

An Evening Psalm

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[0 : 00] Take your Bibles and turn to the book of James. Our scripture reading tonight will be from James 5. The Lord will raise him up.

If he has sinned, he will be forgiven. Therefore, confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous man is powerful and effective.

Elijah was a man just like us. He prayed earnestly that it would not rain, and it did not rain on the land for three and a half years. Again, he prayed, and the heavens gave rain, and the earth produced its crops.

C.S. Lewis wrote a book that is not as familiar as some of his other books called *Till We Have Faces*. And in that book, he describes a critical situation in the ancient kingdom of Nome.

The rain did not come until there is no food. Starvation is threatening the kingdom. And so the king's rule is in jeopardy. And so the high priest of that society calls for a supreme sacrifice, the death of the king's daughter.

[1 : 57] That is a very common pagan response to a crisis in one's life. And Psalm 4 has kind of a similar echo to that.

Perhaps the background is there is a problem. There is no rain. Elijah prayed for no rain. There was no rain. Then he prayed for rain. And David seems to be in a critical situation, as he writes here. His leadership is being attacked. He is the Lord's anointed. A couple of thoughts here about the lament of Psalm 4. Psalm 4 is a reminder about God's providence in our lives.

And that should lead us tonight to get a good night's sleep. Two, Psalm 3 is associated with a morning prayer. Psalm 4 is connected to an evening prayer. And so they are related.

Psalm 4 is a lament. It describes unfair accusations that are leveled against David. And yet, Psalm 4 is not a lament that involves the confession of sin.

[2 : 57] There is no confession of sin in this particular chapter. It is a lament that ends with strong confidence in God. It deals with the difficulties of being accused unfairly.

But it ends in a very calm, tranquil way. David is willing to sleep well in his kingdom. We know from Deuteronomy 11 that God designed Israel, right, to be a nation that does not rely upon a river for agricultural bounty.

They depended upon God for their reign. And if you're in a situation in a land like that and no rain comes, you may be tempted to blame the king.

It's the king's fault. After all, he is our leader and he is supposed to be closer to God in a sense. A drought might even tempt us to turn back to Baal, the kind of original health and wealth prosperity gospel gods.

They are the fertility gods, the rain gods. And then finally, God can quiet our troubled souls and give us peace when we too have times of distress in this life.

[4 : 03] Let us pray and ask God to help us quiet our souls and trust in his care for us. Father in heaven, we pray tonight that as we look at Psalm 4, this wonderful bedtime prayer that you would calm the hearts and minds of your people.

We know that all of us from time to time go through difficult trials and experiences in this life. And Father, we pray that this particular Psalm of David would not only point us forward to Jesus Christ, but it would help us to trust in your good providence in our lives.

Now, Lord, we do pray that it would give your people the result that we would get a good night's rest tonight and throughout this week. We pray your blessing upon your word. In Christ's name we pray. Amen.

Again, David's immediate distress here, hinted at by a few words, might be that there is a drought in the land. In 2 Samuel 12, we read about such a drought that lasted for a long period of time.

And that would have certainly called the king's qualifications, perhaps, and even his leadership into question. And so we have three points we will follow tonight as we go through this psalm.

[5 : 09] The first two verses, cast all your cares upon God. That's right out of Peter, but it agrees with what David says here. Peter says, cast all your anxieties on him because he cares for you.

And that is what David does in this crisis. I mean, have you ever stopped to think about all of the psalms that David wrote? If we ever met someone like that, a human being, we might think something's wrong with them.

Here's my collection of laments. I mean, it seems like every month David is in a crisis in his life. Without those trials, we wouldn't have the treasures that we see are fulfilled in Jesus Christ because he too, the greater son of David, experienced great trials in his own kingship.

The first verse in Hebrew begins to the choir master with stringed instruments, a psalm of David. This individual lament was somehow picked up and incorporated into the corporate worship of Israel, their congregational worship.

Stringed instruments is another hint along with the two little words, *selah*, that we are reading something that is now incorporated into the liturgy, the worship of Israel.

[6 : 17] No, Psalm 4 was probably not written originally as an evening prayer, but it came to be used that way throughout Israel's use of the psalms, and even many Christians have followed that pattern.

Spurgeon notes about the title, this chief musician, this is the person responsible for all of the sacred music in Israel. In 1 Chronicles 6 and 15, we read about some of their responsibilities in the worship of God's people.

They are to be skilled in their musical ability, like our young man Mark here, to raise sounds of joy musicians and singers set apart for service, trained in singing to the Lord.

These are people that had a focus upon love for sacred music. As we come to worship here tonight and even throughout the coming weeks, what is the most important instrument in worship?

What string is the most important? Spurgeon quotes one of the church fathers who says this, Lord, I am an instrument for thee to touch.

[7 : 23] Our hearts are the most important, aren't they? If God plucks the string of our hearts, is there a sweet sound that comes from our hearts? Psalm 4 is a lesson in that reality.

This church father goes on to say, Let us lay ourselves open to the Spirit's touch, so shall we make melody. May we be full of faith and love, and we shall be living instruments of music.

Paul tells us in the New Testament that we are to sing and make music in our hearts to the Lord.

Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom.

And what does he say again? And as you sing psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs with gratitude in your hearts to God. The title helps us to prepare for this psalm.

David is going through a difficult time, but his heart is in tune with God. In verses 1 through 2, under this theme of casting all your cares upon him, and David must have experienced this so many times, go to God first when you are in distress.

[8 : 27] How often do we find ourselves in situations like that? Rain is a gift from God to his people. According to Deuteronomy chapter 11, they were a unique nation, weren't they?

Egypt has a great river. The people over in Assyria and Babylon, they have the Euphrates and the Tigris, and they are river cultures. Everything thrives like the Mississippi.

People used to live along the Mississippi, right? That's where all of the great cities are developing, and the goods would flow on that river. But there is no great river in Israel, and it's God's design.

He wants to put his people in a position where they need to trust him so that the crops will come, and they're called to thank God for sending the rain. Drought, however, plunges the king into an even greater crisis.

Apparently, people have lost confidence in this son of David, this anointed one of God. 2 Samuel 21 says that the drought lasted for three years, and how tempting it would be if we knew about our own ancestors, if we were Hebrew, to turn back to the fertility gods.

[9 : 36] Baal and others. The symbol of Baal and its pagan fertility religion was a strong and powerful bull. But for Israel, the most sacred symbol in their entire nation was what?

It is the Ark of the Covenant. That is the place where justice and mercy meet. It's not with the bulls of Baal. Peter Craigie says, All he can do is turn to God.

He has actually no specific request in these opening verses. He just calls out to God. Where else do you turn when you have trouble like this?

We go first to God. And we begin this psalm, Answer me when I call, O God of my righteousness. You have given me relief when I was in distress.

Be gracious to me and hear my prayer. Very short, simple request, isn't it? John Chrysostom, who was born in Antioch and grew up in this kind of arid region that is very similar to the land of Israel.

[10:52] He said in his day, the Canaanite fertility system was replaced by the Greek god Zeus. And in his day, people called upon Zeus. That was the replacement of the original Baal, the rain god.

And even when he preached on this passage centuries ago, he says to his congregation, How can they worship Zeus as the god of fertility when he is also such an immoral scoundrel?

What was he saying there? Many of these Greek gods that we read about in the mythologies, you cannot trust them, can you? They are incredibly unreliable gods.

And that's how the Roman and Greek world, the people lived in a situation like that. And they were always trying to appease their god if their god was angry. And our god isn't like that.

That is why we can call upon him. And we do not have to have that fear that he may be in a bad mood if I'm having a bad day. He hears us. And that is why David constantly calls out to God when he is in distress.

[11:57] He knows that God is gracious and will hear him because God has helped him in the past. And yet the gods of materialism that the Canaanite gods promoted are still with us today.

It's the same issue today. We don't want to reduce God's providence simply to material blessing. We are thankful for that. But that's not all that God's providence is about.

One of the great blessings of trusting in God's providence is that we have joy of heart. That God fills our hearts with joy even in the midst of these difficulties in life.

Again, Chrysostom encourages the people of his day. He says you don't have to have great oratorical skill. Just call out to God in a humble, meek, and trusting heart.

And every child of God can do that when we find ourselves in trouble. Oh God of my righteousness for Christians is Jesus Christ. Spurgeon quotes a pastor perhaps who lived before him and says this.

[12:58] Let us never lose sight of the Lord Jesus while reading the psalm. He is the Lord our righteousness. And therefore in all our approaches to the mercy seat. Let us go there in a language that corresponds to this which calls Jesus the Lord our righteousness.

And so yes, let people pursue their own interest in life. Apart from God, that is what they will do. Let us simply desire to have God's face shine upon us, which is infinitely greater in value than corn and wine.

That which represents all of the material things that someone could ever want in this life. Yes, Lord, your favor is better than life itself.

And so Jesus is our righteousness. This king was given a special Davidic promise, a covenant by God. And so he calls out to God.

God has made an oath to him. And he appeals back to God to establish his kingdom. David's prayer, O God of my righteousness, of course, points us forward to what we just mentioned.

[14:04] This final gift of righteousness which comes through Jesus Christ. He has fulfilled the law perfectly for us. In obedience to his father.

Paul reminds us, For he, God, made him Christ, who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become what? The righteousness of God in him.

Verse 2 begins, O men, how long shall my honor be turned into shame? How long will you love vain words and seek after lies?

David seems at this point to turn now to his accusers. All the way down several verses, he is now speaking to his accusers. In one summary of this, David turns from his prayer to address those who slander him and slander the pious.

Such people should know that the Lord has set his favor upon the faithful and will listen to their prayers. And that's what is coming in the next verse. David now focuses on these people.

[15:05] In this translation, in another version, it says this, How long will you people turn my glory into shame? How long will you love delusions and seek false gods?

Waltke translates this word, O men. He says, this is referring to a technical phrase, the highborn men. Perhaps it's referring to Absalom when he revolted against his own father. Imagine if there was a drought and your son revolts against you in the kingdom and says, I am going to be king. My father is not a reliable king. Imagine the difficulty that would have been for David.

If there are problems within his own family, if the barns are empty and people are wondering, what is going on in our nation? What is wrong with our king?

These are people of high social standing. And David says that their accusations are completely groundless against him. I think in verses 2 to 5, David is probably addressing his accusers, but Paul, we will find out later, will apply one of these verses to us.

[16:15] I don't know if they're apostate people, these people that are accusing David. One thing is clear, they should have known better. These people of high social status would certainly have known that God made a special promise to David, wouldn't they?

They knew that much, but they decided to oppose David. Not a lot different from the days of Jesus, when Jesus comes as the final anointed son of God, and the religious leaders, the ones who knew Scripture, the ones who taught Scripture, use their knowledge to fight against the Lord's anointed. Same thing is happening to David. The reason why their defection against David is so serious is because they all know that David is God's anointed. He is the appointed king.

And yet still, they are accusing this king. And David says, Your accusations are nothing but delusions. You should be ashamed of this. How long will you love your delusions?

Their insults and rejection of David have no basis in reality. Their faithlessness did not stop them from rejecting David's leadership.

[17:27] They scorn him. They insult him. They mock him. And it was the same with Jesus Christ. Their accusations reveal they are trusting in a false God. They're not trusting in God's providence.

In fact, anytime someone does the same thing to Jesus Christ, they're turning the glory of God into shame, aren't they? Someone who is a critic of Jesus Christ is doing the same thing today. And we have many people in our world that are critics of Jesus Christ.

The reality is they are believing a delusion and they are turning God's glory into shame. In the ancient Near East, the gods in the nation, the kings of Egypt, the pharaohs, and other nations around the nation of Israel, they had a belief that the king had a special connection with some of the gods, right?

The Egyptians believed that about Pharaoh. The ancient Near East held strong beliefs in associating the king with the gods of grain and rain. And so if there isn't any grain or there isn't any rain producing the grain in the nation, there is something wrong with the king.

That is a common viewpoint among the Egyptians. They believed their king was perhaps related somehow to one of these gods. And he had a relationship, a supernatural relationship to the sending of the rain.

[18:49] Yet God made a promise with David. He says, I will give you an abundance to your kingdom in Psalm 132. The king is supposed to be potent in prayer, whether it's an Egyptian pharaoh or David, the anointed of God.

They are supposed to have access to God and it should have led to a prosperity and abundance in the nation. But that isn't what is happening. And I don't know why it's not happening at this time. God had somehow perhaps withheld the rain. And David says how long, which suggests to us this trial was going on for some time. C.S. Lewis in his book, *A Grief Observed*, he wrote when his wife died of cancer.

He speaks about sometimes praying to God and you seem to never have an answer. He compares praying for his wife's healing from cancer to knocking on the door as Jesus instructed.

He says, I knocked until my knuckles were bloody and there was no answer. And that does sometimes happen to God's people. He says, my knuckles were raw. And when I looked at the door, I found that it was double bolted shut.

[19:56] I stepped back and looked up in the window and the light was off and it seemed as if God wasn't home. And yet he says, but I know he is home. He says, perplexity is normal Christian experience.

Ultimately, we will not despair even when we sometimes feel like God doesn't hear our prayers or that he isn't home. Psalm 13, 1 and 2, how long, O Lord, will you forget me forever?

How long will you hide your face from me? How long must I wrestle with my thoughts and every day have sorrow in my heart? How long will my enemy triumph over me?

Those are real prayers of a believer that trusted in God's promises. And I see why a believer today couldn't experience the same difficulty in praying to God.

Maybe David feels partly cornered. Maybe he feels trapped a bit. But he does cast his burden upon God. He shares with God from the depths of his heart.

[20 : 56] It's very similar to the call of wisdom in Proverbs 8. Like lady wisdom, David is appealing to his accusers to change course. He is called upon God and now he speaks to his accusers.

Change your attitude. It's not true what you're thinking and what you are saying. Augustine said, how long will you be heavy hearted human creatures? Why love emptiness and chase falsehood? Augustine, as you know, his life, he was quite a playboy, wasn't he? And yet God saved him. The prayers of his mother Monica for years and any parent here today has a child that isn't walking with the Lord.

Remember the conversion of Augustine. His mother prayed for him. And there is always hope as long as the child is alive that God can bring them back. Again, John Chrysostom said something quite interesting.

He said, if I could preach only one sermon to the whole entire world, it would be from Psalm 4.2. How long shall my honor be turned into shame? How long will you love vain words and seek after lies?

[22 : 03] Quite a statement from someone who preached to many people from many different texts throughout his life. David isn't asking God. He's not asking God to judge these people, to curse them.

He's asking them to return. David is wanting the people of God to be blessed, not to divided. It almost echoes distant words of Jesus.

Father, forgive them for they do not know what they are doing. In verses 3-4, the second point would be this.

Grieve for those who are still strangers to God. Seems to be David's attitude here in verse 3. But know that the Lord has set apart the godly for himself. The Lord hears when I call to him.

That's his first point. And then later he says in verse 4, be angry and do not sin. David reminds his accusers, he says, We have been set apart.

[23 : 00] We belong to God. We are a unique people. God has set apart the godly for himself, especially the king. What is in the king's interest is also in God's interest.

This is a difficult lesson for unbelievers to learn, isn't it? Psalm 4 had a special place in the life of Augustine. He comments about this. He says, He quoted Psalm 4 frequently.

Jeremiah pleaded with the people in his day, How long will it be before you are made clean?

Jeremiah 13, 27. People of God are unique.

They are separated out into holy purposes. And David is reminding the people the same thing is true of the church today, isn't it? 1 Peter says, You are a chosen nation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light.

Church consists of all that God has called out of this world. Jesus is the head of the church. He is our king. And we are called to live our lives in conformity to this great king.

[24 : 35] God has set us apart. That is our covenant status. And we are to pray for the people who are not part of the covenant community, not in judgment upon them.

We pray that they would be part of the same community of sinners redeemed by grace that we are. I think that's David's attitude here. We come to verse 4 and there's a message about getting angry. And I would say this, Get angry about your own sin. How easy it is to get angry about somebody else's sin, right? That's easy. It takes no effort. It's difficult for us to get angry sometimes about my sin.

And although David, I think, is speaking to his accusers, we learn later from Paul's writing in Ephesians, he applies this verse to Christians. Be angry and do not sin.

Ponder in your own hearts, on your beds, and be silent. Selah. One translation says, Tremble in fear and do not sin.

[25 : 36] It's almost a word so strong, shake with trauma. If you're angry, are you a good sleeper? How many of you like to go to bed each night and you're angry in your heart?

You're angry in your mind. Your emotions are just seething. It's hard to get to sleep like that, isn't it? If we're going to get angry, let's get angry about the sin that is in my life.

Start with me. That's what David is telling to the accusers in his day. It's hard to sleep when we're angry. Again, if David is still speaking to his accusers, which I think he is, then he is calling them to repent from their false accusations.

He says, You should be trembling in what you are saying about the king. Seems to be a loud echo of Psalm 2.

David is speaking to those who are faithful to him. Maybe he's telling them, Don't be so overzealous to protect me. I think he's speaking to the accusers here. Be angry and do not sin.

[26 : 38] Spurgeon says that many people reverse that counsel. Sin today and we don't get angry at all. We enjoy our sin. That's the temptation that we all face.

We should have a fear of sinning. We know that. And one of the things David will develop soon is that when we get alone and become in a silent place, that is a good opportunity for us to think about our lives and to think about our sin and to evaluate our life.

It's very easy for people today, if God has given us, as one author said, a God-shaped hole, a vacuum, and only God can fill that desire in our lives, it's very easy to ignore that in our life, isn't it? It's very easy to try to cover that up with all kinds of busyness or distractions. Calvin believed David was exhorting David's enemies to withdraw and be alone so that they might examine themselves more truthfully and honestly.

And when we get alone, that's where we encounter the real self. Be angry and do not sin. Augustine said this is just another way of David telling the people who are accusing him, go on, repent.

[27 : 51] Take back those accusations. One translation, a modern one says, be pierced in your own rooms. This piercing repentance can be like a wake-up call. Silence can be like a wake-up call, can't it?

In Ephesians 4.26, Paul applies this verse to all Christians about anger. It's hard to go on to the next phase in the verse to meditate and ponder about God in our hearts as we lay in our bed at night.

It's hard to do that if we have anger in our hearts, isn't it? We must attack the anger, the sin, and get angry about our sin, repent of that, and then we can go on to think about and ponder the goodness of God as we lie down on our beds at night.

I think that's the goal of this text that we are studying this evening. And God has given each one of us a conscience, hasn't he? And our conscience is another way that God speaks to us.

One person said long ago that the conscience is the aboriginal vicar of Christ. God has given all of us a conscience. And sometimes God speaks clearly to people in the silence of night just as he does in the preaching of his word in the service.

[29 : 09] Some of us may have difficulty sleeping at night because our conscience is bothered. I think generally human beings find it very difficult to be silent.

It's very uncomfortable. Number one, you have to stop and think about how you are relational, how you are related to God, right? That's one area that we have to think about. The other area is we have to face ourself in the whole issue of silence.

There's a reason why governments and institutions put criminals in solitary confinement. It drives people crazy. Most human beings do not like to be silent.

And we find ourselves, as even the people of God, sometimes trying to drown out the silence that God may want us to have, sometimes, especially before sleeping.

And we may find ourselves filling our life with the noise of this world, being distracted from one thing to the next. And I think David is telling us that silence, especially in the evening before sleeping, the quietness of the hour is a perfect time, a perfect opportunity for all of us to evaluate our conscience before God.

[30 : 23] Our conscience is formed by Scripture. I think that the human conscience is in many ways a faint experience of the final judgment of God. It is given to all humans and they all experience it, a solitary time.

Listen to your conscience and search your heart. That may be what David is telling us in our text. Let me examine myself in this quiet part of the day.

Before I go to sleep tonight, may I examine my life. It's an opportunity to show deep trust in God. One of the great secrets of spiritual joy, one author says, is to frequently commit to searching our

hearts and being silent.

We find that in the Scriptures, we find that in authors, and I think it's true in our own lives. And so the accusers against David, they will not soften their hearts.

They may continue to harden their hearts in self-confidence and pride. And David's accusers should allow their conscience to be God's rule in their life. David says, if you're not going to listen to your friends in the group, at least stop and think in quiet of your standing before God as you go to sleep this evening.

[31 : 30] Most suicides take place. Christmas time, holidays, in the summertime, they take place often when people feel alone, don't they?

We don't like to feel alone in our world. And when we go to rest in the evening, David is simply saying that take some quiet contemplation before we rest.

One author said, there is a trial in stillness and oftentimes the still chamber makes a larger demand upon loving trust than the battlefield. Psalm 37, 7, be still before God.

Do we know the joy of being still? I'm sure many of you do. Some of us can grow in this particular area of our lives. And finally, in verses 5 through 8, trust in God's perfect sacrifice for you.

When you go to bed tonight, in verse 5, offer a right sacrifice and put your trust in God, one way of doing that is to confess your sins before you go to bed tonight. We can confess them in the morning, we can confess them in the evening.

[32 : 38] Ultimately, we know that all of the Old Testament sacrifice is pointed forward to the great and final sacrifice in Jesus Christ. It doesn't need to be repeated. We trust in the perfect sacrifice of Jesus Christ.

And that means because of that that we can now live our lives. Romans 12, 1 and 2, as living sacrifices for God. Spurgeon reminds us the Jewish sacrifices point to the Redeemer, the great sin-atonement Lamb.

He reminds us to flee to Christ even as believers in this particular context. And remember that God sent His Son to die for us.

The sacrifice is over. In verse 6, there are many who say, who will show us some good or almost, where is the prosperity, O David? There isn't any rain.

Why should we trust in You? Protests are continuing in this part of the psalm. Rejecting God and His providence often results in a mindset, a lifestyle that people can never be satisfied whatever they have.

[33 : 44] I think that's a truth that is just obvious in the Christian life. When people reject God, it doesn't matter what they have. They seem to never be satisfied with what they have.

Psalm 62.5, Find rest, O my soul, in God alone. My hope comes from Him. There are many psalms that speak about trusting God in the quiet hours of the evening.

Psalm 77, I remember my songs in the night. I will praise the Lord who counsels me even at night, my heart instructs me. Waltke says, Make this an evening prayer and before going to sleep confess everything to God.

We will sleep better, won't we, if we do that? And finally, in the last part of 6 to 8, we think about the whole issue of thanking God for heart joy and peaceful rest.

Lift up the light of your face upon us, O Lord. You have put more joy in my heart than they have when their grain and wine abound. That's a powerful statement.

[34 : 49] If there is no rain, there is no grain. If there is no grain, there certainly is no wine. There is no food. A lack of grain, a famine could be the result of this.

This could be the situation in David's life, starvation. People may be panicking and yet the king of Israel is doing what God wants him to do. He is putting his trust in God. And it's as if this last statement, David is sending a benediction throughout all of the land.

He wants God's people to be blessed. He will confidently trust in God even though the rain may not have come yet. He wants the people of God to be blessed.

If you notice there, the language sounds very similar to the Aaronic benediction in the book of Numbers. The Lord bless you and keep you. The Lord cause his face to shine upon you and give you peace.

The ultimate good here is not simply having food in the pantry or a large bank account. It is knowing that God's presence, the light of his countenance is shining upon our lives.

[35 : 52] That is what should fill us with heart joy and that should give us peaceful rest. The light of God's countenance.

God's face is light, we are told. God is light and in him there is no darkness in 1 John 1.5. Jesus, the Son of God, declares, I am the light of the world. He who follows me shall not walk in darkness but have the light of life.

To have Jesus in our life is to have joy in our heart and we should be able to have a peaceful night's rest. In our congregation, I find over the years that one of the most blessed parts of the worship service that I've come to love is giving the benediction at the end of the service.

In all of our services, I raise my hands and we bless God's people. We begin our service with thanking and praising God and Christian worship should always end with blessing God's people. It's the opposite of the mark of the beast. If you leave a Christian worship service and the benediction has been pronounced upon you, God can keep you safe tonight. He can keep you safe this week.

[36 : 59] After the king has turned the dark accusations into bright admonitions, one author says, and this inspires faith, the king returns to make his petition to send the rain.

He is still praying for the rain, isn't he? He puts his trust in God and as if we could say he turns out the light and he's determined to get a good night's sleep. He is not going to stay awake wondering, what am I going to do tomorrow?

Tomorrow is a different day, another day to trust God. But it's a test of our faith in God, isn't it, when we can sleep a good night's sleep and we have financial burdens, job insecurity, fears, or whatever may come our way.

Earlier in my ministry, I would wake up every night filled with anxiety about people in our church.

And over the years, God has helped me to now sleep through the night.

And I'm thankful the church is in God's hands. We do our best, but God is in control. And David models for us here a beautiful example of trust in God, even when it's time to go to bed at night.

[38 : 09] He wants to bless the people. David is asking God's favor, blessing, security, and peace to be upon God's people. This is the state of the king's heart.

Don Williams points out that when C.S. Lewis wrote his book, *Surprised by Joy*, he tells us, we will never know joy by seeking it. Joy or gladness comes as a side effect of knowing the presence of God in our lives.

That's a great piece of wisdom. Delight yourself in the Lord, the psalmist says, and he will give you the desires of your heart. Commit your way to the Lord, trust in him, and he will do this. He will make your righteousness shine like the dawn, the justice of your cause like the noonday sun.

Be still before the Lord and wait patiently for him. Do not worry. Refrain from anger and turn from wrath. Do not fret.

It leads only to evil. And this is when Spurgeon said, Christ in the heart is better than corn in the barn. It's a great example, isn't it?

[39 : 14] Christ in the heart is better than corn in the barn or wine in the vat. Now if you have Christ in your heart and corn in your barn, you're doubly blessed. We are not Manichaeans.

We are thankful for the blessings and the bounty of God. And if a believer has both, then we can enjoy both to the glory of God. If Jesus is smiling upon your life, what a blessing.

Corn and wine are but fruits of the world, but the light of God's countenance countenance is the ripe fruit of heaven. To say thou art with me is a far more blessed cry than bring the harvest home, says Spurgeon.

He says, I would rather let the barn be empty as long as I can say that Jesus Christ is with me. And so in verse 8, in peace, I will both lie down and sleep for you alone, O Lord, make me dwell in safety.

One author called this the Christian's good night. Isn't that precious? Isn't that a blessing? A sweet evening hymn.

[40 : 18] We don't have to sit up all night tonight or any day this week wondering or fearful about what might happen to a problem in our life or even in our friend's life, in a family member's life.

We can lie down in peace tonight knowing that we have nothing to fear. We confess our sins, we evaluate our life and we go to sleep tonight thankful and trusting that God will watch over us.

Spurgeon said, He that hath the wings of God above him needs no other curtain. David may have written this when he is sleeping on the ground at night when he's being hunted by the men of Saul.

He could sleep peacefully even in that fugitive state. And all of us have to ask the question, What keeps me up at night? Maybe that's a sign that we have anxiety in our life and that we are not trusting God for an area that we need to trust Him.

Psalm 42 says, By day the Lord directs His love at night His song is with me, a prayer to the God of my life. David draws to a conclusion in this psalm and he is confident that he can sleep peaceful tonight.

[41 : 31] Waltke says, By laying himself down in peaceful sleep when the earth's troubles seem utterly detached from heaven's promises, reality doesn't seem to match the scriptures here. The king demonstrates the same spirit of faith that has sustained God's people throughout their history.

A poetic expression summarizes as well. It says this, Therefore, with my thoughts composed to peace, I'll give mine eyes to sleep. Your hand is safely, your hand in safety, keeps my days, and will my slumbers keep.

Remember the story of Jesus in the Gospels. He's sleeping in the boat and the disciples are all fearful. Lord, wake up! And all of these examples given by David about the ability to sleep well at night.

All of the apostles laid their own lives down in death, didn't they? Jesus went to the cross and he enters the sleep of death.

He commits his soul to his heavenly Father, forgiving even those who are accusing him as he hangs on the cross. Jesus Christ displays this faith in Psalm chapter 4, far above what David ever experienced in his own lifetime.

[42 : 48] He was laid in the grave. And like King David, Jesus experienced the unbelief of the nation's leadership that accused him that his prayers were worthless as he cried out to his Father on the cross.

Jesus laid himself down in the sleep of death and his Father answered his prayer by raising him back to life again. All of us have to ask the question, are we prepared for that sleep of death someday?

It is only in Jesus Christ that we can face that sleep and be safely secure in his perfect sacrifice for us. I'll end with the words from the book of Numbers, the beautiful Aaronic benediction.

The Lord bless you and keep you. The Lord make his face to shine upon you and be gracious to you. The Lord turn his face toward you and give you peace. in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

Amen. Amen.