

Not Afraid of Ten Thousand! An Exposition of Psalm 3

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[0:00] Well, it is a pleasure to be back with you again. I forget how many months it's been. I think it was maybe March that I was here. So apparently I'm the preacher who comes when there's times of distress. But I'm glad to be with you today. And I've opened my Bible to Psalm 3 and I invite you to do the same. There's also a handout that has a couple things on it I'll point out to you.

So on the back there's this colorful thing and that's just for your future study. This is what's called a visual outline chart. This is not my preaching outline. It's a study outline. So the preaching outline begins on the front with the cartoon which I'll talk about in just a moment.

I have been in a lot of different churches. This is my fifth church in four weeks. I've been in Williamsburg and Lynchburg and Iceberg and I don't know where else. But I'm glad to be here and look forward to be back next week.

I cannot promise you that next week will be Psalm 4. Now it might be but a little inside thing here. I'm mostly recrafting old material and those notes are from the year 2000. It's a different format and I don't know in the midst of my dissertation writing if I can update it. So we'll see.

It'll be something from the scriptures that I trust will be edifying. But today in keeping with the earlier messages on Psalm 1 and 2 we have come to Psalm 3.

[1:36] Now on the handout you see a cartoon. This comes from a British company called Living and Powerful. They create devotional art and I've come to really enjoy these.

Like here is their depiction of the message of Romans 8.28. That's Joseph's garment that has been all torn up but God does work all things together for good, doesn't he?

I love this one about the tongue from James 2. The tongue is a little thing but look what a great fire it sets. And then here's about Jesus walking on the storm and the one that's on our handout today, that's the fuller image.

One man puts to flight a thousand. This is thinking of Joshua 23 verse 10. Now that last image reminds me of our passage although in reverse because in that passage in Joshua the Lord encourages Israel how they'll be able to achieve impossible victories as if one person could chase off a thousand.

But you know many times in life it feels exactly the opposite. It feels like you are being chased by a thousand different things. Ten thousand even. And that is the experience of David in the passage that we're coming to today.

[2:53] Psalm 3 is going to teach us that David knew that nothing that rises up against us can prevail when the Lord rises to our aid.

So with that thought in mind I'd like us at this time to read Psalm 3 and look at the heading with me. I'll call that verse 0. It's part of the inspired text before the poem begins in the first verse.

So the heading says, A Psalm of David. When he fled from Absalom his son. O Lord, how my adversaries have increased.

Many are rising up against me. Many are saying of my soul, There's no deliverance for God in him. Salah. But you, O Lord, are a shield about me.

My glory and the one who lifts up my head. I was crying to the Lord with my voice and he answered me from his holy mountain. Salah. I lay down and slept.

[3:59] I awoke for the Lord sustains me. I will not be afraid of ten thousands of people who have set themselves against around me. 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. Salvation belongs to the Lord.

Your blessing be upon your people. Salah. Salah. Shall we pray? Lord, guide my lips this morning as I speak forth your word and unveil what has been revealed in this glorious text. Grow us in grace and our confidence in Christ and our understanding of your word. In Jesus' name. Amen. Amen. Well, I want to say something about the background of this psalm.

This is one of a few psalms, I think it's a little over a dozen psalms, that have some kind of a historical heading. And this one tells us in verse 0 that it's by David.

[5:03] And when he fled from Absalom, his son. This is describing a time of civil war in 2 Samuel 15-18 where Absalom decided to usurp the throne and David has to run from Jerusalem.

This is around the year 985 B.C. This is about 20 years after David had brought the ark into Jerusalem and made that his political capital and the religious capital, a time of significant reformation and revival in the nation.

But things have been in decay. And you know that part of this is the chastening of the Lord on him for his gross violations, for his adultery and his murder. He had sinned awfully and he was still now, this is some 15 plus years after that great sin was exposed.

He is still reaping consequences from that. David's oldest son, acting sinfully, has led an insurrection. He went down to Hebron where David had first reigned and had himself crowned as king.

And then led his army north up to Jerusalem on a full day's march. David heard about it just in time and is able to escape into the wilderness. He's able to regroup eventually.

[6:25] Absalom's forces advance on him at Mahanaim, but they quickly are routed in the forests and David is ultimately restored to power. When you read those stories in 2 Samuel, you see a real mixture of things in the life of David.

You see a man who trusts God, but you also see a man whose affections are kind of mixed and sort of everywhere. In one sense, he's very thankful for the Lord, how he has been delivered.

And yet on the other hand, he's excessively mourning his treacherous son. While he should be celebrating with his men for the victory they've gotten, he turns their triumph into a time of mourning for Absalom.

He is confused. He is, in some ways, a complicated person. Sometimes David is full of faith. Sometimes he's very confused.

What we find here in Psalm 3 is one of those times when David is at his best. And that's typically what we find in the Psalms. Even when he is dealing with sin, we find his best moments here in the Psalter.

[7:32] Jewish tradition says that David prayed this early on in the conflict from Absalom when he fled Jerusalem in 2 Samuel 15.

Maybe. I think it's likely that David put pen to paper or stylus to papyrus sometime afterwards, reflecting on the kinds of prayers that he had in those moments.

When you have something that says, a Psalm of David, when he was in a cave, I doubt he actually wrote the words then. I think these are poetic recollections of the way that he prayed and found help from the Lord.

There's something in this Psalm, a group of words that bind it together, and it's the word rise. I want you to note it with me in verse 1. Lord, how my adversaries have increased.

Many are rising up against me. And would you now move down to verse 7, and you'll see a play on that word. Arise, O Lord, save me, O my God.

[8:33] So at the beginning of the Psalm and the end of the Psalm, we see that there are things that are rising up. And as we look further in the Psalm, verse 3 as well. You, O Lord, are the shield about me, my glory, and the one who lifts up my head.

So this is a Psalm with a lot of things that are going up. Not all of them are good, but it ends with things looking up because he knows he can trust Yahweh.

So this is the historical background. I want to say something also about the collection context. Now, one thing I like about preaching the Psalms when I travel to different churches is I don't have to spend a whole lot of time talking about context.

It's not like preaching from Genesis 3 and you have to explain Genesis 1 and 2. You don't need to understand Psalm 1 and Psalm 2 in order to understand Psalm 3. But there is a sense in which they have been put in this order.

There are some loose connections that bind them together. Psalm 1, and I should say, by the way, also that the Psalms, and you probably know this, but it's worth saying.

[9:41] The Psalms are not arranged chronologically. Psalm 1 is anonymous. In fact, there's a pretty good theory that Jeremiah wrote Psalm 1.

So at the end of the Old Testament period, Psalm 1 was probably put where it is to introduce the rest of the Psalms. Psalm 2 is by David according to the New Testament.

And then Psalms 3, 4, 5, and 6 all have some reference either to morning or nighttime. And usually about finding rest and peace in those times of difficulty.

But there is an interesting connection between Psalm 2 and Psalm 3. Look back with me at Psalm 2. David says in verse 1, Now you read that and you assume David means these are Gentile kings, pagan kings.

And yet, what's the very next Psalm? The heading, a Psalm of David when he fled from Absalom. One of the kings of the earth.

[11:00] His own son, a king, a false king of Israel, rose up against the Lord and against his anointed. So what you have in Psalm 3 is an example of the kind of revolt that Psalm 2 talks about.

Now our Psalm, Psalm 3 has three parts to it. And the word *salah* sometimes breaks them up. Verses 1 and 2 are a lament and then there's the word *salah*. Verses 3, 4, 5, and 6 are statements of confidence. *Salah* is in the middle of it. Sometimes the word *salah* is used to divide up the poem. By the way, what does this word mean? There's a reason why it's a Hebrew word spelled in English letters. We really don't know. There are about six theories. I suspect it is some kind of a musical reference.

My best guess is that it's a reference that instrumentalists would play some kind of an interlude. And it enables you to either transition to a new segment or maybe to meditate on a profound thing that was just said.

[12:09] Which I think is what's true at the end of verse 4. And then *salah* ends the psalm at the very end where there's a plea, a prayer that is made. So here's a little overview of the passage.

Again, we're saying that the main point of this psalm, So the first couple of verses are a lament that's going to teach us that things look bad when conflicts mount up.

And then the middle section, verses 3 through 6, is expressions of confidence, which teach us that God gives peace when our prayers go up. And then the last couple of verses are the plea that David makes, which teaches that victory comes when God rises up.

Well, let's go to the first of those. It's in verses 1 and 2. This is the lament. Things look bad when conflicts mount up.

Here, David is speaking to God about the very serious troubles that he's facing. These are life and death situations. Not only for him, this could be life or death for the kingdom.

[13:23] And he speaks in verse 1 about the multiplication of enemies. Oh Lord, how my adversaries have increased.

Many are rising up against me. This word for adversaries. I don't mean to make too big of a deal about a word for enemy. But it is fascinating that the root of this word adversary is used to refer to hemming something in.

That's a great description of what was happening to David in this period as Absalom's forces are encircling and trying to take them. It is possible in reading the text of 2 Samuel 15 that David might have escaped Absalom's arrival in Jerusalem by as little as 30 minutes.

And yet this whole problem with him, this revolt would take weeks to resolve. My adversaries have increased. Interestingly, that same Hebrew word is used in 2 Samuel 15, 12 to talk about how the conspiracy was strong for the people increased continually with Absalom.

And this is no overstatement when David says what he does here in verse 1. In the story, it looked like the large majority had turned against David.

[14:48] Now David is God's man, but he is in a shrinking company. You know, this is a situation that many of God's people find themselves in, in different periods, probably most periods of church history, that they find themselves in a minority, and sometimes a shrinking minority.

Faithful Christians more and more feel this way within our post-Christian society. And sometimes these times ebb and flow, and they're less frightening or less concerning than they were, but when it ebbs, it can be quite frightening.

And it feels like things are hemming you in. But David is mindful of something we need to be reminded of, that one person plus God equals a majority.

That is divine math. Let's look at verse 2. As the lament continues, he talks about the discouragement from onlookers.

Many are saying of my soul, there is no deliverance for him and God. Salah. Many. Who are these many?

[16:08] They are both the opponents, the adversaries being led by Absalom, and they're also onlookers who aren't fully committed one way or the other. They're not willing to take sides with the king, and they're not ready to roll up their arms and join the revolt either.

These are unloyal people putting their finger to the wind. Many people assumed, because of the situation that David was going through, God must have abandoned him.

The only thing that explains why his own son would rise up against him, and he'd have to leave his capital city, the Lord must not be with him. Many are saying of my soul, and here is a great example of where this word soul refers to the whole being, not just the internal self.

Enemies opposed him personally, not just in his office. And these enemies are talking. The enemies in the Psalms often threaten, not only with weapons, but with words.

And we're all mature enough to know that the proverb that says, sticks and stones may break my bones, but words will never hurt me, is a lie. These onlookers taunt.

[17:27] They say, there is no deliverance for him and God. There's no salvation, no rescue for him. God isn't going to do anything for him. God has abandoned him.

They interpret his trials as God's rejection. And this is often how the world sees the trouble in a life of Christians. They watch a Christian who faithfully goes to church, raises their children in the fear of the Lord, serve and give, and then they get cancer.

And they say, well, I thought your God was going to care for you. Of course, it's a really gross misunderstanding about what life is like in the Lord. Oh, I thought you were God's special one.

It looks like you're not so special after all. Lot of good all that praying did you. And this is a common way in the ancient world for people to think.

This is the way that one of Israel's great enemies taunted Jerusalem in the days of Isaiah. The commander of the Assyrian army, the Rabshakeh, came to the city of Jerusalem and choosing to speak in Hebrew and not in Aramaic, he taunted the city, Isaiah 36.10, Have I now come up without the Lord's approval against this land and destroy it?

[18:44] The Lord said to me, Go up against this land and destroy it. No, the Lord had not said that. Sovereignly, the Lord did raise up the Assyrians, but the Assyrians are no godly servant of his.

He's taunting them. It was an experience in the life of our Lord Jesus. So many in Israel had forsaken him at the end of his earthly ministry that they cry out, Crucify him!

Crucify him! And you remember the taunt that said to him when he's on the cross, He saved others, but he cannot save himself. Let him come down now from the cross if his soul delights in him.

Alan Ross, the commentator, said, If such opposition was true for the Lord's anointed, it will also be true of all who follow him.

Now, I don't mean by this to demonize all unsaved people or for you to think that that's the reaction you're always going to get. Sometimes the Lord is going to use your reaction at trials to soften the heart of people as a witness.

[19:59] But this is the issue of soils, isn't it? There are others who will witness your sufferings and see in that some token of God's unfaithfulness or his non-existence.

And that's David's lot. Things look bad when conflict mounts up. But note with me now as we come to the middle part of the psalm that God gives peace when our prayers go up.

These four verses, this middle movement of the psalm, are verses of confidence. There's a noticeable shift in tone, though the troubles are not done.

Verse 3, we have what we could call a confession of trust. But you, O Lord, are a shield around me, my glory, and the one who lifts my head.

Three depictions of God's characteristic care are said. God is a shield. God is his glory. God lifts up his head. Now, shields. There's different kinds of shields in the ancient world.

[21:08] This one would be like a mid-size shield. You use it to, you don't use this so much to dodge, you know, a volley of arrows, but this is in close combat. You can even use it as an offensive weapon if you wedge it the right way in your arm.

Two other things seem less connected to the shield. While the shield protects from physical blows, glory and uplifted head are about social battles, social issues.

And see, this is part of what was happening to David. He never actually had a physical blow come against him, but he had weapons of shame and disgrace hurled at him awfully when he was in his period of flight.

As David fled from Jerusalem, he went out in shame. Now, I want you to keep your place here in Psalm 3 and turn back with me to the story in 2 Samuel 15.

2 Samuel 15, we'll look at a couple spots. Chapter 15, verse 30, And David went up the ascent of the Mount of Olives and wept as he went, and his head was covered, and he walked barefoot.

[22 : 33] Then all the people who were with him covered his head and went up weeping as they went. This is the posture of disgrace and shame and even a kind of prayer of destitution.

He chooses to express himself in this way, but look at some of the reactions that he gets. Look at the next chapter, 2 Samuel 16, beginning in verse 5.

When King David came to Behurim, behold, there came out from there a man of the family of the house of Saul, whose name was Shimei, the son of Gerah.

He came out cursing continually as he came. He threw stones at David and at all the servants of King David, and all the people and all the mighty men were at his right hand and at his left. Thus Shimei said when he cursed, Get out!

Get out, you man of bloodshed and worthless fellow! The Lord has returned upon you all the bloodshed of the house of Saul in whose place you have reigned, and the Lord has given the kingdom into the hand of your son Absalom.

[23 : 43] And behold, you were taken in your own evil, for you are a man of bloodshed. What disgrace! Now, this is largely lies.

This is fascinating. Now, we're talking 25, nearly 30 years into David's reign, and there are still people that think David is an illegitimate king, that he stole the throne from Saul.

And may I say to you, I think this is one of the purposes of the books in 1 and 2 Samuel is to authenticate the reign of David. There were conspiracy theories in their day, and these stories are setting the record straight.

True, David is a faulty man, but also true, he was God's choice. Shimei doesn't believe that, and he curses and disgraces and shames David horribly.

This is part of the weaponization of shame. Now, back in our psalm, David says, you, O Lord, are my glory.

[24 : 57] And the one who lifts up my head, he knows that Yahweh is the protector and restorer of his honor, his reputation.

He leaves it in Yahweh's hand. In fact, back in the story, we didn't read it, but David's associates say, what should we do about him? And David says, let him go. Lord will take care of it.

The one who lifts up my head suggests not only a change of emotion, but a dramatic change of circumstance. Ultimately, the Lord is the one who's going to vindicate me.

This is a time now for humility as he's running from Absalom. It's a time to seek help and prayer. Ultimately, the Lord is the one who will restore his honor.

David knew he would come back. The promises of the Davidic covenant were certain. The promises that were pronounced over him, even when he was a young man and Samuel anointed him to be future king, he was certain.

[26 : 05] Those promises carried David through trial after trial after trial. This is what Isaiah will refer to as the sure mercies of David.

The sure mercies that the Lord had promised to David and to his house. He knew in his better moments that God's word was stronger than all of his worst worries.

There's a little irony here in the Hebrew language. The word for shield in this text rhymes with another Hebrew word that means shameless or bold.

The Lord is the one who will ultimately protect him and his honor. Now, you and I are no David or Davidette. You, so far as I know, have not been crowned king of Williamsburg or Yorktown or Virginia Beach.

But, you as a child of the king have had exceedingly great and precious promises made to you in the gospel. Promises of ultimate glory and your final good.

[27:18] And there is nothing or no combination of persons who can undo what God has promised for you. All your worst afflictions were they to conspire together in one awful moment cannot unseat what God has settled for you to have in the gospel.

Nothing will deter God's plan to make our afflictions, as Paul says, to seem light when we get to compare them with the exceeding weight of glory that awaits us.

So, David makes here in verse 3 a confession of trust. In verses 4 and 5, he talks about the experience of peace that he has, even in the midst of this conflict.

Verse 4, I was crying to the Lord with my voice, and he answered me from his holy mountain, Salah. He is praying with tremendous intensity.

So, don't misunderstand this. Now, when we talk about having peace in our troubles, we're not talking about this sort of, nothing bothers me at all, I'm in this Buddha-like state.

[28:33] There is still pain and lament and crying and even shouting out to God. This is no little silent prayer. This is no spinning of a prayer wheel he's talking about.

This was earnest, gut-wrenching, God-seeking prayer. There's one prayer in particular, maybe you've closed 1 Samuel 15 already, but back in that passage, 2 Samuel 15 verses 31 to 32, we have in the story one of the prayers that he offered.

Now, someone told David, saying, this is 2 Samuel 15, 31, Ahithophel is among the conspirators with Absalom, and David said, O Lord, I pray, make the counsel of Ahithophel foolishness.

So, to pause to say, this is one of his royal advisors who he's just found out is betraying him. And this is a smart guy. David prays, pleads, Lord, twist his plans, distort his plans.

And then verse 32, the answer to the prayer starts to come in the very next verse. It happened as David was coming to the summit of the Mount of Olives where God was worshipped that behold, Hushai the archite met him with his coat torn and dust on his head and Hushai is raised up as God to be a great helper to David even in the midst of newly discovered conspiracy.

[30:08] Barely had he finished praying for help in that circumstance before part of the answer showed up. Back in our psalm, David is thinking here of those earliest days of Absalom's revolt as he's scurrying out of Jerusalem, hoping to escape, walking, weeping, praying, and God heard him even though David was nowhere near the ark.

The God who'd made his home in Jerusalem on the holy mountain heard David even though David wasn't on that mountain anymore. David who had brought the ark to Jerusalem bringing it out of the backwaters of the hill country where no one was tending to it properly certainly wasn't the center of Israel's life and worship brought it into Jerusalem eventually to be reunited with the tabernacle as a whole and the glorious temple a great reformation and revival in the nation's life but David knew he didn't need the ark nearby to be a man with strength.

Absalom may have controlled Jerusalem but Yahweh still reigned in Zion and that thought that you heard me from your holy mountain even though I was no longer in the city even though I couldn't go to the ark and inquire of the Lord we read today earlier from Psalm 27 which might speak about how David might get as close to the ark as he could to inquire of the Lord seek him in his temple he couldn't do that physically but the Lord who was not next to him in the ark was certainly still with him and then in verse 5 here's the result of this confidence I lay down and slept I awoke for the Lord sustains me this is the after effect that at least on one of those nights

David had this sense that the Lord had indeed heard him even if the crisis was not fully solved yet David and his company would have to sleep in the rough for weeks sometimes down by the river fords near the Jordan at night time out in the rough is sometimes dangerous enough some of you avoid camping at all costs and this was not camping that was well prepared for but it's even worse when you have enemies who might show up in the dark and undo you 2 Samuel 17 tells us that Ahithophel tried to get 12,000 men to go after David down at the river fords 2 Samuel 17:16 listen to this now therefore sin quickly and tell David saying do not spend the night at the fords of the wilderness but by all means cross over or else the king and all the people who are with him will be destroyed this is dangerous times but in the midst of all that mess

David could sleep in fact the Hebrew text here in Psalm 3 is emphatic I laid down and oh I slept as if to say can you believe I slept so well Alec Motir the great Irish commentator said imagine me this is his summarizing imagine me placed as I am getting a good night's sleep and how well I slept there's no good explanation for that kind of peace of mind when everything else around you is unpeaceful other than the supernatural steadying grace of God the Lord sustains me the Lord supports me the Lord protects me I love Alec Motir's outline of this passage you know how he

summarizes this verse the Lord is my pillow this kind of response to be able to have peace in the midst of adversity is very very counter intuitive

[34:29] I mean this surpasses normal understanding this is what Paul speaks about in Philippians 4:6 and 7 the peace of God which surpasses understanding shall garrison your heart and mind through Christ Jesus now some people will say oh come on this this is poetic exaggeration this is hero talk there's no way in fact there are liberal commentators who will read talk about this song there's clearly no way that this could connect to the experience of 2 Samuel because people don't sleep well in periods like this well that is what I tell my students that is a hermeneutic of unbelief that is an interpretive method that presumes the text can't be right well let's think about for a moment what are the things that keep us up at night now let me say quickly my goal and what

I'm about to say is not to add guilt to your troubles also I want to say that there are issues that come up that we've got to think through we have to process and formulate how we're going to respond at times I'm not talking about thinking through things and pondering on things prayerfully and planning things there's a difference about working through things and worrying about things and sometimes it takes growth and grace and wisdom to understand where that fine line is worrying is a kind of meditation a very very unhelpful kind of meditation where you take your problem and you flip it this way and that way and the other way and you turn it over again and it looks the same way when you look at it but you keep thinking if I keep turning this over in my head eventually my worrying about it is going to solve it it's really a fruitless and futile kind of meditation isn't it it brings no insight it brings no rest it just brings more anxiety

I mean why on earth do we think that worrying about things changes things we have to learn to do what Peter counseled struggling Christians in 1st Peter 5 casting all your cares upon him because he cares for you you know that word for cares casting all your cares some of our versions say all your anxieties is related to the verb that follows it for he is I'm going to say this and then explain it he is anxious for you now I don't mean by that that God is in heaven wringing his hands worried oh no oh no what are we going to do but he knows how to work through your troubles and to bring you through your troubles faith brings rest and again I don't mean absolute calm where you pretend that there's no problems that you're impervious that you're on this higher plane that just can't be troubled by anything

I mean Jesus who is the embodiment of righteousness is a man who had tremendous anguish and concern and prayer but nonetheless he modeled for us to have a steadied stabilized response in the sure purposes and plan of God David knew something of the experience of peace and so you and I can too if we confide our trust in him look at the confidence and trouble that's spoken about in verse six I will not be afraid of ten thousands of people who have set themselves round about who have set themselves against me round about David is able to look back at God's promises in the past and how he has delivered him and that gives him grace and strength for the moment looking back to yesterday's grace gives today strength to face this day and even the next day when he talks about facing ten thousand people who encircle him this is not hyperbole

I read for you a moment about how Ahithophel had a plan of raising another twelve thousand people David meets these increased problems with increased faith let them increase it so that the odds are ten thousand to one they can't break through God's shield now you and I will never likely face ten thousand enemies we have a hard enough time dealing with one but sometimes it sure feels like our problems are just multiplying!

[39:58] and they may not be personal enemies David is here facing personal opposition we face impersonal oppositions all the time things that oppose us though they're not malignant intentionally illnesses financial distress and then there's conflicts maybe not ill intention necessarily but they just grow and blossom round about us like noxious weeds so think about the apostle Paul when he reflects on the great grace of God and how nothing can separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus right before he makes that tremendous statement in Romans 8 nothing shall separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord right before that Paul gives a list of suspects listen to the things who will separate us from the love of Christ will tribulation or distress or persecution or famine that's impersonal nakedness peril sword and and that list is just meant to be representative you can keep on adding things to it bankruptcy unemployment cancer divorce estrangement rejection keep on keep adding to it you will never come up with a formula that will undo the promise nothing shall be able to separate us from the love of

God which is in Christ Jesus we come to the last part of our psalm verses 7 and 8 where David anticipates the victory that he's going to receive and this is a victory he will get not just in heaven not in the afterlife but he has the sure mercies of David that even before he comes to his grave that things will turn around right and in these verses he speaks about how victory comes when God rises up these last couple verses are mostly in the form of a plea where he's asking God to intervene yes he's at peace he knows the Lord is with him and yet this circumstance is not the way things ought to be so his prayers don't stop when he gets peace it's still right for him to pray for the Lord to undo the evil that is being done and so in verse 7 we see

David arousing the holy God of war arise oh Lord save me oh my God for you have smitten all my enemies on the cheek you have shattered the teeth of the wicked David at this point has lost control of his kingdom but he still has his most powerful weapon prayer he calls on God with a battle cry and the language that David uses here is borrowed from Numbers chapter 10 and I want you to turn back to that spot don't forsake Psalm 3 but turn would you to Numbers chapter 10 if you're wondering Genesis Exodus Leviticus Numbers that's where you are right Numbers 10 verse 35 this is describing the custom that the Hebrews had as they moved the camp and the procession of the ark of the covenant as they would set up camp and leave camp look with me would you at Numbers 10 verse 33 we'll get a little context thus they set out from the mount of the Lord three days journey with the ark of the covenant of the Lord journeying in front of them for the three days to seek out a resting place for them the cloud of the Lord was over them by day when they set out from the camp then it came about when the ark set out that Moses said rise up O Lord and let your enemies be scattered and let those who hate you flee before you when it came to rest he said return O Lord to the myriad thousands of Israel David in Psalm 3 is borrowing the wording of that ancient liturgy arise O Lord save me O my God this same language is used in a couple other Psalms you'll find it in Psalm 68 Psalm 132 and this is especially relevant for David because as David has left Jerusalem one of the things he's left behind is the ark of the covenant in fact there was even a moment in 2 Samuel 15 we won't read it at this point but where the two high priests Zadok and Abiathar bring the ark of the covenant out of Jerusalem up to the Mount of Olives to say we will take it with you we will go with you so the ark can be with you and David says no no send it back and he says he is confident that he would return to the city he knew he didn't need the ark with him in order for God to be with him the God of Mount Zion was not stuck in a box here in Psalm 3 in the middle of the verse our versions will vary but the New American Standard I'm reading from has in the past tense for you have smitten all my enemies on the cheek you have shattered the teeth of the wicked some commentators believe that this is an example of what is called the prophetic past tense where a future event is described as if it has already happened this is like the prophecies of Isaiah 53 but the

[46 : 30] Lord grew up before him as a tender plant and we looked upon him and he was despised and we say all that's past tense but it's describing what happened 700 years later in the birth and life and death and resurrection of our Lord Jesus the prophetic past tense I think the same thing is happening here it's as if David is saying I'm so certain that God is going to work for me and keep his promises to me his covenantal promises that I can already see my enemies being destroyed smitten all my enemies on the cheek that's not just a little slap this is the language of a blow from a mace and look how it's paired with you have shattered the teeth of the wicked this is an image of powerful victory isn't it interesting there's some comparisons between this verse verse 7 and the opening verses 1 and 2 verse 1 enemies rose up against

David but here God rises up in verse 1 many say there's no deliverance there's no salvation for him but here we see that the Lord is going to bring deliverance salvation in verse 8 in verse 2 the enemies use their mouths against David by what they say and here those lying taunting mouths are permanently disabled what reversals these are and there's a universal principle at work here that God is totally able to reverse circumstances things that seem impossible and intractable impossible for us to do are not beyond his power now I'm not making any promise to you about your particular problems that within so much amount of time you're going to see them completely reversed but the gospel promises us as new covenant believers that in the end there is a great reversal of all that has threatened us in this life and the life to come is going to more than compensate the trials of this one and even in this life there are sweet victories that we experience answers to prayer pre-resurrection answers to prayer we need to learn to keep the long look though we don't know how the Lord is going to work how he's going to deal with every sickness every trial

I love what D.A. Carson has said there's no problem in my face that a good resurrection can't fix and we come to our last verse verse 8 which speaks about knowing the blessing of rescue salvation belongs to the Lord he says in verse 8 that salvation is the same word as deliverance back in verse 2 and it's that sort of salvation David has in mind rescue from the adversities that he finds himself in it belongs to the Lord meaning that he is in absolute control and sovereign over deliverance there's nothing that Absalom or Ahithophel or any of his associates can think up that can undo the saving arm of God Jonah you know his time in the fish he quotes this phrase when he celebrates how the Lord had been merciful to him and delivered him from physical death now David

David knows even when praying something like this that he still is going to have to fight this is not a let go and let God moment he and his troops had to get ready plan bivouac move march fight but in the end it would not be by might nor by strength but by God's spirit that they would win and then the psalm ends says your blessing be upon your people thinking about God's delivering him and his troops David now thinks about the nation that he's been called to lead you see if David ultimately lost and came to an untimely death then the kingdom would be lost and the people would be like sheep without a shepherd there was much to lose beyond just his own life and the circumstance that they were in but God showing kindness to David was also his way of showing covenant faithfulness to his people

I think David anticipates there will come a point for giving thanks for all that the Lord would do that one day they'd be back at the sanctuary and thank offerings would be brought up and there would be opportunities for people to reflect on the good and great things that the Lord had done you know and I think it's important for us to take time periodically to publicly thank God for what he's done the battle's not over we're not through it all yet but there are triumphs aren't there triumphs of mercy and grace and prayer and perseverance there are instances of God turning things all around and we need to rejoice together in the Lord about these things we need to view all of these as preliminary reports because the final day of deliverance is yet to come and oh what a time that's going to be but even before then it's good to hear and remind ourselves of what God has done and what he's doing

[52:22] David knew that nothing that rises up against us can prevail when the Lord rises to our aid and yes there are a thousand and one things that we can worry about and you might feel like your thousand and one multiplies itself into ten thousand against one but remember this dear one God is not impressed by numbers like that it's like what David prays in Psalm 34 19 many are the afflictions of the righteous but the Lord delivers him out of them all Lord we thank you for the good promises of the gospel of our Lord Jesus that there is nothing that can separate us from his love help us remember in our many trials sometimes our multiplied trials of affliction and distress and conflict trials in which we have questions and many many unknowns that you are present that you hear our prayers you see our plight and you have not forsaken your plan accomplish all your good purposes in our troubles may we not may we not waste one trial but use each one to draw close to you to grow in our confidence and our trust and so bring greater glory to you as we wait on you to bring about our ultimate good promised us in our Lord

Jesus we ask all this in the wonderful name of Christ Amen