

Preaching the Psalms Series

(13)

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.”

2. (Psalm 3:3-6) Proclaim your faith in God.

Psalm 3:3-6 (NASB)

³“But 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.”

“*But*” is the simple, yet powerful, word that transitions the mood of this psalm from helplessness to hope, from darkness to light, from weakness to power. Just as this psalm does not end with David’s desperate situation, our overwhelming circumstances are not our doom. We are not left to hopelessly suffer defeat at the hands of our enemies. “*But*” informs us that the tone of this psalm is changing with the words “*You, O LORD.*”

David took his eyes off his enemies and focused them upon the Lord. We are not alone in our battles, and we are not without help when we are attacked by insurmountable trouble. It is important to note that throughout this psalm David addresses God as *Yahweh* (Hebrew), *Jehovah* (Greek). The only exceptions are when David quotes his enemies (v. 2), and when he responds to their taunts (v. 7). *Yahweh* (*Jehovah*) is God’s covenant name, the name that is used to symbolize His faithfulness to His people. The Lord had made a covenant with David, a promise that pledged the throne of Israel to him (2 Samuel 7). After the promise was given, David was not controlled by his fears or his

feelings. Instead, he stood firm in the God who does not break His covenant or promises.

[Psalm 3:3](#) is one of the most-beloved verses in all the psalms. David's *faith-filled* words continue to raise a triumphant spirit in troubled hearts today.

a. God is your protector (shield) ([v. 3](#)).

[Psalm 3:3 \(NASB\)](#)

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

David's troubled mind turned to the familiar promises of God's Word, promises such as these:

[Genesis 15:1 \(NASB\)](#)

¹“After these things the word of the LORD came to Abram in a vision, saying, “Do not fear, Abram, I am a shield to you; Your reward shall be very great.”

[Deuteronomy 33:29 \(NASB\)](#)

²⁹“Blessed are you, O Israel; Who is like you, a people saved by the LORD, Who is the shield of your help And the sword of your majesty! So your enemies will cringe before you, And you will tread upon their high places.”

The betrayed king's confidence was not in his skills as a warrior, his armies, or his friends. He knew that His Protector—his *shield (magain)*—was the Lord. Two types of shields were used by Hebrew warriors. One was a large rectangular shield which the soldier could hide behind and be covered. The other was a small, hand-held shield which was used to fend off arrows and absorb sword strikes. The Hebrew word, *magain*, is the latter. Note the significance of this word. David was not afraid of a mortal shot or blow from his enemies. The Lord was his shield. The Lord would not just protect David from being struck by his foes, but also He would personally take the shots or blows intended for David. He *personally* would rise up in front of David and absorb the impact. This reminds us of the smitten Lamb at Calvary who absorbed the impact of sin for us:

[Isaiah 53:4-6 \(NASB\)](#)

⁴“Surely our griefs He Himself bore, And our sorrows He carried; Yet we ourselves esteemed Him stricken, Smitten of God, and afflicted.

⁵ But He was pierced through for our transgressions, He was crushed for our iniquities; The chastening for our well-being *fell* upon Him, And by His scourging we are healed.

⁶ All of us like sheep have gone astray, Each of us has turned to his own way; But the LORD has caused the iniquity of us all To fall on Him.”

This great truth is fully understood by remembering that David's bloody household—his family problems—were the result of his terrible sin with Bathsheba:

2 Samuel 12:9-12 (NASB)

⁹“Why have you despised the word of the LORD by doing evil in His sight? You have struck down Uriah the Hittite with the sword, have taken his wife to be your wife, and have killed him with the sword of the sons of Ammon.”

¹⁰‘Now therefore, the sword shall never depart from your house, because you have despised Me and have taken the wife of Uriah the Hittite to be your wife.’

¹¹“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.’”

¹²‘Indeed you did it secretly, but I will do this thing before all Israel, and under the sun.’”

Yet when David's own son raised his sword against his father—a consequence of David's sin of murdering Uriah the Hittite—David declared that God would intercept the blow and bear the strike that was meant for him. What a prophetic picture of the substitutionary death of the Lord Jesus Christ! God's Son stepped between us and the penalty for our sin. Like a shield, He absorbed the painful punishment that should have been ours.

Note this also about the *shield*: it is the piece of the Christian's armor that pictures our faith in God and His Word:

Ephesians 6:16 (NASB)

¹⁶“In addition to all, taking up the shield of faith with which you will be able to extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil *one*.”

The Lord is our shield. When we raise the shield of faith, we declare our unwavering confidence that God will protect us. We bear strong witness to His power and immeasurable strength.

b. God is your source of glory ([v. 3](#)).

Psalm 3:3 (NASB)

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

David was known as a “man of war” ([2 Samuel 17:8](#)). He had ascended to the throne of Israel after being victorious over the giant Goliath and in other military campaigns. He had ruled gloriously over God's chosen people. But his glory was stripped from him and turned to shame when he suddenly fled

from Jerusalem barefoot, weeping, and with his head hung low ([2 Samuel 15:14-30](#); [Psalm 4:2](#)). He was further disgraced by that fact that his enemy was his son. But David recognized that any glory he had achieved had come from the Lord, and he was fully aware that only God could restore his former glory.

God's Word declares that *"the Lord will give grace and glory,"* ([Psalm 84:11](#)). David foresaw God's glory being restored to him...

- through "the honour of serving such a master" as the Lord
- through the assurance of God's covenant that had been promised to him
- through the restoration of all that Absalom had taken away from him
- through a victory in the battle and a triumphant return to Jerusalem
- through the display of God's favor and power on his behalf, contrary to what his enemies believed

We sometimes face situations that can make us feel embarrassed, scorned, and even disgraced. Problems of an intensely personal nature, such as family strife, financial difficulty, or loss of employment leave us feeling humiliated and ashamed. But even in the midst of our failures, we must remain faithful to the Lord and hope in Him. If we do, He promises to shower us with His glory:

[Romans 8:18 \(NASB\)](#)

¹⁸ "For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that is to be revealed to us."

[1 Peter 4:13-14 \(NASB\)](#)

¹³ "But to the degree that you share the sufferings of Christ, keep on rejoicing, so that also at the revelation of His glory you may rejoice with exultation.

¹⁴ If you are reviled for the name of Christ, you are blessed, because the Spirit of glory and of God rests on you."

c. God lifts up and encourages you ([v. 3](#)).

[Psalm 3:3 \(NASB\)](#)

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

David's head was bowed low in despair because of his situation and in dread of the battle ahead. But David declared his unwavering confidence that God would encourage him. First, the Lord would lift his head and give him the needed courage to face his foes, fears, and dreaded tomorrows, just as He will lift ours. He will show forth His magnificent power, strength, and help on our behalf. He will encourage us—make us bold and enable us—to face every problem in the strength He gives.

Second, the Lord would lift David's head to look above his circumstances so that he might see God's glory. Ruling above the fray of our world and the attacks of our enemies is God. He is on His throne. In our darkest nights He lifts up our heads to give us a glimpse of Himself—His glory, power, greatness, and sufficiency for our troubles.

Third, David had left Jerusalem with His head hung low in shame and rejection. God would lift his head in triumph, and the king would march again into Jerusalem. God would give him victory and He would reclaim his throne with his head held high. Unfortunate events may embarrass us and cause shame in our lives. They may make us the subject of reproach among our critics and enemies. But when we know that we have been faithful to God, He will lift our heads high and send us to march on undeterred in our faith. In His good time, He will vindicate us and honor our faith and faithfulness to Him.

d. God answers your prayers ([v. 4](#)).

Psalm 3:4 (NASB)

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

"Too often plans come before prayers." This was not the case, however, with David. He had no plan, and he realized he was incapable of successfully carrying out a strategy that would defeat his enemies. His first and only recourse was to cry out to God in prayer. In desperation, he cried aloud from the depths of his heart. David was compelled to express the heaviness in his spirit audibly to the Lord. His loud crying released the pressure and pain pent up inside him.

Although David's world was crumbling around him, he had faith that God was unshaken in *his holy hill*—Mount Zion, the place where the tabernacle sat, and later the temple. God's glorious presence was manifest there in the Ark of the Covenant. When David left Jerusalem, the Levites removed the Ark and carried it with his fleeing delegation. But David commanded that it be returned to its proper place. The disgraced king declared his confidence in the purpose and power of God:

2 Samuel 15:25-26 (NASB)

²⁵ "The king said to Zadok, 'Return the ark of God to the city. If I find favor in the sight of the LORD, then He will bring me back again and show me both it and His habitation.'"

²⁶ "But if He should say thus, 'I have no delight in you,' behold, here I am, let Him do to me as seems good to Him.'"

David was confident that God answered his prayers because of God's covenant relationship with him. His cry to the Lord was the cry of a child to his Father:

1 Chronicles 17:13 (NASB)

¹³“I will be his father and he shall be My son; and I will not take My lovingkindness away from him, as I took it from him who was before you.”

As believers under God’s new covenant of grace, we enjoy the same Father/child relationship with God:

Romans 8:14-15 (NASB)

¹⁴“For all who are being led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God.

¹⁵For you have not received a spirit of slavery leading to fear again, but you have received a spirit of adoption as sons by which we cry out, “Abba! Father!”

Galatians 4:6 (NASB)

⁶“Because you are sons, God has sent forth the Spirit of His Son into our hearts, crying, “Abba! Father!”

Through the shed blood of Christ, we are given the wonderful privilege of crying out to our Heavenly Father at anytime, anyplace. He assures us of open access into His glorious presence, and He invites us to come boldly before His throne. When we faithfully approach Him, He promises to help us and to meet our need.

Hebrews 4:16 (NASB)

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.”

Hebrews 10:19-22 (NASB)

¹⁹“Therefore, brethren, since we have confidence to enter the holy place by the blood of Jesus,

²⁰by a new and living way which He inaugurated for us through the veil, that is, His flesh,

²¹and since *we have* a great priest over the house of God,

²²let us draw near with a sincere heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled *clean* from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water.”

1 John 5:14-15 (NASB)

¹⁴“This is the confidence which we have before Him, that, if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us.

¹⁵And if we know that He hears us *in* whatever we ask, we know that we have the requests which we have asked from Him.”

e. God sustains—watches over—you through both day and night ([v. 5](#)).

Psalms 3:5 (NASB)

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

David powerfully proclaimed his confidence in the Lord. In spite of his distress—the heartache of a rebellious son who sought his life, the fear of attack by his enemies during the night, the dread of tomorrow’s battle—David lay down and slept. His lying down shows just how much he trusted God to watch over him during the night. His sleep shows the peace that God gave him in the midst of unimaginable trouble. David could sleep because he knew God was awake and because, just as God promises, God gave His *unexplainable peace* in response to David’s prayers:

Philippians 4:6-7 (NASB)

⁶ “Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God.

⁷ And the peace of God, which surpasses all comprehension, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.”

The king awoke to see the morning light because God *sustained* (**samak**)—guarded, upheld, supported—him. As he slept, he literally leaned upon the Lord, and he arose with great confidence and strength to face the battle of the day.

We should remember the importance of sleep when facing serious trouble. We must be refreshed—renewed, strengthened—physically as well as spiritually in order to deal with the challenges that trouble brings. God will grant us sleep when we fully commit our concerns to Him in prayer, and when we trust Him for the victory. Prayer does not always change our circumstances, but it always changes us.

In [Acts 12](#), after Peter had witnessed the brutal slaying of James by Herod’s sword, he was captured and put in prison. On the night before he was to be executed, God sent an angel to free him from prison. Peter was sleeping so soundly that the light from the angel did not rouse him. In fact, the Bible says that the angel had to strike Peter on the side and physically lift him up in order to awaken him! Peter was still half-asleep and thought he was dreaming as he groggily followed the angel out of the prison. It was some time later that Peter fully awoke and realized the miracle that had taken place ([Acts 12:6-11](#)). In the darkest of nights, our loving, gracious Father will give us rest if we will place ourselves in His powerful hands.

f. God delivers you from fear—even when thousands oppose you ([v. 6](#)).

Psalm 3:6 (NASB)

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

David entrusted his life into the Lord's hands; therefore, he was able to face the day unafraid. In the Lord's strength, he stood against the rebellious forces that sought his life. Remember, he was grossly outnumbered. He was neither exaggerating nor using poetic language when he spoke of tens of thousands opposing him. Though mighty and brave, the number of those who supported and fled with him was small in comparison ([2 Samuel 15:13](#); [2 Samuel 17:11, 24](#); [2 Samuel 18:7](#)). He and his army were surrounded by Absalom's disloyal forces, men who once fought in David's army.

Thought 1. *“For whatever is born of God overcomes the world; and this is the victory that has overcome the world—our faith.”* ([1 John 5:4 NASB](#)).

David did not speak from a heart of doubt but from a heart of faith. In our darkest, most desperate nights, we must hold fast to the Lord and His unchanging Word. Unwavering faith releases the mighty power of God to act on our behalf. However, even the slightest doubt can hinder the miraculous from taking place. For this reason, we must be fully persuaded of God's presence and power and not allow doubt to enter our minds. Consider the amazing impact of faith—or the lack of it:

[Matthew 9:20-22 \(NASB\)](#)

²⁰ **“And a woman who had been suffering from a hemorrhage for twelve years, came up behind Him and touched the fringe of His cloak;**

²¹ **for she was saying to herself, “If I only touch His garment, I will get well.”**

²² **But Jesus turning and seeing her said, “Daughter, take courage; your faith has made you well.” At once the woman was made well.”**

[Mark 9:23 \(NASB\)](#)

²³ **“And Jesus said to him, ““If You can?” All things are possible to him who believes.”**

[Mark 11:23 \(NASB\)](#)

²³ **“Truly I say to you, whoever says to this mountain, ‘Be taken up and cast into the sea,’ and does not doubt in his heart, but believes that what he says is going to happen, it will be *granted* him.”**

[James 1:6-7 \(NASB\)](#)

⁶ **“But he must ask in faith without any doubting, for the one who doubts is like the surf of the sea, driven and tossed by the wind.**

⁷ **For that man ought not to expect that he will receive anything from the Lord.”**