

Preaching the Psalms Series

(15)

Psalm 4

How to Get Relief from Adverse Circumstances,

Psalm 4:1-8

Psalm 4:1-8 (NASB)

¹ “Answer me when I call, O God of my righteousness! You have relieved me in my distress; Be gracious to me and hear my prayer.

² O sons of men, how long will my honor become a reproach? *How long* will you love what is worthless and aim at deception? Selah.

³ But know that the LORD has set apart the godly man for Himself; The LORD hears when I call to Him.

⁴ Tremble, and do not sin; Meditate in your heart upon your bed, and be still. Selah.

⁵ Offer the sacrifices of righteousness, And trust in the LORD.

⁶ Many are saying, “Who will show us *any* good?” Lift up the light of Your countenance upon us, O LORD!

⁷ You have put gladness in my heart, More than when their grain and new wine abound.

⁸ In peace I will both lie down and sleep, For You alone, O LORD, make me to dwell in safety.”

(Psalm 4:1-8) Introduction: few know the name Eppie Lederer, but she achieved fame through writing an advice column for hundreds of North American newspapers using the pen name *Ann Landers*. Millions of people sought her advice on every imaginable subject. She is quoted as saying, “If I were asked to give what I consider the single most useful bit of advice for all humanity it would be this: Expect trouble as an inevitable part of life....”

Trouble never ceases in this earthly life. And no person ever understood or expressed this fact more succinctly than Job: “**Man, who is born of woman, Is short-lived and full of turmoil**” (**Job 14:1 NASB**).

Many of the psalms deal with various problems and adverse circumstances because we experience so much trouble throughout life. As a matter of fact, most of us have spent many restless nights crying out for God’s help. Thus the Holy Spirit has inspired numerous psalms of lament to help us when we struggle with difficult circumstances.

The author of **Psalm 4** is identified as David, but the specific occasion for its writing is not provided. Some commentators link it with **Psalm 3**, which would mean that it was written during Absalom’s rebellious attempt to overthrow his father. Similarities between the two psalms and the appropriateness of certain statements favor this opinion. *To the*

chief musician or director of music means it is intended for congregational use.

Neginoth indicates it is to be accompanied by stringed instruments.

As in the previous psalm, David finds peace through prayer and through trusting God to help him. After pouring his heart out to God, he is able to sleep in spite of the overwhelming trouble facing him. Like [Psalm 3](#), this psalm is a pattern to follow in trying times. This is, *How to Get Relief from Adverse Circumstances*, [Psalm 4:1-8](#).

1. Call upon the God of righteousness (v. 1).
2. Call upon the godly to repent (vv. 2-5).
3. Call upon God to be good—to let the light of His face shine upon you (vv. 6-8).

1. ([Psalm 4:1](#)) Call upon the God of righteousness.

[Psalm 4:1 \(NASB\)](#)

¹“Answer me when I call, O God of my righteousness! You have relieved me in my distress; Be gracious to me and hear my prayer.”

David called upon the Lord to act righteously on his behalf. *Righteousness (tsedeq)* means that which is morally and ethically just. The troubled king appealed to God on the basis of His holy character. Because God is righteous, David was confident that the Lord would keep His covenant with him and execute justice in his situation. He had faith that God would act to bring about that which was right against those who falsely accused him.

The Scripture commands us to do exactly as David did, to never seek personal vengeance but to commit the carrying out of justice to the Lord. We should never take vengeance against those who wrong us nor are we to personally enforce retribution against them. In cases where crimes have been committed, we may call upon civil authorities, but we are to leave the settling of all personal injustices in the Lord’s hands, He can be trusted to defend and vindicate us, and He will render justice in His due time ([Romans 12:19](#); [Hebrews 10:30](#)).

[Romans 12:19 \(NASB\)](#)

¹⁹“Never take your own revenge, beloved, but leave room for the wrath of God, for it is written, “VENGEANCE IS MINE, I WILL REPAY,” says the Lord.”

[Hebrews 10:30 \(NASB\)](#)

³⁰“For we know Him who said, “VENGEANCE IS MINE, I WILL REPAY.” And again, “THE LORD WILL JUDGE HIS PEOPLE.”

a. For relief from distress ([v. 1](#)).

[Psalm 4:1 \(NASB\)](#)

¹“Answer me when I call, O God of my righteousness! You have relieved me in my distress; Be gracious to me and hear my prayer.”

The Lord’s previous deliverance gave David confidence that God would surely rise up for him again. *Distress (tsar)* literally means a narrow or tight place. *Enlarged (KJV)* or *relieved (rakhah)* means to broaden or set at large, to bring into an open place. We all know what it is to feel smothered or constricted, even short of breath,

when in deep distress. David implored the Lord to loosen the painful cords that strangled his spirit, to set him free from the anxiety and anguish that were choking the life out of him. He cried out to God for relief.

b. For mercy ([v. 1](#)).

[Psalm 4:1 \(NASB\)](#)

¹“Answer me when I call, O God of my righteousness! You have relieved me in my distress; Be gracious to me and hear my prayer.”

Everything we receive from God is due to His mercy. We never deserve His lovingkindness or assistance, but only His wrath. *Gracious* (**khanan**) literally means **“to bend or stoop in kindness to an inferior.”** Through His marvelous grace, we have been brought into a relationship with the God **“who stoops down to help needy human beings.”**

c. To hear and answer your prayer ([v. 1](#)).

[Psalm 4:1 \(NASB\)](#)

¹“Answer me when I call, O God of my righteousness! You have relieved me in my distress; Be gracious to me and hear my prayer.”

Because of his covenant relationship with the Lord, David boldly requested God’s attention and action on his behalf. He prayed in full assurance that God would answer him. We too have the same privilege of prayer: we can enter God’s holy presence any time, any place. The Lord’s door is always open to us. We can call out to Him with complete confidence that He will answer us according to His will (**see [outline and notes—Psalm 3:4 for more discussion](#)**).

Thought 1. David’s basis for calling out to God was the Lord’s faithfulness. Throughout life, time and again, God had given David relief from distress. “Power in prayer comes in part from our memories. Satan wants to make us forget the answers to prayer which we have already received.”

When the Israelites entered the Promised Land, the Lord ordered them to build memorials as a reminder of the great victories He had given. After He miraculously parted the overflowing waters of the Jordan River, God commanded Joshua to build a memorial with twelve stones for future generations (**[Joshua 4:1-9](#)**).

[Joshua 4:1-9 \(NASB\)](#)

¹“Now when all the nation had finished crossing the Jordan, the LORD spoke to Joshua, saying,

²“Take for yourselves twelve men from the people, one man from each tribe,

³and command them, saying, ‘Take up for yourselves twelve stones from here out of the middle of the Jordan, from the place where the priests’ feet are standing firm, and carry them over with you and lay them down in the lodging place where you will lodge tonight.’”

⁴So Joshua called the twelve men whom he had appointed from the sons of Israel, one man from each tribe;

⁵ and Joshua said to them, “Cross again to the ark of the LORD your God into the middle of the Jordan, and each of you take up a stone on his shoulder, according to the number of the tribes of the sons of Israel.”

⁶ “Let this be a sign among you, so that when your children ask later, saying, ‘What do these stones mean to you?’

⁷ then you shall say to them, ‘Because the waters of the Jordan were cut off before the ark of the covenant of the LORD; when it crossed the Jordan, the waters of the Jordan were cut off.’ So, these stones shall become a memorial to the sons of Israel forever.”

⁸ Thus the sons of Israel did as Joshua commanded, and took up twelve stones from the middle of the Jordan, just as the LORD spoke to Joshua, according to the number of the tribes of the sons of Israel; and they carried them over with them to the lodging place and put them down there.

⁹ Then Joshua set up twelve stones in the middle of the Jordan at the place where the feet of the priests who carried the ark of the covenant were standing, and they are there to this day.”

Generations later, the Jews instituted the Feast of Purim as an annual memorial to God’s deliverance from destruction at the hand of wicked Haman ([Esther 9:26-28](#)). Many of the psalms are reminders of God’s past faithfulness and recount His mighty acts on Israel’s behalf.

[Esther 9:26-28 \(NASB\)](#)

²⁶ “Therefore they called these days Purim after the name of Pur. And because of the instructions in this letter, both what they had seen in this regard and what had happened to them,

²⁷ the Jews established and made a custom for themselves and for their descendants and for all those who allied themselves with them, so that they would not fail to celebrate these two days according to their regulation and according to their appointed time annually.

²⁸ So these days were to be remembered and celebrated throughout every generation, every family, every province and every city; and these days of Purim were not to fail from among the Jews, or their memory fade from their descendants.”

In our times of deepest distress, we can be encouraged by remembering all the prayers God has answered in the past. Every problem He has solved, every need He has provided, every sickness He has healed—all of these remind us that God is faithful. He did it before, and He will do it again. He loves us enough to give His Son for us, and He will not fail us ([Romans 8:32](#)). He will always show Himself strong on our behalf, and He will always prove sufficient for our every need.

[Romans 8:32 \(NASB\)](#)

³² “He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him over for us all, how will He not also with Him freely give us all things?”

1 Corinthians 1:9 (NASB)

⁹“God is faithful, through whom you were called into fellowship with His Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.”

Deuteronomy 7:9 (NASB)

⁹“Know therefore that the LORD your God, He is God, the faithful God, who keeps His covenant and His lovingkindness to a thousandth generation with those who love Him and keep His commandments.”

Psalms 77:10-11 (NASB)

¹⁰“Then I said, “It is my grief, That the right hand of the Most High has changed.”

¹¹ I shall remember the deeds of the LORD; Surely I will remember Your wonders of old.”

Psalms 89:1 (NASB)

¹“I will sing of the lovingkindness of the LORD forever; To all generations I will make known Your faithfulness with my mouth.”