

Part 5

Finding Peace in God (Psalm 4)

• How to pray in times of trouble

• David temporarily forced to leave Jerusalem

• Yet he can sleep peacefully

A. To God

• The Christian life is not problem free

• David commits himself to prayer

B. To his enemies

• The wicked and godly – clear thinking

In the psalms we are studying how people prayed when they were in trouble. This is why the psalms are so encouraging to us. We have our own problems and it is heartening to find men facing similar difficulties. They learned how to handle themselves in trouble. What do you do when you are in bad trouble? These psalms help us to know how to respond to conflicts of every kind.

As in Psalm 3, Psalm 4 still fits perfectly the time when the 'big men' who were David's enemies (Absalom and his friends) temporarily forced David to leave Jerusalem. Their lies had deceived many. David's friends must have been bitterly resentful at David's defeat ¹. Again they are all about to go to their beds ². No doubt many in Jerusalem were sceptical that either David or Absalom would be of any value to the kingdom ³. Again ⁴ David is able to sleep in peace. The best way to understand the structure of the psalm is to take note of who is being addressed. It has an A-B-C-B-A structure.

A. He speaks to God ¹. When we pray, often we begin with calling upon God in a general way, asking him to hear our prayer. David asks to be heard ². He has been answered before ³. He asks to be heard again ⁴.

Do not be surprised if you find yourself in great difficulties. We must not pick up the idea that all our problems will disappear. Often we are surprised at troubles! The godliest of people get the greatest of persecution. "In the world you shall have tribulation... I have overcome the world," – said Jesus.

We are not to get bitter. The answer is not Stoicism - trying to be unemotional about everything in this world. The Christian approach is not surprise, not bitterness, not Stoicism – but joyfulness. Acts 5:41 – rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer dishonour for the name. It is not that we are just enduring. We rejoice at our knowledge of what God is doing.

Our troubles drive us to prayer. David commits himself to pray. *Answer me when I call, O God of my righteousness!* Notice that he prays about prayer! He tells God he is praying and asks to be heard. Why do the psalmists pray about prayer? It is a way of praying very definitely. You commit yourself to prayer and tell God what you are doing. He has prayed many times before and he is determined to win through in the same way again. *You have given me relief when I was in distress.* David has been in trouble before, and he has learned the lesson that prayer is heard when he comes in faith to God. He thinks about prayer before he prays and asks to be heard. *Be gracious to me and hear my prayer!* He is focusing upon God as the one who hears us when we are in distress.

B. He speaks to his enemies ¹, as if they were present. It is good when we are in trouble to have clear ideas about the difference between the wicked and the godly. David's enemies are proud of their big reputations (as they see the matter).

You big men! How long will my honour be turned into shame?

These words reflect the time David briefly lost the royal power. What a disgrace it was. But David refuses to go the way of pride and deceit.

How long will you love vain words and seek after lies? Selah ¹
But know that Yahweh has set apart the godly for himself!

¹ see 4:3b
² see 4:4
³ see 4:6
⁴ as in 3:5

¹ 4:1
² 4:1a
³ 4:1b
⁴ 4:1c

¹ 4:2

¹ 4:2

• *Confident because God's purposes have not been brought to an end*

I find it interesting that David is not blaming himself! He had actually made bad mistakes in his family-life, but there is no value in living in guilt, and he knows that God's purpose for his life and kingship has **not** been brought to an end. He speaks with confidence. He **knows** his son Absalom is doing something wrong. David knows he is still in God's will. He did not make himself the king of Israel. When you are in God's will you can still be confidence when you are in trouble.

C. To himself

C. He encourages himself ¹. *Yahweh hears when I call to him* - he says. I rather think he is talking to himself here. In a psalm with an A-B-C-B-A the middle point is the most important point.

¹ 4:3b

B². To His friends

B². He speaks to his friends ¹. David turns to warning again but now he is surely speaking to his friends. When we are in controversy our friends are as much a nuisance as our enemies! The unspiritual may fall into deceit and pride, but the supporters of godly leadership may fall into bitterness and self-righteousness! It is dangerous to be right! David warns his supporters.

¹ 4:4-5

• *Examine your hearts*

*Be angry, but do not sin;
Speak to yourself in your hearts on your beds, and be silent.
Selah* ¹
*Offer right sacrifices,
and put your trust in Yahweh* ²

¹ 4:4

² 4:5

• *Faith in God's grace*

When they go to sleep that night they had best examine their hearts. Absalom has sinned but have David's supporters nothing to confess? They had best put their faith in the grace of God rather than in their conviction of their own righteousness!

A². To God

A². He comes back to God again ¹.

¹ 4:6-8

There are many who say, 'Who will show us some good?'
Yahweh, lift up the light of your face upon us ¹.
You have put joy in my heart more than in the time
when their grain and their wine abound ²
In peace I will both lie down and sleep;
for Yahweh you alone make me dwell in safety ³.



¹ 4:6

² 4:7

³ 4:8

• *David has found the secret of peace*

Many are sceptical about both Absalom and David! But David finds relief in prayer. It is one thing to lie down but it is another thing to lie down and sleep! But David has found the secret of peace.

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