

MOUNT SINAI MISSIONARY BAPTIST CHURCH

MONDAY EVENING BIBLE STUDY

Psalm 4

Calm Assurance

Quote

“The **sovereignty** of God is the pillow upon which the child of God rests His head at night, giving perfect peace.”

Charles H. Spurgeon

I. Introduction

Life should be lived with the assurance of God’s **sovereignty**, knowing that he rules over everything for his glory. Even when it seems as if the ungodly have dominated the scene, believers should remember that God has chosen the godly for himself and will not forsake them. This is the central message of Psalm 4, a song that provides a Godward focus in the midst of life’s storms.

Often called “the Evening Psalm,” this “psalm of David” was a prayer of trust offered to God at the close of a long, trouble-filled day. Many interpreters believe that Psalms 3 and 4 once formed a single unit. The third psalm was a prayer expressed in the early morning (3:5), and the fourth psalm was to be offered up to God in the evening (4:8).

If this connection exists, the background of Psalm 4 is the same as Psalm 3—the revolt of Absalom against David (cp. 2 Sam. 15–18). The superscription reads, “For the director of music,” a title directing the **worship** leader during the public **worship** service. As this psalm was sung, it was to be accompanied “with stringed instruments,” the harp and lyre acting as an orchestra. This psalm expresses the psalmist’s confidence in God during an hour of desperate need. The psalmist could rest secure because God reigned supreme.

II. Commentary

MAIN IDEA: In the midst of persecution, David called upon God for relief, asking the Lord to bring **repentance** to his enemies and divine favor to his supporters.

A David's Request (4:1)

4:1. In the midst of his painful ordeal, David called out to God, **Answer me when I call to you.** Passionately, David pleaded to be heard by his **righteous God.** David did not appeal to God on the basis of his own goodness or personal achievement but solely upon the Lord's perfect **righteousness** given to him by **faith.** He prayed, specifically **Give me relief from my distress.**

The Hebrew word for *distress* means a “tight place”; the word for *relief* means an “open place.” The psalmist had been encompassed on all sides by this trial, and he asked God to make a spacious place for him. Be merciful **to me**, he cried, **and hear my prayer.** Mercy is God's tender compassion demonstrated toward those who are afflicted, not according to what they deserve but according to what they need to survive this trial.

B David's Rebuke (4:2–3)

4:2. No longer addressing God, David spoke to his enemies, chiding them for their **evil** opposition against him. He rebuked them, **How long, O men, will you turn my glory into shame?** Confronting these adversaries, David challenged them by asking how much longer they would seek to destroy his glory, a reference to the success of his life lived for God. David asked, **How long will you love delusions,** pointing to their slanderous lies which they spoke to undermine his leadership. Likewise, how long would they **seek false gods**, referring to their wicked unbelief in the Lord. As a man after God's own heart, David opposed all that the Lord opposed.

4:3. As if speaking to his enemies directly, David prayed, **Know that the Lord has set apart the godly for himself.** Identifying himself as God's chosen servant, David challenged them. Why should they persist in their opposition against him whom God had chosen? To oppose David was to oppose God, who had sovereignly elected him and set him apart. Thus, he had deep assurance that the Lord would hear when he called to him. David knew he would be safe because the Lord would remember his servant and hear his plea.

C David's Rebuttal (4:4–5)

4:4. David also prayed for their change of heart, pleading, **In your anger do not sin.** Another translation has “tremble” (NASB). This was a direct appeal to God that his attackers would be made to fear the Lord which would, in turn, thwart their attempt to harm him. He added, **When you are on your beds, search your hearts**

and be silent. In other words, they must be made by God to reconsider their personal attacks against him. At night, when their consciences had pondered their ways, the Lord would reveal their opposition to him as a treacherous **sin**.

4:5. Still as if addressing his enemies, David asked God to direct them to **offer right sacrifices and trust in the Lord**. They must abandon the hypocrisy of their empty **worship** and approach God with right sacrifices from a pure heart. David's enemies must cease their sinful opposition of him and **worship** God with the right sacrifices of a pure heart. Ultimately, only God could bring about such change in their hearts.

D Davids Relief (4:6–8)

4:6. Many of those who were following David were **asking, “Who can show us any good?”** His followers were wanting to know that their now-deposed king would still lead them into a victorious future. The question among his followers was, “Will following David result in good?” In response to this uncertainty, David appealed to God, **Let the light of your face shine upon us, O Lord**. He called for God to bless his loyal supporters with the fullness of his **grace**. These words were drawn from the well-known benediction of Aaron (Num. 6:24–26). This was a request that the fullness of God's divine favor be directed toward them.

4:7. You have filled my heart with greater joy was the result of David's prayer. Before his prayer changed his circumstances, it had already changed him. His anxiety was transformed into assurance as he experienced more **joy** than **when their grain and new wine abound**. He found more **joy** in God than when a farmer enjoys a bountiful harvest—all because he put his trust in the Lord.

4:8. Finally, David testified, I will lie down and sleep in peace. Thus, he concluded, **for you alone, O Lord, make me dwell in safety**. Only God could cause his fearful heart to be calm and know genuine peace—a calm contentment in the fire of adversity.

III. Conclusion

No believer is immune from the **trials** and afflictions of life. In difficult times it is critical that we call upon God. Only he can deliver us out of our troubles. But too many Christians internalize their anxiety rather than rely upon God for relief and rescue. When deeply distressed, believers should pray to God, who is a very present help in time of trouble (Ps. 46:1–2). When Christians call upon God from a

pure heart, they may have confidence that he hears them and will answer according to his perfect will.

Prayer is never an exercise in empty chatter, but it is the overflow of a living, dynamic relationship with the one true God who will hear in the day of trouble (Ps. 50:15). It is in the painful moments of life, when surrounded by mounting pressures, that God's people will find the comfort and consolation they need when they trust the Lord. The light of God's presence will shine upon them. He will bring a supernatural peace which will flood their hearts and souls with a calm assurance that transcends all human understanding (Phil. 4:7).

IV. Teaching Outline

- A. David's Request (1)
 - 1. God, answer me! (1a)
 - 2. God, acquit me! (1b)
- B. David's Rebuke (2–3)
 - 1. Men shame me (2)
 - 2. God sanctifies me (3)
- C. David's Rebuttal (4–5)
 - 1. Search your hearts (4a, b, c)
 - 2. Silence your mouths (4d)
 - 3. Sacrifice your lives (5a)
 - 4. Submit your wills (5b)
- D. David's Relief (6–8)
 - 1. Favor me with goodness (6)
 - 2. Fill me with **joy** (7)
 - 3. Flood me with peace (8)¹

¹ Steven Lawson, [*Psalms 1–75*](#), ed. Max Anders, vol. 11, Holman Old Testament Commentary (Nashville, TN: Holman Reference, 2004), 32–36.

