

PSALM 3

I. HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

A. DAVID'S PUNISHMENT FOR TAKING BATHSHEBA & KILLING URIAH—II Sam 12

1. THE SWORD WILL NEVER DEPART FROM YOUR HOUSE
2. GOD WILL RAISE EVIL AGAINST HIM IN HIS OWN HOUSE
3. HIS 'COMPANION' WILL TAKE DAVID'S WIVES AND SLEEP WITH THEM OPENLY

B. STRAINED RELATIONS BETWEEN DAVID AND ABSALOM—II Sam 13-14

1. AMNON—TAMAR—ABSALOM
 - a. Amnon—David's eldest son—by Ahinoam the Jezreelitess
 - b. Absalom—David's third son—by Maacah—daughter of Talmai, King of Geshur
 - c. Tamar—beautiful sister of Absalom
2. AMNON AND TAMAR
 - a. Amnon lusted for Tamar—tricked her into his bed-chamber—and raped her
 - b. Amnon then 'despised' Tamar—and cast her out in shame
 - c. Tamar went to live with her brother Absalom—in desolation
 - d. David became very angry
3. ABSALOM AND AMNON
 - a. Absalom waited 2 years
 - b. Absalom tricked Amnon into joining him for a sheep-shearing feast
 - c. Absalom had Amnon murdered—then fled to his grandfather Talmai—in Geshur
4. DAVID AND ABSALOM
 - a. After Absalom was 3 years in exile—David finally sent for him
 - b. But David refused to give Absalom a personal audience
 - c. Finally—only after 2 more years—David reconciled with Absalom

C. ABSALOM'S REBELLION

1. Absalom was handsomest man in the land—became very popular
2. He "*stole away the hearts of the people*"—by favoring anyone who came to him for judgment
3. He went to Hebron—site of David's coronation over Judah—on pretense of fulfilling a vow

4. He sent spies into the land—to proclaim him king in Hebron
5. He drew 200 warriors and David’s counselor Ahithophel into his conspiracy
6. The rebellion was so widespread and strong—David had to flee Jerusalem

II Sam 15:12-14—*And the conspiracy was strong, for the people increased continually with Absalom. Then a messenger came to David, saying, “The hearts of the men of Israel are with Absalom.” David said to all his servants who were with him at Jerusalem, “Arise and let us flee, for otherwise none of us will escape from Absalom. Go in haste, or he will overtake us quickly and bring down calamity on us and strike the city with the edge of the sword.”*

D. DAVID’S FLIGHT

1. David fled Jerusalem with his servants—to the “fords in the desert” near Jericho
2. He left 10 concubines to tend the palace
3. Ironically—his 600-man bodyguard of Philistines remained faithful
 - o Under Ittai the Gittite (from Goliath’s hometown Gath)
 - o Who later commanded 1/3 of David’s army against Absalom
4. David threw himself on God’s mercy—and would not allow the Ark to accompany him

II Sam 15:25-26—*The king said to Zadok, “Return the ark of God to the city. If I find favor in the sight of the Lord, then He will bring me back again and show me both it and His habitation. But if He should say thus, ‘I have no delight in you,’ behold, here I am, let Him do to me as seems good to Him.”*

5. The mournful ascent of the Mount of Olives—**II Sam 15:30**
 - a. David’s grief
 - David covered his head—a sign of grief
 - Went barefoot—additional sign of grief—compounding the first sign
 - And wept—along with all the people
 - b. According to the Jewish Midrash—this is where David composed **Psalm 3**
6. Absalom was close behind!—As David fled, Absalom entered Jerusalem—**II Sam 15:37**
7. Cursing of David
 - a. Near Bahurim—Benjamite town east of Jerusalem—on way to the Jordan
 - b. Shimei, son of Gera—house of Saul—cursed David—and threw rocks at him
 - c. David’s response—submitted to God’s judgment—did not punish Shimei

II Sam 16:11-12—*Let him alone and let him curse, for the Lord has told him. Perhaps the Lord will look on my affliction and return good to me instead of his cursing this day.*

8. At the ‘fords of the wilderness’—[near Jericho]—**II Sam 16:14**

- a. David and his entourage arrived weary—*and he refreshed himself there*
- b. Also—another likely site where David wrote **Psalm 3**

II. TEXT

1 *O Lord, how my adversaries have increased! Many are rising up against me. 2 Many are saying of my soul, “There is no deliverance for him in God.” Selah.*

3 *But You, O Lord, are a shield about me, My glory, and the One who lifts my head. 4 I was crying to the Lord with my voice, And He answered me from His holy mountain. Selah.*

5 *I lay down and slept; I awoke, for the Lord sustains me. 6 I will not be afraid of ten thousands of people Who have set themselves against me round about.*

7 *Arise, O Lord; save me, O my God! For You have smitten all my enemies on the cheek; You have shattered the teeth of the wicked. 8 Salvation belongs to the Lord; Your blessing be upon Your people! Selah.*

THE MESSAGE

1 *God! Look! Enemies past counting! Enemies sprouting like mushrooms, 2 Mobs of them all around me, roaring their mockery: "Hah! No help for him from God!" 3 But you, God, shield me on all sides; You ground my feet, you lift my head high; 4 With all my might I shout up to God, His answers thunder from the holy mountain. 5 I stretch myself out. I sleep. Then I'm up again—rested, tall and steady, 6 Fearless before the enemy mobs coming at me from all sides. 7 Up, God! My God, help me! Slap their faces, First this cheek, then the other, Your fist hard in their teeth! 8 Real help comes from God. Your blessing clothes your people!*

III. INTRODUCTION

A. TYPE OF PSALM

1. ONE OF THE LAMENTATIONS—[more than 60]
 - o The first of five in a row—**Psalms 3-7**
2. SPECIAL TYPE OF LAMENTATION—IMRPECATORY
 - a. Open, honest expression of anger and frustration
 - b. Call upon God to punish opponents
 - c. Sound harsh and offensive today; even seems contrary to the Christian ethic
 - d. But in that time they were considered acceptable expressions of bitter feelings
 - e. Beware: do not apply NT ethical standards in judging OT situations

B. AUTHORSHIP

1. PSALM OF DAVID
2. WHEN DAVID FLED FROM HIS SON ABSALOM—**I Sam 15:13ff**

3. ONE OF 14 PSALMS LINKED TO A SPECIFIC HISTORICAL EPISODE

C. SUBJECT—DAVID’S LAMENT AND APPEAL TO GOD FOR HELP

D. STRUCTURE

- o FOUR STANZAS
 - **Verses 1-2**—Complaint
 - **Verses 3-4**—Expression of confidence in the Lord’s help
 - **Verses 5-6**—Assurance of Lord’s protection
 - **Verses 7-8**—Closing prayer

III. EXPOSITION

❖ **1 O Lord, how my adversaries have increased! Many are rising up against me. 2 Many are saying of my soul, “There is no deliverance for him in God.” Selah.**

a. *adversaries*

1. David is ostracized—outcast—outnumbered by those *disloyal* to him
2. For the first time in many years—since Saul’s opposition—he is in the minority
3. For the first time ever—betrayed by those closest to him

➤ David’s reign always marked by loyalty of ‘mighty men’—see **I Chr 11**

4. Compare with **Psalm 2**

- a. In Psalm 2—the outsiders [Gentile nations] rebel—against God
- b. In Psalm 3—the insider [Israel] rebels—against God’s anointed

b. *many are rising*

1. David is shocked at the size of the rebellion—later defined as 10,000s
2. **200** warriors left Jerusalem with Absalom—**II Sam 15:11**
3. All the people, the men of Israel—followed Absalom into Jerusalem—**II Sam 15:13**

4. *rising*

- a. Could mean ‘rebellious’—‘rebellious against’ me

b. But probably means—the **number** ‘against’ him is **increasing**—a swelling tide

c. *many are saying of my soul*

1. Their attacks are aimed at David’s innermost being—at the deepest level
2. They are questioning not just his competence—but his inmost character
3. This makes the betrayal even more deeply hurtful
 - Because David was known to have a ‘perfect heart’
 - Single-mindedly devoted to seeking God’s heart—with integrity

d. *There is no deliverance for him in God*

1. His accusers are not questioning God’s existence or ability to deliver
2. They mean *David* now has no hope coming from God
3. David’s situation is absolutely hopeless—even prayer will not help him now!

e. *Selah*

1. Probably a sign to pause—for emphasis—not to be read
2. Used 71 times in **Psalms**

❖ **3** *But You, O Lord, are a shield about me, My glory, and the One who lifts my head.* **4** *I was crying to the Lord with my voice, And He answered me from His holy mountain. Selah.*

a. David throws himself on God’s mercy

1. David’s attitude is surprisingly serene and steady—though mournful
2. He is relying totally on God’s will—whatever God decides is best!
3. So he will not take matters into his own hand
 - a. Not using the Ark of the Covenant for his own good
 - b. Not punishing Shimei for his ridicule and abuse of the king

b. Contrast Stanza 2 with Stanza 1

- Here three ‘remedy’ clauses answer the three previous ‘complaint’ clauses

- David’s many enemies—blocked by the Lord—as David’s shield
- His enemies intend to disgrace him—the Lord sets him up in honor
- He lamented over slanderers—He now boasts in the Lord who lifts his head

c. *But You, O Lord*

1. “You” is emphatic—YOU O LORD!!!
2. Contrasts God’s faithfulness—with the faithlessness of the conspirators

d. *shield about me*

1. ‘about’—is a strong preposition—NEB translates this ‘covers me’
2. This shield—the Lord—covers more than other shields
 - a. The war shield of a field soldier protected only his front
 - b. This shield enfolds the whole person!
3. Just as the Lord promised to be a protective shield to Abraham and Israel
 - a. Abraham

Gen 15:1—*Do not fear Abram, I am a shield to you; your reward shall be very great.*

- b. Israel—[in Moses’ closing blessing to Israel]

Dt 33:29—*Blessed are you, O Israel; Who is like you, a people saved by the Lord, who is the shield of your help and the sword of your majesty! So your enemies will cringe before you, and you will tread upon their high places.*

e. *my glory*

1. Obviously not speaking of David’s glory
2. But the source of glory—and the object of David’s adoration—the Lord!

f. *the One who lifts my head*

1. A lifted head—a sign of renewed confidence and determination
2. Contrasted with David’s dejected posture when ascending the Mount of Olives

3. This might mean—David wants the Lord to inspire him in the midst of mourning
4. But probably indicates—this Psalm was written later—*after* the Lord has done this

g. *I was crying to the Lord with my voice*

1. Past tense—further evidence the mourning was in the past—before the Lord responded
2. Meaning of phrase—*I was crying out*—a loud—inconsolable—lament!
3. He let God know his situation
 - a. He did not wallow in silent self-pity!
 - b. God wants to hear our complaints—He can ‘take it’!
 - c. God wants to hear our petitions—He can help!

h. *and He answered me*

- An important reminder—God DOES answer prayer!

i. *from His holy mountain*

1. Where God had installed David as king—see **Psalm 2:6**
2. Where David had placed the Ark of the Covenant—**II Sam 6**

❖ 5 *I lay down and slept; I awoke, for the Lord sustains me.* 6 *I will not be afraid of ten thousands of people Who have set themselves against me round about.*

a. *I*—is emphatic—corresponding to the emphatic ‘You’ in verse 3

b. *I lay down and slept*

1. Further evidence—David wrote this Psalm after having rested—**II Sam 16:14**
 - Probably after arriving at the ford near the Jordan river--
2. David slept—shows his serene confidence in God—knowing God has heard his cry

c. *the Lord sustains me*—

1. Literally means—***the Lord will sustain me***
2. Meaning—will provide security and safety

d. *ten thousands*

1. The term = *myriad*

a. In singular—it means '10,000'—**II Sam 18:7**

b. This is plural—meaning 'innumerable'—or 'tens of thousands'

2. Absalom—*did* have tens of thousands of troops—plural!

➤ Ahithophel—wanted to take 120,000 troops to pursue and kill David—**II Sam 17:1**

e. *round about*

1. David felt surrounded—on all sides—no human way of escape

2. This intensified threat—also heightens David's dependence on God

3. God is the only One able to protect David from enemies on all sides

➤ NOTE—**verse 3**—the Lord is a shield 'about' David—protecting him on all sides

❖ **7 Arise, O Lord; save me, O my God! For You have smitten all my enemies on the cheek; You have shattered the teeth of the wicked. 8 Salvation belongs to the Lord; Your blessing be upon Your people! Selah.**

a. Notice David's resolve

1. To give up would be to abdicate—not only the throne—but his role as the Lord's anointed

2. So he takes a confident stand in God—for the sake of God's covenant with him

b. *Arise*—notice the sequencing

1. First—David's enemies are 'rising' against him

2. Then—David has now arisen from a good night's restful sleep—reliant on the Lord

3. Now—David calls on the Lord—to arise to his deliverance

c. *cheekbone and teeth*

1. David's enemies are fierce—like ravenous, wild beasts ready to devour him

2. Smiting on cheekbone—denoted violence and insult—**I Kgs 22:24; Job 16:10; Micah 5:1**

3. Shattering teeth—meant—to render enemy powerless—**Ps 58:6**

4. These are perfect verbs

a. They carry the force of imperatives

b. They could be 'prophetic perfect'—this future thing is certain to be done

5. Could be David reflecting on what God has already done to previous enemies

➤ And this gives David certain hope that God will do it again

d. *salvation belongs to the Lord* = the cause of deliverance is always the Lord

1. Meaning = the cause of deliverance is always the Lord
2. David's **humility**—he cannot do it himself—only God can deliver!

e. *Your blessing upon your people*

1. This is not a statement of fact—but an intercessory prayer
2. David shifts focus from himself—to his people
3. Sign of a servant-king—regardless his situation—he always cares about his people