

April 18

Scriptures: Read Psalms 4, 5 & 6

Key Verse: “For You, O Lord, will bless the righteous; with favor You will surround him as with a shield.” (Psalm 5:12)

Overview

From these psalms we learn that even though distressful situations surround the godly, they may rest assured that God is watching over them. The historical circumstance of Psalm 4 is likely the same as Psalm 3, when Absalom was in rebellion against his father David. With trust and serenity, David appeals to God for deliverance. He has confidence that God will deliver him, since God had proven himself in the past (4:1). David admonishes his adversaries, who had slandered his reputation, to meditate or listen to their consciences before they sleep (as should we all), so that they might not sin (4:4; cf. Ephesians 4:26). They should realize that fighting against King David, the one whom the Lord had chosen and anointed, was to fight against God Himself and was therefore futile. It is no wonder David was calm and confident, saying, “The Lord will hear when I call to Him” (4:3). Unlike the pessimistic people around him, David’s trust in God gave him great gladness of heart, as well as peace of mind. In this evening prayer, David acknowledges that God alone is his safety (not his bodyguard or army), and so he can sleep without worrying and have true rest.

In Psalm 5, David is once again surrounded by foes, but he was a man of prayer, praying in the evening (Psalm 4) and now also in the morning. Rather than being downcast because of his grim circumstances, David looks to the Lord for strength and guidance. It is only by looking to God that one can live above the circumstances, not under them, and “keep the victory”. David had warned his adversaries to repent and trust in God (4:4-5). It appears, however, that his words went unheeded, for his foes continued in their wickedness. So David prays in this psalm that God will destroy those violent, lying, rebellious workers of iniquity. David knew that his Most Holy God hated sin and must punish sinners, so he declares that God would destroy them (5:6). Continuing his prayer, David shows the sharp contrast between the wicked and the righteous. While his foes are working iniquity, he is reverently worshipping the Lord and committing his ways to Him. Those who rebel against God are pronounced guilty, made to fall in defeat, and cast out (5:10); but the godly are full of joy, blessed, and protected by His mighty arm, as though surrounded by a shield. The righteous have the greatest weapon — they can turn to the Lord in prayer. What then is there to fear?

In Psalm 6, we see that David is in deeper distress than in any of the preceding psalms. There were many distressing events in David’s life (2 Samuel records many), including his own sinful deeds (e.g. with Bathsheba), and this is a psalm of repentance. Clearly, David is suffering, possibly with a life-threatening sickness, but his cry for mercy comes out of the suffering of his soul. He recognizes the chastisement of God as the reason for his suffering. Unlike Job, he does not insist upon his innocence, nor does he deny his sin; he merely admits his weakness and throws himself upon God’s mercy (6:2). He prays that God’s chastisement will not lead to his death, and He reasons with God to deliver him so he might live to praise Him (6:5).

With poetic exaggeration, David expresses his great grief (in recognition of his sin), which causes him to groan and weep profusely (6:6). Like Job, his enemies' insults added to his suffering and grief (6:7). But suddenly, there is a change in David's tone (6:8) as he seems to have regained his strength and boldness. David loudly rebukes his enemies, for he is now confident that the Lord has heard his supplication (6:9).

Prayer

You are there, dear Lord, in our times of trouble, and You hear the cry of the righteous. Thank 'You for the divine protection and blessings You are so willing to give to those who trust you.