

Learning to Love the Psalms (VI)

Psalm 3 and Psalm 4 the importance of interpreting the Psalms in their own historical perspective

Psalm 3 Superscript – Absalom’s revolt (2 Sam. 14 – 20)

military scenes not mere metaphor

shield (3:3)

away from Jerusalem yet praying toward the holy mountain (3:4)

many foes (3:6)

Arise (3:7) *Numbers 10:35*

3:1-2 lament O LORD (3:1) 3:3-6 confidence 3:7 petition (and the imprecation also)

3:8 conclusion (benediction)

3:2 and 3:7-8 *inclusio* 3:2 deliverance denied 3:7-8 deliverance affirmed

3:1 synonymous parallelism many foes (2 Sam. 15:13; 17:11)

3:2 God will not deliver him (NIV).

3:3-6 Confidence is stated in two parts:

- “But you, O LORD, are a shield around me; you bestow glory on me and lift up my head (3:3).
barefoot and with his head covered (2 Sam. 15:30) But he will return with head lifted high.

“I cry aloud to the LORD and he answers me from his holy hill (3:3, NIV)

(2500 ft above sea level) (Jordanian Rift 1385 ft below sea level, the lowest point on earth)

- David was able to sleep (3:5-6) See Mark 4:36-40

“He is speaking of the morning after a refreshing sleep—not in bed! But out in open and beneath the stars, haunted by foes! It is not the sleep of exhaustion, but of trust in God.”

(W. Graham Scroggie). I [emphatic in Hebrew] lay down (boldness of true faith).

אֲנִי שָׁכַבְתִּי וְאִישְׁנָה הִקְיִצּוּתִי כִּי יְהוָה יִסְמְכֵנִי

3:7 Petition Arise, O LORD! Deliver me Strike

3:8 Benediction

beyond the “I” and “me” of all the previous verses to thy people (not even “my people”) to thy blessing

Yet according to postscript he intends us to sing with him. How so?

Psalm 4

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! (Ps. 4:1, ESV)

Answer me when I call to you, **my righteous God. Give me relief from my distress**; have mercy on me and hear my prayer. (Ps. 4:1, NIV) [imperative in Hebrew]

4:2 O men **sons of [a] man** No ordinary men in view but specifically "highborn men or "men of rank;" ^{ESV} **Psalm 4:2** O men, how long shall my honor be turned into shame? How long will you love vain words and seek after lies? ^{NIV} **Psalm 4:2** How long will you people turn my glory into shame? How long will you love delusions and seek false gods?

4:3-5 David's confidence

4:4 "Be angry, and do not sin (ESV);"

Paul simply borrows the language (Eph. 4:26) but not intended to convey the meaning of the Psalm 4:4 in context. The verb translated "Be angry" means to "tremble" or "shake" in trauma. "Tremble before God, not before me, and sin not against him;" "Trust in the Lord and offer sacrifices to him—not to Baal, the rain god."

Know your king (4:3).

Understand the consequences of your sin (4:4a)

Let your conscience confirm you or condemn you (4:4b).

Remain faithful to the Lord (4:5)

4:6-7 David's petition

"Fill my heart with joy when their grain and new wine abound (4:7, NIV). The king is not praying for something that will give "more joy than" that of fruitful harvest. He is praying for joy *in* fruitful harvest! In other words, the crisis at hand is that of drought. This is the historical context of the psalm 2 Sam. 21:1-14! This explains "the good" of Psalm 4:6: "There are many who say, 'O that we may see some good?' (NRSV). The "good" they seek is that of fruitful harvest. Yes, the LORD will give what is good, and our land will yield its increase (Psalm 85:12).

Dahood translates "good" rather freely as "rain"—"Who will show us rain?"

4:8 David's Confidence and Praise

At the end of the psalm the prayer is not answered. David is still in crisis. Yet he concludes with a resolve to go to sleep, a sleep explained in terms of confidence in God.