

Psalm 3

Introduction – Psalm 1 and 2 may seem a bit ‘pie-in-the-sky’ come Monday morning. The first stresses the blessednesses of the man who walks with God and according to His laws. The second stresses the victory, present and ultimate, of the Messiah and His kingdom upon the earth. Psalm 3 is not a contradiction of these songs. It is rather an example of the application of these psalm-themes in everyday life filled with everyday sin and sinners, pressures, fears, and opposition. And then there is the messiness of the stuff of life: how much is due to others’ disobedience, and how much is due to my own?

Title/Setting – The title tells us that this Psalm was written during the time narrated in 2 Sam 15-16. Absalom stole the hearts of the people from David and surprised him with a revolt. David had no recourse but to flee from the tens of thousands that had now joined with Absalom; while fleeing, Shimei throws curses and rocks down upon David, *“the Lord has delivered the kingdom into the hand of Absalom, your son.”* It is true that the Lord was bringing this upon David, but not because of the blood of Saul. Rather, this had all been promised by the Lord through the prophet Nathan because of David’s sin with Bathsheba (2 Sam 12:11-12).

Nobody Knows the Trouble I’ve Seen (vv1-2) – On the one hand, David’s situation is quite unique. On the other hand, it isn’t hard to find yourself quickly identifying with David in this song – and that is the point of singing the psalms. We may not be able to count tens of thousands against us personally, but how many enemies, or situations where you are simply misunderstood, are necessary to make life miserable? In addition, we know the troubles that our enemies, the world, the flesh, and the devil, bring to bear upon our lives. *“Many are they who rise up against me.”*

“Lord” – David, who knows that God is sovereign, omnipotent, and perfect, is telling Him what is happening. *“Nothing is more unbecoming than sullenly to gnaw at the bit with which we are bridled, and to withhold our groaning from God.”* – Calvin. Things are so bad for David that there are those around telling him that God can’t or won’t get him out of this. Have you ever been tempted to think that?

Selah – Throughout the psalms this word shows up. Our best understanding is that this word means there is to be some kind of musical pause or change before going on in the poem. And in the midst of this Selah, David turns his attention away from his enemies and towards his God.

My Shield, My Glory, My Lord (vv3-4) – Ten spies stared at the giants in the land, but Joshua and Caleb saw the mighty promises of the Lord. David himself saw Goliath as nothing before his God, and so he is able to turn now and remember that the Lord is his shield, protecting and covering his whole person from the enemies. Romans 8:39 tells us that there is absolutely nothing that can separate us from the love of Christ. We are protected. We have a shield.

David is suffering ridicule and slander upon his character and work. But David has not lost his glory at all, for the Lord is his glory. We care far too much about what others think about us because we do not grasp the glory that is ours because we are in Christ.

And the Lord is the One who lifts up our heads, heads which are low and downcast. He does so with His promises again and again each time we gather before Him, and He does so with His gentle admonitions (Heb 12:3-4).

Sleeping Like a Baby - When we are anxious, sleep alludes us, and David’s point is that in the midst of what ought to cause great anxiety, he is able to lie down and sleep, and to rise up the next morning refreshed with the events of the day firmly in the hands of God (Phil 4:6-7, Eph 2:10). When God’s providential hand is heavy upon us, even if it is due to the consequences of our own sin, we may take refuge in Him and sleep like a baby (John 10:17-18).

Battle Cry (vv7-8) – In Num 10:33-36 we are told that when the hosts of Israel broke camp, they did so because the cloud of the Lord had risen and gone before them. They saw the Lord moving and cried, *“Rise up, O LORD! May Your enemies be scattered,”* because they saw that the Lord was doing just this. And in the context when this psalm was written God did just that – Absalom was defeated. This is cried out with holy confidence by a man who himself was an adulterer and a murderer. He can do this because he knows and believes verse 8.

Salvation Belongs to the Lord – David knows and believes that salvation and vindication belong fully and completely to the Lord; it does not rest in himself at all. This is to be sung by faith in the here and now as it will be sung in its fullness when God has manifested Himself in the salvation of the nations (Rev 7:9-12).

Selaha/Meditative Moments – A moment’s meditation and you see the flow of this Psalm speaking of Another who crossed the Brook Kidron and went on up the Mount of Olives (2 Sam 15:23, 30, John 18:1) where he was then betrayed, laid down, and rose again to be vindicated by His Father. And so this is a Psalm of Christ. And it is a psalm for Christ’s people as well.

Trials, Like Christ - Paul’s words come to mind, *“We must through many tribulations, enter the kingdom of God”* (Acts 14:22).

Walking In Christ – We must see our lives, all aspects of them, as part of the mandate of kingdom-building, in similar ways that David saw. Only then can we join with David in crying out for deliverance, from real external and internal enemies. That is why we *must* sing Psalm 3.

Praying Like Christ – and like David. God does hear the cries of His people, and He does so from His holy hill, that place of complete authority also known as the throne of grace.