

PSALM 4

AN EVENING HYMN

This is a Psalm of consolation; yet at the same time, it teaches us to bear afflictions patiently, to expect the help of the Lord, and to trust in Him in all adversities. Alas! The greatest of all true and real Christian wisdom is unknown to the world! This wisdom teaches us to learn and know, by daily temptations and various trials of faith, that God exercises His people in all these afflictions – why? So that He may save, deliver, comfort, strengthen, and glorify them in a wonderful manner, in the midst of perils, and even in death itself! His purpose in thus exposing them to the all-bitter hatred of the world and the devil is so that He might make His Church known to be invincible – through faith and the Word – in the midst of the kingdom of the devil, against all the storms of the world, and under all the clouds and darkness and tempests of temptations of every kind.

This Psalm also deals a very severe blow at all hypocrites and wicked persons of every description, who – before the eyes of the world – would have us believe that they are the only true saints and the people of God. They even say that they worship God, but they really know nothing of Him; for in the time of affliction, they tremble with cowardly fear, and impatiently mutter in their hearts against God and His holy will (verse 6). They soon forget His words and His works, and they wickedly forsake the only One that is able to comfort them. They cease from expecting His aid, they hate the cross, and they seek for human consolation – even though there is no sure consolation to be obtained from all the resources of human help; for sure consolation comes from God alone, and no one can take it away.

However, this peace and consolation of God is not like the peace of the world. “Know,” says David in verse 3, “that the Lord hath set apart him that is godly for himself!” He casts them down so that He may raise them up; He afflicts them so that He may minister gentle consolation unto them; He humbles them so that He may greatly exalt them; He makes them sorrowful so that He

Overview of the Psalm, adapted from Charles Spurgeon:

This Psalm is apparently intended to accompany the third, and make a pair with it. If the last may be entitled “The Morning Psalm,” then this one is equally deserving of the title of “The Evening Hymn.”

In the first verse, David pleads with God for help. In the second, he expostulates with his enemies, and continues to address them to the end of verse 5. Then, from verse 6 to the end, he delightfully contrasts his own satisfaction and safety with the disquietude of the ungodly in their best estate.

This Psalm was most probably written upon the same occasion as the preceding one, and it is another choice flower from the garden of affliction. Happy it is for us that David was tried, or we probably would have never heard these sweet sonnets of faith!



may make them glad.

Therefore, as the Lord's people fight against sin and the devil (who unceasingly assault them in this life and desire to sift them as wheat), their agonizing struggles are their exercises of faith and patience – from which exercises, those who love God learn to more satisfactorily know His

presence. They realize more and more that He is always present with them, and that He will never leave nor forsake those who believe in Him; for He will always marvelously deliver, save, and rescue them from all their deaths and destructions!

But as for the wicked and hypocrites – no matter how much they may talk about God with their lips, they hate Him; and they hate this manifestation of His will in the afflictions of His saints. These are the ones who are referred to in the First Commandment as “them that hate me.” They are also the ones of whom Paul says, “whose god is their belly.” They wish first, and above all things, that all their fortunes and their property should be safe; and they trust in their riches and possessions. Naturally, then, of course, all such persons deride this doctrine of faith! And if anyone tries to speak to them of this kind of patience, and of the cross, they laugh at it and boast of their supposed holiness as being superior to that of those who truly fear God. They say, “What! Are we to be taught what is right by such a fool as you? Are you to teach us what is good, and what the true worship of God is?”

However, in the concluding verses of this Psalm, we see the perfect peace and serenity that surround the child of God! We observe how the people of this world expend all their care and anxiety upon their earthly provisions and pleasures, and yet they are never nearly as well-satisfied as the man, woman, or child who enjoys the light of the Lord's favor shining down upon them. “I will both lay me down in peace, and sleep,” says the Psalmist; “for the Lord only maketh me dwell in safety.” He resolves that sinful fears shall not rob him of his inward quietness, nor will he torture his thoughts with anxious forebodings; rather, he commits all his concerns into that faithful Fatherly hand that has hitherto worked all things for his good! He will not lose the comfort of one night's rest, nor spend today ruminating upon tomorrow's potential evils; instead, since he knows Whose hand he is in, he wisely enjoys the sweet felicity of a will that has been resigned into that hand.

Lord Jesus, while the ungodly are seeking their chief good from this perishing earth, let us desire Your favor, which is better than life itself! Help us to lie down in peace at night, and sleep securely in You, enjoying the rest and refreshment that is found in Your protection, which is better than that of bolts and locks! Amen.