

David: When Bad Things Happen to Good People, They Look for God

Psalm 3 & 63

As we open to Psalm 3 we are seeing David's response when bad things happen to him, especially when he is doing nothing wrong. The lesson is that when bad things happened in David's life he looked for God for understanding.

For us the lesson is that when bad things happen to good people, they are to look to God for understanding.

We start at the last word of the superscript that appears just before the first verse. That one word sets the tone for this period of David's life we are examining. That one word in Psalm 3 that weighed heaviest on David appears at the end of the attribution line: *A Psalm of David when he fled from Absalom his son.*

David was a good man. He loved the Lord and served the Lord. Though he failed at times like we all do, he was completely forgiven. Yet he went through years of hard times as consequences rippled through his life.

Now the painful events have crystallized. After so many other pains and struggles, a powerful new wave hits. All of this unforeseen and painful time of trials is reflected in Psalm 3, and in the parallel passage of II Samuel 15: was because of David's own son.

What could lead to a son to rape his own sister? Or what would incite a son to murder his own brother? Or, as we see here, what could drive a son to try to murder his own father?

One word answers all three—sin! Sin led Amnon to rape Tamar; sin prompted Absalom to murder Amnon; and sin drove Absalom to seek his father's death. David was facing the wider ripple of sin, now that it was dealt with in his life, David had to endure the effects it had on those around him that he loved. Which reminds us that:

LIKE DAVID— WE ALL HAVE PROBLEMS

God has a lesson for all of us here in Psalm 3, about what to do when bad things happen to good people. The lesson that God teaches us tonight is: they look for God. That is the only choice we can make when the waves keep rolling over us, the troubles keep

coming, and life never stops hurting.

That is what David does in both Psalms 3 and in Psalm 63, as he runs from his own son, and reflects upon the goodness of God: that never ends, and is always close by.

That is the supreme peace David felt as he laid down in the presence of his enemies and slept. So should we, humbly, and in complete dependence upon our Lord. But what David faced in principle was what many, many parents have to agonize through. We could summarize David's struggles as:

When Godly Parents Have Ungodly Children

Since time began, parents in every generation have faced the heartache of children who do not follow the Lord, and even turn away from Him.

What comfort is there for those whose hearts have been broken many times over by wayward children? What hope is there after all the years we loved them, earnestly prayed for them, read God's Word to them, nurtured them in the ways of the Lord, and sought to guide them as best we could—when they turn their backs on God?

Here are some truths that David learned the hard way, and that many of us even here tonight have also learned. These are the truths that comfort our hearts—and the hearts of the many parents who are godly, but have ungodly children:

- Absalom's rebellion was ***no surprise to God***. David wrote for God the words of Psalm 139, that every day of our life has already been written in His book—even the darkest of days!
- Absalom's rebellion was ***an opportunity for God to see David's response***. Our response is what matters to God most. He is watching and waiting for what we will do, to whom we will turn—and when we turn to Him, our Lord is glorified.
- Absalom's rebellion must have ***driven David to pray*** for what he may have thought impossible—Absalom's return to the Lord and to David.
- Absalom's rebellion ***opened to David a situation where only God could encourage him*** in times like that (Remember one of David's other lowest points of his life when he thought he had lost all his wives and kids in I Samuel 30:6b)!
- Absalom's rebellion ***filled David with hope*** as he remembered that God wasn't ever through with him as long as he lived—and so, neither is God ever through with our wayward child.
- Absalom's rebellion ***reminded David that he had a perfect heavenly***

Father, and then he saw his own imperfections reflected by his son.

- Absalom's rebellion must have **humbled David** as he remembered how often he also had failed his children (Psalm 130:3), and failed to respond correctly to his perfect Father.
- Absalom's rebellion must have **rebuked David** because he expected so much obedience from his imperfect parenting, yet he gave his heavenly Father such imperfect obedience—even though God's parenting was perfect!
- Absalom's rebellion **made David believe** more and more each day what only God is able to do: touch their hearts, soften their hearts, and turn their hearts back to Him (as Ezekiel would later write in 36:26-27)—and to us.
- Absalom's rebellion **showed David God's never ending grace** as each wave of fear and sorrow rolled over him, and he found his feet firmly planted on the Solid Rock (Psalm 40:1-2)!

All of that from just that short statement: *A Psalm of David when he fled from Absalom his son.*

I hope these truths that David would have found in God's Word, will also give you strength when the parenting path gets rough—whether for a moment, a few weeks or months, or even for the rest of your life.

For as long as your children have breath, keep up on seeking God's face on their behalf! David did, and regardless of how much sorrow and pain Absalom's betrayal caused him, he still continued his lifelong pattern of worshiping God.

As we open to Psalm 63, we move to the other song of deliverance David wrote from this hard time in his life of running from Absalom. Despite fears, tears, troubles and dangers, David made a simple choice.

DAVID USED EVERY MEANS TO PURSUE GOD

We need a new generation of God-hearted, Spirit-empowered, Christ-seeking worshipers like David who earnestly pursue the Lord in all circumstances—like when David penned this song of worship in the hot, empty, lifelessness of the bleak and hostile desert while being chased by his son, Absalom (most likely the context of this psalm):

Psalm 63

A Psalm of David when he was in the wilderness of Judah.

*¹ O God, You are my God;
Early will I seek You;
My soul thirsts for You;*

- My flesh longs for You
In a dry and thirsty land
Where there is no water.*
- ² *So I have looked for You in the sanctuary,
To see Your power and Your glory.*
- ³ *Because Your lovingkindness is better than life,
My lips shall praise You.*
- ⁴ *Thus I will bless You while I live;
I will lift up my hands in Your name.*
- ⁵ *My soul shall be satisfied as with marrow and fatness,
And my mouth shall praise You with joyful lips.*
- ⁶ *When I remember You on my bed,
I meditate on You in the night watches.*
- ⁷ *Because You have been my help,
Therefore in the shadow of Your wings I will rejoice.*
- ⁸ *My soul follows close behind You;
Your right hand upholds me.*
- ⁹ *But those who seek my life, to destroy it,
Shall go into the lower parts of the earth.*
- ¹⁰ *They shall fall by the sword;
They shall be a portion for jackals.*
- ¹¹ *But the king shall rejoice in God;
Everyone who swears by Him shall glory;
But the mouth of those who speak lies shall be stopped.*

Pray

When we talk about David as a seeker of the Lord, we aren't kidding. Have you ever noticed how David uses just about every means possible to seek the Lord?

David's Seeking The Lord

We need believers like David who used every tense of life to describe his pursuit of the Lord! Even a quick glance at this psalm in your English Bible shows an ancient Hebrew pattern; David used seven different means to praise and worship God (seven as in a complete set):

1. David used *his lips* to speak of God's kind and true love: *Because Your lovingkindness is better than life, **my lips** shall praise You* (v. 3).
2. David harnessed *his tongue* to bless the God he loved: ... **I will bless You while I live ...**" (v. 4a).
3. David used *his hands* to point to the God he sought and loved: ... *I will lift up **my hands** in Your name* (4b).

4. David used *his will* to intentionally make a declaration of God's worthiness: ***My soul shall be satisfied as with marrow and fatness ...*** (v. 5a).
5. David again spoke with *his mouth* to lift praises to the God he loves: ... ***And my mouth shall praise You with joyful lips*** (v. 5b).
6. David used *his mind* to remember: ***When I remember You on my bed ...*** (v. 6a).
7. David used *his intellect* to meditate upon God's character: ... ***I meditate on You in the night watches*** (v. 6b).

David was saying, "I am using all the faculties that God gave me in seeking Him." Is that pursuit of God echoed in your heart today?

Since childhood we have been taught that we have far more capacity in our brains than we ever use. Most doctors say the average human barely uses 10% of their brain.

So we are continually challenged by our culture to never stop learning to use a few extra percentage points through life; but in a vastly more strategic way, God is saying through David—***Why not start employing more and more of your capacity to worship God?***

Regularly use your lips, your tongue, your hands, your will, your mouth, your mind, and your intellect *to the max* in seeking to offer worship to God!

ONLY GOD CAN SATISFY

One of the most fundamental truths from Psalm 63 is that God can satisfy us to the very core of our existence and being. That is David's three-thousand-year-old testimony, and he was as human as anyone can get.

David's life reflected every virtue and every vice. He struggled with fear, depression, and lust, and yet he sang with abandon, worshiped with a passion, and meditated into the very throne room of God. So we can each identify with his struggles and learn from his relentless pursuit of God.

David's life has shown us the precious lifelong opportunity we can have of pursuing God. God is an exhaustless supply of new satisfaction; He is a well that never runs dry, a spring that always wells up with fresh and life-giving waters.

Every desire, even the deepest, can be satisfied by Him. And, as Augustine said those well remembered words 1600 years ago, "Our hearts are restless till they find rest in Thee."¹

David repeatedly testified to the fact he was ***completely satisfied by God, with God,***

¹ C.H. Spurgeon, *The Treasury of David*, vol. 2, Psalms 58-87 (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1968), p. 65.

and **in God**. He experienced what the Lord has offered and promised to each of us—He can't hold Himself back from those who seek Him!

God is always looking throughout the earth for anyone who focuses their heart's desires upon Him. And He has promised to be found by those who seek Him with all their heart. So David testified: "Yes, that is what I have experienced!"

Look at verse 3 again:

Because Your lovingkindness is better than life, my lips shall praise You.

In other words, David was saying: **Life is good; God is better!**

Life is Good: But God is BETTER

Now that is something all of us can relate to and decide upon. David declared that life is good, and most of us would agree. In reality, life is so good people cling to it with a tenacity surpassing all other desires.

In fact, we will do anything to save ourselves from death, humanly speaking. For example, at gun point we will give up every dollar we have to not be killed. Or, we will agree to the most painful surgical and procedures to try to stave off cancer's advance, to the point of amputation of parts of our body if that will give us hope of more days to live.

Satan's assessment of Job reminds us that this is always the case with humans:

Satan answered the LORD and said, "... Yes, all that a man has he will give for his life (Job 2:4).

For almost everyone, their life is their most precious and treasured possession. But verse 3 tells us that even though life is good, and God made it wonderful, He Himself is better. Why? Because no matter how carefully we guard our life, it can be lost.

Our bodies will wear out or get ravaged by some disease or trauma—and die. Life, as good as it is, still ends. But God will never end; His love will never fade away or get traumatized or diseased.

So David said, "God is better because of His loving kindness—His faithful, steady, and unwavering love." That is the love of God He has covenanted to us. It is safe, sure, and reliable. God's love is inseparable from us who receive it.

God has told us as clearly and forcefully as is possible in human language—nothing can remove His promised "*better than life*" love!

For I am persuaded that neither death nor life, nor angels nor principalities nor

powers, nor things present nor things to come, nor height nor depth, nor any other created thing, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord (Romans 8:38-39).

When we stop and think about it, isn't it hard to believe that we neglect and spend so little time cultivating something that is "*better than life*"—and instead spend the majority of our time pursuing, protecting, and seeking to prolong what is a distant second? That means one of the great choices we can make in life is to learn by grace to:

ENJOY GOD!

God offers endless satisfaction—completion on a supreme level to enjoy and enlarge on a daily basis. I therefore encourage you to pause and, like David, with your lips, tongue, mouth, mind, and will express to the Lord how much you want to just enjoy Him!

One way I do that, when struck by thoughts like these, is to break right out in song; whether I am in the study before my open Bible, or riding in the car listening to the Dramatized Bible on my iPod, or walking and meditating on memorized verses—I right then grab for the reality of endless joy in His Presence. And so I often sing:

More Precious Than Silver

*Lord, You are more precious than silver.
Lord, You are more costly than gold.
Lord, You are more beautiful than diamonds,
And nothing I desire compares to You.*

*Lord, Your Love is higher than mountains.
Lord, Your Love is deeper than seas.
Lord, Your Love encompasses the nations,
And yet, You live right here inside of me!*

*Lord, You are more precious than silver.
Lord, You are more costly than gold.
Lord, You are more beautiful than diamonds,
And nothing I desire compares to You.
And nothing I desire compares to You.²*

A lifelong personal pursuit of worshiping God is not only what God came seeking for (John 4), and what we will be doing forever as Revelation 4 onward teaches us, it is what we are to be now.

The definition of true believers as worshipers is at the heart of the church:

² Words and Music by Lynn Deshazo, © 1982 Integrity's Hosanna! Music

For we are the circumcision, who worship God in the Spirit, rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh (Philippians 3:3).

But with all that truth, reality is often much less, isn't it? We often move deeper in our studies—but not closer to the Lord.

We often have more contact with the Truth—but less touch with God's power in our own personal lives.

We have more and more relationships at church, in groups, and in activities—but less and less depth.

And outside the church, the world is going faster, life is getting harder, and spiritual lives need deepening.

Could it be that the difference is because the three-thousand-year-old secret of David is largely missing in believers' lives today?

I pray that each of us will come to the place, like David, where we can wholeheartedly claim: Nothing I desire compares with You!