

CHURCH OF THE REDEEMER

717 North Stapley Drive, Mesa, AZ 85203 Phone: (480) 833-7500

Series:	The Psalms		Pastor/Teacher
Number:	1		Mason Depew
Text:	Psalm 4		
Date:	October 17, 2021 (a.m.)		

The Assurance of the Anointed

Introduction: How do you talk to your boss? How do you talk to your parents? How do you want your children to talk to you? If you lived in an ancient kingdom, how would you talk to a ruler with power over your life like Nebuchadnezzar from Daniel or Ahasuerus from Esther? It would be foolish to swagger into his throne room like you are equals, or even worse, start giving him orders. And yet David in Psalm 4 begins with the form of a command. “Answer me when I call!” Where does David, once a mere shepherd boy, get the right to speak to the ruler of the whole universe this way?

1. David gives three “commands” to God: “Answer me!” (4:1) “Be gracious to me!” and “Hear my prayer!” (4:2)
 - a. This way of speaking probably doesn’t stick out to us because we are used to speaking this way in, for example, the Lord’s prayer. “Give us this day our daily bread,” etc.
 - b. This is very unusual, however, in the ancient nations around Israel. Pagans did not talk to their gods this way.
 - i. They would typically make a request by saying something like, “Let Baal deliver me!” Or “Let Baal strike that town with blindness!”¹ This is a way to make a request sound more like a suggestion rather than a command.
 - ii. Some scholars have called this a “politeness strategy.” Notice, for example, how the tone of Nebuchadnezzar’s magicians changes from Daniel 2:4 to Daniel 2:7. They suddenly become much more polite when their lives are in danger!
 - c. David’s language is even more surprising when we consider how much greater the God of Israel is than all the gods of the nations which surrounded her.
 - i. God is not just the maker and ruler of just some parts of life in the created world like most pagan gods were claimed to be, but of *everything*.
 - ii. The Bible repeatedly reminds us of how far God transcends his creation. He is surely worthy of more honor than any human king or emperor.

¹ Both of these examples are from *Ugaritic Narrative Poetry*, Edited by Simon B. Parker (SBL, 1997).

2. David does not come out and explicitly say why he is so bold before the creator and ruler of the universe. He does, however, give us several important clues.
 - a. In verses 1 and 7, David looks to God's past faithfulness for future comfort; a pattern throughout the Psalms as well as other books of the Bible.²
 - i. Consider how David concludes Psalm 23 in verse 6 by looking to future blessings with certainty after reviewing God's past kindness to him.
 - b. Even more important, however, is verse 3, where David indicates he has been chosen and set apart by God. That is the most direct reason David gives for why God answers when he calls.
 - i. God had set apart all of Israel generally as a holy nation for himself. See Exodus 33:16, for example.
 - ii. God had set apart David and his descendants specifically to be the line of the Messiah. See 2 Samuel 7:12-16.
 - c. The Lord our God is not an arbitrary human ruler who changes his opinions of people based on whims.
 - i. He has extended a standing invitation for all his people to call on him with boldness, to fulfill his promises. The God of Israel is both more transcendent than pagan gods, and yet at the same time more intimately his people's loving caretaker.
 - ii. Consider Psalms 79:6, 86:5, 105:1, 116:2, and many more which make habitually "calling on the name of the Lord" a defining feature of God's people because of God's steadfastly merciful responses.
3. How do we see ourselves in Psalm 4?
 - a. David does not specify the events surrounding this Psalm like with some others, seemingly to make it apply broadly to believers who sing it.
 - i. In verses 2-6, David appears to be addressing the enemies who have persecuted him, and he is, but all people need to heed his words.

² John Calvin, commenting on Psalm 4:1, said, "Thus the faithful are accustomed to call to their remembrance those things which tend to strengthen their faith. We shall hereafter meet with many passages similar to this, where David, in order to give energy to his faith against terrors and dangers, brings together the many experiences from which he had learned that God is always present with his own people and will never disappoint their desires. . . . The distress of which he speaks, in my opinion, refers not less to the state of his mind than to circumstances of outward affliction; for David's heart was not of such an iron mould as to prevent him from being cast into deeper mental anguish by adversity."

- b. David confronts his enemies not with weapons, but with grace. (4:2-5)
 - i. In two questions he exposes their foolishness in attacking David's real, God-given glory³ for empty purposes. (4:2)
 - ii. He calls on his enemies to repent and trust in the Lord. (4:4-5)
- c. The sacrifices in verse 5 are necessary to reconcile Psalms 3 & 4. Without a substitute David's enemies must be punished. (3:7)
 - i. In fact, without a substitute no sinner may approach the living, holy God with the confidence David shows in this Psalm.
- d. Jesus Christ's sacrifice on the Cross is ultimately the only sacrifice that can take away sins and reconcile people from enemy nations.
 - i. Consider what Paul says in Ephesians 2:11-16 about how Jews and Gentiles have been reconciled in the Church by the blood of Christ.
 - ii. If we see ourselves in this psalm without thinking of Christ, therefore, we find ourselves on the side of David's enemies.
 - iii. If we consider ourselves united to Christ as our sacrifice, then we may sing this psalm with all the confidence of David!
- e. It is now also easier to see how verses 4, 6, 7, and 8 of Psalm 4 apply to us.
 - i. Only Christ has purely righteous anger and is therefore angry without sinning. (4:4) Nevertheless, the more we remember and meditate on God's grace, the better we will regulate our emotions and resemble Christ in this life.
 - ii. There are many who act as though God is cold and uncaring towards us right now (4:6), but he has given us the most valuable gift already.
 - iii. Therefore we can be comforted as we suffer now, with more joy than the wealthiest man of this world (4:7), and trust God's protection every night when we go to bed, ultimately looking forward to our everlasting rest.⁴ (4:8)

³ Compare Psalm 4:2 with 3:3 to see that God is the source of David's glory.

⁴ Compare Psalm 4:8 with how 1 Kings 2:10 says David "slept with his fathers." Going to sleep each in the peace and joy of the Gospel prepares us to die well in the hope of the Gospel.