

PSALM 3

INTRODUCTION

Stress related illnesses are increasing all the time, in fact stress and their related illnesses are the biggest contributor to absenteeism from work today. We all know life is stressful today. It seems that life is getting quicker, people are having to work more hours than before, and then there are the pressures of general living. Financial pressures of a mortgage, the insecurity in employment with short-term contracts and redundancies hanging over one's head.

Then some of us have the added family pressures, of raising children in this world, or having teenagers who are rebelling or having grown up and married children who seem to cast us off as Parents.

Then for some of us there are the worries and cares of the church that burden us and weigh us down. It is no wonder that when we go to lie down at night we find our minds moving into turbo charge, so that we can hardly sleep, which of course only adds to our stress. Can anything be done to counteract all this? The answer is yes and this Psalm is very instructive in helping us cope with the pressures of Life. The pressures that David is under in this Psalm are very different from the ones we may face but the answers are exactly the same.

1 THE CIRCUMSTANCES DESCRIBED (vs. 1-2)

The title of the Psalm gives us the historical setting for this Psalm. Now there are many who think that these little titles are not historically reliable, because some feel they were added at a later date and were not part of the original Psalm. However others feel that the title should be taken at face value unless there is anything in the Psalm itself that would suggest that the title is not correct (this is my view). There is nothing in this Psalm to suggest that the historical situation is not as it says at the beginning of the Psalm.

a) The Historical Setting - You need to turn to 2 Samuel 14-16. Now I am only going to pick out relevant parts in order to help us understand the setting. David is King and he has a son that he loves called Absalom (13:37 & 14:33). Absalom kills Amnon because he had raped his sister and therefore Absalom had to flee for his life. Eventually through the intervention of Joab, Absalom is brought back to Jerusalem (chapter 14), but for a while is not allowed contact with the king.

Absalom makes it his business to become popular with the people and he stole the hearts of the people from the King (15:6). He establishes himself as King among the people and David has to flee (15:13-14). As if this isn't bad enough for David, things got worst whenever he came across a very unsavoury character called Shimei (16:5-8 & 13). How was David feeling? 15:30 gives us an indication of his feelings.

Now turn with me to Psalm 3 and read vs.1-2. Do these verses not describe the situation in 2 Samuel? Notice the word "many" indicating that David's enemies were increasing all the time. The word "foes" carries the idea of an enemy who is backing you into a corner. Not only that, but his enemies are saying that His God will not deliver him (v 2). Why would David's enemies say that? Surely David was a man of God; after all he was the one who wrote Psalm 23 "The Lord is my Shepherd."

Well the answer to the question is concerned with the story that we didn't read. In chapter 12:11-12 we read that calamity upon David was the consequence of his sin with Bathsheba. Therefore the enemies of David probably looked at the situation and said, David you're finished, God is against you and so are we. It's only a matter of time before your end comes.

Now let us apply this, there are times in our lives, when everything seems to go against us, we have problems in our family, problems in our relationships and at such times we may think or others may think, God isn't going to help you this time, particularly if our problems are a direct result of some sin. We do have to understand that although as a Christian God does forgive you your sin, if you have repented, the consequences of that sin remain or God may choose to discipline us further in order to fulfil His purposes in our lives. That is what was happening in David's life. So when we face the trials in life, when we are under pressure. Ask is this a consequence of some sin, if so have you repented of that sin. Or is this God's hand of discipline upon me in order to teach me some lesson about the peril of sin.

The important thing is that no matter what the reason behind the pressures we face are, it's how we deal with them that really matters. So let's look at how David dealt with his situation.

2. THE CONFIDENCE HE DISPLAYED (vs. 3-6)

There are Christians who base their whole Christianity on feelings, they go to church to feel better, and if they haven't had their spirits lifted by the lively singing, or service then they go away disappointed. Well notice what David did when he was in trouble, he didn't rely on his feelings (remember 2 Samuel 15:30?). He applied what he knew to be true about the Lord to His own circumstances. It was truth that would help him through this time of crisis not his feelings.

That's why he can speak with such confidence, he was defenceless and yet he knew that God would be his shield, his protector (v 3). Perhaps he remembered the word of God spoken to Abram when he was afraid (Genesis 15:1). He was despised but God would be the source of his glory, and lift up His downcast head (v 3).

You see it is truth not feeling that will give you confidence in the Lord. That's why reading and hearing His word is vital, because although there may be days when you think that the passage you read or heard preached upon was not particularly relevant to you, you will be storing up in your mind truth, that one day will be relevant to you, and in that day you can apply it to yourself and have confidence in God as a result.

The confidence David displayed was such that He knew that God had promised to protect His people, and indeed he knew that the glory that was granted to David as King was given to Him by God, and therefore David could be restored to his proper position. He also knew that although he was downcast, and depressed, His God would lift his spirits. In fact knowing these truths and having such a confidence in God would have already lifted his spirits.

Have you got problems, perhaps like David you have a wayward son or daughter, perhaps people have been opposing you at work, and you feel you are being squeezed out. Perhaps some people are just down right against you, and openly show that, and as a result your head has dropped. What should you do? Have confidence in God. Think about all that you know that is true about God, He is powerful, gracious, merciful, just etc. and then apply those truths to your situation now.

Of course you must be a Christian to be able to do this for God is not a shield to everyone, but just to His people, to those who have taken refuge in Him as we saw at the end of Psalm 2 last week.

But what David knows to be true about the Lord encourages him to do three things:

a) He prays (v 4)- To know certain truths about God is one thing, but to apply them will lead to action. In David's case He prayed (v 4). Why does He pray? Because he knows certain truths about God i.e. He answers. Are you in trouble? Have you got worries and cares that are overwhelming you? Are people against you and opposing you? Have you tried praying? Once we know the truth that God answers prayer, then it makes more sense to pray!

b) He sleeps (v 5) - This is remarkable, for if you were in David's situation would you sleep? You know as well as I do that the first thing that goes when we are under stress is our sleep pattern.

How can he sleep in such circumstances? He sleeps because He knows that if he wakes up, it is only because the Lord has sustained him. He has learned you see, that people sleep and wake up because of the Lord sustaining them during the night. It is the Lord who ultimately grants us sleep and gives us the gift of another day. Are you having trouble sleeping because of worries and anxieties, then apply this truth, remember nothing will happen to you unless the Lord allows it to happen, He is your protector.

But again if you are not a Christian then remember every day you wake up, it is a gift from God, He has granted you another day, but what are you going to do with it? Are you going to continue to rebel against Him and His Word, or are you going to use this day to repent and to turn wholeheartedly to the Lord. Remember there will come a day when God will not sustain you through the night and will not grant you the gift of another day, then it will be too late for you, so use this day to turn to the Lord.

c) He refuses to fear (v 6). Now again this is a remarkable statement, thousands are now against David, Absalom has really done a good job of turning people against David, yet David refuses to fear. His confidence is totally in the Lord. He knows, the one who is his shield, the one who lifts up his head, the One that answers His prayer and sustains him through the night. Therefore because of these truths he is not going to fear what mere human beings can do to him, even if there are thousands of them.

Apply these truths to your difficult circumstances, whatever they are. Then do what David did, refuse to fear those who are causing you worry and causing anxiety. But why does David refuse to fear? Because ultimately He cannot lose because His God will deliver him (vs. 7-8)

3. HE CALLS FOR DELIVERANCE (vs. 7-8)

David calls upon God to rise up, deliver him from His enemies and make them powerless. The term "rise up" is used in the Old Testament when the Ark of the Covenant was being moved (Numbers 10:35). It was symbolic of God moving before His people to give them deliverance and victory. David sees his enemies like an animal and calls upon God to make them powerless (v 7).

David is aware that if victory is to come, it will come by the Lord alone (v 8). That's why David closes this Psalm by asking for God's blessing to be upon His people, because without God's blessing and commitment to His people there is no deliverance or salvation.

Now who is ultimately going to give us the victory? Who is going to deliver us from our enemy? Only the Lord. He does this through the rule of Jesus Christ (Psalm 2:9). He is the One who came into this world, died, rose again, and one day will come back as judge and will deliver all his people from their enemies.

Those enemies are sin, Satan and the world, from which, God will deliver us. Have you come to the Lord for salvation or deliverance from your enemy of sin and Satan? If you haven't and continue to refuse to do so, then God will simply one day deal you with because you are one of His enemies. Revelation 6 gives us a picture of that day, and what a terrible day it is (6:12-17).

So when you are downcast, when people and things are stacked against you, when people are saying, your God will not help you now. Remember to put your confidence in Him, because you know He is your shield, and will raise up your down cast head. Remember to pray because He answers, Remember it is the Lord who grants you sleep and the gift of a new day. So trust Him and sleep well!

Finally remember not to fear, because it is God who ultimately will rise up, and deliver His people. This he has done through Jesus, and one day will bring that work to completion, when Jesus returns to judge and condemn all who oppose us and therefore by so doing oppose Him.
Amen