



Bible Study
Biblical Theology of Psalms
Lesson 3: Psalm 3

INTRODUCTION

Summary Statement:

Psalm 3 teaches unwavering trust in God's sovereignty to keep his promises.

Outline

1. 1-2 God's Enemies
2. 3-4 God's Shield
3. 5-8 God's Salvation

OBSERVATION

Psalm 3 was written by David, according to the superscription. This is the first Psalm in the collection to have a superscription. Book 1 includes Psalms 1 through 41. Thirty-seven of those Psalms have a superscription attributing the Psalm to David.

Psalm 3 is also the first of fourteen Psalms connected with a specific event in David's life (Psalms 3, 7, 18, 30, 34, 51, 52, 54, 56, 57, 59, 60, 63, & 142). The superscription connects this Psalm to the time when David fled from his son Absalom, which is recorded in 2 Samuel 15-19. Absalom conspired to lead a rebellion against David to take the kingdom to himself. Ultimately, David had to leave his palace and flee the city of Jerusalem as Absalom came against Jerusalem with his army.

The word Psalm in the superscription is translated from the Hebrew mizmor, which appears fifty-seven times in Psalms, but only in the superscriptions. The term indicates the Psalm was to be sung with musical accompaniment.

Psalm 3 is also the first lament Psalm. A lament is a type of Psalm where some crisis is defined and God's help is sought. Laments usually express confidence and trust in God to help. This is also the first Psalm where selah appears. We can't be completely certain of the exact meaning of this term, but it is generally believed to be a part of the musical direction and indicates a pause, similar to a musical rest. It is generally believed the singing would be paused at those points, perhaps with a musical interlude before singing resumed at the next line.

Walk Through Psalm 3

Verses 1-2 show David surrounded by enemies. Keeping the context in mind, David's numerous enemies were his fellow Israelites, led by his own son against him. The counselor Hushai referred to the army Absalom could gather as a multitude like sand by the sea (2 Samuel 17:11). David was also mocked as being forsaken by God as the anointed king. When David was fleeing from Jerusalem, he was cursed by Shimei, who taunted David that the Lord had taken the kingdom away from him. He also claimed God would not help David because he had supplanted Saul (2 Samuel 16:8).

Verses 3-4 give the counter to David being surrounded by enemies as he is encircled by Yahweh as a shield. Though he was surrounded by enemies, he was shielded round by God. He further states that God is the lifter of his head. The phrase refers to the exaltation of kings, or lifting up of kings to their place. For instance, see Psalm 27:6 and the phrase used in reference to the Messiah in Psalm 110:7.

These verses constitute David's response to the mocking of his enemies, who were his kinsmen. God lifted him up to be king. He did not rebel against Saul and take that place to himself. Whatever the politics may have looked like, or whatever the community of Israel may have thought about it, David was king precisely because God had chosen him [the man after God's own heart/choice (1 Samuel 13:14)] and anointed him as the king. David's cries to the Lord being heard further confirmed he was just in his cause.

Verses 5-8 express David's assurance of God's deliverance. He could sleep and wake being sustained by God. It was not his ingenuity or military strength, but God's faithfulness that would deliver him. He refers to thousands being against him. This corresponds to the record in 2 Samuel 18:7, where David's men killed 20,000 when they went out against Absalom.

David calls upon God to rise up and deliver. This phrase refers to God rising to scatter his enemies. Moses cried to God this way in Numbers 10:35. This is the parallel to those rising up against him. His enemies rise against him and David calls upon God to rise up for him. The smiting of cheek bones refers to subduing and subjugating the enemy. The breaking of teeth is violent imagery speaking of their destruction in battle.

David ends this Psalm on a note of praise to God and blessing to God's people. Salvation belongs to God. He is sovereign over salvation, so he determines whether, when, where, how, and whom he will deliver. David seeks blessing on God's people, but David was being attacked by enemies who were his fellow Israelites. Further, they were being led by his own son against him. So, in this prayer, David is actually praying for his enemies.

INTERPRETATION***God's Sovereignty***

Psalm 3 teaches God's sovereignty in determining outcomes in his creation. The enemies (Absalom and others) spoke against God's plan (2). This did not prevent God from answer-

ing David's cry, sustaining him, and rising up to strike and break the enemies. The image of God rising and breaking the enemies reminds of Psalm 1:5 and how the wicked will not stand when God rises up in judgment. David explicitly states that deliverance is God's possession and prerogative (8). The declarations and actions of enemies cannot affect God's plan of deliverance nor the execution of his plan.

Trust in God

Psalm 3 teaches the need for complete trust and confidence in God to deliver. David could lay down and sleep, because he trusted in God. Laying down to sleep is an image of being in peace and safety. It is contrasted with worry and anxiety in Psalms 4:8 & 127:2. Strong trust in God delivers from fear (6). This reminds us of Jesus' words to his disciples in Matthew 10:28 that they were not to fear those who could only kill the body, but they should rather fear the One who is able to destroy both body and soul in hell.

The Messianic Hope

The context of the Psalm and the textual connections with Psalm 2 reveal the Messianic hope in Psalm 3. Psalm 2 considered a threat to God's mediatorial kingdom on earth in the form of nations and kings raging and plotting against God and his Anointed (Psalm 2:1-3). Psalm 3 considers a threat against God's kingdom of Israel through the rebellion of the people of Israel, led by David's own son in an effort to take the throne and kingdom from David (1-2, 6).

This is the opposite of the promise for David's son in the covenant (2 Samuel 7). David is God's anointed king and his son is supposed to be set up by God to David's throne to establish the kingdom forever, according to God's covenant with David. Instead, the son and kingdom rebel to establish their own kingdom, seeming to put God's covenant with David in jeopardy.

David cried to God and trusted God to keep his covenant promises. God answered him from "his holy hill" (4). This is significant because God's holy hill is the temple mount in Zion, or Jerusalem. The temple was not there and David was not in Jerusalem when he cried out. Why did God answer from the holy hill? According to Psalm 2:6, the holy hill of Zion (temple mount in Jerusalem) is where God will establish or install his King, the Son of David who will overcome all his enemies. The answer from the holy hill is confirmation of his covenant with David that he will not fail to keep his covenant promises.

In Psalm 3, David as the anointed king is rejected by his own. From our vantage point post-resurrection and post-ascension, we have seen the true Son of David come to his own and be rejected by them. Because of their rejection of God's Anointed, his hand is still heavy on them in judgment. Their rejection, however, will prevent his return to establish his kingdom, the reign of his Messiah from David's throne in Zion/Jerusalem to bless his people by gathering them and restoring them to the land of promise.

APPLICATION

What does Psalm 3 say to modern readers?

1. Understanding Psalm 3 helps us have confidence in God despite the enemies around us. This Psalm speaks of enemies even amongst us, but they cannot override God's plan.
2. Understanding Psalm 3 helps us understand God's sovereignty to bring about all his will. We don't know how circumstances in our lives may fit in God's plan. Our confidence is not that God will work out this or that troubling circumstance the way we want him to. Our confidence is that God is always faithful to keep his word and will bring deliverance to all who trust in him. We trust God to work his will in his time.
3. Understanding Psalm 3 helps us understand that our hearts and mind must be fixed on his coming Messiah. In our case today, he is returning, or coming the second time. His coming will deliver us from God's wrath to his kingdom, while breaking the jaws and teeth of his enemies.

ABOUT THIS STUDY

This series is a study in biblical theology of the book of Psalms. Each lesson typically covers one Psalm. This PDF is provided for personal study, small group study, or use in a church class. Unless otherwise noted, all lessons have been prepared by Jeff Short, the pastor of Harmony Baptist Church.

Harmony Baptist Church

3012 W Delmar Ave
Godfrey, IL 62035

618-466-2631

Harmonybaptist3014@gmail.com

www.hbcgodfrey.com

www.facebook.com/HarmonyBaptistGodfrey