

## TEXT SERMONS – SERIES: PSALM SERMONS

## A CRY FOR HELP

## PSALM 3

**“LORD, how they have increased who trouble me!  
Many are they who rise up against me.  
2 Many are they who say of me,  
“There is no help for him in God.” Selah**

**3 But You, O LORD, are a shield for me,  
My glory and the One who lifts up my head.  
4 I cried to the LORD with my voice,  
And He heard me from His holy hill. Selah**

**5 I lay down and slept;  
I awoke, for the LORD sustained me.  
6 I will not be afraid of ten thousands of people  
Who have set themselves against me all around.**

**7 Arise, O LORD;  
Save me, O my God!  
For You have struck all my enemies on the cheekbone;  
You have broken the teeth of the ungodly.  
8 Salvation belongs to the LORD.  
Your blessing is upon Your people. Selah.”**

Psalm 3 is a Psalm written by King David. This Psalm is directly linked to 2 Samuel chapters 15-18 where we read the sad record of David fleeing from his very own son Absalom. He was a rebel son who turned against his Father, subtly stole the affections of the people and was leading an army to overthrow David's government. It was a perilous time for David and the nation.

Psalm 3 is David's prayer to God for help. This prayer can be divided into three sections: in one he turns his face toward God in prayer; in one he turns his faith toward God in peace; in the last he turns his foes over to God for punishment. May we follow his example!

**I. DAVID TURNED HIS FACE TOWARD GOD IN PRAYER.** Psalm 3:1-2

*“LORD, how they have increased who trouble me! Many are they who rise up against me. Many are they who say of me, “There is no help for him in God.” Selah.*

There are times when we feel outnumbered. David cries out to God because he was dealing with the rising tide of disloyalty. Both family and friends have turned against him. Now they are enemies and they surround him. Things seemed so hopeless. What did David do?

**A. The Person David Turned To For Help.**

*“LORD, how they have increased who trouble me!”*

David was in deep trouble and he called out to God for help. David wasted no time seeking help from fellow humans. He knew that God was not only his only recourse but that God was his only resource for assistance. He knew that unless God intervened his kingship would be ended. Therefore, he turned his face to the One of whom he would later say, "Behold, God is my helper." (Psalm 54:4)

"Help!" is the most basic and probably the most often repeated prayer we pray. Most of our prayers for help are triggered by trouble aren't they? The moment we realize we are in trouble and can't get ourselves out, we pray, "Help, Lord!" Repeatedly David called out to God for help. There are at least seven times in the Psalms that David raises a cry for help to the Lord:

Psalm 12:1 – "Help, LORD, for the godly man ceases!"

Psalm 22:19 – "O My Strength, hasten to help Me!"

Psalm 38:22 – "Make haste to help me, O Lord, my salvation!"

Psalm 40:13 – "O LORD, make haste to help me!"

Psalm 70:1 – "Make haste to help me, O LORD!"

Psalm 71:12 – "O my God, make haste to help me!"

Psalm 109:26 – "Help me, O LORD my God!"

To whom do you turn when "sorrows like sea billows roll"? Everyone of us face tough times now and then. The Lord will always be our Anchor through the storms of life; our Solid Rock in times of trouble, and if we ever feel overwhelmed and that we are sinking, His gentle loving hand is there to lift us up and bring us out.

There is a wonderful truth to be discovered in the old gospel hymn by Joseph Scriven. You will recognize the lyrics:

*"What a friend we have in Jesus, all our sins and griefs to bear,  
What a privilege to carry every thing to God in prayer.  
Oh what peace we often forfeit, oh what needless pain we bear,  
All because we do not carry everything to God in prayer."*

## **B. The Problem David Turned Over To God.**

*"Many are they who rise up against me. Many are they who say of me, "There is no help for him in God. Selah."*

At this point in David's life there was one trouble maker who greatly troubled David, his own son Absalom. He had gathered many others with him. Trouble loves company. David states that "Many are they who rise up against me." One of Satan's tricks is to impress people with numbers. Absalom had the crowds on his side, but David had God on his side.

What did David do? He gave his troubles to the Lord. He took them to the Lord and left them there for God to deal with – and God dealt with Absalom! Take your troubles to the Lord and leave them there!

Sometimes we take things to the Lord and leave them there for only for a brief time, then later take them back again. Take your troubles to the Lord and leave them and keep believing, for God is the prayer hearing God who delights to answer our calls for help. In my over 50 years of Christian ministry, I have seen many who temporarily turn to the Lord with their burdens but later pick them up and carry them again. Maybe the following illustration will help to show the inconsistency in such actions.

William Whitehall Smith tells the story of a man riding down the road in a horse-drawn cart, when he saw a stranger struggling with a heavy sack on his back. He stopped and offered him a ride, and the stranger accepted. But as they rode along together, he noticed the stranger still kept carrying the huge sack on his back. So he said to the man, "Why don't you just lay it down?" The stranger replied, "Oh no sir, its good of you to carry me, I could not ask you to carry my burden as well."

Charles Spurgeon said, "Cast your *troubles* where you have cast your *sins*; you have cast your sins onto Jesus--cast your troubles there also! As soon as the trouble comes, quick, the first thing, *tell it to your Father in heaven!* Remember, that the longer you take telling your trouble to God--the more your peace will be impaired. The longer the frost lasts--the more likely the ponds will be frozen. Oh! It is a *happy way of smoothing sorrow*, when we can cast our burden upon the Lord. Oh, you agitated Christians, do not dishonor your religion by always wearing a 'frown of concern'. Come, cast your burden upon the Lord. I see *you* staggering beneath a weight, which *He* would not feel. What seems to you a crushing burden--would be nothing but a bit of dust to Him. See! The Almighty bends His shoulders, and He says, "*Here--put your troubles here!*"

"Cast your burden on the LORD, and He shall sustain you." (Psalm 55:22) The same counsel is in 1 Peter 5: 7 - "Casting all your care upon Him, for He cares for you." The Greek word for 'cast' means to "throw it." Throw your pain, your disappointment your broken dreams, your heart ache on to the Lord for he cares for you. You don't have to carry it around like luggage any longer. Take it to the Lord and leave it there.

I remember many years ago we sang this song:

*"Take your burden to the Lord, and leave it there,  
If you trust and never doubt, He will surely bring you out;  
Take your burden to the Lord, and leave it there."*

## II. DAVID TURNED HIS FAITH TOWARD GOD FOR PEACE. Psalm 3:3-6

*"But You, O LORD, are a shield for me, My glory and the One who lifts up my head. I cried to*

*the LORD with my voice, and He heard me from His holy hill. Selah. I lay down and slept; I awoke, for the LORD sustained me. I will not be afraid of ten thousands of people Who have set themselves against me all around."*

**A. He Shifted His Gaze. "But You, O LORD ...."**

There is a remarkable change between verses 1 and 2 and verses 3 through 6. In verses 1 and 2 David is restless; in verses 3 through 6 David is resting. Why the change? In verses 1-2 he is looking to the Lord, troubled; in verses 3-6 He is leaning upon the Lord, trustingly. There is a great difference! What happened? What has produced this abrupt but obvious change? He has turned his attention from his enemies to God! He ceased to look around and began to look up.

**B. He Shielded Himself In The Lord.**

*"But You, O LORD, are a shield for me, My glory and the One who lifts up my head. I cried to the LORD with my voice, and He heard me from His holy hill. Selah.*

In the words "*But You, O Lord, are a shield for me....*" we see David's heart change from discouragement and dejection to confidence and renewed faith. David refers to God as His shield. The shield was an instrument of defense and so, David understood that God was his defense. He knew this because of God's very own words to Abraham: "Fear not, Abram, I am your shield." (Genesis 15:1) With God shielding him, how could he be harmed?

In ancient times a shield formed a most important part of the soldier's armor. In the Hebrew original Psalm 3:3 reads: "You LORD are a shield *about* me." In olden times some of the shields were so large that they entirely hid the warrior. Certainly the Lord completely surrounds His trusting children and shields us from all directions. God is not only a present help in trouble, but a great help in keeping out of trouble! Are we taking refuge behind the shield of the Lord?

**C. He Slept And Was Refreshed.**

*"I lay down and slept; I awoke, for the LORD sustained me. I will not be afraid of ten thousands of people who have set themselves against me all around."*

There is a saying that everything looks better in the morning. And there is a truth to that, for a good night's sleep gives one perspective. But for David, it is even more meaningful. A good night's rest means he has survived another night on the run. And so his faith grows and his courage increases. He recognizes that God is the source of his comfort and that the Lord is with him.

David's whole outlook had changed. Why? The answer is: because of his uplook! When the Psalm begins, he is restless; now he is rested. Before he was fearful; now he is fearless: "I will not be afraid of ten thousands of people who have set themselves against me all around."

After committing his burden to the Lord and the restful sleep that followed, David was refreshed in spirit and strengthened in body so that he could say, "I will not be afraid of ten

thousands of people, that have set themselves against me.” God and one believer make a majority in any fearful situation. Believing prayer and physical rest is always the best prescription in times of trial.

### III. DAVID TURNED HIS FOES OVER TO GOD FOR PUNISHMENT. Psalm 3:7-8

*“Arise, O LORD; save me, O my God! For You have struck all my enemies on the cheekbone; You have broken the teeth of the ungodly. Salvation belongs to the LORD. Your blessing is upon Your people. Selah.”*

David called out to God to arise and take action, not only on his behalf but on behalf of the nation over which God had placed David in authority as the King. He called for God to strike down his enemies and deliver him from them. The very throne upon which God had placed David was about to be usurped by a rebellious crowd under the leadership of a spiteful and proud son.

The confrontation before David was a military one. There was ultimately to be a military conclusion that would cost the life of Absalom. It happened like this according to II Samuel chapter 18:

“Now Absalom happened to meet David's men. He was riding his mule, and as the mule went under the thick branches of a large oak, Absalom's head got caught in the tree. He was left hanging in midair, while the mule he was riding kept on going..... Joab ..... took three javelins in his hand and plunged them into Absalom's heart while Absalom was still alive in the oak tree. And ten of Joab's armor-bearers surrounded Absalom, struck him and killed him.” (II Samuel 18:9 & 14-15)

The enemies were defeated, the rebellion ended and David and his administration returned to Jerusalem. However, as one might expect: “The king was shaken. He went up to the room over the gateway and wept. As he went, he said: “O my son Absalom! My son, my son Absalom! If only I had died instead of you—O Absalom, my son, my son!” (II Samuel 18:33) Here is a sad dad weeping for a bad lad. However, Psalm 3 concludes on an upbeat note:

#### A. David Ascribed to God The Victory.

*“You have struck all my enemies on the cheekbone; You have broken the teeth of the ungodly.”*

He was careful to give God the credit for restoring him to the throne and ridding him of his enemies, even though his son perished in the process. Let us always give God the glory for every victory won. “To God be the glory; great things He hath done!”

#### B. David Announced God's Sovereignty. *“Salvation belongs to the LORD.”*

What do David and Jonah have in common? Both were rescued by the Lord and both exclaimed, *“Salvation belongs to the Lord.”* (Jonah 2:9)

#### C. David Acknowledged God's Posterity. *“Your blessing is upon Your people. Selah.”*

The people over whom David reigned as King were not his people in the literal sense. He acknowledged that they were God's people. He said, *“Your blessing is upon Your*

people.” We who serve in any leadership capacity in the work of the Lord must ever be mindful that we minister to the Lord’s people and we must not harm God’s posterity!

### CONCLUSION

David and his people had come through some very dark and difficult days. He did not hesitate to call out to God, “Help!” And he received help from the One Who is available to help us in our difficulties. The writer of the book of Hebrews reminds us that:

“He Himself has said, *“I will never leave you nor forsake you.”*  
So we may boldly say: *‘The LORD is my helper; I will not fear.  
What can man do to me?’* (Hebrews 13:5-6)

God will make a way when there seems to be no way. That is what Don Moen’s song says:

“God will make a way when there seems to be no way.  
He works in ways we cannot see.  
He will make a way for me.  
He will be my guide; hold me closely to His side.  
With love and strength for each new day, He will make a way.”

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