

The LORD Helps His Troubled People

Psalm 3:1–8

A Psalm of David When He Fled from Absalom His Son.

¹ LORD, how they have increased who trouble me!
Many are they who rise up against me.

² Many are they who say of me,
“There is no help for him in God.”

Selah

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

⁴ I cried to the LORD with my voice,
And He heard me from His holy hill.

Selah

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

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

⁷ Arise, O LORD;
Save me, O my God!

For You have struck all my enemies on the cheekbone;
You have broken the teeth of the ungodly.

⁸ Salvation belongs to the LORD.
Your blessing is upon Your people.

Selah

I. Introduction

Psalm 3 is basically talking about the matter of having a “**Peaceful trust in God**”. In this time of deep and awful anguish for David, a time when his son Absalom rebelled against him, this wonderful Psalm lays out for us a powerful example of how the godly man can sort these matter out, seeing them in a godly, and so, right and God glorifying manner.

- Absalom rebelled against him, 1–2,
- David found God as his glory, as his shield (protector) and
- as his encourager, 2–3;
- as the One who answered his prayers, 4; and
- as the One who gave him peace and deliverance, 5–8.

King David is especially interesting and instructive to believers in that he does not simply speak about the good times and aspects of his life in the Psalms. Of course, David was a Prophet of God and wrote under the inspiration of God's Holy Spirit, but it is interesting and instructive that all of life, every part, is a part of his narrative here in Psalms. The transparency that is a part of David's life (that is to the readers of the Bible - not necessarily to all those whom David came in contact with) is a marvelous example for us in the way in which we ought to see that we present ourselves to those around us.

We could give a brief outline of the Psalm in this fashion:

1. The Psalmist's Predicament (3:1, 2)
2. The Psalmist's Peace (3:3-6)
3. The Psalmist's Prayer (3:7, 8)

II. *The Psalmist's Predicament (3:1, 2)*

¹ *LORD, how they have increased who trouble me!
Many are they who rise up against me.*

² *Many are they who say of me,
"There is no help for him in God."
Selah*

This first part of the Psalm speaks of David's experience, what he has seen. It seems to lay out the desperate situation he faces, underscored with its 2x repetition of **many**. We should notice also that he uses the plural "they" 3x in these first two verse. The general description here ties in well with 2 Sam. 15:12-13 ("many") and 16:8 ("no salvation for him").

Note that verse 1 pretty much speaks of protection from earthly enemies and prefigures protection from the ultimate evils of Satan, sin, and death (Heb. 2:14-15). God the Father delivered Christ from his enemies in his resurrection (Acts 3:13-15), and that is the basis for our deliverance (Rom. 4:25). You and I will one day see that same deliverance at the time we emerge from our earthly existence and walk into our eternity with our Lord and Master in glory.

I do want to note that David is very detailed about that which he has concern about and which is 'afflicting' him. He first uses the word "trouble" him which identifies the ones spoken of as his "adversaries". It is indeed a plural noun and looks at the target in view in a general fashion including all of those who set themselves against him (David). He says that they have "increased". The interesting thing here is that this surely seems as though he is saying that the number of the ones in view has (and may still be) increased. There are more of them now than there we some bit ago. However, this may not, strictly speaking, be the case. It may be that David is saying that the actual afflictions are what is in view. However, looking at the second part of the verse, it is indeed talking about the number of people in view, which will complicate the number of afflictions.

We clearly see a double reference (at the end of verse 1 and at the beginning of verse 2) to multiple persons (“many”). There were a number of people that had set themselves and had even taken active steps in opposing and attacking David.

It is also interesting that David uses a unique word at the end of verse 1. An increased number of people have troubled him and also an increased number have “risen up” against him. The word used for “rise up” is the Hebrew word “qāmîm” referring to the active action of rebellion. The implication is really two-fold:

- David considered their act a deliberate act of rebellion against him as king and that they knew what they were doing.
- It also implies that those rebelling knew as well and that they understood what they were doing when they did it.

That furthers the idea of “troubling me” in the first phrase. The being of an adversary is not merely a matter of opinion or negativity. It is active opposition. Also, note that they are in this state of opposition is not just against the office that David held, but against “me”, that is against him personally. When we think about who David was, the King of Israel, as well as called by God to the office of Prophet and actively pursuing the fulfilling the place to which his Master, the Lord God, had called him.

This makes the rebellion against David, in a very real way, rebellion against the God of all men. This is surely a much more significant and weighty thing. It is also a matter that we need to think on for a moment. We need to recognize a couple things:

1. The Scripture tells us that the heart of the King is in the hand of the Lord. It is HE that puts rulers in their places. Now, this **does not** mean that we, as believers, must APPROVE of whatever ruler that is presently in our view. But it does mean that we need to see and understand them properly. As a result, we MUST treat them, and be a part of that which they rule over in a godly and spiritual fashion. Our responsibility in whatever kingdom/nation we speak in, as believers; is to act as one who knows the Gospel and wants to see that Gospel held up before all of the people in that kingdom/nation.
2. It is clear also that God sees to it that those whom He desire are present in whatever town we are speaking of. He controls the leader and the population of any given town.
3. It is also important for us to remember that these two facts do not mean that every ruler and/or every population are necessarily godly or respectable from a Christian point of view. There are surely any number of ungodly people around and we can all think of rulers that have been horrible.
4. But it is essential for us to keep what we have said about the ruler being where he is by the hand of God. This is even so of ungodly rulers. It is not our place to pass judgment spiritually speaking all of them, either singularly or corporately. It is, however, our responsibility to bear

witness to the truth of the Gospel, as best we are able and to what degree God makes possible in whatever social or political group we are placed in.

^{3:2} *Many are they who say of me,
“There is no help for him in God.”*

Selah

The same “many” that we saw just a line ago we see here again in the beginning phrase of verse 2. This is the “active” rebellion that we mentioned a bit ago. There rebellion is, by implication, political; but is also, as David says here, spiritual in the conclusion it draws. The “speakers here, the rebellious ones,

3:2 Salvation here, as generally in the OT, can refer to either (or both) physical and spiritual deliverance from danger. The fact that they are saying this of his **soul** indicates that the enemies are taunting him: his sins are so bad, they imply, that God cannot save him.

Often throughout the Psalms, we see David saying things very much like this. He cries out to God and does a couple basic things; we see it time and again. As we’ve touched on a bit already:

1. He cried out to God, not merely in complaint or pain.
2. He rehearsed the issue he was grappling with as a part of his prayer to God.
3. He recognized the details of the problem as he was praying; he did not simply ask God for help.
4. He think through the contrast involved in the issue he was facing - that is what is profitable TO ponder and cry out concerning as well as what it would be unprofitable for him to allow to occupy his mind with.
5. He also rehearses, inn his mind, just how God has been faithful to him in his past matters.

III. *The Psalmist’s Peace (3:3–6)*

He Expresses His Conviction That God is different than the conviction of those who had set themselves against him (David)

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

⁴ *I cried to the LORD with my voice,
And He heard me from His holy hill.*

Selah

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

*⁶ I will not be afraid of ten thousands of people
Who have set themselves against me all around.*

- “They” were those who had:
 1. Troubled David
 2. Increased in spite of that Trouble
 3. Risen up against King David
 4. Deliberately Said that God, David’s Lord would not help him.

He expressed His desire not only that he be relieved of his affliction, but also (and perhaps as an even more pressing desire?) that God be shown to a God that hears and takes care of His people and thus be glorified. Notice the conjunction “But” at the beginning of verse 3. It has a contrastive sense and so sets what follows over against what has gone before.

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

*⁴ I cried to the LORD with my voice,
And He heard me from His holy hill.*

Selah

Note that the content of the first two verses are largely personal in their nature. We can easily see that this is because of the very personal nature of the relationship that David had with his Lord. This is not so much a formal declaration as it is David crying out in gratitude to the Lord for the goodness and power of His rescue. “Lord” is the well-known Hebrew word “Yahweh”. It translates as “LORD” 6510 times, “GOD” four times, “JEHOVAH” four times, and a “variant” once. It is seen as the proper name of the one true God. It went unpronounced in respect and honor, except with the vowel pointings of “adonay”, another popularly used word for God usually translated “Lord”.

At the end of verse two is another frequent name for God - “*ēlōhîm*” - it translates as “God” 2346 times, and as “god” 244 times. Not meaning to be casual at all, but it is the more generally used word for “God” in the OT. The idea is that it is the word anyone can use in most normal circumstances.

*² Many are they who say of me,
“There is no help for him in God.”*

Selah

The “saying” that is in view, in the context that it is in, can be seen to speak of both an attack of sorts on the hearer as well as perhaps some sort of gossip that had him as its’ subject; running him down in the sight of others. We should remember that David was not only the King of the land, but was also quite loved and respected by his people. We might conclude that at least a part of this “saying” by David’s rebellious enemies was intended to tear him down in the face of his people.

We remember, as well, that David was quite known for depending upon the Lord, as well as, for God's undertaking on his behalf on numerous occasions. The last phrase of verse 2 attacks him on exactly that point.

The content here in verse 2 kind of demonstrates this. They were saying, likely in loud voice and harsh terms, that what David had said concerning his unique and powerful relationship with God was largely untrue and that God would be of no help to him! Remember that there were a number of folks, including his own son, who had set themselves against him. David was well-known and loved in Jerusalem. It was the aim of these gossipers to tear down David's reputation and to make one disrespected and even mocked in Israel.

It is clear from the historical accounts that God defended David and ground down those who set themselves against him. It is this very thing that is in aim in this Psalm - it would not happen again and anyone who is on David's "side" ought to run for cover!!

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

⁶ *I will not be afraid of ten thousands of people
Who have set themselves against me all around.*

The first phrase in verse 5 "*I lay down and slept*" speaks, obviously, of one's taking rest or recovery in a very natural way to people. It sets up the second phrase - that of awaking in a state that has reaped the good results of sleeping. Interestingly, "slept" is most often used of the act of falling asleep, and implies that there was not the kind of things going on that are often said to keep one awake and preventing needed sleep - he "fell asleep". The kind of things that are often said to prevent normal sleep, worry, fear, concern, an occupied mind, and the like were apparently not a part of David's mindset at this time. He was able to lay himself down and easily fall asleep.

The statement is clearly designed to draw a contrast with the situation we discussed earlier:

¹ *LORD, how they have increased who trouble me!
Many are they who rise up against me.*

² *Many are they who say of me,
"There is no help for him in God."*

Selah (Psalm 3:1-2)

We noted that there were many who had risen in rebellion against their King, against the man who, fairly obviously, was a chosen servant and Prophet of God. They raised themselves up and put themselves forward, it seems like, attempting to stand up in his (David's) place. We noted that one of the things that they had undertaken to discourage and crush David under the weight of their attack was, possibly, to tell him that God would not be there for him, that he was alone against their attacks. Who knows just what stories and fable they

had put before him (David) to seek to bring him to the depth of discouragement and thus raise themselves to the height they desired for themselves.

But David wasn't having any of it! The fact that he was able to sleep easily tells us that he had run the matter over in his mind and heart and was assured that Go was on his side and would defend him. It was just that he was holding the opinion of this, but that he was convinced and solid in this conviction.

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

⁶ *I will not be afraid of ten thousands of people
Who have set themselves against me all around.*

Verse 6 enlarges even more upon this very idea. He WILL NOT be afraid of any threat - WHY? Because the LORD has sustained him...He has done it before and He will do it NOW! David's faith and trust in his God is an astonishing example for you and I. Surely David was called as a Prophet of God and served in that office for a goodly amount of time. But his kind of trust and reliance is not limited to the "Great Ones" so to speak. It is available and even showered upon whatever of God's children set themselves to make use of it!

IV. The Palmist's Prayer (3:7, 8)

We want to underscore that what we said about David's experience is, indeed, available to all of God's people by looking at the next few verses:

⁷ *Arise, O LORD;
Save me, O my God!
For You have struck all my enemies on the cheekbone;
You have broken the teeth of the ungodly.*

⁸ *Salvation belongs to the LORD.
Your blessing is upon Your people.*

Selah (Psalm 3:7-8)

As he suggested that he, himself, had simply fallen asleep, we must note that he is NOT suggesting that there are times when God sleeps and must be wakened. Rather, what is in David's mind here is that the believer needs to call upon the Lord so that the Glory is given to the Lord as He answers the cry of His people. It demonstrates that David is NOT relying on his own power and is not simply leaving it up to God to do the watching and taking the initiative in whatever issue is in view. There are, of course, many times when God does take initiative and act on the behalf of His people. Salvation itself is a great example of exactly this!

The implication here, however, is that David is not just concerned in delivery from the matter. He is also concerned that all of those who can see, either from the "friend" side or from the "enemy" side; that they can see just

who it was that was standing up for King David and give HIM the glory for the deliverance.

He cries to God because, in very human fashion, he wanted deliverance from what was facing him. You and I are much the same. We can surely understand that it may, indeed, be that the unpleasantness that we are experiencing could be something that will bring God glory. Like David, many of us have some capacity to sort out and resolve things ourselves. He was, after all, a King, not to mention a Prophet of God. Yet he cries out to God, as you and I ought to as well, in any negative circumstance.

“Arise” is not trying to stir God from some inaction of His. Rather, having made it clear that the matter in view is quite serious and is beyond his power to resolve, He looks to the ONE whom he knows has power over any and all circumstance to resolve the issue. For any believer, there are times and circumstance where we face things that are hard and beyond our ability to care for. And so, he cries out for God, the only One he knows who cannot fall short of whatever necessity we face.

He asks God to “save” him, a common word in the OT. It is translated as “save” most often, 149 times, as “savior” 15 times, “deliver” 13 times, “help” 12 times, “preserved” five times, “salvation” three times, “avenging” twice, “at all” once, “avenged” once, “defend” once, “rescue” once, “safe” once, and “victory” once. As you can see, it has a varied meaning and it takes various shades of meaning depending on the context in which it is used. Here I suspect that, yes, it does mean “save”, but it carries with it the idea of being rescued. We might also see the implication that a return to previous circumstances or position could be seen as well. David is asking God, in light of these attacks and nasty gossip spread by these rebellious enemies that have arisen, to rescue him and restore him to the position peace and wellbeing as King.

In the second part of verse 7 we see that he is remembering what God has done for him in the past. We should note that he is not citing this deliverance concerning the present enemies, but is using past deliverance as a part of that which helps him stand sure...

*^{7b} ...For You have struck all my enemies on the cheekbone;
You have broken the teeth of the ungodly. (Psalm 3:7b)*

It appears that God had protected David before. It seems as though he is saying that God had defended him every single time there had risen a threat. If we were to look over at the historical record, we would see that there we a number of such times. Notice the use of the conjunction translated “For” at the beginning of the verse. It joins the end of verse 6 with the beginning of this verse. He will NOT be afraid, no matter what number of people set themselves as enemies to him.

We ought to conclude that this Psalm is here, not to uphold and impress us concerning David and his abilities and habits before the Lord. Surely, David was a great man of God but this Psalm is here to show us how you and I ought

to stand up and to depend upon God in our times of need and stress. We can, I think, be sure that we will face times of both uncertainty as well as times of attack from those around us. As we see David doing, so also can WE do in both defending ourselves from such attacks and in seeing to it that we uphold the Word of God and that our actions and attitudes point toward the good Character and Nature of our Lord. Just as David did, so also - WE CAN carry through with what we know our thinking and actions ought to be!