

Psalm 4

:: wednesday night ignite ::

Jeremiah 17:7 – Blessed is the man who trusts in the Lord, and whose hope is the Lord.

We live in a difficult world. We lead busy, often stressful lives. We struggle against our old nature. We are surrounded by any number of pressures and temptations that present themselves to us and demand a response.

A key precept of our faith is that we can **trust** in our Lord. We can be confident in the Lord. We can feel secure in our relationship with Jesus Christ. We can approach any situation, any temptation, any struggle with the understanding that the God of heaven and earth stands with us.

Psalm 4 demonstrates that trust, so let's get into our text.

*Psalm 4.1 – Hear me when I call, oh God of my righteousness!
You have relieved me in my distress;
have mercy on me and hear my prayer.*

I love the density of the Psalms. I am the very first to read a Psalm and then sort of tell myself that there just isn't much in there, but really, nothing could be further from the truth. Line upon line we can glean insight into God's character; we can see new aspects of His interaction with us.

"Hear me when I call." It is an amazing thing that we can say to our God, "hear me when I call." God is listening and He is waiting to hear us talk to Him, so we should try to **do** a lot of talking to Him.

Now, prayer is often a difficult issue. Probably most of us would say that we feel that our prayer lives could be 'better,' but I think that instead of just evaluating how we feel about our prayer lives we should approach it like the dating world.

In the dating world you go out on dates and get to know a person, right? And for our illustration let's say that the person you start going out with is going to end up being your husband or your wife. Is the conversation as comfortable on the first date as it is on the 3rd date? The 10th date? The wedding rehearsal dinner? The 1st anniversary?

God is a romantic. He loves us dearly and wants to spend time with us. So, if we feel that our prayer is awkward or in some way less meaningful than what we want it to be, then I suggest just going on a few more prayer dates with God. God is listening for us to call.

There's something else I really love here, David says, "oh God of my righteousness." Jesus Christ is the one that gives us righteousness; we do not gather it for ourselves. This is important because we **are** imperfect and we **cannot** attain righteousness on our own.

We need to remember that our God is all about forgiveness. Throughout this Psalm David presents Jehovah as a God of mercy, a God of relief, a God who listens, a God who protects, a God of gladness, a God who is trustworthy. So we need to train ourselves to not feel unworthy and defeated when we go to God in prayer. Of course we're unworthy, but the Lord has gone to extensive lengths

to bring us closer to Him, to provide us grace and peace, to remove obstacles that separate us from intimacy. **He is the God of our righteousness.**

We are not alone in this life.

*Psalm 4.2 – How long, oh you sons of men, will you turn my glory to shame?
How long will you love worthlessness and seek falsehood? Selah*

Again, I know that I sometimes misread the Psalms. I mean, when we read Revelation we know that we're reading prophecy and we adjust our thinking a bit to get into the prophetic mode. When we read an epistle of Paul we have a slightly different mindset as well. There **are** a number of different writing styles throughout the Bible: narrative (history), prophecy, epistles, parables, poetry.

When I read the Psalms I often fail to really get into what this book is. It is Hebrew poetry, Hebrew music; and thus it is a lot more personal, a lot more emotional, a lot more poetic than the books of history or even many of the books of prophecy. That doesn't discount those other books, it is simply a different style of writing.

Now, as we probably all know, the word 'selah' appears in the Psalms relatively often and one of the things that helps me when I'm reading a Psalm is to obey the 'selahs.' To pause when the Scripture calls for pause, and then to reflect on what God is talking about.

Here we see a 'selah' and it's David asking, 'how long will the sons of men love worthlessness and seek falsehood?' When we pause to consider that, the answer is "forever."

Until the end of time unbelievers will love worthlessness and seek falsehood. That is one of the reasons that it is a mistake when a church or a Christian organization starts working with the world, starts partnering with unbelievers in their ministry. Our goals and our methods are different. That which we seek is different.

We need to seek the truth, not falsehood. It's important. And that is why we reject the idea that the truth is relative or that a purely *experiential* relationship with God is better than a Scriptural relationship with God. We seek the truth.

*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.*

Couple of things here: First, we need to own up to our faith. Since we are believers there are a lot of things that should **already** characterize us....things like love and mercy and forgiveness and meekness, giving, hope, joy, self-control, peace. The fruit of the Spirit is the natural growth of a believer in Jesus Christ. Like a tree regularly bears fruit in a natural and expected pattern, so we, as God's people, should be regularly bearing the fruit of love, the fruit of kindness, the fruit of ministry, etc, in our lives.

God has set His people apart for His glory and His work. So, we should expect God to use us to encourage other believers, to evangelize the lost, to show love to the world.

But the second thing is this: we need to stay godly. We need to stay in God's will, stay in His provision, His protection, His boundaries. God will either set us apart or He will set us aside. That doesn't mean He will ever leave us or forsake us, it doesn't mean that we can lose our salvation. It means that there isn't a middle ground in our relationship with the Lord. We're either in His will or

we're outside of it. We're either set apart to be used, or we have to be set aside while He works on our hardness or our sin.

*Psalm 4.4 – Be angry and do not sin.
Meditate within your heart on your bed and be still.
Selah*

The Psalms talk a lot about meditating within ourselves about the Lord, about His will, about our lives with Him. It is very important because *that* is how we cultivate our love for God. It's how we continue to fall in love with Him every day. Just like with our marriages; if we don't spend any personal time with our spouse, if we don't have any personal intimacy with them, then our marriages are going to be in trouble. The same goes for our relationship with God. God's love for us is intimate and personal and His plan for our lives is also intimate and personal, so we need to spend time developing that relationship, developing that intimacy, that devotional life with our Bridegroom.

Psalm 4.5 – Offer the sacrifices of righteousness, and put your trust in the LORD.

There's a lot of talk in Christianity right now about change. Christians, especially younger Christians are desiring change. Change in their own lives, change in their churches, change in the world. One of the ways this is manifesting in many churches and Christian universities right now is through the topic of social action. There is a huge push to value social justice and equality over the teaching of God's word, over the regular gathering of the Saints, over worship.

Here, David, who has been talking about being angry at injustice, who has been petitioning God about the wicked men surrounding him, tells us that if we want change we should offer the sacrifices of righteousness and put our trust in the Lord.

I think there are 2 parts to this. First, we need to bring God sacrifice. I love what David said at one point in his life, he said 'I will not offer to the Lord that which cost me nothing.' We talk about offering the sacrifice of praise from our lips. We talk about presenting ourselves to God as a living sacrifice, we talk about crucifying the flesh and we need to be sure we're still doing those things when we come before the Lord.

When I come to worship God, when I come to church, when I'm out at my job or home with my family am I crucifying the flesh? Am I sacrificing anything? Am I having a real transaction with the Lord, or am I just present? Is it just a habit? David says that we must offer the sacrifices of righteousness to our God.

But the second part of that verse is the comfort of knowing that we can trust in our Lord. Yes there is much suffering in the world, yes there is much injustice, but God is faithful to address those issues in His timing with His methods. He will direct His people just how He desires. And so, we do not need to trust in ourselves to solve the problems of the world, we need to simply trust God, who **will** use us to bring change to this earth in accordance to His timing and His will.

*Psalm 4:6-7 – There are many who say, 'who will show us any good?'
Lord, lift up the light of Your countenance upon us.*

You have put gladness in my heart, more than in the season that their grain and wine increased.

We belong to a mighty God. Are we glad? Are we full of gladness? I see a lot of Christians living right now without joy, without gladness. I see a lot of Christians who seem to only have desperation, that the Church and the faith have failed.

Was David wrong? Was there no suffering during his life? Had injustice been set aside? Despite the struggles he faced or his kingdom faced, David does not ask God for funding or for food in this Psalm. He asks that the Lord might lift up the light of His countenance on His people. That the Lord might pour out His **presence** and His **power** on His people.

There are many people around this world who are in need. But, the need for food and water is always secondary to the need for Christ. And so, if we find ourselves giving food, giving funding, we should also find ourselves giving Jesus, giving the Gospel. We should find ourselves carrying the grace and gladness of our Lord when we go to help those in need.

I guess what I mean by that is this: as Christians, we shouldn't dig a well unless we're going to fill it with living water. Does that make sense? This is what David was talking about in Psalm 4. When he saw injustice, when he saw need, he asked first for the presence of God, for the light of His countenance to be visible in His people. He understood that it is God who gives righteousness, God who shows mercy, God who brings change.

What better way to revive the world than for God's people to be aligned with His will. For God's people to be deep in intimacy with their King, for God's people to wait for God's guidance and provision before trying to change our surroundings.

*Psalm 4:8 – I will both lie down in peace and sleep;
For You alone, oh Lord, make me dwell in safety.*

I like this; God alone satisfies, but God **wants** to satisfy. He wants to give us peace. He wants to protect us. He is the God of rest. The God whose yoke is easy and burden is light.

And so there are some questions we can ask ourselves tonight. Questions like, do I have satisfaction in the Lord? Do I want the Lord to use me to change the world around me? Have I been bringing God a sacrifice when I come to worship Him? Do I trust God to forgive me, to fill me, to hear me, to bear fruit in my life?

Jeremiah 17:7 – Blessed is the man who trusts in the Lord, and whose hope is the Lord.

I want to trust in God, not in my own self-righteousness. Not in some social action. Our God **is** the God who gives righteousness freely, who does not tire and who heals and fills and loves. Our God **has** a plan for redeeming the world and we want to know it and be in line with it so that we can serve our King in the time and in the way and in the strength that He desires.