

Psalm 3

“Save Me, O My God”

Intro:

The authorship of Psalms of course points to God Himself, since all scripture is God-breathed and inspired by The Holy Spirit and from this fact, we will look at a few really powerful truths a little further on. But approaching the authorship of Psalm 3 from the human side, we can see that Psalm 3 was written by King David, after fleeing from his son Absalom; the episode of which we read over the course of four chapters beginning in 2 Samuel, Chapter 15.

I don't want to assume that everyone knows who Absalom was and how he plays into this particular Psalm, so I think it's important that we understand the occasion that called for the writing of Psalm 3, and therefore it's probably necessary to give just a brief synopsis of who Absalom was, why this was happening, and therefore why David had written this particular Psalm.

King David had a number of children:

- 19 sons
- 1 daughter

There are only three children that we'll focus our attention on here because it is the fates of those three that are intertwined, and will ultimately lead us to the writing of Psalm 3. The three children are Amnon, David's firstborn son and heir-apparent to the throne of David, Absalom, David's 3rd-born son, and finally Tamar, David's only daughter and full sister of Absalom (they had the same mother).

Keeping a bird's-eye view, we see in the account that Amnon was quite taken with his half-sister, Tamar, having found her sexually irresistible. Amnon would come to violently and cruelly violate her thus initiating a cascade of bloodshed in the royal family for years to come. Later, we see Absalom take revenge upon his older brother Amnon, having him murdered for his crime against his half-sister Tamar, who Absalom loved dearly. After exacting his vengeance, Absalom left the kingdom and fled to his mother's ancestral home, where he would live under the protection of his grandfather (on his mother's side) who was king of that region, in an attempt to avoid the punishment of his father David for Amnon's premeditated murder. At this point, there would have been very little hope of Absalom ever being able to return to his father's kingdom, considering what he had done.

Eventually, King David would send for Absalom to return to Jerusalem though David wouldn't allow him to be in his presence, and for 2 years, Absalom was forced to stay away from him. This frustrated Absalom greatly, so instead of a time of reflection, repentance, and restoration over those 2 years, Absalom began to plot and manipulate. He was eventually restored by David, actually being given chariots, horses, and men - this was a symbol of royalty, a small army (1 Sam 8:11, 1 Kings 1:5, etc) but this was all part of Absalom's ultimate plan to usurp his father David. He began to meddle in royal affairs, outside the knowledge of his father, and he was quickly gaining the favor of the people and capturing their hearts. After 4 years' time, after being given permission by David to return to Hebron, (Absalom's hometown and where David was first anointed king (2 Sam 2:1-4)) to fulfill a promise, under false pretenses of course, Absalom used the opportunity to drum up support for his own kingship throughout the nation. As we read in 2 Samuel 15:12, "*...the conspiracy grew strong, and the people with Absalom kept increasing.*"

Some time later, in the middle of the night, one of David's servants alerted David that Absalom would soon be entering Jerusalem with all the armies of Israel, to make war with him. He must have been especially shattered upon hearing the words of his servant that the hearts and affections of the people were now with Absalom (2 Sam 15:13). Weeping no doubt, as he fled from his **own palace**, a broken-hearted David and a number of his servants, barefoot, heads covered, crossed the brook Kidron and walked up the Mount of Olives east of Jerusalem while his people were in full rebellion against him.

Now, the first act of Absalom upon entering Jerusalem would ultimately be the fulfillment of the Prophet Nathan's judgement against David for his sin in the matter of Uriah, Bathsheba's husband. We recall *that* prophecy here from 2 Samuel 12:11-12, "*Thus says the Lord, "Behold, I will raise up evil against you out of your own house. And I will take your wives before your eyes and give them to your neighbor, and he shall lie with your wives in the sight of the sun. For you did it secretly, but I will do this thing before all Israel and before the sun."*

So against this backdrop, we now arrive at the 3rd Psalm, written as we've seen, when King David was fleeing his son, Absalom.

Let's read Psalm 3 - I'm reading from the ESV

Verse 1:

Looking broadly here at verses 1 and 2, we see David crying out to God about his numerous foes. Though David is chased from his own kingdom by his rebellious son and all the men who David so obliged and took care of during his reign, the first thing he does in writing this Psalm is cry out to God saying, "O Lord!". Oh, that ***I*** would cry out to the Most High God first, right along

with David, rather than run & hide from Him in my time of great need, only seeking His face after I've exhausted myself.

I remember years ago, I saw a poster in a church that read, "Prayer should be our first resource - not our last resort". Let us run **TO** our Savior, the Author of all Life, the Guardian of our souls, the Great Provider of our Salvation.

David's son, Absalom, has turned David's kingdom upside down. The very people David helped, employed, trained, and trusted have now begun to bare their teeth in revolt. He just lost his home. He was evicted in the middle of the night without so much as his shoes. And **yet** here's David, composing holy worship songs TO GOD. Afflicted. Weeping. Lost everything. And here he is addressing God in poetry.

We then see recorded here that David is counting his miseries, crying out to God how they multiply. Notice the numerical qualifier: "(1)...how **MANY** are my foes! **MANY** are rising against me; (2) **MANY** are saying of my soul, "There is no salvation for him in God."

Verse 2:

Now we come to perhaps one of the most painful, ugly, and malicious allegations that David's enemies boasted, recorded here in verse 2, saying "*Many are saying of my soul, "There is no salvation for him in God."*" Any adopted child of God shudders at the thought of being cut off from the saving grace of our heavenly Father. How many times in my own life have I despaired that God has left me. I was sure of it. And yet every time I turned around, there He was. Ready to receive me. Chasing after me like the good Father He is. Even at this very moment, our Great High Priest is making intercession on our behalf before the Father. THANK GOD that my

salvation does NOT depend on my ability to hold on to Him; it depends on His ability to hold on to ME. God's word is absolutely FILLED with promises that He will preserve me and keep me.

You'll also note here that verse 2 ends with the word, "Selah". The precise meaning of the word Selah in the original Hebrew language is not entirely clear but most agree that it's a liturgical or musical pause in the psalm, likely noting a part where we are to stop and solemnly take note of the words preceding it. In effect, you could very well read verse 2 as, "Stop and consider this thought: that they say of David's soul, "there is no help for him in God".

Let us rebuke such a thought! Don't let anyone ever tell you that there is "no salvation or hope for you in God". Not even your own inner man/inner woman! Indeed, God promises us, WHO **ARE IN CHRIST**, that He will NEVER leave us nor forsake us (Deut 31:6)! He is with us wherever we go (Josh 1:9), He is ever in our midst, a mighty One who will save us (Zeph 3:17), behold He is with us always, to the end of the age (Matt 28:20), and neither death nor life, nor angels no rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, nor heights nor depths, nor anything in all creation will be able to separate us from the love of God in our Lord Jesus Christ (Romans 8:38-39). Amen!

Verse 3:

We now leave David despairing at the notion of no longer finding salvation in God and now move into a yielding of David's reassurance **IN** God. Reading verse 3, "*But you, O Lord, are a shield about me, my glory, and the lifter of my head.*". This is a beautiful confession of David's utter dependence upon God as his shield, his glory, and the lifter of his head. There's really no question that David was desperate with everything that had happened and that WAS happening to him. The interesting thing to note is that at his most desperate, David cleaved stronger to God, he took hold of Him Who saves all that much more. In David's resolute dependence on

God, we can glean **3** important things about who God is in our time of need (or at any time for that matter!):

1. **God Provides Safety:** *“But You, O Lord, are a shield about me...”*. A shield “about” me, is to suggest a shield “around” me - a covering on all sides. This certainly suggests that God is our ultimate, Divine protection, but beyond that, David is noting a practical, present protection in his hour of despair. David wasn’t in the midst of some garden-variety existential crisis here; the guys’s own son was coming against him with all of the armies of Israel to make war with him and to depose, usurp, and ultimately rid the world of him. And yet David professes his safety in God, his Shield about him.
2. **God Honors Us:** *“...my glory...”*. David was now on the run, his crown broken from his head, his kingdom in rebellion, and yet he knew that he could rest in the honor of God upon him as His own. It’s no secret that life is often difficult, underlined with pain, marred by sickness and death, seasoned with grief, colored by much toil and effort. But what a considerable thing that God has chosen us, honored us by bestowing upon us His glory. No matter what life brings, we can rest in knowing that God has placed us only a little lower than the angels, has sent us a Great Redeemer who provides us a Living Hope, has given us a Comforter in our walk with Him, and has even prepared a place for those of us who love Him that no eye has seen, no ear has heard, nor the heart of man imagined (1 Cor 2:9). What an indescribable honor indeed!
3. **God Gives Joy:** David says, *“...and the lifter of my head.”* Let the troubles of this life brag that they will win and overcome you. Let sickness, uncertainty, and even death say that God has given you over and that He can’t save you. Let the world trust in their “Absalom” and in the wisdom of his “evil advisors”. But let **us** shout with David that the Lord **is** our defender and the LIFTER OF MY HEAD! It is God Himself that will trample those proud enemies of our soul from their high seats. It is God Himself who exalts the lowly and the poor in spirit. It is He that will be glorified and magnified in our troubles, it is

indeed our God who lifts our heads by preparing a feast for us in the presence of our enemies. It is He alone that has the power to restore, indeed **from death to life**, it is He alone that has the power to work all things for the good of those that love Him, it is He alone, in all His splendor and majesty that lifts our heads high. May we all rejoice in the magnificence of our God!

Verse 4:

With verse 4, we now move into a declaration of God's magnificent deliverance: "*I cried aloud to the Lord...*". While it's certainly true that our silent prayers are heard, I know that I've found that I tend to pray a lot better when I do so *aloud*. David's troubles always brought him to his knees before God. In all his difficulties and struggles, he always acknowledged God and cried out to Him, trusting the Lord for His deliverance. This is the kind of assurance that communion with the Most High God brings.

I'll speak plainly: I would like to think that I was always drawn to God, rather than driven to Him. I don't often "cry aloud to the Lord" unless I'm at the end of my rope and when I've come to the end of myself. Sure, I shout praises in good times or when He showers me with some outward show of His great providence in the "good things" or "sweet blessings". But do I "cry aloud to Him" when things are going well? I think not. How fickle of a soul is mine that only seems to shout out to Him when either marked by great ecstasy in praise or when I'm about to be consumed by my enemies. What kind of communion is that? It's like that game we used to play as kids, "Red Light, Green Light". Only when prompted by either God's great blessings or by great troubles He sends my way (those green lights and red lights), do my greatest shouts arise. Paul says we should pray without ceasing. Oh, how I've personally failed in that area for many years of my life. It's taken decades of shaping, often painful molding, by my heavenly Father to get to a place where I think upon Him throughout the day more and more. But how many years

did it take to play “Red Light, Green Light” with God? Constantly being chased back to Him, driven to Him. Someone once said, “A hard head makes for a soft backside”. Truer words...

And best of all, continuing on with the end of verse 4 (4b), David writes, “...and He answered me from His holy hill.” David knew THIS about God: that OUR God is a prayer-hearing, prayer-answering God! Answered prayers are like sweet desserts for the soul, are they not? I’ve searched and searched and I cannot seem to find any difference between God HEARING a prayer and ANSWERING a prayer. For God to HEAR a prayer, IS for Him to ANSWER a prayer (Psalm 66:19, Isaiah 65:24, Jeremiah 33:3, 1 John 5:15, etc). He is Omnipotent, He is Sovereign. He doesn’t need to wait around and “decide” what to do - He’s already decided! God answers every prayer because he HEARS every prayer. That answer is either Yes, No, or Not Yet. So once we cry out loud to the Lord, THANK HIM in advance for His answer. Because of the finished work of Christ upon the cross, we can come boldly into the Throne Room. Let our prayers be known with **thanksgiving**.

I love the powerful contrast here between Verses 1 & 2 where David cries out how many enemies he has, how they grow in number, and how they’ve said that God has forsaken him. And then we contrast that complaint against his expectation of deliverance at the end of Verse 4 where David writes, “I cried aloud to the Lord, **and He answered me from His holy hill!**” I cry aloud to the Lord because there is One in His holy sanctuary who calls to me from heaven. And look, all of this is followed by that word again, “Selah”. It’s like saying “Pay attention! Look at what was just said!” And I think we might be able to add that this particular “Selah” would suggest a pause where we are to consider also what’s ABOUT TO BE said as well!

Verse 5:

So having said that, moving forward, Verse 5 begins, “*I lay down and slept; I woke again, for the Lord sustained me.*” David was pursued by his enemies: the armies of Israel, his own beloved son, evicted from his own palace and even kingdom, David was assailed by the anxieties you would expect in a situation like that, and yet David laid his head in the lap of the Lord, completely reassured in God’s divine protection; his faith allowed him to lay down and sleep the sleep - not of death! - but the sleep of Divine Security. A rest in the knowledge of WHO GOD IS; His complete Sovereignty. There is perhaps no attribute more comforting to the adopted children of God than that of His Sovereignty. Under the most adverse circumstances, in the most desperate times and the most severe trials, we can trust that His Sovereignty has ordained our afflictions, that His Sovereignty overrules us (and our enemies!), and that His Sovereignty will sanctify all of us. God WILL exercise His divine Supremacy, and that in the end, ALL THINGS WORK TOGETHER FOR THE GOOD OF THOSE THAT LOVE HIM (Rom 8:28). ALL things - not some things, not a few things; **ALL** things!

This is also such a glorious picture of **our own** divine security. God’s word is filled to the brim with references to Him preserving His kids. He gives us eternal life, we will never perish, and no one can snatch us from His hand (John 10:28), He Who began a good work in us will bring it to completion (Phil 1:6), we are sealed by the Holy Spirit for the day of redemption (Eph 4:30), etc etc.

Verse 6:

Walking now into Verse 6, let’s take note of the fact that David doesn’t underestimate the magnitude of his foes or their tactical strategy here when he writes, “*I will not be afraid of **many thousands of people who have set themselves against me all around***”. David seems to engender a holy defiance here. A defiant faith if you will: **I.WILL.NOT.** be afraid! It’s like he’s saying “Encircle me and I’ll either run right through you or I’ll stay right where I’m at as you

begin to close in, but I WILL NOT BE AFRAID". His lack of fear gave strength to his prayer. It gave wings to his prayer. It gave him courage. It gave him confidence. I.Will.Not.Be.Afraid. To quote another Davidic Psalm, a little further along in the book of Psalms, "Though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I WILL FEAR NO EVIL. This is a perilous time for David! His faith in **Who God is** dictated his attitude. David uses what he knows to be true about God to determine his circumstances. He isn't using his circumstances to determine who God is. So many of us today do just that. And that is the OPPOSITE of faith. We must judge our circumstances by WHO GOD IS. **Not** the other way around. I WILL NOT BE AFRAID because of WHO GOD IS.

Verse 7:

Verse 7 begins, "*Arise, O Lord! Save me, O my God!*". All David **had** was God. His entire hope, his whole life, the promise of eternal rest for his soul, was in God's hands and he knew that. Don't you dare leave today without knowing that. Don't let another minute pass without knowing for sure that that's true for yourself. **Is** God all you have? Or are YOU still on the throne?

Continuing on, David writes "*...For you strike all my enemies on the cheek; you break the teeth of the wicked*". This seems to demonstrate that David's defiant faith has become a triumphant faith. Considering just a little more deeply the triumph that David proclaims here, for our own lives, I am secure in Christ's triumph over sin. Indeed, Christ HAS struck our enemy on the cheek and broken its teeth. That enemy is sin. That enemy robs us of our fellowship with God. Just one sin caused Adam and Eve to be forced from the presence of God and barred from re-entry into fellowship with Him. For only one sin, Moses was excluded from Canaan. One sin caused Ananias and Sapphira to be cut off from the land of the living. That enemy was crushed. Sin was brought to its knees at the Cross. It's teeth have been utterly broken. "Oh death, where

is your sting?" Christ has overcome the world. His righteousness prevailed at that old tree. His righteousness is given FREELY to all who call upon His holy Name!

Verse 8:

Here we come to the final Verse (Verse 8) where we read, "*Salvation belongs to the Lord; your blessings be upon your people!*". David knew well from whence his salvation came. Our salvation does NOT belong to us in the sovereign sense. It belongs to us in the recipient sense. And any of our works **toward** salvation are a blasphemy to the sufficiency of Christ's Atoning work on the cross. In effect, trying to bring our works before the Lord as an acceptable sacrifice for our salvation is saying, "No! Christ isn't good enough. Christ isn't sufficient. You need MY righteousness". What a damnable thought.

In a sense, our salvation WAS accomplished through works. Just not OUR works. It was accomplished through HIS work. HIS finished work upon the cross. HE who is sufficient, HE who knew no sin but was made sin for our sake, HE who causes every knee to bow and every tongue to confess, HE who is the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end, HE Whom through which all things were made and without Whom was not anything made that was made (John 1:3). Let us declare, along with David, that if we are indeed saved, that God's "blessings be upon His people". That God saves us **BY HIMSELF, FROM HIMSELF, FOR HIMSELF**. And who He saves, He sanctifies. And who He sanctifies, He ultimately glorifies. God's blessing be truly upon us, Praise God!