

## Psalm 3

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

<sup>1</sup>LORD, how many are my foes!

How many rise up against me!

<sup>2</sup>Many are saying of me,

“God will not deliver him.”<sup>[b]</sup>

<sup>3</sup>But you, LORD, are a shield around me,  
my glory, the One who lifts my head high.

<sup>4</sup>I call out to the LORD,  
and he answers me from his holy mountain.

<sup>5</sup>I lie down and sleep;  
I wake again, because the LORD sustains me.

<sup>6</sup>I will not fear though tens of thousands  
assail me on every side.

<sup>7</sup>Arise, LORD!

Deliver me, my God!

Strike all my enemies on the jaw;  
break the teeth of the wicked.

<sup>8</sup>From the LORD comes deliverance.

May your blessing be on your people.

**15** It happened afterward that Absalom made himself a chariot with horses and fifty men running before him. <sup>2</sup> Absalom used to rise early in the morning, and he stood [beside] the road *at* the gate; [anyone] who had a legal dispute to bring to the king for judgment Absalom would call to him and say, “[Where are you from?]” And he would say, “Your servant *is* from one of the tribes of Israel.” <sup>3</sup> Then Absalom would say to him, “Look, your case *is* good and right, but for you there is no hearing with the king.” <sup>4</sup> Then Absalom would say, “[Oh, that someone would] appoint me as judge in the land, that [anyone] might come to me who had a legal dispute or a case, and I would give him justice.” <sup>5</sup> It happened whenever anyone drew near to do obeisance to him, that he would stretch his hand and take hold of him and kiss him. <sup>6</sup> Absalom did like this to all of Israel who came to the king for judgment; so Absalom stole the hearts of the people of Israel. <sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Harris, W. H., III, Ritzema, E., Brannan, R., Mangum, D., Dunham, J., Reimer, J. A., & Wierenga, M. (Eds.). (2012). [The Lexham English Bible](#) (2 Sa 15:1–6). Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press.

**1. Absalom prepared him chariots and horses, and fifty men to run before him—**

This was assuming the state and equipage of a prince. The royal guards, called runners, avant couriers, amounted to fifty (1 Ki 1:5). The chariot, as the Hebrew indicates, was of a magnificent style; and the horses, a novelty among the Hebrew people, only introduced in that age as an appendage of royalty (Ps 32:9; 66:12), formed a splendid retinue, which would make him “the observed of all observers.”

**2. Absalom rose up early, and stood beside the way of the gate—**

Public business in the East is always transacted early in the morning—the kings sitting an hour or more to hear causes or receive petitions, in a court held anciently, and in many places still, in the open air at the city gateway; so that, as those whose circumstances led them to wait on King David required to be in attendance on his morning levees, Absalom had to rise up early and stand beside the way of the gate. Through the growing infirmities of age, or the occupation of his government with foreign wars, many private causes had long lain undecided, and a deep feeling of discontent prevailed among the people. This dissatisfaction was artfully fomented by Absalom, who addressed himself to the various suitors; and after briefly hearing their tale, he gratified everyone with a favorable opinion of his case. Studiously concealing his ambitious designs, he expressed a wish to be invested with official power, only that he might accelerate the course of justice and advance the public interests. His professions had an air of extraordinary generosity and disinterestedness, which, together with his fawning arts in lavishing civilities on all, made him a popular favorite. Thus, by forcing a contrast between his own display of public spirit and the dilatory proceedings of the court, he created a growing disgust with his father’s government, as weak, careless, or corrupt, and seduced the affections of the multitude, who neither penetrated the motive nor foresaw the tendency of his conduct.

**7. after forty years—**

It is generally admitted that an error has here crept into the text, and that instead of “forty,” we should read with the Syriac and Arabic versions, and JOSEPHUS, “four years”—that is, after Absalom’s return to Jerusalem, and his beginning to practice the base arts of gaining popularity.

**my vow, which I have vowed unto the Lord—**

during his exile in Geshur. The purport of it was, that whenever God’s providence should pave the way for his re-establishment in Jerusalem, he would offer a sacrifice of thanksgiving. Hebron was the spot selected for the performance of this vow, ostensibly as being his native place (2 Sa 3:3), and a famous high place, where sacrifices were frequently offered before the temple was built; but really as being in many respects the most suitable for the commencement of his rebellious enterprise. David, who always encouraged piety and desired to see religious engagements punctually performed, gave his consent and his blessing.

2 Sa 15:10–12. HE FORMS A CONSPIRACY.

**10. Absalom sent spies throughout all the tribes of Israel—**

These emissaries were to sound the inclination of the people, to further interests of Absalom, and exhort all the adherents of his party to be in readiness to join his standard as soon as they should hear that he had been proclaimed king. As the summons was to be made by the sound of trumpets, it is probable that care had been taken to have trumpeters stationed on the heights, and at convenient stations—a mode of announcement that would soon spread the news over all the country of his inauguration to the throne.

**11. with Absalom went two hundred men ... that were called—**

From their quality, reputation, and high standing, such as would create the impression that the king patronized the movement and, being aged and infirm, was willing to adopt his oldest and noblest son to divide with him the cares and honors of government.

**12. Absalom sent for Ahithophel**—who he knew was ready to join the revolt, through disgust and revenge, as Jewish writers assert, at David's conduct towards Bath-sheba, who was his granddaughter.

**Giloh**—near Hebron.

**the conspiracy was strong**—The rapid accession of one place after another in all parts of the kingdom to the party of the insurgents, shows that deep and general dissatisfaction existed at this time against the person and government of David. The remnant of Saul's partisans, the unhappy affair of Bath-sheba, the overbearing insolence and crimes of Joab, negligence and obstruction in the administration of justice—these were some of the principal causes that contributed to the success of this widespread insurrection.

2 Sa 15:13–37. DAVID FLEES FROM JERUSALEM.

**14. David said ... Arise, and let us flee**—David, anxious for the preservation of the city which he had beautified, and hopeful of a greater support throughout the country, wisely resolved on leaving Jerusalem.

**18. all the Gittites, six hundred men**—These were a body of foreign guards, natives of Gath, whom David, when in the country of the Philistines, had enlisted in his service, and kept around his person. Addressing their commander, Ittai, he made a searching trial of their fidelity in bidding them (2 Sa 15:19) abide with the new king.

**23. the brook Kidron**—a winter torrent that flows through the valley between the city and the eastern side of the Mount of Olives.

**24, 25. Zadok also, and all the Levites ..., bearing the ark**—Knowing the strong religious feelings of the aged king, they brought it to accompany him in his distress. But as he could not doubt that both the ark and their sacred office would exempt them from the attacks of the rebels, he sent them back with it—not only that they might not be exposed to the perils of uncertain wandering, for he seems to place more confidence in the symbol of the divine presence than in God Himself—but that, by remaining in Jerusalem, they might render him greater service by watching the enemy's movements.

**30. David went up by the ascent of mount Olivet**—The same pathway over that mount has been followed ever since that memorable day.

**had his head covered**—with a mourning wrapper. The humility and resignation of David marked strongly his sanctified spirit, induced by contrition for his transgressions. He had fallen, but it was the fall of the upright; and he rose again, submitting himself meekly in the meantime to the will of God [CHALMERS].

**31. David said, Turn, O Lord, ... the counsel of Ahithophel**—this senator being the mainstay of the conspiracy.

**32. when David was come to the top of the mount, where he worshipped**—looking towards Jerusalem, where were the ark and tabernacle.

**Hushai the Archite**—A native of Archi, on the frontiers of Benjamin and Ephraim (Jos 16:2). Comparing the prayer against Ahithophel with the counsel to Hushai, we see how strongly a spirit of fervent piety was combined in his character with the devices of an active and far-seeing policy.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Jamieson, R., Fausset, A. R., & Brown, D. (1997). [\*Commentary Critical and Explanatory on the Whole Bible\*](#) (Vol. 1, p. 204). Oak Harbor, WA: Logos Research Systems, Inc.

See note on 1:1.

**3:title–8** In this individual lament psalm the psalmist is someone under personal attack. The entire psalm is addressed to Yahweh. The psalmist first describes the situation (vv. 1–2), then expresses confidence in Yahweh to protect and sustain him (vv. 3–6). Finally, he petitions Yahweh to deliver him (vv. 7–8).

#### Types of Psalms Table

**3:title A psalm** The Hebrew word used here, *mizmor*, is one of several names for compositions within the psalter. A *mizmor* is a song that is usually accompanied by a musical instrument.

**of David** David is associated with the authorship of the Psalms as a whole. However, the Hebrew phrase often translated as “of David” (*ledavid*) does not necessarily indicate authorship. The Hebrew preposition *lamedh* (*le-*) can mean “to,” “for,” “by,” or “about.” This makes it unclear whether the phrase “of David” in psalm titles means that the psalm was written “by David” or “for David” or was dedicated “to David.” In addition, the psalm titles were most likely added later.

#### and the Psalm Titles

**his fleeing from the presence of Absalom, his son** The story of David fleeing Absalom is found in 2 Sam 15–18.

**3:1 how many are my enemies** The psalmist emphasizes how many enemies he has (Psa 119:157).

**3:2 There is no deliverance for him from God** The enemies taunt him for trusting in God. The psalmist points this out in hopes that God will act and prove them wrong.

**3:3 are a shield around me** His enemies’ taunts have not caused him to doubt God. The psalmist trusts Yahweh to protect him like a shield—a common metaphor for David God’s protection (7:10; 18:2, 30; 28:7).

**the one who lifts up my head** A lifted head signaled confidence and pride (27:6), while a lowered head signaled defeat and disgrace (Judg 8:28).

**3:4 he answers** God responds to the psalmist’s cries.

**his holy hill** Refers to the temple mount—Mount Zion—the place where Yahweh established His king (Ps 2:6).

**3:5 I lay down and slept** The psalmist is so confident of Yahweh’s protection that he leaves himself defenseless, despite his multitude of enemies. The psalmist often finds comfort in the night by remembering Yahweh (63:6; 77:6).

**3:6 the ten thousands of people** The psalmist again describes the number of his enemies: they are like a large army surrounding him.

**3:7 Rise up, O Yahweh** After expressing confidence in Yahweh, the psalmist petitions Yahweh to act. He has trusted God to protect him; now he encourages God to take action and save him.

**3:8 To Yahweh belongs deliverance** The psalmist’s enemies believe God is unable to save him. He knows, however, that salvation comes only from Yahweh.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Barry, J. D., Mangum, D., Brown, D. R., Heiser, M. S., Custis, M., Ritzema, E., ... Bomar, D. (2012, 2016). *Faithlife Study Bible* (Ps 2:12–3:8). Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press.

Our God is one who is always protecting and loving us. Elijah/Elisha drew his servant's attention to the massive army of God around them when under threat from Syncharib's army.

Jesus told Peter to put his sword back in its sheath, because if he needed protection he could call on a huge number of angels to protect him. God was not going to use force. He is always in control there



*Sermon Preached on 24 July 2018*

*Praying our trouble*

Psalm 3; Jn 16:29 -17:5

'Strike my enemies on the jaw; 'Break the teeth of the wicked!'

But I like psalms that speak of encouragement, peace and joy, such as Ps 23 'The Lord is my Shepherd', and Ps 133 'How good and how pleasant it is when brothers live together in unity', and Ps 134 O Lord , my heart is not lifted up'.

But there are psalms which describe an unbridled hatred of your enemy and wanting God to take revenge; see Ps 58, Ps 94 and Ps 109. And Ps 3 is one of them - or so it seems. Let us look at this psalm. In doing so we make five points about it.

### ***1. Prayer is more real when we are desperate***

David is desperate for God to deliver him. He is under personal attack from his son Absalom, whom he happens to love.

It so happened that Absalom's brother Amnon raped Absalom's sister Tamar, which destroyed her life, for no-one would now marry her. Absalom gave refuge to Tamar, but Amnon was not brought to justice. Three years later Absalom killed Amnon. David was furious, and Absalom fled Jerusalem. David allowed Absalom to return two years later. Although David loved Absalom, he would not see him.

Now Absalom was clever. He won the hearts of many people including David's Chief Advisor Ahithophel. A conspiracy grew around Absalom, which aimed to kill David and put Absalom on the throne.

Four years after Absalom returned the conspirators gathered at Hebron and proclaimed Absalom as king. But David was no pushover. Once he was told about Absalom's rebellion he, like Absalom, fled from Jerusalem, while Absalom moved in. Ahithophel advised Absalom to attack David immediately while he was fleeing from Jerusalem, when he was most vulnerable. But Absalom failed to take his advice and Ahithophel realised that Absalom's venture would fail, he committed suicide.

David was very close to being assassinated, and he prayed to God out of desperation. Psalm 3 is real prayer, prayer built out of his need, gutsy and determined. The conspirators struck at the heart of David's confidence in his God by proclaiming that God would not save David this time.

### ***2. But David is aware of how God has helped him in the past***

God had protected him when he was a young lad looking after his father's sheep. God was a shield all around him; he is under God's

protection. What is more, God gives him his glory as King and a human being. God lifts up his head and helps him walk with confidence

### **3. God both listens to him and answers him**

David knows that he can share his concerns with God at anytime and anywhere; and God will always hear him. But David also knows that God will respond and *answer*. For, so far as David is concerned, God is present in his holy hill Mount Zion where he had established David as his king

### **4. David did not have a spirit of fear, but power, love and self-discipline**

We are most vulnerable when we are asleep. Some people take their worries to bed, others wake up in the middle of the night afraid. But David is able to sleep, confident of God's protection. And he will awake without fear, even if tens of thousands of troops surround him

### **5. David lets his mouth pour out his anger to God and lets him know that he wants deliverance**

Deliver me, my God! Defeat my enemies by striking them on the jaw so that their teeth break. David is now fully engaged with God in his prayer. After all, it is the Lord from whom his deliverance comes. And deliverance did come.

Absalom was riding through a wood during the battle when his head got caught in the branches of a tree, and his mule went on without him. The troops pursuing him could not bring themselves to kill Absalom, the King's son. But when Joab, David's general, came he killed Absalom by thrusting three lances into his body, buried him in a deep hole which he filled with stones (making it difficult to recover the body), and then reported his death to David.

So David was delivered by God. Yet he still mourned greatly for his son Absalom. And David had to learn yet more from God on how to deal with his enemies.

There are many illustrations in the Bible about how this principle of trusting God works out in people's lives. God heard his people crying out to him when they were slaves in Egypt. He delivered the Children of Israel from slavery in Egypt, he saved them from the pursuing Egyptian army by making a path for them through the Red Sea, who made the waters to return and drown the Egyptian army, who delivered the Israelites from their enemies in the Promised Land

In 1940 the British Expeditionary Force in France was evacuated from Dunkirk. British and French troops retreated from the German troops in haste, and some 226,000 British and 110,000 French troops were rescued from the channel port of Dunkirk by a ragged fleet ranging from pleasure boats to Navy destroyers.

Many of us develop sicknesses as we grow older, which restrict our ability to do things we want to do. Our medical condition is such that it is so easy to submit to it, and not to let go and submit ourselves to God for his purposes.

'I cry desperately to the Lord, and he hears me'.

**i) *We need to recover our confidence in our God.***

Our God is a great big God who loves us so much he sent his Son to die for us while we were yet sinners.

**ii) *We need to be familiar with all the things God does for us – his works and his ways.***

God loves us with an everlasting love. That does not necessarily give us permission to do nothing. We need to contribute our experience of God's works and ways. For example, when David knew that Absalom was coming, the only (and right) thing he could do was to escape from Jerusalem; to have remained would have meant that the conspirators would have defeated him.

God bestows his glory on me because I am his adopted son.

God lifts up my head, he gives me confidence to live his life.

'Delivery comes from the Lord'.

God responds and answer our prayers

And I can sleep, because the Lord sustains me

'Get up Lord and deliver me; strike all my enemies on the jaw and break the teeth of the wicked'

'It is the Lord who delivers me'.

'May your blessing be on your people'.