

How often do you lie awake at night and wonder about tomorrow? How often do you stir with restlessness as the problems of the day are turned over and over in your mind? Sometimes you toss and turn and look over at the clock and realize you haven't been sleeping for hours. There's just too much going on. There's problems to solve, situations to address, issues to go over.

This morning we've turned to Psalm 4, a psalm that David sings as he calls out to his Lord for answers. He has serious issues to contend with, with real opponents that are making his life very difficult. He's concerned about the impact this will have on his life. What does he do about it? He turns to the Lord in prayer. He calls upon his God for help. And in doing so, he recognizes his true status: one of blessing.

The psalm opens with a powerful appeal to his God. "Answer me, when I call!" It's an opening word that calls upon his Lord and God, because he does not know where else to turn. As we'll see in a moment, he's surrounded by opponents, people who would have him shamed and defeated and humiliated. He's in distress, and where's the one place he turns to for his blessing? For his help? The Lord God!

He invokes God with a particular title: God of my righteousness. My righteousness. The one who helps is the judge of the living and the dead, the one he calls upon is just and perfect in his law. At first glance, we may think that David is being a bit presumptuous here, and is calling on God in pride and arrogance. But this is his righteousness because of the verdict of the perfect Judge. He's received the declaration of righteousness and can rightly call upon his Lord and God as the one who knows his covenant child and his status before him. His next appeal, asking for graciousness, we know that David does not call on God on his own merits, on his righteousness, but is seeking the Lord's aid.

And what is David seeking help from? We learn a lot in verse 2 about his position, as he addresses his adversaries. He addresses them as the sons of men, and not the humble son of man like how Jesus referred to himself.

No, the Hebrew word used here to describe his opponents is more about noteworthy people. These are people whose words had clout. When they spoke, things happened. People listened. Give a good word, and doors opened. Speak otherwise, and your target suffered.

And these people were using their influence to target David. They were mocking him and spreading rumours about him. They were tarnishing his reputation. They were taking his glory, his honour, and turning it to shame. His reputation was being torn to shreds by their false testimony, their lies, their slander. There was no blessing for him in their word, they were giving him a curse by their word.

But their words were empty. They're delusional, empty, vain. Like the mist that disappears with the morning sun, their words were like vapour: empty and profitless. We may immediately be reminded of the state of our Lord and Saviour when he stood accused by liars and slanderers. They gathered around him in the dark night and cast lies and false testimony upon him. They wanted his reputation dragged through the mud, they wanted the teachings of Jesus dismissed and forgotten. The scribes and the Pharisees used their considerable clout to attempt to shame our Saviour.

Our faithful Lord and Saviour is also David's Saviour, and he had let his servant know by faith his status. David could call on God in his distress and know that the Lord had set the godly for himself, that he would therefore hear him when he called. He knew that the words of his opponents were empty and vain, and would not stick for long, since his righteousness was declared by God.

It's in that righteousness, that's his because of the descendant who bore a far greater insult to his honour than David ever would. The one who would be slandered and made light of to a far greater extent than David came so that no word of man could have a lasting impact, but the blessing by the word of God would carry him forward.

David had opportunity even as his foes were slandering him and putting him down to rest easy in knowing that the Lord hears him when he calls. It's almost as if David is beginning to answer his own prayer by remembering who he's praying to! He could call upon his God in distress, frustrated with all of his opposition, how many of high reputation were ruining his own, and in that call of distress speak about how the Lord hears!

This is the assurance that we have when we call upon God. This is why prayer is so important for us! God knows our estate, he knows our condition, he knows what we struggle with. He searches our hearts and knows us more truly than we know ourselves. Yet we still pray to him because we depend upon him, and so desperately need his help and support. And the beautiful thing about prayer is that even as we pray, his Spirit gently reminds us and assures us of his presence, of his help, of his support, of his blessing. In stark contrast with the vain words and lies of the opponent, the words of prayer directed at our loving God are filled with depth and truth.

Even in the face of distress, David can experience peace because of his God. What of the taunting of his foe? He has God's blessing and communion. What of his reputation in tatters? He has the favour of the eternal Lord. What is the material wealth of his foes while he suffers? He has joy in his faithful Lord God. He is experiencing firsthand the effects of God's grace and favour to him. His opponents were equating their wealth and influence with the blessing of the gods, but David knew that it was only knowing God's presence that would properly let him lie down and sleep in safety.

We see in this psalm a complete overview of a difficult situation. Contrast the start of the psalm with the end of the psalm! Earnest words at the beginning that call upon God to answer with grace and mercy in the midst of distress. Words about the terrible things others are doing. And slowly, as the picture unfolds, as we move through this reflection, the picture is transformed from unpleasant struggle to quiet joy and peace.

That is the blessing our God provides for his people! It's a blessing to know the word of prayer is heard by a God who listens, who does more than simply receive words, but also calms our hearts and reminds us that he has set us apart for himself. It's a blessing to know that we are counted as righteous for the sake of Christ, and that our actions, our walk in accordance with his law, our living sacrifice of thanksgiving is done in the light of his face shining upon us.

How do you respond to opposition? How do you react to stressful situations? To attacks on your reputation? To the prosperity of others? Turn to the Lord in prayer. Take your needs and issues to him, cast your anxieties upon him as your faithful and loving God. Recognize the comfort that is yours as his Spirit quiets you and the strength he provides to face each new challenge.