

Psalm 3

Salvation Belongs to the Lord

July 30th, 2023

1. Intro

- a. In William Gurnall's commentary on the third Psalm, he wrote these words...
 - i. "A good conscience can sleep in the mouth of a cannon. Grace is the Christian's coat of mail, which fears not the arrow or the bullet. True grace may be shot AT, but it can never be shot THROUGH, for grace puts one's soul into Christ, and there it is safe, as the bee in the hive, as the dove in the ark. 'There is NO condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus.'"
- b. Psalm 3 was written during a very tumultuous time in David's life
 - i. This Psalm comes AFTER David's affair with Bathsheba, AFTER he had her husband murdered on the front lines of battle, and AFTER the son that was born to them died by the hand of the Lord
 1. We don't know how much time has passed between those events and the events that we'll look at in just a minute, but we do know that Psalm 51, David's great prayer of sorrow and repentance, came BEFORE Psalm 3
 - a. This is crucial for us to understand David's heart in Psalm 3, because by the time he wrote THIS Psalm, his conscience had been cleared
 - i. He had experienced the abundant mercy of the Lord
 - ii. He had been purged with hyssop and washed whiter than snow
 - iii. The joy of his salvation had been restored to him
 1. His conscience had been cleared, which is why Gurnall wrote of him, "A good conscience can sleep in the mouth of a cannon."
 2. However, David still had to face the CONSEQUENCES of his sins
 - ii. As the note at the top of the Psalm says, this Psalm was written when David was fleeing from his son, Absalom
 1. The story begins in 2 Samuel 13, but I'll just give a quick overview
 - a. Absalom and Amnon were both sons of David, but they had different moms, so they were half-brothers
 - i. In 2 Samuel 13, we read of Amnon falling in love with Tamar, who was Absalom's full sister
 1. That scenario ends up really messy, and Tamar sadly came out of it all with her reputation ruined, through no fault of her own
 2. Absalom, being the good big brother that he was, does the completely rational thing and has Amnon murdered for what he did to his sister
 - a. And in fear of the retribution that would come because of his actions, Absalom fled out of the kingdom
 2. In 2 Samuel 14, we read that King David and Absalom are eventually reconciled, but it turns out that Absalom's heart was still a mess, and David didn't do a great job of handling all of that
 - a. So in 2 Samuel 15, over the course of the next four years, Absalom secretly plots against his father's authority, and in verse 13, we read
 - i. *And a messenger came to David, saying, "The hearts of the men of Israel have gone after Absalom."*
 - b. One has to wonder at this point, had word spread throughout the Kingdom regarding David's affair, and his murder of Uriah the Hittite, and all the fallout that had come from those events?
 - i. Had the nation lost its confidence in its leader as they saw this man of God fall into awful immorality?
 - ii. We don't have to think too hard or too far to see how similar things have happened in our own nation, do we?
 1. Nixon and Watergate, Clinton and his escapades

- a. When a leader fails, the consequences are long-lasting
 - c. David realized all that Absalom had conspired against him
 - d. He realized that Absalom had turned all Israel in his favor
 - e. And this time, it was not Absalom who fled from Jerusalem, but King David himself
 - iii. This is where we find ourselves as we read Psalm 3...
 - c. Psalm 3
 - i. *(A Psalm of David, when he fled from Absalom his son.)* ¹O LORD, how many are my foes! Many are rising against me; ²many are saying of my soul, "There is no salvation for him in God." *Selah* ³But you, O LORD, are a shield about me, my glory, and the lifter of my head. ⁴I cried aloud to the LORD, and he answered me from his holy hill. *Selah* ⁵I lay down and slept; I woke again, for the LORD sustained me. ⁶I will not be afraid of many thousands of people who have set themselves against me all around. ⁷Arise, O LORD! Save me, O my God! For you strike all my enemies on the cheek; you break the teeth of the wicked. ⁸Salvation belongs to the LORD; your blessing be on your people! *Selah*
 - d. Before we get into the exposition of Psalm 3, this Psalm gives us the opportunity to lay some groundwork for the rest of the Psalms
 - i. In the title for this Psalm, we actually find the first use of the word "Psalm" in the Bible
 - 1. This word has the idea of singing, and playing musical instruments
 - a. In its most simple form, Psalm is translated as a "song of praise, sung to a harp"
 - 2. However, there is another meaning in this word, "Psalm"...
 - a. Henry Ainsworth, a 16th century pastor from the Netherlands, who was also one of the foremost Hebrew scholars of his day, noted that this word "Psalm" also has the meaning of pruning, or cutting off extra twigs from a branch
 - i. When applied to the Psalms of the Bible, Ainsworth wrote that "In times of sore trouble... men will not use fine words in prayer, but will offer a prayer which is pruned of all luxuries of wordy speeches."
 - 1. In other words, when you've just lost your Kingdom to your murdering and conspiring son, you don't have time to write a bunch of fancy lyrics!
 - b. In the Abarim Publications Dictionary, they make this same connection for us, saying that these Psalms provide a very important contrast to all other songs
 - i. These "pruned" Psalms are like a tended and manicured vineyard, as opposed to vines running wild out in the forest
 - ii. In the same way, these "pruned" Psalms are like a choir singing a well-crafted song, as opposed to a crowd howling wildly
 - 3. So when you see the word "Psalm" in the Bible, don't just think "singing praises along with musical instruments"
 - a. Think about a short, almost heat-of-the-moment, hymn, often composed amidst trials or sorrows or hardships
 - i. And in these short clips of emotion, every word matters!
- e. As we talk about how every word matters, we also need to address another word that is used for the first time in this Psalm, the word "Selah"
 - i. We see this word at the end of verse 2, verse 4, and verse 8
 - ii. What's interesting is that there really isn't a consensus on what this word means
 - 1. Most commentators believe that it signifies a pause in the singing, maybe accompanied by some sort of musical interlude
 - 2. But other commentators say, "No, selah is an exuberant expression of praise, where the singers would almost shout some kind of loud exclamation"
 - a. I would tend to agree with the first definition, especially when you look at the context of "selah" in Psalm 3
 - i. It doesn't really seem appropriate to have a loud shout of praise after verses 1 and 2
 - b. Regardless, the word Selah serves mainly as a signal to the singers, rather than a word that was actually sung

- ii. MANY will be our foes
 - b. As followers of Jesus Christ, we are promised persecution, just as David experienced at the hand of his very own son
- 3. BUT, the second promise we find in Psalm 3 is the promise of PROTECTION from God
 - a. David goes in to write in Psalm 3:3-4
 - i. *³But you, O LORD, are a shield about me, my glory, and the lifter of my head. ⁴I cried aloud to the LORD, and he answered me from his holy hill.*
 - b. This is the sure footing that David found amidst the persecution from all of his foes
 - i. This was a reality that Absalom would never understand
 - 1. Remember, Psalm 51 tells us that God had blotted out David's transgressions
 - 2. God had washed him thoroughly from his iniquity, and cleansed him from his sin
 - a. Therefore, as his foes said to him, "There is no salvation for you in God," David could reply, without hesitation,
 - i. My God is a shield around me
 - ii. He is my glory
 - iii. He is the lifter of my head
 - b. David could say, "I have already cried aloud to the Lord in my time of greatest desperation, and HE ANSWERED me from His holy hill"
 - ii. Because David knew the mercy and grace of His God, NOTHING could touch him in this world
 - 1. He KNEW that, even as many rose up against him, his God would be his shield
 - 2. He KNEW that, even as they mocked and ridiculed him as he fled Jerusalem, his God would be his glory
 - 3. And he KNEW that, as they cried out, "There is no salvation for you in God," God would indeed be the lifter of his head
 - iii. My friends, this is the great promise for ALL who have also experienced the mercy and grace of our God
 - 1. Jesus promised us in John 15 that persecution would come
 - 2. But he also said to us in John 16:33...
 - a. *³³I have said these things to you, that IN ME you may have peace. In the world you WILL have tribulation. But take heart; I have overcome the world."*
 - c. We need to take some time and camp out on the weight of this promise...
 - i. Through his life, death, and resurrection, Jesus has not simply purchased us off the slave blocks of our own sin
 - 1. He has ALSO conquered our greatest enemy... DEATH!
 - a. Because Jesus has been raised from the dead, now all who are IN HIM will ALSO be raised from the dead
 - b. This is what Paul teaches us in Romans 8:9-11, when he writes,
 - i. *⁹You, however, are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if in fact the Spirit of God dwells in you. Anyone who does not have the Spirit of Christ does not belong to him. ¹⁰But if Christ is in you, although the body is dead because of sin, the Spirit is life because of righteousness. ¹¹If the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, he who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will ALSO give life to YOUR mortal bodies through his Spirit who dwells in you.*
 - 2. My friends, if the Spirit dwells in you, then ETERNAL life is YOURS!!
 - a. ETERNAL fellowship with Christ is YOURS!
 - b. ETERNAL forgiveness and grace and mercy is YOURS!
 - c. ETERNAL reconciliation with the Father is YOURS!
 - ii. Think about what that means for us – in light of all that we now have in Christ, what is a diagnosis of cancer in comparison?
 - 1. What is the loss of a job, or a season of financial hardship?
 - 2. What is the ridicule of this world, as they mock us and scorn us for our faith in Jesus Christ?
 - 3. What even is persecution that might even lead to our death, if ETERNITY WITH CHRIST is already ours???

- a. These are the promises for all those in whom the Spirit of Christ dwells
 - i. God Himself will be a shield about us
 - ii. God Himself will be our glory and the lifter of our heads
 - iii. For God Himself has heard our cries for salvation, and He has answered us from His holy hill, by giving to us His very own Son
 - 1. If this God is for us, then who can be against us?!
 - iii. In this world we are promised persecution
 - iv. But, for all those who are in Christ, we are also promised protection
 - 1. Which leads us to our third promise...
4. The promise of PEACE from God
 - a. Look at these incredible words David wrote in Psalm 3:5-6,
 - i. *⁵I lay down and slept; I woke again, for the LORD sustained me. ⁶I will not be afraid of many thousands of people who have set themselves against me all around.*
 - b. In many cases in the Psalms, you might run up against a statement of hyperbole, where they really aren't meant to convey a LITERAL thought
 - i. But if we think about the context of David's situation when he wrote this Psalm, verse 8 was likely NOT a statement of exaggeration
 - 1. When David said that "thousands of people have set themselves against me all around," we know that that is EXACTLY what was going on
 - a. Absalom had turned the masses against David over his four years of conspiring against him
 - i. It could even be said that TENS of thousands – possibly even HUNDREDS of thousands – had now set themselves against David
 - 2. And what did David do?
 - a. He SLEPT!!
 - i. Even more specifically, he slept WITHOUT FEAR!
 - c. Friends, this is the natural overflow of those who TRULY understand all that has been given to them in Christ
 - i. As we talked about in the previous section, what can touch those in whom the Spirit of God dwells???
 - 1. This is how, in Acts chapter 5, after the Apostles were arrested, imprisoned, and beaten for preaching Christ, verse 41 tells us,
 - a. *⁴¹Then they left the presence of the council, REJOICING that they were counted worthy to suffer dishonor for the name.*
 - 2. This is how, in Acts chapter 7, as Stephen was being stoned to death, he could call out to the Lord, "Lord, do not hold this sin against them."
 - 3. This is how, in Acts 16, Paul and Silas could sit in a dark dungeon in Philippi, beaten with rods and chained together in their cell, and they could sing hymns to the Lord
 - 4. This is how David, when he was LITERALLY surrounded by thousands of his foes, could sleep through the night, free from the fear of man
 - ii. What a beautiful example for us of Isaiah 26:3, which says,
 - 1. *³You keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on you, because he trusts in you.*
 - d. Brothers and sisters, do you know this perfect peace of the Lord?
 - i. When times of trial or hardship or suffering come in your life, do you sleep in peace, as your mind is stayed on Christ?
 - 1. Let us go back again to the quote from William Gurnall...
 - a. "A good conscience can sleep in the mouth of a cannon, grace is a Christian's coat of mail, which fears not the arrow or bullet. True grace may be shot at, but can never be shot through; grace puts one's soul into Christ, and there it is safe, as the bee in the hive, as the dove in the ark."
 - i. Do you know this grace that Gurnall speaks of?
 - ii. Do you know the peace that only comes when your soul is in Christ?
 - iii. Do you know the safety found in Jesus, as the bee is in the hive, and as the dove was in the ark?

- b. These are promises that are ONLY to be found in Jesus Christ, for it is ONLY in Christ that our consciences can TRULY be clean
 - i. Our sins are too ingrained in our hearts
 - ii. Our guilt is too entrenched in our soul
 - c. Only Christ can purify us in such a way that we could TRULY say we have a GOOD conscience
 - 2. We MUST take refuge in HIM
 - a. As we saw last week at the conclusion of Psalm 2, “Blessed are those who take refuge in the Son”
 - i. Have you taken refuge in the Son of God?
 - ii. Have you stayed your mind upon Christ?
 - iii. Have you trusted in him, and him alone?
 - ii. The Bible is clear, if you have placed all your trust in him, then this peace that David experienced can also be yours, regardless of how painful your circumstances might be
 - iii. Paul affirms this truth for us in Philippians 4:6-7, as he says,
 - 1. *“do not be anxious about ANYTHING, but in EVERYTHING by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, WILL guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.*
 - e. David was in the midst of awful persecution
 - i. But he rested in the promise of God’s protection
 - ii. He rested in the promise of God’s peace that surpassed all understanding
 - iii. And he rested in the fourth promise,
- 5. The promise of PUNISHMENT for the wicked
 - a. Psalm 3:7
 - i. *“Arise, O LORD! Save me, O my God! For you strike all my enemies on the cheek; you break the teeth of the wicked.*
 - ii. This brings us to an interesting dilemma as New Testament Christians, doesn’t it?
 - 1. What are we supposed to do with these kinds of statements?
 - a. We’ll see very soon that these types of statements happen all throughout the Psalms, and if we’re honest, they tend to make us a little uncomfortable, don’t they?
 - i. When we read the New Testament, we find Jesus teaching us to love our enemies, and to turn the other cheek when they strike us, and to walk the extra mile when they place unreasonable demands upon us
 - ii. We find Jesus teaching us that we’re to forgive those who sin against us, not seven times, but seven times seventy times
 - iii. We find Paul telling us to pray for our rulers, and give honor to the emperor, even though it was the emperor who would eventually have Paul’s head cut off
 - iii. So, when we read all of these commands in the New Testament to love and pray for and honor our enemies, what do we do when the third hymn in the Bible’s hymnbook says,
 - 1. “Arise, O Lord! Save me, O my God! For you strike all my enemies on the cheek; you break the teeth of the wicked...”?
 - a. Do we shout in agreement, “YES! Lord may you do these things to our enemies today as well!!”?
 - b. Do we quietly push these verses under the rug, hoping in embarrassment that the lost don’t see such harsh statements in our Bible?
 - c. Or, do we take the third option, the option the Apostle Paul took in 2 Timothy 3:16, and affirm that “ALL Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be COMPLETE, equipped for every good work.”?
 - i. Obviously, my desire is that we all choose this last option!
 - iv. So the question must then be, how does Psalm 3:7 equip us for every good work?

1. It equips us because it reminds us that, while our God is most certainly a God of love and grace and mercy, our God is ALSO a God of wrath and justice against the wicked
 - a. And, while we are to pray for our enemies, and mourn over the fallen condition of their wicked and sinful hearts, we are ALSO to cry out to God for His justice to prevail on this earth
- v. 2 Peter 2 is a helpful chapter for us to see these things in the New Testament
 1. I'll leave you to look at this chapter on your own, but listen to the language that Peter uses against the wicked...
 - a. In verse 12, Peter says that they are like "irrational animals, creatures of instinct, born to be caught and destroyed..."
 - b. In verse 13, he calls them "blots and blemishes, reveling in their deceptions"
 - c. And in verse 14, he calls them "accursed children, whose hearts have been trained in greed"
 - i. Needless to say, Peter does not hold back in his language against the wicked
 - ii. And he gives us a sobering dose of reality when he says in verses 9-10,
 1. *⁹the Lord knows how to rescue the godly from trials, AND to keep the UNrighteous under punishment until the day of judgment, ¹⁰and especially those who indulge in the lust of defiling passion and despise authority*
- vi. We have a tendency in our day and age to pit the love and grace and mercy of God against the wrath and justice of God
 1. And in our overly sensitive culture, we have been taught that it is best if the church would just keep silent on those latter characteristics
 2. This is why we MUST return to the Psalms, the songs that the early Christians sang
 - a. For they remind us that it is GOOD to rest in the promises of God's protection and peace for His children
 - b. But they also remind us that it is ALSO good to pray for God's justice to be shown mightily upon the earth
 - b. As we rest in the promises that God will protect His children and give them a peace that surpasses all understanding, and as we pray that His justice will be made manifest among the nations, these lead us to our final promise...
6. The PRAISE from God's people!
 - a. David concludes this Psalm in verse 8 by singing this one foundational truth:
 - i. *⁸Salvation belongs to the LORD; your blessing be on your people!*
 1. At the heart of the Christian message lies our unapologetic proclamation found in Acts 4:11-12...
 - a. *¹¹This Jesus is the stone that was rejected by you, the builders, which has become the cornerstone. ¹²And there is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved*
 - i. There are not many roads to heaven
 1. You cannot find salvation in Allah or Buddha
 2. You cannot find salvation in the God of Mormonism or the God of the Jehovah's witnesses
 3. And you most certainly cannot find salvation in your own good works
 - ii. Salvation can be found ONLY in Jesus Christ
 1. For salvation belongs to the Lord!
 - ii. But this brings us full circle, doesn't it?
 1. For when we proclaim THIS truth, that salvation is found ONLY in the name of Jesus, the world will hate us for our message
 - a. And the persecution that was promised will come
 - b. So why in the world would the people of God praise Him for this plan of His that promises we will be persecuted???

- i. Because, as Jesus said in Matthew 5:10-11,
 - 1. ¹⁰*Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for THEIRS is the kingdom of heaven.* ¹¹*Blessed are you when others revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account.* ¹²*Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you.*
- ii. Christian, God has granted to you your salvation
 - 1. In the name of Jesus, you have been rescued out of the kingdom of darkness and brought into the Kingdom of Light
 - a. As you faithfully proclaim the excellencies of Him who called you, you are promised PERSECUTION
 - b. But, along with this persecution, you are promised PROTECTION, for the God who saved you shall surely keep you
 - c. And along with this protection, you are promised PEACE, for whom shall we fear when the God of all Creation goes before us?
 - d. And along with this peace, you are promised that all the enemies of the cross will be PUNISHED, for our God is love AND our God is JUST
 - 2. These are the promises God has given to all those whom He will save
 - a. And as we realize that the Kingdom of God has been given to us, the most natural thing that should proceed from every aspect of our lives is PRAISE
 - i. Salvation belongs to God
 - ii. May His blessing be on His people!