

PSALM 3

A Psalm of David, when he fled from Absalom his son.

1 Lord, how are they increased that trouble me! Many are they that rise up against me. Page | 1

The immediate context is David's very life being threatened by his revolutionary son. When David says "many" rise up against him, he was not exaggerating. **And Absalom, and all the people the men of Israel, came to Jerusalem, and Ahithophel with him.** (2 Samuel 16:15).

When David first got wind that Absalom was possibly treacherous, his numbers were small, but now they had "increased" to the point where David's crown and life were in peril. Those that sought David's life were presently numerous and formidable. Polls showed Absalom to be quite popular; political winds shift dramatically and quickly. On top of that, the great counselor Ahithophel now advised selecting 12,000 men to pursue after David that very night. (2 Samuel 17:1). Things are indeed looking grim for David!

2 Many *there be* which say of my soul, *There is no help for him in God.*
Selah.

Here the text continues the theme started in verse 1, but adds the overarching message and theme of those that pursue David. For his many crimes, say they, David is now utterly forsaken by God. His enemies were confident of victory, and they were convinced that all things on the ground indicated that God would not interfere to save David. They were perfectly sure of their prey. **Moreover Ahithophel said unto Absalom, Let me now choose out twelve thousand men, and I will arise and pursue after David this night: and I will come**

upon him, while he is weary and weak handed, and will make him afraid: and all the people that are with him shall flee; and I will smite the king only[.] (2 Samuel 17:1, 2).

Barnes well summarizes the scene: *There is no help for him in God - He is entirely forsaken. He has no power of defending himself, and no hope of escaping from us now, and all the indications are, that God does not intend to interpose and deliver him. Circumstances, in the rebellion of Absalom, were such as to seem to justify this taunt. David had been driven away from his throne and his capital. God had not protected him when he had his armed men and his friends around him, and when he was entrenched in a strong city; and now he was a forsaken fugitive, fleeing almost alone, and seeking a place of safety. If God had not defended him on his throne and in his capital; if he had suffered him to be driven away without interposing to save him, much less was there reason to suppose that he would now interpose in his behalf; and hence, they exultingly said that there was no hope for his life, even in that God in whom he had trusted. It is no uncommon thing in this world for good men to be in similar circumstances of trial, when they seem to be so utterly forsaken by God as well as men, that their foes exultingly say they are entirely abandoned.*

Before leaving this verse, consider some observations about “Selah.” That word appears only in the Psalms and Habakkuk, and is thus thought to be a musical directive. Musical scores are filled with directives that help emphasize portions of the music; loud/soft, fast/slow, pause/go, etc. It’s a way of drawing attention. In the context of the written language, it suggests a full stop, a pause, a note of attention. Stop and pay extra attention to what you just read! It’s remarkably bad and distressing, such as we have here. Or it’s remarkably good and a matter for rejoicing.

3 But thou, O LORD, *art* a shield for me; my glory, and the lifter up of mine head.

The Lord Jesus Christ, part of the Triune God, is a shield for us; he is on every side, where our enemies are, as a defense. This is so, not just for some or most dangers, but all dangers.

Page | 3

The shield was a well known part of ancient armor, when swords, spears and arrows were employed. They were made of tough and thick hides and were held and utilized in such a way as to protect the vital parts of the body. As such, it was natural to speak of God as the “shield” or the “Protector” of his people. **After these things the word of the Lord came unto Abram in a vision, saying, Fear not, Abram: I am thy shield, and thy exceeding great reward.** (Genesis 15:1). **Happy art thou, O Israel: who is like unto thee, O people saved by the Lord, the shield of thy help, and who is the sword of thy excellency! And thine enemies shall be found liars unto thee; and thou shalt tread upon their high places.** (Deuteronomy 33:29).

What is the “glory” involved here? David, as king, had gloried before this predicament he found himself in. But presently, he’s in bad shape. So we read: **And David went up by the ascent of mount Olivet, and wept as he went up, and had his head covered, and he went barefoot: and all the people that was with him covered every man his head, and they went up, weeping as they went up.** (2 Samuel 15:30). This doesn’t seem glorious.

The “glory” is what lies ahead. David would be restored to his kingdom. David, as representing Christ, suffered and was brought low, but Christ, having risen, is now at the right hand of God where he is crowned with glory and honor. *Thou hast formerly given, and wilt*

further give me, occasion of glorying in thy power and favour.
(Benson).

The final clause of this verse deals with lifting the head. The head, in time of trouble and sorrow, is naturally bowed down as if overpowered with the weight of affliction. **I bowed down heavily, as one that mourneth for his mother.** (Psalm 35:14). **I am troubled; I am bowed down greatly; I go mourning all the day long.** (Psalm 38:6). To lift up the head, then, is to relieve distresses and take away troubles. Such a helper, the Psalmist declares, is God. God raises his people from depression, despondency and heartache. *[T]hou wilt lift me out of the mire in which I now lie, and restore me to my former power and dignity from which I am fallen.* (Poole).

4 I cried unto the LORD with my voice, and he heard me out of his holy hill. Selah.

It's good to cry to God with your voice; that is, vocally, out loud. Talk to God; thank God for his mercies and blessings as you make your way through life. Utter your anguish, out loud. Make it a habit, as David did. Christ did so. **And he went a little farther, and fell on his face, and prayed, saying, O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me: nevertheless not as I will, but as thou wilt.** (Matthew 26:39). *[T]here is a measure of relief found by the very act of giving utterance or vent to the deep and, as it were, pent-up feelings of the soul. In calmer times we are satisfied with unuttered aspirations; * * * in overwhelming trials we give utterance to our feelings in the earnest language of pleading.* (Barnes).

God hears these utterances from his holy hill; that being probably heaven and the church, easily done since God is omnipresent. **Lord, who shall abide in thy tabernacle? Who shall dwell in thy**

holy hill? (Psalm 15:1). So we learn “holy hill” is synonymous with “tabernacle” or house or church. In Psalm 2:6, we read of the **holy hill of Zion**. Again, the church is what’s referenced; God’s visible earthly residence. There, God is accustomed to not just hearing, but answering the prayers of his people. **The Lord shall bless thee out of Zion[.]** (Psalm 128:5). **The Lord that made heaven and earth bless thee out of Zion.** (Psalm 134:3). Mount Zion is **the heavenly Jerusalem.** (Hebrews 12:22). **Heaven is (the Lord’s) throne.** (Isaiah 66:1).

5 I laid me down and slept; I awaked; for the LORD sustained me.

Many lie down, and cannot sleep, through pain of body, or anguish of mind, or the continual alarms of fear in the night. But it seems here rather to be meant of the calmness of David's spirit, in the midst of his dangers. (Henry).

Though David was in the midst of afflictions and challenges few have ever experienced, at the hands of his traitorous flesh-and-blood son, he has such confidence that God answers prayers and delivers his people that he was able to sleep sweetly, soundly and securely. Here is a flavor: **It is vain for you to rise up early, to sit up late, to eat the bread of sorrows: for so he giveth his beloved sleep.** (Psalm 127:2). Please note this blessing – and it is an extreme blessing because sleep is so imperative – applies to his “beloved”, not everybody. When Elijah fled for his life from blood-thirsty Jezebel, he was able to **lay and sleep under a juniper tree** in such an undisturbed and comfortable way that an angel had to touch him to wake him, saying **arise and eat.** (1 Kings 19:5).

Good sleep is vital to overall health of the human mind and body. The list of health concerns when sleep deprivation occurs is unlimited.

Here's a little sample of the literature that's out there on this topic: *Sleep is an essential function that allows your body and mind to recharge, leaving you refreshed and alert when you wake up. Healthy sleep also helps the body remain healthy and stave off diseases. Without enough sleep, the brain cannot function properly. This can impair your abilities to concentrate, think clearly, and process memories.* See [Why Do We Need Sleep? | Sleep Foundation](#)

We can also detect in this language a reference to death, as sleep is often used to describe death. **And many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt.** (Daniel 12:2). More from Henry on that aspect: *[L]et faith teach thee how to sleep, and how to die; while it assures thee that as sleep is a short death, so death is only a longer sleep; the same God watches over thee, in thy bed and in thy grave.*

6 *I will not be afraid of ten thousands of people, that have set themselves against me round about.*

Contemplating all that God had done for him and with this renewed proof of divine protection just mentioned, David displays great confidence in the face of numerous enemies. David has so many enemies, they cannot be numbered. 2 Samuel 17:1 tells us there were 12,000 enemies who were loud, proud and on Front Street; but they were the tip of the iceberg.

Moreover, these opponents of David were not just your run-of-the-mill haters, but people who set themselves openly and notoriously against David; they arrayed themselves in open rebellion. Such has been our experience, which is more powerful proof that our **calling and election (is) sure.** (2 Peter 1:10). And right here is the proper

mindset and attitude under all such seasons: **Mine enemies would daily swallow me up: for they be many that fight against me, O thou most High. What time I am afraid, I will trust in thee. In God I will praise his word, in God I have put my trust; I will not fear what flesh can do unto me.** (Psalm 56:2-4).

7 Arise, O LORD; save me, O my God: for thou hast smitten all mine enemies upon the cheek bone; thou hast broken the teeth of the ungodly.

God is figuratively represented as resting or sleeping to denote his apparent indifference. We see a similar passage in Psalm 7:6: **Arise, O Lord, in thine anger, lift up thyself because of the rage of mine enemies[.]** This is a common mode in the scriptures of calling upon God as though he had been sitting still or inactive, which is not the case but so appears to frail humans. *It is, of course, language taken from human conceptions, for in the intervals of active effort, in labor or in battle, we sit or lie down, and when we engage in toil we arise from our sitting or recumbent posture.* (Barnes). Often, this is how it seems: **Awake, why sleepest thou, O Lord? Arise, cast us not off forever.** (Psalm 44:23). Or, as Poole says, *bestir thyself on my behalf, and be no longer as an idle spectator of my miseries.*

This language describing enemies – “cheek bone” and “teeth” -- suggests they are likened to wild beasts. **When the wicked, even mine enemies and my foes, came upon me to eat up my flesh, they stumbled and fell.** (Psalm 27:2). The cheek bone holds the teeth. To smite that bone so as to break the teeth disarms these animalistic enemies. They can no longer inflict damage or injury. Toothless jaws are unable to chew or devour. With their teeth struck out, these enemies are disabled from doing that mischief they desire and were accustomed to doing.

One final concept here arises from the act of smiting on the cheek bone, which implies contempt and reproach. Zedekiah smote Micaiah **on the cheek** (1 Kings 22:24), Micah prophesied troops would **smite the judge of Israel with a rod upon the cheek** (Micah 5:1) and that prophecy was fulfilled when they smote Jesus just before he was crucified (Matthew 27:30; John 18:22).

8 Salvation *belongeth* unto the LORD: thy blessing is upon thy people. Selah.

Step back for a moment when looking at this text, and it will soon hit you: This verse contains the sum and substance of what is generally referred to as “Calvinistic doctrine” – that is, salvation belongs exclusively and only to God. Most say salvation belongs to the free will of man, or man’s merit. But the Bible is clear: Salvation, from first to last, and every iota of it, belongs to the Most High God! It is God that chooses his people. If you had nothing more from Holy Writ than this verse, you would need nothing more to prove that point.

Closing this verse, and this Psalm, and remembering the context of Absalom’s rebellion, consider this as to the primary meaning of “thy people” from Henry: *[e]ither upon my friends and followers, who alone are thy people, the rest being rebels to thee as well as to me; or, upon all thy people Israel, to preserve my friends, to convince and convert mine enemies, and to save the body of the nation, which without thy mercy are likely by this civil war to be brought to utter ruin.* The secondary reference is to all of the Lord’s sheep down through the ages.

The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit. Amen.
(Philemon 25).

THE NECESSITY OF THE REDEEMER'S RETURN

1. The Redeemer's return is necessitated by the declarations of Old Testament prophecy.
2. The Redeemer's return is necessitated by His own affirmations. *[Christ said: For as the lightning cometh out of the east, and shineth even unto the west; so shall also the coming of the Son of man be. (Matthew 24:27)].*
3. The Redeemer's return is necessitated by the ratification of the Holy Spirit.
4. The Redeemer's return is necessitated by the humiliation of the cross. [The lowly Nazarene will return in power and glory].
5. The Redeemer's return is necessitated by the present exaltation of Satan. [The Devil must be vanquished and imprisoned].
6. The Redeemer's return is necessitated by the present disorganization of Israel. *[After this I will return, and will build again the tabernacle of David (Israel), which is fallen down, and I will build again the ruins thereof, and I will set it up. (Acts 15:16)].*
7. The Redeemer's return is necessitated by the present degradation and desolation of the world.
8. The Redeemer's return is necessitated by the lamentations of all creation.
9. The Redeemer's return is necessitated by the supplications of the church.
10. The Redeemer's return is necessitated by the expectation of the dead in Christ. [Sown a natural body; raised a spiritual body].