

In the Morning When I Rise

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Bible Text: Psalm 3

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One of the saddest things that you can experience as a pastor in my judgment is to talk to an earnest sincere Christian who is going through difficulty and they say that they feel like God is punishing them or that God won't hear them or they start to question why is God angry with me. I'm glad to be able to come to our text this evening, Psalm 3, to be able to address that issue because the Psalms teach us that various trials come into the life of godly man, into the life of a godly woman. Difficulties will come. It is not a sign of disfavor with God; it is not always a punishment for sin. There is a recognition in the Psalms that our trials are sometimes profoundly uncomfortable and the thing that I would say about that is for us to simply recognize that this is going to be part of the fabric of living the Christian life until we go to heaven or until the Lord returns for us.

There are going to be trials that we deal with and this tells us a couple of important things. First of all, it refutes right on the surface, it refutes the idea of the prosperity gospel that God always wants you to be healthy and wealthy and to take away your problems. One of the things that I detest about preachers like that and people from that persuasion is that they will tell suffering people, "Well, if you only had enough faith, your problems would not be there." That's a vicious lie and it is not true to experience. Faith does not exempt us from trials and you see that the Lord Jesus Christ himself suffered, apostles suffered, the Psalmists suffered and so that is simply foreign to the biblical message, that idea that faith would insulate us from the trials of life. But this leaves us still with the question: what do we do with them? How do we respond to them? Psalm 3 gives us an introduction to that topic.

Psalm 3 is the first Psalm that is ascribed to David and it is the first Psalm that is set in an historical context based on the inscription. Look at the very beginning of Psalm 3, even before verse 1. It says, "A Psalm of David when he fled from Absalom his son." Now in your English text, that inscription is separated, that title is separated from the English text but in the Hebrew text, they're right there alongside with the rest of the inspired text and so we're going to treat them as a trustworthy part of the text. What this tells us is, as we kind of set the context here, is that this Psalm was written in the midst of a particular trouble in David's life, one that you and I are going to be able to identify with. You'll remember the story: David had sinned with Bathsheba. You can read about that in 2

Samuel 11 and 12. God had said in 2 Samuel 12 that he would discipline David with sorrow from his own household and much of that sorrow that David experienced came at the hands of his son Absalom who led a national revolt against his father. This is all by way of background.

I'd like you to turn back to 2 Samuel 15 so that you can see just a little bit of the context here. 2 Samuel 10. We're just going to spend a moment in this context but in 2 Samuel 15:10, you read about Absalom and it says that he "sent spies throughout all the tribes of Israel, saying, 'As soon as you hear the sound of the trumpet, then you shall say, "Absalom is king in Hebron.'" So here is David, the real anointed king of Israel and yet his son has led a revolt and has set up a rival throne. This is a serious crisis during his reign and you can see that it's not just isolated to his son, in verse 11 it says, "Then two hundred men went with Absalom from Jerusalem, who were invited and went innocently, and they did not know anything. And Absalom sent for Ahithophel the Gilonite, David's counselor, from his city Giloh, while he was offering the sacrifices," then look at this in verse 12, "And the conspiracy was strong, for the people increased continually with Absalom." This is all by way of background. You can see that there is a mushrooming problem in David's reign and that there are people that are rising up against him. That's the background of this Psalm and as you go on, you'll find that a certain man named Shimei was even so emboldened against the king that he cursed the king. Look at chapter 16:7, "Thus Shimei said when he cursed, 'Get out,'" he's speaking to David, "'Get out, get out, you man of bloodshed, and worthless fellow! The LORD has returned upon you all the bloodshed 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. And behold, you are taken in your own evil, for you are a man of bloodshed!'" Whoa. That's what David is up against. There is this expanding national revolution against his reign. People are so emboldened that they are saying that, "God has judged you. Cursed you and has abandoned you and, David, that is why you are having your trouble. It's because God has turned his face away from you." That's the background to Psalm 3.

We can turn back to Psalm 3 and we'll get into the text with it. Just with that little bit of background, here's what you want to see as we start to enter into our approach to land in this Psalm. David's response, David's reaction to that circumstance informs how we are to go about trusting God in our own trials. While there was a specific historical circumstance that David was responding to which gave rise to Psalm 3, what he is doing is he is manifesting how we respond in trust to those kinds of serious trials. What I want you to be mindful of tonight, what I want you to kind of dial in for your particular attention, is what we want to do is we want to observe David's method of responding. You want to pay attention not just to the words of the text but what it is that he is doing, how it is that he goes about responding because, as you saw from the beginning at the opening of this Psalm, he is alarmed. He is shaken by what is going on and yet by the end of the Psalm within a matter of eight verses, he's able to say, "Salvation belongs to the LORD; Your blessing be upon Your people!"

How was it that he came full circle from this alarm of his circumstance all the way around to being able to say, "I am confident in the Lord in the midst of it"? Well, here's

what we need to see among many other things just by way of introduction, what I want you to see is: with David, with biblical trust, there is an ongoing theme that as we apply our understanding of God to our circumstances, we can replace fear with faith, we can replace alarm with confidence and what you have to see to understand the genius of biblical trust, to understand the genius of this particular Psalm is that the circumstances in David's life did not change. From verse 1 to verse 8, the circumstances are the same and yet he has gone from this tribulation of soul to this confidence in Christ, in this confidence in his God. How is it that you do that? You see, our normal approach, even the best of us, our normal approach is that we remain anxious and we remain troubled until the circumstances shift back in our favor and you may not always think about it like that but a lot of times we're just kind of biding our time and biting our lips waiting for the hurricane of the trial to pass and then we'll be restored to a sense of calm in our souls. Well, that's not the way that we're supposed to do it. That is not the exalted level at which spiritual life is to be led for the believer and yet what you need to understand is that faith is not like a thermostat: you set the thermostat in your house so that there is a stable temperature and very little variation from where you set it. You set it at 73 and it goes to 72 or 74 but it's right in that realm of comfort that you live and the HVAC system just automatically rises to the external circumstances or lowers and there you are and you stay in your level of comfort. Here's what you've got to understand, beloved, this will change your life if this is new to you: that is not how faith works. Faith works and the way that we establish spiritual stability is that we have to think, we have to apply ourselves to God and there is a spiritual effort that takes place; there is a method that we follow in order to attain that level of faith. If we do not engage ourselves in this method, we will stumble, we will struggle. But it doesn't have to be that way. It does not have to be that way. What we're going to see in Psalm 3 is the path toward living a consistent godly life and yet recognizing that there is a responsibility and obligation that we have to respond to our trials in a way that brings about this result. It's very cool. It's very encouraging to see.

We're going to break this message down along the three stanzas of the Psalm: the first two verse and then verse 3-6 and verses 7-8. So here is the first thing that you see David doing. Let's do it this way: whatever it was that is on your heart tonight that came in. I know most of you come in with various burdens; there are very few of us that are just on Cloud 9 when we come in and we come in especially at the end of a day burdened by what's happened. I want you to put these things that we're going to hear tonight in that context: take what's really on your heart, heavy, weighing on your heart and that is what God has brought you here tonight to help you deal with in his word. You have a divine appointment with God's word tonight to help you respond to that in the right way. So, what do you do? How is it that we respond to our trials? This is all going to be so very simple.

Point 1: bring your trouble to God. Bring your trouble to God. What I love about the Psalms, what I love about David is that he is realistic with his problems. He does not try to whitewash them; he does not make it sound better than it is. David lives in the midst of the grind of life and he lives with God and he interacts with God and he prays to God in the midst of that grind. He is not asking for anything in these first two verses. That's what

I want you to notice: he is describing his problems to God. Look at verse 1 now, finally we get to the text, Psalm 3:1,

1 O LORD, how my adversaries have increased! Many are rising up against me. 2 Many are saying of my soul, "There is no deliverance for him in God." Selah.

Notice what he's doing here: he is not saying, "God, help me," there is not an imperative in these verses; there is not a request that he is making. He is simply isolating himself with his Lord and he is declaring what the trouble is. He is specific about the trouble and we know from what we saw in 2 Samuel, we have a sense of what was causing him to pray this way. Of course his adversaries are increasing; there is a rival to the throne that God gave to him. It is in the bounds of his own family; his own flesh and blood has risen up against him. There are many gathering around the rebel to oppose David and there are people quoted in Scripture saying, "Curse you, David. You have brought this on your own head. God has abandoned you." Sometimes we have people that are actually saying that about it; sometimes it's your own heart that's whispering that into your ear. "Maybe God has turned his face away from me." Whatever the case, you see David bringing his trouble to God, describing it, laying it out before him with clarity.

Now, here's what I want you to notice: it was very difficult for me to pass over the first two words to read the rest of the verses. Notice how this Psalm opens: "O LORD." The letters in your Bible should all be in capital letters there. That is an indication that you're looking at the divine name of God, Yahweh. That is the divine, the proper name of God and it is a very significant term for David to use. David is invoking God himself as he speaks; he's addressing himself to God. Notice this: he is not simply ruminating in his mind, "Oh, I've got these problems. What am I going to do about this? How am I going to face Absalom here?" All of that and he's not looking at his problem in a horizontal way. When you start to collapse under the weight of your anxiety, that's probably what's going on. You are simply looking at your problems, looking at those problem relationships and you are looking at them purely from a human dimension, "How can I respond to this? How can I get a solution to this?" That's not what David's doing here and don't make the mistake of transferring the poor way that we handle our trials with what David is doing here. It's completely different. The very word that opens the Psalm frames everything that follows.

So David uses the name LORD and that name speaks of God's covenant relationship with his people. It speaks of his promises to them. Turn back to Exodus 6. This is very important for you to see. This is not a generic name of God as if it were a fungible commodity, one that could be exchanged and used for different words. There is a content to this name that is assumed when the Psalmists use it. So in Exodus 6, here is what I want you to see, Exodus 6:6: this is the name that God used to reveal himself to Moses in Exodus 3:14, "God said to Moses, 'I AM WHO I AM,'" that's the name Yahweh, "and He said, 'Thus you shall say to the sons of Israel, 'I AM has sent me to you.'"" Now watch this in Exodus 6, watch how God himself describes the implications of his proper name. Exodus 6:6, he says, "Say, therefore, to the sons of Israel, 'I am the LORD,'" there

it is again, all capital letters, "I am Yahweh and I will bring you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians, and I will deliver you from their bondage. I will also redeem you with an outstretched arm and with great judgments. Then I will take you for My people, and I will be your God; and you shall know that I am the LORD your God," there it is again, "who brought you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians. I will bring you to the land which I swore to give to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and I will give it to you for a possession; I am the LORD." So right on the brink of being delivered from 430 years of slavery to Egypt, God comes to Moses and says, "I am the LORD and here is what that means." That's really key. That's really key. God goes on and says, "Here's what it means that I am the LORD to you. I am a God of deliverance. I can bring you out from under the bondage of the greatest nation on earth and it is not a problem; it is not a strain on my power to do so. I will deliver you from their bondage. I will redeem you." So there is this element of help and strength and redemption that is bound up in the name of Yahweh.

Along with that, beloved, there is this sense of spiritual intimacy that is included in that name. Look at Exodus 6:7, he says, "I will take you for My people, and I will be your God." Sometimes on Sunday mornings we sing that hymn "I Am His and He is Mine." The Lord is your God. What he's saying to Israel at that time in history, he says, "I belong to you and you belong to me. I will take you to be my people. You will belong to me. You can rely on me. You can trust me." So there is this deliverance, there is this trust, that is embedded in and wrapped around that name, LORD, Yahweh. More than that, it's a promise of provision and faithfulness. In Genesis 15 and Genesis 12, he had made promises to Abraham, "I will make you a great nation. All the nations of the earth will be blessed in you," and God invokes that as he unveils his name to his people. Verse 8, he says, "I will bring you to the land which I swore to give to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and I will give it to you for a possession; I am the LORD."

So deliverance, intimacy, promise, faithfulness. All of that is wrapped up in the name of Yahweh, in the name of the LORD. That is what David particularly as God's anointed king, would be seeing because he was on the receiving end of his own promises from God in 2 Samuel 7. So here's what I want you to see: I totally understand how easy it is to just glide over that name when you read it; I totally understand that when you read Psalm 3 as you've read it in your devotions, you go, "O LORD, how have my adversaries increased," and LORD doesn't connect much more than any of the other words in the Psalm. Here's what you need to see tonight for your own sake, for your own walk with God: this is not a casual, flippant statement that David makes when he opens it. When he calls God by the name LORD, when he addresses him as Yahweh, all of that is bound up in what he says, "LORD, my God of deliverance, my God of promise, my God of faithfulness, my God of protection, my God of intimacy, the God who loves my soul, God, that's who I'm addressing. My faithful, loving, providing God, I have a problem to share with you tonight."

What I want you to see in the rest of the Psalm is that including this instance here in verse 1, David uses that name six times in this Psalm. Look at it with me: verse 3, "You, O LORD, are a shield about me"; verse 4, "I was crying to the LORD with my voice"; verse

5, "I awoke, for the LORD sustains me"; verse 7, "Arise, O LORD; save me"; verse 8, "Salvation belongs to the LORD." Six times he is using it. Do you see it? The whole Psalm is pivoting on this name Yahweh. It's all wrapped around on that and so when David invokes the name of the LORD here and describes his trouble to him, he is doing it from a position of ultimate spiritual strength. He has the character of God in mind and he invokes the name of this great God and all that that name means when he comes and declares his trouble in his presence.

What do you do? You bring your troubles to your God. Now for us, one of the beauties of being a New Testament believer is to realize that as great as David's position of strength is, ours is even better because we're on the other side of the cross. We come to God in the fullness of all divine revelation, in the fullness of the Incarnation of Christ and we can say everything that David said and more, "LORD, you're not only this protecting, favorable, intimate God with me, you're the Father of my Lord Jesus Christ. You're the Father of the one who poured his blood for the sins of my soul. You're the Father who said that you know the numbers of hairs on my head, that if you clothe the lilies of the field and feed the birds of the air, you'll do much more for me. You're the one, O God, who said that you will perfect what you have begun until the day of Christ Jesus. You're the one who has said, 'Cast your anxieties upon me for I care for you.'" So when we have the fullness of the revelation of God in mind, we realize that when we invoke his name, it's not simply like we're starting a letter, "Dear John. Dear God, in the fullness of who you are, let me lay out my problem before you." So what this teaches us is that we have to think theologically. We have to think biblically as we go through our problems. As we deal with the most distressing of things, we have to start at this point. We have to be mindful of who it is and consciously direct the motion of our mind to this God and talk to him and to address him if we want to respond in biblical faith.

So what does David do as he brings his troubles to God? Well, look at it again, verses 1 and 2 with me. Let's go back to the text. Notice the theme of many and the multiplication of his enemies. He says in verse 1, "How my adversaries have increased! Many are rising up against me. Many are saying of my soul, 'There is no deliverance for him in God.'" In verse 6, he talks about "ten thousands of people have set themselves against me round about." So he's laying it out honestly, directly. Troubles had surrounded him, enemies had surrounded him like a swarm of bees that were just attacking him. With David, it was multiples of people, for us it might be multiples of circumstances: different things, different phone calls, different issues. One right after another, bouncing off like bullets ricocheting in our lives. What you need to understand is: that doesn't mean that we have to collapse under the weight of it. For David, the battle was both physical in a military sense; it was spiritual because men were trying to undermine his confidence in God. But here's what I want you to understand about your trials. If I could say anything else for you to hear tonight, this would be one of them. I've got a lot of stuff I want you to hear so why would I isolate it to one thing? That would be silly. But I want you to think about your trials tonight like this: in your trials, here's what's happening – I wish I could stick my fingers in and whistle. Bonny Mills can do that really cool. I can't. I never could. But God is whistling to you in your trials and he is whistling to you to come to him. God is calling you through your trials. Look beyond the external circumstances which disturbe

you. You must look beyond the horizontal, the human element of what is troubling you and step back from it and recognize what is going on. God has brought that pressure to bear on you with the intention of drawing you closer to himself. Those troubles are now a vehicle to greater spiritual intimacy with God. Your most severe trials and I say this gently knowing some of the trials that are represented in this room but it's true nonetheless, your most significant, heart-wrenching trials are God ordained instruments whereby he intends to draw you closer to himself.

All of a sudden, beloved, that changes everything. Now it's no longer about the human instrumentalities that are going on and the human problems that you have, now you have a transcendent purpose. You have an ennobling motivation in your trials that, "Here is my opportunity to grow closer to God than I have been before." There is no question about that and even if you're dealing with a trial that has been tormenting you for 5, 10, 20 years, now is the time to realize all of this time is for this one purpose, it's to uniquely focus me on this covenant-keeping, intimate, loving, faithfully providing God. That's the purpose for me. It's not about getting a solution to my human dilemma, this is about me getting closer to God. You'll see this as we go on in Psalm 3. So when we say bring your troubles to God, we're saying to not just dump it all out without thinking about it, the key word in that is bring your troubles to God and to know who this God is that you are talking to when you pray.

Look at the end of verse 2, "Many are saying of my soul, 'There is no deliverance for him in God.'" Then there is that word that we often pass over, "Selah." I appreciated the fact that Andrew on Sunday morning read that word. A lot of people don't. In this Psalm in particular which is called a Psalm, the Psalms are poetry that were intended to be put to musical accompaniment. They were poems put to music, you might say. This word "Selah," we don't know exactly what it means but some people think that it has an idea that there's a musical interlude maybe that would take place at this point when it was originally written. We don't really know exactly what it precisely meant. We can say this though: it calls attention to what was just said. In one way or another, it calls attention to what was just said. It's like saying, "Take a time out right here. Pause for a moment and think about what was just said. Don't rush through this part. Take some time to step back and think."

So let's do that, step back for a second and think about what David was facing because it will give us perspective about what we're facing today. David's troubles were coming at the hands of his own son. His own son whom he loved, was an instrument of rebellion. Think about that and think about what it means for some of you in your family lives. It's not a surprise that if David, a man after God's own heart, would find trouble welling up within his own household, it is not an indication that God has abandoned you if trouble has risen up in your own household. If your nearest and dearest have somehow started to betray you, have turned upon you, well look at this Psalm and realize that you have an empathetic Psalm that you can turn to and in the inspired words of Scripture you see something with which your soul can identify, that there is a strength and an ennobling aspect to realize that even family can make life miserable, can make life devastating, can reduce you to tears of untold depth. What I think that says to us tonight, far from those

who say, "Your trials would go away if you just had enough faith," I mean, I reject that out of hand. At the other end, the exact opposite is true. What you have in that depth of trial that you're weeping over at night is you have your invitation into this Psalm and you can say to yourself, "If there's nothing else in Scripture that I can turn to here tonight, I can turn to this word of King David, he who was chosen by God, and realize that here is an inspired writer of Scripture who understands the dilemma of my heart, who understands the tears that wet my pillow," and you find in that, "Ah, here is an open door. Here is a receptive entrance into heaven itself through Psalm 3." Selah. Selah.

Now, in light of the fact that David could bring his troubles like that to God, Selah, I can bring my troubles like that to God as well and know that this faithful, covenant-keeping, intimate, providing, protecting God will receive me favorably just like he did David. It's just the opposite, it's not that heaven is closed because of my lack of faith, heaven, God is open to me because of my broken heart. Jesus said, "Come to me all ye who labor and are heavy-laden and I will give you rest." He does not despise the broken heart. He welcomes it into his presence. Is that great? Is that not wonderful to know that this LORD, this Yahweh is like that? And Christ is Yahweh in human flesh and he came to redeem us, to bring us into a relationship like that? I mean, praise God! Praise God! We're not cast adrift on a sea without rudder, without oar, and just tossed about by circumstances. God is in the boat sympathetic with us and bids us to come. Hallelujah! I love that God. I know that God through faith in Christ.

Now what do we do? David has declared it but we're only two verses into it. There must be something more to how David did it. Point 1 was: bring your trouble to God. Point 2 now: bring your God to the trouble. Bring your God to the trouble. Watch what David does. He shows us further how to trust God in our trials. The first two verses were about David declaring his trouble to God but now verse 3 is David calling to mind, speaking to God, describing to God who he understands God to be. It is a prayer grounded in the truth of the attributes of God. Look at verses 3-6 with me as we talk about bringing your God to the trouble. Verse 3, notice the contrast, "I've got all these people rising up against me," verse 1 and 2, verse 3, "But, But You, O LORD, are a shield about me." All of a sudden he's in a completely different realm. This pivot between verse 2 and verse 3 is enormous. Now his focus is no longer on the horizontal problem, now he is defining God, he is remembering and bringing to bear the character and the attributes of God to bear on the situation. He's describing God in personal terms. He is declaring, he is describing his own relationship with God because of who God is. "But You, O LORD," in sharp contrast to my enemies,

3 But You, O LORD, are a shield about me, My glory, and the One who lifts my head.

In this section, verses 3-6, David sets aside his sorrow and meditates on what he knows is true about God. He uses the metaphor of a shield, "God, you're a shield." It's a statement of protection. The shield protected the human soldier in battle. It protected his vital organs and David says, "God, you are like that to me. You are my shield. You are my protection in the midst of my enemies. You are my protection in the midst of

adversity." God had promised David to establish his kingdom and now he will protect and establish and perfect that which he had begun. Notice, while David is experiencing discipline for his sin with Bathsheba here, that had not forfeited his protection from God and so sometimes people will say, "Well, you know, I'm dealing with the consequences of my own sin. I'm on my own here." No. No. No, that's not true. That's not true. You are not alone. You are not isolated. You are not severed from the help of God even if as a Christian you are dealing with the consequences of your sin, you are still able to call upon the faithfulness of God, the goodness of God, the protecting hand of God, in the midst of those consequences. He won't wipe away the consequences; he won't take all of that away. You know, if you've spent yourself into more debt than you can pay back, it's not magically going to go away but that does not mean that you cannot call on God with the same level of protection and trust.

David says, "God, in the midst of this, in the midst of these circumstances which I realize are a consequence of my long ago sin, still in this, you're a shield. You're my protection. You're my glory," in the sense that God is the one who bestows dignity and gives purpose to David's reign, to David's life. "You're the lifter of my head." Think about body language. People speak through their body language, don't they? You can see it in athletics; you can see it in people. When someone is hanging their head, they're discouraged, they're droopy, they're down. Look back at 2 Samuel 15 for just a second because I want you to see how much this is tied to David's life. 2 Samuel 15, "And David went up the ascent of the Mount of Olives, and wept as he went, and his head was covered and he walked barefoot. Then all the people who were with him each covered his head and went up weeping as they went." His head was literally drooping. He was literally weeping. The sorrow in his heart was intense and yet as he brings God to bear on his situation, he says, "God, you're the one who lifts my head. I find in you the confidence and the encouragement and the grace and the stability, the firmness of purpose that allows me to rise up and be firm once more. When my focus," David says, "when my focus is turned to you, I find spiritual strength that puts a bounce in my step and puts my chin back up again. You're the lifter of my head. You give me confidence that I did not have before when I think rightly about you." He's bringing God to bear. He's talking through. He's praying to God, the nature of God and who God is in relationship to his people and he finds strength in that.

Verse 4,

4 I was crying to the LORD with my voice, And He answered me from
His holy mountain. Selah.

"I prayed and God answered. I have a lifetime of experience of this," David says. "I pray and God answers. God provides and so I have the character of God, I have a proven track record of God responding to me in prayer, why am I downcast? On what basis would I remain discouraged? There is hope in the midst of these adversaries because God is right here in the middle of it with me and he is my protector, he is my glory, he is the one who gives encouragement and strength to me." Look at the end of verse 4, "Selah." Park it here. Pull off to the side of the road and think for a moment here.

What is this saying? What are those two verses saying? It's this and I can't tell you how important this is: God's character redefines our perspective and, beloved, it's this and I fear for you lest you are too much like me, that prayer sometimes simply becomes a matter of airing our grievances, airing our complaints, airing our worries and anxieties and kind of skipping to the end saying, "God, somehow fix this." Have you noticed, I know you know what I'm talking about, have you noticed that when you pray that way, it really doesn't do too much for you? That it's really not that much help? That if you simply pour out your problems and say, "God, you've got to change it," and you leave it at that and you get up that your heart really isn't all that encouraged? That you really haven't been helped? The bounce hasn't been restored to your step? Selah. Here's why. Here's what we miss in our utilitarian approach to God, in treating him like a vending machine who just gives us whatever button we push so that we get the product dumped into the tray that we want, we totally bypass the grandeur of the one to whom we are speaking and that, my friends, is where most of us are going to fail in prayer. We're so eager to get the result that we want that we don't even realize how selfishly we're praying. Selfish because we have bypassed the element of worship and adoration of the God to whom we're praying. When you are praying, the most important thing is not your problem. The most important thing when you are praying is the one to whom you are praying. And for prayer to be meaningful, you have to step back and give God the credit and the glory and the recognition of which he is so preeminently worthy.

David, with a national revolt on his hands, stops his description of his troubles and goes to a more important, a more strategic level and says, "God, in the midst of this, you're my shield." God, we say now today, "God, in the midst of my broken heart, in the midst of the personal betrayal that I have experienced at the hands of those closest to me, God, they may have betrayed me but, God, not you. God, you are my shield. God, you are Yahweh. God, you are the Father of my Lord Jesus Christ. You are the one who interceded on my behalf at Calvary. You're the God who is bringing me to glory. You will usher me into your presence. God, I worship you. Forget about my problems, God. Alright now, I am preoccupied with your glory and your goodness to me which is independent of my circumstances and so I can dwell on your goodness, I can dwell on our mercy in prayer and not connected to whether you give me what I would like to have or not." Beloved, embrace that spiritual challenge in your heart that says, "Whatever I've been in the past, whatever people may be doing around me, whatever my sorrows may be, whether anyone else is like this or not, I personally am going to be someone in prayer who devotes extended, unqualified, unhurried time to simply thanking God, worshiping God, praising God and acknowledging him for who he is because that's more important to me than anything. God, not only are you the lifter of my head, you're the Savior of my soul. Lord Jesus, not only are you the propitiation for the sins of men, you are my personal Lord, my personal Savior. You loved me and gave yourself up for me," Galatians 2:20, "Lord, I am so lost in wonder, awe and praise. Why was it that I started praying anyway? I can't even remember. I've forgotten what I wanted to talk about, Lord, because I have just been captivated by your radiant beauty and I love you and worship you for who you are."

Oh beloved, suffering Christian, discouraged and weighed down, look at what this text is saying and realize that God is placing a call on your heart tonight saying, "Be this kind of Christian. Be this one who worships me, who engages me, who praises me," the Lord, so to speak, says. Be the kind of Christian who worships and loves God like that: on your knees, alone with him and not simply view him as the dispenser of change in earthly circumstances. Distinguish yourself from the sick, shallow dimension that passes for evangelical Christianity in the day and age in which we live. Separate yourself out and be someone different. Be this kind of Christian and here's what happens. There is a byproduct of what happens when you bring God to your troubles. It's not that this is why we do it, it's a byproduct of it. We do this, we pray this way, we engage our hearts and our affections and our thinking this way because God's worthy of that and we love him for our salvation. We just love him because of who he is but when we do this, something happens.

Look at verse 5. David, with enemies all about him, says in verse 5,

5 I lay down and slept; I awoke, for the LORD sustains me.

Rather than tossing and turning and waking up in the middle of the night, once again unable to sleep because of his mental agitation over what was going on, when he gave God the preeminent glory in his heart, he was able to sleep. Scripture says that he gives sleep to his beloved. Trusting God is the best pillow for the anxious mind and it not only gave David physical rest, it gave him spiritual courage to face his foes. Look at verse 6,

6 I will not be afraid of ten thousands of people Who have set themselves against me round about.

Wow! Look at the transformation from verses 1 and 2 to verse 6. He starts out, "O God, how many adversaries I have. They are rising up. They are all about me." And there's an evident sense of fear as this prayer starts, of concern, of trouble, of anxiety but when he brought God to his trouble by which we mean, when he meditated on the character and faithfulness of God and then turned his attention back to his trouble, it changed his whole perspective. He's no longer worried about those ten thousands that are around him, he says, "I'm not afraid. Bring it. Bring it because I know who my God is. I know his protection. I know his faithfulness. I am convinced and therefore I will not be afraid." His whole spiritual demeanor had been transformed by his focus on the truth of God. That is one aspect of what we mean when we talk about the sufficiency of Christ, when we talk about the sufficiency of Scripture. There is all that you need for spiritual stability found in the character of God as he is revealed in the 66 books of the Bible. You don't need anything else.

Here's what I want you to notice: when you get to verse 6, nothing has changed. When he said this in verse 6, Absalom was still leading the revolt, there were still ten thousand people, I think Scripture actually uses the number twelve thousand, there were still multiplied thousands of people against him and yet the circumstances hadn't changed but

David had changed because he had brought God to his trouble. Biblical trust changes the soul.

Notice that once again, you read through verses 1-6, David has not made a request yet. He hasn't asked God for anything in this particular instance. He describes past answered prayer in verse 4 but he hasn't asked him anything about the adversaries that are prompting this Psalm. He describes his issues, he talks about God but he hasn't gotten around to asking for anything until you get to verse 7 and that brings us to our third and final point. We said bring your trouble to God, bring God to your trouble and now point 3: bring your request to your God. Bring your request to your God. Here's where we're at: David's mindset was now what it needed to be in order to ask God properly. In the presence of God, he's not asking from a sense of panic and unbridled fear. Now from a position of security and strength he makes his request and that's what you see in verse 7. He's composed his soul and now a composed soul is positioned to make a proper request and that's what he does in verse 7,

7 Arise, O LORD; save me, O my God! For You have smitten all my enemies on the cheek; You have shattered the teeth of the wicked.

It's a call to battle. He says, "God, I've got all of these enemies and I'm trusting in you and now, God, arise, step forth, display your power and aid me against my enemies." He uses language that sounds harsh on our ears in the 21st century, "Smite my enemies on the cheek. Shatter the teeth of the wicked." What he's praying for there is completely appropriate. This is not a prayer of personal vindictiveness against his son. You know that because you know what happened when Absalom died, it grieved David when Absalom died. He wasn't after personal vindictiveness here, he was after the righteous display, the vindication of God's intentions and purposes in this period of Israel's history. David was the anointed king, not Absalom. Absalom's revolt was not only against David, it was a revolt against the appointed anointed of God. David says, "God, that can't be. That can't stand. Strike my enemies who, by the way, are also your enemies and achieve victory."

Notice something that's easy to miss: David actually asks. There is a humbling dimension to this. Having composed his soul, he humbles himself and asks God for help. I make that point because there is another area of spiritual risk for us: we could talk in terms of understanding God's providence, we could talk about the power of God and all of that and talk in theological circles but never get around to actually humbling our soul and saying, "God, please help me." A lot of us, I'm in this circle too, we don't like to ask people for help too much. Maybe there's some pride in that, whatever, who cares, that's not the point of tonight's sermon. That's something completely different. Just making an observation here. We don't like to ask. It puts us in the position of need. It puts us in the position of needing help. Well, as believers in Christ in our troubles and in our sorrows, we're supposed to ask. We're supposed to go to God and say, "God, now please help me. You're my glory. You're my confidence and now I ask you to help me." In the book of James it says, "You don't have because you don't ask," and so as you're praying, make sure that you get to the point where you're saying, "God, please help."

Notice one last thing in that request there in verse 7, David doesn't define what he wants the deliverance to be. He simply says, "Save me, O God." I've had so many conversations with people over the years where they say, "Well, how do you think we should pray about this? What do you think we should pray for?" What they have in mind is that this situation is so complex that we've got to kind of figure out where this all should go so that we can pray for that particular outcome. I don't think that's true. I think that's an entirely wrong way to pray. We can pray more broadly, more generally, and rather than relying on our wisdom about what the outcome could be and using God as our lever to leverage it into that direction, let's just make it simple. Let's just say, "God, you know what? You're who you are. You are my shield. You are the omnipotent, omniscient God. You are wise and good. Rather than try to tell you what I think the good outcome should be, God, I'm just content to having declared my problem to you, to just ask you, 'Save me. Help me. Deliver me in this whatever that looks like.'" And trust and know that what God does in his exercise of his sovereignty is going to be far more effective and far more complete than anything that you and I could put our words to.

And sometimes it's just going to be really unexpected. You know how God delivered David here, right? Absalom is riding a donkey and got his head wedged in between the branches and he died. He got stuck in an oak tree riding a donkey and he couldn't get down and then people came and finished him off. Now if you're David, you never could have said, "God, I pray that you would get my foe on a donkey and take him to a tree where he'll be hung and then bring other men along." No, you'd never pray that way. That's silly. Just let God work it out in his magnificent providence and trust him that whatever follows from this kind of praying is going to be an expression of God's will for your life and rest in that rather than trying to manipulate God to do what you think is best. We usually don't know what's best. We can only recognize it in hindsight. David mourned over his son but he returned to Jerusalem to receive his throne. God saved him. Delivered him from that predicament.

Now look at how it ends in verse 8. David says,

8 Salvation belongs to the LORD.

"God, you are the God of deliverance. You are the God of help and that's why I can pray to you with confidence. You are the God of deliverance for your people. You provide help to us and when we are in situations that overwhelm us, that are beyond our ability to control and respond to, God, you are the one who intervenes for us and provides assistance to us like no one else. That is in your realm. Salvation both physical and spiritual belongs to you and so I state with confidence, God, having asked you for your help, I know that you will provide it because salvation, deliverance belongs to you and you are Yahweh who is the protector and provider of your people and therefore I am at rest."

Notice the greatness, the vastness, the breadth of David's heart as we close here in verse 8,

8 Your blessing be upon Your people! Selah.

His prayer wasn't simply a self-centered focus. He says, "God, I want your blessing on all of your people." Even in the midst of a national rebellion, he was thinking beyond his own life. And look at the end of verse 8, "Selah." Stop and consider. Stop and consider.

Bring your God to your troubles and bring your request to God.

Bow with me in prayer.

Tonight as you're here, do you know something of serious trials? I know that you do. Recognize how you're supposed to manifest your faith. Turn trustingly to God in this quiet moment. Firm your confidence in him, your shield, the sufficient reason for your life, the lifter of your head and like David ask, "God, save me. God, help me. You alone are the God of deliverance."

Our God, you are faithful. Give us confidence in the midst of the battle and in your time, draw our battles to a close in such a way that we could look back and see that you have been faithful to the very one that you said that you are. We trust you and we praise you in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

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