

When Your Enemies Are Too Many To Count

Psalm 3

Introduction:

- 1) In life we should not be surprised when we are forced to fight, when we are faced with battles we cannot avoid. Sometimes the fighting is fierce and the conflict so intense we are driven into the trenches, the foxhole. One of life's great blessings is to have company in the foxhole, persons who will put their life on the line for you and guard your back. Such friends are few in number and they are a cherished possession.
- 2) However, one of life's greatest disappointments and heartbreaks is to be in that foxhole, receiving enemy fire, only to feel a burning sharp pain in the back, to turn and see that someone you were certain was a friend, is actually the enemy who has just stabbed you in the back in cruel betrayal. Such betrayal can come from friends, and yes, even family. The pain is dumbing. The disappointment more than words can convey.
- 3) This no doubt is what David felt when he was betrayed by his own son, his son named Absalom. The record of this is found in 2 Sam. 15-18. Absalom was a handsome and impressive figure. 2 Sam. 14:25 says, "There was no blemish in him." No doubt his parents were proud of him. He showed tremendous promise. The sky was the limit in terms of potential. He was loved by his father David, and even after he murdered his brother Amnon for raping his sister Tamar (2 Sam 13), David forgave him and grew once again to trust him (2 Sam 14:33). Absalom, however, had a plan, and in 2 Sam. 15:6 the Bible says, "So Absalom stole the hearts of the men of Israel." This led to a successful palace coup and David was forced to abdicate the throne and flee the city of Jerusalem. The Bible says he wept and went barefoot (2 Sam 15:30) as he fled for his life. He also endured the ridicule and rock pelting of a man named Shimei (2 Sam

16:5-14) whose cursings and action were such that David and “all who were with him became weary,” exhausted on their flight for their life. And worst of all, his own son now seeking to take his life. It is during this tremendous trial and test of faith that David pens this psalm of lament.

- 4) This is one of the most painful hours of David’s life. A night of darkness engulfs his soul as he realizes all he has could come to an abrupt end before dawn. Being rich and famous, powerful and influential did not prevent David from problems and difficulties, going from the throne to the valley, from everything to nothing, from living life to running for his life. What can David do? What should we do when the shadow of death crosses our horizon and all seems lost? There is only one thing we can do: trust in the Lord and call out to Him in confidence that He will deliver us.

I. Share Your Problem with God 3:1-2

- Psalm 3 is the first Psalm with a superscription providing some information about its context and occasion for writing. It is a psalm of lament and it is the natural extension of Psalms 1 & 2. In the first there is a general contrast between the righteous and the ungodly. In Psalm 2 there is a contrast between the righteous anointed Son and the Lord on one side, and the wicked kings and rulers and those who follow them on the other. Now the Davidic king is alone, faced with innumerable enemies which now includes family and friends. Interestingly, the promise of Psalm 2:12 (read it) is tragically fulfilled in the death of Absalom as recorded in 2 Sam. 18:14-15.
- David has been run out of town on a rail, fleeing for his life like a scared rabbit. Finding a quiet moment of rest, David turns to God and pours out his heart in

prayer. He invokes not the general name for God (*Elohim*), but the personal covenantal name *Yahweh* (LORD).

1) Tell the Lord What They Do 3:1

- Lord, how (amazement at the turn of events) they have increased who trouble me. Many...Many (vr 2).
- David's numbers appear to be shrinking while those of his enemies multiply! They oppose him (*NIV*, "Foes"); they are rising up against him. David senses he is hemmed in on every side. Escape appears impossible. Everywhere he turns and everywhere he looks he sees the enemy, those who wish to do him harm. This is how he sees things and he tells the Lord.

2) Tell the Lord What They Say 2:2

- David's adversaries are active (v.1) and they are accusing (v.2). The "many" of vs. 1 are now the "many of verse 2 who claim even God is against him. No doubt this wounded David deeply. Maybe he even wondered if what they were saying is true. He had murdered Uriah and stolen his wife Bathsheba in adultery. His family life was a disaster. A daughter raped, a son murdered, and now a son seeking to take his life. Perhaps this was God's judgment. That is certainly what his enemies were saying.
- He is as good as dead. There is no help, deliverance, salvation for him; his ministry is finished. He is already a has-been, yesterday's news, tomorrow's nobody.
- Yes, this is what they were saying. It is not, however, what God had said. These opponents of David may have fooled themselves into thinking God was on their

side as they sought to displace and remove His chosen servant. However if you read 2 Samuel it was Absalom and his enablers who had violated the Law of God, engaged in subterfuge, advocated immorality, and now wanted to murder the Lord's Anointed (2:2), His King whom He had set on His holy hill of Zion (2:6).
 Application: This can happen in any life. It can happen in ministry. People you think are your friends will betray you by what they do and what they say. When they do check your heart, inventory your actions, and give your problem to God.

- v.2 ends with "Selah," as does vs. 4 and 8. Here it probably means "stop, and think about that." Think about what you just read. Consider its implications for your own life.

II. Shout Your Praise to God 3:3-4

David's complaint now takes a 180 turn. He get biblical not emotional. He gets theological not experiential. He gets his eyes off of his enemies and directs his gaze on the power and promise of God. Despair gives way to glorious confidence as he recalls and remembers who God is and what God is like.

1) Exult in the Character of God 3:3

But you is a strong adversative, a powerful point of contrast. They may say "there is no help for him in God," but I know you, Oh LORD (*Yahweh*) are 1) a shield around me, 2) My glory and 3) the One who lifts up my head.

- My Shield speaks of God as His protector, and is repeatedly used in the Psalms (7:10; 18:2, 30; 28:7; 33:20; 47:9; 59:11; 84:9, 11; 91:4; 115:9-11; 119:114; 144:2). David perhaps recalled God's words to Abram in Gen 15:1, "Do not be afraid Abram, I am your shield, your exceedingly great reward." Perhaps he

remembered the final blessing of Moses to Israel in Deut 33:29, where Moses said, “Happy are you, O Israel! Who is like you, a people saved by the Lord, The shield of your help...” The shield here in Ps. 3:3 is a light shield, used to deflect arrows or other objects hurled at us. The Lord is ready at a moments notice to deflect the fiery darts of the evil one (Eph. 6:16).

- My Glory-Any praise and honor I have I have in and from you. My own glory is worthless and useless. Any doubt about this has been cleared up in the light of where I am! No, my glory and esteem is in you, it comes from you. You are the source of my life. You are the source of my glory. I will glory only in you. Paul would say, “I will glory only in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ” (Gal 6:14).
- The One who lifts up my head-David had a droopy head; a depressed, downcast countenance. The Lord however could fix all of that. Absalom had brought him shame and embarrassment. He fled from his throne with his head hanging down and his tail between his legs. Apart from the Lord he was not much. But with the Lord his honor and dignity, his reputation as God’s man would be restored. James 4:10 instructs us, “Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and He will lift you up.”

2) Express Your Confidence in God. 3:4

“I cried out to the Lord...” David prayed and he prayed hard! This verse and those that follow reveal God’s answer to his prayer. It will take on the form of a testimony.

- To God I cried and I did so aloud, no shame if anyone over hears the desperate plea of this king.

- To us-“He heard me and from His holy hill (cf 2:6!) From the very place you installed me as King I received an answer. The people plot...the kings set themselves against...the rulers conspire...my own son joins their ranks and seeks my ruin but You set me as King and you laugh at and deride those who oppose you and your Messiah. You made a promise to me and you are a God who always keeps His word. I may have doubted but no more! I cried, you heard. What more do I need?
- Selah. “Think about it!”

III. See Your Protection in God 3:5-8

The Bible promises us a peace “that surpasses understanding” (Phil 4:7). Indeed it says this peace “will guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus.” David was the recipient of this peace from the Lord. His response is both amazing and instructive.

1) Trust the Lord to Sustain You 3:5

David went to sleep! Enemies all around! His own son seeking to murder him! David would say read Psalm 121:3, “He who keeps you will not slumber. Behold, He who keeps Israel shall neither slumber or sleep.” Lord, there is no reason for both of us to stay awake. You keep watch, I will sleep! And what happened? “I awoke, for the Lord sustained me.” A safe night’s sleep was a sign, a pledge from the Lord, that He would protect and provide for David. If He will keep me safe through the night, He will keep me safe through this day as well.

2) Trust the Lord to Strengthen You 3:6

The many of vs. 1-2 are now the myriads, “the tens of thousands” (*NIV*) of v. 6. They are many and they are everywhere, “set against me all around.” David, however, after a good night’s rest reaches over and puts on his “No Fear” t-shirt. This is what it says on the front. On the back the words are different. Here we read:

- The Lord is my shield (v.3)
- The Lord hears my prayers (v.4)
- The Lord sustains me (v.5)

3) Trust the Lord to Save You 3:7-8

- Now comes David’s actual petition. True to the form of most lament psalms, it includes a prayer for God to arise and a prayer for God to deliver. Arise is a prayer for God to come to the aid of His people in power and glory. The poetic parallelism is beautiful and balanced. “Arise...O Lord, save me...O my God.” (salvation repeated in v.8).

David is so confident in what God will do he uses what is called “a prophetic perfect.” The Lord’s future vindication of His servant David is so certain that he can write as if it has already happened.

- Again there is beautiful poetic parallelism as David’s enemies, pictured as wild and dangerous animals, are described also as receiving a crushing blow from the Lord. He will jack the jaw and smash the teeth of the ungodly who have walked the path of the sinners of Psalm 1:1 and who have refused to kiss the Son of Psalm 2:12. All of this is God’s doing not man’s, though God may choose to use

- men, or even “the thick branches of a large oak” that captured the hair of Absalom and became the cause of his death and the end of his rebellion. (2 Sam 18:9-15).
- Like Jonah (2:9) David proclaims, “Salvation belongs to the Lord.” Joining with Ps 1:1, 2:12, this 3rd song affirms the blessing of the Lord upon His people. Yes, “the Lord knows the way of the righteous, but the way of the ungodly shall perish (Psalm 1:6).
 - Selah! “Think about that.”
 - Yes, the great David lay down to sleep with death all about him. But by God’s grace he awoke and was restored to his throne on the holy hill of Zion. Amazing is it not, for David’s greater Son also lay down to sleep, with death all upon Him. This Davidic King also cried to Lord (“It is finished”) and was heard (“Into your hands I commend my spirit”). Yes He lay down...and slept...and awoke! And yes He has been restored to His throne even at the right hand of the Majesty on High (Heb 1:3).
 - When your enemies are too many to count, cry out to our Lord. He heard David. He heard Jesus. He will hear you and me as well.

Conclusion: My dumpster experience in 1985 and how I got there, what God taught me, and what he has done for me. With David I rejoice to say, “Salvation, deliverance, rescue, it all belongs to the Lord. Your blessing truly is upon your people.”