

Prayer

We thank You, O Lord, for all the good things within Your world:
 You have created love, by which people are bound together
 You have made sight, sound and taste to enrich our environment
 You have filled the earth with the possibilities of joy and happiness
 You have saved the sinner and given humanity hope for the future
 We thank You, O Lord, for Your generosity is unbounded!
 Alleluia!

Prayer Suggestions

Prayer ideas

Contact a relative you have not spoken to recently, and use the conversation to inform your prayers

On-going prayers

- **Pray about worship.** *Pray for those who preach the Gospel in your services of worship*
- *Give thanks to God for the many ways that we can communicate with each other today*
- *Pray for the people of Haiti who are still struggling to survive*

Meditation

When sorrowful, because everything fails to satisfy the soul;
 Come to Christ, for His comfort and reassurance.

When troubled, because facing the truth is harder than life;
 Come to Christ, and be set free from worldly fears.

When tempted, because the Evil One has found a foothold;
 Come to Christ, who saves repentant the sinner.

When forgetful, because nothing stays in an occupied mind;
 Come to Christ, the One who holds all things in His hands.

When stressed, because what was safe has grown insecure;
 Come to Christ, for His love will soothe and pacify.

And thence remade, because the work of God will never fail;
 Still, come to Christ, in whom all things are complete.

Bible passage - Psalm 3

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

¹ O LORD, how many are my foes!
 How many rise up against me!

² Many are saying of me,
 'God will not deliver him.'

Selah

³ But you are a shield around me, O LORD;
 you bestow glory on me and lift up my head.

⁴ To the LORD I cry aloud,
 and he answers me from his holy hill.

Selah

⁵ I lie down and sleep; I wake again,
 because the LORD sustains me.

⁶ I will not fear the tens of thousands
 drawn up against me on every side.

⁷ Arise, O LORD! Deliver me, O my God!
 Strike all my enemies on the jaw;
 break the teeth of the wicked.

⁸ From the Lord comes deliverance.
 May your blessing be on your people.

Selah

Bible Study

Review

Psalm 3 describes how to deal with life's troubles. It is a simple psalm, but like so many others, it hides considerable spiritual and practical advice about how to trust God and live as His people.

The best way to appreciate this psalm is to begin with the brief sentence that comes just before it starts; it reads 'A psalm of David, when he fled from his son Absalom'. These words are called a 'superscription', and psalm 3 is the first of the psalms to have this feature, and is part of the sacred text of Scripture and should not be confused with the various editorial headings found in most modern Bible translations. Many psalms have superscriptions, and some of them are insignificant. However, many of them, as here, can give us helpful insight and background to the writing of the psalm.

Here, the superscription of Psalm 3 recalls a dreadful incident in David's life when his reign was severely threatened. As an old man, David's sons squabbled over who would succeed him, and on one occasion, his son Absalom seized power and ousted King David. It was a terrible act of rebellion, and it had dire consequences (2 Sam 15, to the end). In this light, the psalm is clearly about the victory of God's people over evil.

The psalm captures David's sense of devastation, betrayal and deception, but it also conveys something of his spiritual strength and insight. It begins with a description of the horror of betrayal (3:1-2), but turns swiftly to the glory of God's presence (3:3-4) which brings peace (3:5,6), before the last two verses speak of victory over evil (3:7,8). However, the genius of the psalm is not that it describes David's experience. It has been written in a general manner so that although it obviously comes from David's experience, it can easily relate to the experience of a reader. The same Lord who helped David helps all those who turn to Him.

The first stanza describes the way in which evil attacks the soul, firstly by creating panic within, 'O Lord ... how many rise up against me!', and then by questioning faith in God, 'Many are saying ... God will not deliver him' (3:1). All too often, such an attack creates confusion, and it is hard to know where to go. Yet after a pause, signified by the word 'selah' (3:2), David makes the one move always open to a person of faith, which is to turn to God; he cries out 'but You are a shield around me, O Lord ...' (3:3). This cry is pivotal, because it is the soul's decision to turn away from evil to God, who is the source of all good. David then prays to the Lord, as if worshipping Him in Jerusalem (3:4). Remember, according to the superscription, David had been thrown out of Jerusalem and longed to return, so this verse is like a parable of the soul's longing to be with the Lord.

In the second half of the psalm, David describes the peace that accompanies such a decision as like peaceful sleep (3:5). More than this, the Lord's protection has removed all fear, and the size of the enemy no longer matters, 'I will fear not the tens of thousands drawn up against me ...' (3:6)!

The last two verses are somewhat fierce, and they call on the Lord to defeat the foe. The phrases 'strike all my enemies on the jaw; break the teeth of the wicked ...' (3:7) seems somewhat violent, but it simply expresses the fact that God defeats all evil completely. However the psalm expresses this, we surely need to know it.

This is a powerful psalm, which is of great help when dealing with the pain of rejection from loved ones (as David did with Absalom). Those who are closest to us can sometimes be the cause of great trials! Yet in the midst of such ordeals the best we can do for everyone is to seek the Lord's will and be centred upon Him. It may be hard to see how everything will work out, but if we trust Him then we can have peace. We may need to do much work in order to sort things out, as David did when he had to recapture Jerusalem from Absalom, but if we keep close to Him, He will guide us through our problems even if we cannot see this.

Discipleship

Questions (for use in groups)

1. Are you conscious of enemies who prevent you doing what you believe to be God's will in your own life, or your church? Who or what are they?
2. If you were to you 'cry aloud to the Lord' (3:4), would you be able to recognise God's voice, speaking in return?
3. In your group, discuss what this psalm says about how to deal with trouble and distress in personal life.

Personal comments by author

I have always found it useful to ask for the Lord's protection, and I know that I live under the essential shield of God's love and care. Nevertheless, I have a serious physical condition that keeps me from normal work, and many people pray for me that I will be healed, indeed I pray for this myself, but as yet I am not healed! I believe that the Lord will overcome this trouble in my own life in His own good time, but in the meantime, the Lord uses this physical problem of mine for His purposes. I accept that, in order to deny Satan the chance to use my circumstances in any other way.

Ideas for exploring discipleship

- *It is part of the discipline of the Christian life to take one's stance against the works of the enemy that compromise faith. Think about this, and about how the enemy can work to compromise your own faith. Pray to ask the Lord to help you stand firm against evil in whatever form it take.*
- *Pray for any in your family who are experiencing a troubled time at the moment, and ask the Lord to bless them spiritually, and practically, as appropriate.*

Final Prayer

Thank You, Heavenly Father, for the assurance that when we place our trust in You, all things become possible; our sins are forgiven, our lives are empowered and the Holy Spirit blesses us with His gifts. Your graciousness is far more than we could ask. AMEN
