

PSYCHOLOGY IN THE PSALMS

PSALM 4

# A LOVE SONG



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**FIRST BYRON CHRISTIAN REFORMED CHURCH**

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# INTRODUCTION

We all love to love. In one way or other, we all want more love in our lives. A husband asks, "How can I love my wife more?" A mother asks, "How can I love my children more?" Americans may ask, especially on a day like today, "How can I love my country more?" The Christian asks, "How can I love God more?" or "How can I love the Bible more? or God's people more?" The self-critical asks, "How can I love myself more?" That's not always a bad question, because we are to love our neighbor as ourselves. Which raises a question we may not often ask, **"How can I love my neighbor better?"** It's a question we should ask because Jesus said this love is the second most important of all loves. That's the question this Psalm helps us answer.

## BACKGROUND

This is our fourth sermon in the series, 'Psychology in the Psalms.' Psychology is the scientific study of how people behave, think, and feel. It investigates the connections between feeling, thinking, and doing. The Psalms are God's infallible study of the connections between feeling, thinking, and doing. They explain, heal, and stimulate healthy thoughts, feelings, and actions.

Psalm 1 helped us develop happiness in Christ, Psalm 2 encouraged us to find courage in Christ, Psalm three invited us to find peace in Christ, and Psalm 4 calls us to love souls for Christ.



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# 1. WE LOVE OUR NEIGHBORS BY PRAYING FOR THEM (1)

**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! (1)**

## Pain for the godless

David was in deep and distressing pain causing him to cry out to God for relief. It was too great, too deep, and too long to bear any longer. What pain was he suffering? Verse two reveals it was the sinful lifestyles of the ungodly that were crushing him. God had been working in David, showing him the enormous need of all the unbelievers around him, so much so that it distressed him. God gave him a painful concern for the ungodly.

## Prayer for the godless

David brought this debilitating pain to God because God had graciously heard his prayer for relief before. He therefore called again upon God to hear and answer by relieving his godly soul pain for the ungodly's soul-condition. He didn't pray for the removal of this pain, but for the relief of this pain. Soul-pain that's rooted in soul-care is healthy pain. It's a sign of life and health. But when it is too much, or for too many, or goes on too long, it can become unbearable.

## CHANGE YOUR STORY WITH GOD'S STORY

**Pray for pain.** If you have never felt this pain or feel it too little or too rarely, ask God to give you this pain, this soul-concern. Think of your neighbors and ask God to give you a concern for their souls.

**Pray about your pain.** God gives us this soul pain so that we give him our soul prayers. If the pain gets too unbearable, we can bring it to God ask him not to eliminate it but to ease it.

SOME SOUL-PAIN IS  
A SIGN OF SOUL LIFE



What happens when God answers our prayer?



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## 2. WE LOVE OUR NEIGHBOR BY PLEADING WITH THEM (2-5)

Having appealed to God, David then appeals to sinners, and does so by sharing with them God's perspective on their sin, the Christian's status, and Christ's sacrifice.

David pleads with them about their sordid sin

**"O men, how long shall my honor be turned into shame? How long will you love vain words and seek after lies?"** (2).

Speaking as God's spokesman, David tells his neighbors what God thinks about sin and how he views their lives. He says, sin is long, sin is shameful, sin is pointless, and sin is a lie. Above all, it is against God. He comes back to this theme in verse four when he urges them, **"Be angry (lit. 'be agitated'), and do not sin; ponder in your own hearts on your beds, and be silent"** (4). He's hoping that they experience such deep conviction that they cannot sleep or talk because of their spiritual pain.

David pleads with them about the Christian's special status

**But know that the Lord has set apart the godly for himself; the Lord hears when I call to him** (3).

He urges these suffering sinners to consider the status and honor that believers have. As believers, we have been specially selected by God for the special favor of being God's special property that he takes special care for. God says of them, "I want them near me, and I want to hear their voices."

David pleads with them about Christ's special sacrifice

**Offer right sacrifices, and put your trust in the Lord** (5).

He pleads with them to use the Old Testament sacrifices to put their trust in the Lord. God blesses the sacrifices to bring them to faith in the coming Messiah.

### CHANGE YOUR STORY WITH GOD'S STORY

**Begin with sin.** Sometimes people are in such a mess that they are willing to listen to a negative critique of their lives. Other times, they do not let the armor come down. In these situations we can ask them, "How do you know what's right or wrong?" That can open up a conversation about God's moral values.

**Balance with status.** We don't just want to pain people. We also want to attract people. We want to tell about the glorious privilege and pleasure of being one of God's special people. We want to scare them from sin and attract them to salvation.

**Build trust in the sacrifice.** Show how suitable, sufficient, and saving Christ's sacrifice is.

SIN MAKES STATUS DESIRABLE  
AND STATUS MAKES SIN DISGUSTING.



How can we encourage our neighbors to seek status not sin?



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## 3. WE LOVE OUR NEIGHBOR BY PROMISING THEM (5-8)

We encourage our neighbors towards the Gospel with the promises of the Gospel.

### God promises spiritual protection (5)

Christ's sacrifice turns away the anger of God like an umbrella turns away the rain from our heads.

### God promises spiritual pleasure (6-7)

**There are many who say, "Who will show us some good?"** People are seeking pleasure. The Psalmist says, "Find it in God." **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** (6-7). However much happiness you've found at parties, you'll find even more in Jesus.

### God promises spiritual peace (8)

**I will both lie down and sleep; for you alone, O Lord, make me dwell in safety** (8). Whether I wake up in this world or the next, I have total peace. I trust God as much as I trust my bed. He's a perfectly comfortable place for my soul.

### CHANGE YOUR STORY WITH GOD'S STORY

Regularly rehearse the plentiful promises of God. Here's just a sample of 7,500 promises of God.

**Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved (Acts 16:31).**

**Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved (Rom. 10:13).**

**Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest (Matt. 11:28).**

**I am the bread of life; whoever comes to me shall not hunger, and whoever believes in me shall never thirst (John 6:35).**

**All that the Father gives me will come to me, and whoever comes to me I will never cast out (John 6:37)**

**This is the will of my Father, that everyone who looks on the Son and believes in him should have eternal life, and I will raise him up on the last day (John 6:40).**

**Truly, truly, I say to you, whoever believes has eternal life (John 6:47).**

**GOD GAVE THOUSANDS OF PROMISES  
FOR OUR THOUSANDS OF DOUBTS**



# CONCLUSION



**PRAYER:** Loving Savior, thank you for loving me with the Gospel.  
Help me to love my neighbor with the Gospel.

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. How have you showed love to your neighbors?
2. What can you do to increase soul-pain for the godless?
3. How will you increase prayer for your neighbors?
4. What does each neighbor need to hear most: their sin, the Christian's status, or Christ's sacrifice?
5. What Gospel promises are special to you?
6. In what ways did Jesus fulfill this Psalm?

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