

# PSALMS

## Chapter 3

**O LORD, how many are my foes! Many are rising against me; <sup>2</sup> many are saying of my soul, “There is no salvation for him in God.” *Selah* <sup>3</sup> But you, O LORD, are a shield about me, my glory, and the lifter of my head. <sup>4</sup> I cried aloud to the LORD, and he answered me from his holy hill. *Selah* <sup>5</sup> I lay down and slept; I woke again, for the LORD sustained me. <sup>6</sup> I will not be afraid of many thousands of people who have set themselves against me all around. <sup>7</sup> Arise, O LORD! Save me, O my God! For you strike all my enemies on the cheek; you break the teeth of the wicked. <sup>8</sup> Salvation belongs to the LORD; your blessing be on your people! *Selah***

**Ps 3** Though threatened by many foes, the psalmist prays confidently to the Lord. Ps 3 and 4 are linked by references to glory and to the psalmist’s sleep at night (see v. 5; 4:8). In v. 5 David speaks of the assurance of his waking in the morning because the Lord will keep him while he sleeps; in 4:8 he speaks of the inner quietness with which he goes to sleep because of the Lord’s care. This juxtaposition of prayers with references to waking (morning) and sleeping (evening) at the beginning of the Psalter suggests that God’s faithful care sustains the godly day and night whatever the need or circumstances, many of which will be mentioned in this book of prayers. (CSB)

This psalm of David describes Absalom’s attempt to undermine his father’s rule (2Sm 15–17). It was written toward the end of David’s reign. (TLSB)

Format: Vv 1–2, rising foes; vv 3–4, the Lord’s protection; vv 5–6, not afraid; v 7, a prayer for salvation; v 8, salvation and blessing. (TLSB)

Psalm 3 is a psalm of prayer in which we follow the example of David. He prayed this prayer in distress when his son Absalom expelled him, and his prayer was granted to him. At the end, David glorifies God for being a true helper and keeper for all his people who call on him in distress.

This psalm belongs to the First Commandment, that God will be our God and our help. The psalm is in the Seventh Petition of the Lord’s Prayer, in which we pray to be delivered from all evil. (Reading the Psalms with Luther)

Psalms 3-6 are morning and evening prayers. They all refer to affliction or suffering at the hands of enemies. Perhaps David wrote all four of them during Absalom’s rebellion, which is mentioned in the heading of Psalm 3. The events of this period of David’s life are described in 2 Samuel 15-17. When you are overwhelmed with troubles, turn to this psalm for a reminder of the security you have in the Lord. (PBC)

It is fitting that the first lament psalm of the book is filled with confidence, because throughout the collection confidence and praise form significant parts of the laments. This witnesses to the fact that the faith of the psalmist was steadfast in spite of the lamentable circumstances they faced; it was steadfast because they had come to know the Lord by experience as well as revelation. (A Commentary on the Psalms – Ross)

**3:1–2** David’s need: threatened by many foes. (CSB)

What will become a familiar note in the Psalter is sounded here at the outset, namely, that there is an everlasting number of people who would like to destroy the righteous and their faith. Their opposition to the people of God may be subtle at times, but at other times it may also be open directs, far more dangerous than scorning. (A Commentary on the Psalms – Ross)

In David’s life an insurrection turned into a personal attack on him and his faith, but his faith overcame the crisis. That faith is first signaled by his immediate cry to God, “O Lord.” (A Commentary on the Psalms – Ross)

These “adversaries” has the sense of hemming in, continued to surround him even when he went to sleep for the night. and when he awoke, he knew that they were still there. (A Commentary on the Psalms – Ross)

This means men who cause him distress by crowding him into a narrow place. (Leupold)

In this point many Christian expositors have noted comparisons with Jesus. Most of the nation rejected him as their king, choosing rather to follow the murderous leaders who wanted to put him to death. And, if such opposition was true for the Lord’s anointed, it will also be true of all who follow him. Therefore, in the face of such opposition, believers must turn to God in prayer. (A Commentary on the Psalms – Ross)

**3:2** The psalmists frequently quote their wicked oppressors in order to portray how they mock God and his servants. (CSB)

Open enemies as well as disconcerted friends look upon him as one henceforth cast away. David had plunged himself into the deepest abyss of wretchedness by his adultery with Bathsheba, at the beginning of the very year in which, by the renewal of the Syro-Ammonitish war, he had reached the pinnacle of worldly power. The rebellion of Absalom belonged to the series of dire calamities which began to come upon him from that time. (KD)

*Selah.* Hebrew; untranslatable. Mainly in the first two books of Psalms. Probably refers to the accompaniment of the harps during the psalm. (TLSB p. 993)

This often occurs in the middle of a psalm and which apparently signals an interlude. “The Sela indicates that one must be still and quickly think through the words of the psalm; for they demand a quiet and restful soul, which can grasp and hold to that which the Holy Spirit there presents and offers” (Luther). (Psalms – The Prayer Book of the Bible – Dietrich Bonhoeffer p. 23)

Selah may be a musical notation. It could also be a point where a pause is desirable for the singer or reader of the psalm in order that the statement last made or the thought as a whole just developed may be reflected upon before the next turn of the thought appears. (Leupold)

**3:3–4** David’s confidence in God, who does not fail to answer his prayers. (CSB)

**3:3** Because the adversaries were striking at His faith, the psalmist expressed his faith with the greatest confidence: “But you, O Lord” signals the change from lament to confidence. He found confidence in the fact that God’s character and care for him contrasted sharply with their challenge. (A Commentary on the Psalms – Ross)

*shield.* God's protection is all-encompassing. (TLSB)

With this metaphor, the psalmist places himself under the protection of the Great King, who promised to protect his own (Gen. 15:1; Deut. 33:29). (Expositor's Bible Commentary – Psalms)

God was the only defense that he had, but God was the only defense that he needed against the numerous adversaries. If God was his defense, who could harm? (A Commentary on the Psalms – Ross)

*you bestow glory on me.* The psalmist rejoices in the Lord as his royal provider and protector text note. (CSB)

Glory is commonly used to describe God as the most important person in existence, a fact that is manifested by accompanying phenomena (called the “glory of the Lord”); but here it may refer to glory and honor that David had been given when the Lord chose him and gave him the kingdom. David had been driving from his palace; but his glory was still intact, for God had bestowed honor and power on him as the chosen king. (A Commentary on the Psalms – Ross)

I.e., the source of David's glory, since his fame came from God. (TLSB)

*lift up my head.* In victory over his enemies (see 110:7). (CSB)

David may have felt dejected and afraid when he fled, but as he reflected on his relationship with God, he became confident that he would be restored to the position of leadership over the people of God. The king knew that he would return to the royal city with head held high. (A Commentary on the Psalms – Ross)

The head drops when a person is discouraged and disappointed. When God lifts up the head He delivers a man from all those things that depress. (Leupold)

**3:4** *I cried to the Lord* – The king is portrayed as leaving Jerusalem weeping, barefoot, with his head covered (2 Sam. 15:30). In this condition, he raised his voice to the Lord. (Expositor's Bible Commentary – Psalms)

*he answers me* – In the treaties of the ancient East, the king expected his vassals to obey him, and he promised to come to their aid. For David, God is more than “Lord,” because he calls the Great King (as) his father. David's confidence is prayer lies not in righteous deeds done the flesh but in the gracious promises of God. Even in the moments of great despair, when the soul feels abandoned by all others, comfort may be drawn from the assurance that God answers. (Expositor's Bible Commentary – Psalms)

*holy hill.* The place of the Lord's sanctuary, the earthly counterpart of his heavenly throne room. (CSB)

**3:5–6** David's sense of security. (CSB)

**3:5** Even while his own watchfulness is surrendered to sleep, the watchful Lord preserves him (see 4:8). (CSB)

When vigilance waned, God continued to protect and sustain. (TLSB)

*I will wake again* – Lying down to sleep expresses David’s confidence in God’s response to his plea. God is the Great King who will come to aid of his son. (Expositor’s Bible Commentary – Psalms)

**3:6** *will not fear* – (I will not fear) is not uttered in a tone of triumph, but is only a quiet, meek expression of believing confidence. (KD)

*Many thousands* – His focus on the character of God and his experience of protection through answered prayer strengthened him to face the enemies, no matter what the odds might be. All the time that he was praying and sleeping, the adversaries were taking their stand all around him, readying themselves for a final attack. Because God was on his side, David would not be afraid of them. (A Commentary on the Psalms – Ross)

**3:7–8** David’s prayer. (CSB)

In warfare, victory came only if God fought for and through His people. (TLSB)

**3:7** *Arise ... Deliver.* Hebrew idiom frequently prefaces an imperative calling for immediate action with the call to arise (see Ex 12:31, “Up!”; Dt 2:13; Jdg 7:9, “Get up”). In poetry the two imperatives of the idiom are often distributed between the two halves of the poetic line. Hence the psalmist’s prayer is: “Arise (and) deliver me.” (CSB)

The request is clear and direct; it is also a prayer of faith. The petitioner expected a great deliverance. (A Commentary on the Psalms – Ross)

*LORD... my God.* That is, LORD my God; the two elements of a compound divine name are also frequently distributed between the two halves of a poetic line. (CSB)

*Strike all my enemies* – Smashed. Could mean “have struck.” It is to say that you have struck my enemies in the past, and so I know you can do it now. The psalmist is so confident of the outcome that he writes it as if it had happened already. (A Commentary on the Psalms – Ross)

*On the jaw... break the teeth* – This metaphor likens the enemies to wild animals whose strength is taken away when their teeth are crushed (cf. Ps. 58:6). This expression of vindication may seem harsh to our ears, but the psalmist is putting before us the hope that, regardless of what enemies may arise from inside or outside the kingdom of God, God will be victorious. (Expositor’s Bible Commentary – Psalms)

**3:8** *From the LORD comes deliverance.* A common feature in the prayers of the Psalter is a concluding expression of confidence that the prayer will be or has been heard (as in 6:8–10; 7:10–17; 10:16–18; 12:7; 13:5–6 and often elsewhere. Here David’s confidence becomes a testimony to God’s people. (CSB)

Help is Yahweh’s (covenant keeper name of God). With Yahweh alone are deposited all the resources of help, and how they shall be bestowed rests exclusively with Him. (Leupold)

*May your blessing be on your people.* See 25:22; 28:8–9; 51:18. The psalmists stood before God, the royal King, as his servants responsible for the well-being of his people. (CSB)

The psalmist was not only concerned for himself and the security of his kingship is evident by the conclusion. His prayer was that through the victory granted to the Lord's anointed, God's blessing might return to his people. The spirit of the shepherd-king is revealed by his concern for the welfare of his people. (Expositor's Bible Commentary – Psalms)

David looked forward to the time of full blessing. In his hope lies ours, for in Jesus' promises the victory and blessing of God are assured. (Expositor's Bible Commentary – Psalms)

Paul reiterates the point of this psalm when he says: "*If God is for us, who can be against us?*" ((Romans 8:31). Indeed, nothing will separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Savior. (A Commentary on the Psalms – Ross)

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**Ps 3** This psalm recounts a dark period in David's life. His enemies, including his own son, have overwhelmed and opposed him. Despite his foes' claim that David's sins preclude him from salvation, David remains confident that God will protect and deliver him. Despite our miserable condition (and certain end), God shields us from our foes, lifts us, and directs our eyes to His great mercy displayed in the cross of Christ. He assures us that salvation belongs to Him and is given to those who trust in Him. • "You, O LORD, are a shield about me, my glory, and the lifter of my head. Arise, O LORD! Save me, O my God!" Amen. (TLSB)