

Anger
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!

O men, how long shall my honor be turned into shame?
How long will you love vain words
and seek after lies? *Selah**
But know that the Lord has set apart
the godly for himself;
the Lord hears when I call to him.

Be angry, and do not sin;
ponder in your own hearts on your beds,
and be silent. *Selah*
Offer right sacrifices,
and put your trust in the Lord.

There are many who say, "Who will show us some good?
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.

In peace I will both lie down and sleep;
for you alone, O Lord, make me dwell in safety.

Be angry and do not sin.

Those are the words that jumped out at me in this psalm. Is that even possible for me?

What do I do when I'm angry?
Plot revenge. Harsh words. Punch back.

If my anger was justified, have I made the situation better? What if I was angry without cause? Then what have I done?

David says two things after mentioning anger: be silent and offer right sacrifices. *Be silent* = don't repay evil with evil, don't lash out in words or deeds. *Offer right sacrifices* = look at what's in your heart and repent of your own sin. For that's why you would offer a sacrifice, to receive forgiveness and to *put your trust in the Lord*.

David seems to have been wronged somehow in this psalm. He says his *honor has been turned into shame; vain words and lies* and flying around. Maybe his anger is justified.

But even so, how easy is it to become like the people wronging us! Anger driving us into sin, and maybe even worse - sin that we think is right and good! It's not. It never is. Anger twists us and makes us see things in ways that are not good and right.

In the first lines of the psalm, David remembers God's faithfulness and how He had given him relief before. It's good to remember those things, maybe especially when we're angry. God's promises and His faithfulness. He can make it right. And He will do it right. For He is the righteous one.

And then this too: David talks about the joy he has - joy from the Lord. Joy that is greater than the joy the wrongdoers get from their wrong. And greater than the joy David would get from whatever comes of his anger. Joy that is greater than mere happiness, but comes from the quiet confidence of knowing that you are a child of God.

And so at the end of the day, David will both lie down and sleep - he won't lay awake, stewing in his anger. The Lord is with him. Only the Lord can give him the safety he needs, the rest he craves, the life he desires, the peace that calms, and the joy that is the answer to our anger.

Lord, help me to trust in You and not take matters into my own hands, especially when I am angry. Help me to repent and give me the joy of being Your child, knowing that with You, there is forgiveness and life. Amen.

*(*Selah is an ancient Hebrew word whose meaning was lost. It is likely a musical term.)*