

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.

1. Call upon the God of righteousness (v. 1).

2. Call upon the godly to repent (vv. 2-5).

3. Call upon God to be good—to let the light of His face shine upon you (vv. 6-8).

3. (Psalm 4:6-8) Call upon God to be good—to let the light of His face shine on you.

Psalm 4:6-8 NKJV

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Theological Introduction

Psalm 4 was written during one of the darkest seasons of David's life, likely during the rebellion of Absalom (2 Samuel 15–18).

David had been driven from Jerusalem by his **own son**. Many of his **closest advisers** had **abandoned him**, the **nation was divided**, and his **future appeared uncertain**. **Humanly speaking, David had every reason to despair**. Yet this psalm reveals that the greatest need of God's people **is not a change in circumstances** but the **enjoyment of God's presence**. David **does not** first ask for **military victory**, **political restoration**, or **material prosperity**.

Instead, he prays,

“Lord, lift up the light of Your countenance upon us.” The **“light of God's countenance”** is **covenant language**. It refers to God's favor, His smile, His gracious presence, and His covenant blessing upon His people.

It echoes the Aaronic Blessing:

Numbers 6:24-26 NKJV

²⁴ **“The Lord bless you and keep you;**

²⁵ **The Lord make His face shine upon you, And be gracious to you;**

²⁶ **The Lord lift up His countenance upon you, And give you peace.” ’**

Throughout Scripture, God's people have always desired His presence more than His gifts.

Moses declared,

Exodus 33:15 NKJV

¹⁵ **Then he said to Him, “If Your Presence does not go *with us*, do not bring us up from here.”**

Ultimately this longing is fulfilled in Jesus Christ.

John writes,

John 1:14 NKJV

The Word Becomes Flesh

¹⁴ **And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.**

In Christ, the face of God shines upon sinners through grace. Through His atoning death and resurrection believers are reconciled to God and enjoy His continual presence through the indwelling Holy Spirit.

Modern-Day Introduction

Our generation constantly asks the same question David heard thousands of years ago: **“Who will show us any good?”** People search for happiness through **wealth, careers, politics, entertainment, relationships, technology, retirement, and possessions**. Yet anxiety continues to rise. Depression increases. Sleeplessness has become epidemic. The world assumes that joy comes from changing circumstances.

The Bible teaches something radically different. True joy comes from God’s presence. Peace comes from God’s favor. Security comes from trusting the Lord rather than circumstances. David teaches that when God’s face shines upon His people, they possess something greater than prosperity itself.

Psalm 4:6-8 NKJV

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.***

David again addressed the Lord directly. Notice that he did not entreat God for himself, **but rather for the faithful followers** who had placed their lives and livelihoods on the line to support and fight for him. They were **discouraged, gripped** by **fear** and **despair**.

Hear the godly king’s plea to the Lord: **“Look upon us. Turn your face toward us. Let us see your light in the midst of our darkness. Give us a glimpse of your glory and loving favor. Let us see your face.”**

David’s plea **is not to see** God’s hand—he does not call upon God to act powerfully and decisively on their behalf. He beseeches the Lord to show them His face. He desires, more than anything, a manifestation of God’s presence among them.

a. Because many question if anyone can help them (show them any good) (v. 6).

Psalm 4:6 NKJV

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

David's loyal supporters were sorely discouraged. Having left their homes to flee with their godly king into the wilderness, they were now **cold, hungry, and scared**. The majority of the Israelites, both leaders and followers, were supporting Absalom. David's followers were in the minority and suffered every possible disadvantage in the fight.

The tense of the verb indicates that this discouraging statement was repeated again and again by the complainers, and the more they complained, the more others took up the strain. David called upon the Lord and shared the remarks that came from their downcast and uncertain hearts. Nothing would encourage them like a glimpse of God. The only thing that could lift their downtrodden hearts was for God to lift up His countenance upon them.

b. Because God alone can fill your heart with joy (v. 7).

Psalm 4: NKJV

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

David asked the Lord to do for his faithful followers what He (God) had done for him. God had transformed David's spirit from **fear to faith**, from **darkness to light**, from **despondency to hope**, from **sorrow to joy**. The Lord had given David victory in his spirit.

His dark night radiated with the joy and glory that can only come from a manifestation of the presence of the Lord (**John 14:21**).

John 14:21 (NKJV)

²¹He who has My commandments and keeps them, it is he who loves Me. And he who loves Me will be loved by My Father, and I will love him and manifest Myself to him.

Nothing could compare to it, not even an abundance of grain and wine in the kingdom. Note the pronoun **their**. David does not refer to a personal abundance, but a season of abundance in his kingdom, a time when his people's barns and tables were full.

He desires a joy for his faithful, discouraged followers that surpasses any material prosperity or abundance they had ever known. He wants them to experience the unparalleled joy of the Lord's countenance.

c. Because God alone can give you security and enable you to sleep in peace (v. 8).

Psalm 4:8 NKJV

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

The threatened king poured his heart out to the Lord. God's unfathomable peace flooded his heart and mind (**Philippians 4:6-7**).

Philippians 4:6-7 NKJV

⁶ Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God;

⁷ and the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.

He simply stated, **"I am going to bed."** What would the troubled king do under the dark cover of night?

Would he stand guard, armed and ready to defend himself?

What would he do about the fight he was facing tomorrow?

Would he spend the night strategizing and laying out a plan for victory?

No, he would lie down and sleep soundly, without terror of what the night could bring. He was encouraged by the Lord as he faced the battles of tomorrow. God and God alone was his source of safety, and that was enough. God was awake, so David could sleep—and so can we.

Thought 1. Always remember that we need God's presence more than we need His power. We need Him more than the things He can do for us. All too often we seek God's hand rather than His face. For this reason, God sometimes allows trouble in our lives to arouse us to seek Him. God is all-powerful; He can do **"exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think" (Ephesians 3:20).**

Ephesians 3:20 NKJV

²⁰ Now to Him who is able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that works in us.

We undoubtedly need His help when we are caught in the midst of some trouble. But more than that, we need Him, the very light that only a glimpse of His face can bring. It is this revelation of Him that enables us to **"count it all joy"** when we fall into various trials and tribulations (**James 1:2**).

James 1:2 NKJV

Profiting from Trials

² My brethren, count it all joy when you fall into various trials.

Hebrews 13:5-6 NKJV

⁵ Let your conduct be without covetousness; be content with such things as you have. For He Himself has said, "I will never leave you nor forsake you."

⁶ So we may boldly say: "The Lord is my helper; I will not fear. What can man do to me?"

1 John 1:3 NKJV

³ That which we have seen and heard we declare to you, that you also may have fellowship with us; and truly our fellowship is with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ.

Genesis 28:15 NKJV

¹⁵ Behold, I am with you and will keep you wherever you go, and will bring you back to this land; for I will not leave you until I have done what I have spoken to you."

Numbers 6:24-26 NKJV

²⁴ "The Lord bless you and keep you;

²⁵ The Lord make His face shine upon you,
And be gracious to you;

²⁶ The Lord lift up His countenance upon you, And give you peace."

1 Chronicles 16:10-11 NKJV

¹⁰ Glory in His holy name; Let the hearts of those rejoice who seek the Lord!

¹¹ Seek the Lord and His strength; Seek His
face evermore!

Psalm 34:10 NKJV

¹⁰ The young lions lack and suffer hunger; But those who seek the Lord shall not lack any good thing.

Psalm 80:3 NKJV

³ Restore us, O God; Cause Your face to shine, And we shall be saved!

Isaiah 43:2 NKJV

² When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; And through the rivers, they shall not overflow you. When you walk through the fire, you shall not be burned, Nor shall the flame scorch you.

Jeremiah 29:13 NKJV

¹³ And you will seek Me and find Me, when you search for Me with all your heart.