

A GODLY MAN'S EVENING PRAYER  
Psalm 4

Intro: Under the Law there was special emphasis upon the way the people began the day, and the way they ended the day. That is to be seen in what was called, the continual burnt offering. See Ex. 29:38-46. This was a national observance, but it had personal significance. Note the I will's of God beginning at the end of Ex. 29:42.

So important was this offering that it was to be observed even on days when other sacrifices were offered. See Num. 28, 29--vv. 10, 15, 23, 24, 31, etc. in Num. 29.

That seems to be the emphasis in these Psalms at the beginning of the Book of Psalms--esp. Psa. 3, 4, 5 (where, see v. 3).

Many who have studied the Scriptures believe that this is a type of time which we are to give each morning and each evening to the Lord, reading the Word, in prayer, and worship. The emphasis seems to be that, if we habitually give the first of the day to the Lord, and the end of the day, then that which is between, both day and night, will also be His.

The fact that this is an evening Psalm seems confirmed by vv. 4 and 8.

The evening time is usually a time of weariness. Often it can be a time of discouragement. It is a time when our troubles loom the largest, often larger than they are. It can be a time when our thoughts are more occupied with ourselves, our enemies, and our troubles, than with the Lord and His blessings. So it is important to use the end of the day as the Lord has indicated in His Word.

So let us learn from David who knew about "the continual burnt offering," but who was often hindered from participating in it because of his troubles.

The background of this Psalm may have been the same as that of Psalm 3: David's troubles with Absalom. Its markings with "Selah" are similar to Psalm 3. We have three stanzas. Some feel that these Psalms may have been sung together, and that that is the reason we have a connecting "Selah" at the end of Psalm 3, but no "Selah" at the end of Psalm 4. That is at least an interesting speculation.

The three stanzas are: vv. 1, 2; vv. 3, 4; vv. 5-8.

But having noticed that, we need also to see that David began this Psalm by calling upon the Lord in v. 1. Then from v. 2 through v. 5 he addressed himself to "the sons of men." And in

three verses David turned to the Lord again.

But, having noticed that, let us follow the divisions indicated by the Selahs.

I. STANZA #1: DAVID'S TWOFOLD APPEAL (Psa. 4:1, 2).

- A. First, to the Lord (v. 1)--and this is always the best place to start.
- B. Second, to the sons of men (v. 2). They are probably so addressed because, even though they claim to be a part of the people of God (Israel), yet their actions show them to be mere, unregenerate, unchanged men.

Psalm 3 ends with David in prayer, and Psalm 4 begins the same way: with David in prayer. He still needs the mercy of the Lord; he still needs to be heard. But he expresses two things about what the Lord has been doing:

- 1) The Lord has become the "God of my righteousness," i.e., there has been a morally purifying work that has gone on in David's life as a result of his troubles.
- 2) David calls this being "enlarged." God had not only done something for David, but He had done something to David. He had been spiritually enlarged--with a greater capacity for God, and for knowing Him.

Thus David recognized the providence of God in what had taken place.

But then, when he turned his attention to his enemies, he rebuked them for two things:

- 1) What they were trying to do to him.
- 2) What they were doing to themselves.

David's "glory," remember (Psa. 3:3), was the Lord. A person's glory is that which he delights in the most. His enemies ridiculed David's faith and the way he had boasted in the Lord.

But in doing so, their glory was "vanity"--nothing; and they were trusting in "leasing"--i.e., falsehood, lies. David's heart was turned toward them in pity.

"Selah."

II. STANZA #2: DAVID'S APPEAL (to the "sons of men) CONTINUED (Psa. 4:3, 4).

This consists of:

- A. Some needed instruction (v. 3). There was something

very important about the people of God that they did not know. "Set apart" has to do with something that is closed, completed, finished. The Lord has claimed the "godly"; they belong to Him, and He is not going to let them go or leave them.

This is David's version of John 10:27-30.

Consequently, they need to "stand in awe." This is quoted in Eph. 4:26, and it constitutes . . .

B. A warning (v. 4).

They were to be moved with this warning, moved with anger (possibly at themselves), but not to continue in sin. Or possibly their anger was to be directed against Absalom and those men who has misled them.

They needed to go to bed and think! The wrong needed to be made right before the day came to an end.

Again: "Selah."

III. THE END OF THE APPEAL, AND DAVID'S EVENING PRAYER CONCLUDED (Psa. 4:5-8).

A. The end of the appeal (v. 5).

People are not going to be changed, really changed, unless the Lord changes them. The sacrifices typified the coming sacrifice of the Messiah, and He was to be the Object of their faith.

This is a Gospel appeal.

B. The end of David's prayer (which started at least in v. 1, possibly in Psa. 3) (vv. 6-8).

The words of Psa. 3:1, 2 were still ringing in David's ears (and in his heart). Our Lord's enemies sought to torment Him with this idea. Cf. Matt. 27:43,

He trusted in God; let him deliver him now,  
if he will have him:  
for he said, I am the Son of God.

What is "good" to a "godly" man?

It is not "corn and wine." It is not wealth or material gain. The man of God has something better than that.

David mentioned three things:

## 1. V. 6. What OT prayer does this remind you of?

Cf. Num. 6:22-27.

*Turning  
the Word  
into prayer.*

David was simply praying that the Lord would be with him, and with his men. If the Lord is your Friend, it makes no difference who your enemies are (a Puritan quotation).

God's presence, God's blessing, brings light into the darkest situation. Remember that!

## 2. V. 7.

Remember that this is the prayer of a man whom God has "enlarged" in his time of distress--meaning when he was under pressure, persecuted, afflicted (v. 1).

He had learned that you do not need a lot of things in order to be happy. All you need is the Lord. And the person who has learned to rejoice in the Lord is a person who has experienced greater joy than you can ever find in the world.

## 3. V. 8.

PEACE! What a wonderful thing it is to be able to go to bed, lie down, and sleep.

*Dt. 33:28*

Another rendering of the last part of v. 8 goes like this: "For thou, Lord, makest me dwell in safety--all alone!" The Lord alone does it, but the child of God is safe even when he has no physical, visible help.

Concl: David did not envy his enemies; he pitied them. He preached to them. He wanted them to have what he had. What he had was the Lord--and the Lord can compensate for any loss. No material gain can possibly take His place.

Do you see that in the final part of David's prayer you have the first three characteristics of the fruit of the Spirit: love (for the Lord), joy (in the Lord), and peace (because of the Lord).

In our trials, let us pray that we will be enlarged like David was.