

The Christian's Defense

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Introduction

Do you ever wake up in the middle of the night and can't go back to sleep? And what woke you? Was it something you ate or drank earlier or was it something that was weighing on your mind, worries, fears, or other concerns that you couldn't seem to shake. What awakens us at night reveals what's deep within our hearts. And more precisely, they reveal idols of the heart.

Past Regrets

These worries and fears can be past regrets. These regrets may be as small and simple as something you said to someone or in a group and you keep replaying those words repeatedly, fearful of what people thought of you. Or it could be much bigger. Like decisions you made in the past, decisions about a spouse, a job, or even your career choice. You are not where you thought you would be at this point in your life and you think, if only I would have done this instead, then I wouldn't be where I am now. You're even tempted to think that God is punishing you for those past "mistakes" or decisions. You keep looking back, in regret, missing out on the present.

Present Realities

Then there are present realities that worry us. This could be a health diagnosis. That lump you found, is cancer. Or you find out that a close friend has betrayed you, like a coworker who was trying to climb the corporate ladder and they slandered you. Or even worse, your spouse has betrayed you. For some of us, it's money. We are awakened quite often because we aren't sure how we are going to pay the bills from one month to the next. These are deep and undeniable painful realities of the world we live in. And these realities cause us to worry and fear not only the present, but also the future. Will I live? Will I make it through this? What is my life going to be like now? The concern is real. The pain is real.

Future Unknowns

Maybe you don't have a present diagnosis or dilemma in your life to cause you to worry and fear for the future. We do that, naturally don't we? Youth, you may be asking yourself, "What am I going to do with the rest of my life?" We've all been there and some of us are still there! The future can appear overwhelming. At other times we worry about others, like our children. What's going to happen to them? We look at the world and see the evil and it makes us worry. We then try to protect, guard, and shelter them from it but the problem is not out there it's in here, the heart. We don't have control. That

is what keeps us up at night. There are enemies everywhere. There are enemies, within us, and there are enemies outside of us.

If you are not currently facing any of these situations, you will. It is going to happen. There will be times when you feel hopeless, defeated, downcast, and discouraged and fearful, like everything is falling apart. This morning we are going to read 8 short verses, and in these 8 verses we are going to see how one king handled similar situations. Before we begin, let's stop and pray.

jjThis morning we are covering a short series on exalting God in life's troubles. It is to remind us of the wonders of worshipping God in all the varieties of situations of life. This morning we are in Psalm 3. In Psalm 1 Pastor Michael preached the two ways of living. Psalm 2, we read of the tension that exists between the two paths. And, in Psalm 3 we see the tension of the ways of living expressed in the life of the believer. For us to drink deeply from its fountains, we must understand the context in which this psalm was written. Let's turn to Psalm 3. It opens with these words,

¹ A Psalm of David, when he fled from Absalom his son. O LORD, how many are my foes! Many are rising against me; ² many are saying of my soul, there is no salvation for him in God. Selah

Surrounded by Enemies

Have you ever felt this way? Everyone is against you? We get a small glimpse of David's situation with the words, "when he fled from Absalom his son." But that doesn't fully explain the situation David was in. We're going to have to go back to get a full understanding of the situation. I would suggest you read 2 Samuel 13-19 to understand all the details. For the sake of time, we will only highlight a few things.

When David was around 50, Absalom's half-brother, Amnon, rapes Absalom's sister Tamar. This infuriates Absalom and when David finds this out even though he is angered, he does nothing about it. Absalom wrestles with this for two years and then he finally can't take it anymore and arranges for Amnon's death. David hears about this situation and becomes furious with Absalom. In fact, he doesn't even want Absalom near him. So, Absalom flees to another city. After about 5 years, through a series of events, David and Absalom finally reconcile.

Family

Absalom sets himself at the entrance of the city. As citizens come to the city, seeking to reconcile their disputes, Absalom says that David is too busy and there is no one assigned to this duty. Therefore, the people can't get their problems solved. In 2 Samuel 15:4, Absalom says, "*Oh that I were judge in the*

land! Then every man with a dispute or cause might come to me, and I would give him justice." With his words, Absalom is causing the people to doubt David's love for them. When they go to bow before Absalom but he stops them. He won't let them and instead he takes them by the hand and kisses them as if to express his love for them. And God's Word says, "*So Absalom stole the hearts of the men of Israel.*"¹ David, betrayed with a kiss. Absalom has begun the rebellion by wooing the hearts of the people. Now, he is getting the locals to follow him, he needs all the surrounding cities to bow before him. So he devises a plan so that he can get them to recognize him as the new king. And it works. The nation of Israel now has a new king. Family betrayal. And to make matters worse, Absalom sends for Ahithophel, one of David's close counselors. He was held with very high regard because whatever he said was treated as if they were the very word of God. He now turns on David. The conspiracy is gaining momentum. I would encourage you to read this story and the outcome of Ahithophel's words in 2 Samuel 16-17.

Followers

Can you imagine having your very own son betray you, your followers turning on you, and now a close counselor is jumping ship. I mean, almost literally, the whole world is turning against him. And for what reason? It wasn't because David had treated everyone poorly or he ruled with as a harsh dictator. No, it was because of the heart of Absalom. Was Absalom was still angry with David over Tamar or was it due to his hunger and thirst for power and control? Pride has destroyed countless people, leaders, and pastors. In this situation I would venture to guess it was a little of both. If you were David, how would you react to this situation? Would this cause you to lose sleep? We may scream, "Unfair!" Would you want revenge? As word gets back to David of the situation, knowing his very life is now at stake, he decides to flee. Remember, present realities from the beginning of the sermon? David's threat is real. As he is leaving the city with a few of his supporters, Zadok, a priest, and the Levites carry the Ark of the Covenant out of the city with them, the symbol of the presence of the Lord. Wouldn't you want that? Some tangible symbol or sign that God is with you? But listen to what David says to Zadok, "*Carry the ark of God back into the city. If I find favor in the eyes of the LORD, he will bring me back and let me see both it and his dwelling place.*"² *But if he says, 'I have no pleasure in you,' behold, here I am, let him do to me what seems good to him.*"² A moment of realization for David. If this is God's plan, then it doesn't matter if the ark is with me or not. David was an adulterer, a murderer, and a liar, a

¹ [*The Holy Bible: English Standard Version*](#). (2016). (2 Sa 15:6). Wheaton: Standard Bible Society.

² [*The Holy Bible: English Standard Version*](#). (2016). (2 Sa 15:25–26). Wheaton: Standard Bible Society.

sinner, just like all of us. David knew himself, but more importantly, he knew the Lord. He knew it was futile to try to defend himself by carrying the ark with him. If I have the ark, then I have God. Nope, it doesn't work that way. You can't manipulate the Lord. No man can thwart his plans. Do you ever find yourself trying to do this? "God if you do this then I will believe, or then I will do such and such." Or, "God just do this one thing, please!" When we are in trials, we are tempted to try to manipulate God or look for signs from Him that He is with us. Don't seek signs, seek His Word and His people. And don't attempt to manipulate with your words, as if you say the right prayer, things will change. God will not be mocked.

Friends

David left Jerusalem and went toward the Mount of Olives. Listen to that, in his betrayal, David ascends the Mount of Olives. As he was walking up the stony hillside, barefoot, head covered, and weeping, he is confronted with a messenger, Ziba, Mephibosheth's servant. Ziba lies and tells David that Mephibosheth is getting the kingdom back. Do you remember Mephibosheth? He was Jonathan's son, Saul's grandson, who was crippled after being dropped as a child. After losing his dad and grandfather, Mephibosheth has nothing. But David calls him to his home, gives him a place at the table, and then in a display of gospel love and mercy gives him land and servants. Can you imagine what David thought again to himself? But I showed him so much mercy! Another strike to his heart. In this scene, we as New Testament believers, look back through the cross to see another King, that would ascend this mount. Another King who would experience the greatest betrayal, the greatest injustice ever known to man, as He who had no sin became sin for us. Just as King David's betrayal was God's plan, so too His son, our redeemer's betrayal was also God's plan our King.

Foes

We're still not done yet. As David is entering Bahurim, here comes Shimei, another family member of Saul. He is cursing David and throwing rocks at him. Saying, ⁷ *"Get out, get out, you man of blood, you worthless man!"* ⁸ *The LORD has avenged on you all the blood of the house of Saul, in whose place you have reigned, and the LORD has given the kingdom into the hand of your son Absalom. See, your evil is on you, for you are a man of blood.* He is saying to David, see, your sins have come back to haunt you! Remember, in the beginning of the message, past regrets? David knows what it is like to have past regrets. Do you ever feel that way? Have you been in a situation, or maybe you are in one now, where you feel like God is punishing you. We look at our life circumstances and situations and we begin to think that God is making us pay for our past mistakes. The few servants David has around him asked if they could kill him, more literally, let me take off his head. God's Word says, ¹¹ *And David said to*

Abishai and to all his servants, “Behold, my own son seeks my life; how much more now may this Benjaminite! Leave him alone, and let him curse, for the LORD has told him to.” David acknowledges God’s kingship, lordship, and sovereignty. David knows intimately the Lord is God and all things submit to Him. No one can thwart the plans of the Lord and He does all that pleases Him. Then David says, ¹² *It may be that the LORD will look on the wrong done to me, and that the LORD will repay me with good for his cursing today.*” Even as his life is falling apart, he puts his trust in the LORD. Now, let’s pick up again in Psalm 3 verse 1 and 2 and see if there is more meaning to it.

¹ *A Psalm of David, when he fled from Absalom his son. O LORD, how many are my foes! Many are rising against me;* ² *many are saying of my soul, there is no salvation for him in God. Selah*

Faith

We now know what he means by “*many are my foes*” and “*many rising against me.*” Notice verse two. God’s Word says, “*many are saying of my soul, there is no salvation for him in God.*” You see, his enemies, were looking at his circumstances and seeing his trials as judgement from God. This is what the world would want you to believe. And, sadly, there are other churches who believe this too. If your life is messed up and things are falling apart, then you must be doing something wrong or that God doesn’t love you or He is punishing you for your mistakes. It can cause us to doubt our faith and even our salvation. It can cause us question God and His lordship. Don’t be me wrong here, God disciplines the ones He loves. But there is a big difference between seeing your trials as a punishment from God as opposed to possibly discipline. One is motivated by love and the other anger. Anger, or the wrath of God, was poured upon Son so that there remains no more wrath for us. Thanks be to Jesus Christ.

Sustained by God

How does the man after God’s own heart handle his troubles? Look down, God’s Word says,

³ *But you, O LORD, are a shield about me, my glory, and the lifter of my head.* ⁴ *I cried aloud to the LORD, and he answered me from his holy hill. Selah*

By Faith In

David chooses to focus on his Lord, his redeemer rather than the situation. He reminds himself who the LORD is. As he is fighting the internal battle of belief and faith, hearing the cries of his enemies, “there is no salvation for him in God”, he begins to lift his mind and heart upward. It would have be so easy for David to quit. Submitting to God does not equate to sitting around moping or doing nothing. No, it’s choice to seek Him.

His Protection

Moving from the bottom of valley, upward toward the top of God's holy hill, he reminds himself that God is his protection. God is his defense. David did not immediately begin building himself walls and mustering a people to defeat his son. No, he has learned over time, remember, it was over time, it doesn't matter how much you try to manipulate your situation, circumstances, and even people (think Bathsheba and Uriah), God will do what God will do. He has learned to entrust himself to the Lord. The Lord is his shield, his protection.

His Hope

Then David says something interesting. He says, the Lord is his glory. What does he mean by "my glory?" The glory of God is difficult to define. But think of it here as high value, riches and wealth. David knows God is of supreme value, worthy of all of his devotion, worthy of all his hope, and worthy of his trust. Think about this, if David would have asked God give him the power and all the people to overthrow his enemies then who would have received the glory? If that was his desire, David would have been seeking his own glory. Do we do that? Do you ask for revenge on your enemies so they will see you victorious? We want to be able to proclaim our vindication and be proven right. In this situation, David knew it is no use to seek victory over enemies by his own hand, that would only have glorified man. God is David's glory, God is David's hope. The weightiness of your worry, no matter how real it is, is nothing compared to the weightiness of God's glory.

His Encouragement

Lastly, he calls the LORD, the lifter of my head. What is the posture of those who are discouraged, dismayed, or downcast? Don't they hang their head? Parents, what do you do when your child has been poorly treated or betrayed by a friend and they are completely devastated, hanging their head. You reach over with your hands and you lift their heads and tell them, "it's going to be okay." You give them encouragement. We know keeping our eyes down keeps our eyes off our God. And our God is not below, He is high and lifted up. In another psalm it says, *"I lift up my eyes to the hills. From where does my help come?"* It comes from the Lord. When you feel defeated, betrayed, weak, discouraged, look to the hill, where Christ was crucified. For without the cross, we cannot come to the Father. So, it is there, the cross, where our forgiveness and mercy meet. Be encouraged, things may look bleak, but it will all work out in the end, it will be okay. Let me ask you, are these sound words or accurate counsel? Can we say that with confidence even if someone is facing imminent death? Absolutely. For we *"know that for those who love God all things work together for good,"* and nothing can separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus.

His Peace

And when David finds this peace and hope, he can sleep. Look down at verse 5, God's Word says,

⁵ I lay down and slept; I woke again, for the LORD sustained me. ⁶ I will not be afraid of many thousands of people who have set themselves against me all around.

Sometimes that's all we can do is take it one day at a time. The threat on his life was real. It was not perceived nor was it contrived. It was very real. For him, in his circumstances, I'm sure to wake again the next day was a victory. Notice David uses the words "sustained me" and not protected me. The weight of our fears, worries, and concerns can crush our spirits. Being able to sleep in these trials is a trust we long for when we are weighed down with these cares and concerns. Sometimes lack of sleep equals lack of trust. We will all face those times when attaining sleep may be a battle because of worries, doubts, and fears, but like David, turn your eyes on the one who has gone before you, the one who sustains your very breath. Trust Him. David awakes and says, "I will be not afraid." You have heard the phrase, "I don't know what tomorrow holds, but I know who holds tomorrow." Continue to take one day at a time and watch your trust and confidence in the Father grow.

Saved by God

This is what happens with David. Look down now at verse 7-8. God's Word says,

⁷ Arise, O LORD! Save me, O my God! For you strike all my enemies on the cheek; you break the teeth of the wicked. ⁸ Salvation belongs to the LORD; your blessing be on your people! Selah

A Bold Dependence

It is a cry of boldness. He is telling God to get up now and do something. The cry is not give him strength, or to give him more people, or a bigger army, but put plain and simple, to save him.

A Bold Defense

It is interesting that David uses the imagery of striking his enemies on the cheek and breaking their teeth. Why didn't he say, cut off their heads, or stop their beating hearts? Both of those analogies would translate to their death and his victory. No, he focuses on the mouth of the enemy. And we could use that word picture as a painful punch. If you ever have a tooth ache or a broken tooth then you would understand the pain. A punch to the jaw can knock any man out. Breaking a man's jaw will bring him to his knees in pain. But I think there is more here than that. What comes out of the mouth that is dangerous? Words. This all started with words. Absalom won the hearts of the people through his words. If the serpent could not speak in the garden, would he have tempted Eve? True, sin resides in

our hearts, but it's what comes out of the mouth that defiles us. You see, many of our enemies are those that speak. The voice within, you know, the one that condemns us, then there's the outer voice, the people who persecute us. And that outer voice can even be our brothers and sisters in Christ. By their words they can speak judgment on us, doubting our motives, our devotion to the Lord, and our zeal for Him. And quite frankly, those can be the most painful.

A Bold Proclamation

Finally, David ends this psalm proclaiming victory. Salvation belongs to the Lord. This is a strong reminder that our salvation, whether it be in the here and now in our circumstances or more importantly our spiritual salvation, both are wholly dependent on the Lord. We contribute nothing to it. Yes, we need to be prudent, and wise, but understand it is God who delivers and saves.

Reflect and Respond

Yes, this is David's psalm but as you know we must turn a gospel lens on it. And when we do this, this is what we see. Jesus knew what it meant to be surrounded by enemies. He knew betrayal. He knew those who doubted Him at the cross. Remember, many said, "He saved others, let him save himself, if he is the Christ of God, his Chosen One!" Jesus was sustained by God too. At the Mount of Olives, in the Garden of Gethsemane, he bowed down and prayed, in anguish. He went to His father. He knew His father was His protector, His hope, and His encouragement. But there is difference between what David could say and what Jesus did. You see, David could sleep through the night when his whole world was falling apart, just like we can too. But the reason we can is because that night of Jesus betrayal, he didn't sleep. In fact, he asked others not to sleep but to stay awake and pray. But they could not do it. They fell asleep. Jesus suffered in that garden, praying, "All things are possible for you. Remove this cup from me. Yet not what I will, but what you will." David was sustained and slept. But with Jesus, that wasn't going to be the case for Him. He was going to have remain awake because no one else could. And through this God-man, many are saved. He crushed the finally enemy, death by His work on the cross. We can now say, "*O death, where is your victory? O death, where is your sting?*" ⁵⁷ *But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.* He made all His enemies and ours, His footstool. He rules this world and your life from high and with authority. He is the King of your situation and circumstances. Even if you feel as if your whole world is falling apart, whether it is legitimate or contrived within your mind, God still reigns over your life. What's the worst that can happen to you? You die? Then what? Be in the presence of the Lord and fully understand what we only partially know now. And even if that thought is not easy to accept and understand, that's okay. There

no prerequisite for heaven accept faith in Jesus Christ. So, if you are struggling with this, keep your eyes on His Word, be present with His people, and be in a prayer. These are the graces God has given us to help us endure our trials.