

The Guardian

Ps 4

INTRODUCTION

- A. An elderly woman lay dying.
 - 1. Her broken-hearted husband sat beside her, tenderly holding her hand.
 - 2. They had been married many years, and they both knew that the time for parting had come.
 - 3. As their eyes met, a tear flowed down the old woman's wrinkled cheek.
 - a. Gently, her husband wiped it away.
 - b. Then, with a quiver in his voice, he said, "Thank God, Mary, that's the last."
- B. Thank God that he has promised to wipe away our tears in the next life, for there is a great deal of suffering in this world.
 - 1. How many of our own brethren are struggling with serious health problems at the moment?
 - 2. This past week was the tenth anniversary of the massacre at Columbine High School.
- C. The massacre at Columbine well illustrates that often suffering comes at the hands of others.
 - 1. How many of us have been hurt to the core because of a careless word?
 - 2. How many of us have been hurt because of some vindictive act?
- D. Tonight's text speaks at length about suffering at the hands of others.
 - 1. We do not know precisely what suffering David was facing at the hands of others, but many scholars believe the suffering depicted here occurred when he was forced to flee from Absalom.
 - a. Psalm 3 does depict David's flight from his son, and there are some similarities between these two Psalms.
 - b. Yet, the similarities don't necessarily point to the same situation being discussed.
 - 2. Whatever the situation, the placement of Psalm 4 is quite informative.
 - a. We have no idea who put the Book of Psalms in the form that we have it today.
 - 1) While David wrote many Psalms, he did not write them all & the Book of Psalms was not completed until well after David's death.
 - 2) Psalm 137 was written during the Babylonian Captivity; therefore, the book as a whole could not have been compiled until after the writing of Psalm 137.
 - 3) The songbooks in front of you have songs written during the 1500's, the 1800's, the 1930's, and so forth.
 - a) While the individual songs were kept long before they were put into our song books, the order we have them could not have been completed when just half the songs were written.
 - b) The Israelites kept these individual, inspired Psalms & then someone, inspired of God, compiled these Psalms into the order we now have them.
 - b. I've pointed all of that out to say that putting Psalm 3 & 4 together informs us much about following God.
 - 1) Psalm 3 is a "morning Psalm" & praises God in the morning for his protection: "I lay down and slept; I woke again, for the LORD sustained me. I will not be afraid of many thousands of people who have set themselves against me all around" (vv 5-6).
 - 2) Psalm 4, on the other hand, is an evening Psalm, sang before one went to bed for the evening: "In peace I will both lie down and sleep; for you alone, O LORD, make me dwell in safety" (v 8).

- 3) Undoubtedly, the point being made here is that the day needs to be “wrapped” in prayer from beginning to end.
- E. While this Psalm speaks of the suffering of others & speaks of the necessity of prayer throughout the day, it lifts God up as THE GUARDIAN.

David speaks of THE GUARDIAN as—

A PERSISTENT GUARDIAN, v 1

- A. “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.”
- B. David declares that God is his righteousness.
1. In this passage, God’s righteousness does not refer to his upright moral character.
 2. Instead, God’s righteousness references his faithfulness.
 - a. In other words, because God is righteous, he will keep his promises to help David.
 - 1) When David went to fight Goliath, he told Saul, “The LORD who delivered me from the paw of the lion and from the paw of the bear will deliver me from the hand of this Philistine” (1 Sm 17:37).
 - a) That statement makes absolutely no sense; being delivered from the paw of a lion & bear is one thing, but being delivered from a giant with a javelin & spear was quite another!
 - b) Why would David be so confident that God would absolutely deliver him from Goliath?
 - i. Granted, it may be nothing more than a confident assertion because of God’s past deliverances.
 - ii. However, David has been already been anointed king.
 - i) After Samuel anointed David, we read, “And the Spirit of the LORD rushed upon David from that day forward” (1 Sm 16:13).
 - ii) While it is conjecture, is it too much to think that the LORD had promised to bless David richly and, therefore, David knew he had nothing to fear from that uncircumcised Philistine?
 - 2) When the LORD promises that Solomon will build the temple, God says to David, “The LORD promised David, “I will give you rest from all your enemies” (2 Sm 7:11).
 - b. Whatever the situation was in David’s life, he knew for certain that God would aid him because the Lord is the God of David’s righteousness.
- C. The Lord had given David relief when he was in distress.
1. Over & over the Lord had blessed David—he delivered him from Goliath, from the hand of Saul, from numerous enemies of Israel.
 2. David, therefore, knew that God could provide deliverance again.
- D. David presents God as a PERSISTENT GUARDIAN—One who has promised deliverance & has provided it in the past.
1. In a real sense, David presents God as the “Energizer Bunny” when it comes to trouble—the Lord keeps going & going & going from one problem to another in order to provide deliverance for his people.
 2. God has promised that whatever Satan throws our way, he will be our Guardian.
 - a. The Hebrew Christians were facing multiple problems—persecution, losing their possessions, backsliding. The author reminds them of Old Testament promises & writes: “He has said, ‘I will never leave you nor forsake you.’ So we can confidently say, ‘The Lord is my helper; I will not fear; what can man do to me?’” (Heb 13:5-6).

- b. That the Lord will **never** leave us demonstrates he is our PERSISTENT GUARDIAN.
 - 1) It doesn't matter if we've just learned the company is moving, the blood work doesn't look good, or we don't know how much longer our marriage will survive.
 - 2) God will be our GUARDIAN.

A PERCEIVING GUARDIAN, v 3

- A. Throughout this Psalm, David is confronting the leading men of Israel.
 - 1. The Hebrew "sons of men" (v 2) makes it clear that these are the high & mighty of Israelites society whom David is confronting.
 - 2. In fact, the Holman Christian Standard Bible translates this as: "How long, exalted men, will my honor be insulted?"
 - 3. It is obvious that these are the leading men of Israel from v 7: "You have put more joy in my heart than they have when their grain and wine abound."
- B. To the leading men of Israel David says, "But know that the LORD has set apart the godly for himself; the LORD hears when I call to him."
 - 1. I'm not exactly sure what David means by saying that the LORD has set apart the godly for himself.
 - a. On the one hand, David could simply mean that whoever is godly has been set apart for God. Such would certainly accord with other Scriptures.
 - b. However, I'm more inclined to think that David speaks of himself here as God's anointed king.
 - 1) I'm inclined to think that because of verse 2: "O men, how long shall my honor be turned into shame? How long will you love vain words and seek after lies?"
 - 2) The point certainly seems to be that God had bestowed honor upon David by anointing him as king & the men of Israel want to depose David as king.
 - a) Such would certainly fit with this Psalm's coming from the time of Absalom.
 - b) "Absalom stole the hearts of the men of Israel" (2 Sm 15:6).
 - c) After Absalom had the men of Israel behind him, he conspired to take the throne of his father.
 - c. David, because the LORD anointed him as king, had been sanctified—set apart—for God.
 - 1) When David had the opportunity to kill Saul, he told his men, "The LORD forbid that I should do this thing to my lord, the LORD's anointed, to put out my hand against him, seeing he is the LORD's anointed" (1 Sm 24:6).
 - 2) Being the king of God's people put David in a position that should have been honored, because—if for no other reason—God had chosen to put him over his people.
 - 2. The LORD heard David when he prayed.
 - a. Surely part of the reason that the Lord heard David was that he was the LORD's anointed.
 - b. However, being the LORD's anointed was not enough for God to hear David's prayers.
 - 1) Saul was still the LORD's anointed after the LORD's Spirit left him & David had been anointed king.
 - 2) For the LORD to hear David's prayers, David had to be a godly person.
 - a) "Who shall ascend the hill of the LORD? And who shall stand in his holy place? He who has clean hands and a pure heart, who does not lift up his soul to what is false and does not swear deceitfully" (Ps 24:3-4).
 - b) "If I had cherished iniquity in my heart, the Lord would not have listened" (Ps 66:18).
- C. The Lord is A PERCEIVING GUARDIAN—he hears the prayers of his people.

1. “This is the confidence that we have toward him, that if we ask anything according to his will he hears us. And if we know that he hears us in whatever we ask, we know that we have the requests that we have asked of him” (1 Jn 5:14-15).
2. But, it is the prayers of the righteous that God perceived: “The prayer of a **righteous** person has great power as it is working” (Js 5:16).
3. Does God hear your prayers because of your righteousness?

A PROVIDING GUARDIAN, vv 7-8

- A. “You have put more joy in my heart than they have when their grain and wine abound,” v 7.
1. David was facing some sort of great trial when he penned these lines. How on earth had he put joy in David’s heart?
 - a. Far too often, we confuse “joy” & “happiness.”
 - 1) “Happiness” refers to external circumstances—My boys are happy when they get that toy they’ve been wanting for Christmas, but that happiness isn’t going to be there when the toy breaks.
 - 2) “Joy” refers to a state of mind that even circumstances cannot erase.
 - b. Many of those facing great trials have had great joy.
 - 1) Before his crucifixion, Jesus told the disciples, “So also you have sorrow now, but I will see you again, and your hearts will rejoice, and no one will take your joy from you” (Jn 16:22).
 - a) Earlier in John 16, Jesus has said, “The hour is coming when whoever kills you will think he is offering service to God” (v 2).
 - b) Jesus says, “You are going to die because of me, but no one will be able to take your joy away.”
 - 2) “Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, Rejoice” (Phil 4:4).
 - a) We like those words—it’s not uncommon to sing them or to see them on refrigerator magnets. But, we cannot forget that Paul wrote those words from **prison**.
 - b) Paul was sitting in a Roman prison, but he knew that joy wasn’t dependent upon circumstances.
 2. How can we have joy when circumstances seem so bleak?
 - a. First, we can’t forget that God is THE GUARDIAN—he will protect **us**, not necessarily our bodies or our finances or our circumstances. But, he will protect our **souls**—our true selves.
 - b. Second, we must not forget what Paul writes to the Romans.
 - 1) “In all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. For I am sure that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord” (Rom 8:37-39).
 - 2) **Nothing** will prevent God’s love from shining through & God will eventually take us to that heavenly home where there will be no more suffering.
 - 3) If that doesn’t provide great joy, I don’t know what will!
- B. “In peace I will both lie down and sleep; for you alone, O LORD, make me dwell in safety,” v 8.
1. David says that he will lie down & sleep in peace.
 - a. If he wrote this during Absalom’s rebellion, he doesn’t know whether Absalom will find him in the middle of the night & kill him.
 - b. If he wrote this during some other crisis, it’s still quite plausible that David doesn’t know if he will wake up in the morning or not.

2. But, David is going to sleep in peace?
 - a. How many people tonight will not sleep in peace? How many people will lie awake worrying about their jobs or about their children or about their marriage or about some sin from the past?
 - b. David wasn't worried about his life, for the LORD made him dwell in safety.
 - 1) Again, I'm convinced that we need to draw a line between the physical & the spiritual reality.
 - 2) Because the LORD had anointed David as king, it's very likely that he had the assurance that he would physically awake in the morning. But, on the other hand, there are multiple cases in Scripture where the righteous were killed for doing right.
 - 3) Yet, David had the calm assurance that God was on his throne & all, therefore, was well with the world.
 - 4) That is an assurance which should provide us peace, too.
 - a) To the saints suffering at the hands of the Roman Empire, John records this voice from a great multitude: "Hallelujah! For the Lord our God the Almighty reigns" (Rv 19:6).
 - b) At the very end of his life, Paul writes, "I am already being poured out as a drink offering, and the time of my departure has come. I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. Henceforth there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, will award to me on that Day, and not only to me but also to all who have loved his appearing" (2 Tm 4:6-8).
 - i. Because he had been faithful to the Lord, Paul was confident that the Lord would now be faithful to him, even though Nero would very soon order his beheading.
 - ii. Is God, likewise, your GUARDIAN? Do you know that because of your faithfulness God will be faithful to you?