

## Psalm 4

I don't know about yourself but there are often times when you feel in a tight spot, pressured and under the hammer, to coin a phrase. David as always in his psalms is able to speak very honestly and transparently about his tough and difficult times and I think that we can learn a lot from how he deals with these situations in our own lives. David was obviously under great pressure of some kind and dealing with some sort of persecution, pain, illness and or both and he was crying out to the Lord in the urgency of the hour. So right from the opening verse when David starts to talk about God's care and protection his instructions are first of all to look to the Lord, **verse 1**.

When David says, "**hear me when I call O God of my righteousness,**" he is really bringing home an urgency of the need to pray in difficult times and secondly there's an urgency in the tone of the way he cries out to the Lord. It is sad to say that often for us as the Lord's people, instead of turning to Him in difficult times in prayer, we choose to abandon God, the Scriptures and indeed the importance of praying. It does seem strange to me to take that sort of approach because what we really need to understand is that God is a righteous God as David says and everything He does is right.

In fact David goes on to say, "**You have relieved me in my distress.**" The literal translation of that is that God has given him room to move after he has been pressed in and extremely limited in his movements. That's really a literal translation of what he is saying when he found himself in distress. The other important thing to understand when we pray to God in difficult times is to know that God will deal with whatever the circumstances are in a right way rather than allowing us to get focused on the wrong things and becoming rather bitter and beaten over the whole issue.

The other thing that's really important in the scheme of things is that when we pray in difficult times, and hopefully that's not the only time we pray, it gives us a bank of experience on which to call upon. So when we look to the Lord, we can look to the Lord on the basis of past deliverance. Now recognising that in the past He has worked righteously and has relieved our distress means that we can have confidence that He will do the same in our present situation. One writer has said that in the Christian life we are either coming out of a storm, in the middle of a storm or we have a storm coming up. Whilst that may seem a somewhat pessimistic view the reality is that the Christian life is not easy and there are times of testing and difficulties when things simply don't go right. And I think last but not least in this opening verse we can see that praying in these difficult times stops us looking at ourselves. Often when things go wrong you will hear people saying something like this; 'I don't know what I've done for this to happen in my life.' That sort of expression really means that the person somehow or other feels that blessing in their life is

determined by having some sort of tick list that guarantees them a blessing.

I think we forget that there are times when we can do the right thing and still it seems that all hell breaks loose. I wonder how you would feel if you were Job when it seems that within a matter of paragraphs he lost his family, his health and all of his possessions and it seemed almost his life. But Job was able to say that he came into the world with nothing and that he would leave the world with nothing. But in all of that he kept his focus on God and worshipped Him.

Then **secondly** what's really important when we are in a difficult time especially when it's inspired by the enemy is to recognise that these things come as God allows them. It is best for us to confront the enemy, verses 2-3. David realised that ignoring the problem wouldn't make it go away or indeed, solve it. So David first of all confronted the ringleaders of those who were oppressing him. There are times even in families where there are difficulties and struggles which need to be confronted. We can see this also in the Christian church where there are those who are not happy with the direction in which the church is going or the way in which the pastor is preaching, or what have you. And there may be other areas where people are just simply looking to make life difficult because you own the name of Jesus and want to count for Him particularly in the work place for example.

Well David is saying to us that it really is important to look at confronting the ring leaders involved in this situation. And then David is not shy in communicating the error and the faults in what they are doing. You can't get it any clearer than what he says in **verse 2**; "**how long will you love worthlessness and seek falsehood?**" I know that we live in an age where we are called to tiptoe through the tulips on lots of these issues but there are times when we need to confront the enemy and allow God to bring the victory as we do.

But then **thirdly**, David clarified God's remedy in verse 3 when he says; "**But know that the Lord has set apart for Himself him who is godly; the Lord will hear when I call to Him.**" That is a wonderful verse of encouragement to any of us who know and recognise that God is pleased to bless the praying saint. David not only clarified what was God's remedy in terms of dealing with the enemy but also took great comfort in knowing that God would hear him when he called.

And then **fourthly** David took time to encourage his friends, **verses 4-5**. What do we do when emotions start to get out of control? Well David gave us some key pieces of advice in understanding how to deal with difficult circumstances that put enormous pressure on you. First of all David said that we are to worship the Lord and stand in  
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awe of Him, verse 4. Then we are to walk with God, don't let sin have dominion over us. And then he encourages us to wait on God, that is to prayerfully search our own hearts and to take inventory of anything that might be in our lives that needs to be dealt with. Then we are to be still and be honest with ourselves and then with God that we have sinned. And then we are to consecrate ourselves to the Lord, verse 5. The idea here of offering the sacrifices of righteousness is really another way of saying that 'Lord we want you to set us apart that we may be used for your glory and honour.' But then last, but not least we are to commit ourselves to the Lord as David says at the end of verse 5 to put our trust in the Lord.

Now what is important in doing all of this is to avoid the situation where we exhibit what we call an unrighteous anger, where we really express anger in a way that is not God-honouring. The classic example of this was the most recent shootings in Melbourne where a bikie gang member obviously just lost it completely and he was filled with rage and anger and the end result of it was that two people were killed and a number of others were seriously injured. That is exactly what God wants us to avoid when we are dealing with difficult and pressured times.

Then **fifthly** we should praise the Lord, **verses 6-8**. I know that is such an easy thing to say especially when we are wilting under the weight of continual discouragement. I think anybody who is worth his salt and really means business with the Lord will know times of discouragement. I know that I certainly do. But how should we respond when we feel down and despondent about things? Well first of all we need to learn to praise God. And I think the psalmist says it so well when he says; **“You have put gladness in my heart” in verse 7, “more than in the season that their**

**grain and wine increased.”** So this is all about praising God and as a result joy and gladness are the outcome. And I think this is why **Nehemiah says in chapter 8, verse 10 that “the joy of the Lord is our strength.”** Keeping a close walk with the Lord is critical in dealing with times where we are under extreme testing and pressure and upset.

But also we need to praise God not only for His joy and gladness but we need to praise God for His peace. In **verse 7 it says; “I will both lie down in peace and sleep.”** I know when I get a little stressed or under pressure one of the first areas that seem to suffer is the idea of peaceful sleep. It seems that our minds become this movie screen on our bedroom wall and we are unable to gain that much needed peace of mind and heart. The word peace here means not only the absence of conflict but rather the adequacy that we need for life, that confidence and fullness that comes from the Lord to live life in the way that He would have us to do so. And then we do need to praise God for His rest because when sleep comes it is such a beautiful blessing and encouragement so that we can wake up the next morning refreshed and renewed in the Lord. That's why he says in **Psalm 3; “I lay down and slept for the Lord sustained me.”**

And then last but not least we need to praise God for His safety, care and protection. I know that when we go to Africa every year on a mission's trip it is so comforting to know that there are the Lord's people around the world praying for our safety and care and protection. My mind pictures this sense of the mission team being surrounded by the loving sustaining arms of the Lord as we go into a squatter camp or a prison or into a refugee housing area and doing so with confidence because we are in the ever secure everlasting arms of the everlasting one.

— Carl Carmody, Editor of Challenge



## *Praise*

1. Praise God for the safe return of the Impact Africa Team and for His protection and provision of all their needs.
2. Praise God for His guidance and help for the team here as they busily put together the various editions of the paper each month.
3. We also praise Him for the team of volunteers who come in to wrap and prepare the paper for delivery each month and for the faithful folk in the churches who oversee the use of the paper in church ministries.
4. Please praise with us our wonderful God who cares for us in all of our circumstances whether they are pleasant or even sometimes not so pleasant.

## *Prayer*

1. Some of the Impact Africa team are still overseas. Please pray for their safe return, for strength and safety as they travel both in Africa and as they return home soon.
2. Please pray for our regular writers that they will be refreshed each month as they prepare their articles and others as they write their testimonies that what they write will really speak to the readers of the papers and draw them to the Lord.
3. Pray for a successful distribution of Challenge in Harlem, New York, U.S.A.
4. Please pray for staff appointments: a new editor and promotions director for Australia.



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