

# Preaching the Psalms Series

(16)

## Psalm 4

### *How to Get Relief from Adverse Circumstances,*

#### Psalm 4:1-8

##### Psalm 4:1-8 (NASB)

<sup>1</sup> “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.

<sup>2</sup> 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.

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

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

<sup>5</sup> Offer the sacrifices of righteousness, And trust in the LORD.

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

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

<sup>8</sup> 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).

## 2. ([Psalm 4:2-5](#)) Call upon your enemies to repent.

[Psalm 4:2-5 \(NASB\)](#)

<sup>2</sup>“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.

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

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

<sup>5</sup>Offer the sacrifices of righteousness, And trust in the LORD.”

David turned from calling upon the Lord to address his enemies on God’s behalf. Notice that his attitude is different than in many psalms when he calls upon God to pour out unmerciful wrath upon his foes. His attitude toward those opposing him supports the view that Absalom’s rebellion is the setting for this psalm.

David’s enemies were his son and his countrymen, former friends and leaders in his administration and army. He did not desire their destruction, but their repentance.

### a. Turn from the slander and ruin of God’s king ([v. 2](#)).

[Psalm 4:2 \(NASB\)](#)

<sup>2</sup>“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.”

David’s enemies were slandering and damaging his reputation. *How long* is a call to repent, a call to cease their sinful behavior. *Sons of men* is a Hebrew term that refers specifically to men of rank, the leaders in Israel. Absalom had stolen their hearts, and they were using their influence to turn others against David.

David realized that God was the sole source of his *glory* ([Psalm 3:3](#)).

[Psalm 3:3 \(NASB\)](#)

<sup>3</sup>“But You, O LORD, are a shield about me, My glory, and the One who lifts my head.”

The glory to which he referred in this verse is his kingly glory; the glory God had bestowed upon him in His ascension to Israel's throne. Remember that David's path to the throne began with his glorious victory over Goliath, a victory given by God. The people's rebellion against David was rebellion against God; they sought to overthrow the man God had chosen to be their king. The same disloyal people who were quick to exalt David over Saul now transferred their cheap allegiance to the charming son of David ([1 Samuel 18:7](#)).

**1 Samuel 18:7 (NASB)**

<sup>7</sup>“The women sang as they played, and said, “Saul has slain his thousands, And David his ten thousands.”

David never sought the throne of Israel. It was the Lord who had removed Saul as king and replaced him with the young shepherd. *Turn my glory into shame* lends insight to their specific accusation against David. They were now attacking him because of the way he—in their eyes—became king. To them, David was getting a dose of his own medicine: Absalom's ambitious campaign to dethrone him was justice for his alleged overthrow of Saul. Shimei said to David's face what the people were saying behind his back:

**2 Samuel 16:7-8 (NASB)**

<sup>7</sup>“Thus Shimei said when he cursed, “Get out, get out, you man of bloodshed, and worthless fellow!”

<sup>8</sup>“The LORD has returned upon you all the bloodshed of the house of Saul, in whose place you have reigned; and the LORD has given the kingdom into the hand of your son Absalom. And behold, you are *taken* in your own evil, for you are a man of bloodshed!”

The enemies' attempt to ruin David was *vanity* or *delusion*, a worthless pursuit. They were wasting their time and destroying their nation for something that could not possibly come to pass. If they continued, precious lives would be lost in battle for no good reason.

The rebels needed to stop slandering David and to stop destroying the nation with their lies. *Leasing* (KJV) **deception** is an Old English word for lie or falsehood.

**b. Do not oppose the godly ([v. 3](#))**

**Psalm 4:3 (NASB)**

<sup>3</sup>“But know that the LORD has set apart the godly man for Himself; The LORD hears when I call to Him.”

David's enemies could not prevail against him because God was with him. The Lord had *set apart* or separated the *godly* king unto Himself. He was God's choice, and the Lord had made a covenant with Him to confirm it ([2 Samuel 7](#)). In no way did he ambitiously and violently seize the throne from Saul; God had placed him there. “Only a man who is conscious of his innocence could dare to raise an issue of this sort.” David had received a clear word from the Lord that sustained and supported him, and proved his enemies to be liars:

**2 Samuel 7:8 (NASB)**

**<sup>8</sup>“Now therefore, thus you shall say to My servant David, ‘Thus says the LORD of hosts, ‘I took you from the pasture, from following the sheep, to be ruler over My people Israel.’”**

**2 Samuel 7:15 (NASB)**

**<sup>15</sup>“But My lovingkindness shall not depart from him, as I took *it* away from Saul, whom I removed from before you.”**

The rebels had convinced themselves that God was on their side, for, as with most soldiers about to engage in battle, they surely had called upon the Lord to help them. However, David was unshakably confident of whose prayers God would *hear* and answer. Along with his enemies’ futile ambitions, their prayers were also in vain. God would respond when *he*—not they—called unto Him.

God would hear David, not because God was on his side, but because David was on the Lord’s side. He had followed God’s will in becoming king, and he had done nothing wrong.

**c. Tremble and do not sin ([v. 4](#))**

**Psalm 4:4 (NASB)**

**<sup>4</sup>“Tremble, and do not sin; Meditate in your heart upon your bed, and be still. Selah.”**

David further admonished his enemies to lie awake and search their hearts when they went to bed. This counsel may have also been a prayer. David may have been praying that God would not grant the rebels sleep, but that He would convict them of their sin as they lay upon their beds. Nighttime has a way of keenly alerting our consciences to wrongdoing. Rest does not come easy to those who are guilty before God.

Good commentators have varied opinions as to whom David is speaking in [vv. 4-5](#).

**Psalm 4:4-5 (NASB)**

**<sup>4</sup>“Tremble, and do not sin; Meditate in your heart upon your bed, and be still. Selah.**

**<sup>5</sup> Offer the sacrifices of righteousness, And trust in the LORD.”**

Some believe he is addressing the faithful people who followed him; that he is encouraging them not to sin in response to the rebels’ sin. They need to stay right with the Lord and trust Him. Other commentators believe David is admonishing himself not to react in a way that displeases the Lord. However, there is no evidence in the text that David is speaking to anyone other than the rebellious people of his kingdom. Most likely, David is continuing to humbly yet boldly rebuke them.

*Stand in awe* (KJV) *tremble* (**ragaz**) means to quiver or shake with emotion. It is usually translated in the Old Testament as *tremble*. David is calling upon His enemies to fear the Lord, to tremble because of God’s coming judgment upon them for their

rebellion. They will suffer the inevitable destruction they are bringing upon themselves. Some good translations interpret the emotion that causes them to tremble as anger, meaning that David is pleading with them—in their anger against him—not to sin against the Lord.

**d. Turn to the Lord ([v. 5](#))**

**Psalm 4:5 (NASB)**

**<sup>5</sup>“Offer the sacrifices of righteousness, And trust in the LORD.”**

Absalom, in a deliberate attempt to convince the people that he was right, was offering sacrifices to the Lord

**([2 Samuel 15:12](#)).**

**2 Samuel 15:12 (NASB)**

**<sup>12</sup>“And Absalom sent for Ahithophel the Gilonite, David's counselor, from his city Giloh, while he was offering the sacrifices. And the conspiracy was strong, for the people increased continually with Absalom.”**

These sacrifices were a sham, a deceptive device to persuade the people that *he* was on God's side—actually doing God's will—in overthrowing the king. David admonished the easily-swayed people of his kingdom to awaken to Absalom's deception and to offer true sacrifices that were rightly presented to God. If they would sincerely approach the Lord, he knew that God would convict them of their sin and open their eyes to Absalom's evil ways. God would alert them to His will for their nation.

The people needed to turn to the Lord, place the matter in His hands, and trust Him to do what was right and just in the situation. If David had sinned in his ascent to the throne, the Judge of all the earth would do right and remove him as king ([Genesis 18:25](#)).

**Genesis 18:25 (NASB)**

**<sup>25</sup>“Far be it from You to do such a thing, to slay the righteous with the wicked, so that the righteous and the wicked are *treated* alike. Far be it from You! Shall not the Judge of all the earth deal justly?”**

**Thought 1.** As believers, when our zeal is aroused to do what is right, we must be careful not to be deceived by evildoers. This is especially true in the church. Satan attacks the church from within, and sometimes he is able to stir up some carnal church members to rise up against godly pastors and leaders. True, pastors and leaders are sometimes in the wrong. However, those who rise up in open rebellion against godly leadership are never under the control of God's Holy Spirit. It is Satan who works in people's hearts to divide and destroy. Most who rebel against leadership have usually been offended or have personal agendas. In some cases, troublemakers have never been genuinely born again. If they were, they would never do some of the things they do. Christ Himself says that they are tares rather than wheat—false believers sown by Satan into the fellowship of the church ([Matthew 13:36-43](#)).

**Matthew 13:36-43 (NASB)**

<sup>36</sup>“Then He left the crowds and went into the house. And His disciples came to Him and said, “Explain to us the parable of the tares of the field.”

<sup>37</sup>And He said, “The one who sows the good seed is the Son of Man,

<sup>38</sup>and the field is the world; and *as for* the good seed, these are the sons of the kingdom; and the tares are the sons of the evil *one*;

<sup>39</sup>and the enemy who sowed them is the devil, and the harvest is the end of the age; and the reapers are angels.”

<sup>40</sup>“So just as the tares are gathered up and burned with fire, so shall it be at the end of the age.”

<sup>41</sup>“The Son of Man will send forth His angels, and they will gather out of His kingdom all stumbling blocks, and those who commit lawlessness,

<sup>42</sup>and will throw them into the furnace of fire; in that place, there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.”

<sup>43</sup>“Then THE RIGHTEOUS WILL SHINE FORTH AS THE SUN in the kingdom of their Father. He who has ears, let him hear.”

The New Testament epistles are filled with the names of ungodly people who rose up in the churches against the apostles. We must be on guard against troublemakers in our churches. We must actively resist them, refuse to listen to them, and even rebuke them for their unbiblical, satanic behavior. One way to silence troublemakers when they come to us to criticize church leadership is to simply say, “I would be happy to go with you to the pastor.” Scripture prescribes the process to be followed when dealing with troublemakers:

**Matthew 18:15-17 (NASB)**

<sup>15</sup>“If your brother sins, go and show him his fault in private; if he listens to you, you have won your brother.”

<sup>16</sup>“But if he does not listen *to you*, take one or two more with you, so that BY THE MOUTH OF TWO OR THREE WITNESSES EVERY FACT MAY BE CONFIRMED.”

<sup>17</sup>“If he refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church; and if he refuses to listen even to the church, let him be to you as a Gentile and a tax collector.”

**Romans 16:17-18 (NASB)**

<sup>17</sup>“Now I urge you, brethren, keep your eye on those who cause dissensions and hindrances contrary to the teaching which you learned, and turn away from them.

<sup>18</sup>For such men are slaves, not of our Lord Christ but of their own appetites; and by their smooth and flattering speech they deceive the hearts of the unsuspecting.”

**1 Timothy 5:1 (NASB)**

<sup>1</sup>“Do not sharply rebuke an older man, but *rather* appeal to *him* as a father, to the younger men as brothers.”

**1 Timothy 5:19-20 (NASB)**

<sup>19</sup>“Do not receive an accusation against an elder except on the basis of two or three witnesses.

<sup>20</sup>Those who continue in sin, rebuke in the presence of all, so that the rest also will be fearful of *sinning*.”

**1 Samuel 15:23 (NASB)**

<sup>23</sup>“For rebellion is as the sin of divination, And insubordination is as iniquity and idolatry. Because you have rejected the word of the LORD, He has also rejected you from *being* king.”

**Thought 2.** David’s call for his enemies to repent is an example for us in our dealings with other believers, especially when they are lying about us or attempting to hurt us in some way. Note that these enemies were Israelites, David’s fellow countrymen and sharers in God’s covenant. Again, his desire is for their repentance, not their destruction. When people—believers or unbelievers—attack and cause trouble for us, we should always seek their repentance, not their destruction.

**1 Thessalonians 5:15 (NASB)**

<sup>15</sup>“See that no one repays another with evil for evil, but always seek after that which is good for one another and for all people.”

**2 Thessalonians 3:13-15 (NASB)**

<sup>13</sup>“But as for you, brethren, do not grow weary of doing good.

<sup>14</sup>If anyone does not obey our instruction in this letter, take special note of that person and do not associate with him, so that he will be put to shame.

<sup>15</sup>*Yet* do not regard him as an enemy but admonish him as a brother.”