

Psalms, Hymns, and Spiritual Songs: The Master Musician's Melodies

Adult Sunday School
Placerita Baptist Church
2003

by
William D. Barrick, Th.D.
Professor of OT, The Master's Seminary

Psalm 4 — Now I Lay Me Down to Sleep



1.0 Introductory Matters

1.1 Called an “evening psalm”: “I will both lie down in peace, and sleep” (v. 8).

1.2 A psalm of confident prayer when under stress:

- “in *my* distress” (v. 1) is literally “in a tight situation.”
- “You have relieved me” (v. 1) is literally “You have given me wideness” = “You’ve given me room to breathe.”
- “Here is another instance of David’s common habit of pleading past mercies as a ground for present favour.” (Spurgeon, *Treasury of David*)
- The psalm concludes with a striking declaration of confident faith in spite of the psalmist’s troubled situation: “I will both lie down in peace, and sleep; For You alone, O LORD, make me dwell in safety.”



1.3 Connections to Psalm 3:

- Calling and answering (prayer) – 3:4; 4:1
- Lying down and sleeping (trusting God) – 3:5; 4:8

- “Many ... say” (popular opinion?) – 3:2; 4:6

The Psalm

A Psalm of David.

4:1 Hear me when I call, O God of my righteousness!
You have relieved me in *my* distress;
Have mercy on me, and hear my prayer.

4:2 How long, O you sons of men,
Will you turn my glory to shame?
How long will you love worthlessness
And seek falsehood? Selah

4:3 But know that the LORD has set apart for Himself him who is godly;
The LORD will hear when I call to Him.

4:4 Be angry, and do not sin.
Meditate within your heart on your bed, and be still. Selah

4:5 Offer the sacrifices of righteousness,
And put your trust in the LORD.

4:6 *There are* many who say, "Who will show us *any* good?"
LORD, lift up the light of Your countenance upon us.

4:7 You have put gladness in my heart,
More than in the season that their grain and wine increased.

4:8 I will both lie down in peace, and sleep;
For You alone, O LORD, make me dwell in safety.

To the Chief Musician. With flutes.

2.0 Interpretation

2.1 Outline

- I.** Superscription
- II.** The Psalmist's Calling on God – Prayer (v. 1)
- III.** The Psalmist's Challenge to Opponents – Preaching(?) (vv. 2-5)
 - A. Exposure of Perversity (v. 2)
 - B. Explanation of Grace (v. 3)
 - C. Exhortation to Obedience (vv. 4-5)
- IV.** The Psalmist's Complaint – Prayer (v. 6)
- V.** The Psalmist's Confidence – Proclamation (vv. 7-8)
- VI.** Subscription



2.2 Notes

- v. 1 “You have relieved me in *my* distress.”
 - God provided room in a time of stress.
 - Either a problem with nobles (v. 2) or a famine (v. 7).
 - “Here is another instance of David’s common habit of pleading past mercies as a ground for present favour.” (Spurgeon, *Treasury of David*)

- v. 2 “sons of men”
 - Elevated social rank
 - Perhaps leaders in Israel, or at least nobility.
 - See Psalms 49:2; 62:9

- v. 2 “*turn* my glory to shame,” “love worthlessness,” “seek falsehood”
 - References to idols? or to David?
 - If idols, why would they be referred to as “shame,” “worthlessness,” and “falsehood”?
 - Cf. “alone” (v. 8)

- v. 3 “the godly”
 - To illustrate the word: **Hasidic** Jews
 - To define the word: loyalty and faithfulness

- v. 4 “Be angry, and do not sin.”
 - Cf. Ephesians 4:26

- v. 5 “Offer the sacrifices of righteousness”
 - source of righteousness? result in righteousness? characterized by righteousness?

 - OT: Deuteronomy 33:19; Psalm 51:19; Proverbs 21:3

 - NT: Hebrews 11:4

- v. 6 “Who will show us *any* good?”
 - Personal benefit—what good is in for me?

- Shopping around for the best deal.
- Walking by sight rather than faith.
- v. 6 “LORD, lift up the light of Your countenance upon us.”
 - The priestly blessing from Aaron
 - Numbers 6:25-26

- v. 8 “I will both lie down in peace, and sleep”
 - Trust and confidence in God.
 - “I will not lie awake listening to every rustling sound, but I will lie down *in peace and sleep*, for I have nought to fear. He that hath the wings of God above him needs no other curtain. Better than bolts or bars is the protection of the Lord.” (Spurgeon)
 - “both ... in peace” = *complete, full, perfect, absolute* peace?

3.0 Singing Psalm 4

Can you find one? Write one? Sing one?



4.0 Praying Psalm 4

“Psalm 4 has always been a prayer for the hour when the onset of darkness brings the day to its close.” (Stanley L. Jaki, *Praying the Psalms*, 39)

- Lord, thank You for being gracious to me and answering my prayer. [v. 1]
- Fill my mind and heart with Your Word when I am going to sleep. [v. 4]
- Increase the gladness in my heart for all the good You’ve given to me. [v. 7]
- Let me be assured of the security I have in You, O God. [v. 8]
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5.0 Applying Psalm 4

- There is great peace and confidence in knowing God hears our prayers.
- Those whose prayers are heard by God also have lives that are godly.
- One of the rewards of righteous living and faith in God is a peaceful sleep.

On the night preceding the execution of Nicholas Ridley (1500-1555), Bishop of London, his brother offered to pass his last hours in his company, but the bishop refused, saying that he meant to go to bed and sleep as quietly as he ever did in his life:--

*“I will lay me down in peace, and take my rest,
For it is Thou, LORD, only, that makest me dwell in safety.”*

The next morning he was chained to the stake in the town ditch, opposite the south front of Balliol College, Oxford. As the flames rose round him he exclaimed, with a wonderful loud voice:

*“In manus tuas, Domine, commendo spiritum meum.
Domine, recipe spiritum meum.”*

And then in English:

“Lord, Lord, receive my spirit.”

— W. Graham Scroggie, *The Psalms* (Old Tappan, N.J.: Fleming H. Revell Co., 1973 reprint), 60