

Psalm 3

How to Be Victorious Over Distress and Enemies, 3:1-8

Psalm 3:1-8 (NKJV)

¹ Lord, how they have increased who trouble me! Many are they who rise up against me.

² Many are they who say of me, “There is no help for him in God.” Selah

³ But You, O Lord, are a shield for me, My glory and the One who lifts up my head.

⁴ I cried to the Lord with my voice, And He heard me from His holy hill. Selah

⁵ I lay down and slept; I awoke, for the Lord sustained me.

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

⁷ 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.

⁸ Salvation belongs to the Lord. Your blessing is upon Your people. Selah

The single most profound opening statement for **Psalm 3** is this: “**Psalm 3** declares that the believer can sleep in peace—even when surrounded by enemies—because salvation belongs to the Lord.”

Why this works theologically and pastorally:

- It captures the historical setting (David fleeing from Absalom, **2 Samuel 15**).
- It centers the Psalm on divine sovereignty rather than human distress.
- It highlights the turning point of the Psalm: from fear (**vv.1–2**) to faith (**vv.3–8**).
- It climaxes with the doctrinal anchor: “*Salvation belongs to the LORD*” (**v.8**).

If you prefer a more exegetically compressed version:

“**Psalm 3** teaches that when opposition increases, confidence in God must deepen.”

Or a more Christ-centered framing:

“**Psalm 3** shows us that the child of God rests securely not because enemies disappear, but because the Lord reigns.”

But the most complete and pastorally weighty single statement remains:

“**Psalm 3** declares that the believer can sleep in peace—even when surrounded by enemies—because salvation belongs to the Lord.”

Introduction: Victory in the Night Seasons

Psalm 3 speaks with unusual pastoral relevance in an age marked by anxiety disorders, political instability, fractured families, and digital hostility. We live in a culture where distress multiplies rapidly—sometimes overnight. A single social media post can damage a reputation. A medical diagnosis can disrupt peace. A leadership conflict can fracture trust. Sleeplessness has become almost normative in American life.

Psalm 3 is not theoretical theology; it is battlefield theology. It was forged in betrayal, humiliation, and public rebellion. When David wrote this psalm, he was not merely facing

critics—he was fleeing from his own son. Absalom’s conspiracy was not only political; it was deeply personal. The throne was threatened, but so was David’s fatherly heart.

In our modern context, many believers know this kind of distress:

- The parent whose child has turned away from the faith.
- The pastor facing criticism from within his own congregation.
- The leader betrayed by trusted associates.
- The believer mocked for trusting God in an increasingly secular culture.

Verse 2 reveals the most painful accusation:

“There is no help for him in God.”

Psalm 3:2 (NKJV)

² Many are they who say of me, “There is no help for him in God.” Selah

That is the enemy’s ultimate weapon—not merely external pressure, but internal discouragement. The adversary wants us to conclude that God has abandoned us.

But **Psalm 3** teaches a disciplined theology of confidence:

- When enemies multiply, God remains a shield.
- When accusations rise, God remains our glory.
- When fear robs sleep, God sustains rest.
- When tomorrow threatens, salvation belongs to the Lord.

David did not deny distress—he redirected it. He turned lament into prayer, fear into declaration, and crisis into confidence. The cure for the restless night is not denial of trouble; it is a renewed vision of the Lord.

Illustration 1: The Executive Under Public Attack

A Christian executive in a large corporation became the target of a coordinated internal campaign. False narratives circulated. Emails were forwarded. Whisper networks intensified. Within weeks, he felt surrounded. One night he confessed, “I don’t fear losing my position as much as I fear losing my name. And I fear that maybe God has stepped aside.”

That is **Psalm 3:1–2** in contemporary language. Yet over time, as he continued in prayer rather than retaliation, the truth surfaced. The investigation cleared his name. More importantly, he later testified: **“The real victory was not keeping my job. The real victory was that I could sleep.”**

Psalm 3:5 —

“I lay down and slept; I awoke, for the Lord sustained me.”

Victory is not merely external vindication; it is internal stability.

Illustration 2: The Parent with a Prodigal Child

A godly mother raised her son in church. In his early twenties, he rejected the faith, publicly criticized Christianity, and blamed his upbringing for his struggles. Extended family members whispered, “If God were truly with her, this wouldn’t have happened.”

Those words echoed [Psalm 3:2](#) —

“There is no help for him in God.” Her distress was not theoretical—it was maternal agony.

Yet instead of collapsing into shame, she anchored herself in [Psalm 3:3](#): **“But You, O Lord, are a shield for me, My glory and the One who lifts up my head.”** She could not control her son’s choices, but she entrusted him to God’s sovereignty. Years later, after a season of brokenness, he returned to faith. But even before that restoration, she learned the deeper lesson of [Psalm 3](#): God sustains the believer even when circumstances have not yet changed.

The Theological Core

[Psalm 3](#) teaches three decisive truths for victory over distress:

1. Distress may increase — but God’s protection does not decrease.
2. Accusations may multiply — but divine hearing is immediate.
3. Enemies may surround — but salvation belongs exclusively to the Lord.

The psalm moves from:

- **Complaint** ([vv. 1–2](#))
- **To Confidence** ([vv. 3–6](#))
- **To Cry for Deliverance** ([v. 7](#))
- **To Corporate Blessing** ([v. 8](#))

David begins surrounded and ends secure. That is the pathway to victory in every generation. The night may be loud with enemies, but the morning belongs to those sustained by God.

([Psalm 3:1-8](#)) Introduction: sleeplessness plagues us all at some time in our lives. For many it is a chronic condition; others of us battle it when some burden, trouble, or decision weighs heavily on our minds. Some of us lie awake at night because we do not think we can face what tomorrow will bring. Medicines and methods abound for managing this life-affecting affliction, but only one completely successful cure exists. David reveals the cure for insomnia and the fearful anticipation of tomorrow in the third Psalm. This is the first psalm in which the occasion for its writing is revealed (See [Deeper Study # 1](#)).

[Psalm 3](#) is David’s prayer to the Lord when he was forced to flee a second time from Jerusalem. The first time was when Saul was threatened by David’s popularity and sought the young man’s life. This time, however, David’s pursuer was not an aging, jealous king; it was his very own flesh and blood, his son, Absalom. Backstabbing friends and associates who had fallen for Absalom’s deceitful charms joined David’s disloyal son in the rebellion.

[Psalm 3](#) is the first psalm of lament to the Lord. To many of us, these are the most precious of all the psalms. In the darkest hours of our lives, we identify with them and even quote them in our prayers. These psalms teach us to take our burdens, fears, questions, and even complaints to the Lord. God wants to share *everything* in our lives. He wants to handle *everything* we face. God has thick skin—He can handle our frustrations, hopelessness, and even anger. The psalms of lament encourage us to call upon the great Creator and Judge of the universe. And call we should. God loves us so much that He gives us the liberty to dump the raw emotions of our hearts at His holy, omnipotent throne ([Hebrews 4:15-16](#)).

Hebrews 4:15-16 NKJV

¹⁵ **For we do not have a High Priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but was in all points tempted as we are, yet without sin.**

¹⁶ **Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need.**

Hebrews 4:15–16 — Reverse for Clarity

Verse 15 — Reverse for Clarity

¹⁵ If we had a High Priest who were unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, then we would stand alone in our frailty and temptation. But we do not have such a High Priest. Anyone who claims that Christ does not understand human struggle misunderstands His incarnation. He was tempted in every category of human testing just as we are. However, unlike us, He never yielded. Where we fall, He remained faithful. Where we sin, He stood sinless. Where we are weak, He was holy. Therefore, His sympathy is not theoretical—it is experiential without corruption. He knows the weight of temptation without the stain of sin.

Hebrews 4:16 NKJV

¹⁶ **Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need.**

Verse 16 — Reverse for Clarity

¹⁶ If Christ were not a compassionate and victorious High Priest, we would have no confidence to approach God. If His sacrifice were incomplete, we would shrink back in fear. But because He understands our weakness and conquered temptation without sin, we are not commanded to retreat—we are invited to draw near. We do not come timidly to a throne of judgment. We do not come uncertain of acceptance. We come boldly—confidently—freely—to the throne of grace. Those who refuse to come will not obtain mercy. Those who remain distant will not experience sustaining grace. But those who draw near in faith will obtain mercy for their failures and will find grace sufficient for their present need. And that grace is not delayed—it is timely. It meets us precisely in the moment of necessity.

Most parents would agree that life's most intense heartaches involve their children. Imagine David's heart-piercing pain as his son rose up to destroy him and take his kingdom by force. Imagine his shame as he, the mighty warrior king, fled Jerusalem barefoot and weeping (**2 Samuel 15:30**).

2 Samuel 15:30 NKJV

³⁰ **So David went up by the Ascent of the Mount of Olives, and wept as he went up; and he had his head covered and went barefoot. And all the people who were with him covered their heads and went up, weeping as they went up.**

How could anyone sleep in these circumstances? How could any father rest knowing he would face his son in battle the next day? In this precious psalm, God's Holy Spirit teaches us how to sleep tonight and face tomorrow (**John 14:26**; **Psalm 4:8**).

John 14:26 NKJV

²⁶ **But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all things that I said to you.**

Psalm 4:8 NKJV

⁸ **I will both lie down in peace, and sleep; For You alone, O Lord, make me dwell in safety.**