

# OpenTheo

## Psalm 3-4



### Individual Topics - Steve Gregg

Steve Gregg discusses Psalm 3-4 and the relevance of these Psalms to real-life experiences. Psalm 3, written by David during his son Absalom's attempted overthrow of him as king, expresses David's distress and concerns about people turning against him. Psalm 4 serves as a companion piece to Psalm 3, with David's message emphasizing the importance of meditating on God's word and making sacrifices of righteousness. Throughout both Psalms, David expresses his trust in God's protection and ultimate authority.

### Transcript

I have to say I didn't really appreciate the Psalms when I was younger. I never cared for poetry much. They're full of all kinds of expressions that are not clear sometimes.

And they express a lot of emotion. And I've never been overly emotive. But, you know, they just didn't resonate with me when I was young.

And people would say, oh, I just love the Psalms. And I'd say, no, I don't like the Psalms. I don't like the Psalms.

I don't like the Psalms. I don't like the Psalms. I don't like the Psalms.

I don't like the Psalms. I don't like the Psalms. I think, why? You know, I mean, not that you shouldn't.

I just thought, what is it about them that has such appeal? But then, that's one of the things that you think before you have life experience. And then once you begin to have some life experience, you realize that these Psalms actually speak to reality much more than you realized. Until you've had some of the experiences that David or the other psalmists had, they're outbursts.

Of emotion, so forth, don't really seem to be very relevant to you. But it turns out, they often prove to be later in life. I've been through a few things since then.

And I just, I love the Psalms. In fact, many times, I've just prayed the Psalms. Just, you

know, I mean, they are prayers for the most part.

There's more than just prayers in the Psalms. But there's a lot of our prayers and to pray them out loud, you know, intentionally, you know, making them my own prayers have been very fruitful. Psalm 3 is one of the Psalms that has a title that explains what was going on when David wrote it.

Not all the Psalms have titles, and not all of them were written by David. There's 150 Psalms. About 75 of them have Psalm titles that attribute them to David.

Others are written by the sons of Korah, sons of Asaph, chief musician, things like that. But about half the Psalms are written by David and about 14 of them say something about what he was going through. So that we often can actually cross-reference what he was going through when he wrote the Psalm with something that's actually recorded in 1st or 2nd Samuel, which is where David's story is done.

And as you'll see, the Psalm title on chapter 3 is a Psalm of David when he fled from Absalom, his son. That's got to be one of the most dramatic episodes of David's life, whose life was filled with quite a few dramatic episodes. I mean, killing the giant was just the beginning of a life of adventure and heroism and trials and things like that.

He was pursued by the king and the armies of Israel for some years before the king died. And then David became king. And then later in his life, he really made a big mistake.

And that big mistake was that he slept with his neighbor's wife, got her pregnant, tried to conceal the fact by calling her husband home from the battlefield so that he'd go and sleep with her. And he wouldn't. He wouldn't because he felt sorry for his fellow soldiers on the field.

He said, I can't go home to my wife when my friends are out sleeping on the rocks out there. He felt real solidarity. And so David couldn't get this man, Uriah, to sleep with his own wife on his brief time off.

So David had him killed, hoping that he could then marry her and conceal the fact of the crime that he committed. And so this is, you know, David committed essentially murder and adultery, which was obviously the low point of his entire career. He was rebuked for it by the prophet Nathan, and he was he repented and God actually forgave him horrendous crimes.

He committed, but he got forgiven and God continually said God said as a result of David's sin, although he would not be put to death for it, which is what he deserved. He he said the sword will not depart from your house all the days of your life. That is, his his household would be chaotic.

And his son, a lot of his sons died, some at the hands of their siblings, violent deaths.

One of them was Amnon. Now, Amnon lusted after his half sister and actually ended up raping her.

Now, that half sister was the full sister of Absalom, another son of David's. So one of his sons raped one of his daughters, who is the sister of another of his sons, Absalom. Well, when David heard about it, about the rape, he did nothing about it.

Now, we're not told why he didn't, but we can imagine he probably felt rather morally hypocritical to criticize his son for raping a woman when David himself had not only committed adultery, killed her husband. I mean, once you've compromised yourself in that way, it makes it very hard to feel like you have the moral authority to confront somebody else, unless you're one of the Pharisees who confronted people all the time about things they were guilty of. But, you know, when you're a person with with some real conscience, once you realize how bad you can be, it makes it a little harder for you to be strict with your kids or other people who need to be confronted.

It compromises you not only personally, but it compromises your leadership. And so when Amnon slept with his sister, David, it says, knew about it and was angry, but didn't do anything about it. Well, her brother, Absalom, decided he'd do something about it.

He's more of a man of action. And he made a plot and had Amnon, his brother, half brother, killed to vindicate his sister for the rape. So Absalom now is a murderer of his own brother, and Amnon had been a rapist of his own sister.

This is the consequences that came on David's house because of his own sins. But because of Absalom killing his brother, David couldn't ignore that. And Absalom fled to another country so that, you know, he wouldn't be extradited and put to death.

Well, eventually, Absalom was allowed to come back to the country, but he was not allowed to see David. David didn't want to see him. And this made Absalom obviously very bitter toward David.

And eventually, one of David's generals, Joab, talked David into allowing Absalom to come back and to his good graces and, you know, see him and so forth. And so Absalom was restored to the society. But he hated his dad, and he was bitter toward his dad.

And he staged an insurrection against his dad. Absalom was a very handsome, charismatic guy. David was past his prime.

David had also been handsome and charismatic, too. But he was, you know, past his prime now, and his young son was much more popular. And so Absalom got quite a few of David's cabinet and military people to side with him to be the new king.

Now, how long this all was after the sin with Bathsheba, I don't know. But I have to assume that it was because of the sin with Bathsheba and that scandal in David's life

that caused some of even his own generals and stuff like that to kind of lose confidence in him and maybe say maybe we should go with Absalom. Absalom's a man of action.

You know, Amnon should have been killed by David. David ignored it. Absalom took it into his own hands and did the right thing.

So, I mean, there were people who sided with Absalom against David. And eventually, Absalom had a party with a lot of the powerful people and had them proclaim him king in David's place. Now, David was in Jerusalem at the time.

Absalom was a town nearby. And David and those who were loyal to him in Jerusalem heard, you know, the people proclaiming Absalom king. And David knew enough about Absalom to know that Absalom hated him.

And when you proclaim yourself king when there's already a king on the throne, that's, of course, treason. It means you're going to unseat the sitting king and almost certainly kill him. Usually, when you unseat a king, you have to kill him and usually his relatives, too, because he stands as one who can impose you.

He has loyalty from some of the others in the country who might want him back. So you just have to get him out of the way. That's just how things were done.

When kings were overthrown, they were killed and they often were killed just because the new king knew there'd be people in the country who were loyal to the old king. And they didn't need to get rid of that problem. So David's life was in danger and Absalom was going to kill him.

And David, of course, was a mighty man of war and had people who were mighty men of war who still stood with him. But apparently, most of them were going to Absalom. And instead of fighting Absalom because David didn't really want to kill his own son, he still loved his son.

David just decided to flee with the few who were loyal to him. And so he fled from Jerusalem and hid in the mountains with some of the troops that were with him. And Absalom and his party came to Jerusalem after David had fled that evening.

And they had to decide how they're going to get rid of David. Now, there were two counselors of David that were in Absalom's court. One was Ahithophel who was actually loyal to Absalom.

The other was a friend of David's that David had planted there. And Ahithophel who was considered to be the wisest of the counselors. He had a reputation that people said if you inquire of Ahithophel, it's like inquiring of the Oracle of God.

It's like talking to a prophet. He wasn't a prophet. He's just that smart.

His counsel is that worthwhile. Well, Ahithophel gave Absalom counsel and said, Give me some armies here and we'll pursue your father before he has time to hide anywhere. And we'll just wipe him out and that'll end this thing quickly.

But David had a friend who was also giving counsel to Absalom but pretending to be on Absalom's side. And David's friend said, Well, you know your dad, he's like a bear robbed of his cubs. He's ferocious.

I don't think you want to go out there without all the armies of Israel. I think you better call all the armies to Israel together tomorrow. And once they get here, then go out and fight your father.

And Absalom took that counsel instead of Ahithophel's counsel. The Bible says that when Ahithophel saw that his counsel wasn't heeded, he went home and he hanged himself. This is the counselor who had counseled to go out immediately and kill David.

Well, why did he do that? Why did he hang himself? Is he just too proud? I just can't live with people ignoring my counsel? Some people might think so, but it's actually more likely that he knew, he was smart enough to know, that David was going to win this because Absalom had listened to counsel that was not going to go well for Absalom. David would come to power and then Ahithophel would be hanged anyway as a traitor. So he just went home and hanged himself.

But this is the event when David wrote Psalm 3. He was fleeing from Absalom. Now the next day what actually happened was there was a war and Absalom was killed in it. Joab found Absalom.

Absalom had thick hair. The Bible says he cut his hair once a year, cut off three pounds a year. It's like shearing a sheep, you know.

And he was riding his horse through the woods and his hair got tangled up in the low hanging branches of a tree. He was dangling there off the ground by his hair. And Joab found him there and shot arrows through the guy and that ended the rebellion.

And so David came back to power. But this was written in that interval there. David had fled.

The war apparently had not yet been fought because David was not yet vindicated. So here he's robbed of his domain. But not only is he robbed of his domain.

I mean that would be hard on anyone to be king and have someone drive him out. But it's his own son. That your own son is wanting to kill you.

And that all your friends and all your loyalists are on his side. It's hard enough when you're in the minority and unpopular. It's worse when the majority, the one who's leading

the majority against you is your own son.

And his conspiracy is growing. And Psalm 3 begins, Lord, how have they increased who trouble me? Many are they who rise up against me. Now, it actually says in 2 Samuel 15 verse 12.

This is about the time that David wrote this psalm. It says, then Absalom sent for Ahithophel, the Gileanite, David's counselor from his city, namely from Gilon. And while he offered sacrifices and the conspiracy grew strong, that is Absalom's conspiracy grew strong.

For people were with Absalom. The people were continually increasing in number. So the conspiracy was already siding, attracting most, but it was growing and growing.

And so David says, Lord, how are those people increased? Their numbers are increasing who are troubling me. Many are they who rise up against me. Many are they who say of me, there is no help for him in God.

Now, this is the most galling part for a man of God to say, you know, it looks like God's not on my side anymore. When you read the book of Job, you know, the man had a lot of trials. He lost his family.

He lost his health. He lost his goods. But you can tell when Job begins to complain, he's not complaining about losing his money and his family, his goods.

He complains that it seems like God's not on his side anymore. You know, where's God? I was, I was loyal to God. How come God has forsaken me? It's, it's the hardest thing on Job and on David and on anyone who cares about his relationship with God to feel like, well, has God given up on me too? You know, these people have turned on me.

Well, that's okay. As long as I've got God. Oh, he's maybe he's not on my side either.

Maybe that's why this is happening. It says over in second Samuel chapter 17, that one of the enemies of David was, I may have the wrong place here. I've got to look for a 16.

Yeah, it's 16. Second Samuel 16, eight. When David was leaving Jerusalem, there's a guy named Shimei.

They came out to curse him and throw dirt at him and throw rocks at him. And here David had soldiers with him. And this guy was cursing David at the risk of his own life.

And here's, it says in verse seven, Shimei, I said, thus, when he cursed, come out, come out, you bloodthirsty man, you rogue. He's speaking to David. The Lord has brought upon you the blood of the house of Saul in whose place you have reigned.

And the Lord has delivered the kingdom into the hand of Absalom, your son. Now, one of

David's armor, you know, soldiers, why do you let this dead dog curse the king? Let me go over there and take his head off for you. And he could have done it.

But David said, no, no one's going to die today. If God sent him to curse me, then let him curse me. If God's on my side, he can rescue me.

David just kind of committed his case to God. But essentially, Shimei was saying, you know, the Lord has, is brought upon you the blood of the house of Saul. Now, David actually had done nothing wrong to the house of Saul.

He had done no harm to Saul. But that's what he's being accused of. And Shimei was saying, God has turned against you.

God is bringing this upon you. And David says in the psalm, there are many who say to me, there's no help for him in God. Now, to say there's no help for him in God might be something an atheist would say.

You're trusting God? There is no God. There's no help coming from there for you. But this is not what it's meaning.

The persons are not saying there's no God to help. It's that there's no help for you from God. God is not on your side.

You used to have God helping you kill giants and slay Philistines and do things like that. But that was then and this is now. And David could almost believe it because of his awareness of his great sin he'd committed with Bathsheba and killed Uriah.

I mean, you don't get over something like that when you've murdered somebody so you can take their wife. And then the baby that was conceived in that sin died too. So David was responsible for just a multifaceted tragedy.

And I don't think he ever outlived the awareness of that. So when some people are saying God's not on your side, there's no help coming for you from him. It's almost like he wasn't sure they were wrong.

But he strengthened himself and encouraged himself. Wait a minute, wait. God did forgive me.

Nathan the prophet said God forgives you because you've repented. And so David calls up his self-encouragement and says, But you, O Lord, are a shield for me, or in the Hebrew, about me, around me. You're surrounding me like a shield.

You're my glory and the one who lifts up my head. Now, those are unusual expressions. You're my glory.

What's that mean? Well, David had been a very glorious king. He was the greatest and

most remarkable king in the region for many years. He had conquered all the lands around him.

They were paying tribute to him. He actually had an empire. He had taken Israel, which under the previous king Saul, was just a small group of tribes who were afflicted by the Philistines most of the time.

And David came to power, wiped out the Philistines, drove them out, defeated the Moabites and the Ammonites and the Edomites and all the enemies and brought them under tribute. He turned this little weak nation that had been under Saul into an empire in the region. He was a great king over kings.

That's glory. But he said, But God, you are my glory. I don't have the kingship anymore.

I've been driven out of my own capital, my own son. There's nothing more humiliating than that. I've been humiliated, but you are the only glory I care about.

My glory is to be your servant. Having you as my king is my glory. You're my glory, not my own kingship, but my relationship with you.

That's the only thing I can boast in. And he says, And you're the lifter of my head. Now, that's an interesting phrase because it conveys a picture.

Perhaps David, we know it says in 2 Samuel, when he was leaving Jerusalem, he had his head covered, his head was down. He was mourning, obviously. And so the lifter of my head might mean, you know, chin up, you know, be encouraged.

But it's a phrase in Hebrew that has a variety of meanings. For example, when in chapter 40 of Genesis, when Joseph was in prison, wrongfully, and there were two other prisoners in there with him, the Pharaoh's baker and the Pharaoh's butler. They both had dreams.

And Joseph was able to interpret their dreams. And the first dream was that of the butler, who was the cupbearer for the king. And basically, when Joseph interpreted, he said, this is the interpretation, three days, the Pharaoh is going to lift your head up and give you back your position.

So to lift the head would be to exalt you to high office. But the next guy had a dream, the baker. And he had this dream of the birds eating bread off of three baskets on his head.

And Joseph said, well, that is also about three days from now. The Pharaoh's going to lift up your head from off of you. You're going to be executed.

So the lifter of the head was a phrase Joseph used in both cases. One was exalted to power. The other was lifted up in execution.



A little like when Jesus said, if I'd be lifted up, I'll draw a man unto myself. And John says he spoke that about the way he would die. Jesus lifted up on a cross.

So the lifting up by God is, it can be a positive or negative. But it's obvious that David means this as a positive. He says, you're my glory.

You're the lifter of my head. And no doubt that's what he's saying. You're the one who brought me to power.

You're the one who put me in a position. I didn't bring myself into this position. I was a shepherd boy minding my own business.

I was just sent by dad to take some food to our brothers at the battlefield. And I heard the giant talking. And what could I do? I had to answer.

And I went and killed the giant. Suddenly I'm famous. Suddenly people want me to be king.

Suddenly I am king. I didn't even plan on this. You're the one who lifted my head.

I was made king not by my own contriving, but I was made king by you. And therefore, you're the one who gets to decide if I'm king or not. If I'm not, well, you're the one who lifted me up.

You can bring me down. But it sounds almost though that he's confident that God is going to keep him in power. You're the one who put me in power.

If God raises me up, who can take me down? If God is for us, who can be against us? Paul said in Romans 8. And so when he says, you're my glory, you're the one who lifts up my head, he's apparently being optimistic here. Where he didn't sound very optimistic in the first two verses, but that's often the way it is in the Psalms. The Psalms often begin with a complaint and a prayer, a desperate cry for help from God.

And then as it moves along, he begins to express confidence in God, which is a smart thing to do. I mean, in a couple of the Psalms, David speaks to his own heart and says, why are you cast down, O my soul? Why are you disquieting me? Hope in God. He talks himself out of his despair, not with psychological self-talk, but with reminding himself about who God is and talking to God.

He's actually speaking to God. And so in his prayer, he's complaining about his plight, but he's reminding God, yeah, but on the other hand, you're the one who lifted me up. You're the one who's my glory.

I cried to the Lord with my voice, he says in verse four, and he heard me from his holy hill. Now the holy hill is Mount Zion where Jerusalem is. Jerusalem was built on Mount Zion, the holy hill.

And that's where David's throne had been. That's where his capital was. That's where his palace was.

That's what Absalom now controlled. Absalom was now reigning, as far as humans were concerned, over the holy hill, but God was still seated there. God answers from there.

Absalom may be the one who's visibly in power, but God's still the one who owns the place, and he's the one. He says, I cried to God, and he heard me from the holy hill. Now the word heard in the Hebrew actually has the meaning of answered or responded.

It does mean to hear, but its usage usually means if you hear my cry, it means you've heeded, you've hearkened to me, you've responded to me. Many translations actually read, and you answered me from your holy hill, where it actually says here, you heard me. In any case, there are people saying that David's tenure under God's favor is over.

There's no help for him in God now. He says, yeah, but I cried out to God, and he still heard me. He still answered me, so I think they're wrong.

You're my glory. You're at the left of my head. I'm still counting on you.

He says, I lay down and slept. I awoke, for the Lord sustained me. I will not be afraid of 10,000s of people who set themselves against me all around.

Now, he says, I slept comfortably. I mean, I'm out here in the woods, probably in a cave somewhere, trying to avoid being detected by absolute dishonor, because they'd kill me if they heard me. But I slept well.

I'm doing good. I laid down. I slept.

I woke up. It's all good, because you sustained me. In other words, when you have confidence in God, you can sleep well.

Now, that's going to come up again in the next psalm. And the next psalm, it ends with these words. I will both lay down in peace and sleep, for you alone, O Lord, make me dwell in safety.

So he wrote Psalm 3 the morning after. And the next psalm, he wrote about anticipating the next night's sleep. Psalm 3 says, I laid down last night.

I was ostensibly in a great deal of danger, but I slept. I woke up, and I'm okay. You sustained me.

You must be on my side. So he's like writing this the day after he fled from Jerusalem, but he's still out of Jerusalem, and there's not been a battle yet. When he wrote Psalm 4, he's looking forward to sleeping well that night, too.

So sleeping well is sort of a theme of these two psalms. It's one reason that they seem to go together. I lay down.

I slept. I woke. You sustained me.

I'm good. It's all good. I will not be afraid of ten thousands of people who have set themselves against me all around.

Now, that's a sentiment that David expresses more times than just here. I mean, there's times when he talks about even if the mountains are moved out of their places, I'm still secure in God. And if armies come against me, for example, over in Psalm 27, just a few pages over, verse 2 and 3, he says, When the wicked came against me to eat up my flesh, my enemies and foes, they stumbled and fell.

Though an army should encamp against me, my heart shall not fear. Though war should rise against me, in this I will be confident. Now, how can you be confident when an army rises against you, and you're not an army yourself? If ten thousands of enemies come against you, I'm confident.

It's all good. Now, I don't know if he's saying, I could just stand there against them and take them all on. Or if he's saying, I just know that God's will is going to be done, and that's all that matters.

If I live, I live. If I die, I die. I'm not going to be afraid.

I can't control this situation. Fortunately, there's a God who does control situations when I don't have any control over them. I can't make there not be a war.

I can't make there not be people wanting to kill me. I mean, I haven't done anything to earn this from them. So this is out of my hands.

So it's in God's hands. And that's, you know, it says in 1 Peter 5 that we should cast all of our cares, the word cares means worries, cast all of our cares on him, because he cares few. What in the world does that mean? What does it mean to cast your cares on him? It means saying, God, this is your problem.

You know? I'm in trouble here, but I belong to you. Whatever happens to me is up to you. If you lose me, if you want to lose me, that's fine.

If you don't want to lose me, you better protect me, because this is your problem, not mine. And that's what a person can say only when they're totally resigned to God, and saying, you know, I certainly have things I would prefer to see happen, but really, in the long run, it doesn't matter. A thousand years from now, what will matter would happen to me today.

What will matter is if I'm in the will of God. A thousand years, a million years from now,

all that will matter is that God's will was done in my life, and I'm resigned to that. I can die young or old.

I can die in my sleep, or I can die in battle, but I'm going to rest comfortably, because, frankly, my life is in God's hands. If I give myself to him, along with me go my problems to him. He gets to take care of it.

So, that's where David's at. Yeah, 10,000 people come against me, well, I'll still sleep okay, you know. Now, that may sound really unlikely, but I believe it's true.

I mean, a person can actually be at a place where they're totally worried, totally sleepless, you know, they're restless, fearful, but to remind yourself, well, you know, what control do I have over the situation? Not any. Obviously, if I had control, I wouldn't be in this situation, but God has control, and so, if I like God, if I like his will, if I'm on his side, he's on my side, what more can be done by me but to rest in God? And there's, you know, some other psalms that have that kind of idea in them. Like, I mentioned Psalm 4, verse 8, where he says, I will both lie down in peace and sleep for you alone, O Lord, make me dwell safely.

So, I'm, you know, I'm in trouble, but I'll sleep comfortably because you're the one who makes me safe. There's also Psalm 127, which is a psalm with some other interesting features in this, but I just want to bring up the one point in Psalm 127, in verse 2, where it says, it is vain for you to rise up early or to sit up late and to eat the bread of sorrows, for he gives his beloved sleep. So, sleepless nights, not necessary.

Staying up late because you can't sleep, getting up early because you couldn't sleep in, just, you're restless, you're eating the bread of sorrows, as it were, so to speak. That's a vain thing to do. What's the point of staying awake? You know, when God is the one who's going to give you sleep.

In Psalm 121, in verse 4, it says, Behold, he who keeps Israel, meaning God, God is the one who keeps Israel. Behold, he who keeps Israel neither slumbers nor sleeps. So, God doesn't go to sleep.

He's watching all the time. He'll keep watch. You can go ahead and go to sleep.

I remember hearing a preacher tell this story more than once, that in World War II, when the Nazis were bombing England, it was very common for people in London to hear the air raid sirens and they have to all leave their homes and go into the air raid shelters and so forth. And there's this one lady living in this neighborhood who everyone knew, and when the sirens went off, they went into the shelters and she wasn't there. And they're, uh-oh, she's not here.

You know, is she going to be okay? Was she killed? Where is she? And when the danger was over, they came out of the shelter, went back home, and they saw her sitting on her

rocking chair on her front porch. And they said, Where were you during the bombing? She said, I was right here. And they said, Well, how in the world did you sleep at night? Weren't you afraid? She said, Well, I read in my Bible that he that keeps Israel neither slumbers nor sleeps.

So I felt there's no use for both of us staying awake. You know? So that's kind of David's attitude here too. You know? No sense in me staying awake if God's going to stay awake and watch.

You know? If he ever goes to sleep, I'll have to wake up and keep watch. I'll take his place. But I don't think that's ever going to happen.

So I can sleep. I can rest in the Lord. So verse 7, Arise, O Lord.

Now, he's actually just speaking by way of testimony in verses 5 and 6. But David speaks to God again as he was in the earlier verses. Arise, O Lord. Save me, O my God.

For you have struck all my enemies in the cheekbone and have broken the teeth of the ungodly. Salvation belongs to our God. Your blessing is upon your people.

Now, striking his enemies on the cheekbone probably is picturing himself as God's sheep and the predators are after him. Remember Psalm 23? The Lord is my shepherd. He makes me lie down in green pastures.

He leads me by the waters. He's like the sheep, and God takes care of him. But there's predators.

David knew because he had been a shepherd. He had killed lions and bears, he had said, before he killed Goliath. And everyone said, you can't kill that giant.

He said, well, listen, I was watching sheep and a lion came after a sheep. I killed it. A bear came after a sheep on another occasion.

I killed it too. God delivered me from the mouth of a lion and from the paw of a bear. He'll deliver me from this uncircumcised Philistine.

David had some experience that was shepherding as a shepherd, but he also likened himself to a sheep, God's sheep. The Lord is my shepherd. And as a shepherd, he had to be protected from predators because there were plenty of predators, wolves, lions, bears.

They're all mentioned in the Bible as being in the area. And they would be a menace to the sheep. I remember we looked at a moment ago in Psalm 27, where he said, when the wicked came up, this is Psalm 27 too, when the wicked came against me to eat up my flesh.

That's a picture of carnivores coming to eat the sheep. He's the sheep and his enemies are like ravenous wolves or lions coming against him. So it's when my wicked came against me to eat up my flesh, my enemies and foes, they stumbled and fell.

Though an army should have camped against me, my heart would not fear. Over here in Psalm 3, his enemies are not stumbling and falling. It's more like God has arisen like a shepherd to defend his sheep.

He grabs his club and knocks the wolf across the face and knocks all his teeth out. That's how he is describing God's protection of him. Arise, O Lord, save me, O God.

You have struck all my enemies on the cheekbone. You've broken the teeth of the ungodly. Now, notice that David is calling out for help, but he's reminding God of times in the past when God has helped him.

Even in Psalm 27, which we just looked at, he said, When my enemies came against me, that's a previous occasion. When my enemies came against me, they stumbled and fell. Therefore, I won't be afraid if an army comes against me now.

I've been in that situation before, been there, done that. I've been in trouble before and hey, God made my enemies stumble because he wanted to protect me. God broke the teeth out of these predators coming after me.

Therefore, I can be confident that this situation too, when he says he's broken the teeth out of his enemies, he doesn't mean Absalom and those guys. It means previous times. David has experience with God.

I'll tell you, that's something that really is helpful. I mean, in facing life, coping with hard situations and challenges, fearful situations and dangers, having some experience under your belt with God really gives you grounds for peace because you've seen, oh, God can handle this. I killed a lion, I killed a bear, I can kill this Philistine.

I mean, God took care of those situations, so take care of this one. David's Psalms have a lot of that element in it. So he says, you've broken my enemies' teeth out of their heads before when you arose to defend me.

So he's just saying, and he's telling his own soul this as much as anything. He's encouraging himself. He says salvation belongs to the Lord.

Your blessing is upon your people. David didn't seem like he was being blessed by God that time, but he knew that God does bless his people and that salvation is God's possession. God's salvation belongs to God.

That's an interesting phrase. It's also found in Revelation 7, 10, where the inhabitants of heaven sing, salvation belongs to our God who sits upon the throne and unto the Lamb.

That's been put into a song, some of you might remember, but salvation belongs to our God.

Anyway, it's the same line, only from the New Testament. What does it mean, salvation belongs to God? What it means is it's his prerogative. He's the one who can do it.

You don't look to someone else for it. He's the Savior. He's the one who saves.

It's his salvation. He delivers if he wants to. And it's also the case that he delivers for his own sake.

It's his enterprise, salvation. And his enterprise is not, he doesn't save us just so that we'll be out of danger. He saves us because we're valuable to him and he doesn't want to lose us until it's time.

Certainly there's a time each of us has to go sometime, but until then, God has something for us to do. Until God is finished with us, I believe we're indestructible. Of course, we might, any of us, he might be done with us today.

You know, we might die today. But the comfort is in knowing that God is the one who saves for his own sake. And that means he will save me if it works out for his plan, if he wants that.

It's his to save. And it's like the story of the lost coin in Luke 15. The woman had 10 coins.

She lost one. Jesus said, she searched the whole house until she found it and she rejoiced to find it. That's like God searching for a lost soul and rejoicing to find it.

Now, that coin wasn't in any danger. It's the woman who lost the coin who got something back of value to her. That's, you know, it's for her that she sought it.

It's for him that God saves us. We're saved for him. We often think of, what am I saved from? Hell? Okay, well, that might be one of the things I'm saved from.

But the real issue of salvation is not what am I saved from? What am I saved for? I'm saved for God. You know, in Ephesians 2, 8 and 9 and 10, many of us are probably more familiar with verses 8 and 9, which says, for by grace you've been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves, it's the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast. But then it says, for we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works.

We're saved by grace, but we're saved for a life of good works. That's what God's looking for. He didn't save us just because we were in trouble.

He saved us because he wanted us. He wanted us for himself. A people who do good works.

Paul said the same thing over in Titus 2, in verse 14. He said that Christ, let me just give you an actual reading here. Titus 2, verse 14, says, Christ gave himself for us that he might redeem us.

Now, the word redeem means purchase. If you've lost something and it's at the pawn shop, you had to forfeit it, and you get the money and go buy it back, that's redeeming it. Redeeming is to buy back something you lost or forfeited.

Okay, so Jesus gave himself that he might redeem us, to buy us back for himself from every lawless deed and purify for himself his own special people, zealous for good works. The reason Jesus died isn't just because we were in trouble and he felt sorry for us. He wanted to purchase us back for his own purposes.

He wants to have a people of his own who are zealous for good works. So salvation isn't just for me, it's for God. Salvation is the Lord's and it belongs to the Lord.

And so does the thing that was saved belong to the Lord. Now, I just want to go real quickly through Psalm 4 because it's short. I don't have to make any comments.

We talked a lot about Absalom and so forth at the beginning of this, so it took us longer to get through chapter 3. But chapter 4 is thought to be a companion psalm. Many people believe it was written around the same time with the same historical milieu. So in chapter 4, it just says to the chief musician with stringed instruments, the Psalm of David, Hear me when I call, O God of my righteousness.

Now, I believe this is no doubt the next day or maybe even it's possible David wrote this psalm earlier when he was fleeing from Absalom because he talks about, I'm going to go to sleep and wake up, I'll be fine. But in Psalm 3, he says, I went to sleep, I woke up, I was fine. It's almost like Psalm 4 could have been written earlier.

No one knows the order in which they were written. So, I mean, this could be he's fleeing from Absalom initially. He hasn't assured himself as he did in Psalm 3 yet or else it's the next day and he still has to remind himself that he's in trouble.

Hear when I call, O God of my righteousness. You have relieved me when I was in distress. Have mercy on me and hear my prayer.

How long, O you sons of men, which would be a reference probably to Absalom and those who were with Absalom. How long will you turn my glory into shame? Yeah, I was a glorious king. Now you've got me humiliated.

You've turned me into a person who doesn't have that glory anymore. It's now shame I've traded in for that. How long will you love worthlessness and seek falsehood? Yeah, to support Absalom was to seek falsehood because Absalom was not the real king.



God had chosen David to be king and made it very clear. He had anointed him. His Holy Spirit came upon him.

Nathan the prophet, excuse me, Samuel the prophet had poured oil over his head and made him king. Absalom didn't have any of that. They're faking it like this guy's the king.

They're pretending he's the king. David's the real king but they're following a falsehood, a false claimant to the throne. But know that the Lord has set apart for himself him who is godly.

The Lord will hear when I call him. That line, God has set apart for himself. That's what we were just talking about.

When God saves you, he saves you for himself. You don't just get a ticket to heaven and now that's the difference between now and before. The difference is you weren't his and now you are.

Now you belong to God. Paul says, you've been bought with a price, the blood of Jesus. You're not your own.

You need to glorify God with your body and with your mind and your spirit because they belong to God. And David knew that. They knew that because I belong to God, God has an interest in me.

God has an interest in his stuff, in his possessions, in his valuables. And David was one of God's valuable guys. So, okay, God has set me apart.

God has set apart every godly person for himself. Because there aren't many, there aren't many godly people in the world comparatively. And therefore, when God finds them, he sets them aside for special purposes.

He sets them aside to be his own. He sets them aside to use them and to bless them, of course, and to reward them too. And in this case, because David knew he belonged to God, then he knew God would listen to him when he cries out.

Now, verse four and five is, I've got to say something, especially verse four. It says, be angry and do not sin. Meditate within your heart on your bed and be still.

Offer the sacrifices of righteousness and put your trust in the Lord. Now, I don't usually read the word Selah. You can read it, it's there.

The word Selah is considered to be a musical notation. These were written to be sung by a choir, by musicians played. And no one knows exactly what Selah means, but it's a musical indicator.

Some people say it means pause, like it's a musical pause. Or some say crescendo here.

We don't know really what the word means, but it's giving some kind of instructions to the musicians.

So I usually don't even read the Selah, but it's there, so I note it. But he says, be angry and do not sin. Meditate within your heart on your bed and be still.

Offer the sacrifices of righteousness and put your trust in the Lord. Now, I wanted to comment on verse four because there's a quotation of it in the New Testament by Paul in Ephesians 4.26. But the word, the verb be angry in the Hebrew means tremble. It's a different idea than be angry.

Tremble, like in fear. You know, it says in Isaiah that God looks to this man who is meek and a humble spirit and who trembles at his word. You know, somebody who fears God, who takes God seriously, who, when they realize, oh, God is awesome, kind of makes them tremble.

And it looks like he's speaking, of course, to his enemies. He's not addressing the good guys. He's been in verse two, how long, O you sons of men, will you turn my glory and say, how long you love worthless, a sick falsehood.

This seems to be the people he's talking to. And in the Hebrew, he says, tremble and do not sin. In other words, be afraid of God and give up your career of sin.

And meditate within your heart, on your bed, that is, think about your life. On your bed usually would mean at the end of the day, the business of the day is behind you. A lot of times people, if they are awake in bed, they're contemplating life a little deeper than when they're about their business in the daytime.

Think about this, meditate on this. Offer sacrifices of righteousness and put your trust in the Lord. So he's actually calling on his enemies to trust in God and do the things that God wants.

Offering sacrifices of righteousness. He's not, I don't think talking about actually offering sacrifices of animals in the temple, as which you might think. But I think he means that by being righteous, your righteous behavior is the offering of the sacrifice.

Like Paul said in Romans 12, present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God. What does it mean to present your bodies a sacrifice? It means you recognize that you are offering yourself to God for his service and to live righteously. A parallel to that is in Romans 6, 13, where he says, present the members of your body as instruments of righteousness and not instruments of sin.

So you present your bodies a living sacrifice by presenting your instruments to God as his, for his service. And that's offering a kind of a sacrifice. It's not a ritual sacrifice on an altar in a temple.

It's more like doing what to God is a more valuable sacrifice than an animal being sacrificed. Do the right thing. In another place, David said in Psalm 40, to God, sacrifice and offerings you did not desire, but you've opened my ear.

I delight to do your will, O God. Now, I want to, your word is in my heart, he said. Your word is in my heart.

I love to do your will. That's what you like more than sacrifices and offerings. Even though there are plenty of sacrifices and offerings in the Jewish religious system, David knew that there were things more important.

The sacrifices of righteousness are more than sacrifices of animals. Doing righteousness is your sacrifice. Put your trust in the Lord.

So he kind of calls his enemies to repent. There are many who say, who will show us any good? Lord, lift up the light of your countenance on us. Now, who will show us any good? He's saying there's a lot of people asking this question.

Who can show us any good? And it sounds like a cynical question. Like, I dare you. I dare you to show me some good.

Who will show us anything good? As if to say, there really isn't anything to there. Who can show us otherwise? Prove me wrong. There's no good.

Prove me wrong. Is what they're saying. Now, what does good here mean? I was looking at that today in the lexicons, and the word good can mean virtue.

In other words, moral goodness. But it can also mean just good circumstances. Like, good times.

You know, prosperity. We're looking for good circumstances as opposed to bad circumstances. But I've always kind of understood this to mean virtue.

Who can show us any real virtue? And I don't know if that's what David meant or not, but I think in the context it makes good sense. The people would be saying perhaps, David, you're supposed to be a good man, but you're not even a good man. You've sinned terribly.

Is there anyone really good? Who can show us really someone who's good? Everyone's a hypocrite. And a lot of people say that. I mean, they just assume.

Don't trust anybody, especially religious people. They're holier than thou folks. They're all hypocrites.

Just prove me otherwise. Show me someone who's really good. Who can show us how you're good? And David realizes that he himself has failed to be an example of good,

although he was a man of God.

He himself had been a hypocrite, which he regretted. But he then prays. He says, there are a lot of people asking, who can show us any good? Well, God, let the light of your countenance arise on us.

Lift up the light of your countenance on us. Countenance is a word for face. God, let your face shine on us, is what he's saying.

There was a priestly prayer that Aaron was supposed to utter regularly over people saying, the Lord bless you and keep you. The Lord be merciful unto you and lift up the light of his countenance upon you. Lift up the light of the countenance means to show favor.

Actually, that phrase is used about three other times in the Psalms and once in the Proverbs. It usually means to show favor. But more than that, to have God's face shine on us would mean to help us be the people that can answer that cynical question.

You know, favor us with the ability to be the answer to that cynic. Who can show us any good? Well, I hope you can look at me and see something good. You know, if God will so favor me, if God will lift up his countenance upon me, I hope that I can make you stop asking that question.

I hope you can examine my life and see if I'm a good person or not, or if I'm a hypocrite. You know, Christians should be able to say, you're looking for something good? I'll volunteer my example, you know. But no one will, or very few will.

First of all, it sounds proud. It sounds self-righteous. And it frankly is something that most Christians can't say without feeling ashamed because they realize that if you look closely enough at them, they're not all that good.

But David, I think, wants to be that good. Every Christian should want to say, God, let your face be seen, your face and your character be seen in me. Those people who need to see that there is such a thing as a righteous life.

Let me live it. Let me show them, if possible. And of course, none of us are going to be perfect.

Virtuous doesn't mean perfect. A virtuous person is weak. They're good because they're oriented toward good.

They want to do good. It's their determination to do good. Out of weakness, we sometimes slip and don't do good, but it's our determination.

And when a righteous person doesn't do what's right, they repent, like David did himself when he fell, he repented. That's actually the mark of a good person. Not that they don't

ever do anything wrong, but they're not satisfied to do wrong.

They want to change, and they want to repent of what they do wrong. You have put gladness in my heart, more than in this season, that their grain and wine increase. Now, when the grain and wine is brought in and the harvest and the vintage every year, that's the time when Middle Eastern Jews would have their big parties when they bring in the wine and they bring in the grain.

I mean, it's the big time of the year for celebration. And David isn't experiencing quite really good times at this point. He's really, he's got people against him.

He's not in power. It's not exactly party time for David, but he says, you've increased the joy in my heart more than they experience in their festivals and parties. In other words, I have a different kind of joy based on something different than what worldly people do.

People, they love to party. They love to indulge. And they did it in their harvest times and so on.

That's what they did. And David says, I know how people are at those times. I've been there too.

I know what it's like when their wine and their grain increases. But I have more joy in my heart now, and I'm not in those circumstances. But I have that joy in my heart now, more than they have at those times.

Which is, of course, what the Bible teaches, that God gives a joy that's unspeakable. Or inexpressible and full of glory. Jesus said that he's given a joy to us that the world can't understand.

Because it's not based on having good times. It's actually the relationship with God makes you have this fulfillment and this joy that others may not have. So you have put gladness in my heart more than, he means more than they have in the season that their grain and wine increase.

I will both lie down in peace and sleep, for you alone, O Lord, make me dwell safely. So we have this sleep motif again. By the way, the word both there, the Hebrew word actually means together.

And probably means simultaneous in this case. I will lie down and simultaneously fall asleep. I will have, my lying down and my sleep, falling asleep will be simultaneous.

It'll happen together. The two things will happen together. In other words, I'm not going to lie awake in bed, trying to sleep.

I'm going to go right to sleep. I'm not going to worry about a thing because I know that you alone make me dwell in safety. Now, the you alone is an important thing.

It's not you and me together, God, will keep me safe. If I have a role to play, I might as well stay awake. Because, I mean, if God's counting on me to make myself safe, how do I know if I'm putting enough diligence and vigilance into that? But it's not me that keeps me safe.

It's you alone. You're the one who's going to determine how safe I am. And that's good with me.

That's fine with me because you're pretty good at that. You're a shield around me, he says. You're my glory, the lifter of my head.

You're the one who takes care of my fortunes. And I'm quite happy to let it be so. And David, of course, eventually died, as all people do.

But when you have put yourself in the hand of God and said, I'm yours. You've set apart the hymn of God for yourself. I belong to you.

You've set me apart for you. Well, okay. That means I don't have any agendas.

Even survival is not an agenda for me. I don't even have to survive. I know I'm going to die sometime.

The more important thing than whether I live or die is whether I live or die in the will of God. If God is finished with me and doesn't want to use me anymore, dying is just fine. What's the point of living on if you're not going to be used by God anymore? If he doesn't have any more use for you.

Might as well go home. Might as well be promoted now rather than later. So, I mean, if you belong to God, it's just you resign yourself to the fact that I'll live or die as God prefers.

He alone is the one who's going to determine my security and my safety. And that's what David came to, I guess, as he was in that most trying and most heartbreaking time of his entire life. And, of course, he did.

He was vindicated. His enemy, sadly, his son had to die. And David wasn't happy about it.

David wept and mourned over the death of Absalom. So much so that the people who had been loyal to David were offended. They said, you know, it looks like you'd rather we had all died and Absalom would have lived rather than us live and Absalom die.

You love your enemies more than you love your friends. So David had to kind of control his emotions there. But he was very sorry when Absalom died.

But it was the way that God rescued him. If Absalom had not died, David would have

died. They weren't both going to survive that confrontation.

So he just expresses his trust in God in those times and his security and perhaps most relevant to any of us is the ability to sleep well in troubled times, you know. Times when you watch the news and go to bed and you think, I can't sleep because of what's going on in Washington, D.C., what's going on in Ukraine, what's going on the world around. Well, that's in God's hands, if I leave it in God's hands.

I have to do the will of God and he might have me do something to bring about change, but even then I have to trust him to make it successful. Or he might just say, there's nothing you can do, just trust me. The point is whether you're involved in bringing the solution or you have no possible involvement in bringing the solution, it's that you're resting in God.

You are at peace, you're at rest because you consider God alone makes me dwell securely, and that's all that's going to matter to me. That's my decision.