

## PSALMS 4

To the Overseer with Stringed Instruments. —A Psalm of David.

*{1} Answer me when I call to you, O my righteous God. Give me relief from my distress; be merciful to me and hear my prayer.*

David began this Psalm with a request that God answer his prayer. Verse 1 ends with a plea that God will hear his prayer. The two ideas go hand-in-hand. Our initial thoughts are to obtain a response when we call for help. On further thought we realize that someone has to hear before they can answer. We would do well to determine what hinders our communications to God from being heard. [Regard iniquity in your heart, have bloody hands, continue in rebellion against God, refuse to hear the cries for help from others, etc.]

[Most translations render “O my righteous God” as “O God of my righteousness.”] Any righteousness we have is imputed to us by God. As Isaiah said in Chapter 6, my righteousness is as filthy rags. On this side of the Cross, we understand that we do have a righteous standing before God because of the sacrifice of Jesus: God (the Father) made Jesus to be “sin” for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him. (1 Cor 5:21)

The pressures of life and opposition from the enemy of our souls cause distress. The Hebrew word used here for “distress” could literally be translated as “straits” or in a tight place. We cry out to God for relief in a realization that anything we receive of Him is not based on any good we have but comes from His love for us. The Hebrew word used here for “relief” (as rendered in NIV) is enlargement. The KJV reads: “thou hast enlarged me when I was in distress.” Notice that in the KJV the thought is rendered as an acknowledgment of what has already done while in the NIV the thought is expressed in terms of a request for help. (Both seem to be legitimate, but they do express different ideas.) The way we might express this request is “Lord, give me room when I am in a tight place.” This idea is closely related to the statement made by Paul in 1 Cor 10:13: God will provide a way out so that we are never tempted beyond that which we are able to bear.

**PRAYER:** Lord as You taught us to prayer, “Lead us not into temptation and deliver us from evil,” we ask now that you help us guard our thoughts so that we do not regard iniquity in our hearts and that we avoid things in our behavior that would hinder our prayers.

*{2} How long, O men, will you turn my glory into shame? How long will you love delusions and seek false gods? Selah*

The way this verse reads, it could be a response from God to the Psalmists who just asked God to answer him and to hear him. It is as if God is saying, “if you want Me to hear you and answer you, then don’t take that which I created to give Me glory and use it shamefully. Seek the truth rather than a lie and seek after Me rather than false gods. What was created to bring glory to God? (In general: everything. Specifically: Mankind was created to glorify God and is an expression of the glory of God’s creation. 1 Cor 11:7)

On the other hand, if this is a question that David raised with regard to the problems he was undergoing, then these questions could be addressed to the enemies of Israel such as the surrounding nations. Some commentators relate this Psalm to the problems of David introduced in Chapter 3 regarding the attempted overthrow by Absalom and those who were supporting him. The question could also be addressed to Saul and those who supported him as he was attempting to kill David. We could argue that God was David’s glory and that by trying to overthrow the one whom God had chosen to be king, they were dishonoring God.

The pressures we experience are sometimes a result of evil people attempting to take that which is good and assigning evil intent to it. We see this in the life of Christ. The miraculous virgin birth (a glorious thing indeed) was used to malign Jesus by implying that He was an illegitimate child. His status as “God the Son” (another glorious aspect) was as cause for people to accuse Him of blasphemy. We are finding more instances in our day of people being openly critical of Christians for their stand against evil. We are accused of not being loving and kind when we oppose sin in our society.

**PRAYER:** Father, we ask for your forgiveness when we have failed to bring glory to You in our lives. Help us to use all that you have entrusted to us to lift up the name of Jesus and to promote the Kingdom of God.

*{3} Know that the LORD has set apart the godly for himself; the LORD will hear when I call to him.*

The people of God are frequently referred to as saints. We have been designated (set apart, called out) for God’s service. Some are uncomfortable with this status of being different or special. However, one particular benefit of being seen as special by God is that He hears us when we call upon Him.

**PRAYER:** Lord, we thank You for saving us and making us a part of Your family. Thank You for hearing our prayers and answering with what is best for us rather than what we want. Help us to always be aware that we are Your children and that we have been set apart for your service.

*{4} In your anger do not sin; when you are on your beds, search your hearts and be silent. Selah*

The literal translation of the first part of verse four is “tremble and sin not.” He is not referring to trembling in **awe** but to trembling in **anger** or rage. How do we avoid sinning when we are so angry that we are having real difficulty in controlling ourselves? The first step is to seek some solitude - go to some place where you can be alone. Then whatever you need to say, say it first to yourself. Think about the situation and what is causing such a response in you. Meditate on it. Is the cause something that is related to you or is it related to the cause of righteousness. Is it righteous indignation or is it that your pride has been injured or you are going to experience a personal loss? The most important step in avoiding sin when we are really angry is to “be silent.” It is much better to not speak in anger but to be in control and to give consideration to what we say.

When we (who have been set apart by God and for God) consider the awesomeness of God and His total power, then we should be diligent to spend quiet time in meditation to ensure that our thought processes, actions and attitudes are in alignment with what pleases God.

**PRAYER:** Father, as we realize Your great love for us and Your watch care over us, then we pray that we can see things that happen to us and around us through Your eyes. Help us to realize that we are Your representatives and that our attitude and behaviors are to project Your nature and not give in to our own emotions.

*{5} Offer right sacrifices and trust in the LORD.*

Right sacrifices are sacrifices of righteousness. The old nature in man tends to follow the way of the world rather than God’s way. We have much difficulty in turning the other cheek and going the second mile. To do so is to sacrifice our rights and our pride. Trusting in the principles of the Kingdom of Heaven requires that we die daily to self. Jesus said we should take up our cross and follow Him. This is the “right sacrifice” (taking up our cross) and “trust in the Lord” (following Jesus).

**PRAYER:** Just as Jesus came to be a sacrifice, help us to realize that each of us are called to make sacrifices in our lives that the very life of Christ can be lived out through us.

*{6} Many are asking, "Who can show us any good?" Let the light of your face shine upon us, O LORD. {7} You have filled my heart with greater joy than when their grain and new wine abound.*

People have a tendency to look at physical abundance and external things as measures of success (good) in our lives. The successes we have from following God are typically internal and are measured in terms of inner joy. What would be the cause of the light of God’s face to shine upon us? In other words, what pleases God? In Micah 6:8 we see a simple answer to a very profound question: “He hath shewed thee, O man, what is good; and what doth the LORD require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?”

What greater joy could there be than to be in the very presence of God and to behold His beauty. In Psalm 17:15 we see these words: “As for me, I will behold thy face in righteousness: I shall be satisfied, when I awake, with thy likeness.”

**PRAYER:** Lord, we look forward to that time when we will behold Your face and be in Your very presence. We thank you that we have an earnest of that inheritance even now with the indwelling presence of Your Spirit in our lives. Help us to always keep our priorities in the right perspective and realize that the joy of the Lord is greater than all the wealth of the world.