

Psalm 4

How to Get Relief from Adverse Circumstances, Psalm 4:1-8

Psalm 4:1-8 (NKJV)

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.

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*

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

⁵ Offer the sacrifices of righteousness, And put your trust in the Lord.

⁶ *There are* many who say, “Who will show us *any* good?” Lord, lift up the light of Your countenance upon us.

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

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

Theological Introduction

Psalm 4 is a psalm written in the context of **rebellion**, **slander**, and **opposition** against King David. David had been **falsely accused**, **publicly opposed**, and **personally attacked**. Yet instead of taking vengeance into his own hands, he calls his enemies to **repentance**, **self-examination**, **reverence**, and **trust in God**. From a theological Reformed perspective, this passage reveals several foundational doctrines:

1. The holiness and justice of God

God is not indifferent toward **sin**, **rebellion**, or **unrighteous anger**. The command to “**tremble**” reminds sinners that they stand before a holy Judge.

The Holiness and Justice of God

The holiness and justice of God are foundational attributes of His divine nature. God is perfectly holy, meaning He is completely **pure**, **morally flawless**, and **utterly separated** from all **sin** and **evil**. He is not merely more holy than man—He is infinitely holy in His very essence.

Isaiah 6:3 (NKJV)

³ “And one cried to another and said: ‘Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts; The whole earth is full of His glory!’”

Because God is holy, He cannot **tolerate, ignore, or approve of sin**. His holiness demands **righteousness, purity, and obedience** from His creation.

The justice of God means that He always acts **rightly, fairly, and according to His perfect moral standard**. God *never* judges unjustly, *never* overlooks evil without satisfaction, and *never* perverts' truth.

Deuteronomy 32:4 (NKJV)

“He is the Rock, His work is perfect; For all His ways are justice, A God of truth and without injustice; Righteous and upright is He.”

From a theological perspective, God's **holiness** and **justice** reveal why sin is so serious. **Every sin is ultimately rebellion against a holy God** and therefore **deserves righteous judgment**. This is why mankind stands condemned apart from Christ.

Romans 3:23 (NKJV)

²³ **“For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.”**

Yet the gospel magnifies both God's **holiness** and His **mercy**. At the cross, God did not ignore sin; He judged it fully in Jesus Christ. Christ bore the **wrath** and **justice** sinners deserved so that God could remain both just and the justifier of those who believe.

Romans 3:26 (NKJV)

²⁶ **“That He might be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus.”**

Therefore, the **holiness of God** should produce **reverence, humility, repentance, and worship**, while the justice of God should cause sinners to flee to Christ for **mercy and salvation**.

2. The depravity of the human heart

Sin is not merely external behavior; it is rooted in the corruption of the heart. **Men rebel because their hearts are naturally hostile toward God.**

The Depravity of the Human Heart

The depravity of the human heart refers to **the biblical truth that sin has affected every part of man's nature—his mind, will, emotions, desires, and affections**. From a theological perspective, **this doctrine is often called total depravity**, meaning that mankind is **corrupted by sin in every aspect of his being** and is therefore spiritually unable to save himself or come to God apart from divine grace. This does not mean that every person is as wicked as

possible, but that every part of man is polluted by sin and naturally inclined toward rebellion against God.

Jeremiah 17:9 (NKJV)

⁹ **“The heart is deceitful above all things, And desperately wicked; Who can know it?”**

Because of the Fall of Adam, humanity inherited a sinful nature. Sin is not merely something people do; it is what fallen mankind is by nature apart from Christ.

Psalms 51:5 (NKJV)

⁵ **“Behold, I was brought forth in iniquity, And in sin my mother conceived me.”**

The depraved heart does not naturally **seek God, love holiness, or submit to divine authority.**

Romans 3:10-11 (NKJV)

¹⁰ **“There is none righteous, no, not one; There is none who understands;**

¹¹ **There is none who seeks after God.”**

Romans 8:7 (NKJV)

⁷ **“Because the carnal mind is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, nor indeed can be.”**

This doctrine humbles man by **destroying all confidence in self-righteousness, morality, religion, or human effort** as a means of salvation. It reveals mankind’s desperate need for **sovereign grace, regeneration, and the transforming power of the Holy Spirit.**

Ephesians 2:1 (NKJV)

¹ **“And you He made alive, who were dead in trespasses and sins.”**

The gospel is glorious precisely because God saves spiritually dead sinners who could never save themselves.

Salvation is therefore entirely by grace through faith in Jesus Christ alone.

Ephesians 2:8-9 (NKJV)

⁸ **“For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God,**

⁹ **not of works, lest anyone should boast.”**

Romans 8:7 (NKJV)

⁷ **“Because the carnal mind is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, nor indeed can be.”**

2. The necessity of inward repentance

David calls the rebels to lie awake, commune with their own hearts, and become still before God. Biblical repentance is not superficial remorse but deep conviction before the Lord.

3. The sovereignty of God in conviction

Conviction of sin is ultimately the work of God. Sleeplessness, trembling, and troubled consciences are often instruments God uses to awaken sinners.

John 16:8 (NKJV)

⁸ “And when He has come, He will convict the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment.”

4. The call to trust in God rather than sinful reaction

Whether directed toward rebels or the faithful, the command is clear: anger must not become sin. Fear of God must produce submission, worship, and trust.

This passage therefore teaches that **genuine fear of God restrains sinful passions, exposes rebellion**, and drives sinners toward **repentance and faith**.

Modern-Day Introduction

We live in a culture that celebrates **emotional expression** without **moral restraint**. Society often says:

- “Speak your truth.”
- “Follow your feelings.”
- “Let your anger out.”
- “If someone hurts you, strike back.”

But Scripture teaches something radically different.

Psalm 4:4 reminds us that emotions themselves are not sinful, but **uncontrolled emotions quickly become sinful actions**.

Anger becomes bitterness.

Frustration becomes revenge.

Disagreement becomes rebellion.

Offense becomes division.

At night, when the noise stops and distractions disappear, the conscience often becomes loud. Many people can silence conviction during the day with **entertainment, work, social media, alcohol, pleasure, or activity—but nighttime exposes the soul**.

God often uses quiet moments to confront sinners with:

- guilt,
- conviction,
- fear,
- regret,
- and the reality of judgment.

The modern church desperately needs reverent trembling before God again. We have produced **casual Christianity *without* holy fear, emotional worship *without* repentance, and theological knowledge *without* obedience.**

Ecclesiastes 12:13 (NKJV)

¹³ **“Fear God and keep His commandments, For this is man’s all.”**

The **fear of God** does not drive believers away **from Him**—it drives them to **humble trust, repentance, worship, and holiness.**

c. Tremble and do not sin (v. 4)

Psalm 4:4 NKJV

⁴ **Be angry, and do not sin. Meditate within your heart on 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 NKJV

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

⁵ **Offer the sacrifices of righteousness,
And put your trust in the Lord.**

Psalm 4:4-5 KJV

⁴ **Stand in awe, and sin not: commune with your own heart upon your bed, and be still. *Selah*.**

⁵ **Offer the sacrifices of righteousness, and put your 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**.