

Israel's Hymnal
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PSALM THREE

[Pss 3:1] Jehovah, how are mine adversaries increased! Many are they that rise up against me.

[Pss 3:2] Many there are that say of my soul, There is no help for him in God. Selah

[Pss 3:3] But thou, O Jehovah, art a shield about me; My glory and the lifter up of my head.

[Pss 3:4] I cry unto Jehovah with my voice, And he answereth me out of his holy hill. Selah

[Pss 3:5] I laid me down and slept; I awaked; for Jehovah sustaineth me.

[Pss 3:6] I will not be afraid of ten thousands of the people that have set themselves against me round about.

[Pss 3:7] Arise, O Jehovah; save me, O my God: For thou hast smitten all mine enemies upon the cheek bone; Thou hast broken the teeth of the wicked.

[Pss 3:8] Salvation belongeth unto Jehovah: Thy blessing be upon thy people.

- I. David's numerous enemies (vss. 1,2).
- II. God his shield (vss. 3, 4).
- III. God's protection of him while he slept (vss. 5, 6).
- IV. Prayer for complete deliverance from all foes (vs. 7).
- V. A prayer for Israel (vs. 8).

According to the superscription of this psalm David by the Spirit was led to compose it on the occasion of his fleeing from Absalom his son. In order to see the historical background of this hymn, one should read very carefully II Samuel, chapter 15, in which we find the record of Absalom's revolt. But this action was the fulfillment of the prediction which Nathan the prophet made as is recorded in II Samuel 12:11-14. One cannot sin and escape punishment. Man reaps what he sows--and often times with a prodigious increase. In order to see the full background of Absalom's rebellion, one should therefore read II Samuel, chapter 12. Life is made up of a chain of causes and effects. It therefore behooves everyone to walk lightly before God and to live for Him. Every son whom the Lord receives He chastens, but whatever comes into the life of the faithful child of God is designed by the Lord for his good, for both time and eternity.

I. David's numerous enemies

"Jehovah, how are mine adversaries increased!

Many are they that rise up against me.

Many there are that say of my soul,

There is no help for him in God" (vss. 1,2).

When all was going well with David, he never realized that he was surrounded by so very many who would become hostile to him if an occasion presented itself for them to show their real selves. Truly, the heart is deceitful above all things and it is desperately wicked. Who indeed can know it? (Jer. 17:9). Doubtless

there are many of those who had sworn allegiance to David and who were enjoying royal favor among those who joined in the rebellion, when they thought that Absalom had overthrown David's government and that he would be supreme from that time on. Men have turned from their friends to others often times simply because events seem to favor other persons. Only the true ones will remain with one in times of stress and of difficulty. History has proved, however, that most of a person's friends will forsake him when the fortunes of life seem to have forsaken him. There is, however, one friend who is true at all times and who will never forsake one--the Lord Jesus Christ.

Among those who had joined the rebellion of Absalom, or who were attempting to take a neutral stand, were those who were saying, "There is no help for him in God." It is quite likely that those who were thus speaking had in mind David's great sin in connection with his taking Uriah's wife and having him killed. They knew that David had been out of fellowship with God. They probably also realized that the Lord punishes every transgressor and disobedient one. They were therefore saying that David was being punished for his sins and that the Lord would not come to his rescue. In thinking that he was being punished for his sins, they were correct; but one thing they overlooked--the mercy and pardoning grace of God. David repented, confessed his sin, and pleaded for forgiveness (Ps. 51). Though he was forgiven, the Lord, the administrator of a moral government of necessity had to punish him for his wickedness. When this was accomplished, the Lord restored David to his position from which he had fallen. This case of David's should be a warning to all of God's people to shun the very appearance of evil. On the other hand, it should also be a source of great satisfaction and comfort to those who have fallen into sin to realize that the Lord will forgive and restore one to His favor and grace. When one has thus sinned, one must in genuine contrition and repentance turn from his wickedness and implore divine favor. He who thus returns, the Lord will in no wise cast away. But let everyone remember that one reaps that which he has sowed and that he cannot sin without being punished for his wrongs.

The father in the parable of the "Prodigal Son" represents God who stands willing and waiting for His disobedient child to return in genuine repentance. For such a one there is always help in God.

II. God David's shield

When the revolt of Absalom occurred, David was driven from his kingdom. He therefore fled toward the Jordan valley, across the river, and went into hiding in Transjordan. Knowing that he had been reinstated into the favor of his Lord, and trusting God for protection, the king prayed,

But thou, O Jehovah, art a shield about me;
My glory, and the lifter up of my head.
I cry unto Jehovah with my voice,
And he answereth me out of his holy hill" (vss. 3,4).

What the shield was to the ancient soldier, God was to David, His servant. The Lord always protects and defends those who know Him and who are trusting Him. Moreover, David spoke of the Lord as being his glory and the one who lifted up his head. God was David's glory in that He was the object of praise and adoration. He was the source of David's glory and magnificence, the bestower of all that he enjoyed. Moreover, He was the one who lifted him from his pastoral life of insignificance to the throne. David was

convinced that the Lord would lift up his head of shame and dejection and would restore the crown to him. He therefore thus spoke of the Almighty in terms of the things which he had done and would continue to do for him. These words indeed express strong faith and trust.

From this quotation we see that David was a man of prayer who constantly submitted things to the Lord and who continually received answers to his petitions. He therefore declared that even on the occasion of which he was speaking in this hymn God would answer him out of His holy hill. This hill of course was Mount Zion. The Lord chose this place as the one where the tabernacle with the ark should rest until the Temple was built. The Shekinah of glory rested upon the mercy seat in the holy of holies. This manifestation was a visible symbol of God's presence. The Hebrews in their praying looked therefore toward Jerusalem as the residence of the Lord and looked for Him out of His sanctuary to answer the petitions.

III. God's protection of David while he slept

"I laid me down and slept;
I awaked; for Jehovah sustaineth me.
I will not be afraid of ten thousands of the people
That have set themselves against me round about" (vss. 5,6).

From verse 5 it is clear that this psalm is a morning prayer of trust in God. David had had a restful night of sleep, notwithstanding his being in flight because of the rebellion. Furthermore, he knew that the Lord has exercised special protection over him while he slept. Probably the Lord had dispatched some angels, who are ministering spirits set forth to do service for the sake of them that shall inherit salvation, to protect him as he slept and as his body was being recuperated by the same. The Lord indeed did sustain him, both in his wakeful and in his restful hours.

The fact that the Lord had protected him during this night concerning which he spoke produced in David the strong conviction that He would continue to care for him and to protect him. He therefore exclaimed that he would not be afraid of ten thousands of the people that might set themselves in array against him.

"Faith, mighty faith, the promise sees,
And looks to God alone;
Laughs at impossibilities and cries,
It shall, be done!"

IV. Prayer for complete deliverance from all foes

"Arise, O Jehovah; save me, O my God:
For thou hast smitten all mine enemies upon the cheek bone;
Thou hast broken the teeth of the wicked" (vs. 7).

Though he has expressed the conviction that God would protect him from all foes and that he would not be afraid of ten thousands who might rise against him, the king prayed to the Lord to arise and save him.

This is the type of faith which believes that one has already received the petition which he is about to make in order that his request might be granted. Thus as David prayed his faith lifted him to the lofty plain from which he viewed all of his enemies as having been conquered and smitten: "For thou hast smitten all mine enemies upon the cheek bone; Thou hast broken the teeth of the wicked." When one prays, one must pray in faith, doubting nothing; for he who doubts cannot expect to receive anything from the Lord. Those who come to God must believe that He is and that He is a rewarder of them that seek after Him.

V. A prayer for Israel

"Salvation belongeth unto Jehovah:
Thy blessing be upon thy people" (vs. 8).

The marginal reading of the word, salvation, is *victory*. God indeed is the one who gives victory in every sphere of life. Man is impotent, even though he often feels that he can accomplish great things. We are dependent upon the Lord every moment of our existence, for life, health, strength, and ability to achieve. Hence deliverance or victory indeed belongs to Jehovah. This principle is demonstrated throughout the Old Testament as well as in the New. Every true child of God realizes the force of this statement. Many have been the experiences in our lives where we have been in a position that we could not make any moves. Our situations have appeared hopeless; then suddenly, in answer to believing, trustful prayer the difficulties have been removed, deliverances have been given. The Lord indeed is "a God of deliverance" (Ps. 68:20).

Notwithstanding the fact that David had been driven out by his rebellious son, and that the people, with few exceptions had joined in the rebellion and had forsaken the king, he, in those trying hours, never lost sight of the well-being of the people; for he prayed, "Thy blessing be upon thy people." The king realized that the Hebrews were and are God's peculiar people. The Lord performed a biological miracle on the bodies of Abraham and Sarah and created the Jewish nation in that He made possible the birth of Isaac. Thus the nation of Israel was created and is the nation of destiny. It is God's good pleasure and purpose to bless all nations in and through them (Gen. 12:1-3). Although they were in rebellion against the king, he did not resent their attitude toward him. He believed the word of God. He had the glory and the honor of God at heart. He therefore wanted God to bless his people in order that they might become the channel of world-blessing. He therefore thus prayed. In doing so David was to a certain extent like His Lord who, after He had been rejected by His people, prayed in his dying hour, "Father forgive them, for they know not what they do." The Lord Jesus Christ, who Israel rejected nineteen hundred years ago, is at this moment seated at the right hand of the throne of God in glory and the attitude of his heart toward his rebellious people is that they might turn from their national sin, might accept his atonement in order that He might do them good and that the blessing of the Eternal God might rest upon His "Chosen People."

May every born-again child of God today take the same attitude toward Israel, notwithstanding her failures and sins. Let us take no rest and give God no rest until He make Jerusalem the joy of the whole earth (Isa. 62:6). Let us also pray for the peace of Jerusalem (Ps. 122:6).