

“I Will Lay Me Down in Peace”
Psalm 4
(Preached at Trinity, October 4, 2009)

I’m supplying these notes for the benefit of busy pastors who may be engaged in bi-vocational work, feeling the pressure of preparing to preach twice on the Lord’s Day while trying to balance full-time secular work as well as caring for their families. While the notes of another man are no substitute for personal study, I pray that these may aid in the process of preparing to preach.

Disclaimer: These are the actual notes I bring with me to the pulpit, which I follow loosely. They are not designed for publication. While I try to make every effort to give proper credit to my sources from the pulpit, adequate citations will sometimes be absent from my notes. If anyone feels their intellectual material has been used without adequate citation, please contact me and I’ll make immediate correction giving credit.

1. Babies are often contradictions – sweet paradoxes.
 - A. When they grow weary they fight sleep with all their might. It is almost as if falling asleep is painful for them. Perhaps with their enormously high metabolism weariness is painful. You watch them squirm, they rub their eyes, they whine until finally they crash into sleep.
 - B. The paradox is never do you find a sweeter sleep; such contentment and rest.
2. For the Christian we should find only the sweetness of rest. Though our world is crashing down around us we can rest in peace, sweet slumber because in Christ we dwell in safety.
3. Psalm 4 is sometimes called the psalm of the evening in contrast with the Third Psalm that is sometimes called the morning psalm.
4. Some presume that the setting for Psalm 4 is the same as Psalm 3 but we don’t necessarily have authority for such a claim.
 - A. In Psalm 3 we have authority in the superscription:
Psalm 3:1 – “A Psalm of David, when he fled from Absalom his son.”
 - B. We don’t have this in **Psalm 4**
In fact, David’s trial in Psalm 4 involves that of slander and malicious lies against David’s reputation.
5. Trials in this life can be many and varied, yet God delivers us out of them all.
Psalm 34:19 – “Many are the afflictions of the righteous: but the LORD delivereth him out of them all.”
6. Because of our great peace in Christ we can go to sleep in comfort, contentment and confidence.
7. Like Psalm 3, Psalm 4 begins with a superscription. It gives us two pieces of information. To the chief Musician on Neginoth, A Psalm of David
 - A. It gives a piece of musical notation. The KJV transliterates the word Neginoth which refers to stringed instruments telling us that, like many of the Psalms, it was meant to be sung. This one was to be accompanied by stringed instruments. This psalm was delivered to the chief musician
 - B. Second, the superscription tells us of the author: King David
7. This psalm can be divided into four parts.
In **Verse 1** David sets his petition before God.
In **Verse 2** David rebukes his enemies.
In **Verses 3-5** David exhorts his enemies to turn to God and trust Him
In **Verses 6-8** David again turns his attention back to God where he finds consolation and peace.

I. David's petition before God – **Verse 1**

A. David begins and ends **Verse 1** with petitions for God to turn His ear towards him

1. First, At the beginning David petitions that God would hear his prayer effectually. The word means “to answer” which is the way most translations render it.
David is pleading with God, “Please answer my prayer.”
2. At the end of **Verse 1** David uses the word **שָׁמַע** which is simply a petition that God would receive his petition; that God would listen to him.
3. Our prayer before God is both, “Hear me and answer me.”
It is a petition that goes forth with both humility and expectation.
3. Never should we come before God as if it were a common thing. Always should we come before Him with passion and pleading.

B. David refers to God as, “O God of my righteousness”

1. In other words, David wasn't coming on the basis of his own righteousness or personal achievement. He was coming on the basis of God's righteousness.
2. This is significant in this psalm because David is being falsely slandered.
Verse 2 – “How long will you turn my glory (or honor) into shame?”
NAS – “How long will my honor become a reproach?”
3. We've all be falsely accused before. Falsely slandered. How do you respond in such a case? David went to God to justify himself.
God is the author of our righteousness, the rewarder of our righteousness – and He alone is our judge.
4. It ultimately doesn't matter what men may say of us. They shall not be our judge.

1 Corinthians 4:3-4 – “But with me it is a very small thing that I should be judged of you, or of man's judgment: yea, I judge not mine own self. ⁴ For I know nothing by myself; yet am I not hereby justified: but he that judgeth me is the Lord.”

C. David praises God for His past sustaining grace

“Thou has enlarged me when I was in distress.”

1. The word translated, “enlarged” is very literal. It means to “enlarge or make wide.” It probably carries the idea of relief when we are being pressed from all sides. The word for “distress” means to be narrow.
2. David is remembering the many times when God provided gracious relief from his distress.
3. Remembering previous times when God came to our defense gives us confidence in the present.
In this confidence David then turns to address his enemies.

II. David rebukes his enemies – **Verses 2-3**

- A. He addresses them as “sons of men”
1. He uses the Hebrew phrase *beni ish* instead of *beni adam* implying these were great men, men of high degree.
 2. David may also use the expression to great contrast between them and God
They were guilty of pride and arrogance – pride puffs up
 3. They may be great men but they were acting foolishly
- B. “How long will you turn my glory into shame?”
1. How much longer will they seek to destroy his reputation particularly his life as a man of God. How long will you oppose my divinely appointed office?
 2. How long will you love vanity and lies? Their words were untrue and apparently they knew it.
“vanity” – emptiness, pointlessness, fruitless – such is the life of the lost person. He loves the foolishness of his life. It is all futile. He gives up Christ and their very soul for the smallest thing.
 3. According to Matthew Henry, the term “glory” can also refer to God.
You are turning my God to shame.
Romans 1:21 – “Because that, when they knew God, they glorified *him* not as God, neither were thankful; but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened.”
 4. Selah – pause and ponder. Stop and consider and meditate
- C. David contrasts his life with theirs.
1. Know this: Those who are Godly God has set apart for Himself.
The contrast is, Those who are not Godly God has rejected.
 2. God hears the righteous, He hears their cry and pleads their cause.
The contrast is He does not hear the unrighteous

III. David exhorts his enemies to turn to God and trust Him – **Verses 4-5**

- A. This should be our high priority
1. We should desire to lead even our enemies to Christ
 2. David sought God’s aid and protection, he vindicated himself before his enemies, and then he exhorted them to turn
Listen to his instruction:
- B. “Stand in awe”
1. In other words, reverence the one true God. Stand in awe of Him.
 2. The word literally refers to terror. It means “to tremble, quake, or quiver”
 3. The NKJV, ESV, NIV, CSB translate it “be angry.” This comes from the Septuagint. It is also in accord with Paul’s words, **Ephesians 4:26** – “Be ye angry, and sin not”
 4. The word best implies our proper position as we approach God. It has always been described as fear.
Psalms 2:11 – “Serve the LORD with fear, and rejoice with trembling.”
Psalms 34:9 – “O fear the LORD, ye his saints: for *there is* no want to them that fear him.”
 5. The best way to avoid sin is to live in a constant state of the awe of God.

- C. “And sin not”
1. David is admonishing them to give up their sin. Repentance!
 2. “Commune with your own heart” – search your heart, examine yourselves. Of course this can only be done through the Holy Spirit. Most people believe they are righteous. If they would commune with their hearts along side God’s perfect Law they would be exposed.
 3. Be still, consider. “Selah” Stop and meditate upon it!
 - a. How few in our generation will be still. We fear the quietness. We avoid listening to the stirrings our conscience.
 - b. How few are convicted by their own sin.
 - c. It takes much grace to be still. In the noise of our life lost humanity avoids God.
Psalm 46:10 – “Be still, and know that I *am* God: I will be exalted among the heathen, I will be exalted in the earth.”
- D. **Verse 5** – “Offer the sacrifices of righteousness”
1. Do the fruits of repentance!
 2. David’s enemies would have been faithful in their religion of Judaism. God desires the sacrifices of obedience.
1 Samuel 15:22-23 – “Hath the LORD *as great* delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices, as in obeying the voice of the LORD? Behold, to obey *is* better than sacrifice, *and* to hearken than the fat of rams. ²³ For rebellion *is* as the sin of witchcraft, and stubbornness *is* as iniquity and idolatry. Because thou hast rejected the word of the LORD, he hath also rejected thee from *being* king.”
 3. Not only must we cease doing evil. We must do good.
Ephesians 2:10 – “For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them.”
- E. “And put your trust in the Lord”
1. In purity of heart they must trust God
 2. This takes us back to Psalm 2
Psalm 2:12 – “Kiss the Son, lest he be angry, and ye perish *from* the way, when his wrath is kindled but a little. Blessed *are* all they that put their trust in him.”
- IV. David turns to God for consolation and peace – **Verses 6-8**
- A. David’s own followers were beginning to have doubts – **Verse 6**
Psalm 4:6 – “*There be* many that say, Who will shew us *any* good?”
1. Will following David result in good?
 2. Will David lead them to victory?
 3. Doubts in the human heart are never far away. They found it difficult to be content with David as they saw others prospering.
 4. Such is the condition of man as he looks to Christ. Will he do me good? His answer is NO. He refuses to be satisfied in Christ.
- B. David then calls upon God – **Psalm 4:6** – “LORD, lift thou up the light of thy countenance upon us.”
1. Oh God, let the light of your countenance fall on us
 2. Oh God, may your presence be mightily with us.

- C. David pauses to praise God
1. “You have filled my heart with gladness”
 2. In the midst of adversity and the hatred of his enemies praise upon upon David’s lips – his heart was filled with unspeakable joy.
 3. He had more joy than the farmer experiences at harvest.
Another way to put it – “I have more joy in Christ than all the wealth this world could possibly offer.”
- D. With this joy David laid his head down in peace
1. Such was the rest of Christ in the bottom of the boat as the storms raged outside.
 2. There is peace and safety in Christ. He is always present – a very present Lord
Psalm 46:1-3 – “God *is* our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble. ² Therefore will not we fear, though the earth be removed, and though the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea; ³ *Though* the waters thereof roar *and* be troubled, *though* the mountains shake with the swelling thereof.”
 3. Only Christ can clear our fearful hearts and bring us to calm contentment.
 4. We pray and our anxiety is turned to calm and our calm is turned to joy
James 5:13 – “Is any among you afflicted? let him pray. Is any merry? let him sing psalms.”

Conclusion:

1. David’s life was filled with God. Yes he faced adversity. Yes he was hated by his enemies. Yes, there were times that he was fearful. But he found great peace in God.
2. We too can find this great peace in Jesus Christ.
May we find joy in God’s favor and commit all of our life to Him and be satisfied in Him.