

Now I Lay Me Down to Sleep

(Psalm 4)

9/14/16; Wed PM Pine Grove

Introduction

Church history is full of martyrs, men and women who were killed as a result of their faith...

The 1500s were a very bloody century for Christian martyrs, particularly in Europe.

The main reason for this was the Protestant reformation.

As the printing press allowed for the Bible to be printed and distributed to the common folk, people began to read it and realize that the Catholic church was not in line with the Scriptures.

In fact, many began to realize that the Catholic church even abused its people with what they taught.

Therefore, the seeds of a return to biblical Christianity were planted and the Catholic church began to face growing opposition...

However, nations also got caught up in that struggle between the Catholic church and the people who desired to return the Word of God, who became known as Protestants because of their protests against the Catholic church.

One of the nations that got caught up in the debate about biblical Christianity was England...

Henry VIII was a supporter of the Protestants and sought to turn England way from Catholicism to Biblical Christianity...

His reform was successful and even continued when his son Edward followed him as King...

However, Edward died at 16 and his sister Mary then became queen in 1554.

Though Mary was the daughter of Henry VIII and the sister of Edward, who were both opposed to the Catholic church, Mary's was determined to bring Catholicism back to England...

This desire to stop the spread of Biblical Christianity caused Mary to order the execution of over 250 Protestants earning her the title Bloody Mary...

One of those executed by Mary was a Protestant preacher named Nicolas Ridley...

Ridley was one of the first men rounded up by Mary and asked to return his pledge of allegiance to the Pope....

When they asked Ridley to name the Pope as the authority of his ministry, Ridley responded...

“The church is not built on a man, but on the Lord Jesus Christ and Him alone.”

Therefore Ridley owed no loyalty to the Pope, and he would not submit to any man, but especially to a man like the pope who insulted the name of Christ.

So, Mary ordered Ridley to be excited by being burnt at the stake...

The night before his execution, Ridley’s brother came and offered to spend the night with him...

But Ridley refused, telling his brother...

That he planned to get a good night’s sleep even though his death loomed...

And then he recited to his brother Psalm 4. verse 8

8

*In peace I will [k]both lie down and sleep,
For You alone, O Lord, make me to dwell in safety.*

According to his brother, Ridley did sleep well that night...

He woke in the morning and walked to the town stake and burned alive on October 16, 1555 beside his good friend Hugh Latimer...

Who said their burning at the stake would light a fire under the protestants in England that would never be put out...

And he was right, their deaths and the 250 or some more at the hands of Bloody Mary ignited the protestant reformation in Europe...

However, let us think back to Ridley's use of Psalm 4 on the final night of his life..

How could he sleep so well on the final night of his life?

Because he knew that God would keep him safe...

Now, some may say, well God didn't keep him safe at all...

He died after being set on fire while tied to a stake...

But the people who say that have only an earthly focus...

Ridley was safe because He was in God's hands in death as well...

Safety in this life is not our goal, but safety in the life to come should be our goal...

Now, David lived a life that was never totally safe...

His life was lived on the run for the most part as we saw last week in Psalm 3 and all throughout 1 and 2 Samuel...

Yet as we saw last week, David rested well wherever he made his bed for the night...

Last week, we saw that David slept well on his escape from Absalom...

Then he got up in the morning and prayed to God asking him to rise and stand and defend him that day...

To strike his enemies on the cheek and jaw and to save him that day...

We looked at that last week in Psalm 3 and called it a great morning prayer...

Well, tonight we are going to move from a morning prayer to an evening prayer...

This could be the prayer of David after a day of running from Absalom...

This could be the prayer of David as he made a bed in the wilderness....

This could be the true, “Now, I lay me down to sleep” prayer that we learn as a child.

So, I want us to look at Psalm 4 tonight in 3 parts...

Each part will offer a principle of prayer that I think you will find helpful in your own prayer life...

So, let’s begin in verse 1 with a great principle of prayer...

I. Go to God in Prayer Because He Has Answered Your Prayers Before (1)

Verse 1 of Psalm 4...

*[a]For the choir director; on stringed instruments.
A Psalm of David.*

4

Answer me when I call, O God [b]of my righteousness!

*You have [c]relieved me in my distress;
Be gracious to me and hear my prayer.*

Let us first begin with the heading of psalm 4....

For the choir director on stringed instruments. A psalm of David..

This is the first psalm that directs the use of this psalm for Jewish choir directors, and also directs the use of stringed instruments to accompany this song...

There are 54 other psalms that are songs for the choir to sing and lead the people to worship the Lord...

The reason we sing today as a form of worship is that people were directed to sing to God many years ago...

Now what is important to note is this...

This psalm doesn't include sheet music.

It doesn't instruct the choir director of the tune or melody....

And why is that noteworthy?

Because worship is now about the music or the notes or the tune or the melody, worship is about the words of truth...

You could sing this psalm fast or slow high or low and it wouldn't matter because God is interested only in the heart of worshipper and the truth he or she is singing....

Now I make that point to say this...

Churches have become obsessed with music style and sounds....

You see churches advertise contemporary and traditional music services....

You even see churches split over music styles...

That is tragic because God is not interested in music styles....

He is interested in the truth sung and the heart of the worshipper...

Anyway, that's a slight detour but an important one in a day where music is worshiped and not the God of music...

Now, let me get into this psalm...

In verse 1, David simply calls upon God to graciously answer his prayer....

But please note what David says in the middle of verse 1...

You have relived me in my distress...

The literal Hebrew is translated like this...

You have given me room in a very tight space...

In other words, God had given David relief before...

When David's enemies had closed in on him in previous times, God delivered him...

And now David is in another tight spot...

Whether this is a reference to Absalom closing in or not, the bottom line is David needs help...

And the reason he goes to God is because God has helped before...

Which leads to a great principle of prayer....

We turn to the Lord in prayer because it has worked before...

Now that seems obvious to us here, but how often do people see prayer as a last resort?

Prayer should be our first resort in all the situations of our life...

Yet we often tell ourselves...

That is too small to pray about...

That is too big to pray for...

I can handle this on my own...

I know what to do here...

When the correct response should be...

God I am bringing this to you because you have helped me before...

When we offer a prayer to God and he answers it, it should increase our frequency of taking more to Him...

I mean if I go to a restaurant and get a good steak over and over, I am more likely to go back...

The same should be true for the believer....

The more we go to God and he answers our prayers, the more we should see the need to go to Him...

David needed a lot of prayers answered in his life, and God's deliverance of him through his prayers only encouraged David to go all the more....

May the same be said of us....

The second principle of prayer is an interesting one found in verses 2-5...

II. Go to God in Prayer Because People Need You to Pray for Them (2-5)

In verses 2-5, David turns from talking to God to talking to his enemies...

Verse 2...

2
*O sons of men, how long will my [d]honor become
 a reproach?
 How long will you love what is worthless and aim
 at deception? [e]Selah.*

3
*But know that the Lord has [f]set apart the godly
 man for Himself;
 The Lord hears when I call to Him.*

4
*[g]Tremble, [h]and do not sin;
 [i]Meditate in your heart upon your bed, and be
 still. Selah.*

5
*Offer [j]the sacrifices of righteousness,
 And trust in the Lord.*

His words to his enemies are not a prayer but a conversation between David and them...

But I think we can learn about prayer in what David says to his enemies here...

Remember, what did Jesus say should be our attitude toward our enemies in Matthew 5...

43 “You have heard that it was said, ‘You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.’ 44 But I say to you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, 45 so that you may [ap]be sons of your Father who is in heaven;

And guess what we see in verses 2-5?

David’s love for his enemies...

In verse 2, David is pleading with his enemies to turn from their evil ways...

How long will you persecute me?

How long will you love worthless things and be filled with deceit?

This is the cry of a man who wants to see his enemies repent...

Then in verse 3, he tells of the great benefits of knowing and following the Lord....

Look, turn from evil and to God, and He will protect you and even hear you when you cry to Him...

Then in verse, he asks his enemies to turn from their sin by considering the fear of the Lord...

Tremble, and do not sin is motivation that David offers to his enemies to help them stop their evil ways....

The fear of a Holy God and the threat of His wrath should cause every man to tremble when he sins...

And then David offers a great strategy for telling people to be saved....

He tells his enemies in in the second half of verse 4...

Meditate in your heart upon your bed and be still before God...

Every time that you share the gospel with someone leave them with this thought...

Hey, please think about the gospel that I have just shared with you...

Tonight, before you fall asleep consider your sin and consider a holy God and think about what happens after you die...

Look, most people will resist you during the day and in a public setting, but remind them to think about these things in the quietness of their room when it is just them and God...

That's a very good thing to do...

And then David ends with a message of salvation in verse 6...

Trust in the Lord...

That is the gospel of the entire Bible...

I call on people to trust in the Lord when I preach in 2016 and David called on his enemies to trust in the Lord 3000 years ago...

The gospel is and always has been...

Put your faith and trust in the Lord...

Now, what is the application of these verses, and it is simply this....

Pray for your enemies of the previous day and even your enemies of tomorrow as you head to bed each night...

I often tell people this, but how soon we forget it...

But the best way to keep your anger down and your emotions in check and not sin in your trials is to pray for the people persecuting you....

It is awfully hard to be mad at people who you are earnestly praying for...

If you truly want your enemies to come to know the Lord, -which you should, you shouldn't be arguing with them...

You should be pointing them to the Lord and then taking their names to the Lord...

The way to change your persecution is not to force your way, but to pray that God would change the hearts of your persecutors..

David was under the thumb of the people surrounding him...

He was on the run for his life...

But he didn't stop praying for the lives of the people who were pursuing him...

Look, I tried to make the point on Sunday, but Christians should be praying for Muslims way more than they are complaining about them...

We are called to pray for our enemies, and David is a great model of this in Psalm 4....

Though he never offered a prayer for them here, he was clearly concerned for them and called them to repentance and faith in the Lord...

And I assume that he was also praying for them regularly as well....

So, #1.....

We should pray because God has answered our prayers before....

And #2...

We should pray because people, especially unbelievers, need you to pray for them....

And one more principle to take from psalm 4...

III. Go to God in Prayer Because He is the Source of Everything Good Thing (6-8)

In verse 6, David offers a complaint of the unbelieving world against God...

6 Many are saying, "Who will show us any good?"

In David's day, people were filled with the same complaint that many have today against God...

Why is this world filled with some much evil?

Why can't we get ahead in life?

Why do we struggle to make ends meet?

The real question behind this question is this...

Where can we find happiness in the world?

In David's case, the people were seeking to overthrow him in hopes that it would bring happiness to them...

This was probably Absalom's campaign promise...

This was probably the slogan of his rebellion....

Help me overthrow David and happy days will be here again....

This is the slogan of campaigns in this country in 2016...

Everybody wants happiness, but David reminds us that happiness only comes from one thing....

Look at the end of verse 6...

Lift up the light of Your countenance upon us, O Lord!

In other words, the only source of good in this world is to be in a right relationship with the God of the world...

Then His face will shine upon you and your head will be raised and happiness will fill your heart...

But not only that....

Putting your trust in the Lord will also affect your entire mood....

Look at verse 7...

7

***You have put gladness in my heart,
More than when their grain and new wine
abound.***

David tells his enemies and the critics who were seeking good in this world that God's goodness even puts happiness in their hearts...

Even greater than the happiness of having a full bank account of grain and new wine....

In other words, I am happier in the to have the Lord's face shine upon me than to have the biggest house on the biggest block with the world's biggest bank account....

But not only does God's goodness give us happiness and make us rich, it also gives the greatest peace...

Verse 8....

8
*In peace I will [k]both lie down and sleep,
 For You alone, O Lord, make me to dwell in safety.*

We said it last week in reference to Psalm 3, but it holds true this week as well....

David slept well because his prayer life was in good shape...

In Psalm 3, he slept when Absalom chased and he got up and prayed for God to protect him that day...

And now in Psalm 4, he has been squeezed in all day, but now he goes back to sleep in peace because of God's goodness to Him that gives his happiness, riches, and most of all peace....

In his answer to the people who can't seem to find any good in the world....

David says that God is good...

He gives blessing and peace and rest even when His people are running for their lives...

And because of that, David says his prayers, and lays down to sleep in the portable crib of God's safety...

To the enemies of God, they can't find anything good no matter where they are in the world...

To David and to believers in God, they see God's goodness everywhere they look...

Now, how does this affect your prayers?

Quite simply, if you want something good, you won't find it on earth, you will only find it by asking God above for it...

Yet, the great truth is this...

God willing gives good things to his people....

James 1:17....

17 Every good thing given and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or [r]shifting shadow.

In case you were wondering, good things can only come from God, so you must be asking for those good things from him and not be seeking them on earth...

Everything that you seek for earth on your own may turn out to be fools gold...

IT may look good, but it may leave you broke and disappointed....

David knew that a good night's sleep didn't come from the best mattress money can buy....

It came from being in a right relationship with God...

For David, peace didn't come from a full storehouse of wine and grain, it came from David's trust in the Lord....

When you are right with the Lord, the account may never be full, but it never goes empty either...

Conclusion

When I was a kid, I was horrified at the bedtime prayer that I was taught...

Now I lay me down to sleep,
I pray the Lord my soul to keep.
If I should die before I wake,
I pray the Lord my soul to take....

Though that may sound nice and rhyme good, that is not the greatest biblical prayer..

The first place that prayer appeared in the US was in the first school textbook called the New England Primer...

However teaching where you may go if you die in your sleep is not best taught to kids by a rhyming bedtime prayer.

It is best taught through teaching them the gospel that says repentance and faith in Christ is what saves and not a prayer before bedtime...

The best bedtime prayer may be a prayer similar to what we see David pray here...

Where you take your prayers to God at night because he has answered you before, maybe even they before...

Where you also pray for the people who persecuted you that day asking God to save them and give you patience with them..

And where you also pray that night seeking the goodness of God to come down out of heaven since you know that He is the only source of goodness in the universe...

That bedtime prayer is a prayer that honors God....

May that will become more a pattern for your praying at night that a short rhyming poem....

Let us pray.