

# Psalm 3: A Shield Around Me

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[ 0 : 0 0 ] If you have a copy of the scriptures, I want you to open up to the book of Psalms. We're going to be in Psalm 3 today. If you didn't bring your Bible, there are some Bibles that are sort of scattered out in the chairs there that you can grab. We have been for quite a while actually in the book of Genesis.

And last week we finished up our series through the first 11 chapters of Genesis. Really the first 10 and a half chapters. And eventually we'll come back in a few months and we'll pick up and cover another major portion, large section, of the book of Genesis.

But I mentioned quite a while back that when we're in between series and we're in between, we're going to begin studying the book of Romans in June. But when we're in between those series, that we're going to turn to the book of Psalms.

And I figure if I cover five Psalms a year, then it'll only take me 30 years to get through the book of Psalms. And that's doable so long as I don't die an early death. We might actually get there.

So we're in Psalm 3. We've covered Psalm 1 and Psalm 2 in the fall and we're in Psalm 3 this morning. And I want you guys to stand with me as we read God's Word. A Psalm of David, when he fled from Absalom his son.

[ 1 : 1 2 ] O Lord, how many are my foes! Many are rising against me. Many are saying of my soul, there is no salvation for him in God.

But you, O Lord, are a shield about me, my glory and the lifter of my head. I cried aloud to the Lord and he answered me from his holy hill.

I lay down and slept. I woke again, for the Lord sustained me. I will not be afraid of many thousands of people who have set themselves against me all around.

Arise, O Lord! Save me, O my God! For you strike all my enemies on the cheek. You break the teeth of the wicked. Salvation belongs to the Lord.

Your blessing be upon your people. Father, help us to rightly understand your Word. And to see good news for us.

[ 2 : 1 1 ] And the glory of Christ displayed even here in the Old Testament. It's in his name that we pray. Amen. Amen. Amen. There are not actually a lot of crimes today outside of certain forms of murder for which you can receive capital punishment, the death penalty.

There really are not. I mean, there's capital murder, which obviously, from the term, means that it's murder that could come with the death penalty. But there are not a lot of other crimes that you could commit in our country in today's climate that would result in the death penalty.

But one that still exists, that you still can receive the death penalty for, is treason. We haven't seen anyone put to death for treason in a long time. But technically speaking, someone could be put to death for treason.

Now, why would that be the case? I mean, there are all sorts of terrible, horrible things that people do and are convicted of all the time. And the death penalty is not even an option for that.

And yet, for treason, for betraying your country, you can, and in the past, many people were, put to death for that particular crime.

[ 3 : 23 ] Why is that? I think that it may be because we recognize, on sort of a national level, we recognize just how great the crime of betrayal is.

Whether it's a personal betrayal between a family member and a friend and yourself, or whether it's something that happens on a national level like treason, we just naturally sort of recoil at even the thought of a real betrayal by someone who you thought, or who at least at one time was, very loyal to you.

So in the Bible, we see the example of Judas betraying Jesus, and then so, so filled with guilt and disgust over it that he goes and hangs himself and kills himself.

We feel that sense of revulsion at the idea of us betraying someone that we care about. And then we feel a sense of dread and fear when we think about what it would be like for us to be betrayed by a close confidant.

Or perhaps you have been betrayed by a good friend, by a relative, by a co-worker that you thought that you could depend upon, and you thought that you had a good relationship with them, and things turned, and you didn't see them turn, and the next thing that you know, you're being hung out to dry because of their accusation against you, or their refusal to stand up for you, or because of their sudden hostility toward you.

[ 4 : 47 ] Those things happen to us. Those things happen to people in the Bible, and it happened to King David. And what we're seeing here in Psalm 3 is David's reaction to a deep, intense, both personal and national betrayal that he faced.

You can see the background laid out for you. There's an inscription. In most of our English translations, verse 1 doesn't begin until we read the words, O Lord, how many are my foes? But really, the inscription above that is a part of the psalm itself, where we read that this is a psalm of David, or a song or a hymn of David.

When he fled from Absalom his son. There's your background. There's sort of your historical context of when did David write this poem? When did he write this song?

What was going on in David's mind? What was happening in David's life at the time that he wrote this? And when we read the opening words to the song itself, we realize how important it is to understand that background.

He says, O Lord, how many are my foes? Many are rising against me. Many are saying of my soul there is no salvation for him in God. That cry of desperation from David comes out of his sense of having been betrayed.

[ 6 : 05 ] And betrayed by none other than his son Absalom. That's kind of a long story to give all the background, and so we won't read the entire story. But if you turn over to 2 Samuel, the story between David and Absalom takes place beginning in chapter 13 and runs for several chapters through 2 Samuel.

Absalom, of course, was one of David's sons. And Absalom had many brothers and sisters. One of his brothers, a half-brother, was named Amnon. It was his half-brother because David, of course, had multiple wives.

You know, we've heard people say things before. They say, well, the Old Testament is okay with polygamy, and they try to denigrate the Old Testament for that. But here we're seeing one of those instances in which every time we encounter polygamy in the Old Testament, bad things come out of it.

It's not a thing that God condones. It's not a thing that God's okay with. It's a thing that He allows to happen in the Old Testament. But every time people veer off from God's original design and plan for marriage, bad things happen.

And that's what happens here. Two of David's sons by different wives, Absalom and Absalom's half-brother Amnon, have a conflict. The conflict arises because of Absalom's sister.

[ 7 : 19 ] So Amnon's half-sister. You following me here? We've got three people. We've got Absalom, his half-brother Amnon, and then Absalom's sister, whose name is Tamar. And Amnon, weird guy that he was, had a thing for his half-sister Tamar.

And he was miserable over it. He couldn't do anything about it. He was miserable over it. Until finally one day one of his friends said, Why are you bothering yourself? Why are you torn up inside over this? You're the king's son.

If you want her, you can have her. Here's a plan. They lay out this devious plan so that Amnon pretends to be really, really sick, almost to the point of death. Very, very ill.

And he requests of his father, Send my sister to take care of me. Let her come and cook for me and feed me. And that's all I want while I'm ill. And so she comes and she begins to take care of him.

And he sends everyone else out of his living quarters. And he attacks her, violates her, and sends her away. In fact, he himself is so filled with shame, he won't speak to her or look at her anymore.

[ 8 : 22 ] And he sends her away. To which Absalom responds with just intense hatred and anger. But the one thing that you need to know about Absalom is that he's a patient man.

He's an angry man. He's a bitter man. Throughout this entire story, Absalom is angry and bitter, yet he is very, very patient. And he waits two years.

His sister, whose reputation is ruined, whose life is ruined, moves in with him. He cares for her for two years. And for two years, he waits. Let's things settle down.

Let's people begin to sort of forget about the events that had taken place. And all the while, he hates his half-brother. And so he plans a party. Invites all of his brothers to come to the party.

And in the middle of the party, he sends his men and they murder Amnon. Wait for him to drink a little bit too much. Senses are dulled. He's not paying attention. Absalom gives the order.

[ 9 : 23 ] And they kill his brother. So he's gotten vengeance on his brother. But now he's worried that vengeance will be taken upon him. And so he disappears. For three years, he hides out. He's patient.

For three years, he hides out. All the while, he's still bitter and angry. Because it wasn't merely his brother's act that made him angry. He's mad at his father, the king, who should have punished Amnon.

Absalom shouldn't have had to deal with this. He shouldn't have had to take this into his own hands. David's the king. David should have dealt with it. He should have protected his daughter. He should have come in to do something about it. And David didn't do anything.

He didn't make one move to deal with the situation. And so now for three years, he sits. He teems. He grows angry.

He grows bitter. Until finally, David, wanting his son to come back, invites him to come back into the fold. Absalom comes back into the fold.

[ 10 : 20 ] But still angry, still bitter, and still very, very patient. So for another two years, Absalom performs his new job. He's now a judge at the gates of Jerusalem.

And his job is to decide which cases, when people bring a case, they have a complaint against someone else. His job is to decide which cases get to go before David and which cases get to go before a lesser judge.

So he's sort of like the, I don't know, the city clerk. He's deciding who gets to go where. It was an important job. David had given him a big job and it came with a lot of authority. But the entire time that he did that job, every time people came to him with a complaint, he would say, oh, I'm sorry, but the king has not bothered.

He's not allowed to appoint anyone to deal with issues for your region, for your village, for your town. If I were king, I would settle your dispute. But I'm not the king and I can't help you.

My father doesn't care. I'm sorry. And he would send them away. Two years. He does that. Until finally, after a while, people begin to say, you should be king, you know. You'd be better than your father.

[ 11 : 23 ] He doesn't care about us. You care about us. If you had the power to do something about it, you would. And so he amasses all of this support all throughout Israel, all while David is clueless.

Until eventually Absalom brings his troops and his people and all those who are in support of him. And he runs his own father out of his own capital, out of Jerusalem. And David goes out into the wilderness with his men.

Now, it's not David and a couple of dozen guys. It's David and several hundred troops. And they're out in the wilderness camping out in tents and trying to avoid a major battle before they're ready for a major battle.

And it's in that time period that David writes this particular song. He has been chased out of his city by Absalom, his son. His son has now been crowned king and forced him out.

And now his own life is being threatened and put in jeopardy. People are looking for him. Search parties are out to find him and his men. And in the midst of that deep, deep betrayal, he wrote this psalm.

[ 12 : 30 ] How many, many are gathered against me. How many are my enemies. And hold your place in 2 Samuel and look at the psalm again.

And notice one of the things he says here is, I think, directly tied to something that happens in these chapters. He says in verse 2 that many are saying of my soul, there is no salvation for him in God.

Many are saying, God has abandoned you. God has left you. That wouldn't have been all that unusual for them. After all, Saul had been king before David.

And the Lord had left Saul. He withdrew his Holy Spirit from Saul. And he left Saul. It wouldn't be that unusual.

And so now the people are saying, there's no salvation for David. There's no deliverance for David. God's not coming to rescue him. God has abandoned David. And you see someone saying exactly that to David's face.

[ 13 : 33 ] Chapter 16 of 2 Samuel, verse 5. It says that when King David came to Bahurim, there came out a man of the family of the house of Saul. So here's a guy with a grudge, right?

He's of the house of Saul who David replaced. A man of the house of Saul, whose name was Shimei, the son of Gerah. And as he came, he cursed continually.

And he threw stones at David. And all the servants of David. And all the people and all the mighty men were on his right hand and on his left. And Shimei said as he cursed, Get out, get out, you man of blood, you worthless man.

The Lord has avenged on you all the blood 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. See, evil is on you, for you are a man of blood.

God. So literally, David has people shouting at him, The Lord has abandoned you. He has now placed Absalom in your place. He's avenging all the blood that you have shed.

[ 14 : 34 ] You're in trouble, David. The Lord no longer fights for you. The Lord no longer represents you. The Lord will not deliver you and rescue you this time. David says, They're saying that about me.

They're saying that about me. The first thing that David does is he recognizes the situation in which he finds himself. And we're going to use three words to sort of summarize this psalm.

Recognize and then act and praise. So firstly, David recognizes the real situation that he's in. There's no sugarcoating it, okay? He says, I have a lot of enemies.

They've risen up against me. And they're even saying that the Lord is no longer on your side, David. He's recognizing the real depth of the problem that he has. And then the word act, actually, as we walk through here, is going to show us three ways in which David responds to all of this.

First, he's going to admit that he has a desperate need and he can't rescue himself. And then he's going to cry out to God for help. And then he's going to trust the Lord to help him.

[ 15 : 36 ] So take a look. We can see this throughout the text. First, David not only recognizes the situation that he's in, but he admits that he's powerless to actually do anything about it.

He admits that he's not the one who can solve the situation. Only the Lord himself can come and actually be his salvation and his deliverer. Take a look at verse 3.

People are saying there's no salvation. But you, O Lord, are a shield about me, my glory, and the lifter of my head.

So three things. God is a shield about him. God is his glory. And God is the one who lifts his head. So God is the one who will protect David. David, despite everything that's happened, despite the fact that David is out in the wilderness with his armies, and he's running away from his son Absalom and Absalom's armies, despite that, despite the fact that people are literally throwing rocks at David as he walks down the road, he trusts that God will ultimately protect him.

Yes, David has an army. Yes, David is fully capable of defending himself. I mean, he killed a giant with a stone and chopped off his head and put it on display for everybody.

[ 16 : 48 ] And since then, he's fought in a lot of battles. You would think that David would need another shield, that he could be shield enough for himself. But David doesn't think that way. David doesn't think of himself as resourceful or self-sufficient in any sort of way.

He simply says, The Lord is my shield. He is my protector. Not only that, but he says, He is my glory.

In other words, he is the one who has put me in the position of authority that he put me in. He placed me there. He made me king.

I did not do that for myself. I don't have any glory for myself that I have obtained. All the glory that has been directed at me belongs to him, for he is my glory.

In fact, he emphasizes that by saying, He is the one who lifts up my head. And commentators aren't exactly sure what is meant by that. It could mean that in David's time of distress, the Lord will lift up his face, and you're downcast, and now you're no longer downcast.

[ 17 : 55 ] Or it could mean that God is the one who lifts David's head to set the crown on it. We're not really sure exactly what that means, but it's pretty clear from the context that whatever the details work themselves out there, that the point that David's making here is, is that David doesn't possess within himself the power to protect himself, the power to make himself king or retain his position as king.

David is not projecting an image of authority and power for himself. David is admitting that he is weak, that he is needy, and though everyone else around him might think that David is strong, David knows the truth.

If God is not his shield, then he's hopeless. He's without hope. And the truth of the matter is, is that no matter what troubles and trials we face, whether it's a betrayal by a close friend or a relative, or whether it's more general.

It could be illness. It could be sickness. It could be the loss of a job. It could be all manner of things. Whatever the troubles that we face, we have to do as David does, and stop and admit that we don't have the power to fix the situation.

We don't have it. We can't change people's hearts and make people behave the way that we want them to. We can't change our own circumstances. We cannot heal ourselves.

[ 19 : 29 ] We cannot cure ourselves. We can follow the doctor's orders. We can live a healthy lifestyle. But at the end of the day, you still might drop dead of a heart attack, having done all of that.

We're not in control of these things. And David admits that from the beginning. Who cares that he's a king? Who cares that he has an army with him? Who cares that he's the guy who killed the giant?

At the end of the day, David knows, no, I didn't do those things. God did those things. And just as surely as he is the one who's done all those things, so now, in this dark, dark hour, he is a shield about me.

He surrounds me. He protects me. He guards me. He's my protector. Just admit it. Admit that you don't have the power, and that he does. And then he moves from admitting that reality and facing the reality that he doesn't have the power to do anything about it to actually calling upon God for help.

You can see it in verse 4, and you can see it again in verse 7. In verse 4, he simply says, I cried aloud to the Lord, and he answered me from his holy hill. In verse 7, he calls out to God and says, Arise, O Lord, save me, O God, for you strike all my enemies on the cheek.

[ 20 : 43 ] You break the teeth of the wicked. He calls out to God in prayer. He asks God for help. I know that a lot of times, we preachers have a tendency to get on to people for only praying in times of crisis, or only going to church in times of crisis.

And that's true. We see it all the time. We see people who generally sort of live their lives with no regard for the Lord, and then a crisis comes, and they begin to pray earnestly. They begin to come to church.

They begin to participate in things, and the problem is solved, and their devotion to the Lord seems to disappear with their problem. That's true. We do see that all the time. That's reality. But that reality should not diminish in any way our desperate need to call out to the Lord in times of despair.

Whether or not you've been faithful to Him in the past, when troubled times come, we must cry out to Him.

We have to believe that He is the kind of God who is able to deal with our enemies. We have to believe that He is the kind of God who is able to come and save and deliver and rescue.

[ 21 : 58 ] And then we have to call out to Him for that. We have to ask Him genuinely to help us. Part of our problem, Jesus says, the reason why we don't have things that we ought to have or that we need is because we don't ask.

You do not have, He says, because you do not ask. And David is never shy. Read through the Psalms. David is never shy about asking God for the thing that he needs or asking God even for the things that he wants.

He's never shy about that. And we shouldn't be shy about that either. It doesn't mean that God's always going to give us the exact answer that we want. Things don't work out for David exactly the way that he wants.

Yes, he's restored and he becomes king again. Yes, he gets his capital city back. But at great cost. His son is killed.

He's already lost one son. And now he loses another son. In fact, he told the leaders of his army when they eventually did go out to battle against Absalom's army, he said to them, Do not kill Absalom.

[ 23 : 15 ] Have mercy upon him. Do not kill my son. Despite all that Absalom had done, David wanted to show him mercy. Absalom's top commander, Joab, though, didn't have those feelings of sympathy for this guy.

He loved David. He hated Absalom. And so when he found Absalom in the midst of battle, literally caught in a tree from his horse.

It's a strange event. He doesn't say, Guys, help him down. Tie him up. Let's bring him to the king. The king wants him to be safe. No. He orders his men, ten of them, Throw your spears.

And then go into the swords. He kills the guy. Mutilates the guy. David later finds out, and David is in anguish, and he cries out, I wish it had been me rather than my son.

So things don't work out for David exactly the way that he wants them to. Yeah, David's enemies are defeated. He's restored to the kingship. But everything doesn't work out for David.

[ 24 : 21 ] And when we cry out to God, we won't get everything that we want. But nevertheless, if we learn anything from this psalm, it's that we ought to cry out to him. I mean, the entire psalm is really a prayer to God for help, for deliverance, for strength, for courage, for protection, in the midst of trouble.

That's what this psalm is. And we need to follow the example of David. But then once we've called out to him, once we've cried out to God for help, we have to actually trust that he's going to do something.

We have to actually believe that he's going to do something. Look at what happens in verse 5. It seems weird. It seems strange. Verse 5 he says, I lay down and slept.

I woke again, for the Lord sustained me. I will not be afraid of many thousands of people who have set themselves against me all around. Seems like a strange detail to add.

Took a nap. Went to sleep for the evening. Got a good night's rest. But how many of you have ever gotten a good night's rest when trouble strikes?

[ 25 : 28 ] You ever been hiding out in the wilderness? Everybody's trying to murder you? Ever had that happen? Has that ever happened to me? I probably wouldn't sleep well. I probably have a stomach ache. I probably wouldn't be able to eat dinner. I'd probably be up all night fidgeting or something, right?

Not David. He says, God, you're my shield. Help me out. Protect me. Deliver me. I'm going to get a good night's sleep. That's exactly what he does. He sleeps.

Why? How is he able to do this? Why? Because he says, the Lord sustained me. Then he says, he's not afraid of all of these thousands of people who have set themselves against him.

That's literal. There's not a literary figurative device happening here. There are literally thousands upon thousands of people looking to kill David. And he says, I'm not afraid of them. I'm going to get a good night's sleep because he really is my shield and because I believe that he's going to answer my prayers.

We need to have that kind of faith. We need to trust in the Lord to protect us and deliver us when we cry out to him. Not that he'll give us everything that we want, but that in the end he will protect and deliver those who belong to him.

[ 26 : 40 ] He will do it. And when he does it, the only appropriate response for those who have been delivered by him is to praise him. Look how this psalm ends. It ends in praise.

He says that salvation belongs to the Lord. Your blessing be on your people. It's just an eruption of praise at the end.

He believes, he wholeheartedly believes that God's going to save him. And so he praises him that salvation belongs to the Lord. It is the Lord who will bless his people.

He praises God. And the right pattern to follow in the midst of struggle and strife in your life is to simply recognize the issues. Don't hide from them. Admit that you can't do anything about them.

Call out to God and trust him so much that he will deliver you that you praise him in the midst of all of these struggles and trials and betrayals.

[ 27 : 40 ] This is a good pattern to follow. It's not just a good pattern for us to follow when trouble strikes. Is this not the pattern to follow?

Is this not the way to life and salvation from sin? For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God. We have to recognize the real issue in our lives.

The real problem that we face is not a lack of self-esteem. It's a real problem that we face is not that we have a bad, terrible background that we need to overcome.

The real problem that we face is that we are sinners who deserve the wrath of God. The wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and we're the ungodly.

Is that not reality? David has problems. David's running from his son and the wrath of God hangs over us apart from Christ. Recognize the real problem and then the scriptures tell us to admit that we're incapable and unable to save ourselves.

[ 28 : 50 ] We're unable to. We cannot do it. The wages of sin is death and you can't do anything on your own to avoid that. Just admit it.

And then what does the scripture say when we call out to him? If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us and cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

So are we to call out to him when we recognize that we have a real problem with sin? Yeah. And he's faithful and he will forgive us.

We are to admit that we are sinners. Confess that we call out to him and confess our sins that we desperately need his help. And then we must trust.

If you confess with your mouth and believe in your heart, Romans 10, 9, that God raised him from the dead, then you will be saved. Then you will be delivered. Then you will be rescued from your sin.

[ 29 : 52 ] If you believe, that is, if you really trust in what God has revealed to us about his son, he rose from the dead, which means he died in our place before that happened.

We have to trust in him. Trust that he's able to deliver us. Trust that he has done everything necessary for our salvation. The Bible never calls upon us to trust in ourselves or to trust in God mostly and in ourselves a little bit to complete what God didn't quite finish doing.

It's not the way. David never hangs his hopes on his army that stands behind him. He doesn't. God is his shield.

We don't hang our hopes on the good that we're able to do, on the kind of life that we think we're going to be able to live. We hang our hopes fully, totally, completely on what Christ has done in our place on the cross.



We trust fully in him. And when that happens, a new creature. Something altogether new.

[ 31 : 09 ] Before, an enemy of God. Now, a friend, a worshiper of God. And the only rightful response, the only natural response for those who have trusted in Christ is praise.

Salvation belongs to the Lord. So whatever your situation, whether you've been betrayed, whether you're in trouble, whether you're in tribulation, and you need to call out to him for help for that, or whether you can say, I've heard this stuff, but I've not actually done, I've not actually trusted in him.

I've still been trusting in myself. I've still been counting on these few good things that I've been able to tally up. I'm still, if I were honest, that's, my hope lies in that I'm a pretty good, decent human being.

If that's who you are, then stop. Trust in him and recognize that salvation belongs to the Lord. And he alone saves through what he alone does.

does. Bearing your wrath and your shame and the penalty of your sin and rising to give you the hope of life. Salvation belongs to the Lord and his blessing is upon not everyone, his people.

[ 32 : 41 ] Let's pray. What a good thing that your spirit inspired David to write in the midst of his pain and anguish, Father.

So that we might have a guide in how to deal with ours. Oh, we know that many times the Psalms, so many times the Psalms are not laying out for us a pattern to follow but are just the heart cry of the psalmist.

But we thank you that here and there we find a pattern that we can follow, that we can emulate. And I pray, Father, that if there is anyone here who has not trusted in Christ to save them from their sin, that even now your spirit would so work in them that you would give them spiritual life and call them to faith.

and that there would be rejoicing in heaven this morning. It's in Jesus' name that we pray.  
Amen.