
For the Chief Musician; on stringed instruments. A Psalm by David.

PSALM 4: 1 Answer me when I call, God of my righteousness. Give me relief from my distress. Have mercy on me, and hear my prayer.

David prays to be heard, Psa 4:1; expostulates with the ungodly, Psa 4:2; exhorts them to turn to God, and make their peace with him, Psa 4:3-5; shows the vain pursuits of men in search of happiness, which he asserts exists only in the approbation of God, Psa 4:6, Psa 4:7; commends himself to the Lord, and then quietly takes his repose, Psa 4:8.

This Psalm seems to have been composed on the same occasion with the preceding, viz., Absalom's rebellion. It appears to have been an evening hymn, sung by David and his company previously to their going to rest. It is inscribed to the chief Musician upon Neginoth, למנצח בנגינות lamnatstseach binginoth. Probably the first word comes from נצח natsach, to be over, or preside; and may refer to the precentor in the choir. Some suppose that it refers to the Lord Jesus, who is the Supreme Governor, or victorious Person; the Giver of victory. Neginoth seems to come from נגן nagan, to strike; and probably may signify some such instruments as the cymbal, drum, etc., and stringed instruments in general. But there is no certainty in these things. What they mean, or what they were, is known to no man.

Verse 1

Hear me when I call - No man has a right to expect God to hear him if he do not call. Indeed, how shall he be heard if he speak not? There are multitudes who expect the blessings of God as confidently as if they had prayed for them most fervently; and yet such people pray not at all!

God of my righteousness - Whatever pardon, peace, holiness, or truth I possess, has come entirely from thyself. Thou art the God of my salvation, as thou art the God of my life.

Thou hast enlarged me - I was in prison; and thou hast brought me forth abroad. Have mercy on me - continue to act in the same way. I shall always need thy help; I shall never deserve to have it; let me have it in the way of mere mercy, as thou hast hitherto done.

PSALM 4: 2 You sons of men, how long shall my glory be turned into dishonour? Will you love vanity, and seek after falsehood? Selah.

Verse 2

O ye sons of men - בני איש beney ish, ye powerful men - ye who are now at the head of affairs, or who are leaders of the multitude.

Love vanity - The poor, empty, shallow-brained, pretty-faced Absalom; whose prospects are all vain, and whose promises are all empty!

Seek after leasing? - This is a Saxon word, from falsehood, from to lie. Cardmarden has adopted this word in his translation, Rouen, 1566. It is in none of the Bibles previously to that time, nor in any

after, as far as my own collection affords me evidence; and appears to have been borrowed by King James's translators from the above.

Selah - Mark this! See what the end will be!

PSALM 4: 3 But know that the LORD has set apart for himself him who is godly: The LORD will hear when I call to him.

Verse 3

The Lord hath set apart him that is godly - $\tau\iota\omicron\eta$ chasid, the pious, benevolent man. He has marked such, and put them aside as his own property. "This merciful man, this feeling, tender-hearted man, is my own property; touch not a hair of his head!"

PSALM 4: 4 Stand in awe, and don't sin. Search your own heart on your bed, and be still. Selah.

Verse 4

Stand in awe, and sin not - The Septuagint, which is copied by St. Paul, Eph 4:26, translate this clause, $\text{Οργιζεσθε, και μη ἀμαρτανετε}$; Be ye angry, and sin not. The Vulgate, Syriac, Ethiopic, and Arabic, give the same reading; and thus the original יזור rigzu might be translated: If ye be angry, and if ye think ye have cause to be angry; do not let your disaffection carry you to acts of rebellion against both God and your king. Consider the subject deeply before you attempt to act. Do nothing rashly; do not justify one evil act by another: sleep on the business; converse with your open heart upon your bed; consult your pillow.

And be still - וְדוּמוּ vedommu, "and be dumb." Hold your peace; fear lest ye be found fighting against God. Selah. Mark this!

PSALM 4: 5 Offer the sacrifices of righteousness. Put your trust in the LORD.

Verse 5

Offer the sacrifices of righteousness - Do not attempt to offer a sacrifice to God for prosperity in your present rebellious conduct. Such a sacrifice would be a sin. Turn to God from whom you have revolted; and offer to him a righteous sacrifice, such as the law prescribes, and such as he can receive. Let all hear and consider this saying. No sacrifice - no performance of religious duty, will avail any man, if his heart be not right with God. And let all know, that under the Gospel dispensation no sacrifice of any kind will be received but through the all-atoning sacrifice made by Christ.

Because of sin, justice has stopped every man's mouth; so that none can have access to God, but through the Mediator. By him only can the mouth of a sinner be opened to plead with God. Hear

this, ye who trust in yourselves, and hope for heaven without either faith or dependence on the vicarious sacrifice of Christ.

PSALM 4: 6 Many say, "Who will show us any good?" LORD, let the light of your face shine on us.

Verse 6

Who will show us any good? - This is not a fair translation. The word any is not in the text, nor any thing equivalent to it; and not a few have quoted it, and preached upon the text, placing the principal emphasis on this illegitimate word.

The place is sufficiently emphatic without this. There are multitudes who say, Who will show us good? Man wants good; he hates evil as evil, because he has pain, suffering, and death through it; and he wishes to find that supreme good which will content his heart, and save him from evil. But men mistake this good. They look for a good that is to gratify their passions; they have no notion of any happiness that does not come to them through the medium of their senses. Therefore they reject spiritual good, and they reject the Supreme God, by whom alone all the powers of the soul of man can be gratified.

Lift thou up the light of thy countenance - This alone, the light of thy countenance - thy peace and approbation, constitute the supreme good. This is what we want, wish, and pray for. The first is the wish of the worldling, the latter the wish of the godly.

PSALM 4: 7 You have put gladness in my heart, more than when their grain and their new wine are increased.

Verse 7

Thou hast put gladness in my heart - Thou hast given my soul what it wanted and wished for. I find now a happiness which earthly things could not produce. I have peace of conscience, and joy in the Holy Ghost; such inward happiness as they cannot boast who have got the highest increase of corn and wine; those Two Things in the abundance of which many suppose happiness to be found.

To corn and wine all the versions, except the Chaldee, add oil; for corn, wine, and oil, were considered the highest blessings of a temporal kind that man could possess.

PSALM 4: 8 In peace I will both lay myself down and sleep, for you, the LORD alone, make me live in safety.

Verse 8

I will both lay me down in peace, and sleep - Most men lie down, and most sleep, daily, for without rest and sleep life could not be preserved; but alas! how few lie down in peace! peace with their own consciences, and peace with God! David had then two great blessings, rest by sleep, and peace

in his soul. He had a happy soul; and when he lay down on his bed, his body soon enjoyed its repose, as the conscience was in peace. And he had a third blessing, a confidence that he should sleep in safety. And it was so. No fearful dreams disturbed his repose, for he had a mind tranquillized by the peace of God. As to his body, that enjoyed its due rest, for he had not overloaded nature either with dainties or superfluities. Reader, are not many of thy sleepless hours to be attributed to thy disordered soul - to a sense of guilt on thy conscience, or to a fear of death and hell?

Pray incessantly till thou get the light of God's countenance, till his Spirit bear witness with thine that thou art a child of God. Then thy repose will do thee good: and even in thy sleep thy happy soul will be getting forward to heaven.

There are THREE parts in this Psalm:-

I. An entrance, or petition for audience, Ps 4:1. II. An apostrophe to his enemies, which is, 1. Reprehensive, Ps 4:2, 3. 2. Admonitory, Ps 4:4, 5. III. A petition for himself and God's people, Ps 4:6-8.

I. He proposes his request and suit for audience. "Hear me when I call;" and this he founds on four arguments: 1. God has promised to hear me when I call: "Call upon me in trouble, and I will hear thee." I call; hear me, therefore, when I call. 2. His own innocence: "Hear me, O God of my righteousness." 3. He requests no more than what God had done for him at other times: Thou hast enlarged me in trouble, and why not now? 4. It was mercy and favour to answer him then; it will be the same to do it again: "Have mercy on me, and hear."

II. His petition being thus proposed and ended, he proceeds to the doctrinal part; and, turning himself to his enemies, 1. He sharply reproves them; 2. Then warns them, and gives them good counsel.

1. He turns his speech from God to men; the chief but the worst of men. beney ish, "ye eminent men." Not plebeians, but nobles. The charge he lays to them, 1. They "turned his glory into shame." They endeavoured to dishonour him whom God had called and anointed to the kingdom. 2. "They loved vanity." A vain attempt they were in love with. 3. "They sought after falsity." They pursued that which would deceive them; they would find at last that treachery and iniquity lied to itself. 4. That this charge might have the more weight, he figures it with a stinging interrogation, How long? Their sin had malice and pertinacity in it; and he asks them how long they intended to act thus.

And that they might, if possible, be drawn from their attempts, he sends them a noverint, know ye, which has two clauses: 1. Let them know that God hath set apart him that is godly for himself. 2. That God will hear, when either he or any good man calls upon him.

2. The reproof being ended, he gives them good counsel:-

1. That though they be angry, they ought not to let the sun go down upon their wrath.

2. That they commune with their own hearts-their conscience. That they do this on their beds, when secluded from all company, when passion and self-interest did not rule; and then they would be the better able to judge whether they were not in an error, whether their anger were not causeless, and their persecution unjust?

3. That they offer the sacrifice of righteousness-that they serve and worship God with an honest, sincere, and contrite heart.

4. That they put their trust in the Lord; trusting no more to their lies, nor loving their vanities, but relying on God's promises.

III. The third part begins with this question, Who will show us any good? 1. Who will show us that good which will make us happy? To which David, in effect, returns this answer, that it is not bona animi, intellectual gifts; nor bona fortunae, earthly blessings; nor bona corporis, corporeal endowments: but the light of God's countenance. 2. Therefore he prefers his petition: "Lord, lift thou up the light of thy countenance upon us." God's countenance is his grace, his favour, his love, and the light of his countenance, the exhibition and expression of this grace, favour, and love; in which alone lies all the happiness of man. Of this David expresses two effects, gladness and security:-

1. Gladness and joy far beyond that which may be had from any temporal blessings: "Thou hast put gladness in my heart more than in the time that their corn, and wine, and oil increased; gladness beyond the joy in harvest; and this joy is from the light of God's countenance. Thou puttest. THOU, by way of eminence.

2. Security, expressed under the metaphor of sleep: "I will lay me down in peace, and sleep;" just as in a time of peace, as if there were no war nor preparation for battle.

3. To which he adds the reason: "For thou Lord, alone makest me to dwell in safety." I am safe, because I enjoy the light of thy countenance.