

Psalm 3—Save Me, O Lord!

The title gives us the author (King David) and some historical context (fleeing from his son Absalom). It was written late in his reign as king. It is a psalm of individual lament. The word “Selah” appears three times. It may be a musical term allowing worshippers to pause and meditate on the thoughts just shared.

Some Historical Context (2 Samuel 12-18)

1. In the story of David and Bathsheba, we learn of David’s adultery with Bathsheba and his murder of her husband. The prophet Nathan is sent to rebuke David. According to 2 Samuel 12:9-13, what will be the consequences of David’s actions?

2. How do we see these consequences unfolding in the following chapters?
 - a. 2 Samuel 12:14 —

 - b. 2 Samuel 13:1, 10-15, 21-22 —

 - c. 2 Samuel 13:23, 28-29 —

Absalom’s murder of his half-brother Amnon, who happens to be David’s eldest son, accomplishes two things: he avenges his sister Tamar and (as David’s second-born son) sets himself up as successor to the throne.

- d. 2 Samuel 15:10-14 —

- e. 2 Samuel 16:15, 20-22 —

- f. The two armies of David and Absalom go out to battle. What happens in 2 Samuel 18: 9-15?

Rising Foes (Psalm 3: 1-2)

3. Parallelism (matching thoughts repeated in successive lines) is a key component of Hebrew poetry. What idea is repeated three times?

4. What foes might David be referring to in these verses?

5. How would you characterize David’s emotional state as he begins this prayer?

6. Worst of all, David hears the lie that “God will not deliver him”, that “there is no salvation for him”. Who might you suspect is telling this lie?

The Lord Protects (Psalm 3: 3-4)

7. As verse 3 begins, the psalm pivots sharply. What leads to the “but” that starts this section?
8. The first section had a three-fold repetition regarding David’s foes. What is emphasized three times in response in this section?
9. Satan tries to trick David with lies: “You’re no good after what you did” and “Who could love you” and “You’re all alone in this”. What promises from God can reassure us when we have similar thoughts? See Isaiah 43:1 and Joshua 1:5.

I Am Not Afraid (Psalm 3: 5-6)

10. David remembers God’s watchful protection and care. What three things does this allow David to do and why?
11. How has David’s perspective on his foes changed? Compare verses 1-2 with verse 6.

Salvation! (Psalm 3: 7-8)

12. In verse 7, David echoes a liturgical refrain Moses prayed during Israel’s wilderness wanderings. Whenever the priests picked up the ark of the covenant and set out on that day’s journey, Moses would shout, “Arise, O Lord, and let Your enemies be scattered, and let those who hate You flee before You” (Numbers 10:35). Why might David have used these words at this point in Psalm 3?
13. What contrast do you see between verse 2 and verse 8?
14. Psalm 3 is a lament. How do you see some of the components of a lament demonstrated here?
- A complaint expressing pain or difficulty:
 - Often speaks of enemies:
 - Crying out to God for help:
 - Showing trust in God:
 - Praising God:

Some thoughts from the Concordia Commentary on this Psalm and how it relates to Jesus:

- “The challenge confronting the speaker in Psalm 3 is the majority view...The “obvious” truth is that Yhwh will not save him. It is the same challenge that the chief priests, the scribes, and the elders put before Jesus as he hung on the cross: “He trusted in God. Let God deliver him now if he desires him.””
- “That challenge of the chief priests...sounds hollow in the light of Jesus’ resurrection...”I lie down and sleep. I wake up”. In these words, we can also hear Jesus’ description of his experience of death and resurrection.”

And another thought from the Concordia Commentary as it relates to OUR experience:

“The lives of those of us who have been baptized into Christ take OT Israel’s experience as part of our own story. Jesus’ death and resurrection is ours. The salvation that he received is our hope. We pray Psalm 3 in light of Christ. The salvation that the majority disputes is precisely this resurrection experience that God has promised us in Jesus. In this life, we wait for it with a faith that confesses and proclaims our God’s ability to save (Ps. 3: 3,8), in spite of evidence to the contrary. We know that God “will answer” us “from his holy mountain” (Ps. 3:4). For us, the Word from Zion is Jesus, who “became flesh and dwelt among us” (Jn 1:14) and by whom God has spoken in these last days (Heb.1:1-2). This Word from God promises deliverance from every foe. That is what we are praying to experience in its fullness when we cry: “Rise, Yhwh! Save me, my God!” (Ps 3:7). God may not seem to hear us now in this age of sin and sorrows (sometimes it is apparent that he does), but we know that he answers from his holy mountain in Christ. And we wait for that blessing in all its fullness.”

Bible Verses

Isaiah 43:1 -- But now thus says the Lord, he who created you, O Jacob, he who formed you, O Israel: “Fear not, for I have redeemed you; I have called you by name, you are mine.

Joshua 1:5 -- No man shall be able to stand before you all the days of your life. Just as I was with Moses, so I will be with you. I will not leave you or forsake you.

Resources:

NIV and ESV Study Bibles

People’s Bible Commentary on the Psalms by John Brug

Concordia Commentary on the Psalms by Timothy Saleska

A New Song: Save Me, O My God! by Jane Fryar et al