

## Now I Lay Me Down To Sleep

### Psalm 4

#### Introduction.

- 1). In Psalm 127:2 the Bible says, “for He [the Lord] grants sleep to those he loves (NIV).” Eugene Peterson paraphrases it, “Don’t you know he enjoys giving rest to those he loves?” (*The Message*). Sleep, a good night’s rest, is a gift from the Lord.
- 2). However, how often have you missed out on this gift? How often have you tossed and turned, stared at the darkness of the ceiling or poured your face into your pillow because insomnia had taken you captive as its slave?
- 3). There are many reasons why people fail to get a good night’s rest. Some are physiological. Some are personal. Many are spiritual. At least that is what Psalm 4 would indicate.
- 4) Psalm 4 is an evening psalm (v.8) and a companion to Psalm 3. Psalm 3 is appropriately prayed when you get up (3:5). Psalm 4 is appropriately prayed before you lie down (4:8). It is another psalm of lament, though it also has components of the psalms of trust or confidence. Though he is hurting, and hurting badly, David is confident that the Lord will not abandon him in his distress, but he will in fact restore him and bless him. Though we cannot be certain, the rebellion and treason of Absalom may again be in the background.
- 5) Because he believes God is a righteous God (v.1) who has set him apart (v.3), he will trust the Lord (v.5), seek His face (v.6), trust in His provisions (v.7) and lie down for a good night’s sleep because the Lord will keep him safe (v.8).

Transition.

What then do we need to learn from this psalm that we too many enjoy God's gift of a good night's rest?

**I. Remember: God Answers the Prayers of Hurting**

**4:1**

David is going through a difficult time as he makes clear in vs. 2, 4 & 6. Circumstances beyond his control have overwhelmed him like a flood. He knows he can only look in one direction for help and so he does: he looks to God. What does he know about the God to whom he prays?

**1) God will act righteously**

- Twice in this verse David asks God to hear him: hear me when I call; hear me when I pray. The one on whom he calls is identified as the "God of my righteousness" (*NKJV*) or "my righteous God" (*NIV*). God is righteous both in His character and His conduct. Here the latter is in view. God can be trusted to do the righteous thing, the right thing, on behalf of His people. Having set us apart for Himself (v.3), we can be confident he will hear our cry and make things right, if not outwardly, then inwardly with peace, sleep and security (v.8).

**2) God will give relief**

- David is under distress (pressure) that is psychological, physical, spiritual or all the above! The word for distress means a "tight corner." David is in a tight spot, a tough spot. By a series of 4 imperatives he pours out his heart to the Lord asking for relief: 1) hear

me; 2) relieve me; 3) have mercy; 4) hear me. Craig Broyles notes there is something of wordplay here: “in a narrow place make for me a wide place” (p. 53).

- David needs God to give him some space. He needs from God what he knows he does not deserve: mercy. Because he is God’s child he can call out to Him. Because he is God’s child he can be confident he will be heard, receive mercy and experience relief.

Transition.

When you are hurting, call out to God in prayer. He will do what is right. He will give you relief. A better form of personal therapy is scarcely imaginable.

**II. Remember: God Honors the Pure in Heart**

**4:2-5**

David is in trouble and a lot of trouble. Psalm 3 addressed physical danger. Psalm 4 notes personal slander. His reputation is being drug through the mud. His integrity is being questioned from every direction. In a rather strange turn David begins to address his enemies, those who oppose him. He calls on them to examine their motives and their actions. He challenges them to follow him in repentance from sin and trust in the Lord (*Yahweh*, 5 times in vs. 3-8). His enemies conceivably, could become his friends if they would listen to his counsel.

Transition.

David provides a 4-fold strategy for those who, having their sin exposed, now hunger for a pure heart.

1) **Avoid that which is shameful**

4:2

- David raises a series of rhetorical questions designed to expose the shameful actions of his opponents.
- Sons of men in Hebrew denotes the class of prominent citizens, the powerful in Israel, the movers and shakers. The leadership has gotten on the wrong track. David specifies their error. First, they have turned the glory of God's anointed (Psalm 2) into shame and in the process dishonored the Lord (Psalm 3:3!). They have despised the Lord's king and the glory, the honor and weightiness, given to him by God himself. Second, they love (passionately pursue) the worthless (*ESV*, "vain words") and seek falsehoods (*ESV*, "lies").
- Whenever we challenge God's plan and purposes, we chase after false goods, that which is worthless and delusional. Before long we traffic in lies, dishonoring God and deceiving ourselves. We slander those we envy and want to take down. We seek that which even if we gained it, would not satisfy. Such activity is stupid. It is shameful.

2) **Claim that which is sure**

4:3

- The ways of the ungodly shall perish (1:6), but the way of the Lord is set apart and sure. There is often a knowledge problem in a life ravaged by sin. Thus David's word "know." Know what? The Lord has set apart for Himself him who is godly. This promise draws on major themes of both Ps. 1 and Ps. 2 (2:6).

- It is the godly person with whom the Lord is intimate, with whom He has personal fellowship. Because we belong to the Lord we can be confident that when we call to Him, He will hear us.
- How beautiful are the sure things of v.3 contrasted with the uncertain things of v.2. We belong to the Lord who hears us when we pray. Ultimately the enemy cannot defeat us. I can be certain that he will not succeed against me regardless of what he says or does.

### 3) **Flee that which is sinful**

**4:4**

- Sometimes our feelings and emotions run high, almost out of control. David's enemies are described as wild animals in Psalm 3:7, and their rage and anger is highlighted here. What do we do when our temperature rises, our neck gets hot, our cheeks flush with passion?
- Do not let your anger give way to sin (Eph. 4:26). "*Tremble*" (NASV), but do not sin. Keep it in. Bite your tongue. Better yet, get alone with God and let Him deal with your heart. Literally "speak within your own heart on your bed (alone and undistracted) and be still (*NIV*, "silent"), resting and listening (cf. the wicked on their bed in Ps. 36:4; Micah 2:1).
  - Psalm 36:4: " He plans wickedness upon his bed;  
He sets himself on a path that is not good;  
He does not despise evil."
  - Micah 2: "Woe to those who scheme iniquity,  
Who work out evil on their beds! When morning comes,  
they do it, For it is in the power of their hands."

- Getting quietly alone with God has a way of clearing the air, removing the fog, calming the angry and restless waves of our heart.
- It puts me in a position where I can see my sin as God sees it.

Application- It is always wise to sleep on it before acting on it, no matter what it is! Selah! Think about that!

#### 4) **Sacrifice that which is sincere**

**4:5**

- David now issues a call to action. Right sacrifices come from the heart. As Psalm 51:17 so clearly teaches, “The sacrifices of God are a broken [humble] spirit, a broken [humble] and contrite heart – these O God, you will not despise.”
- The righteous God (v.1) requires righteous sacrifices. Such sacrifices, whether ritual or practical, must be sincere, real! They can only come from those who trust in the Lord.
- What’s in it for me gives way to what’s right before the Lord. My agenda’s are set aside as worthless and false gods (v.2). His agenda is now my agenda. Even if I do not fully grasp His plan and purposes, I will trust Him and serve Him from the heart with sacrificial acts that are in accord with His character and His commands. It may not always be easy, but it will always be right.

### **III. Remember: God Prospers the Hopeful**

**4:6-7**

Sometimes God’s people get confused, even depressed, when our hopes and expectations fail to materialize. We begin to question ourselves, our leaders, even God. David

certainly knew this. Those following him began to ask these very questions. David's counsel is awesome. The wisdom he shares could not be more perfect.

### 1) Seek the Lord's presence

4:6

- A large number ("many") are asking a good question given their difficult and troubling circumstances (vs. 2,4a): "who will show us any good?"  
With a downcast (4:3) and defeatist attitude the "spiritual pessimist" were questioning not only their leader, but their Lord's goodness.
- David responds with a simple and direct prayer: "Yahweh, lift up the light of your countenance upon us." The *NIV* says, "Let the light of your face shine upon us, O Lord." David draws from the great Aaronic benediction found in Num. 6:24-26 where the Bible says, "The Lord bless you and keep you; The Lord make His face shine upon you, And be gracious to you; The Lord lift up His countenance upon you, And give you peace."
- The phrase "light of your face" ("countenance") speaks of God's personal presence in covenant faithfulness. He is asking God to be faithful to His promises and to be faithful in the fullest measure. He has been set apart by the Lord. He has put his trust in the Lord. He is simply asking the Lord to make real in personal experience what he knows is his by divine promise. Lord lift up (3:3) and let me see your face in glorious radiance and brilliance. Then I will see clearly once more that you are all that I need.

## 2) Celebrate the Lord's provision

4:7

- The presence of the Lord is all we need, it is more than we could ever hope for in this life. Basking in His presence gives me more gladness (NIV, "greater joy") than all the material blessings this world could offer.
- Using imagery that they would find familiar, David says think of an outstanding grain harvest, an incredible abundance of wine. All this pales in comparison to what one receives when the face of the Lord shines upon them.
- Great material blessing or the favor of the Lord? David would say this is a "no-brainer."

## IV. Remember: God Gives Peace to the Humble

4:8

David has talked to God. He has been with the Lord. He has been in His presence and knows he has the Lord's favor. All that is left is to lay down for a good night's sleep.

His enemies may be against him but his Lord is on his side. As Paul says in Rom. 8:31, "If God is for us, who can be against us?"

### 1) The humble rest in the Lord

- We are set apart for the Lord. We have plead for his mercy and put our trust in Him. No matter what is going on around me, I can 1) lie down in peace, and 2) sleep. My enemies may struggle on their bed (v.4), but I will sleep on mine. They may lie awake in anger, but I will sleep with a peace that passes understanding because I trust in the Lord (v.5).



## 2) The humble trust in the Lord

- My security is not in wealth or wisdom, position or possessions. I am not safe if it depends on me. I am safe only in the Lord. Locked doors, security systems, even body guards will ultimately prove inadequate. Worry about “what might be” is foolish and should be seen for the sin of unbelief that it is. My safety, my security is in the Lord who will never leave me nor forsake me (Heb. 13:5), it is in a Savior who said, “And I shall give them eternal life, and they shall never perish, neither shall anyone snatch them out of my hand” (John 10:28). I am safe. I will sleep. Simple isn’t it?!

### **Conclusion:**

- There is a sweet little rhyme many of us were taught as children entitled “Now I Lay Me Down To Sleep.” It goes:
 

“Now I lay me down to sleep,  
I pray the Lord my soul to keep.  
If I should die before I wake,  
I pray the Lord my soul to take.”
- In light of the truths found in Psalm 4 I would suggest a slight adjustment:
 

“Now I lay me down to sleep,  
I trust the Lord my soul to keep.  
If I should die before I wake,  
I trust the Lord my soul to take.”

- I can trust Him when I sleep.

I can trust Him when I die.

I can trust Him when attacked.

I can trust Him because I am His

and, He is mine. Go, and get a good night's sleep.