

# ***Psalm 4: Peace in the Midst of Distress***

## **Living Hope Bible Church**

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### **A Word About Laments.**

- Definition: “A passionate expression of grief or sorrow.”
- The Psalms can be grouped into three main categories:<sup>1</sup>
  - Orientation: Praise.
  - Disorientation: Lament.
  - Reorientation: Thanksgiving.
- There are at least two main types of lament psalms:
  - Individual lament (Ps 3; 4; 6; 7; 9; ect.).
  - Communal lament (Ps 12; 14; 15; 24; 29; ect).
- “Human life consists in anguished seasons of hurt, alienation, suffering, and death. These evoke rage, self-pity, and hatred.”<sup>2</sup> Laments are born out of these painful experiences and dark emotions.
- There are three main causes for distress in the psalms:
  - Enemies (e.g. Pss 7:13; 10:8-10; 17:11-12; 25:19).
  - Self (e.g. Pss 32:3-5; 38:18; 39:11; 51:2).

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<sup>1</sup> Walter Brueggemann, *The Message of the Psalms* (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1984).

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

- God (e.g. Pss 44:9; 60:3; 90:15).
- There are at least seven elements common in a lament:<sup>3</sup>
  - Invocation: The crying out to God in the vocative (“O LORD,” ect.).
  - Plea to God for Help: The request/petition for help (often an imperative: “hear, save, listen, ect).
  - Complaint: The focal point of the Psalm that reveals what/who has motivated the lament (i.e. enemy, self, or God).
  - Confession of Sin or Assertion of Innocence.
  - Curse of Enemies (=Imprecation): The seeking of covenant vindication.
  - Expression of Confidence in God’s Response: An expression of trust in God’s faithfulness.
  - Hymn of Blessing: As the lamenter realizes what God can and will do for him, it leads him to the opposite of lament – praise.
- Laments are raw; they are brutally honest. They deal with the reality of suffering and the corresponding emotions that pain the human heart.
- Laments teach us what to do with suffering.
- Laments teach us what to do with our emotions.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> These are a basic rubric; not all elements are always present, nor do they necessarily have to occur in this order.

<sup>4</sup> I highly recommend the book: *The Cry of the Soul: How Our Emotions Reveal Our Deepest Questions About God*, by Dan Allender & Tremper Longman III (Colorado Springs: NavPress, 1994).

- Laments teach us how to be honest with ourselves, others, and most importantly God.
- In an overly positivistic culture, that relegates pain and suffering to the fringes of life, we need a return to the laments to teach how to live in the in-between. Christ has already brought the kingdom, but it has yet to be fully realized. Until that day the church cries, “Come, Lord Jesus” (Rev. 22:20).

## Psalm 4.

### Outline

- I. David pleads with God to answer his prayer and relive him from his distress (v. 1).
- II. David pleads with the exalted men to stop seeking after false gods and to trust in YHWH (vv.2-5).
  - a. He exhorts them to stop worshiping idols (v. 2).
  - b. He exhorts them to acknowledge that YHWH listens to his prayers (v. 3).
  - c. He exhorts them to allow their conscience to speak to them, causing them to tremble in fear because of their sin against YHWH (v. 4).
  - d. He exhorts them to trust YHWH and worship Him rightly (v. 5).
- III. David expresses his trust in YHWH, confident that He will answer the prayer for rain (vv. 6-8).
  - a. The people are experiencing doubt, but nevertheless pray to YHWH for rain (v. 6).
  - b. David prays for joy, with great confidence that YHWH will answer (v. 7).
  - c. David expresses his confidence by going immediately to sleep, resting in the security of his covenant relationship with YHWH (v. 8).



## Text Comparison - Psalm 4

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<u>NASB</u>	<u>ESV</u>	<u>NIV (2011)</u>	<u>HCSB</u>
<u>Ps 4:title</u> For the choir director; on stringed instruments. A Psalm of David.	<u>Ps 4:title</u> TO THE CHOIRMASTER: WITH STRINGED INSTRUMENTS. A PSALM OF DAVID.	<u>Ps 4:title</u> For the director of music. With stringed instruments. A psalm of David.	<u>Ps 4:title</u> For the choir director: with stringed instruments. A Davidic psalm.
<u>1</u> Answer me when I call, O God of my righteousness! You have relieved me in my distress; Be gracious to me and hear my prayer.	<u>1</u> Answer me when I call, O God of my righteousness! You have given me relief when I was in distress. Be gracious to me and hear my prayer!	<u>1</u> Answer me when I call to you, my righteous God. Give me relief from my distress; have mercy on me and hear my prayer.	<u>1</u> Answer me when I call, God, who vindicates me. You freed me from affliction; be gracious to me and hear my prayer.
<u>2</u> O sons of men, how long will my honor become a reproach? How long will you love what is worthless and aim at deception? Selah.	<u>2</u> O men, how long shall my honor be turned into shame? How long will you love vain words and seek after lies? Selah	<u>2</u> How long will you people turn my glory into shame? How long will you love delusions and seek false gods?	<u>2</u> How long, exalted men, will my honor be insulted? How long will you love what is worthless and pursue a lie? Selah
<u>3</u> But know that the LORD has set apart the godly man for Himself; The LORD hears when I call to Him.	<u>3</u> But know that the LORD has set apart the godly for himself; the LORD hears when I call to him.	<u>3</u> Know that the LORD has set apart his faithful servant for himself; the LORD hears when I call to him.	<u>3</u> Know that the LORD has set apart the faithful for Himself; the LORD will hear when I call to Him.
<u>4</u> Tremble, and do not sin; Meditate in your heart upon your bed, and be still. Selah.	<u>4</u> Be angry, and do not sin; ponder in your own hearts on your beds, and be silent. Selah	<u>4</u> Tremble and do not sin; when you are on your beds, search your hearts and be silent.	<u>4</u> Be angry and do not sin; on your bed, reflect in your heart and be still. Selah
<u>5</u> Offer the sacrifices of righteousness, And trust in the LORD.	<u>5</u> Offer right sacrifices, and put your trust in the LORD.	<u>5</u> Offer the sacrifices of the righteous and trust in the LORD.	<u>5</u> Offer sacrifices in righteousness and trust in the LORD.

6 Many are saying,  
“Who will show us  
any good?” Lift up  
the light of Your  
countenance upon  
us, O LORD!

6 There are many  
who say, “Who will  
show us some good?  
Lift up the light of  
your face upon us, O  
LORD!”

6 Many, LORD, are  
asking, “Who will  
bring us prosperity?”  
Let the light of your  
face shine upon us.

6 Many are saying,  
“Who can show us  
anything good?” Look  
on us with favor,  
LORD.

7 You have put  
gladness in my heart,  
More than when their  
grain and new wine  
abound.

7 You have put more  
joy in my heart than  
they have when their  
grain and wine  
abound.

7 Fill my heart with  
joy when their grain  
and new wine  
abound.

7 You have put more  
joy in my heart than  
they have when their  
grain and new wine  
abound.

8 In peace I will both  
lie down and sleep,  
For You alone, O  
LORD, make me to  
dwell in safety.

8 In peace I will both  
lie down and sleep;  
for you alone, O  
LORD, make me  
dwell in safety.

8 In peace I will lie  
down and sleep, for  
you alone, LORD,  
make me dwell in  
safety.

8 I will both lie down  
and sleep in peace, for  
You alone, LORD,  
make me live in  
safety.



May the Lord bless you as you live for Christ and  
are conformed to His glorious image!