

PSALM 4 – DWELLING IN SAFETY

We all like safety. Thank God for Singapore which is relatively very safe, compared to many metropolitan cities around the world. One of the fruits of safety is peace of mind. We do not worry about our children when they go to school every morning because the likelihood of them coming home safe and sound is very high. We go to work or to supermarkets and we are confident that these are very safe places to go. However, this is not true in many cities where bombing threats are very real.

Yet, true safety is not in the absence of danger or war. The believer can feel very safe even in the most dangerous place on earth if it is in accordance to God's holy will that he be there. Christians who live for Christ in this sin-sick world will undergo persecution. Their safety could suddenly disappear. Health, work, freedom and life could be in jeopardy the next moment! The question we need to ask ourselves, as we look at Psalm 4, is: what is the basis for our sense of safety and real safety? Psalm 4 gives us three reasons to feel safe and know that Christians are forever safe.

- 1. BECAUSE GOD HEARS** – v1-2 – To be heard by the living God is most reassuring. His hands are never too short to help, His ears are always inclined to hear our cries, and his feet are always on time to come to our aid. God is never too early or late. There are no issues too difficult that He cannot help. There are no issues too insignificant that He is not interested in helping. God will always do right. He will not do wrong if we cry to Him for something that is unjust. David addressed God as the God of his righteousness. David knew that his enemies had wronged him. David did not say that he was perfect and without sin, but rather, he had not wronged and had not sinned even as he was facing persecution.

God had enlarged (made room) for David when he was distressed (put in a narrow space). David was “boxed in” by his enemies. However, God made a way of escape for him when all help seemed lost. We cannot be certain which period of David's life he was referring to when he penned Psalm 4. This is not important. What we must note is the fact that David's God never failed him at any time throughout his earthly life! David's emphasis was that God “has enlarged him”! It was all of God's doing and none of David. David did not consider his ingenuity or cleverness in hiding or speaking. He knew that God did everything to ensure and procure his safety and protection. This is evident by David's own confession in the remaining words of verse 1. He cried to God emphatically for mercy. Mercy is deliverance from just punishment. It is true that David was not guilty of any particular sin when his enemies “narrowed” him. David was a sinner like everyone else. As sinners, we deserve death and punishment. Therefore, pleading for mercy is always the best and only approach in prayer. David realized that God did not have to hear him. God did not have to help him. David had no right to ask for help. David was a persona non grata in the eyes of God, except for God's mercies in his life that God heard his prayers and answered them.

The taunts of David's enemies are in verse 2. David called them "ye sons of men". All enemies of God's children are real people. They wish to turn David's glory into shame. How does one turn glory into shame? Glory is another word for honour. David's honour was entirely through what God had done in his life and the labour given to him by God. To turn his glory into shame, or disgrace, his enemies had to undermine his work, attack his character, and physically hinder his service to make him fail in his tasks. David said they "love vanity and seek after leasing". He described his enemies as loving vanity, which means emptiness. They would try but they would not succeed because God was with David. David's enemies continually sought after leasing or falsehood, to discredit and ruin him but David's God would easily overcome all of them. David knew he would be protected and vindicated by God in due time because his God always heard his cries, especially for help.

- 2. BECAUSE GOD SEPARATES** – v 3-4 – David's personal reflection included a biblical perspective of God's relationship with His own children. For the first time in this psalm, David used the covenantal name of God, the LORD. He used it twice in verse 3. David's right to pray to God originated from God. David emphatically stated to his enemies that they must KNOW that the LORD had set apart or separate all His godly children for Himself. David deliberately used the word "godly" because that is what every child of God is. To be godly means to possess God-like characteristics. God directs and protects the lives of every godly child. No man can hurt or harm them without God's protection. The LORD has separated all of His children, without exception, for service. Until their service has ended, these godly servants are invincible. Therefore, the LORD, or rather their LORD, will definitely hear their prayers. This was David's confidence and must be the confidence of every child of God too. David could not control the words and actions of his many enemies, but he knew that God could and He would. This is why David called their many taunts and attacks, vain!

With great emphasis, David declared to all of God's children to stand in awe, which is, with trembling and shaking. Stop sinning, if you are still sinning, and do not begin to sin, if you have not started sinning. The awe is lost in present day Christianity. There is no reverence, and Christians callously dismiss the fact that the LORD has separated the Christian for Himself. Therefore, Christians will indulge in sin with impunity. Their perspective of sin is like that of the world. They do not frown upon sin but treat it lightly and commit sin openly without shame. However, when Christians take to heart David's words in this psalm, and stand in reverential fear of God and the high calling given by God, they would not want to sin. They would commune with the LORD and be still immediately. There would be no rash conduct and words. They would not retaliate in mind and heart. They would submit to their heavenly Father's sovereign will for their lives because they realize that God has separated them for His glory and service. What a privilege and honour!

- 3. BECAUSE GOD BLESSES** – v 5-7 – David’s response was one of worship and service. There is no reference to any animal sacrifices. The word “sacrifices” is characterized by righteousness, which means a life of holiness. David’s enemies would continue to do what they would, and David could not do anything about their evil ways. However, David had to continue to live a life of holiness and righteousness regardless of the circumstances around him. He would not allow his faith in the LORD to be shaken by his enemies, whether in word and action, no matter how hurtful and painful to his body and soul. His enemies would continue to say that no one would show to God’s people any good. Evil seemed to be upon David repeatedly, with no end. His trust was in his LORD who is sovereign and would always give to him the best. The meaning of “good” to many is a life of ease and tranquillity, without pain and stress. This kind of life is through health and wealth. Therefore, to be treated well by others and by God equals health and wealth. This is a most unbiblical perspective of a life of blessing and goodness.

The presence of the LORD in the believer’s life, and doing His holy will defines a good life in the Bible. If it is God’s will to live in caves and to be eaten by lions, then that is the good life for the Christian . . . to be able to suffer for Christ’s sake! This does not mean that the believer does not cry to the LORD for help and encouragement. David prayed for the LORD to lift up the light of His countenance that he might be able to see and understand the purpose and significance of his life of testing. This enabled David to learn the invaluable lessons the LORD wanted him to experience. David’s heart and being were filled with gladness. This gladness was far superior to the gladness resulting from a super abundant harvest of corn and wine (must or fresh grape juice). This gladness comes only through trusting in the LORD in times of adversity. There is no other way to experience such gladness! The apostle Paul rejoiced in the LORD even in imprisonment!

CONCLUSION – v8 – The result is one of peaceful sleep. David could smile at the storm and quietly lie down and close his weary and trusting eyes, and knew that the LORD would surely protect him while he was “dead to the world”! Even when we do not feel safe, the safety remains sure and secure! The LORD made or caused the safety to surround David. We all desire safety but safety is ONLY in the LORD! Every child of God can claim this psalm as his own. There is nothing to fear and everything to trust, for the LORD is in control; He neither slumbers nor sleeps. He always watches over and cares for His own. Are you a child of God? If you are, then Psalm 4 is yours to claim.