

Psalm 4

“Looking Up When Your World Falls Apart”

Introduction:

- There are times in life that can only be described as “shattering”
- These experiences come unbidden, unwanted, and often unexpected.
- Such experiences often produce extreme depression and despair in the heart of the individual going through them.
- Such an experience came into the lives of the members of a small community in Texas named Killeen.
- On October 16, 1992 their world was shattered as a pickup truck driven by George Hennard rammed through a large plate glass window at Luby’s Cafeteria during the lunch hour rush.
- 15 minutes and 96 bullets later, 23 individuals were dead and 20 others injured.
- Erika Boylan and her sister Suzanna were two of the individuals whose lives were shattered by the tragedy. Their parents, Al and Ursula, were having lunch that day. Al was one of the first victims shot—Suzanna watched her mother gunned down in cold blood as she cradled the head of her dying husband.
- Erika has decided to handle her grief through an interview on national television which airs this weekend on “America’s Most Wanted”—“For us this is healing, to show other people you can survive.”
- Suzanna handles her grief through monthly meetings with other victims who rehash the events—“To find out that I’m not the only one who feels guilt and anger helps me to feel better.”

- Not everyone responds in this fashion when the world they live in falls apart.
- Some turn to drink or drugs
- Some respond by going out and running up their credit cards
- Some turn and just walk out of their life—disappear
- Some become very bitter and angry
- Some abandon God
- Question before us this evening, is simply—“How does God expect us to respond when our world is shattered by devastating events?”
- He has not left us to wonder or guess—He has given us a pattern to follow in the fourth Psalm where we find David, one of His greatest servants, in the middle of a shattered and broken world.
- David—reigned as king—sweet Psalmist of God—Restored—things looked great.
- Absalom—rises up and revolts. David and a small band of men are forced to flee.
- Out in the wilderness with a band of discouraged men—David reveals God’s pattern—Lift up your voice and Talk to God!

I. We Must Pray for Ourselves—For Help: 1

- David in the midst of the perils of his broken world—hiding in the wilderness as an outcast with a small band of loyal men while Absalom living in the palace and eating from the table that was rightfully David’s—Publically defiling 10 of David’s wives—lifts up his voice and cries to God for help.
- In this cry there are three significant things that David does that serve as a pattern for us when we find ourselves in similar circumstances:

A. Remember God’s Permanent Character from age to age: Faithful

- *O God of my righteousness*
- This is not a reference to David’s Character but rather to God’s.
- The word “righteous” here can mean “faithful” or “dependable”
- Really could be translated—“MY RIGHTEOUS GOD”
- David looks at his circumstances and sees very little hope.

- His army is scattered, his food and supplies have been left behind in Jerusalem, his own son has mounted a rebellion against him and has swayed the popular support of the leaders and the people in the city away from David.
- The few men that have followed David are weary, discouraged, and discontent.
- From these shattered pieces of his life—David looks up and thinks about God—and he focuses in on God’s permanent character from age to age—Faithful and Dependable.
- When the walls of your life come crashing in upon you and you sit among the pieces—you can focus on one of two things—the broken ruin around you or the permanent character of God.
- The thing that you choose to focus upon will directly affect your response in worship to God.
- If you focus on the broken pieces of your world—you will become bitter against God. If you focus on God’s permanent Character—you will rise up and lean on God for strength.
- As David sat surrounded by the broken pieces of his world—He focused on God’s Faithfulness and this caused him to remember something else about God.

B. Remember God’s Past Activity in Distressing Circumstances: Deliverance

- *Thou hast enlarged me when I was in distress.*
- “Distress”—literally a tight place—a narrow place with nowhere to go.
- “Enlarged”—to make room for me—to open a place of escape.
- Almost 30 years earlier David had found himself in these same hills under very similar circumstances.
- He was a fugitive—hiding from King Saul and the entire Israelite army.
- Saul literally hunted him down like a wild animal and David was running out of places to hide.
- Just when it looked like Saul had David trapped in a tight place with literally no place to go—God intervened and gave David some “breathing” room. He caused the Amorites to attack Saul’s home town—just when it looked like there was no hope for David—Saul took the entire army over to his home village to fight against the enemy.
- David reflects on God’s permanent faithfulness and remembers how God has delivered him in the past.

C. Request God’s Present Attention in a time of Desperate Need: Help

1. He Recognizes God’s Nearness: Hear my prayer
 2. He Appeals to God’s Goodness and Love: Have mercy
 - Literally be gracious toward me—{Ps 25:16}
 3. He Demands an Answer from God: Answer me when I call
 - “Hear me—KJV” literally means “Give me an answer”
- David’s attention now shifts to the circumstances around him. We find his mind wandering back to Jerusalem and to those who have risen up against him.

II. We Must Pray for Our Enemies—For Conviction: 2-5

- These verses are addressed to “Sons of Men”

- In this passage this is a direct reference to Absalom and to those who have chosen to follow him in his rebellion. David looks at these rebels and in his prayer he desires to do three specific things:

A. Confront them with their Sin: 2

- *How long will you turn my glory into shame? How long will you love vanity and seek after leasing? Selah.*
- The word “Selah” is a very interesting word in the Psalms. It is like an emphasized period—it means to stop—take a long hard look at what you have just read—and **THINK ABOUT IT VERY CAREFULLY.**
- David addresses his enemies in verse two and then he tells them to stop and think about what they are doing.
- What exactly are they doing? What exactly does David want them to think about? What are we to pray that our enemies and our oppressors will see?
- When we pray for our enemies—we often pray that God will “get them” or “remove them”—When David prayed he wanted God to help them see two things.
 1. Their activity was causing God to be dishonored.
 - The phrase “my Glory” is translated “my honor” by the NASV.
 - Although this is possible—I think that David is not referring to his honor when he talks about his glory being reproached. Well—what is he talking about?
 - My Glory occurs one other time in Psalm 3:3 where David refers to God and calls God—“My Glory”
 - What David wants these Jewish rebels to realize was that by their rebellion, they had not just reproached their physical king—They had caused the name of God to be reproached by the pagans.
 2. Their real motives were not righteous.
 - David cuts through the surface issues—{well, we felt that we get more justice from Absalom...David is getting old...time for a change...etc.}—and confronts these people with the real issue at hand.
 - “Why are you loving vanity—or what is worthless?”
 - “Why are you seeking after leasing—or pursuing what you know is a deceptive lie?”
 - These are not innocent people who were caught up in a movement—these were individuals who had mounted a carefully prepared rebellion against Him.

B. Caution them with Divine Truth: 3-4

- David causes them to stop and think over what he has just said—and then he goes on to caution them with 2 divine truths:
 1. God will defend his children:
 - God has set apart the godly man for himself.
 - Set apart—means to mark off—to set aside for personal use.
 - Illustration—when we were children—Dad used to make cakes—we would watch Mom cut the cake and then we would “set apart” or “mark out” our piece and woe be to those who invaded our property.
 2. God knows their real motive: {5}
 - Stand in awe and sin not—literally—“be angry and sin not”

- David is saying—if I have really offended you—if I have really wronged you and you have just reason to be angry with me and treat me in this fashion—then go ahead and be angry. **BUT**—when you are angry—don't let your anger drive you to sinful actions.
- Commune in your own heart upon your bed—means to think about your real motives—do you really have a reason to be angry with me?
- **BE STILL**—Stop your activity against me!
- **POINT:** David was so confident in his integrity and his testimony that he could speak this way to his enemies. Now—remember, he is praying and asking God to do these things.
- **HEY**—if they really have reason to be angry with me—if I have really faulted them, then let them be angry—just keep them from sinful activity.
- **WOW!** So many times when our world falls apart—it is in part our fault. We lose our job—our employer releases us—well—why did he do it? if the truth be told, and you in your heart know the truth—he probably was justified in part.

C. Call them to Repentance: 5

- Even more important than the personal sin they were committing against David was the sin they were committing against God.
- They were going to the Temple and sacrificing and “worshipping” God as if nothing was wrong.
- David is more concerned with the sin against God than he is for himself.
- Not one time here does he ask God for his kingdom, or an army, or a plague to fall on his enemies.
- He looks at his enemies—those he loves—and he calls them to true repentance.
- Stop doing religious things—stop doing all the right things with your hands and start living the right things in your heart.
- What about you? Are you more concerned about the sin that has been done against you by your boss, your family, etc.? Or are you really concerned about their relationship to God?
- One of the reasons that some of us cannot call others to true worship—is because we are guilty of the same sin—we do with our hands but not with our hearts.

III. We Must Pray for those around us—For Encouragement: 6-8

- David ends this prayer by focusing his attention on the weary, discouraged band of men that have gathered around him.
- “There are many that say, “Who shall show us any good?”
- This was the cry of a discouraged group—we are in a hopeless situation—we have no food, no arms, no army, no homes, no family, and no hope for reinforcements.
- **WHERE DO WE GO FROM HERE? HOW WILL WE EVER GET OUT OF THIS?**
- That is exactly how some of you feel this evening—your family situation, economic situation, physical situation—**HOW WILL I EVER GET OUT OF THIS.**
- Here is David’s prayer {and mine as your pastor} for those of you in these kinds of circumstances.

A. Prayer for God’s Presence: 6

- Lift up the light of thy countenance upon us.
- Let your face shine upon us!
- Lord—help us to realize that You are present with us in this trial.

- David wanted his men to realize that in the middle of their shattered world—stood the very God who had created the Universe!
- He who had spoken a universe into being could bring order to their world.
- Well, preacher, all you ever seem to do is “pray for us”—why don’t you get out and give us some real help? Why don’t you get some of that money you pick up on Sunday and help us get through this tight spot?
- Notice David’s response:

B. Praise for God’s Provision: 7

- They had no provision—they were starving.
- Absalom and his army of rebels were eating the grain and drinking the wine that was rightfully theirs.
- David—in spite all of this—right now—here in the middle of nowhere—with nothing to eat and nothing to drink—I have more gladness in my heart than they do.
- SOURCE—“Thou—God” When David is in need—he turns to God and not man for help.
- SEASON—Now—“hast” Right now—David states—I have this joy
- EXCELLENCE—“More than”...

C. Peace in God’s Protection: 8

- Well, David, How are we ever going to stand against such incredible odds?
- David does not sit down and consult with his generals—He consults with his God and then he states—When it comes time to lay down and sleep in just a while, I will sleep in peace—with no fear or worries—Why? BECAUSE GOD—YOU ARE THE ONE WHO WILL KEEP ME SAFE.
- This is the ultimate truth in the Christian life—all of our planning and all of our attempts are worthless if God is not on our side.
- David could weather the storm of a shattered world—because he was under God’s divine protection.
- What about you? Is this storm in your life something that you can sleep through because you know that God is on your side and will protect you?
- OR—have you sinned and rebelled against your God so that He is the one fighting against you?
- What a contrast—David sleeping in the wilderness peacefully as God guards his camp and Absalom posting a guard in the palace because he has been warned that David and his band will turn on them like a mother bear robbed of her cubs.
- Well—preacher—what do I do in my particular circumstance?

Are you weary are you heavy laden? TELL IT TO Jesus
 Are you grieving or joys departed? “ “
 Do the tears flow down your cheeks unbidden?
 Have you sins that from men’s eyes are hidden?
 Do you fear the gathering clouds of sorrow?
 Are you anxious what shall be tomorrow?
 Are you troubled at the thought of dying?
 For Christ’s coming kingdom are you sighing? TELL IT TO JESUS ALONE!