

# PSALM 3

As the foregoing psalm, in the type of David in preferment, showed us the royal dignity of the Redeemer, so this, by the example of David in distress, shows us the peace and holy security of the redeemed, how safe they really are, and think themselves to be, under the divine protection. David, being now driven out from his palace, from the royal city, from the holy city, by his rebellious son Absalom,

**I.** Complains to God of his enemies (v. 1, 2).

**II.** Confides in God, and encourages himself in him as his God, notwithstanding (v. 3).

**III.** Recollects the satisfaction he had in the gracious answers God gave to his prayers, and his experience of his goodness to him (v. 4, 5).

**IV.** Triumphs over his fears (v. 6) and over his enemies, whom he prays against, (v. 7).

**V.** Gives God the glory and takes to himself the comfort of the divine blessing and salvation which are sure to all the people of God (v. 8). Those speak best of the truths of God who speak experimentally; so David here speaks of the power and goodness of God, and of the safety and tranquility of the godly.

## PSALM 3:1-3

### DISTRESS AND CONFIDENCE

*A psalm of David, when he fled from Absalom his son.*

The title of this psalm and many others is as a key hung ready at the door, to open it, and let us into the entertainments of it; when we know upon what occasion a psalm was penned we know the better how to expound it. This was composed, or at least the substance of it was meditated and digested in David's thought, and offered up to God, when he fled from Absalom his son, who formed a conspiracy against him, to take away, not his crown only, but his life; we have the story, 2 Samuel 15, etc.

**1.** David was now in great grief; when, in his flight, he went up the Mount of Olives, he wept greatly, with his head covered, and marching bare-foot; yet *then* he composed this comfortable psalm. He wept and prayed, wept and sung, wept and believed; this was sowing in tears. Is any afflicted? Let him pray; nay, let him sing psalms, let him sing this psalm. Is any afflicted with undutiful disobedient children? David was; and yet that did not hinder his joy in God, nor put him out of tune for holy songs.

**2.** He was now in great danger; the plot against him was laid deep, the party that sought his ruin was very formidable, and his own son at the head of them, so that his affairs seemed to be at the last extremity; yet *then* he kept hold of his interest in God and improved that. Perils and frights should drive us to God, not drive us from him.

**3.** He had now a great deal of provocation given him by those from whom he had reason to expect better things, from his son, whom he had been indulgent of, from his subjects, whom he had been so great a blessing to; this he could not but resent, and it was enough to break in upon any man's temper; yet he was so far from any indecent expressions of passion and indignation that he had calmness enough for those acts of devotion which require the greatest fixedness and freedom of thought. The sedateness of his mind was evinced by the Spirit's coming upon him; for the Spirit chooses to move upon the still waters. Let no unkindness, no, not of a child or a friend, ever be laid so much to heart as to disfit us for communion with God.

**4.** He was now suffering for his sin in the matter of Uriah; this was the evil which, for that sin, God threatened to *raise up against him out of his own house* (~~12:11~~ 2 Samuel 12:11), which, no doubt, he observed, and took occasion thence to renew his repentance for it. Yet he did not *therefore* cast away his confidence in the divine power and goodness, nor despair of succour. Even our sorrow for sin must not hinder either our joy in God or our hope in God.

**5.** He seemed cowardly in fleeing from Absalom, and quitting his royal city, before he had had one struggle for it; and yet, by this psalm, it appears he was full of true courage arising from his faith in God. True Christian fortitude consists more in a gracious security and serenity of mind, in patiently bearing and patiently waiting, than in daring enterprises with sword in hand.

In these three verses he applies to God. Whither else should we go but to him when any thing grieves us or frightens us? David was now at a distance from his own closet, and from the courts of God's house, where he used to pray; and yet he could find a way open heaven-ward. Wherever we are we may have access to God, and may draw nigh to him whithersoever we are driven. David, in his flight, attends his God,

**I.** With a representation of his distress, v. 1, 2. He looks round, and as it were takes a view of his enemies' camp, or receives information of their designs against him, which he brings to God, not to his own council-board. Two things he complains of, concerning his enemies: —

**1.** That they were very many: *Lord, how are they increased!* beyond what they were at first, and beyond whatever he thought they would have been. Absalom's faction, like a snow-ball, strangely gathered in its motion. He speaks of it as one amazed, and well he might, that a people he had so many ways obliged should almost generally revolt from him, rebel against him, and choose for their head such a foolish and giddy young man as Absalom was. How slippery and deceitful are the many! And how little fidelity and constancy are to be found among men! David had had the hearts of his subjects as much as ever any king had, and yet now, of a sudden, he had lost them. As people must not trust too much to princes (<sup>HEB</sup>Psalm 146:3), so princes must not build too much upon their interest in the people. Christ, the Son of David, had many enemies. When a great multitude came to seize him, when the crowd cried, *Crucify him, Crucify him*, how were those then increased that troubled him! Even good people must not think it strange if the stream be against them and the powers that threaten them grow more and more formidable.

**2.** That they were very malicious. They rose up against him; they aimed to trouble him; but that was not all: they said of his soul, *There is no help for him in God.* That is,

**(1.)** They put a spiteful and invidious construction upon his troubles, as Job's friends did upon him, concluding that, because his servants and subjects forsook him thus and did not help him, God had deserted him and abandoned his cause, and he was therefore to be looked *on*, or rather to be looked *off*, as a hypocrite and a wicked man.

**(2.)** They blasphemously reflected upon God as unable to relieve him: "His danger is so great that God himself cannot help him." It is strange

that so great unbelief should be found in any, especially in many, in Israel, as to think any party of men too strong for Omnipotence to deal with.

**(3.)** They endeavoured to shake his confidence in God and drive him to despair of relief from him: “They have said it *to my soul*,” so it may be read; compare <sup>(111)</sup>Psalm 11:1; 42:10. This grieved him worst of all, that they had so bad an opinion of him as to think it possible to take him off from that foundation. The mere temptation was a buffeting to him, *a thorn in his flesh*, nay, *a sword in his bones*. Note, A child of God startles at the very thought of despairing of help in God; you cannot vex him with any thing so much as if you offer to persuade him that *there is no help for him in God*. David comes to God, and tells him what his enemies said of him, as Hezekiah spread Rabshakeh’s blasphemous letter before the Lord.

“They say, *There is no help for me in thee*; but, Lord, if it be so, I am undone. They say to my soul, *There is no salvation*” (for so the word is) “*for him in God*; but, Lord, do thou say unto my soul, *I am thy salvation*” (<sup>(112)</sup>Psalm 35:3) and that shall satisfy me, and in due time silence them.” To this complaint he adds *Selah*, which occurs about seventy times in the book of Psalms. Some refer it to the music with which, in David’s time, the psalms were sung; others to the sense, and that it is a note commanding a solemn pause. *Selah* — *Mark that*, or, “*Stop there*, and consider a little.” As here, they say, *There is no help for him in God*, *Selah*. “Take time for such a thought as this. *Get thee behind me, Satan. The Lord rebuke thee!* Away with such a vile suggestion!”

**II.** With a profession of his dependence upon God, v. 3. An active believer, the more he is beaten off from God, either by the rebukes of Providence or the reproaches of enemies, the faster hold he will take of him and the closer will he cleave to him; so David here, when his enemies said, *There is no help for him in God*, cries out with so much the more assurance, “*But thou, O Lord! art a shield for me*; let them say what they will, I am sure thou wilt never desert me, and I am resolved I will never distrust thee.” See what God is to his people, what he will be, what they have found him, what David found in him.

**1.** Safety: “*Thou art a shield for me*, a shield *about me*” (so some), “to secure me on all sides, since my enemies surrounded me.” Not only *my shield* (<sup>(113)</sup>Genesis 15:1), which denotes an interest in the divine protection, but a shield *for me*, which denotes the present benefit and advantage of that protection.

**2. Honour:** *Thou art my glory.* Those whom God owns for his are not safe and easy, but really look great, and have true honour put upon them, far above that which the great ones of the earth are proud of. David was now in disgrace; the crown had fallen from his head; but he will not think the worse of himself while he has God for his glory, ~~269~~ Isaiah 60:19. “*Thou art my glory; thy glory I reckon mine*” (so some); “this is what I aim at, and am ambitious of, whatever my lot is, and whatever becomes of my honour — that I may be to my God for a name and a praise.”

**3. Joy and deliverance:** “*Thou art the lifter up of my head; thou wilt lift up my head out of my troubles, and restore me to my dignity again, in due time; or, at least, thou wilt lift up my head under my troubles, so that I shall not droop nor be discouraged, nor shall my spirits fail.*” If, in the worst of times, God's people can lift up their heads with joy, knowing that all shall work for good to them, they will own it is God that is the lifter up of their head, that gives them both cause to rejoice and hearts to rejoice.

In singing this, and praying it over, we should possess ourselves with an apprehension of the danger we are in from the multitude and malice of our spiritual enemies, who seek the ruin of our souls by driving us from our God, and we should concern ourselves in the distresses and dangers of the church of God, which is every where spoken again, every where fought against; but, in reference to both, we should encourage ourselves in our God, who owns and protects and will in due time crown his own interest both in the world and in the hearts of his people.

## ~~270~~ PSALM 3:4-8

### DISTRESS AND CONFIDENCE

David, having stirred up himself by the irritations of his enemies to take hold on God as his God, and so gained comfort in looking upward when, if he looked round about him, nothing appeared but what was discouraging, here looks back with pleasing reflections upon the benefit he had derived from trusting in God and looks forward with pleasing expectations of a very bright and happy issue to which the dark dispensation he was now under would shortly be brought.

**I.** See with what comfort he looks back upon the communion he had had with God, and the communications of his favour to him, either in some former trouble he had been in, and through God's goodness got through, or in this hitherto. David had been exercised with many difficulties, often oppressed and brought very low; but still he had found God all-sufficient. He now remembered with pleasure,

**1.** That his troubles had always brought him to his knees, and that, in all his difficulties and dangers, he had been enabled to acknowledge God and to lift up his heart to him, and his voice too (this will be comfortable reflection when we are in trouble): *I cried unto God with my voice*. Care and grief do us good and no hurt when they set us a praying, and engage us, not only to speak to God, but to cry to him, as those that are in earnest. And though God understands the language of the heart, when the *voice is not heard* (<sup><911B></sup>1 Samuel 1:13), and values not the hypocritical prayers of those who *cause their voice to be heard on high* (<sup><2804></sup>Isaiah 58:4), *vox et praeterea nihil* — mere sound, yet, when the earnestness of the voice comes from the fervency of the heart, it shall be taken notice of, in the account, that we cried unto God with our *voice*.

**2.** That he had always found God ready to answer his prayers: *He heard me out of his holy hill*, from heaven, the high and holy place, from the ark on Mount Zion, whence he used to give answers to those that sought to him. David had ordered Zadok to *carry back the ark into the city* when he was flying from Absalom (<sup><165></sup>2 Samuel 15:25), knowing that God was not tied, no, not to the ark of his presence, and that, notwithstanding the distance of place, he could by faith receive answers of peace from the holy hill. No such things can fix a gulf between the communications of God's grace towards us and the operations of his grace in us, between his favour and our faith. The ark of the covenant was in Mount Zion, and all the answers to our prayers come from the promises of that covenant. Christ was *set King upon the holy hill of Zion* (<sup><416></sup>Psalms 2:6), and it is through him, whom the Father hears always, that our prayers are heard.

**3.** That he had always been very safe and very easy under the divine protection (v. 5): *"I laid myself down and slept, composed and quiet; and awaked refreshed, for the Lord sustained me."*

**(1.)** This is applicable to the common mercies of every night, which we ought to give thanks for alone, and with our families, every morning.

Many have not where to lay their head (but wander in deserts), or, if they have, dare not lie down for fear of the enemy; but we have laid ourselves down in peace. Many lie down and cannot sleep, but are full of tossings to and fro till the dawning of the day, through pain of body, or anguish of mind, or the continual alarms of fear in the night; but we lie down and sleep in safety, though incapable of doing any thing then for our own preservation. Many lie down and sleep, and never awake again, they sleep the sleep of death, as the first-born of the Egyptians; but we lie down and sleep, and awake again to the light and comfort of another day; and whence is it, but because the Lord has sustained us with sleep as with food? We have been safe under his protection and easy in the arms of his good providence.

(2.) It seems here to be meant of the wonderful quietness and calmness of David's spirit, in the midst of his dangers. Having by prayer committed himself and his cause to God, and being sure of his protection, his heart was fixed, and he was easy. The undutifulness of his son, the disloyalty of his subjects, the treachery of many of his friends, the hazard of his person, the fatigues of his march, and the uncertainty of the event, never deprived him of an hour's sleep, nor gave any disturbance to his repose; for the Lord, by his grace and the consolations of his Spirit, powerfully sustained him and made him easy. It is a great mercy when we are in trouble to have our minds stayed upon God, so as never either to eat or sleep with trembling and astonishment.

(3.) Some of the ancients apply it to the resurrection of Christ. In his sufferings he offered up strong cries, and was heard; and therefore, though he laid down and slept the sleep of death, yet he awaked the third day, for the Lord sustained him, that he should not see corruption.

4. That God had often broken the power and restrained the malice of his enemies, had *smitten them upon the cheek-bone* (v. 7), had silenced them and spoiled their speaking, blemished them and put them to shame, smitten them on the cheek reproachfully, had disabled them to do the mischief they intended; for he had broken their teeth. Saul and the Philistines, who were sometimes ready to swallow him up, could not effect what they designed. The teeth that are gnashed or sharpened against God's people shall be broken. When, at any time, the power of the church's enemies seems threatening, it is good to remember how often God has

broken it; and we are sure that his arm is not shortened. He can stop their mouths and tie their hands.

**II.** See with what confidence he looks forward to the dangers he had yet in prospect. Having put himself under God's protection and often found the benefit of it,

**1.** *His fears were all stilled and silenced*, v. 6. With what a holy bravery does he bid defiance to the impotent menaces and attempts of his enemies! “*I will not be afraid of ten thousands of people*, that either in a foreign invasion or an intestine rebellion *set themselves*, or encamp, *against me round about.*” No man seemed less safe (his enemies are numerous, *ten thousands*; they are spiteful and resolute, “They have set themselves against me; nay, they have prevailed far, and seem to have gained their point; for they are against me round about on every side, thousands against one”), and yet no man was more secure: “I will not be afraid, for all this; they cannot hurt me, and therefore they shall not frighten me; whatever prudent methods I take for my own preservation, I will not disquiet myself, distrust my God, nor doubt of a good issue at last.” When David, in his flight from Absalom, bade Zadok carry back the ark, he spoke doubtfully of the issue of his present troubles, and concluded, like a humble penitent, *Here I am; let him do to me what seemeth to him good*, <sup>156</sup>2 Samuel 15:26. But now, like a strong believer, he speaks confidently, and has no fear concerning the event. Note, A cheerful resignation to God is the way to obtain a cheerful satisfaction and confidence in God.

**2.** His prayers were quickened and encouraged, v. 7. He believed God was his Saviour, and yet prays; nay, he *therefore* prays, *Arise, O Lord! save me, O my God!* Promises of salvation do not supersede, but engage, our petitions for it. He will for this be enquired of.

**3.** His faith became triumphant. He began the psalm with complaints of the strength and malice of his enemies, but concludes it with exultation in the power and grace of his God, and now sees more with him than against him, v. 8. Two great truths he here builds his confidence upon and fetches comfort from.

**(1.)** That *salvation belongeth unto the Lord*; he has power to save, be the danger ever so great; it is his prerogative to save, when all other helps and succours fail; it is his pleasure, it is his property, it is his promise to those that are his, whose salvation is not of themselves, but of the Lord.



Therefore all that have the Lord for their God, according to the tenour of the new covenant, are sure of salvation; for he that is their God is the God of salvation.

(2.) That his blessing is upon his people; he not only has power to save them, but he has assured them of his kind and gracious intentions towards them. He has, in his word, pronounced a blessing upon his people; and we are bound to believe that that blessing does accordingly rest upon them, though there be not the visible effects of it. Hence we may conclude that God's people, though they may lie under the reproaches and censures of men, are surely blessed of him, who blesses indeed, and therefore can command a blessing.

In singing this, and praying it over, we must own the satisfaction we have had in depending upon God and committing ourselves to him, and encourage ourselves, and one another to continue still hoping and quietly waiting for the salvation of the Lord.