



MATT BLACK, Sun, July 29, 2018
livinghopechurch.net

3 | PSALM 3

WHEN LIFE IS HARD

Outline

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Praise for God's Defense

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Announcements

1. Welcome visitors!
2. Thank you to all who worked tirelessly to make this the best VBS ever! The kids were edified, the Gospel was preached, and we all grew in fellowship together.
3. Father-daughter campout coming up Aug 10-11 Blackwell Forest Preserve.
4. Please note Pastor Michael and family will be on vacation till August 8.
5. I want to praise God and thank those who have been praying for Alex Peace's asylum case. A US Senator and a US Congressman sent inquiries to the Chicago Asylum Office, and Alex has been granted a second interview.
6. Let's pray for Billy Russell. He's in the hospital with chest pains.

Introduction

Open your Bible if you will to **Psalm 3**. We are continuing a short series through the Psalms called "Shadow of the Almighty." The goal of this series is to teach us how to pray and how to walk with God.

Outline

1. Bring your **fear** to God (3:1-2).
2. Find your **identity** in God (3:3-4).
3. **Trust** God, not your circumstances (3:5-6).
4. **Praise** God for his deliverance (3:7-8).

Emotional Language

The Psalms have a language that teach us how to talk to God. The Psalms are emotionally intense: anger, rejoicing, lament, praise! In Jewish history, for thousands of years, observant Jews grew up memorizing most of the poetry in the Psalms. In fact, our Lord Jesus was intensely committed to memorizing the Psalms. At multiple points in Jesus' life, he uses the language of the Psalms to express his own thoughts. That's what we want to learn to do.

Psalm 3 addresses our deepest fears and anxieties. Sometimes we are paralyzed by fear. How do we pray when we are in the midst of great fear and anxiety in our lives? Psalm 3 answers that. David, God's king in Israel refuses to be controlled by his fear. Instead he puts his trust in God.

So this morning let's ask the question: **how do we pray through our fears and anxieties?** Let's begin by reading the Psalm before we answer this important question.

Scripture Reading

Let's stand and read our passage today, Psalm 3,

A Psalm of David, when he fled from Absalom his son.

O Lord, how many are my foes! Many are rising against me; ² many are saying of my soul, "There is no salvation for him in God." *Selah*

³ But you, O Lord, are a shield about me, my glory, and the lifter of my head.

⁴ I cried aloud to the Lord, and he answered me from his holy hill. *Selah*

⁵ I lay down and slept; I woke again, for the Lord sustained me. ⁶ I will not be afraid of many thousands of people who have set themselves against me all around.

⁷ Arise, O Lord! Save me, O my God! For you strike all my enemies on the cheek; you break the teeth of the wicked. ⁸ Salvation belongs to the Lord; your blessing be on your people! *Selah*

This is God's Word.

David begins by expressing what we know is a terrifying situation. If you notice the subscript at the top of the Psalm – that's part of the original inspired Psalm, and it says, **"A Psalm of David, when he fled from Absalom his son."** This gives us the historical context of David's prayer in Psalm 3. This is **David's worst day ever**.

What do you do on your worst day ever? Most of us are paralyzed. We often succumb to thoughts from our adversary who says: you deserve this. This is God's punishment. God is angry with you. This is not how David handled it. He forsook his fear and trusted in God. That's what we need to do.

So this is David's **worst day ever**. You know this story, right? David is king of Israel. He's 70 years of age. This is the last year of David's life. David's old and his son Absalom decides to reject his father and be king in father's place. Tens of thousands are on Absalom's side and they have one mission: kill the king. Kill David. That's how succession worked in the ancient world. You killed the previous king and all his family. This isn't how it should be working. To top it off, this whole situation is David's fault. His family is a total mess because David sinned greatly and publicly against God. Absalom had already killed his oldest brother Amnon. David's family is a mess. **"Sow to the wind, reap the whirlwind"** (Hos 8:7).

Psalm 3 turns tragedy into victory. The early church saw this as a text about Jesus being rejected by his people and still arising from the dead in victory on Easter morning. The early church loved to read this Psalm every Easter morning.

Suffering Exposes Your Heart

Let's ask ourselves, what do you do on your worst day? Most people are paralyzed with fear and anxiety. David's worst day exposes his heart. That's what suffering does. Suffering exposes what we think about God. It exposes what we think we deserve. It exposes your definition of the good life. It exposes your thoughts about meaning and purpose. It exposes whether or not you have an inner sense of well-being. Suffering tests your theology. Do you really believe God is good in all things?

So many of God's people are shaken because they believe being God's child is a ticket out of suffering. Being a saint of God doesn't mean you won't suffer. Suffering will somehow enter your door and pin you to the ground. When everything is stripped from you, what you worship will be laid bare.

David is stripped of everything on this day in a cave in Mahanaim. When he loses everything, we realize, he's lost nothing. On David's worst day ever, he teaches us how to grab hold of God, who really is everything to David. So if you are going through a great trial, listen today and learn how to grab hold of the God who will see you through your deepest suffering. How do we grab hold of God? First...

1. DON'T STEW OVER TRIALS, BUT BRING YOUR **FEAR** TO GOD (3:1-2)

Listen to David's prayer in Psalm 3 when he is rejected by Absalom. Humanly speaking, David would have much to fear. But instead of stewing over it, he bring his problem to the Lord.

O Lord, how many are my foes! Many are rising against me; ² many are saying of my soul, "There is no salvation for him in God." *Selah* (3:1-2).

Context: The younger generation in Israel rejects God's anointed king, David. This is the king that gave them their kingdom. They are so ungrateful. They want to put him to death. Absalom and Ahithophel are planning a coup. That means death for David. According to ancient practice, installing a new king will require the death of the current king.

In 2 Samuel 15, we discover how David has to leave Jerusalem and **climb up the Mount of Olives barefoot** (2 Sam 15:30). He's got a battalion of 30 mighty warriors surrounding him (2 Sam 16:6; 23:18). David is clothed as a mourner. We read in 2 Samuel 15, that his head is covered. His feet are bare. He is travelling near what would later be a Garden. The **Garden of Gethsemane** where our Lord would suffer. Now *this* is something to weep about! It is unthinkable what Absalom is doing. Get the full implication of this. This is a monarchy. To take David's throne, the king must die! Absalom must kill his father.

David flees 20 miles north to **Mahanaim**, near Shiloh – where he was assisted by the local people and surrounding kings and was able to gain additional support before defeating Absalom. It is here, in a cave (2 Sam 17:9) he writes this Psalm as well as Psalm 4. This Psalm is a beautiful prayer that David prays on his worst day ever. His son has rejected him and wants to kill him. It doesn't get worse than that. But David doesn't stew over his trials. He brings his fear to God.

THE MAGNITUDE OF THE TRIAL

Catch this scene: David has lost his kingdom; he's lost his dignity; he's lost his son. What does he do? Does he stew over it? Does he despair? No. David cries out to "I Am" who has sustained him all these years.

"O LORD (YHWH), how many are my foes! Many are rising against me" (3:1). The older generation was fiercely loyal to David, but Absalom had deceived the young new army to turn against David. There were tens of thousands of them ready to kill David and replace him with the young and cunning Absalom.

The Magnitude of David's Trial

This was intensely personal for David. This is David's worst day. Absalom makes it very personal and violates his father's own concubines (2 Sam 16:21). The next step was to put David to death. That's what Absalom was plotting to do.

The Magnitude of Jesus' Trial

This was true in Jesus' life. All plotted against our Lord. All either fled or rejected him. Only a small group was with our Lord: Mary his mother, John his beloved disciple, and a

few women. Everyone else went into hiding. Remember our Lord prayed to his Father in the garden of Gethsemane? Remember his prayers from the cross? Even hanging on the Cross he brings his sorrow and grief to the Father: “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?”

The Magnitude of Your Trial

What do you do when life is so hard? Stewing over your trials won't help you. You must do as David did. You bring your trial to God, no matter how great it is. Look at how David addresses God: “O Lord [YHWH].” He remembers God's covenant name. Remember God told Moses, “I am who I am” (Exo 3:14). This is intensely personal. For David to address God as Yahweh had the same connotation as New Testament believers addressing him as, “Abba, Father.”¹ It is an intimate, personal cry for help. God loves you and can handle your trial. He wants to bear your burdens. He is your Abba, Father.

THE MALIGNING OF THE TRIAL

David is maligned by his closest confidants, and many others. Ahithophel was the wisest man around David. David cries out to God: “Many are saying of my soul, 'There is no salvation for him in God.' Selah” (3:2).

David's Maligning

They fled and forsook him in his hour of need. They were doubting his right to be king. Probably, they were bringing up his now-public sin with Bathsheba and his murder of her husband. How can this man be king?

Ahithophel was David's chief counselor. He was renowned as the wisest of all David's counselors. **Ahithophel** of all people should have known better. It is said of him: “The counsel that Ahithophel gave was as if one consulted the word of God; so was all the counsel of Ahithophel esteemed, both by David and by Absalom” (16:23). Yet even the wisest man in the nation as Ahithophel was, can be defeated. God turns the wisdom of the wise into foolishness. How hurtful it was that Ahithophel turned on David.

Shimei. Another great betrayal was Shimei, from the family of King Saul. David had the compassion to allow Saul's family to live. This was unheard of in ancient times. David has mercy on Saul's house, and Shimei slanders David as he leaves Jerusalem barefoot. Here is Shimei, and he says to the king, “Get out, get out... you worthless man! ⁸ The Lord has avenged on you all the blood of the house of Saul... and the Lord has given the kingdom into the hand of your son Absalom. See, your evil is on you...” (2 Sam 16:7-8).

I love Abishai's response, “Why should this dead dog curse my lord the king? Let me go over and take off his head” (2 Sam 16:9). But David very valiantly says, “Leave him alone, and let him curse, for the Lord has told him to. ¹² It may be that the Lord will look on the wrong done to me, and that the Lord will repay me with good for his cursing today” (2 Sam 16:11-12). Here was this pipsqueak Shimei, and David has mercy on him. Notice he doesn't take any of this personally, but brings it to the Lord.

¹ Willem VanGemeren, *Expositor's Bible Commentary, Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Song of Songs*. ed. by Frank Gaebel (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1991), 5:74

But the greatest betrayal for David was the rejection of his son **Absalom**. How David loved Absalom. But Absalom was pure evil. He was cunning, and now he was willing to assassinate his father David and overthrow the kingdom for himself. How selfish. How evil.

Jesus' Maligning

Jesus was also betrayed by those closest to him. His own disciple Judas Iscariot betrayed the Lord. Judas was the most trusted, since he held the moneybag.

And so saint, do not be surprised when great trials come your way. "Be sober-minded; be watchful. Your adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour" (1 Pet 5:8).

This personal trial, on the worst day of David's life became a Psalm sung in the Temple. Listen to verse 2 again: "Many are saying of my soul, 'There is no salvation for him in God.' Selah" (3:2). **Selah means two things:** It's a musical marking that means crescendo, but it literally means "to lift up" or "exalt" God or lift up your thoughts and think about it." Ponder this: David went through severe personal trial where he was maligning. Jesus went through severe trial in which he was maligning. You as well will go through personal trials as a believer in Christ.

David is lifting up and exalting God in his trial by bringing his deepest cares and fears to God.

Your Trials

Bring your trial to God. Don't hold onto it. If you hold on to it, it will destroy you. Holding onto trials and testings is like holding **a bottle of water**. How heavy is that water? The weight of the water doesn't change, yet it feels heavier and heavier the longer you hold onto it. Let that trial go. You weren't meant to bear it. Let it go by agreeing with God that he has a divine and good purpose for your trial. Trust that God has good in mind to come of it. Give it to God. Trust his good purposes for your life. Don't stew over your trials. Bring them to God.

2. FIND YOUR **IDENTITY** IN GOD (3:3-4)

David flees from the palace and is in a cave 20 miles north of Jerusalem, not far from Shiloh. Everything that he had spent his life working for had suddenly unraveled. What does David do when all is lost? Does he despair?

David's **identity** is not in his circumstances. His identity is that he belongs to God. He is God's king. God promised him an everlasting throne. He turns to YHWH even though circumstances would make him doubt who he is. His confidence is in YHWH, I Am.

But you, O LORD, are a shield about me, my glory, and the lifter of my head (3:3).

Sometimes our circumstances can warp our view of ourselves and of life itself. **Shimei** was calling David a fraud and a traitor. **Absalom** was saying he was a washed up old man. His best friends, like **Ahithophel**, turned on him and said God was done with him as king.

WE IDENTIFY THROUGH PRAYER AS YHWH'S CHILDREN

Do you know it doesn't matter what man's opinion is? God's opinion of you is the only one that matters. David knew what God's opinion of him was. No matter what is happening; no matter what his enemies are shouting at him, David knows who he is. He belongs to God. He is God's king.

The words he uses is son language. First he calls God YHWH. That is the equivalent of calling God Abba, Father. And look at how he identifies God as a great fatherly protector: These are things a father would do for his son. A father is a shield for his family. He's the glory and head of his family. He sustains and lifts up the head in strength for his family. And so it is if you are in Christ, you are also YHWH's son or daughter. We can call him our Abba, Father.

1. *The Lord is My Shield*

David says to God: **You are my shield**. David goes to sleep on his worst day when tens of thousands of soldiers want to put him to death. But he basically says: I know who I am: I belong to the covenant keeping God. I Am is my shield. What is a shield? It stops the enemy from harming me. God is an impenetrable shield. No enemy can harm me. I'm in Christ.

You may be struggling right now with something you can't control. Whatever it is: depression, lust, anger – it can't have you. You belong to Christ. Listen if you are in Christ, you are not a slave to sin. You are a child of God. No one and nothing can touch you in any meaningful way. "No weapon that is formed against you shall prosper" (**Isa 54:17**). God is your shield.

2. *The Lord is My Glory*

David says to God: **You are my glory**. You are my glory. The only esteem I want is that I follow the Lord. The Lord is my highest ambition, my glory. My glory means: all that I am or ever hope to be is to be identified with the Lord, I Am.

Remember, when David was a very young man, Samuel came and anointed David to be king of Israel. God called David. How does he know he's king? The prophet Samuel said, "You are king." He didn't consider Samuel a madman. In his innermost being he knew this was the Word of God. The Spirit of God came upon David when Samuel poured the oil on him. He went out and did mighty works for God. He was never the same after that day he was anointed. Jesus had the Spirit and voice come out. He did the works of God. That's us too. The Spirit and the Word of God has come to us. The Spirit is now in us. He has changed us. We are walking to a different drum beat from the world. Like David, we are elected and chosen. We have been given the ability to believe. Faith is a gift. We are the children of God.

Our identity as God's children is our glory. It's all that we are. You have to remember this on the hard days, the impossible days. You weren't made for earthly glory that fades. You were made to worship the Lord whose glory never fades. Everything good that emanates from your life comes from the Lord. He is your glory.

3. *The Lord Lifts Up My Head*

David says to God: **You lift up my head** (victory) above the surging foe. David's confidence is in God. No matter what is happening, David knows God is with him. For God to move so upon David's heart on the day of his anointing, and then say "I abandon you." That would be diabolical. God is not like that. God will bring us to final victory because we belong to him.

If we give our lives to Jesus, God promises to always be with us. We will at times stumble, but he will never let us fall away, and he will never abandon us. That is not his nature. The Bible's favorite word is steadfast love and grace. In the OT it is **hesed**. God's covenant faithfulness. God is the lifter up of your head. He guarantees final victory. You will suffer greatly in this life, but you are on the winning side! Jesus is our Victor, our Champion. We identify with him.

Don't let the world define who you are. You are God's. He is your Father, your Maker, your Redeemer, your Lord, your King, your God. He is with you. Though the mountains crumble and the earth dissolve like snow, He will always be with you. He will hold you fast.

GOD ANSWERS THOSE WHO IDENTIFY AS HIS CHILDREN

David is far, far away from God's holy hill in Jerusalem, but David had confirmation from God that his prayer was answered. Hear David lift his voice to his Abba, Father. No matter where you are, or how lost you seem to be, a father will answer when he hears his child's voice. Listen to David.

⁴ I cried aloud to the LORD, and he answered me from his holy hill. *Selah* (3:4).

So here is David in the Jordanian rift by the Dead Sea (2500 feet below sea level), on the run for his life, and here is the ark in Jerusalem, 2500 feet above sea level. David is literally at the lowest point on earth's land mass as he writes this Psalm. And Mount Zion (Mount Moriah in Jerusalem) is pictured as the highest point. The idea is that space and time and trials and tribulations do not separate us from God. He is near to the brokenhearted and he hears the prayer of the upright in heart. No matter what you are going through, because you are God's child, he will answer you from his holy hill.

God's **holy hill** is Mount Moriah in Jerusalem, the Temple Mount. It was there the Jebusites had their fortress, which is what Zion means.² The Fortress Mountain. God is your fortress mountain.

The same is true for us as it was for David. By divine right, we are God's children. We are "heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ" (Rom 8:17). That truth is bigger than your trial.

David sinned, but it wasn't the pattern of his life. His sins were grievous. But this wasn't his pattern. He kept returning back to his faith in the Lord. He was God's child. God doesn't abandon his children. Listen, if you trust God, you will never be disappointed. You may be disappointed at circumstances in this life, but on what really matters, God with me now and in eternity, God will never abandon me. That would be treacherous. God is not like that. God is good.

² John E. Hartley, "1910 ׀׀׀׀," ed. R. Laird Harris, Gleason L. Archer Jr., and Bruce K. Waltke, *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1999), 764.

A Prayer Answering God

Spurgeon said, “We need not fear a frowning world while we rejoice in a prayer-hearing God.” No matter where you are God will hear you. David was so far from God’s presence in Jerusalem, yet he received an answer. He will not leave or forsake you. You are in union with Christ. Whatever you are going through, God hears you. He sees you. He is with you. You have placed your trust in David’s God. He is the Creator God, and he is a God of grace. For him to abandon you would be diabolical. He would never do that. No, he’s with you. He’s your **shield**; he’s your **glory**; he’s the **lifter up of your head**!

Your identity is in Christ. You are not what you once were. You are a new creation. Satan would like to drag you back to that old identity, but Christ won’t allow it. You are in Christ. You are forever God’s child. Never forget that.

3. **TRUST** GOD, NOT CIRCUMSTANCES (3:5-6)

David brought this deep trial, but his eyes are not on the greatness of his circumstances, but on the greatness of his God. David trusts his Abba, Father, YHWH, even though his circumstances seem dire and fearful.

⁵ I lay down and slept; I woke again, for the LORD sustained me. ⁶ I will not be afraid of many thousands of people who have set themselves against me all around.

DAVID’S PEACE

What is David’s response to this shame, this humiliation, this terror that now has come upon him? Does he despair or take his stand in his own strength? Does he call to his generals that his army might be rallied for battle? Does he call down legions of angels to destroy his foes? Is it not his destiny to rule over the nations? Is it not his to judge the world, to strike down his foes? What does the anointed King of the LORD, do? He trusts in God. He looks to God. **David refuses to be overwhelmed by his circumstances.** He is so at ease with God’s care over him, that he **sleeps** and gets sweet rest. The **Lord** holds him up and **sustains** him.

The whole of Psalm 3, but especially verses 5-6, is a real-life drama illustrating Philippians 4:6-7: “Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all comprehension, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.” David cried out to God in prayer, then he went to bed—not in the palace, but camped in the wilderness—and was able to sleep through the night.

A King Must Never Sleep

In the ancient near east, a king would never sleep without a lookout. You would always have someone watching out. The motto was “trust no one.” Remember when Saul went to sleep and David had the opportunity to assassinate the king, and he chose not to, but said: “touch not the Lord’s anointed”? He himself knows that no king is safe.

Yet here is David, in the midst of ten thousand enemies, and he says, he can sleep because the LORD is his lookout. The LORD is his protection and sustenance. The Lord

sustains his life. The fact that David can sleep shows that he trusts in God. **We would all need a little Z-Quill, but David trusts God so much that he sleeps peacefully.**

David Rests in the LORD

David boasts in the LORD: **“I lay down and slept; I woke again, for the LORD sustained me”** (3:5). The LORD sustained me. My Abba Father took care of me. I have nothing to worry about. **“I will not be afraid”** of my circumstances.

Isaiah reminds us: **“You keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on you, because he trusts in you. 4 Trust in the Lord forever, for the Lord God is an everlasting rock”** (Isa 26:3). Circumstances change, but God never changes.

It reminds us of Jesus asleep in the storm (Mark 4:39) and Peter asleep in the prison (Acts 12). If we trust Him and seek to do His will, God works on our behalf even while we’re asleep.³

“He will not let your foot be moved; he who keeps you will not slumber. 4 Behold, he who keeps Israel will neither slumber nor sleep” (Psa 121:3-4).

You can sleep because God never sleeps. He’s always watching over you. The Bible says that the LORD **“gives to his beloved sleep”** (Psa 127:2).

JESUS’ PEACE

The early church saw Psalm 3:5 as typological, pointing forward to the true Davidic king, Jesus who laid down in the sleep of death and rose again in the morning to conquer death. This was read on Easter Sunday in the early church. Jesus **“laid down and slept”** the sleep of death for us. But he didn’t stay dead! He **“woke again”** in the resurrection, **“for the LORD sustained him”**

YOUR PEACE

What about you? Where is your focus? Grab hold of God’s care for you. **“Cast your cares on the Lord, for he cares for you”** (1 Pet 5:7).

*Turn your eyes upon Jesus
Look full in his wonderful face
And the things of earth will grow strangely dim
In the light of his glory and grace*

Someone has said, “One plus God is a majority.” Or, as Paul puts it (Rom 8:31), **“If God is for us, who is against us?”** As he goes on to say, even if we are like sheep for the slaughter, **“in all these things we overwhelmingly conquer through him who loved us”** (Rom 8:37). Oh, what **sweet sleep** we have when we trust in our loving heavenly Father and not in our circumstances.

³ Warren W. Wiersbe, *Be Worshipful*, 1st ed., “Be” Commentary Series (Colorado Springs, CO: Cook Communications Ministries, 2004), 22.

4. **PRAISE GOD FOR HIS DELIVERANCE (3:7-8)**

You will be delivered out of all of your trials. You are God's precious treasure. He calls you the "jewel in his crown," the "apple of his eye," and the one over whom he "shouts with joy."

Praise God and Rest in His Forgiving Love

Whatever is happening to you as God's child, it is not condemnation. David deserved God's wrath, but he got his mercy. David had been an **adulterer** and **murderer**. The reason Absalom was running wild, a traitor to his own father was David's own sins and wrong doing. David had been a neglectful father to his children. Remember Amnon was David's oldest son. David shepherded the nation but neglected his own son. His son Amnon became a predator and raped his sister Tamar. Absalom became jealous and killed Amnon. David withdrew himself from Absalom instead of holding him accountable. He didn't want to deal with his son Absalom. He finally allowed him back into the capital city, but it was too late. Absalom had a plan to reject and assassinate his father and take over the throne.

Yet David doesn't go to God and say, "This is my punishment." We have the record of Psalm 51, where we know David had a very repentant heart. David is now walking rightly with God, and he calls out to God for help and assistance. Instead David says, "Arise, O LORD!"

⁷ Arise, O LORD! Save me, O my God! For you strike all my enemies on the cheek; you break the teeth of the wicked. ⁸ Salvation belongs to the Lord; your blessing be on your people! *Selah*

The enemy starts with saying "The Lord will not deliver him." And here David says, *Deliver me!* "**Arise Lord! Save me, O my God.**" Remember they said, "There's no help from God for him"? Now he's saying "**Salvation belongs to the Lord.**"

PRAISE FOR GOD'S DEFENSE

David says, "**Strike my enemies on the cheek.**" What is David saying? He's saying, "**Make them defenseless.**" If you are able to strike the enemy on his cheek, then he has no weapons or defenses. Take away all the enemies' defenses. Make them weak and vulnerable.

Then he says, "**Break the teeth of the wicked**" so they will **stop their mouths** saying God has abandoned me and will not help me. David prays that God would take away their ability to harm and even speak against him.

PRAISE FOR GOD'S BLESSING

Salvation belongs to the Lord. David concludes with a praise: "Deliverance belongs to I Am." David prays for God's blessing. And we can truly conclude that David's blessing is upon us. "**Salvation belongs to the Lord; your blessing be on your people!** *Selah*" (3:8). *Selah!* Think about this. Lift up God in this. Lift up your thoughts to God. *Selah!*

David is writing not only of himself, but of his Lord, his King. David is not any man or everyman, he is the king of Israel. In his religious character we see something of the character of Christ. Yes, the Spirit of Christ was speaking to and through David as he sung this Psalm. We are seeing something of the true nature of blessing, the true way of the Lord that is opposed to the way of the wicked, the true character of the salvation and glory that is ours in Christ. We are seeing something, already, of the way of the Cross of Christ.

Because God did not leave Christ under the power of his enemies, but raised him up and delivered him, lifting his head, we are blessed. Because salvation belonged to the Lord, the God who crushed the Serpent's head through the death and subsequent resurrection of Christ, the everlasting blessing of God rests upon the people.

Conclusion

God answers prayer. He has a purpose for every one of your hard days. You are his child. Never forget that. Remember as Paul says in **2 Corinthians 4:17**, "For this light momentary affliction is preparing for us an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison." God is working behind all the storm clouds.

The Conversion of Tony Alagna

For years Danette Barclay has prayed for her father to be saved. We've all been praying. I heard that he was now largely unresponsive, so I was giving up hope. So many times Danette and Gavin witnessed to her father. So many times he pushed it away.

This week I visited Tony. We have all prayed for him. He had been unresponsive and unable to hold a conversation for quite some time. But on Friday when I visited him, it was as if Jesus was at his bedside. He was wide awake. His first words to me were: "Matt, I'm dying." I said, "I know you're dying. You need to prepare to meet Jesus."

I said, "You are a great sinner."

Tony said, "I have so many sins."

I said, "Coming to Christ is simple. You need to come as a child. You need to put away your pride and repent. Leave your sin behind." He said, "I want to come to Jesus."

I shouldn't have been, but I was shocked. What? This is what we prayed for!

I said, "Tony, you must receive Christ as Savior and Lord and Master. He is your King and he can tell you what to do. Do you receive him as Lord and Master?"

Tony said in such a whisper, "I do." He had lost his voice so we were both almost nose to nose so I could hear him.

I said, "Do you trust Christ died for your sins? Do you believe that your sins are nailed to his cross?" He said, "Yes, I do, I do."

He said, "But I have so many sins." I told him that there is no sin so great that Christ cannot forgive it. That's why Jesus died. He took the full wrath of God for your sins.

Tony said, "I believe that." Again, I was shocked and rejoicing.

Then Tony looked at me and he said, "Matt, why did it take so long?"

I said, "Tony, you were a hardened sinner. You were a harsh man. God had to humble you. You've been paralyzed all these years. All the pain and suffering has been for this moment to humble you."

“But I have doubts,” Tony said. I said, “Tony we all have doubts because our sin is so great. But Jesus paid for all your sin. He’s cleansed you. You are clean. The record of your sin is gone, and your name is written in the Lamb’s book of life.”

Then I told him the story of the thief on the cross. “Tony,” I said, “When Jesus was crucified, there were two thieves hanging next to Jesus. One mocked him, but the other said, “Remember me when you come into your kingdom” (Lk 23:42). Jesus turned to him and said, “Today you will be with me in paradise.””

I said, “Tony, you are like that thief. You lived your whole life against the Lord. You’ve been hard toward him. But now God has humbled you. For the thief, it took a cross to humble him. For you it took decades of being paralyzed, and you lying here on your deathbed. But praise the Lord, you are now in the Kingdom. You are my brother in Christ.”

I tell you that story because there are many hard days. David went through these hard days, but God’s plan and purpose was never in doubt. David’s seed would not go through his oldest two sons, Amnon or Absalom. It was God’s plan to for Jesus Christ to be born in the line of David’s son, Solomon.

These hard days have a purpose. Behind every dark cloud in life is the sunshine of God’s smile. You are God’s child. God promises to answer you. Focus on him, praise him because his great blessing is upon you!