

Psalm 3 is a psalm of David. Actually all but four of the psalms in Book 1 (Psalm 1-41) identify David as the author. The word “psalm” (Heb. “mizmor”) is used for the first time in the book. This was a psalm that could be sung with musical instruments.

This is the first of fourteen Davidic psalms that contain an introduction or superscription in Hebrew that states the actual historical episode or event that prompted David to write the Psalm (3, 7, 18, 30, 24, 51, 52, 54, 56, 57, 59, 60, 63 and 142). These psalms were written in a background of real people of God who were facing real problems.

This is also the first of several prayers that shows up in the book of Psalms and this is the first psalm to use the word “selah” after three paragraphs, which means pause or stop and think about or consider what you just read.

Now this particular psalm presents the subject of great troubles and trials that may come against God’s people, specifically through other family members. The story of David’s flight from Absalom is found in II Samuel 15-18.

Because of David’s sin with Bathsheba, Nathan, the prophet, made a prediction to David that there would be trouble from within his own family (II Sam. 12:11). Absalom became the fulfillment of Nathan’s prediction. He turned the hearts of Israel against David (II Sam. 15:13). He chased David out of his own city Jerusalem (II Sam. 16:15). He took his father’s concubines (II Sam. 16:21) and he put out a death contract on David (II Sam. 17:2, 4).

While all this was happening, David was a hurting man and **it was during this time that he wrote Psalm 3**. Some conclude, on the basis of Psalm 3:5 that this was a “morning” song, which David wrote in the morning to be sung in the morning. Others conclude that it was an “evening” song, one written by David in the evening to be sung in the evening.

Truth is both morning and evening times are wonderful times to read and think about this psalm, especially when one finds himself facing serious trouble and opposition from adversaries who may be in your own family.

There are three ways this psalm may be interpreted:

Interpretive Way #1 - This psalm has, as its primary interpretation, the experience of David.

Interpretive Way #2 - This psalm has, as a national interpretation, the Tribulation and Israel.

Interpretive Way #3 - This psalm has, as a personal application, the troubles of God’s people.

The connection between Psalm 2 and Psalm 3 is this—In Psalm 2 we learn David is God’s installed King. He is God’s appointed leader and through him would come God’s Son, the ultimate King who would take over the world by force and reign. In Psalm 3, we see adversaries trying to destroy God’s installed King. These adversaries are in an uproar. They have united together and were seeking to destroy David. **Psalm 3 is David’s reaction to all of this.** This is the pattern for David finding peace and tranquility in the midst of overwhelming troubles and trials. The point to see here is this:

WHEN WE FIND OURSELVES SURROUNDED BY ADVERSITY AND TROUBLE, EVEN FROM OUR OWN FAMILY MEMBERS, OUR PEACE AND SECURITY WILL BE FOUND IN PRAYING TO GOD, IN TRUSTING GOD AND IN WAITING FOR DELIVERANCE FROM GOD.

Now let us remember that in some ways David deserved the negative things that were happening to him. But David had faced up to his sin and he had confessed his sin and now he was in a position to pray to God, trust in God and wait for God to intervene on his behalf.

There may be times when we find ourselves facing terrible adversity and we know we deserve it. In those times, if we have honestly faced our sin before God and confessed it and turned from it, we can cry out to God and expect Him to deliver us. That is exactly what David does in Psalm 3. Now this text breaks down nicely into three main stanzas:

STANZA #1 – The outnumbered trouble of David. **3:1-2**

As one reads these verses, it is obvious that the real problem for David was one of numbers. “Many” as opposed to just a “few” were against David. Three times, in Hebrew, the word “many” appears to describe three types of enemies. The word “many” is one that speaks of a number that is very large, very great, very vast (William Gesenius, *Hebrew Lexicon*, p. 753).

David identifies the three many groups as being: 1) Many adversaries; 2) Many rising up; 3) Many saying. The number must have been astronomical because in **verse 6** he specifically mentions “ten thousands of people.”

Now the word “adversary” describes an enemy who causes great distress and affliction (*Ibid.*, p. 718). Everywhere David turned people were against him and the numbers kept growing. Everywhere David went people were rising up against him and speaking out against him.

Specifically they were saying God would never deliver him because of his sin. The word “deliver” is the Hebrew word for salvation (yeshua). This word “salvation” or “deliverance” occurs some 136 times in the Psalms and most contexts refer to some physical and emotional deliverance from something bad rather than salvation from hell to eternal life.

Now at about this point David added the word “selah.” This particular word means to pause or rest and be silent (*Ibid.*, p. 588). If this was a psalm to be sung, then at this point some pause or rest was to occur that would enable the people to reflect on the point. The point was that great numbers of people were against David, hated David, were rising up against David and were speaking out against David.

Now why would God want us to stop and think about that? Because God wants us to know that His Son, His King, His people will often find themselves in this situation and when they do, they need to turn to God for His deliverance.

This was true for David, it is true for us and this is true for Israel now and also when she will be in the Tribulation. Big numbers against God or His people do not intimidate God.

Perhaps you are surrounded by many troubles—physical problems, family problems, emotional problems, relationship problems, financial problems and spiritual problems. No matter what the trouble or how much trouble, we may always turn to God. There are not problems too many for God to handle. God delights in coming to the rescue of His people when they cry out to Him—“Selah”—stop and think about that.

STANZA #2 – The personal confidence of David. **3:3-6**

The only Person David could trust and rely on was God. David certainly was not getting any positive confidence from most people who surrounded him, but he was getting his confidence and encouragement from God. He had a firm conviction and knowledge that God had not abandoned him.

When we find ourselves surrounded by negatives and by adversaries who love to point out our flaws and failures, we will not get any support by looking to them, but to God. There were five realizations David had about God when he was outnumbered by adversaries:

Realization #1 - God gave him protection. **3:3a**

Jehovah was David’s shield. He protected David from every side, from every angle and from every attack. David was a military man who spent many hours in war and in battle. He knew the protective value of a shield. But the military shield was typically limited to one side. Not God. God protected David from all kinds of attacks that came at him from many different directions. This is one of the benefits of having adversaries; we get to see God’s protective hand.

Realization #2 - God gave him prestige. **3:3b**

David was very low. He had sinned and people were against him. David’s head, which at one time was held so high and honorable now was hung low. God lifted his head, which is a way of saying, God gave me prestige, dignity and honor (Gen. 40:13, 20). David had sinned and he felt like such a loser, but God gave him his worth.

When you are low, especially when you have failed, you can begin to feel like a loser and sometimes people will lash out against you and laugh at you. It is wonderful to know that if we turn to God, He can and will lift us up and restore our dignity and honor.

Realization #3 - God gave him answers. **3:4**

David literally with his voice cried out to the LORD and God answered him. The specific prayer was that God would keep him safe and God answered that prayer.

Now notice that David inserts the word “Selah,” which again means stop and pause and think about this. Think about what? Think about the fact that David had sinned and found himself surrounded by adversaries and he went to God in prayer, he cried out to Him and God answered his prayers.

Philip Melancthon, the close friend of Martin Luther, once asked him how it was that David was ordained to be King by God and yet he had so many troubles, which the psalms show. Martin Luther said, “David was not acquainted with many good days; he was plagued by the ungodly and false teachers, he saw that banded against him, he endured and all of the troubles taught David his lesson to pray.” Luther said when David was without trouble he grew “giddy-headed and secure.”

Realization #4 - God gave him rest . **3:5**

There were many people who wanted David dead. Yet, night after night he would go to sleep and rest. How is it possible to get a good night’s sleep when people are out to kill you? The answer is God “sustained” him. That word “sustain” means God upheld him and aided him all through the night (*Ibid.*, p. 590).

David could go to sleep at night and rest because he knew God would watch over him and support him. He went to sleep and he awoke because he was sustained by God.

Realization #5 - God gave him bravery . **3:6**

David was a brave man. Even as a young man he was extremely fearless. When the rest of the army of Israel was afraid of Goliath, it was David who said, “I’ll fight him.” We learn here why David was so brave. It was not because of his own strength or fighting prowess; it was due to his confidence in God as his protector.

It has been said that one of the bravest men in history was Oliver Cromwell. In the 1600’s, he became known as the “protector” of England, Scotland and Ireland. He was a brave military man who fought in civil wars, trained a first class army and navy and he fought bishops of churches who were not expounding the Word of God. Cromwell was once asked to give an explanation for his bravery. His answer was this: “Because I fear God, I have no man to fear.” God gave him his bravery and God is stronger than all of our enemies combined, even ten thousands of people and God is our protector.

STANZA #3 – The specific request of David. **3:7**

Thousands of people were against David and were literally trying to track him down. He didn’t have money or much food (i.e. II Sam. 17:29). Humanly speaking, things did not look good. David was boxed in but he did the one thing that every believer should do when they find themselves in such a moment—he went to God and asked God for deliverance. He asked God to come to his rescue.

David had seen God smite his enemies before. He had seen God “shatter their teeth,” which is imagery of God destroying the effectiveness, strength and ability of an enemy by making them helpless (i.e. Ps. 58:6). **David is requesting that God come to his rescue and take down and out all of his enemies.**

Then, in **verse 8**, he gives, as Mr. Spurgeon said, “the sum and substance of Calvinistic doctrine.” “Salvation belongs to the LORD.”

God is the One who saves physically and God is the One who saves spiritually. God blesses His people, His elect. This was a precious doctrine to David and not only did he believe it, he was counting on it in his prayer theology.

Salvation does not belong to the free-will of man, it does not belong to the merit of man, nor does it belong to the size or strength or reasoning ability of man; “salvation belongs to the LORD.”

Any person who is surrounded by trouble may go to God and ask for His salvation if they believe that. No matter what the trouble, “salvation belongs to the LORD.”

If you need physical salvation, cry out to the LORD. If you need spiritual salvation, cry out to the LORD. If you need financial salvation, cry out to the LORD. If you need emotional salvation, cry out to the LORD. He is the One who can deliver us ten thousands of enemies. That is clearly the teaching of Psalm 3.

Before David closed the Psalm he again wrote “Selah,” stop and think about it!