

Psalm 3

3:0 A Psalm of David when he was fleeing from Absalom, his son.¹

3:1 Yahweh, how those who are causing me troubles have increased.
Many are rising up against me.²

3:2 Many are saying of my life,
There is no salvation (יְשׁוּעָה) (σωτηρία) for him by God.³

3:3 But You, Yahweh, are a shield round about me,
my glory, and the One who lifts my head.⁴

3:4 I call to Yahweh with my voice,
and He answers me from His sacred mountain.⁵

3:5 As for me, I lie down, and I sleep.
I awake, because Yahweh helps me.⁶

3:6 I am not afraid of ten thousand people,
who have set themselves against me all around me.⁷

3:7 Arise, Yahweh. Save me (הוֹשִׁיעֵנִי) (σῶσόν με), my God,
for you smite my enemies on the cheek.
You shatter the teeth of the wicked.⁸

3:8 Salvation (הַיְשׁוּעָה) (ἡ σωτηρία) belongs to Yahweh.
Your blessing be upon Your people.⁹

¹ In 2 Samuel 11, David commits adultery with Bathsheba and murders her husband, Uriah the Hittite. In 2 Samuel 12:1-10, the prophet Nathan rebukes David and tells him that “the sword will never depart from your house” and that God “will raise up evil against you from your own household” (vs. 10,11). When David repents in 2 Samuel 12:13, Nathan tells him, “Yahweh also removed your sin. You will not die.

Absalom is David’s third son, born to Maacah, the daughter of Talmi, king of Geshur. All other five sons born at Hebron like Absalom were from five different wives (2 Samuel 3:2-5).

After the death of the child born to David and Bathsheba, she has another son, Solomon (2 Samuel 12:15b-25).

Eventually Absalom conspires to win the hearts of the Israelites so as to make himself king and usurp David (2 Samuel 15:1-12), and then David fled Jerusalem (2 Samuel 15:13-16:14). Absalom enters Jerusalem and has sex with all Davids concubines in full view of the people (2 Samuel 16:15-23). Two men, Ahithophel and Hushai, each present a plan to Absalom to pursue and kill David, and Absalom accepts Hushai’s plan, which actually saves David (2 Samuel 17). Then in 2 Samuel 18, Absalom is killed by Joab contrary to David’s orders, and he grieves his son’s death. Joab rebukes David for grieving so much, and he is restored as king (2 Samuel 19).

In Samuel 22 & 23, David writes two Psalms extolling God for His deliverance and protection from his enemies, along with with his own righteousness and keeping of God’s ordinances and commandments, seemingly in complete contradiction to his adultery and murder. But he says that God has “guarded me as head of the nations,” clearly a reference to his being the Son of God and Messiah/King of Israel.

Cf. Deuteronomy 22:22, “If a man is found lying with a married woman, then the two of them shall die, the man who lay with the woman, and the woman. Thus you shall remove the evil from Israel.” So technically and legally, at least David deserves to die, along with Bathsheba if she was a willing recipient of his advances.

Cf. Leviticus 24:17, “If a man takes the life of another man, he shall surely be put to death.” Thus, David deserves to die for murdering Uriah the Hittite.

The challenge in this psalm is to understand properly how David, an adulterer and a murderer, not only escapes the death penalty but can claim that God will protect him from enemies and from death. The simple explanation is Nathan’s comment to the effect that “Yahweh also removed your sin. You will not die.” But how to reconcile this with God’s commandment through Moses to execute an adulterer. The answer must lie in David’s being the king of Israel and God’s plans to continue to use him up to the time of Solomon’s taking over the throne from him. And then there are at least five questions of 1) how to apply this psalm to other Davidic kings of Israel, 2) how to apply this psalm to other Jews in Israel in David’s and the other kings’ days, 3) how to apply this psalm to Jesus as the final Davidic king, 4) how to apply this psalm to Christians after the first appearance of Jesus, and 5) how to apply this psalm to believers during the millennial kingdom. [See below after the endnotes for possible answers to these questions.]

² **תָּהִיָּה מְהֵרָה רַבּוֹן זְרוֹי רַבִּים יִקְרְנוּ עָלַי** – The LXX translates זְרוֹי with οἱ θλιβόντες με, the verb form of the noun in Romans 5:3, καυχόμεθα ἐν ταῖς θλίψεσιν. Based upon the prefatory statement of 3:0, Absalom and his army are squeezing David and his army, making them feel cramped and surrounded to the extent that they are fearing for their lives.

Thus, this verse is merely explanatory of David’s immediate situation. It is a customary cry to God whom David calls Yahweh, His intimate name with His people Israel, in the midst of troubles by explaining what the troubles are. The people of Israel are rising up (קָרְנוּ) against him. He needs Yahweh to rise up and save him (cf. v. 7).

However, the fact is that God through the prophet Nathan told David that all this would happen as a result of his sins with respect to Bathsheba and Uriah. But the key is that Nathan also told David after he repented that God was forgiving him and would not require that he be executed for his sins. Thus, David knows that God has chosen to sustain his life and protect him from whatever threats occur because of this situation, so that he can write this psalm with confidence.

³ **רַבִּים אֲמָרִים לְנַפְשִׁי אֵין יְשׁוּעָתָה לִּי בְּאֵלֹהִים סָלָה** – Many people think that God has abandoned David so that his life is over. This would especially make sense in the light of their familiarity with the Mosaic Covenant which calls for the death sentence for adultery and murder. Therefore, in one way, they are right in pursuing David’s life, but they have not thought through carefully enough what God’s purposes are for David (and his line of descendants) as the Anointed One if Israel, considering the possibility that God would forgive David, set aside the commandments of the Mosaic Covenant, and continue to use him for His eternal plans and purposes that will include his son, even a different son from those who are currently alive, who will take over his throne, i.e., Solomon.

Thus, God is not going to rescue David from this predicament. Maybe they are factoring in David’s immoral actions of adultery and murder and have come to the conclusion that David has lost so much favor with God that he is finished.

⁴ **יְיָ אֱלֹהֵי יִרְדְּנָה מִגֵּן בְּעַדִּי כְּבוֹדִי וּמְרִים רֵאשִׁי** – David’s trust is still in only God, the one who will protect him from all his enemies, because Nathan has told him that God has forgiven him and will keep him alive. David is God’s Anointed One at that time, in spite of his grievous sins. God is also the one who grants David the glory of being the king and a follower of Yahweh in his inwardness, again in spite of his sins. Therefore, it will be God, not David, who makes David great in the eyes of both God and other people. On the basis of this, David need not succumb to shame and hang his head in shame in the midst of his sins, but God lifts his head so that he can glory in God and His forgiveness and

protection.

EBC – Even though the king had reason for despondency, his knowledge of God gave him reason for hope. The confidence of the king was not in his knowledge of the future, nor in the might of his forces, but in God who had installed him as king (2:6).

Thus, all authentic believers in God can know that He will protect their hearts (at least) and ensure that they persevere in their belief for the sake of obtaining God’s promise of eternal salvation.

⁵ קָוִי אֶל־יְהוָה אֲכַרְא וַיַּעֲנֵנִי מִהַר קָדְשׁוֹ סֵלָה – The LXX translates these verbs with the aorist tense, and some English Bibles use the past tense. But future or simple the present make sense also for conveying the meaning that David is confident that God always hears his prayers, because he is both a genuine follower of Yahweh and the king of Israel. Thus, all genuine followers of God in our day as believers in Jesus as the Messiah can be confident that Yahweh always hears their prayers too—and responds with help and comfort as He currently sees fit, mainly with the truth of His promises and faithfulness to all His people whom He has chosen among both the Jews and the Gentiles.

⁶ אֲנִי שָׁכַבְתִּי וְאִישָׁנָה הִקְיָצוּתִי כִּי יְהוָה יִסְמְכֵנִי – David knows that he can confidently lie down even on the run from Absalom and his army and fall asleep, because his enemies will not be able to sneak up on him and kill him. Again, God protects him—even while he sleeps and is defenseless before his enemies. God is his help, and no one else can be such—not even his own friends and supporters, because they are merely human and nowhere near as powerful as God.

⁷ לֹא־אִירָא מְרֻבְבוֹת עִם אֲשֶׁר סָבִיב שְׁתוּ עָלַי – This is most indicative of Nathan’s promise to David that God will keep him alive in spite of his capital crimes so that David as God’s Anointed One and king of Israel will find protection from his enemies, regardless of how many they are and regardless of how great his sins are. This is also in light of David’s heartfelt repentance in 2 Samuel 12:13. Cf. Psalm 51 in which David address this situation where he has committed adultery with Bathsheba and murdered her husband Uriah.

Thus, no authentic believer in Yahweh need fear anything which could snuff out his belief and render him ineligible for God’s eternal mercy and life.

⁸ קִיָּהֲבִית אֶת־כָּל־אֲבִי לְחִי שִׁנִּי רַשָּׁעִים שְׁבֹרֶתָ | הוֹשִׁיעֵנִי אֱלֹהִי – Just as David’s enemies have risen up against him and said that there is no salvation for him (vs. 1,2), he appeals to his God Yahweh to rise up in turn and save him, which he is confident will happen. David is confident that God renders impotent his enemies in their attempts to destroy him. God knocks them over with a blow to the cheek and shatters their teeth so that they are in such pain that they cannot carry through their malicious plans towards him.

Thus God is all believers’ offense against their “enemies” who could crush their belief. He is their salvation not only the final judgment but also in the meantime while they look forward to His mercy at the judgment.

⁹ לִיהוָה תִּשְׁוֹעָה עַל־עַמּוֹךְ בְּרֻכְתָּךְ סֵלָה – David now turns his attention away from himself to all of God’s people in Israel, even those we can suppose who have turned against him as their king. But they are still members of Israel, God’s chosen people, and David entreats Yahweh to bless His people with salvation, and here probably eternal salvation along with that from their earthly enemies in the ANE too.

This is similar to Paul’s call for prayers for God’s mercy be made on behalf of all men in 1 Timothy 2, knowing that God actually is saving all kinds of people at every level of society in the 1st century Roman Empire. And this would be true even today so that we can appeal to God to bring eternal salvation through changed inwardness now to His people whom He has chosen, whether Jews who are still waiting for the messianic Kingdom of Israel and beyond or Gentiles who are waiting for the messianic kingdom too with their ultimate hope in the eternal Kingdom of God in the new creation.

Possible Answers to the Five Questions in Endnote #1

- 1) How should this psalm be applied to other Davidic kings of Israel? If, like David, they are genuinely repentant of their sins, no matter how grievous, then they can expect God to protect their physical lives for the purpose of their ruling over Israel and their son taking over the throne from them. But this is only because God views them as the *bona fide* Son of God and king of Israel in accordance with the Davidic Covenant.
- 2) How should this psalm be applied to other Jews in Israel in David’s and the other kings’ days? Unless God explicitly communicated that He was sparing their physical lives as He was David’s, then they would be subject to the commandments to execute adulterers and murderers. Nevertheless, if they had authentic belief in spite of their grievous sins, God would be their “protector” in the sense that He would preserve their belief for the sake of their obtaining eternal mercy and life.
- 3) How should this psalm be applied to Jesus as the final Davidic king? Clearly, God had no intention of protecting Jesus from his Jewish and Roman enemies at his first appearance, but God will definitely protect him from any enemies during the millennial kingdom. But both these are because of Jesus’ specific role as the crucified Messiah who rules without opposition once he returns. And both of these also are true in the light of Jesus’ being morally perfect so that his enemies never arise like David’s as a consequence of his sin.

4) How should this psalm be applied to Christians after the first appearance of Jesus? Regardless of their sins, God will protect them from giving up their belief which would disqualify them from eternal life. No amount of enemies within them (their own sin and emotional instability) or without (people hostile to them and God) will be able to crush their faith. God is too powerful and too faithful to allow this to happen.

5) How should this psalm be applied to believers during the millennial kingdom? Exactly like David, they can know that God will protect them from physical death from their enemies because Jesus will be ruling over them and the whole earth from Jerusalem, so that no one will dare challenge Jesus and harm his followers, especially those living on the land of Israel and in the messianic Kingdom of Israel. In addition, God will protect their faith from any opposition even within them so that they too persevere in it for the sake of obtaining His eternal mercy and life.