

Psalm 4

Walking with God Day by Day

There is great security that comes from knowing someone cares for you. Maybe this is the reason that when we reach out to someone, no matter who they are, we like to get a response back. But there is a special joy that comes when we reach out to someone important and they get back to us. I remember as a teenager I reached out to 3 individuals. President Jimmy Carter, I wanted to invite him to an event that my JROTC group in High School was having. He declined but I did receive a hand signed regret from him. I reached out to Billy Graham desiring to meet him, he declined as well, and then I reached out to Charles Stanley, and I did not hear anything back. Fast forward a few years later and suddenly I find myself in the office of Charles Stanley answering letters on his behalf. As I was answering letters I remembered the letter that I sent to him and wondered why my letter got overlooked. You have to understand, just at First Atlanta, not InTouch, Stanley receives probably 2K pieces of mail a month, most of which are replied to by his office. Some are not worth responding to because of the viciousness of the content (those are kept in a special file just in case anything vile were to ever occur). The whole time though I am wondering why my letter was never responded to. Then I found out that certain letters that come by his desk he decides to keep for a while - my letter was one that he kept personally. I learned much from Charles Stanley, most things I learned either through personal experience or observation. One of the greatest things that I learned was how personable a pastor should be. When the line to greet him would be stretching on for an hour and it was finally my turn to greet him, he treated me as if I was the only person in the room.

There is great confidence that comes from knowing that someone cares for you. It is great to know that some of our heroes know our name, but can you imagine just for a moment this fact: The God of the universe, the God who spoke all the stars into existence, who set the seasons in place, who causes sunshine and rain, who knows the seas and all the contents therein, knows you by name! Oh he cares for you, he knows you by name. This is the message of Psalm 4.

From the heading we learn that this Psalm is of David and, I believe, a companion Psalm of Psalm 3. This Psalm is for anyone who is troubled and seeking comfort. Psalm 4 teaches us that there is no greater comfort than walking with God, and the beautiful truth that this Psalm conveys is that we get to walk with God day by day.

READ TEXT

This Psalm is known as an evening Psalm because of verse 8. Psalm 3 is a morning Psalm, Psalm 4 is an evening Psalm. The time gives us a frame of reference as we begin. The close of the day usually brings a time of brooding reflection where the perils of the day and the pressing guilt of the past exhibits the most pressure on a soul. Instead of being inwardly consumed this Psalm invites us to turn to God through prayer. The message - no matter what life throws our way, God has us hand in

hand and is carrying us, guiding us through - have all confidence in Him. Let's dig into this Psalm and learn 4 truths this AM from these four verses.

1. God Has a Firm Hold on Us (1)

Remember that Psalm 3 and 4 are companions. The peril that the day of Psalm 3 brought has continued on into the night of Psalm 4. This trouble does not shake confidence but prolongs confidence. Lamentations 3:19-24 says,

Remember my affliction and my wanderings, the wormwood and the gall! My soul continually remembers it and is bowed down within me. But this I will call to mind, and therefore I have hope: The steadfast love of the LORD never ceases; his mercies never come to an end; they are new morning by morning; great is your faithfulness. The LORD is my portion, says my soul, therefore I will hope in him.

How would we know his mercies never ceased unless we experienced them?

Though the Psalmist is in great distress and great peril, distress and peril are not his only companions. There is another who is great than them all - The LORD God, and it is to this LORD that, despite the peril, he turns to with great confidence that he will answer when he calls.

Look at the language that he uses in verse 1. It is almost demanding, almost presumptuous. This is not so much pious presumption as it is unshakable confidence. Calling out to God and expecting him to answer is more sure than going to a rose and smelling its sweetness. Sometimes there may be an overpowering stench that drowns out the sweet scent of the rose, or our sinuses may be clogged. But when we cry out to God he hears us, how do we know? He has made us his very own.

Look at the phrase *O God of my righteousness*. He has moved heaven and earth to bring we who were far in the pit of despair of our own sinfulness back to the heights of his perfection. The only confidence that we have to enter his presence is he has opened the way for us. 1

Corinthians 1:29-31 says,

He has removed all human boasting in the presence of God - So that no human being might boast in the presence of God. And because of him you are in Christ Jesus, who became to us wisdom, righteousness, and sanctification and redemption, so that, as it is written, 'Let the one who boasts, boast in the Lord.'

God who had been faithful to us in the past is being faithful to us, and though we may presently not be able to see his hand we can trust his good and faithful heart. God has a firm hold on us, so much so that he will never let us go. Which is the second point for us to develop our thoughts around:

2. No Matter What He Will Never Let Us Go (2-3)

The attention shifts in the Psalm. First we look up to God, which is what we should first learn to do. But looking to God doesn't mean we are oblivious to the things around us and so the ones who receive the address of the Psalmist as he is battling the night demons of despair are those causing his grief.

He calls them deceivers. This is reminiscent of the way that Absalom took the kingdom from David. 2 Samuel 15:6 says that Absalom stole the hearts of the people of Israel. Deception is the main enemy of the people of God, and the father of all deception is the Devil (John 8:44). There will be times when you don't need a good excuse to despair, when it is easy to forsake the promises of God. But remember that such times are times of deception.

The promises of God are being subjected to slander in Psalm 4. We see the assurance of verse 1 being met with the barrage of bullets in verse 2. We must anchor our souls to God's promises and batten down the hatches and expect fierce and serious battering from the many onslaughts of the enemy. Satan had the audacity to tempt the Lord Jesus Christ, how much more will he stand ready to send his emissaries after those who wholeheartedly cling to the promises of God?

We must anchor here to realize that all truth is God's truth. Anything else is vain words and lies; all else is futility and chasing after shadows. We are anchored to reality by clinging tightly to Jesus. Why would we care to be weighed down by the cares that come from pursuing futility? Why would we who have the light listen to the voices from the shadows? Look how quickly the onslaughts of verse 2 give way to the truth of verse 3. Here is what we should learn. In reality, the wicked's game is a game of shadows. They are ferocious, but at their worst they are hurling rocks at the sun. A rock may temporarily block out the rays of the sun but in reality will do no damage to the sun.

This kind of truth makes us sing: "Though Satan should buffet, through trials should come; Let this blest assurance control; That Christ has regarded my helpless estate, and has shed his own blood for my soul."

And boy has he ever regarded! God has chosen fellowship with man. *But know that the LORD has set apart the godly for himself, the LORD hears when I call to him.* The eternal God has chosen to make his dwelling with us. Our God has come into chaos, come into disorder to reclaim and reorder and reign in righteousness. The beauty of mercy, the amazingness of grace, that he would set us apart from himself. How did he do this? How do we get him to be the adjective that describes us (godly)? He has made us to become partakers of his divine nature (2 Peter 1:4) by assuming our nature. Without ceasing to be what he was, he became what he was not, so that he could make us like him. The cradle, the cross, and then the crown. He has accomplished everything for us, and he accomplished it for us right in the midst of our old ways of corruption and decay.

Verse 4 should not surprise us. The third thing that we learn this AM is:

3. Walking with Him is the Greatest Delight (4-7)

If verses 1-3 are true, how could there be any greater delight than walking with him? How could we who have seen his face desire to gaze into the face of another? Our response is not grounded in senseless emotion (anger) but with steadfast confidence (Ponder in your own hearts...). This does not mean that we do not fight for truth and justice. We pursue justice but while worshipping and trusting in the LORD. We are not setting ourselves on some pedestal of deserving, but worshipping him who is worthy while we seek justice.

Verse 4 hits at one of the hardest truths for we who follow him. Waiting on the LORD is the greatest discipline of the believer. Nothing will test your trust like waiting on the LORD. Nothing reveals where hearts are like waiting on the LORD. But nothing guarantees our walking with him like the dependence that comes from waiting for him. Waiting does not mean inactivity, waiting means this full assurance that above all the Lord is the one who will build the house. He will probably use a contractor to build the house but the contractor, if he wants the house to stand, will work and wait on the LORD. Go back to Lamentations 3 and pick up where we left off earlier in verses 25-26:

The LORD is good for those who wait for him, to the soul who seeks him. It is good that one should wait quietly for the salvation of the LORD.

But, as verse 6-7 tell us, there are many who just cannot accept the teaching of verses 4-5. There are those, even Christians, who somehow still find futility sweeter than resting in the LORD. They are blind to his mercies, blind to his providential care. As Chrysostom said about them, “[They] behave exactly like someone struggling to see the sun in the unwavering brightness of midday and calling the light into question” (Commentary on Psalms 4 in ACC, 35).

If they could only see!

How should we take the prayer of verse 6? Instead of taking it with the despair of those who miss the providence of God, we take it as prayer desiring the salvation of God, and so we put the prayer of verse 6 with the reality of verse 7. May our longing be for the face of God to shine upon us. His light is a saving light. This is the light that has shone out of darkness, the sun of righteousness that has risen with healing in its wings, the light that has shown forth in a man who came for our sake and our salvation. John 1:4-5 says, *In him was light and that light was the life of men. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not over come it.*

The inward joy of the salvation of God is great than when life may seem to be its best. If grain and wine abound without the salvation of God, then there is nothing but emptiness, but with him there is greater joy, a joy that transcends even the brightest day. He turns the darkness into night and makes the brightest day brighter.

Can't you see, verse 8:

4. Walking with God Gives the Greatest Peace (8)

Only such a view of the overwhelming peace of God can cause sleep. He has saved us not to fret but saved us to rest in his salvation. Oh we may groan, but our groaning is for a salvation that only the Lord can bring - *You alone make me dwell in safety*. So the rest of our life is waiting, but not simply waiting, we are walking with God day by day.

How is your walk with God? When you are lying in your bed at night and you have time of reflection, what is it that overtakes you? Grief, guilt, despair, or is it something else? Is there another companion there with you, a companion that offers peace? Has the peace of God come to your heart? Have you embraced his peace? Are you embracing his peace, or do you put on a really good face at church? God knows and he stands ready to give you real peace, a peace that comes from walking with God day by day.

Romans 8:18-25