

## Psalm 4

What do you do when you are in distress? What do you do when you are in a tight spot? What do you do when you have enemies against you from all sides? What do you do when there is no relief from your afflictions?

Today we are going to look at 3 things that David did to overcome his affliction.

- Prayer - He Prays and Pleads with God
- Perspective - He looks at his affliction through God's perspective
- Peace - He Remembers who God is in his affliction and experiences peace

David here is going through great affliction. And we don't exactly know the context of Psalm 4, but most believe that it is the same context of Psalm 3 and in Psalm 3 David is fleeing from his own son Absalom. His own son won the heart of the people of Israel and overthrew David from his kingdom. After that Absalom begins to hunt down David, wanting to kill him, which forces David and his men into exile. John Calvin believes he was being persecuted by Saul, the first king of Israel. In both cases he has an army hunting him down wanting him dead. What we know for sure is that David is dealing with great distress. David is going through a hardcore trial.

So today David is going to show us how to fight when we are going through hard times when we are surrounded by afflictions.

So if you are going through a really hard time right now this is for you. If you have gone through hard times this is also for you because the reality is, you'll most likely go through this at some point. Let's read verse 1.

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!

The first thing David does is pray and plead with God. When we are in distress, when we are in great affliction the very first thing we should do is pray and plead with God.

Here is what can happen to us if we don't go to God first when we are going through hard times. If you don't take the time to seek God in your affliction you can either be overcome by your affliction after trying to overcome it in your own strength or grow bitter with God for allowing you to go through this hard trial.

This is why it's important for us to go to God first before we do anything else. I don't want you to grow bitter towards God and I definitely don't want you to be discouraged to the point where you give up on God and are overcome by your affliction. I want you to know that there is always hope. No matter how dark it gets there is always hope.

And my hope and prayer for all of us is that at the end of this message you can know for certain that you are going to be okay. I don't know what you are going through or what sort of pain or suffering you are experiencing. Maybe even some depression. Whatever it is you can experience

peace in your darkest moments. We just have to believe and trust in our God. So let's look at the very first thing David did to attain this peace.

### ***Prayer –***

So David prays and pleads with God. "Answer me when I call" "Be gracious to me and here my prayer" One thing David knows is that God answers prayer. So simple, so basic, yet this is where we struggle most in our relationship with the Lord. Prayer is an act of faith. It shows humility. It shows that you recognize your need for God. When we don't seek God in our affliction, we are essentially saying that we don't need him with this one. "I got this."

It's pride and lack of faith. I guess you can say that the first step is not prayer but recognizing your need for God which leads you to prayer.

Honestly, a lot of our heart issues can be solved if we become prayer warriors. If you look at the men and women that have been used mightily by God, you'll realize that they had one common denominator – they were prayer warriors.

One that comes to mind is George Muller. This man was known to be a man of faith and he was always praying. Listen to his mindset in afflictions and for prayer.

***"We should not shrink from opportunities where our faith may be tried. The more I am in a position to be tried in faith, the more I will have the opportunity of seeing God's help and deliverance. Every fresh instance in which He helps and delivers me will increase my faith. The believer should not shrink from situations, positions, or circumstances in which his faith may be tried, but he should cheerfully embrace them as opportunities to see the hand of God stretched out in help and deliverance. Thus his faith will be strengthened."***

***"The greater the difficulty to be overcome, the more will it be seen to the glory of God how much can be done by prayer and faith."***

***"The beginning of anxiety is the end of faith, and the beginning of true faith is the end of anxiety."***

When you are going through a hard battle for faith learn to see the other side. Train your mind to see trials as an opportunity to draw nearer to God and have your faith strengthened and watch His mighty hand deliver you from your anxiety and distress.

And I'm not saying this it's easy. It is a battle. One of the reasons I was led to this Psalm was because of the first verse where David said, "You have given me relief in my distress."

I said Lord I want that, and I admit I don't have it right now. Constantly anxious of my financial situation. Constantly anxious of my kids' future, family's future. As a man, I don't want to fail my family and I get anxious about that.

The last quote from George Muller really hit me, "The beginning of anxiety is the end of faith, and the beginning of true faith is the end of anxiety." I realized that I was trusting in my own

strength instead of trusting in the One who has never failed me. In the one who is able to grant David relief while he's being hunted by his own people!

It's a promise! David said you "have" given me relief in my distress. David experienced it and if he can experience it while going through an intense distressful trial, then we definitely can too. But it starts with prayer.

Maybe you're going through something similar as I am. Getting anxious about your family's future, finances. Or maybe you're going through marital issues. Where the relationship brings anxiety and frustration to you.

Do you believe there is hope and God can grant you guys relief? Do you go to God in prayer for your relationship or are you constantly trying to fix the other person? Do you pray about your own heart towards your spouse?

Distressful situations can come in many different ways. Finances, relationships, family members, how the world is going crazy right now, church members even.

Whatever you're going through I would encourage you to pray like crazy. Anxiety is the end of faith, but Faith is the end of anxiety. And one of the greatest evidences of faith is prayer. Then once you pray your perspective on your distressful trial changes.

### *Perspective - Looking at your affliction through God's Perspective*

After praying David starts addressing his enemies. Those who are the cause of his distressful circumstance.

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

**3** But know that the Lord has set apart the godly for himself;  
the Lord hears when I call to him.

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

**5** Offer right sacrifices,  
and put your trust in the Lord.

This is what happens when you start with prayer. You are emboldened to face your trial. Instead of ignoring it, acting like it's not there, you have brought it to God in prayer and now you can face it.

You have the power to look at it straight in the face. It should never be the case that we act like everything is okay when it's not. As believers we are encouraged to recognize the issue and deal with it.

Don't act like you don't have marital issues, don't act like you're not anxious about your future. Recognize the problem, admit that you have it, and fight it through faith, prayer, and the word, through God's perspective.

So here David is now able to face his enemies looking at them through God's perspective.

In verse 1 he said, "O God of my righteousness" This is the only place in scripture where this phrase is used. His righteousness comes from God. He cared only about what God thinks of him. This is important because his enemies, the Israelites, more than likely were convinced that God had dethroned David and they were falsely accusing him believing that they were walking in accordance with God's will while they were persecuting David. Most likely believing that David was unrighteous.

So, David says, "O God of my righteousness." David is saying, "Though others may think that I am a bad person outside of your will, that I am unrighteous, I know that my righteousness comes from you not from what others say about me."

Maybe you're going through something similar. Where others are saying that you are outside of God's will when you are actually not.

It's interesting because we do live in times where a lot of people that claim to be Christians are saying that those who speak truth in love are bad, judgmental people, outside of God's will. They "Love vain words and seek after lies." What do you do when people falsely accuse you?

Maybe it's your own family members falsely accusing what you are doing. And if we are honest, a lot of times we really do care about what others think about us and we start believing the vain words and lies.

What should we do when this happens?

We should say with David "O God of my Righteousness."

Your righteousness doesn't come from the opinions of others. It comes from Christ. His righteousness is now yours. So no matter what anybody says about you, your identity is grounded in Christ.

"Blessed are you when others revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account. **12** Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you. (Matt 5:11-12)

It's normal. It's to be expected. It's nothing new. And Jesus says you are blessed when that happens.

Nevertheless, these things can cause great suffering in our lives. Especially if it's people that are close to us. Or people that you thought were going to be for you.

But regardless, if you gain God's perspective on whatever suffering you are going through, you will experience peace, joy, and relief when you walk by faith.

In verse 3 David says, "But know that the Lord has set apart the Godly for himself." This is a beautiful truth to meditate on while you are going through a hard time. This is another good perspective to have - The Lord has set apart the Godly for Himself.

That means he has set you apart.

In your affliction you are set apart for Him. You belong to God. That means you are not alone in your affliction, in your distressful trial, you belong to Him. The Lord has set apart the Godly *for Himself*.

There is a lot of verses that show us that we believers have been set apart by God. Listen to Paul in Eph. 1:3-6, 11

**3 "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places, 4 even as he chose us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before him. In love 5 he predestined us for adoption to himself as sons through Jesus Christ, according to the purpose of his will, 6 to the praise of his glorious grace, with which he has blessed us in the Beloved.**

**In him we have obtained an inheritance, having been predestined according to the purpose of him who works all things according to the counsel of his will"**

Before the foundation of the world God chose to set you apart, to give you eternal life, and to plant you in this time in history.

If God wanted you to be born in the 1600s you would have, but God has set you apart for the 21<sup>st</sup> century, for our present time. And He has set you apart from the world. But For what? Paul says so that "we should be holy and blameless before Him."

Not so that we could be just like the world but for a greater purpose. "In Love he predestined us for adoption to himself as sons and daughters through Jesus Christ, according to the purpose of His will. The Lord has set you apart in love for you, so that you can be holy and blameless before him, and according to His will.

Which means there is a reason why you are going through what you are going through. I know that at times it might feel like there is no purpose in your suffering but know that there is.

Who knows what the Lord is going to do through your affliction? Who knows if David knew that we were going to be reading his psalm today and be greatly encouraged by his affliction and how he fought it?

The Lord is working in your life and you must believe that even in the darkest times he is there in love for you.

He has set you apart for this present time, he will never leave you nor forsake you, and there is purpose behind the darkest of trials.

Rom. 8:28,29 says,

“And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good,” That includes pain and suffering, that includes evil from others that you’ve experienced, that includes being falsely accused. All those things will work together for good even if we can’t see the good right now.

For who? “for those who are called according to his purpose.” For those who have been set apart for God.

Then he says, <sup>29</sup> “For those whom he foreknew.”

And foreknew here is an intimate knowledge, he intimately knew you before you were born. Before the world was spoken into existence, he knew you. He knew you.

“For those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son..” One of the main reasons God has set you apart for Himself is to conform you to the image of His Son. To make you more like Jesus.

Isn’t that delightful. We get to become more like Jesus. Isn’t that our prayer? Lord make me more like Jesus! Then all the trials come our way to make us more like Jesus and we are like “What is going on in my life?” “Why am I going through this Lord?” It’s going to happen. If you belong to him, you will become more like Jesus. Praise the Lord!

All that to say, if you look at your affliction through God’s perspective, knowing that you have been set apart, knowing that there is a reason for what you’re going through, knowing that he is making you more like Christ through this, and that you belong to him even when you are going through the darkest of times, then you will be able to see the light at the end of the darkest tunnel. You will be able to have peace during your affliction.

### **Peace**

How do I know this? The end of this Psalm shows us that David believed that he could have peace while his own people wanted him dead. And I believe he experienced joy and peace from God.

So again, if David was able to get there then we can too. There is Hope. Because peace for the future is hope, and peace for the present is joy. So let’s look at how David was able to have joy in the present and hope for the future because of the peace that God granted him. Let’s read verse 6-8,

There are many who say, "Who will show us some good?  
Lift up the light of your face upon us, O Lord!"

7 You have put more joy in my heart  
than they have when their grain and wine abound.

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

In verse 6 when he said, "There are many who say, Who will show us some good?" C

Commentators say this was the men that were with David. David and his mighty men. These guys were so faithful to him and would follow him everywhere. And here it was like they were saying "Who would show us some good in this great affliction? It's not looking to good for us David." They were concerned and discouraged. And David says, "Lift up the light of your face upon us, O Lord."

This is caused by the Holy Spirit.

Have you been around someone that is so in love with Jesus that the radiance of the glory of God shines through them? It almost seems like no matter what they are going through the light of God's countenance is on them. And it's contagious. When you see this brother or sister radiant with the joy of Christ it makes you desire what they have. And the truth is you too can experience the joy that comes from God's light.

The Holy Spirit, the comforter, guides you and points you to Behold Christ in your affliction and the more you behold Christ in your affliction the more of His light will consume you in your affliction.

Then you'll be walking around like Moses when he asked God if he could see him. And God says if you see me, you'll die Moses, but I'll let you see my back. Moses beholds God's back and His face is radiant with the glory of God. So much so that he had to cover his face when he was around the Israelites because the Light of God was upon him.

It was a sign to others that Moses had found favor with God. It was a sign that Moses belong to God. That he was set apart for God. And now that we are in the New covenant, we have the Holy Spirit with us at all times.

We to can go to the throne of God because of Christ by the power of the Holy Spirit. At that time only Moses could talk to God face to face, now all of us can talk to God because something greater than Moses is here. Look at what Hebrews 4:15-16 says,

**"For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin. <sup>16</sup> Let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need."**

In your affliction you can approach the throne of God with all confidence, with all boldness, and ask for the light of God's countenance to shine upon you.

And the result will be peace in the present which brings joy.

How do I know? Verses 6-8 is evidence for us. David was able to say that the Lord had put more joy in his heart than they have when their grain and wine abound.

If you think true happiness or true joy comes from having money. Having financial security. Having a bunch of food, a bunch of wine. That's simply not true.

Of course, it can bring some level of happiness but if that's where you ultimately get your happiness from then you are missing out and eventually you will find out that it's all vanity.

True joy comes from above. This joy is a joy that you can experience even in the darkest of trials. So, don't wait for perfect circumstance to make you happy. You can walk in true joy now if you believe. You can have peace in the present.

In peace I will both lie down and sleep;  
for you alone, O Lord, make me dwell in safety.

This is the goal. To get to the point where we can lie down and sleep in peace. This is the effect of laying our burdens and anxieties on God. We can rest because He is at work.

When we were reading this Psalm together as a staff on Tuesday Jaime pointed out that God is able to make us not just sleep in peace but lie down in peace.

I really liked that because a lot of the times we lie down with anxious thoughts. When you are constantly thinking about your affliction without God in mind you will lie down in anxiety instead of lying down in peace.

If trials are not handled well trials will make you lie down in anxiety. But if your eyes are on God, God will make you lie down in peace. And the reality is you have peace with God right now. Listen to Romans 5:1-6

**“Therefore, since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. <sup>2</sup> Through him we have also obtained access by faith into this grace in which we stand, and we rejoice in hope of the glory of God. <sup>3</sup> Not only that, but we rejoice in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, <sup>4</sup> and endurance produces character, and character produces hope, <sup>5</sup> and hope does not put us to shame, because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us.”**

You have been justified by faith and therefore have (present tense) peace with God.

Justified by faith in Christ means that you can say right now, “O God of my righteousness” you are my peace.

And not only that, we have access by faith into this grace in which we stand!

Then Paul says not only that, but we rejoice in our suffering in our afflictions because it produces endurance, character, and hope. Hope for the future because we have peace with God. Because God’s love has been poured out into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us.

This means that right now at the present time you have peace with God, and you can lie down and sleep in peace because God loves you and he alone can make you dwell in safety. When Paul says “God’s love has been poured out by the Holy Spirit” what he means is that God loves you.

In your greatest affliction God loves you.

But how is this all possible? How do we get all these benefits? The answer is Jesus. Because Jesus lived and died for us, we have been reconciled with God and have peace with Him. If we continue reading on Romans 5:8 Paul says,

“but God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. <sup>9</sup> Since, therefore, we have now been justified by his blood, much more shall we be saved by him from the wrath of God. <sup>10</sup> For if while we were enemies we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, now that we are reconciled, shall we be saved by his life. <sup>11</sup> More than that, we also rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received reconciliation.”

We have been reconciled with God because of Christ and because of Christ we have peace with God. The Gospel applied to your life should bring you hope and peace in your darkest trials.

It might not come overnight, but the more you meditate on these truths - the more you will experience the joy and peace that comes from above which in turn gives us hope for the future.

No matter what you’re going through if you learn to recognize your need for God and plead with him in prayer, and if you learn to look at your pain and suffering through God’s perspective believing that He is able to grant relief, you’ll be able to say with David “In peace I will both lie down and sleep; for you alone, O Lord, make me dwell in safety.” Let’s Pray.

Today we are going to observe communion. There will be brothers and sisters on both sides. And this is a good time to reflect on your relationship with the Lord and maybe it has been hard for you to trust him in affliction. Maybe you haven’t been able to experience peace with God. I want to encourage you to take that to him in prayer. It’s okay. It’s okay to be honest with the Lord where you are at right now. He delights when his children come to him.

**on the night when Jesus was betrayed he took bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it, and said, "This is my body, which is for you. Do this in remembrance of me." In the same way also he took the cup, after supper, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me." For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes.**

Come when you're ready.