

Good morning.

I wanted to speak to you today from a passage that was encouraging to me when I was in college. It's Psalm 4:8, and it's the last verse in the Psalm. It reads, "In peace I will both lie down and sleep, for you alone, O Lord, make me dwell in safety."

I was reading my Bible in college and struggling with anxiety and I came across this verse and it really stood out to me and I memorized it and helped me sleep at night. And even to this day, I actually will often pray this verse before I sleep at night.

So, but my sermon today is actually from the entire Psalm. And I've titled this sermon, Confidence in the Night. And the reason is that this Psalm appears to be written for the night. You can see that in verse 4, it says, it speaks about being on your beds, and then in verse 8, it speaks about lying down and sleeping. And some even think that this Psalm might have been sung at night during worship in the temple.

And if you look at Psalm 3 and 5, the ones before it and after, They're both Psalms for the morning. You can see that in Psalm 3:5. David says, "I woke again for the Lord sustained me." And then if you look at Psalm 5:3, he says, "O Lord, in the morning you hear my voice. In the morning I prepare a sacrifice for you."

So you have two Psalms for the morning here in Psalms 3 and 5. But Psalm 4 is a psalm for the night. And it's often at night that scary things happen. When do they set scary movies? It's not like high noon, right? It's at the night, and there's a reason, right? Temptation and sin often happen at night. Anxiety and bad memories can flood into our minds at night. We talk about nightmares, right? Because they happen at night.

And in Scripture, the night is sometimes used as a metaphor for the evil days that we live in. The day in Scripture is the dawn of the new creation that Christians hope for. But the night is the evil age that we currently face. And this psalm teaches believers that we can have confidence in the night. It was written by David as he wrestled with thoughts in the night and he put his confidence in the Lord.

And it teaches us this: in the darkness you can trust in the Lord. In the darkness you can trust in the Lord. No matter what darkness you're facing, in that darkness you can trust in the Lord. Why? Because the Lord hears when you call.

And if you're a note taker, this is the first point in my sermon, and it's from verses 1 to 3, the Lord hears when you call. This psalm begins as a prayer. You can see in verse 1, David says, "Answer me when I call, O God of my righteousness," or at the end of verse 1, "Be gracious to me and hear my prayer." We don't know why David was calling out to God. Some think, though, that he was facing false accusations, because of verse 2, where he says, "Oh men, how long shall my honor be turned into shame? How long will you love vain words and seek after lies?" So maybe people were lying about him. Maybe they were dishonoring his name. And he's calling out to the Lord for help, just like we call out to the Lord for help. And sometimes when we really need help, we might say, like David says in verse 2, how long?

How long will this last? He's saying it to his enemies, but really, in the context of this prayer, he's saying it to God. How long will I have to deal with this? So the psalm here, it starts out as a prayer, but the interesting thing is that it takes a turn. In verse 3, and most of the psalm is actually a statement of confidence.

And that's why I've titled the psalm Confidence in the Night. In verse 3, I think David's still speaking to his enemies, and he says, "But know that the Lord has set apart the godly for himself. The Lord hears when I call to him." It's kind of like David is saying, you know, to these people apparently who are lying about him, he says, Guys, Don't you know that I'm one of the godly, that I'm one of God's people? Don't you know that God hears when I call to him?

But then it's like he's trying to remind them of this, and then he remembers it himself. And he says, oh wait, the Lord hears when I call to him. And he regains his confidence. He remembers that the Lord hears. And how did he know this?

How does he know that the Lord hears him? Well, at least part of it, I think, is his experience. So in verse one, right in the middle, it says, "You have given me relief when I was in distress." David remembers when God had answered his prayer in the past. He had experienced God hearing him and answering his prayers.

Have you experienced God hearing you and answering your prayers? You need to remind yourself of those times. Remind yourself, oh yeah, the Lord heard me. And then you remind yourself, and the Lord hears me. Why?

Because, as David says here, the Lord has set apart the godly for himself. What does it mean to be godly? We could give a lot of different answers to that. In this psalm, the Hebrew word for godly in verse 3 is the word *hasid*, and it's related to the famous word *hesed*. You've probably heard before, the steadfast love of the Lord.

The godly here are those who have experienced the steadfast love of the Lord and who show *hasid* back to the Lord. We could say today, the godly are those who have experienced the steadfast love of God in and the gospel of Jesus Christ, those who have heard the message of Christ crucified for our sins and have believed it and have turned to the Lord, have turned to the Lord in faith and in love. And the godly, David says, are those that God has set apart for himself. So if you're a believer in Christ, if you're someone who has turned to the Lord and is turning to the Lord, you can know the Lord has set you apart. The Lord has set you apart for himself.

And that means that the Lord hears when you call to him. And we especially need to be reminded of this in the darkness at night when we're calling out to God and he has not yet answered our prayers. In these times, we need to remind ourselves that the Lord hears when I call to him. In the darkness, David teaches us, in the darkness, you can trust in the Lord. And that's exactly what David advises us to do in verses four and five.

You can see at the end of verse five, he says, put your trust in the Lord. And this is for you note takers, all right, this is my second point in the sermon today. Put your trust in the Lord. In verses 4 and 5, it seems to me that David is giving advice to the godly.

He's probably facing false accusations, and what he does is he gives advice when we are in that kind of a situation. What should we do? Here's his first piece of advice, verse 4: "Be angry and do not sin."

I think God's word here gives us permission to be angry. That there is a kind of right anger in response to injustice and evil. But righteous anger, it easily spills over into sinful anger. So the Scriptures tell us, "Be angry and do not sin." Ponder in your own hearts on your beds and be silent.

So when you're thinking about something that makes you angry, I think the psalm teaches us, don't speak or act out of anger. "The anger of man does not work the righteousness of God," James warns us.

There's a lot of anger in our culture right now. There's a lot of anger publicly and there's a lot of anger personally among people. And some of us lie down at night and we think about things that make us angry. Maybe things that have happened to us, broader problems in the world. David counsels us to keep our righteous anger in our hearts and not to lash out with our lips.

Then in verse 5, he gives us more advice about how to respond. He says, "Offer right sacrifices and put your trust in the Lord." I think David's saying, when you're in a situation that makes you angry, you should go to the Lord, you should offer right sacrifices to him, and put your trust in him. And we feel the difference between the Old and New Testament here. In the Old Testament, that's where David lived, the law prescribed sacrifices, right sacrifices for him to offer.

We live in the New Testament in which Christ has offered once for all the right sacrifice to bring all true believers to God. But we're also told in the New Testament to present, in response to present our bodies as living sacrifices, as right sacrifices to God. We're called to give ourselves to God in every way. So when you face situations that make you angry, David says, Keep coming to God. Offer yourself to the Lord and put your trust in him.

Sometimes when people face the darkness, they walk away from God. But David is saying, don't do that. Instead, in the darkness, put your trust in the Lord.

In verses 6 to 8, we see again David's confidence in the night. And these verses teach us that you can sleep in peace. And that's the third and final point of my sermon. You can sleep in peace.

The words that open verse 6, there are many who say, they're the same words that you see in Psalm 3:2, "Many are saying of my soul, there is no salvation for him in God." So I think we can say pretty certainly that these are the words of David's enemies. And what do they say? They say, "who will show us some good?"

I think the idea is they don't know where to look for good. They don't trust in the Lord. The second part of verse 6 is harder to interpret. And the reason is because it's difficult to know who's speaking. It could be David's enemies.

That's the ESV that I'm reading from. You can see it continues the quote marks all the way to the end of the verse. So it's saying it's David's enemies. But it could be David himself, where you put the quote marks in the middle of the verse. The quotes aren't original to this text.

So if it's David's enemies, they're saying, Lift up the light of your face on us, O Lord. And there's clearly an allusion here to the blessing of Aaron in number six. I'm sure you've heard of it. Have you heard it? "The Lord bless you and keep you. The Lord make his face shine upon you and be gracious to you. To you, the Lord lift up his countenance on you and give you peace." You know, you could say those words hypocritically, just like you could say any words of the Bible hypocritically. And if these are the words of David's enemies, maybe it's the words of religious hypocrites saying, Lift up the light of your face on us, O Lord. And David's like, Come on, give me a break.

That might be one way to read the text. Another way to read it is that the words of David, that in the first half of the verse, in the first half of the verse, the enemies say, who will show us some good? They don't know where to look. And David says, I know where to look. I look to the Lord.

Lift up the light of your face upon us. It's difficult to know, I'm not even sure myself, to be honest. But in either case, verse 7 draws a clear black and white contrast between David and his enemies. It says, "you have put more joy in my heart than when their grain and wine abound." Everyone rejoices when grain and wine abound.

That just means when life is going good, okay? Everyone rejoices when life is going well. That's natural. But David, what David had in his heart was supernatural.

David had a joy that went beyond natural joy. David had a joy that God himself had put in his heart. That doesn't mean that David didn't struggle with pain or anxiety or whatever it might be, but in the midst of that he had a joy that was a supernatural joy. He had a confidence in the night. And that's why he closes the psalm with a statement of his confidence in the Lord, and that's verse 8.

"In peace I will both lie down and sleep, for your alone, O Lord, make me dwell in safety." The word "safety" here in Hebrew is the word *batach*, and it's related to the word trust in verse 5. Put your trust in the Lord. That's the Hebrew verb *batach*. And I think it's bringing it all around.

When David says, you, alone make me dwell in safety, he's saying, I trust in the Lord alone. I trust in you alone. David slept in peace because of his confidence in the Lord. And like David, you can sleep in

peace because of your confidence in the Lord. Finally, I want to just bring one word to your attention in the last verse.

Notice that David says, "you, alone, O Lord, make me dwell in safety." In the darkness, we can desperately reach out for something to hold on to. And David teaches us here that the only thing that can ultimately keep us safe is the Lord. The only thing that we can ultimately trust is the Lord. The other things we hold onto cannot be our ultimate trust in the darkness.

You can't put your ultimate trust, for example, in a boyfriend or girlfriend. And when we try to do that, that's why some of our relationships are unhealthy, because we try to put too much stock into it. You can't put your ultimate trust in a parent. You can't put your ultimate trust in doctors or professors or pastors. Or political candidates, or influencers on YouTube, or your wardrobe, or your bank account, or your scholarship, all right, I could go on and on, or whoever, whatever else we try to hold on to in the darkness, it's the Lord alone who can make you dwell in safety.

So put your trust in the Lord alone. In the darkness, this psalm teaches us, in the darkness, you can trust in him. Thank you. Why don't I pray? God, thank you for your word, for teaching us from it.

I pray that you would help our unbelief. In Christ's name, amen.