

Preaching the Psalms Series

(11)

Psalm 3

How to Be Victorious Over Distress and Enemies,

Psalm 3:1-8

Psalm 3:1-8 (NASB)

¹“O LORD, how my adversaries have increased! Many are rising up against me.

²Many are saying of my soul, "There is no deliverance for him in God." Selah.

³But You, O LORD, are a shield about me, My glory, and the One who lifts my head.

⁴I was crying to the LORD with my voice, And He answered me from His holy mountain. Selah.

⁵I lay down and slept; I awoke, for the LORD sustains me.

⁶I will not be afraid of ten thousands of people Who have set themselves against me round about.

⁷Arise, O LORD; save me, O my God! For You have smitten all my enemies on the cheek; You have shattered the teeth of the wicked.

⁸Salvation belongs to the LORD; Your blessing *be* upon Your people! Selah.”

(Psalm 3:1-8) Introduction: sleeplessness plagues us all at some time in our lives. For many it is a chronic condition; others of us battle it when some burden, trouble, or decision weighs heavily on our minds. Some of us lie awake at night because we do not think we can face what tomorrow will bring. Medicines and methods abound for managing this life-affecting affliction, but only one completely successful cure exists.

David reveals the cure for insomnia and the fearful anticipation of tomorrow in the third Psalm. This is the first psalm in which the occasion for its writing is revealed (**See Deeper Study # 1**).

Psalm 3 is David’s prayer to the Lord when he was forced to flee a second time from Jerusalem. The first time was when Saul was threatened by David’s popularity and sought the young man’s life.

This time, however, David’s pursuer was not an aging, jealous king; it was his very own flesh and blood, his son, Absalom. Backstabbing friends and associates who had fallen for Absalom’s deceitful charms joined David’s disloyal son in the rebellion.

Psalm 3 is the first psalm of lament to the Lord. To many of us, these are the most precious of all the psalms. In the darkest hours of our lives, we identify with them and even quote them in our prayers.

This is the first time we find the word *psalm* in the book. The Hebrew word is *mizmor* and means “**to pluck strings.**” This is also the first prayer in the Psalms, and the first psalm attributed to David.

Traditionally speaking [Psalm 3](#) is used as a morning prayer: the trials of the godly in Israel

[Psalms 3–7](#) form a bridge, which I think of as a stairway between two messianic psalms.

[Psalm 2](#) is the prophetic rejection of God’s anointed, and [Psalm 8](#) is His ultimate victory as Man.

The psalms between furnish the glue that holds these two messianic psalms together. They primarily describe the godly remnant of Israel during the time of the absence of the Messiah from the earth, especially during that time which our Lord labeled the Great Tribulation period.

In these [five psalms](#) ([Psalms 3-7](#)) we have the record of Israel’s trials, sorrows, confusions, problems, and sins. We also see their confidence in God, the promises of God, and their prayers for deliverance.

Trials and sorrows are shared by all godly people, regardless of who they are or in what period of history they live. The comfort given in these psalms is for all of God’s children. There are three ways to look at these psalms.

The primary interpretation, of course, concerns the personal experience of David. Then there is a direct application to the nation of Israel to the godly remnant in the Great Tribulation. There is also an application to God’s people everywhere at any time in the history of the world. If we look at the psalms from this point of view, they will become more meaningful to us.

[Psalm 3](#) is called “**A Psalm of David when he fled from Absalom his son.**” (The historical record is in [2 Samuel, chapters 15–18](#).) This title tells us about the contents of this psalm. It tells us what went on in the heart of David when he had to flee from Jerusalem when Absalom his son rebelled against him. This psalm came out of the personal experience of David. He was in a difficult situation. He had become an outcast and a fugitive from his own city Jerusalem, which is called the city of David. He had been driven from the people he ruled. Absalom, his son, was in rebellion against him and seeking his life. Absalom’s intention was actually to put his father to death. Your heart cannot help but go out to David during this heartbreaking experience.

As David fled, the enemy was on the sidelines cursing him. **Abishai**, one of his mighty men said, “**Let me run a spear through him.**” David said, “**Oh, no.**” The prophet Nathan had told David that God would punish him for his sins.

In [2 Samuel 12:11 NASB](#) Nathan said to David, “**Thus says the LORD, ‘Behold, I will raise up evil against you from your own household; I will even take your wives before your eyes and give *them* to your companion, and he will lie with your wives in broad daylight.’**”

Why would this happen? Because David had sinned greatly, and he was not going to get away with it. God has graciously forgiven David and restored him, but David has to reap the results of his sin; and it is in his son’s rebellion that he does it. We find that David’s enemies have increased on all sides and that the hearts of the men of Israel followed Absalom. The Scripture tells us, “**Then a messenger came to David, saying, ‘The hearts of the men of Israel are with Absalom.’**” ([2 Samuel 15:13 NASB](#)).

Absalom was an attractive young man. He was a clever politician who was able to promise the people many good things which he would not have been able to deliver.

During the time of Absalom’s rebellion there were many others who rose up against David. He went out of Jerusalem barefoot and weeping. He passed over Kidron. It looked as if there was no help for him at all.

It is interesting to notice the heading, “**A Psalm of David, when he fled from Absalom his son.**” David, the true king, was rejected and Absalom, the usurper, was reigning; and that is the condition of things now. Our Lord Jesus, the true King, is rejected and a usurper is on the throne; so, we can expect suffering and sorrow. David’s experience pictures in a very wonderful way what the people of God will go through during the day of the Lord’s rejection.

This is the first psalm to bear a title and is one of fourteen that are thereby linked with historical episodes, all in the life of David ([Psalm 3](#), [Psalm 7](#), [Psalm 18](#), [Psalm 30](#), [Psalm 34](#), [Psalm 51](#), [Psalm 52](#), [Psalm 54](#), [Psalm 56](#), [Psalm 57](#), [Psalm 59](#), [Psalm 60](#), [Psalm 63](#), [Psalm 142](#)).

With this background in mind, let us look at [Psalm 3](#)

These psalms teach us to take our burdens, fears, questions, and even complaints to the Lord. God wants to share *everything* in our lives. He wants to handle *everything* we face.

God has thick skin—He can handle our frustrations, hopelessness, and even anger. The psalms of lament encourage us to call upon the great Creator and Judge of the universe. And call we should. God loves us so much that He gives us the liberty to dump the raw emotions of our hearts at His holy, omnipotent throne ([Hebrews 4:15-16](#)).

[Hebrews 4:15-16 \(NASB\)](#)

¹⁵ “**For we do not have a high priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but One who has been tempted in all things as *we are*, yet without sin.**”

16 Therefore let us draw near with confidence to the throne of grace, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need."

Most parents would agree that life's most intense heartaches involve their children. Imagine David's heart-piercing pain as his son rose up to destroy him and take his kingdom by force.

Imagine his shame as he, the mighty warrior king, fled Jerusalem barefoot and weeping ([2 Samuel 15:30](#)).

2 Samuel 15:30 (NASB)

30 "And David went up the ascent of the *Mount of Olives*, and wept as he went, and his head was covered and he walked barefoot. Then all the people who were with him each covered his head and went up weeping as they went."

How could anyone sleep in these circumstances? How could any father rest knowing he would face his son in battle the next day?

In this precious psalm, God's Holy Spirit teaches us how to sleep tonight and face tomorrow ([John 14:26](#); [Psalm 4:8](#)).

John 14:26 (NASB)

26 "But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all that I said to you."

Psalm 4:8 (NASB)

8 "In peace I will both lie down and sleep, For You alone, O LORD, make me to dwell in safety."

He uses a broken-hearted father and a humiliated king to encourage us as we face the desperate situations of life. This is, *How to Be Victorious Over Distress and Enemies*, [Psalm 3:1-8](#).

- 1. Lay your distress before God (vv. 1-2).**
- 2. Proclaim your faith in God (vv. 3-6).**
- 3. Cry out for God's deliverance (vv. 7-8).**

DEEPER STUDY # 1

([Psalm 3:1-8](#)) Notes, Titles, and Headings in Psalms: most of the psalms include some type of information in addition to the text. These notes, titles, and headings usually offer direction or some instruction concerning...

- the *authorship* of the psalm
- *background information*—the historical setting or event that stirred the writing of the psalm
- the *type* of psalm, or its *purpose*
- the *recipient* of the psalm—to or for whom it is intended
- the specific *occasion* for which it is intended

- the *performance* of the psalm—musical notations that give instructions concerning the voices that will sing it and the instrumentation, the tempo (speed), and other technical details that are necessary

These entries were long regarded as accurate until modern critics of Scripture began to challenge them and pick them apart. Excellent commentator **Derek Kidner** writes,

The notes reproduced in small print in most of our versions of all but a few of the psalms, are part of the canonical text of the Hebrew Bible (unlike the marginal notes added by the Massorettes) and are included in its numbering of the verses... The New Testament not only treats these headings as holy writ, but following our Lord's example it is prepared to build its arguments on one or another of the notes of authorship which form part of them ([Mark 12:35-37](#); [Acts 2:29](#), [34](#); [13:35-37](#)). We need look no further than this for their authentication...

Mark 12:35-37 (NASB)

³⁵ “And Jesus *began* to say, as He taught in the temple, “How is it that the scribes say that the Christ is the son of David?”

³⁶ David himself said in the Holy Spirit, ‘THE LORD SAID TO MY LORD, “SIT AT MY RIGHT HAND, UNTIL I PUT YOUR ENEMIES BENEATH YOUR FEET.”’

³⁷ “David himself calls Him ‘Lord’; so, in what sense is He his son?” And the large crowd enjoyed listening to Him.”

Acts 2:29 (NASB)

²⁹ “Brethren, I may confidently say to you regarding the patriarch David that he both died and was buried, and his tomb is with us to this day.”

Acts 2:34 (NASB)

³⁴ “For it was not David who ascended into heaven, but he himself says: ‘THE LORD SAID TO MY LORD, “SIT AT MY RIGHT HAND.”’

Acts 13:35-37 (NASB)

³⁵ “Therefore He also says in another *Psalms*, ‘YOU WILL NOT ALLOW YOUR HOLY ONE TO UNDERGO DECAY.’

³⁶ “For David, after he had served the purpose of God in his own generation, fell asleep, and was laid among his fathers and underwent decay;

³⁷ but He whom God raised did not undergo decay.”

However, discussions abound concerning their authenticity, especially questions concerning when and by whom they were inserted into the text. Most legitimate questions about their accuracy have been honestly and satisfactorily addressed by sound, Bible-believing scholars.

Twentieth century commentator **H.C. Leupold** agrees with many conservative scholars that, while these headings are accurate, they are not a part of the inspired text. He offers a reasonable basis for judging and accepting the titles concerning David’s authorship and life, which is repeated here at length:

Concerning these titles, it is hardly fair when the sweeping demand is made that, unless the contents of the psalm prove authorship as claimed by the heading, the heading must be regarded as unreliable. By such canons of literary criticism, no claim...under comparable circumstances could ever stand.

We rather venture the claim that the correctness of the title dare be questioned only when an actual contradiction to known facts of David's life appears between the title and the contents of the psalm. This demands that allowance be made for the fact that our knowledge of the events of David's life is quite limited, and that much supplementary information may be culled from the psalms."

Dr. Leupold continues to establish this standard of acceptance for the other types of headings and notations as well. *"We arrive at the conclusion that...[the] possibility [of accuracy and reliability] dare not be lightly thrust aside but may be accepted as long as there is no conflict between the claim and the contents of the psalm."*

Simply stated, believers should receive these headings as trustworthy unless there is evidence to the contrary.