

Psalm 4

Introduction:

The Psalms provide us with a wonderful consideration of theology. Theology is the study of God. Theology is often entered into by a wooden consideration of the attributes of God. It is begun by asking the question, "Who is God?" It is answered by saying that God is just, good, holy, merciful etc. Theology also focuses upon God's decrees. God's decrees are His determined purposes and actions.

In Psalm 4 we have a practical study of theology. "Practical" in the sense that it takes a theological issue and presents its relevance for every day life. This evening we have a practical consideration of the doctrines of election and sanctification. "God has set apart the godly for Himself." What does that mean in practical terms? How is my life affected by knowing that God has set me apart for Himself?

Key Verse: Psalm 4:3 (ESV) **But know that the LORD has set apart the godly for himself**; the LORD hears when I call to him.

Theme: What are the responses that we should have to the truth that God has set us apart for Himself?

Knowing that God has set me apart for Himself should produce in me:

Confidence in prayer

Carefulness in living

Contentedness in my circumstances.

I. Knowing that God has set me apart for Himself brings confidence in prayer.

Psalm 4:3 (ESV) But know that the LORD has set apart the godly for himself; **the LORD hears when I call to him.**

The confidence in prayer stems from a confidence in God's relationship to us.

A. We are confident in prayer because we are confident that God accepts us as righteous.

Psalm 4:1 (ESV) **Answer me when I call, O God of my righteousness!** You have given me relief when I was in distress. Be gracious to me and hear my prayer!

1. David does not plead his own righteousness but God's

righteousness.

Psalm 4:1 (ESV) Answer me when I call, **O God of my righteousness!** You have given me relief when I was in distress. Be gracious to me and hear my prayer!

2. David is doing more than pleading God's righteousness in the abstract. Because God has set David apart, David is righteous.

Psa 4:1 (For the choir director; on stringed instruments. A Psalm of David.) Answer me when I call, **O God of my righteousness!** Thou hast relieved me in my distress; Be gracious to me and hear my prayer.

Psa 4:1 (For the choir director; on stringed instruments. A Psalm of David.) Answer me when I call, O God of my righteousness! Thou hast relieved me in my distress; Be gracious to me and hear my prayer.

Psa 4:1 (KJV) To the chief Musician on Neginoth, A Psalm of David. Hear me when I call, O God of my righteousness: thou hast enlarged me when I was in distress; have mercy upon me, and hear my prayer.

Psa 4:1 (NIV) For the director of music. With stringed instruments. A psalm of David. 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.

3. David has confidence in prayer because David views himself as a possessor of God's own righteousness.

4. Application:

Thomas Jefferson said, " I fear for my country when I think that God is just."

Psa 130:3 (NIV) If you, O LORD, kept a record of sins, O Lord, who could stand?

- B. We are confident in prayer because God is faithful.

Psalm 4:1 (ESV) Answer me when I call, O God of my righteousness! **You have given me relief when I was in distress.** Be gracious to me and hear my prayer!

1. Here again David is not just referring to the faithfulness of God in the abstract. David is referring to the faithfulness of God as David himself had

experienced it.

Note the past tenses which speak of what took place in the past.

Psalm 4:1 (ESV) Answer me when I call, O God of my righteousness! You **have given** me relief **when I was** in distress. Be gracious to me and hear my prayer!

2. What God had done in the past was to cause David to become larger.

Psalm 4:1 (ESV) Answer me when I call, O God of my righteousness! You have given me **relief** when I was in distress. Be gracious to me and hear my prayer!

Psalm 4:1 (KJV 1900) Hear me when I call, O God of my righteousness: Thou hast **enlarged me** when I was in distress; Have mercy upon me, and hear my prayer.

a. This could mean that God caused David to "grow" through his past experiences.

b. Or it could mean that God enabled him to "rise" to the occasion.

For instance that God had given David a greater strength than David could ever muster on his own.

3. Whichever the case, David had learned from past experiences, that he could rely upon God in this present situation.

C. We are confident in prayer because God has pity upon us.

Psalm 4:1 (ESV) Answer me when I call, O God of my righteousness! You have given me relief when I was in distress. Be **gracious** to me and hear my prayer!

Psa 4:1 (KJV) To the chief Musician on Neginoth, A Psalm of David. Hear me when I call, O God of my righteousness: thou hast enlarged me when I was in distress; have **mercy** upon me, and hear my prayer.

Psa 4:1 (NIV) For the director of music. With stringed instruments. A psalm of David. 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.

1. While grace and mercy are closely connected terms they are not synonymous

a. Grace is unmerited favor. It refers to the recipient having not "earned" or "merited" the favor that is bestowed. Thus the person who bestows the "grace" is under no obligation to do so. However it does not say anything about the condition of the recipient.

b. Mercy is favor that is bestowed as a result of pity. The emphasis is upon the pitiful condition of the recipient of the mercy. Thus the person who bestows the "mercy" is moved to do so because of the terrible plight of the person who is the recipient of "mercy."

c. Illustration:

2. Because God has set apart David for Himself, David knows that God is going to be moved by the plight that David finds himself in. Even when that plight is the result of David's own sinfulness.

a. There is a special pity that God has for His own.

Psalm 103:12 (KJV 1900) As far as the east is from the west, So far hath he removed our transgressions from us.

Psalm 103:13 (KJV 1900) Like as a father pitieth his children, So the LORD pitieth them that fear him.

b. A father may be sensitive to the suffering of all. However, a father is intensely sensitive to the suffering of his own child.

c. Since God has set us apart for Himself, He demonstrates great mercy towards us.

D. We are confident in prayer because God has a purpose for our lives.

Psalm 4:3 (ESV) **But know that the LORD has set apart the godly for himself;** the LORD hears when I call to him.

1. God has a vested interest in answering our prayers because He has reasons for separating us to Himself. This is especially true of prayers that are in keeping with His will.

2. David has confidence that God will hear his prayers because of God's own name's sake.

3. David realizes that God has a purpose in answering David's prayers that go far beyond the person of

David.

4. All too often our prayers do not go beyond our own self interest or selfish ambition.
5. Nonetheless, God accomplishes His work in this world through answering our prayers.

E. Application:

1. Our confidence in prayer does not flow from our relationship to God, but rather God's relationship to us.
2. It is not our faithfulness to God, but His faithfulness to us.
3. It is not about the righteousness which we have earned and deserve a hearing, it is about a righteousness that He provides and the mercy he shows in granting us a hearing.

II. Knowing that God has set us apart for Himself brings carefulness in living.

Because God has set us apart for Himself, we are to bring honor and glory to Him in the way that we live our lives.

A. God rebukes David for dishonoring God.

Psalm 4:2 (ESV) O men, **how long shall my honor be turned into shame?** How long will you love vain words and seek after lies? Selah

Psa 4:2 O sons of men, how long will my honor become a reproach? How long will you love what is worthless and aim at deception? Selah.

1. That which is to bring honor to God, namely His Grace, Mercy and Love, actually become dishonoring to Him when God's people presume upon those attributes.
2. God is viewed as weak and unjust when He blesses a sinful people.

B. Note the ways in which God is dishonored by His people.

1. God is dishonored when our lives are lived without appropriate purpose.

Psalm 4:2 (ESV) O men, how long shall my honor be turned into shame? **How long will you love vain words and seek after lies?** Selah

Psalm 4:2 (NASB95) O sons of men, how long will my honor become a reproach? **How long will you**

love what is worthless and aim at deception?
Selah.

- a. To love that which is worthless, is to give ourselves to that which has little purpose or value. It is to waste time, which results in a wasted life.
- b. In context it has to do with prayers. All too often our prayers are about our agendas, our desires, and our pleasures.

We pray that it won't rain on our parade. We beseech God that our party won't be spoiled or that our team will not lose the game.

James 4:3 (ESV) You ask and do not receive, because you ask wrongly, to spend it on your passions.

- c. We pray without real meaning and purpose.

(1) We pray for good health - not so that we can better serve God or fulfill our responsibilities but merely so that we can feel good.

(2) We pray for wealth - not so that we can give to the poor or to further God's kingdom, but merely so that we can be at ease and enjoy life.

2. God is dishonored through a lack of struggle against sinfulness.

- a. We are to have a hatred for sin.

Psalms 4:4 (ESV) **Be angry**, and do not sin; ponder in your own hearts on your beds, and be silent. Selah

Psa 4:4 Tremble, and do not sin; Meditate in your heart upon your bed, and be still. Selah

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

Psa 4:4 (NIV) **In your anger do not sin**; when you are on your beds, search your hearts and be silent. Selah

- b. Here the anger is to be directed against sin. We should hate sin and it should anger us when we commit sin.

3. God is dishonored through a lack of thoughtful hatred of sin.

Psalm 4:4 (ESV) Be angry, and do not sin; **ponder in your own hearts on your beds**, and be silent. Selah

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

Psalm 4:4 (NIV) Tremble and do not sin; **when you are on your beds, search your hearts** and be silent.

4. God is dishonored when what we say to God is inappropriate

Psalm 4:4 (ESV) Be angry, and do not sin; ponder in your own hearts on your beds, **and be silent.** Selah

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

Sometimes it is better for us to be silent than to pray inappropriately.

5. Application:

- a. How little value we place on God's advice and counsel.
- b. We are to win the argument that rages inside us.
- c. We are to talk ourselves into doing what is right.

III. Knowing that God has set us apart for Himself brings contentedness in my circumstances.

A. This contentedness is epitomized by relying upon God's goodness and not our own. It is the ability to rejoice in God's favor rather than to be seeking God's favor. Specifically it is trust that we are acceptable to God.

Psalm 4:5 (ESV) Offer right sacrifices, and **put your trust in the LORD.**

B. There are a great many people who are totally dissatisfied with their lives and fail to see how God has been good to them.

Psalm 4:6 (ESV) **There are many who say, "Who will**

show us some good? Lift up the light of your face upon us, O LORD!"

C. What we need to see is God's smiling down upon us.

Psalm 4:6 (ESV) There are many who say, "Who will show us some good? **Lift up the light of your face upon us, O LORD!**"

D. Knowing that God has set us apart for Himself is a source of greater joy than any material prosperity or physical pleasure could ever be.

Psalm 4:7 (ESV) You have put more joy in my heart than they have when their grain and wine abound.

E. Knowing that God has set us apart brings a quiet confidence to life.

Psalm 4:8 (ESV) In peace I will both lie down and sleep; for you alone, O LORD, make me dwell in safety.

IV. Conclusion:

A. Knowing that God has set me apart for Himself brings confidence in prayer.

B. Knowing that God has set us apart for Himself brings carefulness in living.

C. Knowing that God has set us apart for Himself brings contentedness in my circumstances.