

6/23/19 - Psalm 4 - "Resting in God's Sovereignty"

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[0 : 00] Please join me in a word of prayer. Lord God, your scripture is perfect. It is completely without error.

And as we approach your word as imperfect people, we depend upon your Holy Spirit to help us at this time, to help convict our minds, convict our hearts of ways that we are neglecting, things that you desire for us to address in our sanctification.

But also, Lord, we pray for encouragement. We pray that we can leave refined, refreshed, filled, and changed, Lord.

This is a supernatural text. And when we approach it that way, our lives change. And we reflect your glory, Lord, on this earth and to those around.

So center our minds on your word at this time. And we pray this in Jesus' precious name. Amen.

Okay, Psalm chapter 4.

[1 : 11] I'm going to read the entire chapter to its entirety. Verse 1 says, 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. O God, how long shall my honor be turned into shame? How long will you love vain words and seek after lies?

But know the Lord has set apart the godly for himself. The Lord hears when I call to him. Be angry and do not sin. Ponder in your own hearts on your beds and be silent.

Offer right sacrifices and put your trust in the Lord. There are many who say, Who will show us some good? Lift up your face. Lift up the light of your face upon us, O Lord.

You have put more joy in my heart than they have when their grain and wine abound. In peace I will both lie down and sleep for you alone.

[2 : 16] O Lord, make me dwell in safety. Today we're going to be drawing upon a psalm of both two themes.

A psalm of lament, as you can tell, that there's like an undertone of distress going on in this psalm. But also a psalm of confidence, as you can see. And I might get flack for this, but I have four points today.

Is that going to be okay, church? I promise you I'm going to be good. I'm not going to go long. I'm being a bad Baptist right now, though. Because Baptists are three-point preachers.

But I'm going four-point. I'm being a little risky. But within this passage, we meet two groups of people. We meet a group of people where it's David and his companions, his faithful companions who follow him, who trust him.

And we also meet this other group of people who are David's enemies, who are faithful enemies of David, along with their enemies. And they're coming against David.

[3 : 18] Last week, Brad spoke specifically about the immediate physical danger that David faced. Well, today, this passage deals solely with the reputational danger that David is facing.

We've all heard the saying that sticks and stones may break my bones, but... That's good. We're rehearsed.

That's a saying that I remember being spoken about back in the day, back in kindergarten, you know, back in the younger days. Sticks and stones will break your bones, but words or names will never hurt you.

While we see what that's communicating, just toughen up, you know. The words, like somebody can hit you with a baseball bat and versing, you know, the reality of words. They're not going to affect you that much. But the reality is that words do hurt to a certain extent.

We all care to a certain extent about our reputation and sometimes take things into our own hands when our reputation is at stake. But today, I want to highlight David's response to these accusations, number one.

[4 : 30] I want to also, number two, draw out the inner strength which David centered himself regardless of the things said and spoken about him. And finally, number three, I want to see the grace which David models towards his companions and for us today.

Because the reality is true. Words do hurt. They do hurt. But we are completely and utterly in control of our response, regardless of the pain that the harsh words inflict.

And we are also in control of, during the healing process of those wounds, during when we experience hurtful words. So let's dive into Psalm 4 and discuss the dangers which David faces in this troubled and distressful time in his life.

The first point I want to talk about is a call to pray in verse 1. Verse 1 reads, Answer me when I call, O God of my righteousness.

With an exclamation point. This is exclaiming in this passage. Answer me when I call, O God of my righteousness. You have given me relief when I was in distress.

[5 : 45] And then another exclamation. Be gracious to me and hear my prayer. David immediately establishes his argument based upon the source of David's honor.

God is his righteousness. His righteousness is not of his own, in verse 1, but of God's. He centers himself, he establishes himself upon that argument and upon that fact.

And notice the past tense in the second line here. David also recalls a past tense of account of giving, of God giving him relief during past distress.

Past tense. Past tense. Which is the case of which he comes to God in confidence, knowing that his prayers aren't going to be hitting the ceiling at this time.

He knows how God has been faithful in the past. He is assured that he's going to hear his prayer moving forward. This verse also reveals something fundamentally encouraging, that regardless of our situation, David's, for example, in this passage, he is recalling the past faithfulness of God in aiding him in the future.

[6 : 59] He is returning to the shield, the protector, these advocates of the past, knowing he will vouch for him in the future. However, at this point, we don't know what's going on.

We don't know that, you know, I obviously read the passage, but nothing explicitly has been pointed saying that he's talking about a physical danger or verbal danger, things like that. But as we read, we will see what he's facing, that he is calling out to God to be his shield, and he pleads for God to answer him and hear him.

Let's continue to see what precisely David is facing, which is causing him so much distress in verse 2 and 3, in our second point, of David's distress.

Look with me in verse 2 and 3. It says, Verse 3, We identify the source of distress very clearly in this verse, beginning in verse 2.

David makes a dual plea to his enemies to stop the shame against his honor and stop the vain words, stop the lies. It has to end.

[8 : 23] He is speaking. His words are going back to his enemies, saying, Just stop. Without much searching in this passage, we can identify very quickly the situation which is bringing David such great distress in his life.

It is the malicious weapon used against his honor through vain words and lies, also known as slander. A sinful, evil, malicious weapon that is known as slander.

He is dealing with slander. So as we can recall in verse 1, where David recalls who God established him in his position, his kingship, we can also see that the slander, if God established him in this position, that an attack on him was also an attack on God, as it was his righteousness which established David in the first place.

So it's actually a deeper assault, not on just David's character, but also on the character of God and God's sovereign choice to establish David as king. And furthermore, in verse 3, David reiterates that which he began during his opening prayer in this section in verse 1, which he clearly indicates that the Lord has set apart the godly for himself, meaning David.

He's set David apart in this position. And as verse 3 says, David's words are heard when he calls. But the interesting thing, if we stand back from this passage and notice one thing, is the direction of words in this passage.

[9 : 56] One thing, when you're studying this passage, you see words going against David. And you see David just pleading, just like, please, just stop the nonsense. But David is more concerned with the direction of his words vertically rather than horizontally.

And that is something significant that we must draw out of this text. We don't have to look too far to find Christ in this passage either.

Because this takes me back to Holy Week, the week that Jesus was approaching his resurrection, but his crucifixion, as Jesus was on the road, as the religious leaders of that day were slandering him, totally just taking everything that he was doing out of context.

That he was the one and only innocent man on this earth. that Christ was being falsely accused, but he did not utter a word. He was called to pray often.

Even in his lashings, the beatings on the posts, the cat of nine tails hitting his flesh and ripping his flesh off his body, he spoke not a word towards his enemies.

[11 : 14] For us today, what is the knee-jerk reaction when false accusations come against you? The knee-jerk reaction. I like how Boyce puts it.

He says, most of us, most of us would go to our friends and complain. Looking for sympathy, we would start, we would even probably start a slandering campaign of our own against our enemies. It might go something like this. Well, the only reason he or she said this or that is because he or she fill in the blank. Our knee-jerk reaction, I think I can identify with Boyce in this passage, that we sometimes just are so quick to speak back against our enemies and not speak to God and give God full control.

And see what David did in this passage. I mean, clearly, David took things into his own hands. He logged on Facebook. David, KingDavid at Facebook.com, you know, his hashtag.

You went on Twitter in this passage. Did you see it in there? He went on there and he started just... I'm going to get him good with this. And David met with all the friends, you know, and turned everyone against each other.

[12 : 28] It was this big civil war against people. It was something. Did you see that in the passage? Boy, no. Nobody saw that in the passage.

Because David did take matters into his own hands. He did. However, he did not fight fire with fire. But he made an honest, he made a balanced appeal to God on his behalf.

David turns to the one who knows the distressful situation. Then he probably even knows it himself. Then he could even communicate it to his friends trying to start a slander campaign. That God searches our hearts and he knows the situation better than we could ever even communicate it. So his first reaction in the midst of this tornado of lies was to give the situation completely and utterly to God. David was to let go of the words and accusations and slander regardless of the sting and pain that he experienced through them.

And he even left his integrity completely up to God of his kingship, of who established him. And likewise, as we identify the direction of his words in this passage, like I mentioned, the directions of his words were not horizontally back at his enemies, going on Facebook, going on Twitter, doing whatever you want to do, starting a slandering campaign against his enemies, but rather he got on his knees and he started a vertical campaign to God.

[13 : 58] Taking those words and his concerns straight to God and said, God, this is in your hands. Vindicate me, Lord. David chooses his words and the directions of his words wisely and facilitates them not maliciously back towards his evil companions.

And he also doesn't direct his words towards his fellow friends seeking sympathy from them, you know, things like that. His comfort and everything came strictly from God.

He didn't embrace victimhood. He didn't build a team against his enemies regardless of the sting of the vain words and lies spoken about him, but he wisely facilitates his words to God at this time.

And he, in doing so, he released the custody of the anger and any pain that was committed against him through those words. The third point this morning is praying for your enemies in verse 4 and 5. And before we read verse 4 and 5, I want to note, talk about the structure of this psalm because if you know anything about literature or English, you know, things like that if you weren't sleeping in high school or college English class, you know, there's a certain structure in literature called a chiasm and chiasm, when it's used, you know, it's kind of like a building block.

[15 : 28] It forms like a certain arrow like here's a thought and here's a parallel thought and then here's another sub-thought and here's another sub-thought and then boom, here's the main point.

And so it takes you along a logical path which is of this chiasm and the point of this text today and it's praying for your enemies.

In verse 4 and 5, it reads, be angry and do not sin. Ponder in your own hearts on your beds and be silent. Offer right sacrifices and put your trust in the Lord.

This is the most interesting part of the entire psalm. Rather than David unpacking and opening up all this baggage of injustices done to him, this woe is me just saying this stuff and you know, you can't bear the weight of the things being said against him.

But instead, his prayer regarding his enemies was not to destroy them. Lord, put them in their place. If you're not going to put them in their place, I'm going to go on social media and put them in their place. I'll take this into my own hands.

Thank you. No, he doesn't pray to destroy his enemies. He prays to lift them up. Remembering back in verse 1 and 3 of the recalling of David's position which was ordained by God, God's sovereign choice established him.

[16:53] The recalling upon this within his opening prayer set the tone of grace in this passage towards his enemies. And that is the very power of which is the driving force that enables David to lift his enemies up because he is secure in who he is.

He is secure in who established him as king regardless of what's being said and he's secure in knowing that God's going to take care of it. David knew that an attack upon himself or his position that was sovereignly given was an attack on God himself who appointed him to the task so regardless of the sin of his enemies, loving vain words and stirring up lies to him, David continued to lift his enemies up.

Verse 4 gives us great insights and look with me, great insights that he was directing towards his enemies not in hostility or maliciousness but out of gentle care for their soul into handling their emotions properly without sinning.

He talks about anger and anger is a natural part of the human experience. We can all be angry without committing sin, believe it or not. Think about it. Some of us, that might be actually astonishing.

But however, what David is drawing out is what we do in this anger phase in this experience truly does matter. The key to this directive is found within the second part of verse 4.

[18:19] It says, ponder in your own hearts on your beds and be silent. In your anger. Ponder in your own hearts on your beds and be silent.

Or to translate into modern day terminology, modern day terminology, for all intents and purposes, the PG version, and I was like, I was going to, you know, insert some, you know, like how we have that, you know, the S word, you know, the pipe down, you know, the S word, you know, we don't like our kids to say it, you know, it's just, you know what I'm saying.

You think I know? Okay, don't worry about it. So, in other words, this verse is saying, I know you're angry and that is fine, as David would say, but stop acting maliciously.

Focus your energy and worry about your own hearts in this matter and stop the nonsense you speak about me. Or pipe down. Just be silent.

Stop speaking this. Ephesians 4.26, Paul actually quotes this very passage when he says, be angry and do not sin. Do not let the sun go down on your anger.

[19:30] Or in other words, it's okay to be angry, as Paul would say, but just deal with the problem in the anger stage before it settles and rests in your hearts. H.C. Leopold, an early 20th century theologian, he speaks on this evil.

The evil you are planning towards these enemies, the evil you are planning should be abandoned because God is against you in it. You should be able to see this when you are upon your bed, searching your hearts silently.

David encourages his enemies, lifts them up, to allow God to reshape their anger, to discern their anger and not just do what humans do best, a knee-jerk reaction and premature slander campaign against one another, a little civil war against one another.

It's been going on for centuries in the church and outside. And he goes on to encourage his foes in verse 5. Look with me. Offer right sacrifices and put your trust in the Lord.

Or in other words, David is telling his foes to stop the double-mindedness. The very knife that they're offering their sacrifices on account of sin is the very knife they're stabbing other people in the back with.

[20 : 46] Double-mindedness. Instead, put your knife down against your enemy and put your trust in the Lord. Amen? Church, slander is literally an act of taking the role of God into your own hands, serving justice on your own.

It is a sin against man or fellow man and it is also a sin against God. By the act of speaking evil against others, it actually serves as a fallacy of truth that the one who is speaking evil against one another is actually the one who proves to be untrustworthy in the entire matter.

It's shooting yourself in the foot, as it was said. The church, within a blood-bought church, grace must reign supreme in these relationships, especially in the church.

And I speak directly to the church today that grace must reign supreme. When grace reigns supreme, it is clearly identifiable and tested by how you respond when others hurt you.

That this grace, when it reigns supreme, it is identifiable when it's tested, when people hurt you.

How do we respond in the matter? Remember Colossians 4.

[22 : 07] We just got a, if you're new with us today, we just finished a series in a verse-by-verse study in Colossians. When the challenges of bearing with one another become distressful, when we sound like, David, what is going on?

This is just completely counterproductive, especially when someone intentionally or unintentionally hurts you. With words, this still gives no reason to throw in a towel in church and leave and abandon a community that is a blood-bought community where we have to express grace to one another.

It is a powerful testing within the local body of the very grace that we receive from God is how we express it to one another. Bearing with one another is quite challenging.

But regardless of the direction of our anger, whether you are angry at the church leadership or others outside the church, we must rally together and work towards unity at all times in hopes that our efforts are received gracefully as well.

What David is experiencing will be experienced no matter how greener the grass looks at other locations or other things. Because we are all human, we all fall short of the expectations, of other people's expectations.

[23 : 21] We cause pain. Sometimes we don't even know we're causing pain and somebody gets offended by the slightest thing. We miss the mark constantly, but the grace that God has lavished upon us is that grace that we must lavish upon each other in this corporate body called the church.

My fourth and final point, we finally got there, church. Bear with me. Let's practice bearing with one another in grace. Point four is trusting in what God has promised in verse six and eight.

I want to sit on verse six real quick. It says, there are many who say, who will show us some good? Lift up the light of your face upon us, O Lord!

In exclamation, lift up the light of your face upon us, O Lord! David's companions who were experiencing the distress of these slanderous words from others are coming to him essentially saying, these are his fellow brothers, people who trust him or like holding on to their seat.

They're hearing this stuff and they're like holding on like, David, they're saying to him, what's going on here? We heard this. We're hearing this stuff about you. So and so said this.

[24 : 45] This circumstance doesn't seem good. We're getting nervous. Whose side do we need to put on? But who started the other side in the matter? David is vindicating, allowing God, calling God to vindicate himself in the matter and being faithful to what God established.

And within an instant, David directs his attention back to Numbers, verse six. This passage in Psalm four, verse six, is actually quoted in the Aaronic blessing back in number six.

In 6, 24 through 26, it says, the Lord bless you and keep you. The Lord make his face shine upon you and be gracious to you. The Lord turn his face toward you and give you peace.

The Lord took David, literally, in his spirit, in his prayer, back, and his companions, back to when he, when he first established the Aaronic blessing in number six.

Boyce also put in this passage, David was reminded that the one who had shown him good in the past can be counted on to show him good again, even God himself. And the psalm ends with a relief in its chiasmic structure in verse seven and eight.

[26 : 00] It began with a prayer in verse one and it ends in a prayer in seven and eight. Verse seven and eight say, look with me, you have put more joy in my heart than they have when their grain and wine abound.

Verse eight, in peace I will both lie down and sleep. For you alone, O Lord, make me dwell in safety. Or in other words, David is recalling the fulfillment of God's joy being that which exceeds any earthly

riches.

Referring to a cultural aspect of grain and wine at this time. Nothing in this world, not even vindication itself of his innocence in any matter, in his established position, even greater than that, any material thing of when grain and wine abound, God's joy and the fullness of God's joy supersedes that.

God's joy and the fullness of God. This verse speaks volumes to David's situation for us today because in spite of his emptiness, think about what's being said here, in spite of his emptiness, his hopelessness, that he's giving to God, help me here, Lord, with this.

I have no control in this situation. In his emptiness, David is confidently allowing God's overflowing of his joy, fill him up in his emptiness and his distress.

[27 : 29] Joy and peace abound in us when we are reminded of God's favor and his promises in our lives, when he takes us back to the time when he made it clear what he was doing.

The very mission that he started in your lives and this could happen in your salvations, being a Christian when people saw you as a different person, sinning, drinking, partying it up, living life in the fast lane and then they're saying things about you and they're slandering you.

Oh, they haven't changed a bit. Don't fall for these lies. When we are taken back to that moment when we trusted in the Lord and we put our hope in him and we felt the difference, when the Lord put that light switch on in our head and he said, I have a purpose and a plan and a promise for you in your life, you are not to live how you previously lived.

Joy and peace abound in us when we are reminded of God's favor and his promises in our lives. So when the weapon of slander is against us, it is God who protects us.

Even if the words of slander hurt us and hit us and take us out right in our vital organs, it is still the God who we trust in to shield us. When distress invades our minds, it is God who brings us complete peace.

[28 : 52] When the accusations of others damage us and leave us lost and alone, it is God who is our safe dwelling place, church. As we come to a close this morning, I appreciate your attentiveness to the four points this morning.

I want to encourage you when the fiery arrows of slander come straight for us, it must be God who deflects them as we respond by not turning on our enemies but pleading to God to vindicate us and lift our enemies up in prayer.

Give them to God. It is as easy as that. Remember the gospel in this. Think about the gospel. Who are we to even think that we're even innocent ourselves?

Even if David is completely innocent in the matter, who are we to think that we are innocent? Think of the gospel in this. That all have fallen short of the glory of God. There's no one righteous.

No, not even one. Even in our uttermost innocence that we think we have of being innocent towards God, making God feel like, oh man, I'm going to give you a reason.

[29 : 59] I'm going to prove to you, God, that you saved me for a purpose because I'm actually pretty good. I'm a good Christian. I'm going to prove it to you. Even in our uttermost confidence in how innocent we may perceive of our lives and of ourselves, we must never forget our sinful condition and the effects of us mismanaging this condition and specifically dealing with our anger towards one another.

Unity in the midst of this corporate and corporate distress is only achievable by bestowing forgiveness and grace towards those who wrong you. Bestowing forgiveness and grace to those who wrong you.

This is the gospel. This is the gospel church. This is what Christ did for us on the cross while we were slanders against the Holy One, the true King, the only one righteous, the King of Kings.

We were alienated apart from Him, completely lost. But God, so much power in those two words, but God, reached down into history, lived a life that we cannot even fathom living on our own power, died a death that we deserve and was risen and through our faith we are risen with Him in this day in eternity, someday.

We might experience it in this lifetime when He comes back and He returns or we might die of old age. That's probably very likely and we will one day see Him.

[31 : 28] But regardless, He is the one. He is the perfect one. We are sinners. We have fallen short of the mark. So what keeps you up at night, church? It seems as if nighttime is the only productive time that my mind specifically tries to solve problems.

You know, it's the minute my head hits the pillow and there's like just a tally of like, oh wait, you know, I keep a notebook next to my bed because some things I actually think about are actually useful.

But it's my problem solving time. When I need my brain to be shutting off, it's very counterproductive and that's when I have these thoughts of situations and stresses. But sometimes when these problems I'm facing are severe enough regarding family issues that our family has walked through, some serious challenges in life, whether it's your challenges, whether it's regarding anything with church that we're facing.

I lose crucial rest that I need in order to face the problems of tomorrow. Doesn't this sound all too familiar? I can't be the only one.

I can't be. I know I'm not. I know what you guys are going through. I speak with you guys. This echoes many times of troubled relationships, uncertainty of the future, insecurities, and we all give in to this worry at one point or another, but to what extent does this distress affect us?

[32 : 57] David was clearly in distress when he wrote Psalm 4. Clearly, he was in distress. This is a lament, but also confidence, as I spoke about earlier. Literally, when people were ruining his reputation, his loyal companions were questioning him based on what they've heard.

Some were questioning his competency to rule. Are you sure about this? I'm sure David dealt with this anger of being treated unfairly.

Possibly nights of letting the down and worry get the best of him during those sleepless nights, but remember, he ends the psalm in verse 8. As you read, look with me, in peace and will lie down and sleep.

Spurgeon puts it, in thus lying down, David resigned himself into the hands of another. He did so completely for in the absence of all care, he slept. There was here a perfect trust.

Absolutely perfect. So church, what inspired this trust? What gave him the power to experience this trust? Well, from the very beginning we spoke.

[34 : 03] David put his confidence and he rested in what God would do. And it's the answer to his prayer, first and foremost. He rested in God's promise and the appointment of the task that he set David apart for.

God chose him, God chose to love him, and God would meet his every need. He knew this. That was what rooted him in these times of distress. So let us cast our cares upon the Lord, resting in his power and his presence, church, when worry abounds.

When that anxiety hits, I can't be the only one, church. I can't be. When anxiety hits, let his power and his presence in worry abounds.

Let us rest in his sovereign choice in the direction of his lives. Let us lift our enemies up regardless of what's said. Let us express grace to one another and those outside, complete grace.

Because within his loving arms, we can also say, as verse 8 says, in peace, I will lie down and sleep in our distress. Let's pray. Let us pray.