

**Sermon**  
*Psalm 3 – A Prayer of Deliverance*  
The Psalms of Summer

Please open a church Bible to page 537 as we look at Psalm 3 and let me pray for us.

**Illustration**

One day last year I was introduced to Dave about 10 minutes before the church service was about to start. He was visibly shaken and quick to tell me that he was in desperate need of help. He had brought his partner and their young son to the church because they were in a bit of trouble. He eventually told me the Rebel bikie gang was after him and his life was on the line.

Dave didn't look like a regular church goer, or that he wanted to sit through a church service, so I lead them to an office and let them settle with coffee and a glass of milk for his boy. And after hearing a little more of his story and hearing how rough the night before had been, I offered to pray with him. That's when he said to me, "Man, I've been praying!! ... I've been praying!!"

Where do you go when you are in deep distress? Where do you turn when you feel like there's nowhere else to go to? Who do you pray to when serious trouble comes your way?

Well, we know that troubles are part and parcel of life in this world. We know that it doesn't matter if you are a Christian or a non-Christian, we suffer consequences of bad decision, and we even suffer innocently at the hands of others. Suffering is a given in this world. And as Aussies, most of the time we battle through these difficulties with our chin up.

But what happens when our world completely caves in and our life is on the line, like what I saw in Dave's eyes? Where do we go to find hope when we are desperately hopeless?

**1. Context of v1-4**

Psalm 3 is set at a time when King David's life was on the line. The title of this Psalm, which is part of God's word, tells us that this is "A Psalm of David. When he fled from his son Absalom". The situation is explained more clearly in 2 Samuel chapters 15-18, and it's a very sad account.

David was very proud of his handsome son, Absalom, like most dads are proud of their handsome sons, and he was also very generous with him. You might even say he was a little too generous. And it seems that Absalom, whose name means 'Father of peace', had been plotting to violently depose his Father to become King of Israel. So when King David received a message (2 Sam 15:13) that the hearts of the people of Israel were with his son Absalom, David knew that it was now or never. He had to flee Jerusalem to escape his violent son.

2 Samuel 15:30 tells us that as David left the city with a small band of supporters, he travelled east barefoot, through the Kidron Valley and up a small mountain they call the Mount of Olives. In verse 30 we are told twice that David and his followers covered their heads and wept as they walked.

I've never had the chance to travel to the middle-east, but I am told that if you stand on the Mount of Olives and look directly west at the setting sun you would have a beautiful vista of the old city of Jerusalem along with the temple. And this is the setting for Psalm 3, read,

“<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.”

It was desperate times for David, fleeing for his life, not knowing whether this day will be his last. To him it seemed that his enemies were coming at him from all directions whichever way he looked. But for King David, he knew something of the God he was praying to. And as David gazed over the valley at the enemies that pursued him, we notice that something changes his focus, as he sees the holy mountain, the dwelling place of the One on whom he calls. Verse 3,

“<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.”

Although King David is faced with serious threats all around him, he is remarkably confident in this God who his enemies say “...will not deliver him.”

It has become more and more apparent to me in recent years how much the world around us mocks Christianity. It seems that every chance the media get to dig the knife into a Christian or into the church, it grabs with two hands. And so it's become very difficult to speak up as a Christian within our network of friends or even in our families.

In fact at a recent night out, after I mentioned I was a minister, I was asked by a bloke what I thought would eventually happen when the church disappeared. It was if he was saying that not even God could rescue this disaster. Many around are saying of us, God will not deliver us.

But the promises of God throughout scripture are very precious when the chips are down.

David had not become king because of his strategic election campaign. God had brought him each step of the way, and if God was with him then God would remain faithful to his promises.

Verse 3,

“<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.”

Absalom may be the next-in-line to the throne, but it is the LORD God who rules from his holy mountain, and it's God who still calls the shots. He is the one who is in control. For Dave the threat is very real, but he need not doubt God's plan.

## **2. Confident rest of David in v5-6**

Verse 5 and 6 our Psalm 3 reveal the extraordinary confidence that King David has in the deliverance of God. After a day of absolute treachery, David had committed it all to God in prayer and was then able to rest well that night. Verse 5,

“<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.”

I know in my own life I have had significant periods of sleeplessness due to anxiety, and it can be enormously debilitating. And although David's extraordinary confidence seems almost impossible at this moment, it's important to see that this restful response is a gift from God. God doesn't want David to be burdened by the treachery that rages on around and about him. God wants to answer his prayer and grant him what he needs at this time.

This reminds me of Philippians 4:6, an essential memory verse for every Christian, which says, “Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God.” Prayer must be our first port-of-call when we are faced with the difficulties of life. And although we may not experience the amount of comfort David did in this instance, we must remember to bring all our concerns, small and large, to the God who can deal with them all and is in complete control.

Dave had good reason to be stressed in that moment, but he also had good reason to be confident in God, who will always remain faithful to his promises.

### **3. Deliverance comes from the LORD in v7-8**

The final two verses of this Psalm, verse 7 and 8, show a complete turnaround from the beginning of the Psalm. At a time when many are saying, “God will not deliver...”, salvation is shown to come from God and God alone. Verse 7,

“<sup>7</sup> Arise, Lord! Deliver me, my God! Strike all my enemies on the jaw; break the teeth of the wicked.”

David prays that the weapons of his enemies might be rendered useless against him. And he knows that it is only God who can help. Verse 8,

“<sup>8</sup> From the Lord comes deliverance. May your blessing be on your people.”

As David kneels on the Mount of Olives, praying about the desperate situation he finds himself in, he proclaims what he knows is true, and that is that “Salvation comes from the Lord.” Notice he doesn’t ask that he be reinstated as King. Or that he son Absalom might stop what he is doing. He doesn’t seek to tell God how things should turn out, rather he trusts that God will do the very thing he has always done. God will deliver his people.

I was chatting with someone earlier in the week and they reminded me of the vision that the apostle John has in the book of revelation.

In Rev 7, John tries to describe what he saw in a vision he had of heaven. At one point he says,

“<sup>9</sup> After this I looked and there before me was a great multitude that no one could count, from every nation, tribe, people and language, standing before the throne and in front of the Lamb. They were wearing white robes and were holding palm branches in their hands. <sup>10</sup> And they cried out in a loud voice: “Salvation belongs to our God, who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb.””

The very nature of God’s relationship with his people is summed up in these words. Our God is a god who saves. As Psalm 3 puts it, “From the Lord comes *deliverance*”. And so although King David’s enemies say that God will not deliver him, David knows that salvation is found nowhere else. “From *the Lord* comes deliverance”. And the deliverance of God’s anointed king will mean salvation and blessing for the chosen people of God.

Psalm 3, is a song of praise and thanksgiving for the rulers of Israel and the people of God. And Psalm 3 reminds us of the character and nature of God and his relationship with his people. When we face times of desperate need, we can remember “Salvation belongs to our God, and his people can rest confidently in Him”, like King David, that night he went barefoot on the Mount of Olives.

But can I ask, what should we expect when we ask for God to deliver us in our time of need? Will God always protect us from the immediate danger we face? Will God always heal us from the terminal diagnosis we’ve been given? Will God always restore our position or our wealth when we have lost everything?

Well, I actually don’t think Psalm 3 teaches us that God will save us from all the threats and dangers we face. In fact, although Psalm 3 is set at a specific point in Israel’s history, I actually think it points forward to another point in history.

You see, about 1000 years after this event happened, Jesus, one of King David's descendants, also left Jerusalem with a small group of his followers and walked this same path to the Mount of Olives. With a full knowledge of the threat that awaited him, he knelt down to pray in full view of the temple of God. And Luke records for us Jesus' prayer. "<sup>42</sup> Father, if you are willing, take this cup from me; yet not my will, but yours be done." (Luke 22:42).

As God's anointed messiah prays to His Father in heaven, he lays all his concerns into the hands of the one who controls everything, the God of Salvation. But Jesus also entrusts himself to the plan of God, "...not my will, but yours be done." You see, God always has the bigger picture in view. And sometimes difficulty and even death are part of God's plan for salvation. You see, it was the death of Jesus that brought about the salvation of God's people. Without Jesus' death there would be no forgiveness of sin. It is the sufferings of the cross that brought salvation to the people of God. And so the challenge for us when we face significant trials is, will we entrust ourselves to the only one who can deliver us. Verse 8, "<sup>8</sup> From the Lord comes deliverance. May your blessing be on your people."

### **Conclude**

I saw Dave again about two weeks after I initially meet him. He was playing openly with his son on the swings in the church grounds. It was obvious that the threat to his life had passed and he was happy to enjoy his time with his son. But I wondered, had he really acknowledged the God who had delivered him in his time of need? Or had he begun to take it for granted the salvation he had received?

Where will you go to find hope when you're in deep distress? Psalm 3 reminds us that, "Salvation belongs to our God, and his people can rest confidently in Him".

Let me pray.