

Mounting Problems Demand Confident Faith Psalm 3:1-8

Before we open our Bibles to our text in **Psalm 3**, I want us to begin by setting the context for our text. Let's look first at the background for this passage.

II Samuel 12:9-12

II Samuel 15:1-15

If you have a heading above **Psalm 3** it may read something like "A psalm of David. When he fled from his son Absalom."

The words of the prophet Nathan are coming true, and his past sin has now caught up with him. Even though God had forgiven David for his adultery with Bathsheba and the murder of Uriah, he must still face the consequences.

David has once again found himself on the run. He has fought battles, won wars, and established his kingdom, but now we find him getting out of Dodge because of the mounting threat against him. No, it's not from the Philistines, the Amorites, the Ammonites, or the Girgashites. This threat isn't from outside the kingdom, it is from within its borders. It is within his own family. A civil war is brewing. His son, Absalom, has risen in rebellion. His wisest counselor has sided with his new foe. Everything seemed to be against him with overwhelming odds.

Yet in spite of the circumstances he is now facing, we do not see a cry of despair, a moan of "woe is me," but one of dependence and faith in God. He confidently turned to the One who had sustained him through all his days as a shepherd and now as a king. Mounting problems demand confident faith.

His response to the trouble he is facing is much different than that of Elijah. Recall that he faced the hundreds of prophets of Baal on Mt. Carmel in a showdown as to who was really God: Jehovah or Baal. God Almighty rained down fire consuming his sacrifice and then Elijah put all the prophets of Baal to death. It was a decisive victory for the prophet. You would have thought Ahab and Jezebel would have been quaking in their boots. Instead, when

Queen Jezebel heard what happened she vowed revenge on Elijah. In fear for his life, he ran, and ran, and ran. You can read about it in **I Kings 19:1-4**. He thought he was all alone.

But here is David, running from his son. He was not alone. As we read the account in II Samuel, we realize that there are many who have joined him as they escape Jerusalem. But David realizes one important fact – God is with him.

Most of us remember the scandal at Watergate by President Nixon, which ultimately led to his resignation. One day you are the most powerful man in the world. You say, people act. What you say has a ripple effect on the stock market and the world economy. You live in a house with lots of attendants. You travel by jet, helicopter, and limousine with an entourage of guards and attendants. But that is all stripped away, and you leave in humiliation.

To an even greater degree, that's David. The secretive conspiracy of Absalom had now come to light, and he was marching in to seize the throne. David packed his bags and headed out of town. In a show of humiliation he walked bare foot with his head covered, weeping in shame.

As he left, some were bold enough to speak out against the king. Shimei cursed the king and threw stones at him and said he was worthless, that he brought about his own demise. Nothing in his past compared to this personal humiliation. His life had fallen apart. Those he once thought were his friends and allies had now turned against him.

Psalm 41:7-9 "All my enemies whisper together against me; they imagine the worst for me, saying, 'a vile disease has beset him; he will never get up from the place where he lies.' Even my closest friend, whom I trusted, he who shared my bread, has lifted up his heel against me."

When life falls apart, what do you do, where do you go, to whom do you turn?

Everything seems to be going fine at work. But one day you get called into the boss's office and fired under false allegations brought against you by someone you thought was your friend.

A child has turned against you and made false statements that he made to a school counselor that resulted in a visit by child protective services.

A neighbor spreads false rumors about you that gets around town and your reputation, even at your church has been tarnished.

When life falls apart, what do you do, where do you go, to whom do you turn?

Psalm 3 is the answer to David's dilemma when we face a seemingly insurmountable situation from those who are enemies.

When life falls apart, when you face any number of obstacles, when an enemy stands to oppose you, what do you do, where do you turn?

Mounting problems demand confident faith. Let's look at how David responded to this threat. Notice first David recognized that his foes were a problem.

I. DAVID RECOGNIZED HIS FOES WERE A PROBLEM – vv. 1-2

There is a word that occurs three times in this Psalm that we need to pay attention to. It's a word that scholars can only guess as to its meaning. The psalm is laid out in three strophes. A strophe is a term used in poetry that simply means divisions. In **Psalm 3** there are 3 divisions: **verses 1-2**, **verses 3-4**, and **verses 5-8**. After each division there is a word that follows. It's the word **selah**. Scholars agree that it is some kind of musical notation, but really don't know what it means.

Some think it is a crescendo and means to lift up. crescendo is the loudest point reached in gradually increasing sound and intensity. It's a climax that draws attention to what was just sung inviting the choir to boom it out, holding nothing back. It puts an exclamation point on what was just said.

Others think it is a pause or rest in the music before going on to add something else.

Still others think it means a note of observation inviting the listeners to stop and consider what was just said. Just stop for a moment and let that sink in.

John Phillips adds one additional thought about the word **selah**: "What do you think about that?"

Verse 2: "There is no help from God for him? What do you think about that?"

Verse 5: "I cried unto the Lord...and He heard me out of His holy hill. What do you think about that?"

Verse 8: "Salvation is of the Lord. What do you think about that?"

In this psalm, David invites us to take notice, stop and ponder, boom out what he knows by experience about God. What he says about the problems we face followed by how God protects him and proves Himself to David, makes me want to bust out in that song by Rich Mullins:

Our God is an awesome God;
He reigns from heaven above
With wisdom, power and love;
Our God is an awesome God.

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That's a song with crescendo.

That's a song worth pondering.

That's a song worth asking, what do you think about that?

Verse 1 says that his foes have multiplied around him.

A. David's Foes Have Multiplied Around Him – v. 1

David begins abruptly "**O Lord**".

It was a Saturday night and David was six months old. On that night we had to take Robyn to the emergency room because, as we found out there, she was having a full-blown gall bladder attack. The next day I was to preach here for Pastor Don. After the service I went to pick David up from the nursery. I don't remember who it was, but they told me he was running a fever. Robyn was in the hospital and David is now sick with something. We got home and while I was changing his diaper, he just spit up all over, it just gushed out like a geyser. At that moment not knowing what to do, I just cried out "O Jesus". I was in trouble and feeling overwhelmed.

Have you ever felt that way? Something is happening

and in that moment all you could do was cry out to God and all you could get out was His name.

David is fleeing from Absalom. He is a man with vast military experience. He is the king. Yet he's on the run and he cries out **"O Lord"**. But he tells us why he's crying out to God. 'I've got a lot of enemies. I've got a lot of things stacking up against me.'

There's that wonderful hymn to count our blessings one by one. That's a good exercise when we're feeling a bit discouraged. When we realize all that God has done for us, it puts the hardships in perspective. We have a lot to be thankful for.

But here, David is counting his enemies. There are a lot of them.

There was his son, Absalom.

There was his trusted counselor, Ahithophel.

There were two hundred men who brought Absalom to Hebron to crown him king.

Shimei cursed him.

Scripture tells us that Absalom stole the hearts of the people. Many were with him.

II Samuel 15:12 says that the **"conspiracy gained strength, and Absalom's following kept on increasing."** There were a lot of enemies.

Maybe you've also felt like David. It seems like everyone, and everything is against you. **Where do you turn? What do you do? Do you cry to the Lord and point out those who are against you?** David did.

But not only had David's foes multiplied around him, **verse 2** tells us that David's foes mocked him.

B. David's Foes Have Mocked Him – v. 2

To mock someone is to ridicule them, to scorn them, to hold them in derision. You can mock someone by imitating or mimicking their actions or speech in a way that makes fun of them. To mock someone is to disrespect them, make fun of them. It means to scoff or jeer or insult them.

David tells the Lord what people are saying.

"God will not deliver Him."

The Amplified says **"there is no help from God."**

The New Living Translations says **"God will never**

rescue him."

The Message reads: **"Mobs of them all around me, roaring their mockery: 'Hah! No help for him from God!'"**

It's no fun to be mocked. David could feel the sting of words thrown at him. Their insults perhaps centered around his past sin. Essentially, they were saying that with the sins he's committed there's no way God will come to his rescue. There's no hope for him. There's no help for him. He's on his own.

That's what the onlookers and Pharisees said about Jesus as they mocked Him while hanging on the cross. Remember that the cross was a stumbling block to the Jews. Anyone who hung on a cross was cursed. Jesus must not be loved by God.

Mark 15:29-32

If you have ever been mocked, you know that the old saying is not true that sticks and stones may break my bones, but words will never hurt me. They cut deeper than any knife. It isn't the flesh that feels the sharp words, but the heart and head.

This verse portrays how the wicked mock both God and his servants. These foes of David weren't just attacking him, it was also an attack on the character of God as one who forgives sin and loves the sinner and is an ever-present help for those who fear Him.

But David responds in **verses 3 and 4** to their physical and verbal assault. In these two verses, we see that David recognized his faithful protector.

II. DAVID RECOGNIZED HIS FAITHFUL PROTECTOR – vv. 3-4

Where do you turn, what do you do when everyone and everything seems to be against you?

Notice from **verse 3** that David found comfort in the Lord.

A. David Found Comfort In The Lord – v. 3

This is not a prayer of anguish, but a prayer of assurance. We have two choices when we are faced with overwhelming odds. We can either be afraid or we can have faith. It's my belief that David chose the latter. I think he has taken time to reflect on past

experiences when God was His protector.

God protected David out under the stars watching his sheep defending them against lions and bears.

God protected David as he faced the giant Goliath with nothing more than a slingshot and a few stones.

I Samuel 17:37, 45-47 “The Lord who delivered me from the paw of the lion and the paw of the bear will deliver me from the hand of this Philistine...You come against me with sword and spear and javelin, but I come against you in the name of the Lord Almighty, the God of the armies of Israel, whom you have defied. This day the Lord will hand you over to me...and the whole world will know there is a God in Israel. All those gathered here will know that it is not by sword or spear that the Lord saves; for the battle is the Lord’s, and He will give all of you into our hands.”

God protected him from the hand of Saul.

God protected him from the enemies around him.

David found comfort in the recognition that God was his protector. He looked at his situation, and flung himself on the Lord. All his past experiences of knowing God’s protection brought him comfort.

Years later, his son Solomon, would write **“Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge Him and He will direct your paths.” (Proverbs 3:5-6)** I would like to think that Solomon learned that and wrote these verses having seen how his father trusted God in every challenging situation.

Perhaps reading of the history of Israel’s king, Isaiah wrote those profound words of comfort:

“Fear not for I am with you, be not dismayed for I am your God. I will strengthen you, I will help you, I will uphold you with the right hand of My righteousness.” (Isaiah 41:10)

Centuries later, the Apostle Paul would tell us not to be anxious because when we bring our requests to God, with thanksgiving, God’s peace surrounds our heart and settles our mind. **(Philippians 4:6-7)**

Find comfort in the protection of the One who said He would never leave you or forsake you.

Why could David find such comfort in God? “You are a shield around me, O Lord. You restore glory around me, and lift up my head.”

David wasn’t asking God to come and be a protective shield around. He was recognizing that God was already there. He didn’t have anything to fear because God surrounded him.

Psalm 91:1-15

These verses tell us of God’s abiding presence, of God’s almighty power, that God is amazingly personal, and He is an able protector who fulfills His promises and gives us peace.

“God is our refuge and strength, an ever-present help in trouble.” (Psalm 46:1)

Psalm 37:1-2 “Do not fret because of evil men or be envious of those who do wrong; for like the grass they will soon wither, like green plants they will soon die away.”

No matter how dismal things looked for David, he found comfort in the Lord whom he believed would restore his glory and crown as king.

Lifting up the head refers to the restoration of his dignity as well as his position. God was the source of his glory and crown. Absalom had turned David’s glory into shame, but God would restore his glory as king. David found comfort in God as a protective shield who would not forsake him. If God is for me, who can be against me? **(Romans 8:31)**

Verse 4 tells us David found comfort in the Lord because he had confidence in the Lord.

B. David Had Confidence In the Lord – v. 4

“To the Lord I cried aloud, and He answers me from His holy hill.” Selah – What do you think about that?

It’s almost as if he is responding to the ridicule of his assailants by saying “You come at me with sword and spear and javelin, but I’m coming at you in the name of Almighty God, for the battle is the Lord’s.”

Psalm 34:6-8

In our text, the phrase **“I cry”** is a statement of confidence that stems from previous experience.

David knew there wasn't anywhere else to turn to except the Lord.

What is the first place we turn to when facing an enemy?

Do we go to our friends?

Do we go to our bank account?

Do we go to our own reasoning?

Do we pull up our bootstraps and try to get ourselves out of the situation by our own efforts?

II Corinthians 12:7-10

In spite of these dire circumstances, David didn't trust his own military skill. He didn't rally the troops and plan a strategic counter assault. He didn't muster allies from the surrounding nations. He cried to God.

Psalms 121:1-2 "I lift up my eyes to the hills – where does my help come from? My help comes from the Lord, the Maker of heaven and earth?"

II Samuel 22:1-4

If God has the power to create the universe, then He has the power to rescue me. He is an ever-present help in time of trouble.

J.J.S. Perowne observed that David's crying out to the Lord with his voice does not express "a single act, but the habit of a life." He knew where to turn because that was his way of life.

Spurgeon said "We need not fear a frowning world while we rejoice in a prayer-hearing God."

Make it a habit in your life to look to the Lord.

Do you have confidence in the protection of the Lord?

Do you find comfort in His protective shield about you?

That kind of confidence in the Lord that provides such comfort from God's sustaining presence stems from the faith that gave David peace.

III. DAVID RECOGNIZED HIS FAITH BROUGHT PEACE – vv. 5-8

In **verses 5-6** David found peace from resting in the Lord.

A. David Found His Rest In the Lord – vv. 5-6

Here he is being chased by an untold number of

enemies but at night he went to sleep. That's comfort, that's confidence, that's faith. He rests in faith at the promise of God's protection. By what he says in **verse 5**, I suspect he slept like a baby. Faith gives us the ability to rest knowing God's peace.

It's the same kind of faith and peace that Peter experienced when he was tossed in prison waiting his execution that was supposed to take place the next morning. He was sleeping so soundly the angel who came to deliver him had to slap him awake.

It's the same kind of faith and peace that Daniel experienced when he was tossed into the lions den.

It's the same kind of faith and peace that Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego experienced when they were tossed into the fiery furnace.

Faith and peace may not rid you of your enemy, but it will give you the confidence to know that God is with you in the dungeon, in the lions den, and in the fire. In those times we face an enemy God sustains us, He supports us and strengthens us mentally, physically, and spiritually to face the trials.

David says he would not fear the tens of thousands who opposed him on every side. They had circled around him and were closing in on him, but he stood in faith. Again, if God is for us, who can stand us?

Sustained by God, he lay down in peace and slept in safety. **How do we know he was safe?** Our verse tells us he woke up the next morning. I imagine him sitting up from where he had been sleeping, yawning while he stretched out his arms and remarking that he had slept well. We can sleep in peace because God never sleeps.

When I was in college I sustained a minor concussion during a game of dodge ball. My roommate and best friend took me back to our dorm and while I slept, he stayed awake all night to watch over me.

As one author noted: "Enemies might taunt him, and friends might fail him, but the victory was Jehovah's."

Tony Evans concludes that "what you look at affects how you feel." David looked at the Lord in faith and

found absolute peace and safety. As someone so aptly put it “**One plus God is a majority.**”

Psalm 20:7-8 “Some trust in chariots and some in horses, but we trust in the name of the Lord our God. They are brought to their knees and fall, but we rise up and stand firm.”

Edmond Hiebert stated “**Believing prayer takes its stand upon the faithfulness of God.**”

Whatever kind of enemy you are facing, do you have that kind of sustaining faith that provides peace so that you can rest?

Psalm 23:4 “Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for You are with me.”

Isaiah 26:3 “You will keep in perfect him whose mind is steadfast, because he trusts in You.”

Why could David rest peacefully in the Lord?

Verses 7-8 give us the answer. David found his rescue by the Lord.

B. David Found His Rescue By the Lord – vv. 7-8

To strike an enemy on the jaw was meant to insult and humiliate them and bring them into submission.

To break the teeth refers to disarming a predator so that they would drop the prey locked in the jaws. Picture a lamb in the mouth of a lion and you strike the jaw so that the lion lets the lamb go. They are terms referring to destruction of the enemy.

David asked the Lord to deliver him in a way that would humiliate the enemy and cause them to let go. His enemies said God wouldn’t deliver him, but in faith, David asked God to render them powerless. The tense in which he writes is as if God has already done it, that it’s a sure thing.

How could he have such faith you might ask? Because David knew his salvation came only from the Lord. His faith is compelling evidence for others to trust in God with utter confidence, to be confident that God can overpower their enemies.

If God is for me, who can stand against me? God is

our salvation.

We are all confronted with any number of people or circumstances that we could consider to be enemies. The world, the flesh and the devil stand opposed to us. Find our protection in God. Have faith in God that brings peace.

We all face different kinds of enemies, but there is one enemy that we all face. We face the enemy of death and sin and the devil. But when we put our faith in Christ, that enemy is defeated because our salvation comes from the Lord. He is our deliverer. Faith will bring you peace.

Let’s read this together: *When we have mounting problems, they demand confident faith. **Selah** – what do you think about that?*