

- *Read through the psalm and take one verse which speaks to you most powerfully. As you dwell on this during the day, write down what the Lord places on your heart. In the light of this study, it will surely be of interest and significance!*
- *Pray for all those who need the protection of the Lord at this time because of danger. Pray that this scripture and other texts from the Easter story will strengthen them.*

Final Prayer

All wisdom and power are Yours, Almighty and everlasting God; You govern the seasons, You rule over all kings and governments, You give gifts to Your chosen people, You reveal the secrets of the Universe, and You know the moral difference between 'darkness and light'. We give you thanks and praise for Your wisdom and power, almighty and everlasting God! AMEN

Psalm 3

No: 9 Week: 186 Monday 6/04/09

Prayer

Lord Jesus; sometimes we feel held down, and are unable do what we would want to do either for ourselves, or for you. At such times, give us the grace to accept the wisdom of Your guidance, especially if enemies must be defeated or barriers broken down before we can do what we know to be right. Lord Jesus, You show us the way, You show us true life, and You are our true hope. We praise You and thank You for You direction and help; AMEN

Other Prayer Suggestions

Weekly Theme: Charity

This week, we recall what Jesus did freely for us. Pray that God's people will demonstrate the love of God through being willing to give freely to those in need around the world.

On-going prayers

- *Give thanks for what Jesus did for us in the days before He died*
- *Pray for women, men and children who suffer from abuse*
- *Pray for leaders of nations who must deliver on G20 promises*

Meditation

Praise God!

I found the amazing truth of God's own love,
A greater love than anything I'd ever known:
I found that boundaries were broken down,
That life had opened up forever by His love!

I knew that I'd received a gift of heaven,
A sense of wondrous joy within the heart;
I felt emotions rise within an inner celebration
Of my soul's elation at the eternal 'Yes' of God!

I discovered rest within the peace He gave me,
A quality of wholeness, passing understanding;
So now I hold the warmth of love's acceptance,
And dwell within the sanctuary of His 'Shalom'.

Praise God!

Bible Study - Psalm 3

A psalm of David. When he fled from his son Absalom. ³ *But you, O LORD, are a shield around me;*

¹ *O LORD, how many are my foes!
How many are rising against me!* ⁴ *My glory and the One who lifts up my head.*

² *Many are saying of me,
'he will have no help from God!'* ⁴ *When I cry aloud to the LORD,
He answers me from His holy hill.*

Selah

Selah

⁵ *I lie down and I sleep; I wake again,*

because the LORD sustains me. ⁸ Salvation comes from the LORD!
⁶ I will not fear the tens of thousands arrayed against me on every side. May your blessing be on your people.
⁷ Arise, O LORD! Save me, O my God! Strike all my enemies on the jaw; break the teeth of the wicked. Selah

Review

Psalm 3 is a short psalm, and it is yet another that arises from a situation in the life of David. In contrast to the psalms we have read in the last few days, it refers to a time when David was aging. In later life, David was regrettably unclear to his court and his extended family about who would reign in his place when he died, and there was a great deal of intrigue surrounding who would take over from him. His son Absalom took the initiative and led a rebellion against his own father (see 2 Samuel 15), removing David from Jerusalem in circumstances of dire humiliation. His eviction from his beloved city was probably the lowest point in David's life, and in understanding this, we can further understand the psalm, and appreciate how it can help us think about what Jesus went through for us and for our salvation.

My enemies are my friends!

This readily understandable setting of the psalm means that we know immediately that the 'enemies' in this psalm are not just any enemies, but people close to David. Indeed, they had previously been his loyal servants, but led astray his son Absalom. The sense of David's abandonment and loneliness is emphasised by the comment in verse 2, in which those still with him said they thought he stood no chance of surviving what had happened; they did not believe that God would help him. The rest of the psalm is David's personal reflection on what had happened and what people were saying about him, and as we have seen in the previous psalms in this series, it is split up by the Hebrew word for 'pause'; 'Selah'. Given all this, it is possible for us to make this connection with Jesus' last few days on earth. He came to the earth He had created, but in the words of John's Gospel;

'He was in the world, and the world came into being through Him; yet the world did not know Him. He came to what was His own, and His own people did not accept Him!' (John 1:10,11).

Divine help for God's Servants

Despite the heart-rending circumstances here in Psalm 3, both David and Jesus were able to receive direct divine help. Verses 3 and 4 describe this help, found in three forms. Firstly, God provides a shield of protection around His servant (Scripture calls both David and Jesus 'God's servants'). Shields are mentioned frequently in the Old Testament as God's protection, normally given to Jerusalem, and given mostly to those who remain faithful in extreme circumstances (e.g. 2 Sam 22:31, Isaiah 31:5, Zech 9:15). Secondly, God provides strength in the form of His 'glory', which 'lifts up' the head (3:3). This language is unfamiliar to us, but the picture evoked is of a strong father assisting a child who is distressed because of unexpected difficulties that appear to prevent success. The problem is therefore placed in a wider context and the Father offers assurance that what appears impossible can be achieved. Thirdly, God promises immediate answers to prayer in the midst of dire distress; 'I cry aloud to the Lord, He answers from His holy hill' (3:4). We must be very clear that this is a special promise for special times, and not a general 'I'll give you what you want' answer to prayer. In the case of Jesus, God was intent upon sustaining Jesus' spiritual protection against the enemy, of demonstrating His glory through Jesus' most terrible trials, and by answering His every prayer. Time was critical, and God would not abandon His servant.

Victory over evil,

The last part of the psalm is a triumphant song of praise to God, and it completes the poem because it offers the evidence that the Lord's servant receives the help that is offered. The shield of protection is working because the servant can sleep in safety and be fearless of impossible odds (3:5,6). The Father's glory is called upon to give evidence of the victory of right over wrong (3:7), and the answer to the Servant's cry for help is the release of the blessing of salvation upon people (3:8).

The legacy of God's assistance

You may feel that it is presumptive to speak in this way about the defeat of evil and the final blessing of salvation, before Christ, in the 'chronology' of our understanding of the Easter story, has walked to the Cross. However, just as David was able to bear himself well and make good decisions about how to handle the distressing circumstances in which he found himself, so was Jesus able to do the same. We must always remember that the Christ we see entering Jerusalem (Matt 21:1f.), washing the disciples feet (John 13:1f.), sharing bread and wine at the Last Supper (Mark 14:12f.), and both doing and saying many extraordinary things before His death, did all this with the blessing of God for all people in mind. His task was not simply to defeat evil on the Cross, but to leave behind such a trail of teaching, example, fearlessness, prayer and testimony that after His own death and resurrection, the seeds of blessing could take root in the hearts of people and spread throughout the world!

Praise God that Jesus walked the path to the Cross and did all these things, and much more that we do not know about. Satan could not touch Him except in death, but that was not enough to destroy God's intention of the Covenant blessing of all humanity through the saviour Jesus Christ. Our God is now a shield around us; His glory lifts us up and as we do His will, He answers our prayers and lead us on a path of victory even if we have to face the most terrible of circumstances. Thanks be to God!

Questions *(for use in groups)*

1. Who are the foes that fight against the church today, and against those who seek to do God's will?
2. What 'shields' does the Lord give us to defend ourselves in the circumstances of life we face now?
3. Where can we see evidence of victory for the Kingdom of God in this world, and how can we increase the glorious effect of this work of God?

Discipleship

Personal comment:

It is surely true that when we face our most testing of personal problems, our hidden strengths and genuine dependence upon God is revealed, just as Jesus' true strengths were revealed at the last. Those who avoid conflict make themselves weak, and the Bible comments in Judges 3:1 that Israel's enemies were left in the Promised Land to teach the Israelites the lessons of war, so that they would be toughened for their role in the world. It could be said that the churches of God need to be toughened by battle and the facing of problems if they are to begin to achieve again the victories of the Kingdom that God requires today. It is certainly something we should think about this Easter time.

Ideas for discipleship programme