

The Lord, Our Shield

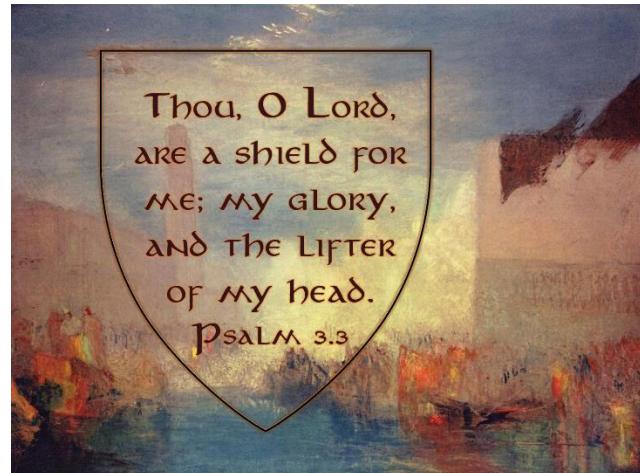
Psalm 3:1-3

As anyone will notice who reads them, the Psalms are alive with human emotion, including not only peace, love, joy, and worship, but also anger, wrath, vengeance, and judgment. Many of the psalms were written in the midst of or in the aftermath of life-changing experiences. Many include annotations at their beginning explaining the circumstances that inspired the psalm. The first of these, Psalm 3, begins, “A psalm of David, when he fled from Absalom his son.” This article is the first in a series of articles looking into this psalm. ([Visit this link](#) to hear a song based on Psalm 3 by The Brooklyn Tabernacle Choir.)

Before talking about Psalm 3, we need a bit of historical background to bring the story to life. The first part of that background deals with the infamous story of David and Bathsheba. If the story is unfamiliar, let me encourage you to read or review the story in the Bible in [2 Samuel 11:1-12:25](#).

Background 1

David was King of the nation of Israel. While his soldiers went off to fight a war, David stayed behind at the palace. While walking on the roof of the palace, he looked down on the roof of a neighboring house that belonged to one of his most trusted soldiers, Uriah. There, on the roof, was Uriah’s wife, Bathsheba, taking a bath.



David lusted after her, sent someone to bring Bathsheba to the palace, and the rest is history. David conspired to have Uriah killed during a battle, then took Bathsheba as his own wife. Rest assured that, even though he was king, David did not get away with his transgressions.

At the risk of his own life, the prophet, Nathan, publicly called David out for his sins. Even though David confessed, repented, and was forgiven, there were still consequences of his decisions and judgments to follow, leaving indelible scars as reminders.

In 2 Samuel, the prophet Nathan reported the words of the Lord to David...

2 Sam 12:10 *Now therefore the sword shall never depart from your house, because you have despised me and have taken the wife of Uriah the Hittite to be your wife.* **11** *Thus says the LORD, “Behold, I will raise up evil against you out of your own house. And I will take your wives before your eyes and give them to your neighbor, and he shall lie with your wives in the sight of this sun.* **12** *For you did it secretly, but I will do this thing before all Israel and before the sun.”*

13 David said to Nathan, “I have sinned against the LORD.” (See also Psalm 51) And Nathan said to David, “The LORD also has put away your sin; you shall not die. **14** Nevertheless, because by this deed you have utterly scorned the LORD, the child who is born to you shall die.”

The baby that was born from the adulterous union of David and Bathsheba died soon after birth as a result of the judgment of God. But there is an even more ominous warning in verse 11 that eventually leads to the text for today in Psalm 3, “Thus says the LORD, ‘Behold, I will raise up evil against you out of your own house.’”

This warning leads to the second part of the historical background to Psalm 3. Verse 11 refers to the war that follows between King David and his son, Absalom. You can read the whole sad story in [2 Samuel 13-18](#).

Background 2

David had many wives and concubines. His fourth wife was named Maacah, a princess, the daughter of a king. By her, David became father to Absalom and Tamar. The Bible says that Tamar was beautiful, but it says of Absalom that there he was the most handsome man in all of Israel. ([2 Samuel 14:25](#))

When Tamar became a young woman, Amnon, David’s oldest son through his first wife, Ahinoam, and therefore half-brother to Absalom and Tamar, following in his father’s footsteps, allowed his lustful passions to overrule his self-control. The Bible says that he fell sick with his love for Tamar. His problem was not love, but lust.

Through a conspiracy worked out by a first cousin, Jonadab, the son of David’s brother, Shimeah, Amnon tricked Tamar into coming into his house, pretending to be sick and calling upon Tamar to be his nursemaid. After excusing all of his servants, Amnon sexually assaulted Tamar. Immediately after, his lust now turned to disgust, Amnon threw Tamar out into the street in dishonor.

When David found out about the assault, he was angry with Amnon, but he supposedly loved him so much, that he did nothing to punish Amnon. Such a disgrace overlooked by their father caused Absalom to seek his own revenge. Two years later, Absalom conspired with his own servants to have them murder Amnon at a feast Absalom hosted for all of David’s sons.

To escape punishment, Absalom fled to the home of his maternal grandfather, the king of Geshur. Once again, instead of disciplining Absalom for his crime, the Bible says that David mourned for Absalom every day that they were apart.

Absalom lived in Geshur for three years until David’s Commander in Chief of the Armies, Joab (who was also David’s nephew, the son of David’s sister, Zeruiah, and Absalom’s first cousin), convinced David to reconcile with Absalom and allow him to come home.

David had already forgiven Absalom and loved him so much that he agreed. The only stipulation was that Absalom could not come to the palace or see David face-to-face. For two more years, they lived apart until, once again, Joab interceded and convinced David to allow Absalom to come to the palace.

The two reconciled, but Absalom was not satisfied with his position. The Bible says that by this time in his life, Absalom had three sons and a daughter, Tamar, named after his sister.

Absalom was the most exceptionally handsome, but his crowning beauty was his hair. Apparently it was long and luxurious and the envy of every woman in town. Absalom only cut his hair once a year, and then only because it became so heavy. Each year, after it was cut, Absalom would weigh his hair. The Bible says that it weighed somewhere around five pounds.

Absalom took advantage of his royal position and his good looks and began to work a conspiracy to take the throne of Israel from his father David. He assembled support from all over Israel, including those who served David in the palace. He also assembled a great army and, on a set day, had himself declare king over Israel in his father's old capital of Hebron.

By the time David got word that the conspiracy had broken out, the only thing he could do was flee for his life from the palace in Jerusalem. And so we see David, fleeing out the Eastern Gate of the city, crossing over the Kidron Valley into the wilderness and the darkness of night with his entire household, except for ten concubines left behind to take care of the palace.

Psalm 3

This is the picture of the scene as we come to verse 1 of Psalm 3, a picture of David, the humbled king of Israel, as he "...walked up the road to the Mount of Olives, weeping as he went. "His head was covered and his feet were bare as a sign of mourning. And the people who were with him covered their heads and wept as they climbed the hill."

And thus we come to Psalm 3, verse 1, where we hear David call out to the Lord through his tears...

***Psalms 3:1 Lord, how they have increased who trouble me!
Many are they who rise up against me. (NKJV)***

While David and his entourage are escaping, Absalom with an army of tens of thousands rapidly closes in on the city of Jerusalem.

At the moment, David does not know how bad things might be. He does not know the extent of the rebellion or if his kingdom can ever be restored. In his flight, David finds little to give him peace along the pathway to safety.

***Psalms 3:2 Many are they who say of me,
"There is no help for him in God." (NKJV)***

As the refugees came down off the Mount of Olives, they passed by the village of Bahurim, where a man named Shimei, who was a relative of the former King Saul, assaulted David and his followers with stones and shouting loud curses, referring to King David as a man of blood, a murderer, and a scoundrel.

Shimei, himself a member of the tribe of Benjamin, also the tribe of King Saul, shouted out to David, “The Lord is paying you back for stealing the throne of Saul and for all the blood you have shed.”

This only added anguish to the pain David was already experiencing from the rebellion of his son and the escape of his family, prompting him to add in verse two...

All of us have been in situations where we could see very little hope of resolution. When we are caught up in adversity, we often find it a struggle to keep our focus on the purpose of God and the love of God. When we are in such straits, what we need is for someone to come along side of us and to encourage us.

What could be more damaging to our faith than to have someone tell us that God no longer cares for us and that there is no hope that God will intervene on our behalf?

Yet as downcast and as discouraged as David may have been, he did not despair. He did not doubt. And he did not forget that the God of Israel is a God of grace and mercy who will not forsake His people.

And so we hear David pray in verse three...

Psalms 3:3 But thou, O Lord, are a shield for me; my glory, and the lifter up of my head. (KJV)

In the midst of one of the worst moments of his life, David did not forget who God truly is.

You, O Lord, are a shield to me...

David called out to God – not just any god, but to Yahweh – Jehovah – the proper name of the God of Israel, Creator of heaven and earth. He called out to the great I AM who revealed himself to Moses, who led the nation of Israel out of captivity, and who established David’s throne forever. He remembered the God of redemption, the God of hope and comfort and deliverance.

David recognized God as his shield. This word “shield” refers to more than just a barrier to ward off a sword or spear. It means to cover or surround. David knew that God was more than the One who went before him, but that God was all around him, surrounding him as a fortress.

In [2 Samuel 21](#), David and his warriors engage in battles against the giants of Philistia, relatives and relations of Goliath. In one encounter, David collapsed from exhaustion while fighting

against one of Goliath's sons. When he staggers and falls, his nephew, Abishai, the brother of Joab, stepped in and killed the giant.

Together they defeat three other of these mighty Philistines, prompting David to sing a psalm of praise, recorded in [2 Samuel 22](#) and again in [Psalm 18](#)...

2 Samuel 22:2 *The Lord is my rock and my fortress and my deliverer, 3 my God, my rock, in whom I take refuge, my shield, and the horn of my salvation...*

At least twelve times the Bible refers to God as our shield.

Psalms 5:12 *For you bless the righteous, O LORD; you cover him with favor as with a shield.*

Psalms 28:7 *The LORD is my strength and my shield; in him my heart trusts, and I am helped;
my heart exults, and with my song I give thanks to him.*

Proverbs 30:5 *Every word of God proves true; he is a shield to those who take refuge in him.*

All of us have been through adversity. Some of us may be facing an adversity as we speak. Certainly, all of us can know that we will face adversity at some time in the future. In fact, I believe that most of us realize that our country is in the midst of one of the greatest crises it has faced since the Cold War of the 1960's and 1970's.

What will be our response when adversity and persecution become our own personal burden to bear? Will we yield to the temptation of Satan to curse God or to question God, or will we, like David, sing a hymn of assurance that God is our strong deliverer?

If you are a Christian, one thing you can be certain of – Satan has your number, and he is out to kill you.

Listen to this warning from the Apostle Peter...

1 Peter 5:8 *Be alert and of sober mind. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour. 9 Resist him, standing firm in the faith (NIV)*

And remember Paul's words from...

Ephesians 6: 11 *Put on the full armor of God, so that you can take your stand against the devil's schemes. 12 For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms... 16 ...take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one. (NIV)*

David knew that, even in his darkest hour, God still cared for him and was still guarding him as a shield. David believed in God.

- He believed in the person and the power and the promises of God

- He believed in the grace and the mercy and the longsuffering of God
- He believed in God as his refuge, his strong tower, his fortress and his refuge

All who are members of the family of God are called to follow after David in the belief that, even in the midst of the worst trials of life, God does not falter or fail.

All people are called to believe in the name of the Savior, Jesus Christ, who came...

- to destroy the works of the devil
- to deliver us from the wrath of God
- to die on an old rugged cross to pay the penalty of sin so that we might have everlasting life
- and to make a way for us to be held in the everlasting arms of our holy, righteous, and sovereign God, even when our world seems to be crashing down around us.