

Prayer

Lord God, heavenly Father, thank You for creating me, for showing Your love for me through Jesus and empowering me by the Holy Spirit. In Your strength, therefore, may I love, serve and respect all those I meet this day. You alone give me the gifts and graces to live at peace with others and with You, and to live my life with honest intent to do what is right. The Lord's name be praised! AMEN

Prayer Suggestions

Prayer ideas

Prayerfully, offer all of your resources of time, possessions and money to the Lord.

On-going prayers

- **Pray about worship.** *Pray that God's people will worship Him in Spirit and in truth both when with others and when by themselves*
- *Pray for those who risk their lives for our security*
- *Give thanks to God for the many ways that we can communicate with each other today*

Meditation

Lord Jesus, how does good come out of suffering?

Perhaps we see a little of it in the compassion of a carer,
Who patiently nurses someone who is chronically ill;

Perhaps we see a little of it in the beauty of a marriage,
Which has passed the tests of time; through 'thick and thin';

Perhaps we see a little of it in a truly miraculous healing
Of someone with a difficult or inoperable condition;

Perhaps we see a little of it in a child who falls to the ground,
Only to rise and play once more, believing that life is good;

We see all this and more, but only make some sense of it
Because You suffered for each one of us on the Cross.
We put You there, You who offered love when suffering most,
Enduring all to win a glorious resurrection after awful death!

Lord Jesus, good comes out of suffering, alone, through You.

Bible passage - Psalm 4

For the director of music. With stringed instruments. A ³ Know that the LORD has set apart the godly psalm of David.

¹ Answer me when I call to you,
O my righteous God.

Give me relief from my distress;
be merciful to me and hear my prayer.

² How long, O men, will you turn my glory into
shame?

How long will you love delusions and seek
false gods?

Selah

for himself;
the LORD will hear when I call to him.

⁴ In your anger do not sin;
when you are on your beds,
search your hearts and be silent.

Selah

⁵ Offer right sacrifices
and trust in the LORD.

⁶ Many are asking, "Who can show us any
good?"

Let the light of your face shine upon us, O LORD.
7 You have filled my heart with greater joy than when grain and new wine abound.

8 I will lie down and sleep in peace,
For You alone, O LORD, make me dwell in safety

Bible Study

Review

Psalm 4 is just like psalm 3, which expresses confidence in God in the midst of uncertainty. It encourages the faithful to face adversity with courage, and to turn to the Lord in the midst of difficult circumstances.

At the very beginning, psalm 4 has a heading (a 'superscription'), which refers to David but this says nothing to help us interpret the psalm. It refers to some form of musical accompaniment, and it says 'a psalm of David' (4:1), which means either that David himself wrote the psalm or that it was part his own collection. The association with David is therefore strong enough for us to assume that it was written by him.

The psalm has been written in response to those who grumble about life and about God, who say, '*many are asking "who can show us any good?"*' (4:6). In this, David had the same problems as previous leaders of Israel such as Moses, who dealt with Israel's grumbling in the desert (Ex 17:1-7, Deut 1:19ff), but David does not succumb to such questioning of the Lord. Rather, his psalm suggests that trials are a reason to refrain from sin and turn to the Lord (4:4,5), and this leads to the hope we read about in the last two verses (4:7,8).

Elsewhere the psalm speaks about lying down to sleep (4:8), so the psalm is traditionally regarded as an evening psalm and it has been used for centuries as part of the ancient order of Compline, said at night before sleeping. By contrast, if you look back at psalm 3, it contains a brief reference to rising from sleep (3:5). So psalms 3 and 4 are regarded traditionally as being a pair, one for the morning and one for the evening!

Psalm 4 begins without any introduction or polite request to God, but with a call for help. David asks the Lord to hear and answer his prayer, which is to '*give relief from my distress*' (4:1). He is concerned about godlessness amongst the people, especially the way that they seek after '*other gods*' (4:2) and complain against God (4:6). He also expresses concern about wrong attitudes towards God and towards others found within the community, such as the '*delusions*' of false religion (4:2), the prevalence of anger in the community (4:4) and the offering of right sacrifices in worship (4:5). David is resolute in the face of all these problems, and he brings them before the Lord to seek His counsel (4:1), trusting the faith of his forefathers (4:5) and praising the Lord despite the problems (4:7,8). Doing this enables him to sleep at night (4:4,8).

Although this is all interesting, the psalm is far more than a description of what happened to David. The psalm tells us how we should respond in a godly manner to the problems we face each day. We can easily look at the sins we observe in people around us and in the church, and we too will sometime see godlessness and false religion, anger and complaint. However, this psalm shows us that if we follow David and bring our problems to the Lord, then He will help us and lead us towards the peace for which we long.

Much of this psalm is about being set free from the power of sin. Now today, we call this 'salvation' and honour Jesus Christ who has won for us our salvation, yet the Old Testament can help us gain a wider understanding of the saving work of God. We read in verse 1, '*give me relief from my distress*', and this is a classic Hebrew cry for God to save His people from oppression and a call for God to save. The people of Israel called out in a similar way when they were enslaved in Egypt (Exodus 2:23,24). Here in this psalm, David's salvation is from the tyranny of people's attitudes and words, and these can be just as oppressive as slavery! Most importantly, the psalm tells us that God's salvation and liberation bring peace, and although this is not the eternal peace of salvation in Christ, it is the peace of one who brings everything to God in prayer.

Psalm 4 describes living in a true relationship with God. It encourages God's people to stand against the sins of bitterness and complaint, and put their trust in God for everything, from their own feelings to all the difficult circumstances of life, and the sins of others. This sounds simple but it can be hard to do and we need to be encouraged, for this is how we find our peace.

Discipleship

Questions (for use in groups)

1. Recall occasions when you have had to wait until the Lord has helped you. Why do you think you have had to wait?
2. What difficult in your life cause you to sin, and how may they be overcome?
3. How does the Lord enable you to find peace in the midst of trouble?

Personal comments by author

It can be profoundly difficult to stop complaining about a problem and start believing that the Lord has a solution! We do need to take a step of faith if we are to be set free from our problems however, as this psalm clearly shows. In the light of Jesus' life and death, we may have confidence that God will deal with us and help us take such steps, so we need to put together our own desire to find solutions to life's problems with God's desire to help us. If we can do this in worship, then we are on our way to resolving many of life's problems!

Ideas for exploring discipleship

- *This psalm challenges us to keep returning to the Lord when we feel that either we or others around us are complaining. Complaint can quickly lead to a downward spiral of unhappiness. Try to turn away consciously from complaining to trusting in the Lord.*
- *Pray for all who have difficulty accepting God because of the terrible things that happen in their lives. Pray for any you know.*

Final Prayer

Lord Jesus, You give perspective to my life. Some things that seem so all embracing are really just another part of life when seen in the light of your love. Other things that I quickly pass by are important signposts you have placed for me to notice. Keep working on me, Lord Jesus, and fill me with Your Holy Spirit, so that I do not miss my way!
