

**Psalm 3: 1-8; “Salvation Belongs to the Lord”, A Sermon delivered in
Preparation for the taking of the Lord’s Supper, Delivered by
Pastor Paul Rendall on March 6th, 2016,
in the Afternoon Worship Service.**

This psalm was written sometime during that awful time in David’s life when he was forced to flee from Jerusalem because his own son Absalom had become proud and selfishly ambitious. Because of pride, he rose up against his father in an attempt to take away the kingdom from him. David’s having to flee from Jerusalem came about because the Lord was disciplining him in relation to his sexual sin with Bathsheba, and his having her husband Uriah killed, in order to attempt to cover up the fact that she had become pregnant. But God loved David too much to let him get away with this. Let us all think about this solemn fact; that the Lord loves His people enough to discipline them for their sins. Let us thank God that it is so, and rejoice; that if we are trusting in Jesus, we will not die eternally because He is faithful and just, not only to forgive us our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness, but also to chasten us as sons. This afternoon we want to look at the precious truth that Salvation belongs to the Lord; that God’s blessing is indeed upon His people. We want to look, 1st of all, at the truth that God’s saving help is not seen by unbelievers, but only by believers. 2nd – We will look at how God’s saving help lifted David up out of the mire of sin. And 3rd – We will look at how God’s saving help gave David confidence and a sure hope of victory against all of his enemies. This is what David confesses in verse 8 and we want to see it in David in order that by faith we might come to experience it ourselves; the great love, and help, and care that God exercises over all of His saints; over all those who are trusting in the Lord Jesus Christ for their salvation. We want to come to the Lord’s table with these great thoughts resonating in our hearts.

1st – Let’s think together about the truth that God’s saving help is not seen by unbelievers, but only by believers. (Verses 1 and 2)

“Lord how they have increased who trouble me!” “Many are they who rise up against me.” “Many are they who say of me, “There is no help for him in the Lord.” When a true Christian falls into sin, and others around that person come to know what that sin was; they often wrongly think that God is no longer for that person; He is against them. And so they think that they should no longer be those who will treat that person with real caring consideration; they think that they are justified in turning against them. So it was with Absalom, David’s son, and Ahithophel, David’s trusted friend and counselor. They turned against David because they really didn’t believe that God would help him. The reason that some people think that way about a true believer who has sinned terribly, is because they do not understand God’s great salvation. They do not understand that God is the One who justifies the ungodly. God is always and forever “for” the one whom He sets His love upon them, and saves them. Salvation does not come to us based upon our good works and our perfect record of doing and keeping God’s commandments. It comes to us through God’s sovereign mercy and favor, and that salvation once begun, continues on until the end of life, the end of the world, and on into eternity. It is the gift of eternal life.

Turn with me over to Romans Chapter 4, verse 1 for a moment. “What then shall we say that Abraham our father has found according to the flesh?” “For if Abraham was justified by works, he has something to boast about, but not before God.” “For what does the Scripture say?” “Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness.” “Now to him who works, the wages are not counted as grace but as debt.” “But to him who does not work but believes on Him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is accounted for righteousness, just as David also describes the blessedness of the man to whom God imputes righteousness apart from works: ‘Blessed are those whose lawless deeds are forgiven, and whose sins are covered; blessed is

the man to whom the Lord shall not impute sin.” You see, if salvation is by your works, then you would have something to boast about before God. If salvation were by your works, God would owe it to you as a debt. You have worked hard at being spiritual and keeping His commandments, and now He owes you eternal life, you think. But you do not see yourself and know yourself to be a sinner. But both Abraham and David will say to you; “No, this cannot be; that you can be saved by just trying to be a pretty good person; because God justifies “the ungodly” by faith. He justifies those who do not work, but trust in God for what He will do for them, and how He will help them.

Some will say to me then, “Well, how about that!” “I can sin, and practice sin, and if I trust in God, He will save me. This is great! No, my friend; you have not understood. If you do that, you will end up in hell. Listen to what it says in Proverbs 17: 15. “He who justifies the wicked, and he who condemns the just, both of them alike are an abomination to the Lord.” The verses that we just looked at in Romans 4 are not saying that God justifies the wicked. They are saying that God justifies the ungodly. There is a difference. The wicked person is the person who willfully and deliberately practices sin and lawlessness. He despises all of God’s offers of mercy in the gospel, which would result in his salvation. The wicked man when God calls to him in the gospel will not repent. God does not justify the wicked, and Christ did not come to call the righteous; that is, those who are self-righteous. He came to call sinners; the ungodly, to repentance, and to learn the way of the Lord. This does not mean that God cannot change a wicked person and make them willing to repent and trust in Him for His great salvation. God can save the vilest of sinners who truly believe. It simply means that when God saves any person, whatever their background, He does so by sovereign, omnipotent, merciful grace. He forgives all their sins and He imputes to them the righteousness of Christ. And this righteous covers them as a spiritual robe, when they believe the gospel. Their lawless deeds are forgiven, and their sins are all covered in the blood of Christ. And that covering is spiritually there upon them all through their life.

The grace to create saving faith in the heart of a person who is a sinner was merited by the Lord Jesus when He suffered on the cross and died there for sinners. That grace was purchased by Christ to give them a new heart so that they could savingly believe. All this comes to those who do believe, because the Lord Jesus went to the cross and suffered there, and He died there, for sinners like you and me. Let me ask you if you have really seen this? If you are a young person, growing up in a Christian family, you may look at your parents and you might, at times, see that they are people who have faults and sinful weaknesses. This is no doubt what happened with Absalom in regard to his father David. And so you may think, therefore, that you are justified in not obeying the gospel, and not coming to Christ. You may feel that if they were once worldly, and sensual, and broke many of God’s commandments before their conversion, that you have missed out on something if you don’t go the same route. This is extreme foolishness and folly. It is sinning against all that they are trying to tell you. Your parents will tell you that they once pursued the world and their fleshly desires because they did not believe in God’s judgment. But God’s judgment does not seem, in your mind, to be something which is upon you. So you do not believe and enter by faith into Jesus Christ. It seems so unreal, that no one confronted your parents about their unsaved state, except their parents, or some Christian friend. It seems strange that they were the only ones who confronted them with the truth of the Bible, that God is a righteous judge. It seems so unreal that God holds His righteous wrath against sinners in this life; that He is keeping His wrath on a slow burn now, and He will store it up and pour it out on the wicked later on.

And so you do not believe because it seems unreal. You think to yourself that you can continue to disbelieve the gospel and all will somehow be well for you. Ah me! When will you wake up? God’s saving help; His most precious gift, of everlasting life, only comes by your

exercising faith in Jesus Christ. If you really have this faith, you will enter in at the narrow gate and believe in the Lord Jesus. To be saved from your sins you must receive Him unto yourself for salvation. Faith does not ignore the claims of God and the Bible upon your life. You may not be much of a reader, but if you knew that your whole eternal destiny depended upon your believing what is written there in the Bible; would you not read it until your eyes grew dim? If you believed the truth that God was a just judge; you would. David believed God even when many around him were saying of him; there is no help for him in God. Even when many people rose up against him; among them, his own son, and his own trusted counselor, he still believed. What I am trying to say is that God's saving help came to David at the very time that many around him were saying, "There is no help for him from God." That was the way that it looked. That was not the way that it really was. There is blessed help which does indeed come from God. And it comes to us in the form of grace to save us from our sins; grace to help us in our time of need when other people are mocking; and grace to keep us safe from spiritual and eternal harm. His grace will sustain us here, and His grace will bring us safely into the heavenly kingdom. It comes to those who believe. To you who believe, Christ is precious. Oh how great are the grace and mercy which Jesus purchased with His blood and His righteousness, both before and after our conversion.

Now 2nd – We will look at how God's saving help lifted David up out of the mire of sin. (verse 3 and 4)

"But you, O Lord, are a shield (about or for) me, my glory and the One who lifts up my head." "I cried to the Lord with my voice, and He heard me from His holy hill." David is exulting in God who is the One who protected him body and soul; the One who took away his shame and reproach and encouraged him; and the One who answered all of his prayers. Do you see God in this way, and do you thank Him for giving you Christ? God was opposed to you and to your sins before you believed in Christ. You were God's enemy because of your sin. But even though so rebellious to His laws and so opposed to seeing yourself as a sinner; yet He loved you and sent Christ. Now Christ has become the life of your soul. It says so in Romans chapter 5, verses 8-11. "But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we still sinners, Christ died for us." "Much more then, having now been justified by His blood, we shall be saved from wrath through Him." "For if when we were enemies we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, much more, having been reconciled, we shall be saved by His life." "And not only that, but we also rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have received the reconciliation." Christ is our shield from the wrath of an all seeing-all knowing God. It is because He took it upon Himself to interpose Himself between us who were sinners and His holy Father who was angry with our sins. It was because He interposed that we are here celebrating and rejoicing in His victory. His precious blood flowed down upon the wood of the cross, upon which He was nailed, while the Father focused all of His righteous anger upon His person there; as though He were looking at us.

This is how He brought about our reconciliation to God. When we believe in the Lord Jesus we are not punished for our sins for all of eternity. And the reason that we are not punished is that the Lord Jesus has become our shield about us; taking the blow of God's fiery sword of judgment upon Himself so that we would not have to bear it. Setting Himself up as the target for the Father's wrath was what He undertook to do for you; for every one of you who have trusted in Him. And because he did this; then God can surround you with His favor as with a shield, as it says in Psalm 5, verses 11 and 12. "But let all those rejoice who put their trust in You; let them ever shout for joy, because you defend them; let those also who love Your name be joyful in You." "For You, O Lord, will bless the righteous; with favor You will surround him as with a shield." This divine mercy, and this eternal defense and protection is all because the Lord Jesus Christ has become a shield for you; your glory (the One that you boast in all the day long),

and the One who lifts up your head. That is, that you no longer have to be ashamed of yourself continually, because of your sins. You have been forgiven, and God will remember your sins no more. He is the One who is “the lifter of your head”. He gives you to understand that even though you have sinned, there is mercy and pardon, and your heart will live forever and you will be His. You belong to the Lord, and salvation belongs to the Lord. Let us come down front now and renew the covenant that we made with Him by faith in His finished work on the cross!

Then 3rd – We want to look, for a few moments, at how God’s saving help gave David confidence and a sure hope of victory against all of his enemies. (Verses 5-8)

“I lay down and slept; I awoke, for the Lord sustained me.” “I will not be afraid of ten thousands of people who have set themselves against me all around.” “Arise O Lord; save me, O my God!” “For you have struck all my enemies on the cheekbone; You have broken the teeth of the ungodly.” “Salvation belongs to the Lord.” “Your blessing is upon Your people. We have come to see, this afternoon, the consequences of loving discipline brought by God against that person who has sinned against Him; even though they are a believer in Christ. Some people mistake the loving discipline of the Lord for His hatred and judgment. They should not do this. But the Lord’s discipline is not hatred at all, for the one trusting in Jesus. It is an act of love in order that we might come to share in His holiness. Salvation is all of grace, and so once God undertakes the great work of salvation in saving a person from their sins; He never turns back. “He who has begun a good work in you will perfect it until the Day of Christ.” (Philippians 1: 6) The sins which are committed by the true believer after their conversion are all forgiven for Jesus’ sake, as they confess them. But a believer does need to examine their heart frequently, and especially when they come to this ordinance of the Lord’s Supper. Listen to the words of the Apostle Paul which are found in 1st Corinthians 11, verse 27. “Therefore whoever eats this bread or drinks this cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord.” “But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of the bread and drink of the cup.” “For he who eats and drinks in an unworthy manner eats and drinks judgment to himself, not discerning the Lord’s body.” “For this reason many are weak and sick among you, and many sleep.” “For if we would judge ourselves, we would not be judged.” “But when we are judged, we are chastened by the Lord, that we may not be condemned with the world.”

As you come now to partake of this Supper, will you not remember the death of the Lord Jesus for your sins in particular? Not someone else’s sins; but your own. David said in verse 7, “Arise, O Lord, and save me, O my God!” And he was delivered. But the Lord Jesus said the same thing and yet He was not delivered from the death of the cross. Instead He said this, in John Chapter 12, verse 23 and following: “The hour has come that the Son of Man should be glorified.” “Most assuredly I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it produces much grain.” “He who loves his life will lose it, and he who hates his life in this world will keep it for eternal life.” “If anyone serves Me, let him follow Me; and where I am, there My servant will be also.” “If anyone serves Me, him My Father will honor.” “Now My soul is troubled, and what shall I say?” “Father save Me from this hour?” “But for this purpose I came to this hour.” “Father, glorify Your name.” The Lord Jesus lay down and slept; not upon a bed of roses, but upon the cruel cross. He died there for you and I who are unworthy sinners. But He awoke; He rose from the dead, for the Lord sustained Him; He was pleased with Him in every respect. Death could not hold Him. He struck all of our enemies on the cheekbone; He has broken the teeth of the ungodly. In our case, He has made us a new creation in Himself. We have new teeth, a new mouth, and a real appetite to partake of spiritual things. And that is why we come to this Supper; to eat Christ’s flesh and drink His blood in this special means of grace. May we know the reality of the presence and Spirit of Christ working in our hearts as we partake of it. May our eating lead us to greater holiness. We can add nothing to what Christ has done, but we take everything spiritual from it.