

# God's Lullaby

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Preacher: Colin Ross

[ 0 : 00 ] I'm going to Sam 4 on page 544 on the church Bible, page 544. I entitled this kind of sermon and I have to say I did copy it as God's lullaby.

Now I don't want you to send you to sleep quite yet. You've got a good 18 hours to go before it's bedtime or something. But how are you sleeping these days? Are you getting the adequate amount of Zeds?

Are you sleeping peacefully? Are you dreaming the dreams of wonder and excitement? Are you resting well? Or are you not getting to sleep so easily these days?

Is the worries of life getting to you? Is the relationships bothering you at night as you lie in bed? Is the relationship you want but don't have? Is that concerning you?

Is the current recession causing you to fear the future? The lacking of financial security? Is the way that you're being dealt with at work?

[ 1 : 11 ] Is that causing you concern? Are people upsetting you? Are you unhappy in church? There are hundreds of reasons why we may not be sleeping well.

There are many reasons why people are restless. Why they just cannot get the amount of sleep that they need. And sure if you came to me with your problems I might be able to help.

I might be able to give you some advice but I can't guarantee that I will be able to help. And anyway and sure you may have loads of other friends who you could go to and turn to for help.

But sometimes they can't help us. What do we do next? Well there are still people out there who can help us. Who may be able to take the stress from us a little but they don't seem that bothered. They really don't seem that concerned. They have bigger things to worry about. They have other things they want to do. And so clearly in the world there are people who want to help us but who can't.

[ 2 : 17 ] And there are people who can help us but won't. And what I want to see today is from this passage is that there is actually someone who wants to help and who can help us in our distress.

God is willing to help you. God is able to help you with your distress. The passage we have been reading about is all about having a nice and secure rest.

As Christians we have this wonderful certainty that our distresses can be dealt with. That we can rest secure knowing that God is with us. That God will protect us and that he will guide us throughout this life.

Sam 4 is David's prayer to God. In the midst of King David's trouble, in the midst of his distress, he appeals to God for help.

And what we have is his prayer. And what he sets out for us is a way by which we should be dealing with our distresses.

[ 3 : 33 ] It's a kind of formula as to how to overcome the distresses or how can we be certain that as Christians that God will help us in our distress.

And so the first point I would make is in just looking at verse 1 in itself, pray with confidence.

Christians pray with confidence. The second thing I want to look at is from verses 2 to 5 is that act graciously in every situation.

Act graciously in every situation. No matter what the situation. Act graciously. And then finally verses 6 to 8, rest secure in God. Rest secure in God.

As we go through this Sam, we need to bear, we're not so much of the outline of the Sam, but what is happening to the Sam is David as he prays to God.

He moves from anxiety to security. He moves from distress to peace. The prayer that David offers is his therapy. It does him good.

[ 4 : 46 ] And so first of all, point 1 verse 1, pray with confidence. Answer me when I call to you, oh my righteous God, give me relief from my distress.

Be merciful to me and hear my prayer. The first line is full of confidence. Answer me when I call to you. This is not a sarcastic answer.

This is purposeful. David knows that God is listening to him and he takes comfort from that fact. And he commands God to answer his prayer. What we have here is a strong plea for help which oozes confidence in God.

This is not some kind of British guy going, oh dear God, please, if you wouldn't mind, please, would you help me here? No, it's full of confidence.

[ 5 : 42 ] God, you can help me. You must help me. In this opening line, we have revealed to us there is a personal relationship between David and God.

David knows he can come to God. David knows that God is not distant. David knows that when he calls to God, God will listen and God will hear.

David calls out to God because our relationship exists between himself and God. He is not crying into the thin air. He is coming to the living God.

Often when we're distressed, we feel lonely. We feel isolated. We feel that nobody understands us. Nobody cares for us.

But this opening line emphasizes to us that God is with us, that God still cares for us in distress.

[ 6 : 41 ] Remember, as Christians, we have a personal relationship with God. We are family. If God is our Father, it is simply unthinkable that he would ignore the cries of his children.

Just as parents, in all their brokenness and sin, will go to a child that cries, how much more our Father, who is good, who is perfect, when he hears our cries, how much more will he come to bring comfort?

Remember the words in Philippians 4 verse 6, do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition with thanksgiving, present your request to God. Go to God in distress.

As we move down the verse to the next line, we then see that David begins to emphasize the righteousness of God. Oh, my righteous God. David knows that God cares for him.

He knows that God will do the right thing in his situation, and in every situation. He knows that God is not simply going to pat him on the head and say, now, now, there, don't cry. But actually, God is going to do a good thing for David.

[ 8 : 03 ] That God is going to act on David's behalf in this situation. He is well aware that the creator of the universe, the one who knows the beginning from the end, always does the right thing by his people. He never does them harm. He never does them wrong.

Do we view God as righteous? Do we view him as the one who will do the right thing in our situation? Are we completely confident that God is acting on our behalf in every situation? Do we wholeheartedly believe this? Do we accept this? Do we take confidence from this truth?

God in doing right may not do what we want or what we expect, but the psalmist puts his complete confidence in God, that whatever happens, that whatever God does, that it will be the right thing.

And as David prays, he takes confidence from the fact that God will do the right thing.

For us today, we must come to God in thoughtful prayer. Yes, include passion, include urgency in your prayer, but there must be a careful reflection on who God is. We must be mindful of God's character.

Biblical prayer reflects upon God. It thinks about who God is. It thinks about what God has done in the past. It thinks about what God is doing in the present. It thinks about what God is going to do in the future.

[ 9 : 51 ] This prayer was a desperately intelligent prayer. This prayer was calling out to God, but in confidence, knowing that God would do the right thing.

Verses 2 to 5, act graciously in every situation. This is a real challenge. This is really tough to act graciously in every situation.

When we are feeling the heat of the battle, when we are feeling tempted, when others are provoking us to anger, we must act graciously.

We need to act graciously, acting with kindness to all people, not just the people we like, not just the ones we get on with, not just the ones we have a good laugh with, but we need to act graciously to those who we find difficult, to those who we struggle with, to those who are even hostile to us.

David's counsel in these next verses reflect this truth to act graciously. However, in verses 2 to 5, we must be mindful of David's context. David is in trouble. He's in distress.

[ 11 : 30 ] It's when he's in distress that he's teaching us about how we should act. This is not teaching coming down from an ivory tower. This is not teaching coming from a plush throne room.

This is teaching which is coming from a man who is facing distress, a man who is fearful. There's a lot of debate as to the context, and we cannot be certain, but a number of people would argue that this prayer was said amidst the situation with Absalom, his son who is trying to overthrow him and his kingdom.

And so David's counsel to act graciously in every situation is possible and must be done. David is in his own uber-stressed environment, and he asks us to act graciously.

And let's see how we can pick that out from these verses. In verse 2, we have outlined the deep distress that David is facing.

David's facing deliverance from a group of men who are intent on destroying his reputation, and with that toppling his kingdom. How long, O men, will you turn my glory into shame?

[ 12 : 46 ] These men are going out and spreading false rumours about the king, and as they gather round the water coolers of the day, they are concocting up rumour and rumour and more rumour and more scandalous rumour to ensure that David is humiliated.

They want the king to go, they want him to be thrown out of office, and they are hungry for the power that would come with that. They are happily filling their press statements with junk statements to ensure that king David is done for.

David has no means of appeal. He cannot sort the mess out himself. He cannot go to a press complaints commission and appeal for his goodness.

He cannot get them a gagging order to shut them up. He goes to the one who has promised to protect him. He goes to God for help.

And as we examine the rest of this prayer, we discover that he acts graciously in the heat of distress. The tone he adopts in verses 2 to 3 is one of compassion. It is one of concern.

[ 14 : 00 ] How long, O man, will you turn my glory into shame? How long will you love delusions and seek false gods? Know that the Lord has set apart the godly for himself.

David is demonstrating godliness in the face of hostility. He is determined to act graciously, even to those who are seeking his downfall. After asking the question, how long will you continue? He then begins to challenge their thinking and their motivations.

How long will you love delusions and seek false gods? He wishes his enemies good. He wants them to turn away from their delusions. He wants them to turn away from their false gods and turn to the true and living God.

There is no hint of bitterness in his voice. There is no hint of getting his own back. But he desperately wants them to turn to enjoy the fullness of relationship with the living God.

We too live in a world where people are ensnared by delusion. Where they too are dishonouring God's king. Where they too are seeking to live for themselves without regard to King Jesus, who has dominion over their lives.

[ 15 : 21 ] How do we respond to this situation? How do we respond to the world in which we live? As we look upon them, we should see them as sheep without shepherds.

We must have this deep sense of regard for them. Remember how Jesus wept over Jerusalem. How he wept for those who had become deluded.

How he wept over those who had chased after false gods. Our deep desire, like David's and like our saviours, must be that those who seek after false gods, who are living delusional lives, should come to Christ as Lord and Saviour.

Do we regularly pray for those people who are deluded, who are chasing after false gods? Are we praying, as David did for his enemies, for those who were hostile to him?

Are we praying for the colleague of work who makes the jibes about our Christian faith? Are we praying that God you would do them good? Are we praying for those who we wholeheartedly disagree with, who are acting completely against God's will?

[ 16 : 43 ] Do we pray for the dictators of our world? Do we pray that President Assad would find the light of Christ? That is the best solution to that problem. The solution is that not he is overthrown, but is that he comes and bows the name before King Jesus.

That is the best solution. Our deep desire should be that those who have gone astray, who have walked away from God, should come back to God.

We should feel the words of Jesus go out into all the world. We have been born again to go out into the realm of delusion and to speak the truth, to speak the word of the living God, and to offer the world the wonderful reality of relationship with God.

David acts graciously in that he wants those who cause him distress to come to Jesus. Yes, we must pray for our enemies, absolutely.

But how do you deal with it when it's going on? How do you deal with those who specifically in this situation and specifically in our own day are feeding false rumors about you?

[ 17 : 59 ] How do you deal with people that are slandering you? How do you get through that situation? Okay, we can pray for them. But your best weapon, if someone's slandering you, if someone's making up rumors against you in the office or at work or in school, is to remember that you have a special relationship with God.

Verse 3, what does David do? He reminds himself about who God was. Know that the Lord has set apart the godly for himself.

The Lord will hear when I call to him. David reminds himself of the very special relationship he has with God, and we must do the very same thing.

Our weapon against the slander is to remember how God regards us and to hear again what God says about you. David reminds himself about the covenant.

God has bound himself to David, and God will hear him when he calls out. I am set apart by God and brought under the protection of God.

[ 19 : 13 ] I am his covenant one no matter what you say, no matter the lies you promote, the lies you preach. I am God's. Just the same for us. I am God's child.

I have been bought back through Christ's sacrifice. There is nothing that anyone can say to me that will change my status. 1 John 3 1, how great is the love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called the children of God, and that is what we are.

We are called the children of God because that's what we really are. We are God's children.

Remind yourself of that when you face the heat of slander's insults.

It doesn't matter what others say about you. It doesn't matter what others think about you. It matters what God says about you, and he says you are his child. Incredible, incredible.

Act graciously. Act as one who remembers, I am God's child in the heat of the battle. And then change your behaviour so you reflect the fact that you are God's child.

[ 20 : 27 ] In verses 4 to 5, the psalmist begins to address a second group of people which is surrounding him. And what he is doing is, as one of the commentators says, he is addressing the hotheads.

He is addressing the angry people. Now, the angry people are actually his followers. These are the men who have remained faithful to the King.

These are the ones who are loyal followers of King David. They are the ones who have stuck with David through thick and thin. They are the ones who have ignored the slander's insults of the enemy, and they are united with the King.

King and people have been grafted together by God. They were God's community, and when one was attacked, they all felt the pain of that attack.

David is urging them not to sin in their anger. Anger is fine. Anger is sometimes warranted. Even Jesus became angry over injustice.

[ 21 : 32 ] But David wants the community of believers to remain holy even when they are provoked and angry. He wants them to continue to reflect the grace of God even in this situation.

He doesn't deny them the opportunity to be angry. He gives them, though, a very clear warning. Be angry, but do not sin.

Now, the word here for anger is trembling. It's the idea of trembling. You know those times when you're so angry you start shaking? When you really get in the lather and go, ah, that's usually my classroom face.

So you get really angry. They're all becoming really angry. And David is telling them, control it.

Don't let that anger lead you into sin.

These guys are really ticked off with what's happening to their king. And David is telling them, don't let sin creep in in this situation. Don't do anything ungodly. Keep reflecting on God.

[ 22 : 42 ] We too may find ourselves in the situations where we have been wronged or others in our community have been wronged. Follow David's advice. Allow yourself to be angry.

But don't let it lead you into sin. Into acting ungraciously towards others. Remember the words of Paul to the Ephesians 4, 26, 27.

Be angry and do not sin. Do not let the sun go down on your anger and give no opportunity to the devil. How do you do that? How do you be angry and don't sin?

It seems so difficult. Well, David urges his followers, and I love the practical element of this, is basically, you're really angry, you're in an uncontrollable rage.

Go home, just walk away. Go home, be quiet. Go to bed, basically, is this a suggestion?

[ 23 : 39 ] He's not trying to suppress their anger, but he's urging them to be angry and do not sin. So go away from the situation that's making you angry. Control your anger, and then think about how can I reflect God's glory.

David is saying, get out of the way of anger, remove yourself from the situation which is making you angry. And don't go to talk to people about it, don't go fueling your anger, but just go home and quietly reflect upon what has just happened.

As you go home and reflect, though, don't start becoming full of bitterness and thinking, oh, the injustice of it all, how I really could hurt them. But no, your focus should be on God, who is the just judge, who has set you apart, who has called you into his family.

Determine in your hearts, how would God want me to act in this situation? Be motivated by trying to resolve the situation in a God-honoring way.

Not seeking your own revenge. Seek justice, but seek it in accordance with God's will. So act graciously when you're in trouble. Pray to God with confidence.

[ 24 : 59 ] And finally, verses 6 to 8, rest securely in God. I was kind of fascinated by this little question, verse 6, you know, the question still stays the same even today.

Who can show us any good? Society is looking for good. The world is searching for good things. However, it can appear to the world in which we live that there's not much good in the world that it seems to be dominated by bad.

I don't know if you might make fun of me for this, but I follow Michael Owen on Twitter. And he kind of reflects this idea of, is there not any good in the world?

This week he said, is there any decent news in the world? So far, every story has been negative.

And what Michael Owen is expressing in his 140-character word limit on Twitter is often what I think the world is thinking.

Come on, guys, surely there must be some good news out there. It's in response to these questions, these feelings of gloom that David urges God to let his light shine.

[ 26 : 12 ] Let the long winter or the long summer of gloom be lifted. Lord, let your light shine out. Let the world feel your glory for themselves is his prayer.

He wants God to shine out. He wants God to reveal himself. David knows he can only reflect God.

He cannot turn anyone to God. He wants God to fill them with the happiness and joy that he has.

He wants God to act in kindness to them as God had acted in kindness to him. Why is he desperate for God to shine his light on them?

Because he can testify in verse 7 of all that God has done for him. For all that God has given him.

And it's so good. It's so wonderful.

All the things that God has given him, he wants others to receive it. He is joyous. He is full of joy because God has placed a joy within him.

[ 27 : 15 ] When God came into David's heart, joy came. You know, that's why there's no such thing as miserable Christianity.

Because we are joyous because God has come in. David wants the people to whom he had served to experience the same joy.

And he wants them to experience in all its fullness. The riches of kingship, the wealth that came from being the leader of God's people was nothing.

Was absolutely nothing in light of the joy that God placed in his heart. All that grain, all that new wine, all that wealth pales into insignificance when he thinks about the joy that came with God.

Notice the locale in my heart. Notice the measure abundant. And notice the independence of it.

[ 28 : 29 ] Yes, there's gladness and joy when grain and wine abound. Yes, it will give you peace of mind for the coming year as you are financially secure.

However, David doesn't have that. He doesn't have much in terms of worldly wealth. He doesn't have a great future to look forward to. He's in distress.

But even without all the material things, he says that he has a gladness which is more than financial security. He has a gladness which is more than wealth.

He has a gladness which is independent of the circumstance he finds himself in. He is finding himself in a tough circumstance where nothing seems to be going right.

But yet, even in that situation, he is full of joy because his joy and his peace is not dependent on his circumstances.

[ 29 : 31 ] He has the gladness of being in covenant in relationship with God. You have placed more gladness in my heart. It is a gift of God to David in the midst of trouble, and this joy leads to peace.

This is a tangible peace. This is a peace that can be recorded. It is one thing to lie down. It's another thing to sleep.

David can now sleep. He can rest secure. Even when he is at his most vulnerable as he lies on his bed, he can sleep because God is his comfort blanket. God gives him security.

God gives him all that he needed to deal with the distress he faced. It may be tempting to think, well, David is one of these heroic figures in the Bible.

You know, it doesn't really help me in any way. We don't have much common ground. But no, he was just like us. He was a man who got scared. He got distressed.

[ 30 : 45 ] But he had joy and peace. Do you have joy and peace in believing in David's Lord? Do you have peace and joy, which is independent of your circumstance, that no matter what happens to you, you still have that peace and joy?

Because you are convinced that God keeps you secure. I pray that each one of us here will know the peace of God.

That we would know peace even in the midst of trouble and distress because we have come to the King of peace. We have come to Jesus.

In times of trouble, pray with confidence. Keep acting like a Christian. And finally, be assured that you can rest secure in your relationship with God. Amen.