

What keeps you awake at night?

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[0:00] Amen.

So Psalm 4. In a few hours from now, depending on what time is usual for you, we will be getting into our beds and sleeping.

For some of us, sleep may come very easy. Perhaps it may come during this talk this evening. That's okay.

For others of us, sleep doesn't come very easily. And actually, if you're anything like me, your head hits the pillow and suddenly all those worries, things maybe you never even thought of during the day, start worrying you at nighttime.

So I wonder what keeps you awake at night. Perhaps it's worries of the future. Perhaps it's things that you've said or done in the last day. You're sort of chewing it.

[1:29] Why did I say that to that person? I hope they're okay. I hope they still like me. Perhaps you worry about the state of the country or the world. Bigger things.

Perhaps it's worries about our family. Perhaps it's worries about our parents, our children, our grandparents. Worries about what is happening tomorrow or what's not going to happen tomorrow. Many things that could cause us to stay awake at night. Well, this psalm that we have before us is a psalm for the nighttime.

We get clues of that in verse 4. David speaks about being on our beds. And then the psalm ends. In peace, I will lie down and sleep. For you alone, Lord, make me dwell in safety. The psalm ends in sleep. This is a psalm for the nighttime.

[2:33] And it's a psalm written again by David, as was this morning. It's less clear on whether this is written at the time of Psalm 3, during Absalom's time pursuing David against him, trying to take the crown from him.

But it could well be at that time. Whatever situation he's in, it is certainly a time of distress for him. But it's encouraging to know where we're landing.

It ends in him in peace and asleep. He still knows the goodness of God to him, even in the distress that he is feeling.

And this psalm is wonderfully given to us, God's people. And hopefully, it's a psalm that we can use in our prayer life, particularly if we struggle to sleep.

Hopefully, in God's mercy, as we use this psalm for ourselves, it will help us to rest confidently in him, as David does at the end of it.

[3:59] And we're going to split this psalm into two big chunks. Firstly, what keeps David awake? And then what helps David sleep? So that's where we're going.

There's various little points along the way under those two big headings. So what keeps David awake? Well, firstly, it's distress.

See that there in verse 1. David is praying. Perhaps he's on his bed praying. Answer me when I call to you, my righteous gods.

Give me relief from my distress. Have mercy on me and hear my prayer. The light is fading and David is feeling his distress at the end of the day.

This word distress, it has the idea of being squeezed into a tight corner, being trapped, and it's hard to get out of that tight corner.

[5:02] Perhaps we know what that feels like at times. Perhaps we even feel like we're feeling that sort of distress now in our own situations.

He's feeling that distress, but he shows humility here in verse 1 because he calls out to God. He has no other place to turn in his distress. He could sit and think, I'll sort this all out myself. This distress, it will pass.

Perhaps we're tempted to think that. When a problem comes, we want to fix it. I know that happens with me. A problem comes up in our own life, in church's life, and I'm like, I want to fix that. And then I realize, actually, no, I need to turn to the one who really can fix it, to the Lord. That takes humility. And he turns here, not just in humility, but also in desperation.

[6:13] I think we sense that here. Answer me when I call to you, Lord. Like when you're desperately phoning someone up, and they're not picking up, so you leave a voicemail and say, please call me, answer me.

I need help. It's that sort of desperate cry to the Lord here. And he cries to God because he knows God's character.

We saw that a bit this morning, what he thought of God in this morning's psalm. We see what he remembers about God here. He calls on his righteous gods.

He's in a situation where people are causing him distress, people who are perhaps not followers of God. But God is the one who is righteous.

His ways are right. They are good. He's a God of right justice. And he will vindicate David rightly from his enemies.

[7:15] And he also remembers what God has done for him in the past. In our NIVs, that's not very clear here. But perhaps you have an ESV, and it might say, a couple of lines down, you have given me relief when I was in distress.

As in, he remembers that in the past, when he has called out to God, God has given him help in previous distresses that he has faced.

And so he takes confidence in God's righteous character and confidence in God's help in the past as he calls out to him in his distress. And he realizes, as one commentator says, that in his distress, prayer is his greatest resource.

He knows that from experience. He knows that God is his only reliable help in the distress. And perhaps we ourselves can look back on our own Christian life and see different distresses that we've been in, different tricky situations, and think, if it wasn't for the Lord helping me there, providing for me there, then I don't know where I'd be today.

And so we can take confidence as we look back on God's faithfulness to us in the past, that God really can answer our prayers in future distresses, that there's nothing that's going to be too big for him.

[8:46] And in this prayer, David also remembers that God is merciful. The last little line in verse 1, have mercy on me and hear my prayer.

If this psalm really was written when he was fleeing, hiding away from Absalom, then perhaps David remembers God's mercy to him in that situation that we recalled this morning with Bathsheba and the killing of her husband.

David labeled an adulterer, a murderer, said it this morning. I think today in our culture, he'd be cancelled, wouldn't he, by the world. But David remembers God is a God of mercy.

Our sins, they are many, but his mercy is more. And that can give us confidence to call out to God in prayer on it.

So we can learn from David's praying here in distress as the day draws to a close.

[10:05] He remembers his merciful God, his righteous God, his God who has answered his prayers in times of distresses before. Secondly, other people keep David awake.

I wonder if that's ever true for you. Other people keep you awake. Perhaps for good reasons, perhaps for not so good reasons.

It's certainly the case for David here. Other people are keeping him awake. And here in this psalm, as we've noted, he begins addressing the Lord.

But then it's like in verse 2, he turns to speak to others. Perhaps others, those ones who are causing him the distress, perhaps just teaching those who are following him.

How am I dealing with this situation? What does it say? Verse 2, How long will you people turn my glory into shame?

[11:08] How long will you love delusions and seek false gods? He questions those ones who are against him.

How long will you do this? How long will you turn my glory into shame? How long will you love these delusions and seek false gods? If it's during the time of Absalom, perhaps you think, I've gone from being your king to being hunted down.

How long will you keep doing this to me? But really, their issue is the second question. That they love delusions, and they seek false gods.

They're rebelling against God, who says, I have installed my king on Zion, my holy hill, and they're deluded in thinking, no, we won't worship him.

We'll worship our own false gods. We'll worship ourselves. We'll worship our own dreams. We'll follow them, not God's, and his ways for us.

[12:15] In reading and praying through the Psalms, it's always good to pause and think, how would Jesus pray these?

We thought a little bit about that this morning in Psalm 3. I wonder, perhaps that night before he would die on the cross, when he's in the Garden of Gethsemane, that's what came to my mind, when he was in deep distress.

Can you imagine the Lord Jesus saying, how long will my honor be turned into shame? The honor, the glory of Jesus as the great son of God, being turned into shame as he was being rejected, betrayed, heading for this awful execution on the cross, being treated as a criminal.

And then he might say to these people, how long will you love your delusions and seek false gods? People who were deluded and thinking, no, we want to get rid of God's king.

We want to get rid of the son of God who's come here. They believe the lie that he is no king.

[13:40] They believe the lie that they are in control, not the Lord Almighty. And we look on our own city this weekend, and perhaps we cry out, how long, how long will you love your delusions and seek false gods?

Is there not a better way than the things that you're celebrating? Is there not a better way to live your lives?

Is there not a better story to tell than the one that you're telling over this pride weekend? Well, David seems to think so. Verse 3, That is what David is telling these enemies of his who are causing his distress.

Yes, the Lord has set me apart for himself. I belong to the Lord. And if I belong to the Lord, I am precious in his holy sight, and I get to speak to the Lord of all creation in prayer.

You can do all this to me, but I know that with the Lord, I am safe. We need to remember, firstly, that David here is writing as God's anointed king.

[15:10] He's being given a very specific purpose by God. We're not the anointed king of God's people. We need to remember that when we read Psalms like this.

I'm sure we know that. But in Jesus, we have come to find that our lives are now united to the king of God's people, to the Lord Jesus.

And when we find our identity in Jesus, we do find, don't we, that our lives are secure in him. And so we can say, because we're united to the Lord Jesus, the Lord has set me apart to be his faithful servant.

The Lord hears me when I call to him. That's a far better place to be than seeking false gods, living in other delusions.

We are so secure in our God. We are so secure in the Lord Jesus. As Paul writes in Romans 8, what then shall we say in response to these things?

[16:21] If God is for us, who can be against us? The Lord is for us. People might be against David, which is causing his distress. And yet his God is for him.

He is secure in him. He who did not spare his own son, but gave him up for us all, how will he not also, along with him, freely give us all things?

God has given up his own son for us. We are secure in him and his love for us. In a few moments, we will sing these wonderful words.

Those he saves are his delights. Christ will hold me fast. Precious in his holy sight, he will hold me fast.

He'll not let my soul be lost. His promises shall last. Bought by him at such a cost. He will hold me fast.

[17:24] We're secure in him. David knows that. There is a better way, a better thing to live for than our own delusions and our own false gods.

And what people are celebrating this evening in our city, over this weekend in our city, in those things, they won't have security.

In fact, it's more of an identity crisis, isn't it? There's much hurt and pain there, and that's really sad. But the gospel message that we can hold out to people is one that gives far more wonderful security, eternal security, a relationship that will not fail.

That's what they need to hear about. What keeps David awake? Distress.

Other people. Anger. Anger. I wonder, have you ever laid on your bed angry? How it eats us up.

[18:43] We move here from David speaking about that security in God to giving wise advice. Perhaps himself in the situation that he faces.

But it's given here for us in this psalm for God's people. Verse 4. Tremble and do not sin. When you're on your bed, search your hearts and be silent.

Wisdom from the king here. Tremble and do not sin. Other words, other versions of the Bible, instead of tremble, use the word anger.

And I think that's the best translation, as we'll see. Paul quotes it in the New Testament. So we'll see that in a moment. Anger.

Not a wrong emotion to feel. We thought about emotions last autumn, didn't we? Perhaps we want to go back and remind ourselves of what we thought about anger then. Anger is this sort of strong, hot, tense emotion.

[19:52] It can at times feel like it controls us, eats us up. Perhaps we do things in our anger, say things in our anger, think things in our anger. We don't think at any other time. It's not a wrong emotion to feel.

God himself, we know, is angry towards injustice, towards sin. He's righteously angry. He's the righteous one that David prays to. But anger is also something we need to sort of control with the help of God's spirit.

And David here offers the advice of be angry and do not sin. Be silent. Search your hearts.

Take a moment to be quiet. Draw away from other people. Search your hearts. The enemies of David who are against him may say all sorts of things against David that are making him angry. We saw that this morning in Psalm 3. Many are saying God will not deliver him. Perhaps that's making David angry. We don't know exactly. But whatever's causing him the anger.

[21:14] He's thinking very wisely about it. Perhaps he's learned the hard way at times. Perhaps this weekend seeing the pride flags out making us feel angry.

Perhaps that might keep us awake tonight. I don't know. But we need to keep our anger in check. There is a rightness about being angry and upset about that.

They've taken a symbol that is a God-given symbol which should remind us of the precious promises of God and used it for things that God would not be pleased with.

There is a rightness in anger. we need to keep our anger in check. So as said Paul quotes this verse in Ephesians chapter 4.

It's worth just turning there. It is only one verse we'll read but Ephesians chapter 4 verse 26. It feels like Paul builds on what advice we get from David the king.

[22:42] Ephesians 4 verse 26. In your anger do not sin. Perhaps you have a footnote saying Psalm 4 verse 4. Do not let the sun go down whilst you are angry and do not give the devil a foothold.

We said this is a nighttime psalm. Do not let the sun go down whilst you're still angry. Don't go to sleep angry is the advice of the Bible.

Deal with it. Search our hearts. Turn to the Lord. Otherwise we might be giving the devil a foothold and he can use that for our ill.

It's okay to acknowledge before the Lord how we feel isn't it? Perhaps that's the way we need to deal with it. To say Lord I'm feeling this. Please help me. Guard me against sin.

Forgive me for sin and my anger. Search my heart. Test my thoughts and my attitude. Have mercy on me Lord. And as we turn to the Lord in our anger it's a bit of an act of trust which David calls us to in verse 5 offer the sacrifices of the righteous and trust in the Lord.

[24:12] So those are three things David is being kept awake by. Secondly what helps David sleep? What helps David sleep?

Firstly light. That doesn't sound right does it? Have a look at verse 6. Many Lord are saying who will bring us prosperity? Let the light of your face shine on us.

Light. As a child I was so fearful of the dark that I would have a little night light on. I couldn't sleep without the little night light on in my room.

I still remember it now. For the Christian we have an even better light to help us sleep. It's the light of the Lord's.

It's what David dwells upon here in verse 6. Let the light of your face shine on us. the preacher Charles Spurgeon said of one of his friends called John that his smile was as good as taking a fortnight's holiday.

[25:24] Isn't that lovely? And that can be true, can't it? Certain people you might think that they have just such a wonderful smile it lights up the room. It's much better than seeing a room full of glum looking people or angry looking people.

And here in verse 6 David is sort of considering the smile of God on him.

That's what comes to mind as you read those words. Let the light of your face shining upon us smiling upon us in my dark distress what a comfort that is for David.

And he's quoting here from Numbers chapter 6 that prayer that we sometimes end a service with. The Lord make his face to shine upon us.

As we're praying there it's almost like we're asking God a smile upon us. Lord you are light with the light of your face shine upon us.

[26:37] would you shine upon us. And so this is the answer to those who are saying to him who will bring us prosperity.

Where is there any good? Where is there any prospering? If you're in distress well we find it in the light of the Lord. In the night as darkness is all around us remember the light of the Lord shining upon us.

The light of the Lord which is far stronger than the darkness. The darkness is here for a time but once that sun rises and being up very early in the morning with the baby seen many sun rises recently and it's wonderful the sun rises and it just gets rid of the darkness it's more powerful it's stronger the light of the Lord is far stronger than any darkness and distress that we may be facing and so we can rest in that secondly joy verse seven fill my heart with joy when their grain and new wine abounds in the Lord is joy more joy than this earth can give we might find joy in grain and new wine or we might find joy in various other things in our lives but with the Lord is far more joy than any joy we can find on earth

David is filled with joy when he looks to the Lord even in his distressing circumstances and so can we perhaps it may seem like others are so much happier than us others are so much filled with joy than us perhaps we look at the thousands of people in Brighton over this weekend and think that they have so much more joy than I do but one thing they lack is the deep joy that we know in the Lord the deep joy that lasts beyond just a few days by the coast a joy that is eternal!

joy in knowing eternal security in Christ is far more joy than anything this world can give and thirdly what helps David sleep well peace peace verse 8 in peace I will lie down and sleep for you alone Lord make me dwell in safety peace there's not much peace in David's situation it seems at the moment he's in distress where does he find his peace from I was reminded in preparing for this of the story of the Lord Jesus and his disciples on a boat as a furious storm rages they're in distress on the boat in the storm and they wonder where is Jesus and they find him sleeping how can

[30:05] Jesus sleep in the midst of such a furious storm and so they go and desperately wake him up like just thinking why on earth are we even waking him up but that's what he was doing and he woke up and he wasn't panicked or alarmed like the rest of them he could sleep because he knew that it would be okay and this psalm shows us that we too can have confidence in God and know we will be okay even in the distresses we will be okay!

even as those worries go round and round in our head at night we will be okay because our confidence can rightly be in the Lord's we can know peace in knowing him finally finally just to note about this sleep that we've seen in psalm 4 and actually that we read about in psalm 3 didn't we psalm 3 verse 5 I lie down and sleep I wake again because the Lord sustains me perhaps one of the worries we might have is am I even going to be here tomorrow perhaps that might keep us awake at night sometimes what if the Lord doesn't sustain me through to tomorrow but sleep in the Bible is even bigger than just our sleep that we might have tonight sleep in the Bible is also linked with there and actually was resurrection and so Jesus with Jairus' little girl as she's sleeping that's what Jesus says she died but Jesus said don't worry she's just sleeping and then he raises her or Lazarus he's told Lazarus has died don't bother coming but he says no he's just asleep and I'll wake him up and that story ends in resurrection sleep in the Bible is linked with death but even better resurrection it's not Jesus being insensitive it would be if he didn't do anything about it it would be if he said I'm going to wake him up and he didn't that would be really insensitive but no he's showing those who die in the Lord simply sleep and await resurrection we don't know what the

Lord has for us even over the next 24 hours maybe we will lie down and sleep and we won't wake up in this world tomorrow but we will wake up to resurrection life and every night we do go to bed and we do wake up in the morning can remind us of the resurrection life that we look forward to and we end with this story there was once an old bishop called Nicholas Ridley who took a stand for the gospel in this country in October 1555 he was due to be publicly burned at the stake in Oxford the night before his planned death his brother had offered to keep him company Ridley responded to him

I mean to go to bed and sleep as quietly as I ever have in this life he meant to go to sleep he meant to rest in his beds even though he knew he was going to die the next day because he knew the words of verse 8 were true in peace I will lie down and sleep for you alone Lord make me dwell in safety not just safety for things of this world tomorrow but safety for all eternity need