

Virtual Prayer Meeting for February 2, 2022

Song: "What a Friend We Have in Jesus"

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Zsp5exNyd94>

African Choir in Ludwigsburg, Germany

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cwi_qKVI8lQ

Song: Tell It to Jesus

Mennonite acapella choir: <https://youtu.be/C0QWDCtwbGg>

Southwest Baptist, OKC: <https://youtu.be/ijmykX3wXYc>

Bonus Song (Jehovah Shalom Acapella): "Just a Little Talk with Jesus"

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LlGXmAggHWQ>

Psalm 4 is a fairly short psalm that has plenty of spiritual meat in it for the careful student. It follows the great third psalm, made famous in our day by the Brooklyn Tabernacle's powerful rendition of the psalm, titled, "But Thou, O Lord," based on the third verse. You can watch a video here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=e-WdXshmqnc>. (This was performed in The Answers Center at the Ark Encounter in Williamstown, KY.) Psalm 4, however, does not disappoint, coming as it does after such a powerful psalm.

Psalm 4 is titled "To the chief Musician on Neginoth, A Psalm of David." Critics may assail the titles of the Psalms, but they were considered part of the inspired text. Witness Derek Kidner's comments: "The notes reproduced in small print in most of our versions, at the head of all but a few of the psalms, are part of the canonical text of the Hebrew Bible ... and are included in its numbering of the verses.... The New Testament not only treats these headings as holy writ, but following our Lord's example it is prepared to build its arguments on one or another of the notes... (Mk. 12:35-3; Acts 2:29ff., 34ff; 13:35-37). We need to look no further than this for their authentication" (Psalms 1—72, pps. 32-33). He goes on to note that they are editorial, written in the third person, and "therefore later than the psalm themselves" but ancient enough that "their technical terms" have "become already largely meaningless to the Jews of the second or third century BC who translated the Psalter into Greek" [the Septuagint]. He suggested some of the "superscriptions" might, indeed, be postscripts to the previous psalms. That need not concern us here. "Neginoth" has a root that refers to a stringed instrument, but in Lamentations 3:14 it carries the idea of a "mocking psalm" (Wolf, TWOT, Vol. 2, p. 1293). Thus it is seen as a taunt to some unknown enemy. Ewald put this psalm and the third psalm in the context of the rebellion of Absalom, a difficult time indeed (cf. 2 Samuel 15:1 ff).

Lange indicated that the psalm was to be accompanied only by stringed instruments leading us to believe it may be an “evening psalm,” which verse 8 reinforces with its reference to laying down in peace to sleep.

The psalm begins with a plea: “Hear me when I call, O God of my righteousness.” “Hear” indicates not merely the act of hearing but implicit is a request for an answer or response. God “hears” all prayer, but He does not always “answer” when we want Him to answer. Sometimes He delays. The petition is intense, as indicated by “O,” a word added by the translator of the King James to emphasize that. Literally, David (whom the superscription testifies is the author), prayed, Answer me when I “call,” a word that means to cry out to someone. It carries the idea of meeting someone. That David addresses God as “God of my righteousness.” That is not an assertion by him that David is righteous in himself, though taken in the context of the rebellion of Absalom, it may be taken to mean that God will bring David’s righteousness out into the clear. It is, however, an assertion that David’s righteousness comes from God. Faith and trust in God is the reason he is righteous. It reflects the divine name Jehovah Tsidkenu, The Lord our righteousness, reflected in Jeremiah 23:6 and 33:6. The same is true of us. Paul referred to that righteousness in Romans 3:22: “The righteousness of God which is by faith of Jesus Christ unto all and upon all them that believe.” Years ago a friend of mine who had been a bit of a “rounder” encountered another longtime friend of his who confronted him about his newfound faith: “I’m just as good as you,” his friend said. “But I’m forgiven,” my friend said. He knew the righteousness of God by faith. We can sometimes give the impression that Christians are better than others, but the difference is forgiveness, the righteousness of God by faith.

David rooted his prayer in past experience: “Thou hast enlarged me when I was in distress” (vs. 1). This may refer to the great deliverance of Psalm 3. The imagery of “enlarged” is to grow or make room, contrasting the previous “distress,” a word that refers to a tight place or circumstance. Lange noted, “The idea is of the expansion of breathing and of space. It means —space for the anxious heart

(*Lange’s Commentary*). In the past, David wrote, You gave me a wide spot when I was in a tight situation. Because of past answered prayer, David was emboldened to ask for “mercy” in seeking God’s help in the present situation. Past experiences in prayer motivate us to present seeking of God. Paul wrote of the same thing in Romans 5: “We glory in tribulations also: knowing that tribulation worketh patience; and patience, experience; and experience, hope” (vss. 2-3). Enduring difficulties with God’s help in prayer and the Word results in “patience,” a word picture of remaining under a burden from which we could escape. That results in “experience,” which is proven character—here ours and God’s. Paul went on to describe this whole chain as resulting in “hope” (vss. 4-5), expectation of God’s help.

David sought God as the righteous Judge, but he also petitioned God for his “mercy” (vs. 1). This is not the usual word for “mercy,” hesed, or God’s unchanging love. It is a root that refers to grace. Edwin Yamauchi noted it can mean “for nothing” or “without cause” (*TWOT*, Vol. 1, p. 303).

Verse 3 reverses the object of David's words from God to "O ye sons of men." Again, "O" was added by the translators to give the urgency. "Sons of men" refers to his enemies, whoever they were, as "great and mighty" as opposed to "poor and lowly" (Girdlestone, *Old Testament Synonyms*, p. 49). The contrast is between human beings, who denigrate David with God who is merciful. "How long" is an oft-repeated cry in the Psalms, occurring fifteen times, and with it, David was asking to what point his trial would endure. "Will ye turn" does not appear in the Hebrew text. It was added by the translators to make sense. The reading would thus be: How long my glory into shame? The question of "how long?" is picked up again (added in italics by the translators to carry the force of the question forward) to ask his enemies the extent to which they would go in their love for "vanity," or emptiness. This seems to refer to their reasons for rebellion or the hopelessness of their plans to overthrow David. As God's thrice-anointed and covenanted king (cf. 2 Sam. 7:14-16), their plans were doomed to failure. David knew that by faith; yet in the midst of this sore trial, he was working it out into his life in practical terms. To accomplish their futile plans they resorted to seeking after "leasing," an old word that means lying. Lying and deceit had characterized this whole situation.

Here we encounter "Selah" (vs. 2). Many consider this a marking of musical interlude. Kidner suggests an interlude or a change of musical accompaniment, admitting the possibility the word comes from a root that means "to lift up"; thus striking up the instruments. I have always considered it a logical interlude that basically calls the reader to "stop, look, and listen," like old railroad crossing signs advised. It is a pause of some kind, and we always reflect at such points. It appears 71 times in the Psalms.

In verse 3, David boldly states his confidence in God's ultimate deliverance and answer to his petition: "Know that the LORD hath set apart him that is godly for himself." Note his use of the divine name, Jehovah, as indicated by all caps. "Set apart" conveys the idea of a discriminating choice. Lange suggests two possible meanings—"wonderful guidance in general" and the special "elevation to royal dignity." In other words, God chose me as king: I remember Samuel anointing me (1 Samuel 16:12). Present assurance can come from the memory of past graces. "Godly" is the word present Orthodox Jews from eastern Europe, the Hasids or Hasidic Jews, use to describe themselves. It comes from the root for "mercy." We can claim to be "godly" because God has given us mercy. Here it may simply mean those who believe.

Out of that experience, David drew a conclusion: "The LORD will hear when I call unto him" (vs. 3). God's children know God hears their prayers as a loving father listens to his children. Jesus drew on that reality when urging persistence in prayer: "If a son shall ask bread of any of you that is a father, will he give him a stone? Or if he ask a fish, will he for a fish give him a serpent? Or if he ask an egg, will he offer him a scorpion?" (Luke 11:11-12). Jesus then made the logical *a fortiori* (from lesser to greater) conclusion: "If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children: how much more shall your heavenly father?" (vs. 13). Jesus said, "Your

father knoweth what things ye have need of, before ye ask him” (Matt. 6:8). David has that assurance as well.

Verse 4 again returns to a statement of fact for all to consider: “Stand in awe, and sin not: commune with your own heart upon your bed, and be still.” “Stand in awe” translates a root that means to tremble, and some commentators see it as corresponding to Ephesians 4:26: “Be ye angry, and sin not.” Others, with whom I agree, see it as a command to consider who God is (because it is His choice of David they reject) and what the appropriate response should be: Stand in awe “before the wrath of God” (Lange). It is a command to consider the far-reaching consequences of precipitous action against God’s anointed king. Sober self-reflection (“commune with your own heart upon your bed”) should lead to the appropriated action: “Be still.” It is not the same term used in Psalm 46:10: “Be still, and know that I am God.” The word in Psalm 4 has the idea of silent waiting (Wolf, TWOT, Vol. 1, p. 193), while the word in Psalm 46 has the idea of stopping something. Once more we find “Selah” ending a section, calling us to stop and think.

Verse 5 is a clarion call to repentance and faith. Is it a call to David’s enemies? Probably. In this case note that it is the “sacrifices of righteousness” David called for, as opposed to the outward lip service of his enemies, who carried out the ceremonies yet without the true heart connection to God. They were just going through the motions rather than truly seeking God. David then called to “put your trust in the LORD.” “Trust” here has the idea of confident security. They were trusting their own plans and devices for security and prosperity rather than God Himself for His blessings.

David moved to considering others in the nation, not his enemies in particular: “There be many that say, Who will shew us any good?” It may be he was referring to those who had fled Jerusalem with him, if we place this psalm during the rebellion of Absalom. In their discouragement, they were looking for blessings but not for the Blessor. How many times do we find ourselves in the same situation? We want God’s blessings, but we don’t particularly want fellowship with God? Contrast that to David, as he addressed the Source of all blessings: “LORD, lift thou up the light of thy countenance upon us.” Subtly David reminded those who sought “good” that the Source of all good is God’s pleasure, indicated by “the light of thy countenance.” James reflected this imagery in James 1:17: “Every good and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of light, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning.” James was contrasting human self-seeking for “good” as we see it with trust in God, who gives only good gifts, not the poor imitations we try to substitute.

David continued his address to the Lord personally: “Thou has put gladness in my heart, more than in the time that their corn and their wine increased.” “Gladness” is “joy” or “mirth,” “joyful with the whole disposition” (Waltke, TWOT, Vol. 2, p. 879). David was contrasting the joy of a bountiful harvest with the joy that a right relationship with God provides. David and those with him (if this is during the rebellion of Absalom) may have been suffering the deprivations of food fugitives would have. He took that imagery and contrasted it with the assurance he received from fellowship with God.

The final verse of Psalm 4 displays the result of David's assurance even in the hard times: "I will both lay me down in peace, and sleep" (vs. 8). "Both" implies as the same time, and shows the depth of his confidence. Clarke noted, "The word 'both' here means at the same time. That is, I will alike be in peace, and I will lie down and will sleep; I will have a mind at peace (or, in tranquility) when I lie down, and will sleep calmly. This is said in view of his confidence in God, and of his belief that God would preserve him." It signifies that sleep comes at once without any anxious concerns. David expanded on his assurance: "For thou, LORD, only makest me dwell in safety." "Only" signifies "alone." God alone, David said made him remain secure or unafraid.

What lessons may we draw from this psalm for our own lives?

First, we can know that God hears the prayers of His children, regardless the circumstances, when we humbly seek Him. He is the righteous Judge and the Source of our righteousness. Imputed righteousness is a concept we seldom consider (cf. Rom. 4:11, 22-24; Gal. 3:6; James 2:23). When we say we have the righteousness of Christ, we are saying that His every act of obedience was credited to us, as if we obeyed. Our sins were placed on Him, and His righteousness was placed on us (2 Cor. 5:21). That truth is so profound, I dare say, we cannot truly comprehend it.

Second, as God's children we can seek Him, expecting only the best outcome.

Third, the blessing of fellowship with God is far better than any earthly things we may seek.

Song: "Trust and Obey"

Formal Worship Version: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zcMQ0RiQrtE>

"Funky" Version: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-HSD1c0Geqc>

Acapella Version: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tAQR8V6pVzo>

Instrumental with words: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4xbKP6_laxk