

# Psalm 3

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[0:00] Well, we're in the Psalms, and the book is The Way of the Righteous and the Muck of Life by Dale Ralph Davis.

! Last week it was Psalm 2, that big picture Psalm that gives us a worldview of the world that hates, the throne that consoles, the decree that determines, and then the gospel that it calls. So that was last week. Let's open our Bibles and turn to Psalm 3, the psalm for this morning, and I've asked Caleb Beery to read it out for us. Go ahead, our brother Caleb wants folks to get a chance to find their place.

Thank you. To read the psalm is to realize we're listening to a man praying, aren't we? Some people think, and I say some people, people of the world think that prayer is nothing more than an emotional crutch for those who are otherwise too weak to face the strains and trials of life, an escape mechanism so that we don't have to deal with the painful troubles of life, just some self-talk in which we talk ourselves into feeling better about our problems.

Well, what do we have to say about that? I think even the medical community has recognized that there is a therapeutic help in healing for those who pray.

Now, not for a minute do most of them think that there's actually a God in heaven who intervenes in the health and the body of that person to restore them to health, but just that when a person is thinking positive thoughts and thinking prayerful thoughts about there is a God and they expect to get better, and that has a way of helping people get better, and there's some truth to that.

[2:03] So we would recognize there is a therapeutic value to prayer. Do we not experience peace in prayer? Don't be anxious about anything, but in everything, with thanksgiving, by prayer and supplication, let your requests be made known unto God, and the peace of God that passes all understanding will guard your heart and soul in Christ Jesus.

So there is this peace that is the result of prayer. Oh, what peace we often forfeit. Oh, what needless pain we bear.

All because we do not carry everything to God in prayer. So, yes, we would say there is this peace value that comes upon us in prayer.

And we would have to acknowledge that we are the weak. Yes, prayer is something for weak people, and that's us. That's why we pray. We feel our weakness in the troubles and strains of life, so we have no argument with that.

But it is not just self-talk. We believe there's a God in heaven who answers, who hears and answers and intervenes in our lives, acts on our behalf.

[3:19] And so prayer is no escape from the troubles of life. Rather, as Davis says, prayer is the way we slug our way through troubles. Prayer is the way we slug our way through troubles.

With our eyes wide open to all the troubles of life, we're not living with our head in the sand, but our eyes are open to much more than just the troubles of life.

They're open to those unseen realities. So here we have David's prayer in trouble. And viewing it in that way, we can learn ourselves how to pray in trouble.

We have the psalm broken down for us then into four headings. The first is the enemies you face. Each heading has two verses. So look at verses 1 and 2 again.

Oh Lord, how many are my foes! How many rise up against me! Many are saying of me, God will not deliver him! How many?

[4:20] How many? How many? There's a lot of enemies here. And the introduction to the psalm reminds us that this is a prayer on the run.

David is running for his life. It's not the Philistines who are chasing him. It's his own son, Absalom. And he's seeking to steal the throne from David, his father, and to snuff out his life in the process.

And he's not a one-man vigilante either. He's got many with him who are all now the enemies of David. Remember how Absalom had stolen the hearts of the men of Israel and pulled them toward himself, away from his father.

And his conspiracy movement had grown and grown to the place where it included some of David's most trusted counselors, even Ahithophel and other government officials. There were some loyalists who stuck with David and fled with him as they ran for their lives out of Jerusalem. But they were the minority. The greater part of Israel sided with David's son Absalom in this coup, this rebellion. So much so that the huge army of Israelites then that are pursuing David are described as the sands on the seashore.

[5 : 42] They were indeed many who were rising up against him. And they were not only many, they were mean. They were seeking to kill their king.

They were traitors wanting to kill the very one who had risked his life time on end to save them from the Philistines and all their other enemies. And now they repay him with their meanness.

They were many, they were mean, and they were mouthy. Indeed, it is especially their words that aggravate David, even more so than their weapons. What was it that they were saying about David?

Can you see? What were they saying? God couldn't deliver him? Look again. He will not.

It's not that he could not. I mean, God can do anything. But he will not. He's not going to. Now, what's so galling about these words? Well, they're saying God is fighting against David.

[6 : 48] That out of all of his many enemies, his number one enemy is God himself. And he will not deliver David.

Now, that's the same charge that was thrown into the teeth of David's greater son, Jesus, when he was hanging on the cross. Remember? The Jewish leaders. He trusts in God.

Let God deliver him now, if he wants him. For he said, I am the Son of God. And so, in their mockery, they're saying, as long as you stay pinned to the cross, it simply shows us that God doesn't want you.

God does not want to deliver you. You're getting what you had coming. Because you're a blasphemer. Isaiah 53, 4 says, We considered him stricken by God, smitten by him and afflicted. Yes, we said, he's simply getting from God what he had coming. And there's something devilish about that. Kicking a man when he's down. Mocking a man when he's on the cross.

[7 : 54] Saying to a man who has all these troubles and all these enemies, God will not deliver you. And that's the very thing that David's enemies are charging him with.

God will not deliver you. You're getting what you had coming. You're getting what you had coming. Now, while David's fleeing Jerusalem, there's a Benjamite named Shimei.

And as David is walking along the path, he's up along the edge of the mountain path. And he's cursing David. And he's pelting him with dirt clods and stones.

And this is what he's shouting. Get out! Get out, you man of blood, you scoundrel! The Lord has repaid you for all the blood you shed in the household of Saul, in whose place you have reigned. The Lord has handed the kingdom over to your son Absalom. You have come to ruin because you are a man of blood. Get out! Get out, you man of blood, you scoundrel! You can read about it there in 2 Samuel 16.

[9 : 09] Now, Shimei's charge was false. David had not shed Saul's blood. You remember, he refused to touch the anointed one. He let God do that.

And yet, even though the charge against David was false, it was still hard for David to shake this charge unscathed by it.

Now, why was that? What gave these words traction in David's heart? Well, because in one sense, David and all of us would have to say, we don't deserve to have God deliver us.

We have sinned enough to reap God's discipline in our life and God's punishment. And so, yeah, should God deliver me? No, no.

He probably won't deliver me. I deserve this. I have it coming. Now, why had this trouble come into David's life? This is for you to answer.

[10 : 11] Why had this trouble, Absalom's revolt, come into David's life? Because of his sin with Bathsheba.

2 Samuel 12, 9-12. This is God's discipline of David for his adultery and his murder in the matter of Bathsheba and Uriah.

Remember how Nathan came to him and he says to David, Why did you despise the word of the Lord by doing what is evil in his eyes? You struck down Uriah the Hittite with the sword and took his wife to be your own.

Now, therefore, the sword will never depart from your house because you despised me and took the wife of Uriah the Hittite to be your own. And this is what the Lord says, Out of your own household I am going to bring calamity upon you.

Before your very eyes I will take your wives and give them to one who is close to you and he will lie with your wives in broad daylight. You did it in secret, but I, Jehovah, I will do this thing in broad daylight before all Israel.

[11:26] It's all fulfilled now, you see. It's coming to pass in Absalom's rebellion and what he does as a tent is erected right in the center of the city and he has physical relations with David's wives, his concubines.

So that's one answer to the question. Why is this happening? Because it's God's discipline of his servant, his child that has strayed from him.

But there's another answer. Why, on a human level, why is this happening? Why does a coup ever happen? It's a power grab, isn't it?

Absalom's lust for power. So much so that he'll kill his father to become king himself. And it reminds us of Psalm 2 that we've got to see the big picture.

Why is this happening? Well, because Absalom is a part of this world that is opposing God, who hates God and his anointed king. And he is now seeking to unseat the king that God seated upon his throne, even David.

[12:40] And so this trouble in David's life is due to the world's hostility against Messiah and his people. It's not one or the other.

It's not that, well, it's either God's discipline upon his erring child, or it's because of Absalom's lust for power. It's both. And you see, what it shows us is that man's injustice is sometimes God's rod of discipline upon his erring children.

Sometimes the reason injustice sweeps into the life of the Christian is because God is punishing. He is disciplining. He's chastening his own son. And that's the case here.

And it gave traction to their mouthy insults. God will not deliver you. Well, that wasn't just some enemy of his spouting off some nonsense. There was some real difficulties in David's heart as he's dealing with his sin and God's discipline of him.

And poor, poor Christian, when enemies and troubles are many and we think that God is our enemy, that he's against us.

[13:56] So what do we do then? What do we do? What did David do? Well, he tells the Lord about it. That's why we have Psalm 3. He prays. To who?

To the very God who his enemies say want nothing to do with him. He goes and tells him. And what does he tell him? He tells him, Lord, they say you don't want to have to help me.

What honesty before the Lord. So you pour out your anguish at the feet of a God who is not supposed to care. That's point one.

The enemies you face. So David's troubles triggered prayer and I wonder if ours do the same. Trouble should trigger prayer.

The second point in the psalm is the God you confess. We go from the enemies you face to the God you confess. And just by the title you see the shift in focus, don't you?

[14:59] And that's exactly the shift in his prayer. It's a turning point. Verse 3 and 4. But you. He had been talking about my enemies.

But now, but you are a shield around me, O Lord. You bestow glory on me and lift up my head. To the Lord I cry aloud and he answers me from his holy hill.

So he's rehearsing what kind of God he has. What is this God of the covenant? Yahweh, the Lord, to him. Well, he's four things at least.

He is a protecting God. He says you are a shield around me. So wherever David went, he's got a shield all the way around him.

What is a shield? A shield is something that comes between me and my enemy. So all my enemies, the first part of the psalm. Second part, I've got a shield between me and my enemies.

[15:59] In other words, they can't touch me. Nothing they do can reach me unless it gets through my shield. And Jehovah, my covenant God, he's my shield. You are my shield. Secondly, he's not

only a protecting God, he's a giving God.

He says you bestow glory on me. Now Absalom was out to steal that glory. But David knows that it's the Lord who dispenses glory. He's the one who had anointed him king through Samuel.

The Lord is a sun and a shield. The Lord will give grace and glory. No good thing will he withhold from him who walks uprightly. Lord, you bestow glory on me.

You're the giving God and I come to you. You're my shield. You're my giving God. Third, you're my refreshing God. He says you lift up my head. Have you noticed how the condition of a man's spirit, his inner spirit, his emotional state is often shown by his outward body language.

I believe that's what we have here before us, his physical posture. You can read a man's heart in his face, in his head, his body language.

[17:15] When a man is disheartened and discouraged, what's the direction, up or down? It's down, isn't it? Shoulders are down. Head is down. In fact, we call it being downcast, don't we?

And when he's strengthened and encouraged and refreshed and restored, he's uplifted. And David says, God, you're that for me.

You're the one who lifts up my head. You're the one who encourages me, who refreshes me, who restores me. In Psalm 110, you have a picture of Messiah's king, the Lord Jesus Christ, destroying his enemies with his sword.

The Lord is at your right hand. He will crush kings on the day of his wrath. He will judge the nations, heaping up the dead and crushing the rulers of the whole earth. So there he is with his sword, and he's heaping up the dead.

That's exhausting work. But he does not grow weary in his work. Why not? Verse 7, he will drink from a brook beside the way. Therefore, he will lift up his head.

[18:22] He will lift up his head. Refreshed. So there's that soldier, weary, bone-tired, sword frozen in his hand.

And he falls down by the brook that he finds. And he drinks. And he gets up refreshed. His head is up now. He's ready to go. David says, God, you are that to me.

Many are my enemies. But you are the lifter up of my head. You're my refreshing God. And surely that's what David needed at this point.

Samuel tells us in 2 Samuel chapter 16 that as David was going out of Jerusalem, he was weeping as he went. He was downcast.

His head was hanging low. The wound from his own son cut him deeply. And so that first night, they arrived at their camping point.

[19:18] But the Bible says exhausted, pelted with stones and dirt clods by some cursing benjamite all the way. And the pain from the wound of his son and the remembrance of his sin with Bathsheba and Uriah.

And this is the result and consequences of my sin. His head was drooping. So he comes to the Lord as the one who refreshes and revives and lifts up his head.

What do you do when you're sad? Where do you go when you're drooping? David would say, run to your covenant, Lord. He's a shield.

He's a giver of glory. And he's the lifter up of our heads. And fourthly, he's the prayer answering God. Verse 4 says, to the Lord, I cry aloud and he answers me from his holy hill.

This was a vocal, out loud, desperate cry. And David says, I know it reaches your throne, O God. Now, the interesting thing is that as David is fleeing Jerusalem, the further he gets from Jerusalem, the further he gets from God's holy hill on Zion, where the temple was and God's presence from which he heard and answered prayers.

[20:35] And yet David knows, even as he's fleeing and getting further from that holy hill of Zion, that his prayer is heard and will be answered from God's holy hill, that from any place in God's earth, he can cry and he has the attention of his covenant, Lord.

He's accessible. Wherever we are, whatever our condition, our God is accessible. And so, you see how verse 2 shifts, or stanza 2, these two verses, 3 and 4, shifts the focus from the enemies to God.

And he fills his vision with the kind of God that he has. Believing prayer brings God into our troubles.

So, when you pray, do you pray like this? When you're in trouble, do you pray or do you just say God and leave it at that? Or do you think about his attributes? Do you pray to God your shield?

Do you pray to God the one that gives glory? Do you pray to the lifter up of your head? Do you remind yourself that he hears and answers prayer? Do you uphold before yourself the attributes of God?

[21:52] You see, no small part of the encouragement that we get from prayer comes from adoring him in prayer for who he is and reminding ourselves of who is in covenant with us in Jesus Christ.

It's this God, my shield. So, as I pray, I pray, Lord, you are my shield, now protect me. Lord, you are the lifter up of my head, now revive me and refresh me.

You're familiar with that famous photograph of the Marines raising the American flag on Iwo Jima in 1945. There's a story that goes along with that picture that Davis tells, and I think it helps us here at this point.

He says, He says, He says, He says, But Bella was sure.

As she strode into the kitchen, she simply said, I know my boy. Actually, that figure was identified as Henry Hansen. But Bella Block was still unmoved.

[23:37] Sadly, the family soon received word that Harlan had been killed in action on Iwo Jima. But in 1947, after additional testimony, they received notification of a correction.

Henry Hansen had not been in the picture. The lad aiming the pole into the ground was Harlan Block. Bella Block was hardly surprised. I know my boy.

So, David is saying, I know my God. I know Him to be a shield. I know Him to be a giver of glory. I know Him to be the lifter up of my head and to be a prayer answering God.

So, the God we confess. The enemies we face. The God we confess. And thirdly, the peace you enjoy. Verses 5 and 6.

I lie down in sleep. I wake again. Because the Lord sustains me. I will not fear the tens of thousands drawn up against me on every side.

[24:42] So, here's peace. Peace for David on the run. You notice the tens of thousands are... That's not poetic...

Excuse me. That's not poetic license that he's taking here. There are literally tens of thousands who are rising up against him. The whole conspiracy movement surrounding him.

And yet, he can lie down and sleep. And sleep without fear, he tells us. Now, how is that possible?

It was not Saman X. It was rather because of the peace that comes from the Lord.

You see? It's because of who you are, O God, that I lie down and sleep. It's because you're a shield around me that I can lie down and sleep.

It's because you never slumber or sleep in your watch care over your people that I can sleep.

Because you don't, I can. And so, David enjoys this wonderful peace.

[25:46] Never knowing when the next traitor might sprout up from his own camp or one of those tens of thousands find where he's hiding out and snuff him out while he sleeps.

And yet, here he is, resting because of who his God is. It reminds us of Acts 12. Herod has beheaded James and he saw how pleased the Jews were when he did so.

And so, he arrests Peter as well. Intending to bring him out after the Passover to trial and execution.

And on the night before he's brought out, where's Peter?

He's sleeping between two soldiers and sleeping so soundly that he must be hit by the angel that appears to wake him up. I lie down and sleep because of who you are.

I'm challenged by that. I spend some sleepless hours in bed. I shouldn't. I should learn from David to pray and to rest.

[27:00] You will keep in perfect peace him whose mind is steadfast because he trusts in you. So when faith is low, fears are high.

And when faith is high, fears are low. And so the command that's repeated more often than any other command in the Bible is do not be afraid.

Evidently, God knows we tend to fear that we're worrisome. And if he says do not fear so many times, it's because there are reasons in him to not be afraid.

And to say with David, I will not fear. It's because of who he is and he's our covenant Lord. So that's why David is not held in the grip of fear but can lie down and sleep.

He does not yet have peace from trouble but peace in it. The circumstances haven't changed. He's still got all these enemies but all he needs for peace is God, his shield, and the lifter up of his head.

[28:13] So David is enjoying peace even before he enjoys deliverance. And that's how we're to face an uncertain future. But notice David not only lied down and slept, he woke up again.

Isn't that the wonder of it all? That every time he laid down and went to sleep, he had a waking again. And that was because the Lord sustained him. And that's why you and I, whenever we lay down and sleep, if we ever have a waking again, it's because the Lord sustained us. So we are to give thanks as David here recalls to mind. The Lord keeping him while he sleeps. So, the enemies we face, the God we confess, the peace we enjoy, and lastly, the help you expect. The help you expect. Here we get to actually see the petitions that David makes in prayer. What is he asking God to do? Up to this point, he's told God about his enemies and about his own fears of, they say you won't help me.

He's told God about who he is and how he adores him for what he is to him as his covenant Lord. He knows his God to be. And then he tells him of that wonderful peace.

[29 : 31] And he testifies of the peace of God. But now he actually gets down to asking God to do something. The last two verses. We usually got it right up front, don't we? And that could be why we often struggle with peace even after we pray.

David's got it last, his petitions. He first looks at the God he's talking to and now he makes his petition. Verses 7 and 8. Arise, O Lord, deliver me, O my God.

Strike all my enemies on the jaw. Break the teeth of the wicked. From the Lord comes deliverance. May your blessing be on your people. So believing prayer does give peace of mind.

We've seen that. But prayer is more. And David is needing more than peace of mind. And he's expecting more. And he's asking for more.

He needs God to act on his behalf in his situation. He needs God to arise, to deliver, to strike, to break, to bless.

[30 : 33] Those are the things he asks of God. Now that's much more than just having a little talk with Jesus that makes it right. No, he needs that Jesus mighty and all-powerful to come and bear his arm and do things for him.

That's what he asks. So he's asking God to do what many are saying he won't do. Deliver him. Deliver me, Lord.

Come in power. Now, this leads to a problem. And here I want to quote Davis at length again because he's helpful as well as humorous.

He says, there are some who always get upset when we get into parts of a psalm like this. Notice the violent imagery of verses 7b. For you shall strike all my enemies on the jaw.

Or what does he say? Strike all my enemies on the jaw. Break the teeth of the wicked. Some get bent out of shape because the enemies are going to need an orthodontist.

[31 : 37] These people are nervous because this prayer asks God to get violent. Shall we pass the hand cream? And some are disturbed because David seems so vengeful.

Another woeful example of those crude Old Testament saints, they say. But he's not vengeful. We've seen that already. Clearly in this prayer, he's committing vengeance to God and asking Him for deliverance.

But you must understand something here. If David is going to be saved, delivered in this situation, then God will have to bring down those who oppose His chosen King.

There can be no safety for David unless his enemies are eliminated. So that's why David says, break their jaw, smash their teeth.

David's asking God to save him, to deliver him. But there's always another side to deliverance. It's a two-sided coin. The one side is, save me, Lord.

[32 : 44] The other side is, destroy my enemies. And there's not one without the other. Noah is saved from the violence of humanity by God drowning the whole human race, except for him and his family to protect him.

The Israelites are saved at the Red Sea. But how? Only by the drowning of Pharaoh's entire army. And in every battle that Israel won, God saved them. How? By destroying their enemies.

So if David's to be saved, how will it be? It will be by the destruction of his foes, those many enemies. You see it in 2 Thessalonians 1.

We're studying it. God will give deliverance and relief to his troubled people by paying back trouble and punishing those who trouble them. How does God bring salvation to his troubled people?

He punishes those who trouble his people. And so in the battle of the ages between the righteous and the wicked, you can't have the deliverance of the righteous without the destruction of the wicked.

[33:48] And that's why this whole age, this whole evil age ends, how? With the wicked all in hell. That is the only way that the righteous will eventually be completely saved.

Living in a new heaven and a new earth where there is only righteousness is if the wicked have their teeth smashed, are destroyed in hell forever. all this to say, as Davis says, biblically, salvation can be a nasty piece of work.

So to pray for salvation and deliverance is to pray for the destruction of your enemies. Remember, Absalom and company are the ones who are rebelling in hatred against God and his chosen king. And God is the one who rules his enemies with a rod of iron and will dash them to pieces like pottery. Chapter 2, verse 9. So, if these enemies of David are intent on using their teeth to gnash him to pieces, then they must have those teeth knocked out.

There's no alternative. And so David prays for deliverance. That's what he's saying. How does David save the sheep from the mouth of the lion? He kills the lion and saves the sheep.

[35:09] And so will David's God, Jehovah, break their jaws, shatter their teeth, take the bite right out of them. No one was ever killed by being gummed to death.

Break their teeth, he cries. Remove all that threatens me. And then he acknowledges the Lord is the one who saves. Verse 8. From the Lord comes deliverance.

It's Jonah's word. Salvation is of the Lord. And how many times has the Lord delivered us of our enemies? Yes, our many enemies of lust and pride and self-pity and revenge and worry and lethargy and love of the world and depression and the flesh and the world and Satan and temptations that would have swallowed us alive.

and the Lord over and over is saving us. He's saving us from our troubles, our temptations, our enemies, our dangers. Even this past week we've been saved. We've been delivered another week that we might come now and offer praises to God.

And so how does he end? May your blessing be on your people. He ends with a benediction for all the people of God. It's me, it's me, it's me, oh Lord, standing in the need of prayer and blessing.

[36:30] Yes, it is. And so he prays for it. But it's not just me, Lord. It's all your afflicted people. And so may your blessing rest upon your people.

Amen.