

Psalms 18-05-03

This is Thursday evening, the 3rd of May, 2018. We continue our study in the book of the Psalms, the hymn book of Israel, and tonight we find ourselves in Psalm 4. Psalm 4. Let's begin by going to the Lord in prayer and asking His blessing on our fellowship and our study of this great song, and then we'll begin. Father, thank You for the many ways that You provide for us and bless us and challenge us and give us opportunities to strengthen our faith and enhance our experiential knowledge of the things we learn from Your Word.

We thank You for the fellowship of like-minded believers and the opportunity to discuss the things that we learn and to be encouragement to one another and a source of support and conversation. We thank You that we have the gift of Your Word and the presence of Your Spirit to provide Your thoughts to our hearts, and we pray tonight as we look at this portion of Your Word that God the Holy Spirit will minister to each heart in a way that is meaningful and effective and fruitful for the days and the kingdoms that are to come. We pray these things in Jesus' name.

Amen. Well, let's take a look at the ground that we've already covered. You remember that Psalm 1 looked inward, recognizing that we have a responsibility to be that tree planted by the rivers of water.

Psalm 2 took a look at the opposition in a corporate sense, the nations and the heathens and the kings and the rulers. This you might equate by application to the principalities and powers and rulers of the darkness of this age that compass us about. Then last time we looked at Psalm 3, which has David looking at the very dire situation when he is run out of Jerusalem by Absalom, and it looks as though all of the promise and the years of sustaining grace in the wilderness and victories in battle and establishing peace for the nation have all come to naught because of something that came from David's own household, product of perhaps his own bad decisions.

And so we saw last time the prayer for God to arise, which have arisen against me, arise, O Lord. And this puts you in mind of Romans where Paul says, where sin abounded, grace did much more abound. And if opposition arises, whether circumstances or people, well, God can arise a little bit higher than anything on this earth, and it is a wonderful appeal and a reminder that salvation belongs to the Lord, and His blessing is upon His people.

And we saw this *silva* notation in the song last time, and I've convinced myself to my own satisfaction that that is an instrumental break where there is a pause to reflect on what has been said before the song moves forward. There is an emotional response, a counterpoint in the music to emphasize what has just been said. We're going to see that again tonight in Psalm 4. We also noticed last time that Psalm 3 is something of a morning song.

It's certainly implied by the rising up in the morning. David wakes in the morning, and as soon

as his awareness fully hits, that's why he's remembering that all of his enemies are rising up as well. You haven't lived until you've been in a circumstance where you wake up, and for a blissful couple of seconds you don't remember all of the troubles that are arrayed against you, and then you remember.

And it is a time of challenge, sometimes first thing in the morning. So Psalm 3 is the morning song. This is how to meet that initial awareness that things are not as good as they have been in the past, but God is in his heaven, and he does help his troubled people.

Well, now Psalm 4 is an evening song, and we're going to see this implied, and it's a wonderful pattern that we've seen time and again, that if we can refresh our perspective first thing in the morning, last thing at night, and sometime in the middle of the day, evening and morning and at noon, will I pray and cry aloud and he will hear my voice. Daniel did that consistently throughout his long life, and one of the reasons he is a great example and hero of faith is because of that regularity in prayer. The Lord Jesus did the same thing.

So we have the idea here that David has given us a morning prayer on a particularly challenging day, and perhaps on that same day or certainly in that same circumstance, we have Psalm 4. Let's read it in our new King James. It has a superscription to the chief musician with stringed instruments, a psalm of David. And you know now when you see the word psalm and a superscription, this is going to be mizmor.

And that comes from the verb zamar, which is generally interpreted to make a song, but it has the idea of plucking or something that has been plucked. And it is a suggestion here that this originated, that David wrote this on his harp. But when it says with stringed instruments, this in the old King James is neganoth.

And nagan is the root verb there. And neganoth is a plural, a feminine plural of that. And this again has the idea of something that is played on strings.

But because it's in the plural, you figure that where Psalm 3 might have been a psalm that was played with solo accompaniment, this one has orchestral accompaniment. There's a lot of strings behind it, and it is addressed to the chief musician who leads. So this might have been a choral arrangement with orchestra accompaniment, as opposed to a solo with a single accompaniment.

So where the Psalm 3 is something that might have been a contemplation when David first awakens, and before he goes out even to join his friends and fellow travelers for breakfast, this is something he thought about on his own. He might have picked up his harp and played a tune and composed this prayer. But in the evening, you get the idea that after a long day of challenge, you need more than that.

It's not a time to go back into contemplation. Most of our social activities take place in the evening, unless it's a men's prayer breakfast, and I never quite understood how that arose. It

didn't come from guys like me, I can tell you.

I wouldn't be saying, let's all get up at 5.30 in the morning and get together and have a social activity. Nothing against it, that's just me. I, not the Lord.

But most normal people, in my estimation, have their social life in the evening. And I find support for it here in Psalm 4, because here's where you've got a chorus and an orchestra supporting the idea. And in the morning, David is on his first cup of coffee, and he just has his own guitar, and he has his own prayer.

So that's how I see it, and I dare anybody to question it. So Psalm 4, to the chief musician. This is something that David gave to the orchestra leader, and he said, look, I want you to teach it to the singers, teach it to the harp players, the stringed instrument players, and you'll perform this as a choir and orchestra number.

Here's the text. Hear me when I call, O God of my righteousness. You have relieved me in my distress.

Have mercy on me and hear my prayer. How long, O you sons of men, will you turn my glory to shame? How long will you love worthlessness and seek falsehood? Selah. Notice my long pause there.

Selah. So that's our first section, and you could imagine that now not just a harp solo, but an instrumental solo by the stringed instruments might fill in here. So what do we have? We have an appeal to God based on God's character and God's past action on his behalf.

The second stanza picks up in verse 3, but know that the Lord has set apart for himself him who is godly. The Lord will hear when I call to him. Be angry and do not sin.

Meditate within your heart on your bed and be still. You see now why the suggestion is that this is an evening song. You're fixing to go to bed, maybe not sure you're going to go to immediate sleep.

Meditate within your heart on your bed and be still. Selah. Another instrumental break.

Offer the sacrifices of righteousness and put your trust in the Lord. There are many who say, Who will show us any good? Lord, lift up the light of your countenance upon us. Again, you think about nighttime.

This is when you lift up a light. If you need to see your way to across the camp or to the edge of the camp or wherever you need to go. You have put gladness in my heart more than in the season that their grain and wine increased.

I will both lay down in peace and sleep for you alone. Oh Lord, make me dwell in safety. You recognize that as one of our memory verses.

Okay, so you will notice that there are two Selah breaks, which divide the Psalm naturally into three parts. You would almost expect there to be another one after verse six, but there isn't. And we'll see that this is a stylistic decision on David's part that has meaning.

But as we begin this, let me make a quick note back on Psalm 2. You remember at the end of that Psalm, verse 12 said in the text of your new King James, kiss the son lest he be angry and you perish in the way. I still haven't found my paper, but I did find my notes and what I think is in the standard world, the best solution to that. And it has to do with the word for this is something that a man named Berto let maybe Berto lay, I don't speak French, but he suggested this in 1908 and it makes a lot of sense.

It fixes the metric problems in verse 12 of Psalm 2. It does a lot of other things. It even creates a chiasmic structure. And I may have given this before years and years ago, we covered Psalm 2, but this, I think outside of my work, which I'll eventually dig up, I think is the most elegant solution and I think most scholars agree.

But here's what happened. The last three letters of a word got forgotten. A scribe fell asleep with his pen in his hand or something and they were left out of the text.

Somebody was reading the text and noticed that they had been left out. And so they put them in the margin. The next guy to come along saw those and stuck them at the beginning of the verse at that margin instead of leaving it at the end.

So you have three letters that got transposed and they are G, L, and W. And when you transpose them, you get the word kiss at the beginning instead of where it belongs. So long story short, here's how 11 and 12 ought to read. That is the last part of 11 and the first part of 12.

So when it says rejoice with trembling, that doesn't make any sense. Kiss the sun doesn't make any sense. Those corrected lines should read serve the Lord with fear, with trembling, literally it says kiss his feet.

So you see how the word kiss got transposed? Lest he be angry and you perish in the way. And it picks up from there. So the next line begins at lest.

You'll notice that serve the Lord with fear, with trembling, kiss his feet is a nice standard distich and it's chiasmic. Serve the Lord and kiss his feet or pay him homage is in the outside, with fear and with trembling are on the inside. It solves, there are five separate problems with these two lines.

This correction fixes all of them. So my suggestion is in your Bible, cross out, rejoice with trembling, cross out, kiss the sun, and it should read, serve the Lord with fear, with trembling, kiss his feet. All the rest of it then follows.

So I finally found some of my Psalm 2 stuff. But with that out of the way, let's return to Psalm 4

now. And let's look at this first section, verses 1 and 2. Hear me when I call, O God of my righteousness.

You have relieved me in my distress. So what is David doing in this call? He begins by making a claim on God's promise. Hear me when I call, O God of my righteousness.

And kara, Q-A-R-A here is to cry out. And once again, we have this idea of verbal prayer. It keeps occurring.

When I call out, and that is really the first word after the superscription. So it is, in my cry, or when I call, it has the prefix ba, which is in, by, or with. In my calling, in my crying out, here.

So juxtaposed, you have David's cry, and, hear, O God. In my crying, hear, O God. And there's even sort of a chiasmic structure there, where you have David crying out, and God's response is to hear.

O God, my righteousness. This is tzedek, with the possessive on the end. O God, my righteousness.

And this is a, sort of a genitive idea here. God of righteousness, but it's my righteousness. And so, David knows that his affliction isn't, he doesn't say, O God, my judge, because I messed up.

He says, the God who knows that what is happening to me is undeserved suffering. O God of my righteousness. The God who declares me righteous, who maintains my righteousness, who gives me righteousness.

All of these things are wrapped up just in that call. Then, the next word is, in distress. B'tzar.

B'tzar. In distress, you have, it literally says, you have enlarged. Or you have made free.

The idea here is, in distress, you have enlarged. But the physical idea is, when I was pinched, you released me. When I was confined, you set me free.

I was hemmed in by circumstance. I was put in a position I couldn't get out of. If you've ever ridden an airplane that's full, and you're tall, and there's people on each side, you can't really stand up.

You can't stretch your legs. That confinement is an addition to an already stressful time. Traveling is stressful, at least for me.

To not be able to move, to be confined, to be in a tight spot, he says, when I was in a tight spot, you released. You broke the bands, the bonds, the confinement. And to me, it says li here, which is la plus me, to me.

You granted freedom to me. You granted release to me. And there are so many circumstances where this is the only place relief is going to come from.

You can't... I know people that are having to wear casts and are limited in movement, and there's no getting around that. Healing takes the time that it takes. Recovering from all kinds of things.

I know several people that have had surgery. I know people that have had limitations of various kinds. And you can't... There's no magic spell.

There's no potion. There's no pill. You can't really accelerate healing.

It takes what it takes. And in the meantime, you're confined. But that's a physical circumstance.

There is release. There is relief. There is enlargement.

There is expanding above and beyond circumstance in God. David knows this, and he calls it to mind. You think about David in the cave of Adullam.

You think about David in his years of pursuit by Saul. You think of the times when he was in great duress, in great hardship. All of the times he was in battle.

The times when he had to have political battles. When he was king of the tribe of Judah and Benjamin, but the rest of Israel had not acknowledged him. And he was in Hebron, and his own wives opposed him.

He's had a lot of heartache and a lot of opposition. But he looks back and he says, The God of my righteousness, when I was pressed, has released that pressure. And it's not always a deliverance out of the circumstance.

It is a spiritual oasis. It is a spiritual place that God takes us to that lifts us beyond enslavement to circumstance, beyond subjectivity, beyond the opinions of people, or the limitations of time and space. You have enlarged me.

So David looks to the past on what God has done, and he says, Now have mercy. This is Canaan. Have mercy and Shammah, hear my prayer.

So David says, This is another time when I am pressed, and I need the God of righteousness to deliver me, to give me that enlargement that lets me function under this pressure. So that is our first thought, but he's not finished. We haven't come to the silah yet.

What is the nature of this pressure? He's going to detail it, and he says, You sons of men, this is the B'nai Ish. Now Ish is the word that is used for men of valor. It's man in his nobler self.

There was Ish and Ishah in the garden. He's not Anosh. He's Ish.

And so, this is, if you imagine that we're still in the Absalom days, and David is still away from Jerusalem, and all of that hardship, you think about the, there's almost a dark humor here, a black humor. Oh, you sons of noble men, you sons of courageous warriors, when you turn my

glory into shame, you love vanity and seek lies, seek deception. Well, who is the warrior who has won battle after battle and victory after victory? Who is the man who has demonstrated his integrity and his Ish qualities over and over again for decades? David, right? And his mighty men, those who are sticking with him as he leaves Jerusalem.

Who are the upstarts that have taken over society in Jerusalem? Sons of the courageous. And it's a two-edged sword. You know, if you're a son of Belial, you partake of your chip off the old block.

But, here, when you think about Absalom, he's a son of a courageous man, but he's demonstrated no courage himself. He's led no armies, won no battles. He's a big talker.

And so, when David addresses the opposition, and he says, it's a sham. Your courage, your victory, your seeming success in driving the people who built Jerusalem, who established the kingdom, who have put everything in place here. And, you know, you can kind of feel that way in modern culture, where, you know, the greatest generation and those who established our nation on Christian values, and then you see others coming and turning it on its head and taking freedom and perverting it and taking opportunity and suborning it and making selfish and vain what used to be functions of character and integrity.

And you say, oh, you sons of men, you upstart generation that isn't proven and doesn't have values. And if you notice how history is being rewritten and so much accomplishment is being forgotten, nobody wants to talk about the founding fathers, nobody wants to talk about the greatest generation, nobody wants to look back and see the values that made America what it used to be. Now it's entertainment, it's stimulation, what will trend, what will hook interest.

You don't earn your way into a career. You are an overnight sensation. You're an immediate vote by the Vox Populi.

And so it turns glory into shame. It is a love of vanity. This word vanity is not what you might think coming from Ecclesiastes.

This is not a puff of wind. This is reek. And reek is R-I-Q.

And this has the idea of uselessness. The best way to see the meaning of this is to look at its earlier use in Leviticus. Just keep your finger here and turn back to Leviticus 26.

Because if you want to understand the pressure that David is praying into and appealing to God for help against, this really gets at the heart of it. Leviticus 26, beginning at verse 16. This day the Lord your God commands you to observe these statutes and judgments.

Therefore you shall be careful to observe them with all your heart, with all your soul. Today you have... I'm in Deuteronomy. Gosh, no wonder.

I thought, where's my word? I want to be in Leviticus 26. That's a great verse I just read. It just

doesn't pertain.

Leviticus 26, 16. And see up in verse 14. If you do not obey me, do not observe all these commandments.

That's what Deuteronomy was talking about. You're to obey the statutes. If you do not, in verse 14 of Leviticus 26, if you despise my statutes, if your soul abhors my judgments, so that you do not perform my commandments, but break my covenant, I also will do this to you.

I will even appoint terror over you, wasting disease and fever, which shall consume the eyes and cause sorrow of heart. And you shall sow your seed in vain. You will sow your seed in reek, for your enemies shall eat it.

You see the idea? It's not just vanity in the sense of shallow or temporariness as you have in Solomon's view. This is, it's useless. It's a waste.

It is pointless. Pointlessness. And if you read down after all this, if you do not obey me, I will punish you seven times more for your sins.

Verse 18, verse 19. I will break the pride of your power. I will make your heavens like iron and your earth like bronze.

That is one of the scariest promises in the whole Bible. We can cause the God we belong to, our Heavenly Father, to make the heavens like iron and the earth like bronze. Unyielding, unresponsive, harsh, completely opposite of everything we need.

Look at verse 20. And your strength shall be spent in reek, in vain. Futility, pointlessness, waste.

Your land will not yield its produce, nor shall the trees of the land yield their fruit. We saw that, if you remember, when we were looking over at Haggai and when they were dragging their feet about finishing God's temple and he says, it's like a bag of seed and it's all leaking out on the ground. Well, that's what is attractive.

That's what is consuming the attention of David's enemies. How long, O you sons of the brave, you sons of courageous men, will you turn my glory to shame? How long will you love pointlessness? Love that which has no return, that which is going to end in loss. And seek falsehood.

Now, seeking falsehood, who in their right mind would seek to be deceived? The heart is deceitful and we want to not be deceived by our heart. We don't want to make a wrong choice. There used to be a lot more emphasis on and seeking after truth than there is now.

This is one of Ezekiel's commonly used words. It's also used in Hosea 12 and verse 2. And this is something that God is going to punish Judah for. Ephraim feeds on wind and follows after the east wind.

He increases lies and desolation and they make a covenant with the Assyrians and oil is carried to Egypt. And the same thing with Judah. But he daily increases lies and desolation.

You know, there's a lot of talk. I don't know when the term actually applies and when it doesn't. But fake news, deception, things that are supposed to be important and they're really not.

And they get substituted for things of substance. I cannot even look at any media anymore because all I hear is, did somebody talk to a Russian about something else? Don't we have some problems that need solving in the country? Do we not have crime? Do we not have infrastructure issues? Do we not have immigration issues? Do we not have things that really are of substance and are going to matter both now and in days to come? And all we can do is go digging into the past and try to root up somebody's peccadillo. Somebody said something they shouldn't have said or did something they shouldn't have done.

There was a big dust storm in the Southern Baptist denomination because somebody dug up a tape by one of the seminary presidents where 16 years ago, somebody asked him a question about battered wives and what they should do. And he counseled them to get away, to seek counsel, but not to divorce. Because there's an understanding of what Jesus said, that God hates divorce and so on.

You can argue the understanding, but that's the belief in the denomination that you should do everything you can to avoid divorce. And he's a seminary president. He was then, he is now, a different seminary, but same denomination.

And he said, I never counsel a woman to seek a divorce even when she's being knocked around. Well, because he said that, now there's this brouhaha and they're calling for his resignation. And I mean, it was in an interview 16 years ago.

They can't even find the original tape. Somebody made a recording of a recording and somebody played it on, stuck it up on YouTube or I don't know where. But seriously, you want to go back and dig something up and make an issue out of it now when we've got present problems.

Let's concentrate on the present. Let's look to the future, type of thing, right? So David brings this up and he says, you sons of the brave love stuff that bears no fruit. It ends in loss.

And you love to fool yourself. You love to be fooled. You love things that are just flat out not even true, much less important.

So it's doubly frustrating. Because now we're at the Silah. What do we think about as the musicians come up and play their orchestral break here? Not only has David come to the end of a long and painful day.

He woke up facing a lot of opposition. Now he's going to try to go to bed knowing he's got to wake up tomorrow morning with pretty much the same situation. Not only have many arisen

against him, but they're inane people.

They shouldn't even be an issue. They don't partake of truth. They're not brave.

They don't deserve whatever success they have. Everything they're pursuing is going to end badly anyway. And yet they're the ones that have kicked David out of Jerusalem, run him across the Brook Kedron, out into the wilderness.

And it's doubly annoying to not only have a problem, but it's not even legitimate. It's not even fair. These people ought not to even be in any kind of position of influence, and yet they've temporarily dominated.

So what does David do when he thinks about this at the end of this long day? He goes straight to the Lord. Hear me when I call, O God of my righteousness. David says, I'm in the right here, and yet I'm in this embarrassing state of disarray.

Run out of the capital. Run across the Brook. People throwing dust and stones and cursing me on the way out.

How long, you illegitimate sons of men, are you going to turn my glory to shame? Have my good be spoken of as evil, as how Paul might put it. Do not let your good be spoken of as evil. But that's what's happening.

The things that David did right are being spoken of as wrong. The things in our society and our culture that were based on biblical values are now being called out and bad-mouthed and rejected and great attempts made to eradicate them. So we can sympathize in our own way with what David is saying here.

Well, that's what we think about as the instruments play. Then we come to the next section. And who is David talking to in verse 1? He has lifted his eyes and he's appealing to heaven, right? Hear me when I call, O God, my righteousness.

He starts by talking to God. Verse 2, who is he talking to? How long, O you sons, you beneesh, you sons of actually brave guys, how long are you going to turn my glory to shame, love worthlessness and seek falsehood, love fruitlessness, that which has no productive end. So in verse 3, who is he talking to? Know that the Lord has set apart for himself him who is godly.

The Lord will hear when I call to him. Who is he talking to? I'm not sure. Is he still talking to the sons of men here? Is he talking to his compatriots? There's a suggestion that because this is an orchestral piece, that this is sort of a, he is speaking for a group perhaps.

So he says, know that the Lord has set apart for himself him who is godly. And this is chasid, chasid, C-H-A-S-I-D. And this comes from the verb chasad, and it is related to the word kesed.

Remember what kesed is. Right? It's grace. It's loyal love.

And so they say in the lexicon that chasad or chasid means pious or kind. But what it means is loyal. Loyal.

Think about Job. Though he slay me, yet will I trust him. He has allowed things through the wall of fire, but he's the God of my righteousness.

And what he does, he does for a reason, and I will not quit. I will not fail to be loyal. Remember what Job goes on to tell his wife? We've received good things from God.

Are we not going to receive the other things that he sends? If it's from him, there is a good in it somewhere. And just because I don't understand it, doesn't mean it isn't there. So, the Lord has set apart for himself a loyal one.

Set apart for himself a loyal one. Of course, this does mean godly, but the emphasis here is not on faultlessness. It's on commitment.

A committed one. One who is not going to fade or fail or turn aside. And this has more than just setting apart.

This is marking out and pointing to. The reason I think of Job is, I've told you before, there was a pastor one time that taught a whole series based on Job, and he said, when Satan calls your name, and as I have reminded you many times, Satan didn't call Job's name. Satan, where have you been, God says.

I've been roaming up and down in the earth. God says, have you seen my servant Job? Have you seen my loyal servant? Satan says, well, he's got ulterior motives. If you let me afflict him, he won't be Kassid anymore.

And God says, knock yourself out. Just don't kill him. And God distinguishes Job for all time and all eternity because he never loses his commitment.

He asks a lot of questions. He's got 36 chapters of dialogue there, but he never wavers in his faith in God, in his waiting on God, in his turning to God. I know my Redeemer lives.

I'm going to see him. The worms can eat through my flesh, but with these eyes, I will see God. Well, that's the Kassid.

And it's not just set apart. It's not just designated. It's featured.

God has made prominent, has marked out, has shown somebody. This is my loyal one. Well, you could be as loyal as Job, but how would anybody know it if you weren't tested like Job? I deal with strings, guitar strings, now piano strings.

And I've noticed something. There's two kinds of strings that you can put on a piano to replace them when they break, especially, and I'm talking about the wound strings, the ones with copper on them. You've looked in there and seen those windings that compensates for acoustic

lack of length and so on.

But the strings look alike. Really, only somebody like me that has to deal with them could tell the difference. You could look in a piano all day long, and you could not tell the two kinds of strings I'm talking about.

One is the kind that the manufacturer uses and that you can custom order to replace a broken string. The other kind is a replacement string that is a lot less expensive, and you basically adapt it to fit. You unwind the windings down to the appropriate length, and you cut it, and you install it.

But here's what I have noticed. You can't tell by looking, but once you put one of those replacement strings on, see, it was billed as a replacement string, and then when I went and looked in the catalog, actually, it wasn't even in the catalog, it says replacement string, but talking to the guy on the phone, he said, oh, you mean the temporary strings. Temporary? I thought they were replacement.

Well, I found out why they're temporary, because when you put them on, they don't sound half as good as the real string. They look indistinguishable. I am a fanatic for detail.

Some of you may know this, and you can't tell. When I put a replacement string on, it looks, I take extra time. I get it exactly right down to the winding length.

It blends. It matches. And on grand pianos that haven't had a lot of moisture, it's just as shiny, no less, no more.

It blends right in. But if you play that note, if you mute the good string and play the bad one, if it's a dual, it doesn't resonate. The only way to know how good that string is is to play it.

A good string that Steinway uses to put on a grand, that thing has got tone all day long. Guitar players know the brand of string and even the type of string from that maker makes a wild amount of difference in the way the instrument sounds. But you can't tell in the package.

They all look the same. You can't tell by feel. You can only string it on the instrument, tighten it to pitch, and play it.

Then you know what kind of string it is. The Kassid is someone that God has put under that pressure that David was talking about. He says, I've been under pressure before, and you freed me.

You're the God of my righteousness. Why is he the God of David's righteousness? Because under pressure, David's righteousness was revealed. He trusted God facing Goliath.

He trusted God facing Saul. He trusted God facing Absalom. But it is under pressure.

It is when that stress is on and the hammer is striking that the tone of the string is revealed.

And you can't tell by looking. You have to see it function.

You have to hear it do its job. So this is what we're thinking about here. The Lord has, in this time of trouble, David says, this is not just a bad misfortune.

This isn't just a terrible miscarriage of justice by bad people doing bad things. God is setting me slash us apart to demonstrate chassid, loyalty, consistency, faithfulness, commitment under pressure. You're not going to know until it's tested.

It wasn't until Abraham raised the knife and was getting ready to put all of his weight behind it to sacrifice Isaac, God stayed his hand and said, I have marked you out. I have demonstrated just how great your faith is. We'd never know that Abraham believed God and it was credited to him for righteousness if it wasn't for that test.

And it was a grievous test. People have said it's an immoral test. How can you ask a guy to commit murder of his own child? There was a point.

There was a reason. It didn't make any sense to a lot of people. It still doesn't make sense.

But if you see this point here, it does make sense. And whatever the test, whatever the trial, however grievous, however lengthy, however seemingly unclimbable that mountain, you can expect that you're going to get some extraordinary... This is what the atheists like to say. I think it was Hitchens or somebody said, well, extraordinary claims require extraordinary evidence.

Extraordinary faith requires extraordinary testing to reveal it and to exercise it and to grow it and to reflect God's glory off of it. It takes extraordinary testing. It's a variation on when the going gets tough, the tougher we're going to get going.

We are not of those who fall back unto perdition, but of those who by faith and patience inherit. That's what's going on here. So there's a lot more than God has set apart for himself, him who is godly.

This is a big idea at the beginning of this psalm. And David is speaking this to whoever's listening. The Lord will hear when I call on him.

How can David make this claim? You know, we've got a memory verse. Your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hidden his face from you, so that he will not hear. David says, that's not me.

When I call, the Lord will hear. And you better watch out, because I'm Kassid, and the New Testament is going to make it plain that the effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much. A righteous man, a godly man, a Kassid man, avails much.

The Lord will hear when I call to him. Now, he says in verse 4, be angry and do not sin. Be angry and do not sin.

This is, as you know, quoted by Paul in the New Testament. However, he's quoting the Greek, and the Greek verb means to be angry. That's not what the Hebrew actually says.

And there's a whole study you can do on, well, is it still inspired if the meaning changes from the Old to the New? That's not our study tonight. If you've got a burning question about that, you can ask me later. But what we're looking at is what is before us.

We're not studying Paul, we're studying David. And David says here, ragaz, or rigzu. And ragaz means to shake, to quiver, to tremble, to be excited.

It doesn't have a connotation of anger. You might read that into it, but that's not really the primary locus of meaning. For example, Isaiah chapter 14, verse 9, a little bit later in time, this word will be used.

You'll recognize this. Hell has moved from beneath to meet you. Remember, Isaiah 14 is the king of Tyre, but we think that it's really talking about Satan.

And when you get to the part where he's going to be cast down to Sheol, he says in verse 9, Hell from beneath is moved for thee to meet thee at thy coming. It stirreth up the dead for thee, even all the chief ones of the earth. It has raised up from their thrones all the kings of the nations.

Hell from beneath is moved to meet you at your company. It's ragaz. They're not angry to meet him.

It stirs up the dead for you, all the chief ones of the earth. Well, that's our word. That's ragaz.

You can do a little word study on this yourself, but it is the idea of trembling. Sometimes it can be tent curtains. Like in Habakkuk chapter 3, verse 7, the tent curtains are fluttering.

It can be people in dread, people who are in dread. So it basically means to be excited, to quiver, to tremble, but it doesn't really give the cause directly. So what's David saying here? You can tremble.

You can quake. You may even be angry or frustrated at the situation, but do not sin. There are a lot of different words that are translated sin.

There's missing the mark. There's falling short. There's crossing a line.

This is taqat, which has the idea of being blameworthy, to incur guilt on yourself, to err, to err as human, to commit a mistake, to fail to do what you should. And an example of its use is, again, in Leviticus chapter 5, verse 15. If a soul commits a trespass and sins through ignorance against the holy things, fails, falls short, transgresses, makes a mistake, and it's through ignorance.

Taqat, through ignorance. So this is ending up being in error by whatever means. It's not

always in ignorance, or you wouldn't have to have the word ignorance in there.

So tremble, but do not fail. Commune in your heart, on your bed, and be still. And this is why I suggest to you that this second section here, verses 3, 4, and 5, are cohortative.

David is talking to those near at hand. And he says, you know, it isn't going to do any good to tell Absalom this, that God has marked someone out to demonstrate their faithfulness and their commitment. It isn't going to do Absalom any good to tell him to not sin.

He's already on a path of evil. But David looks around him and he says, know that the Lord has designated, has marked out, is exhibiting, is putting on display the Qasid. The one who is Qasid.

The Lord will hear when I call to him. So tremble, it doesn't mean you should be flippant or shallow or disregard your circumstance. Your circumstance, whether it makes you angry, whether it makes you quake with anticipation, whether you're excited, whether you've got an adrenaline flow, whatever it may be, he says, that's okay.

You're going to have a reaction. That strong wind may cause you to flutter, may cause you to bend, but don't fail, don't sin. Don't use it as an excuse to go astray.

Commune within your heart on your bed. A lot of times when you've got problems, you know how they spin around in your head and you can't get to sleep because you just keep circling. Your mind just gets a hold of that bone and keeps gnawing on it and you try to bury it and it keeps digging it back up.

You try to think about something else and your mind keeps returning to it. David says, look, go ahead and think about it on your bed, but think about it in spiritual terms. Review this course that David has in his evening song.

What does he do? He doesn't just sit and chew on it himself. He takes it before the Lord. He calls out to God.

The very first words out of his mouth are, hear me when I cry out to you, O God of my righteousness. And just like Hezekiah when he spread the letter out before the Lord, share that burden with the Lord on your bed. Commune in your heart.

And we've had these overt speaking forms of prayer, but this is communing in your heart, meditating within your heart, on your bed, and be still. So if this problem is causing you to quiver and giving you the shakes, commune on it in your heart. And it doesn't mean just review the problem.

Notice we've got a Silat right there. What salve do you apply to this open wound? Everything David has just said. God is righteous and the God of righteousness, and He confers righteousness on us.

God is the God of separateness and apartness and otherness from the world, and He calls us to

be separate and distinct and apart from the world. God is a God of faithfulness and a God of commitment and a God of loyalty and chesed, and He calls us to be faithful and committed and loyal and to put our spiritual life first. And applying these truths to what it is that is besetting us and causing us to tremble, He says if you'll do that, be still.

In other places it says be still and know that I am God. What kind of God? A faithful God. A God who knows what He's doing.

A God who doesn't let things through the wall of fire unless it is an ultimate good. So it doesn't say be angry. It says you can quiver and quake, you can tremble, but do not fail.

Don't go astray. Don't fall short. Don't sin.

Meditate within your heart on your bed and be still, and now He's going to be still and let the orchestra play for a spell. And you've got Selah. We'll speed up here just a little bit now.

Offer the sacrifices of righteousness and put your trust in the Lord. Now, right now, if I said everybody close your Bible, stand up, go out and offer a sacrifice of righteousness, what would you do? What is a sacrifice of righteousness and how do I offer it? I am told in God's Word to offer the sacrifice of righteousness. Well, do you have any memory whatsoever of a verse that is in our stack of cards, actually two verses, that talk about offering a sacrifice? I beseech you, brethren, by the mercies of God, which He has just detailed, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, righteous, holy, acceptable to God.

This is your reasonable service. Be not conformed to the world. Be transformed by the renewing of your mind so that you'll know what that good and acceptable and perfect will of God is.

What do I do when this situation is making me tremble? Well, let me go offer the sacrifice of righteousness and I'll know what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God. It may not be immediate. It wouldn't be a test if it just resolved in a few minutes or a few hours.

But I concentrate on righteousness. He is the God of righteousness. I will offer a sacrifice of righteousness.

Righteousness, kisses. Righteousness, faith unto faith. Right? Offer the sacrifices of righteousness and put your trust in the Lord.

There are many who say, Who will show us good? How is any good going to come of this? I don't see where there is an upside to this downturn. I don't see where there is a lift to this depression. I don't see where there is a mountain of glory in this valley of the shadow.

Lord, lift up the light of your countenance upon us. What is going to illuminate that which is good? It's the light of the Lord. Remember in John 1, when the Lord Jesus came, that life was the light of men? Look at verse 7. You have put gladness in my heart more than in the season

that their grain and wine increased.

These who are not seemingly troubled, many of them are arrayed against David at this point and they're in a period of prosperity. You can look around and see many who are not pursuing a spiritual life or a spiritual path or care anything about God, don't have any faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. And they seem to be doing well.

They don't suffer afflictions. They're not under the hardships and the pressures and the tests. Why do the wicked prosper? You have put gladness in my heart more than the gladness in the hearts of those who are collecting grain and drinking wine.

That's the idea here. And with these thoughts circulating in his heart, David says, I will both lie down in peace and sleep. First goes to bed.

He reflects on these things. He doesn't try to go to immediately asleep. He's not just trying to escape.

He reflects on these things in his heart. He takes them before the Lord. He applies what he knows about God's character, the God of righteousness, God's grace, God's omniscience, God's love, and his own status and standing with God.

When I cry out, God will hear me. Because I don't have unconfessed sin. I don't have obstacles in my life that would disqualify me from God's grace and God's presence.

So he works the problem. He applies what he knows. And by the time he's finished, he says, you know what? I'm ready to lay down in peace and sleep.

Because God alone makes me dwell in safety. And you'll notice there, YOU ALONE O LORD, and LORD is in small caps in your New King James. You know what that means.

You don't often notice it, but LORD is punctuated or displayed two different ways in your Bible. When it's in a capital L and then small cap O-R-D, that's the Tetragrammaton. That's Yahweh.

That's God's personal covenant name. That's the name he gave to Moses in Exodus chapter 3, along about verse 16 or 17 in there. Who shall I say sent me? I AM sends you.

Yahweh. David has an intimate, personal relationship with the eternal and almighty God. YOU ALONE O LORD.

When he starts out, he says, O God of my righteousness. This is sort of a formal approach. But by the time he finishes, he's using God's personal covenant name.

This is the one that the scribes won't even spell out and put a cover over so that no dust would stick to the ink. David uses it freely. He doesn't have to put a dash in the middle or use a substitute word.

It's the familiar name. It's the covenant name of God. YOU ALONE O LORD, make me dwell in safety.

This is the evening song. So in these times of hardship, and all of us have them in various areas and various ways to various degrees. It waxes and wanes in the different circumstances and different aspects of our lives.

But we all wake up in the morning. We all go to bed at night. A great psalm to reflect on in the morning is Psalm 3. I rise up, and so do a lot of my problems.

But here's how I cope. Here's my approach. Here's my perspective.

Here's my divine viewpoint. You come to the end of a long, tiring day. Sometimes it's easy to get discouraged or depressed, thinking, oh boy, I'm going to wake up to the same thing tomorrow.

Psalm 4. I start out looking at distress and pressure, but God has delivered me in the past. He'll deliver me from this one also. Now I'm going to lay down in peace and sleep.

It's a wonderful pair of psalms. And this idea of arising and then laying down pretty well covers the evening and the morning, which comprises the day. And God has given us spiritual sustenance, spiritual strength to carry us through it under His watch care.

The momentary light affliction that we experience is working for us an eternal weight of glory. We just have to endure. As my great-grandmother famously said, it is a great life if you don't weaken.

So the Lord encourages us to use His strength so that we don't weaken. Let's close here in a word of prayer. Father, thank You for the wonderful truths that are expressed by Your servant David, the man after Your own heart, in this psalm.

We pray that Your Holy Spirit will make them live and breathe in our own souls so that we can follow that example, we can be those who are loyal, who are committed, who are faithful, and who can be set apart as an example and as a place where Your glory can shine and be reflected in the midst of such a dark time and such a dark generation so that when the Lord Jesus returns, He will not be ashamed to introduce us and bring us before Your very presence. We pray that You will illuminate these truths for us in a way that will motivate and encourage each one of us. We pray it in Jesus' name.

Amen.