

Talking to God and Men

by David Guzik

David's psalm teaches us the importance of praying with passion, trusting in God's goodness, and finding safety in solitude with Him.

Duration: 24:52

Scripture: Numbers 6:24-26, Psalm 3:5, Psalm 4:2-3, Psalm 4:6-8

Topics: "Prayer Life", "Godly Living"

Description

In this sermon on Psalm 4, the speaker discusses the possible connection of the psalm to Absalom's rebellion, although there is no concrete evidence. The psalm begins with David calling on God for help and expressing gratitude for being relieved in distress. David advises not to sin in anger but to meditate and find solace in the Lord. He also emphasizes the importance of being set apart for God and warns against the consequences of straying from godly paths.

Transcript

All right, let's take a look at Psalm 4. Now, this psalm also has a title, but if you'll notice the title of this psalm doesn't connect it with any historical event in David's life. It simply says to the chief musician with stringed instruments, a psalm of David. Many commentators believe that this psalm was also connected to this period of Absalom's rebellion, but we don't have any evidence of it.

Now, notice here, verse one, David talks to God and he says, hear me when I call, oh, God of my righteousness, you have relieved me in my distress. Have mercy on me and hear my prayer. You know, I think there's.

Wonderful passion in David's cry out to God, he's not just casting up wishes before God in heaven, he needs God's attention to his present problem. And so there's there's passion, there's heart in his cry to God. I'd say oftentimes power in prayer is lacking because there's little passion in prayer and friends don't think for a moment that I'm trying to tell you that we can persuade God by emotional displays.

That's what toddlers try to do towards their parents, right? I want the candy and I can't have it, so I'm going to throw a tantrum and I hope that my emotional display persuades mommy or daddy to give me what I want. God isn't like that. It's not that an emotional display in and of itself persuades God, no, but it's simply that God wants us to care deeply about the things he cares about.

He wants us to have his heart. A couple of weeks ago, I ran across this passage in Isaiah 64, seven, and it really touched my heart. Isaiah spoke with sorrow about the lack of passion in Israel, where he said, and there is no one who calls upon your name, who stirs himself up to take hold of you.

Well, that's what David's doing here. David is stirring himself up to take hold of God. Hear me when I call, oh, God of my righteousness.

What is it like God's death in heaven? David knows God isn't death, but he needs the assurance, he needs the connection, he wants to pour out his heart and passion before God. He says, hear me, oh, God of my righteousness, you have relieved me in my distress, have mercy on me and hear my prayer. I want you to know this is such a familiar pattern in the Psalms and throughout all the prayers of the Bible, where David or other people who pray in the Psalms, they call God back to his prior faithfulness and say, Lord, you did it before.

Now do it again. And this is the way God is, isn't he? He hasn't saved us six times in the past to abandon us in the seventh. He cares about us and you can take God's past blessing to you as a promise of future presence and blessing.

Now, David's finished talking to God there in verse one. Now, look at what he says in verse two to men. How long, oh, you sons of men, will you turn my glory to shame? How long will you love worthlessness and seek falsehood? Selah.

But know that the Lord has set apart for himself him who's godly. The Lord will hear when I call to him. What a great question.

David asks in verse two, how long, you know, just how long will the ungodly keep their way? I've got news to every ungodly person. You're not going to keep your way forever. You're not.

If nothing else, there's going to come a day when you're going to pass from this life to the next. You're not going to take that ungodly way with you to the next world. In heaven, you won't have it.

Neither will you in hell. You're not going to live forever in your ungodly way. You may as well abandon your ungodly way now and be blessed.

You're not going to be able to hold on to it forever. There's your ungodliness. You're holding it in your hand.

And listen, friends, the facts of the matter is you're not going to keep it forever. So why not give it up now? You can gain a blessing from God if you give it up now. You know, when we find ourselves on a course of compromise, it's often valid to ask that question.

How long? How long are you going to play around with that sin that's besetting you? How long? Once you just say right now, be honest before God. OK, God, I'm going to play around with this in another five years and then I'll give it up. Sounds foolish for you to talk like that before God, right? What if you just determine right now before him you're going to give it up or think of it this way.

If you extend this course of action out to its logical and inevitable conclusion, where are you going to be? And then knowing that, how long are you going to play around with that sin? There you are in the break room at work, you're flirting with your co-workers. Now, look, you're a married person, you try to glorify the

Lord, but there you're flirting with your co-workers at work. As you saw the question, how long? Where's it going to end up? Well, it's just some innocent fun.

No, it's not innocent. So what happens when that connection becomes more than just casual flirtation? Well, what happens next and then next? Just extend it all out. And there you are.

You've broken up your family. You've destroyed your world. You're poorer than all get out.

How long? Just extend it out. And there you are, you're a single person and you want to date that unbeliever. Well, how long? How long is it going to go on that course? Just follow it out.

What, are you going to marry them? You're going to bring up kids in a home and have that whole strife between a believer and unbeliever? How long? It's a great question, David asks. But then if you notice, he gets even more specific in verse two, where he says, how long will you turn my glory to shame? You see, the problem that David faces in this psalm is a malicious slander. Those who lie against him, it's his reputation that's being attacked.

It's funny, you know, every leader knows that kind of attack, and David was a leader of a nation. Every leader will face the reputation being attacked. People will, you know, make digs at him, they'll lie about him, they'll tell the truth about him, anything they can to try to bring down their reputation.

Oh, I know people say things about me, but you just have to think about it. Well, what's the big deal? You just have to serve God and not care. You know, the pastors in town, they're wise to it.

They know what's going on. One pastor of a church in town, he was talking to a bunch of us and he says, well, it's just gotten to the point where I think we just all have to say, I won't believe what they say about you if you won't believe what they say about me. And it's pretty much the truth, that's how you just have to handle it.

But, you know, I think it's so important to also see that this speaks to us of Jesus, how they turned his glory to shame. That's what ungodly men wanted to do with our Savior. Think about every glorious occasion in the life of Jesus, the virgin birth.

Man, it doesn't get much more glorious than that, does it? And people whispered behind his back and to his face, he was an illegitimate son. And then think of all the miracles he performed. They turned around, they said, you're doing it by the hand of Satan.

And then think of Jesus on the cross, battling for the salvation of men, taking in his own body the wrath that you and I deserve from God the Father. And he was mocked on the cross. But they turned the glory of our Savior, people tried to turn it in shame, could we expect anything less? At the same time, David knows what he knows in verse three.

Take a look. But know that the Lord has set apart for himself him who is godly. The Lord will hear when I call to him.

You see, David knew that he and other godly people were set apart to God. Now, think about that set apart. Why do you set something apart? Well, some things you set apart for your own enjoyment.

There's a special place in my garage that I have set apart for my surfboards. You know, put in a protected place where they won't get all dinged up, little racks that I've made in the ceiling and they just kind of hang

there and they stack neatly one on top of each other there. They're set apart for their protection.

When they set apart so that they can be enjoyed. I want to enjoy those things, so I take special care of them. Now, why else do you set things apart? Well, you set things apart for greater purity so that they stay clean.

You take the nice dishes and you put them in a special cabinet so that they'll stay safe and pure. But then there's also things that we set apart for special service. You know, if you go to a man's workbench, there's probably a special place where he has the tools that he uses all the time.

And they're there because they're of greater service to him. I want you to think about that. Why does the Lord set you apart? Well, first of all, it's for his enjoyment, because he loves you, because he wants to bestow special favor upon you.

That's why he sets you apart. But he's also set you apart for greater purity. He sets you apart unto himself, but away from the things of the world, the flesh and the devil.

And then finally, he sets you apart for special service unto him. Well, the Lord has set apart for himself him who is godly. And then David says, because of this confidence, he knows in verse three, the Lord will hear when I call to him.

You know, there's disaster waiting for the wicked. But David knows that the Lord will hear him when he calls upon him. What a great assurance to know that God is listening to you.

Now. It's kind of torturous when you know that people are talking about you behind your back, isn't it? You can kind of make your head spin. Look at what David does with all of this.

Verse four. Be angry and do not sin. Meditate within your heart, on your bed and be still.

Offer the sacrifices of righteousness and put your trust in the Lord. You know, with all this ungodliness around him, David had reason to be angry, but he had no reason to sin. He reminds himself not to sin in his anger and instead to find solace in meditation before the Lord.

Did you see that there in verse four where he says, meditate within your heart, on your bed and be still. Now, what is this about meditation? David telling us to go and sit on your bed in the lotus position, burn a little incense and, you know, repeat your mantra over and over again. No, that's not it at all.

There's a great deal of difference between Eastern meditation and Christian meditation. The goal of Eastern meditation is to empty your mind. To just empty it, might I say, spiritually speaking, it's a very dangerous thing to do because the empty mind, the empty heart, the empty soul, so to speak, is susceptible to demonic deception.

You're almost opening the door wide to demonic spirits when you practice that sort of Eastern meditation to empty the mind. That's not Christian meditation at all. What is Christian meditation? Biblical meditation? It's filling the mind with the word of God.

It's taking the word of God and chewing it over in your mind to turn it over and over in your mind, to massage it, to need it, to think of it. You see, that is a great blessing. That's what sustains David.

You know, he's thinking about his problems. He's thinking about what people are saying about him, all the attacks of the lies of the slanders and his head's just spinning and he's getting angry and he goes, whoa, stop, I've got to set aside and meditate on my bed and think of the Lord. You know, when he does that, this transformation takes over David, doesn't it? All of a sudden, he's not angry.

He's meditating on the Lord. And look at what he says going on here, verse five, offer the sacrifices of righteousness and put your trust in the Lord. I love how he couples both of those together.

One is the life of religious observance. Offer your sacrifices. Hey, you've got a duty before God.

Do it. Now, there are certain things that just make up our duty before God. Going to church, fellowshiping with God's people, that's part of your duty before the Lord, giving unto the Lord.

That's part of your duty unto the Lord, your daily walk in time with him. It's part of your duty. David knew the value of religious observance.

Yet at the same time, he knew that those things could be empty without a life of trust. That's why he says offer the sacrifices of righteousness and put your trust in the Lord. You see the two of them coupled together there.

Without a life of vital trust in the Lord, all your church going doesn't affect anything. You know, you can go to church and not trust God at all. You can go to church and not have a real living relationship with Jesus Christ.

That's why he couples them. The religious observance is important, but the vital link of trust in God is also essential. Now, notice what David says next year, verse six.

There are many who say, who will show us any good? Lord, lift up the light of your countenance upon us. You put gladness in my heart more than in the season that their grain and wine increased. I will both lie down in peace and sleep for you alone.

Oh, Lord, make me dwell in safety. Did you hear the voice of the ungodly cynic in verse six? Who will show us any good? Yeah, yeah, I've heard it all before. I've tried it all before.

But what is there good out there? You know, after a life of continual disappointment from men, many people begin to doubt if God will show us any good. David's not of that party. Look at what he says there in verse six.

When he answers those who say who will show us any good, he says, Lord, lift up the light of your countenance upon us. Despite what all the cynics say or think, David trusts that the Lord will show him good, and he claims it on the basis of the promise of Aaron in the ironic blessing of Numbers chapter six. I said that ironic blessing, not the moronic blessing, the ironic blessing, because it belongs to Aaron and the priesthood.

You remember that, don't you? Where Aaron, the high priest, was to stand before the people to raise his hands and pronounce a blessing upon them. The Lord bless you and keep you. The Lord make his face to shine upon you and be gracious unto you.

The Lord lift up his countenance upon you and give you peace. And with those words, he was to bless the nation. David says, who will show us any good? The Lord will show me good.

He will lift up his countenance upon us. Did you see that? The light of your countenance. You know what a countenance is? It's your face.

God, shine your smiling face upon me, my friends, it is an error to think that God's face smiles towards everybody and everything. That's the perception of God that many people claim. They say, you know, God is just this grandfatherly old gentleman in the sky, long beard, rocking chair, smiling down upon the earth.

Well, well, they're my precious children. That's not God. God does not smile at everyone, nor does he smile at everything.

But if you are right with God by faith, according to what Jesus Christ did for you on the cross, if you have that vital relationship, I'm here to tell you that you stand in the favor of God and his face smiles down upon you from heaven. I want you to think about that when you think of God in heaven looking down upon you and you think of this countenance of the expression of in his face, what do you think of? Is God annoyed with you? He's irritated, isn't he? Just one more time. That's what he's saying.

This is your last chance. And I'm here to tell you that because of your standing in Jesus, it's not because you're so great, because God is so great in love and mercy towards you, his countenance towards you is pleasant. He lifts up the light of his countenance and friends, when you know that you have the face of God shining favorably upon you, what can't you face? Look at it right here again.

Verse six. There are many who say who will show us any good Lord, lift up the light of your countenance upon us. You put gladness in my heart.

Well, that's gladness, isn't it? To know that that God is smiling upon you, you know, let's say you got a chance to meet somebody wealthy and influential, you know, a Bill Gates or, you know, I don't know, Warren Buffett, somebody very wealthy and influential. And then as soon as they saw you, a great big smile broke out on their face. You'd feel good about that, wouldn't you? He said, all right, this wealthy, influential, important person, they smile when they think of me.

That's how God is towards you. Be assured of it. It's not because of how great you are.

It's because of how great he is. Now, again, let's notice here, he says, verse six, there are many who say who will show us any good Lord, lift up the light of your countenance upon us. You put gladness in my heart more than in the season that their grain and wine increased.

Well, that would be harvest time, wouldn't it? When grain and wine increase. Well, harvest time was the happiest time of the year for everybody in Israel. You know why? It was like payday.

I mean, when you're a farmer, harvest time is payday. Everybody's happy on payday, aren't they? They get the paycheck. They're so happy.

David says, look, they're happy on payday. I'm happier than that all the time. Isn't that a great way to think of how happy you can be in the Lord? I'm so glad I'm happier than everybody else is on payday.

That's how good God is to me. And God put that gladness in his heart. I look here, verse eight.

I will both lie down in peace and sleep for you alone, oh, Lord, make me dwell in safety. Now, David can sleep well at night. We're back to that, aren't we? David can sleep well at night, even in distressing times, even surrounded by the voices of the ungodly, because his safety is from the Lord.

It's not from circumstances. It's not from feeling. Can you imagine the man lying down to sleep? Maybe you've been that person.

I know I have been at times. You lay down to sleep and you're tormented by all of what your enemies or all of what your pretended friends might be saying about you. And it bothers you.

It torments you. You know, David could be that man, but he's not. Instead, he trusts in the Lord.

He has a gladness that the world can't take away, even with all their slanders and all their lies. Go ahead, David says. People are mocking you.

Fine. They're laughing at you because you're a Christian. Great.

No, there's enough sadness in the world. If you can bring a little bit of laughter in this world by following Jesus Christ, more power to you. David won't let it torment him.

He'll lie down and sleep and in great peace. This proverb from poor Richard's almanac, Ben Franklin had some good advice. This is one proverb of his that I like.

He says, since I cannot govern my own tongue, though it lies within my own teeth, how can I hope to govern the tongues of others? Now, that's smart, isn't it? Listen, I can't control what I say and that tongue's in my own mouth. Well, how can I ever hope to control what other people say? So let him say, I'll keep my heart, my mind fixed and focused. The Lord.

Look how the psalm concludes. Did you see verse eight for you alone, oh, Lord, make me dwell in safety. Now, we would read that and we'd say, OK, I understand that.

David's saying you alone, oh, Lord, you and no one else. Money can't make me dwell in safety. Even friends can't make me dwell in safety.

You alone, oh, Lord, make me dwell in safety. That's not what he's talking about. G. Campbell Morgan points out that the idea here is not that it's the Lord and none other.

Instead, the idea is that David finds safety in solitude with God. The thought of the word alone is in loneliness or in seclusion. The idea is, is that as David is going to sleep, he realizes that it's him and the Lord alone in seclusion.

And that's where there's safety. Friends, that's where there's safety in your Christian life. The time that you spend with the Lord in seclusion, you and him alone.

That's where their safety is. That's where there's power in the Christian life. So, friends, I would challenge you.

David could have this kind of triumphant walk, and you know, this is a triumphant walk. You know how it bothers you when you think people are speaking ill of you. David found real victory over this.

Why? Because of time that he spent alone with God. That's where his safety was. How about you? Are you telling yourself or telling me or telling God that you're just too busy for time alone with him? I don't think so.

That's where your safety is. And never forget reading about Hudson Taylor, the great missionary to China, how he just couldn't find any time to spend alone with God. So you know what he would do? He'd wake up every morning at two o'clock in the morning.

Everybody was asleep. He'd spend a couple of precious, quiet hours with God because nobody else would bother him. That was time alone with God.

And that's what David is referring to when he talks about, for you alone, oh, Lord, make me dwell in safety. My seclusion with you is my safety. Friends, I'm here to tell you that is our safety in our Christian life.

So may God build that in you more and more. Maybe that's a challenge the Lord leads to leave you here with this evening. How's your secluded time with him? How are you before the Lord when nobody else is looking? I see you all right here.

You're attentive. Your Bibles are open. You look like real good Christians right here.

How about when it's just you and the Lord? That's what God values. That's your safety. So, Father, speak to us.

Bless us, Lord. Draw us close into your presence with secluded time with you. We love you, Lord, and we honor you.

Help us to give you honor as we worship you now in Jesus' name.

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