

Psalm 3

Psalm 3 teaches us how to take refuge in God during times of extreme personal adversity. King David wrote this psalm during a terrifying and heart-breaking experience. His son Absalom had launched a coup against him, invaded Jerusalem, and sent his troops to hunt David down and kill him (see 2 Samuel 15). David's psalm expresses three different kinds of prayer to God.

First, David cries out to God in *supplication*:

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."*

Supplication is pouring out our problems and negative emotions to God in a raw, unvarnished way. As a young child in distress runs to his parent, David runs to God and tells Him that he is being hunted by many adversaries, and that they are saying that God has rejected him. The point of supplication is not to give God information; He already knows everything. The point is rather to begin transfer the weight of our adverse situation onto God by turning to Him in acknowledged weakness. It is the first step in taking refuge in God.

But David does not stop with supplication. Having poured out his fears on to God, he now speaks to God a prayer of *affirmation*:



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

David pivots from his supplication with “but You.” This is one of dozens of biblical prayers that include the words “but You.” Having honestly expressed his problems and fears, David now chooses to affirm to God what God says about Himself and the promises He makes that pertain to David’s situation. This choice to verbalize our trust in God despite our circumstances and feelings is at the heart of taking refuge in God.

David has many human adversaries, but he affirms that God is “a shield about me.” A full-length shield gave protection from all kinds of frontal assault. But David says that God is an all-round, 360-degree shield. He affirms that God can protect him no matter how many enemies attack him, and no matter which direction they come from. He is affirming: “All my enemies will have to go through You before they can get to me.” God does not promise us immunity from attack, but He does promise that He will not allow us to be attacked beyond our faith-capacity, and that He will provide us a way through the attack (1 Corinthians 10:3).

David has many accusers whose accusations have depressed him – but he affirms that God is “my glory, the One who lifts up my head.” When we are anxious or depressed, our countenance falls and our head droops. But God is our glory, our shining One, our Sun (see also Psalm 84:11,12). “The sun is (an illustration) of God’s love, which is steady toward us, no matter how violent the storms of affliction around us. The sun still shines even when clouds obscure it, just as we know God loves



us even when we can't feel that love.”¹ So by faith we affirm that His love is stronger and more constant than our anxiety and depression.

David then reports the results of his prayers of supplication and affirmation:

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

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

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

What a beautiful description of refuge in God! David was able to sleep even though he was still in danger, and he was able to face his still-dire situation the next day without crippling fear. Like Paul says, when we take our anxieties to God through supplication and thanksgiving (affirmation), “the peace of God, which surpasses comprehension, shall guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus” (Philippians 4:7).

Finally, David's prayer turns to God-centered *request*:

*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.*

*⁸ Salvation belongs to the LORD;
Your blessing be upon Your people!*

Having prayed to God with supplication and affirmation, and having experienced restored confidence in his God, David's requests concern more than his own survival. He asks God to

¹ Gerald R. McDermott, *Everyday Glory* (Baker Academic, 2018), p. 186.

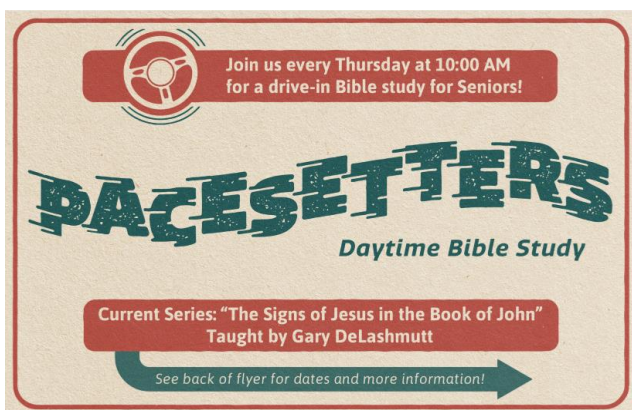


deliver him from his enemies so that he can resume his role as shepherd-king over God's people. He asks God to deliver the Israelites from Absalom's coup so that God's blessings can again be poured out on His people.

It only makes sense that if we have poured out our troubles to God, and then have affirmed our trust in Him, our prayer-focus would shift to advancing God's blessing to others. We can ask: "Get me through this in a way that draws people's attention to how great You are." We can ask: "Sustain me through this so that I can continue to serve others with hope in my heart." We can ask: "Work through this adversity to transform my character and make me a more fruitful servant." God delights in answering requests that are according to His will!

Do you wish to take refuge in God during times of extreme adversity? Begin by pouring out your heart to Him in supplication. Then personally affirm your trust in His character and promises. Then ask Him to make you an agent of His blessing to others. This is not a mantra that obliges God to help you; it is an expression of faith that lays hold of the refuge that God already wants to give you!

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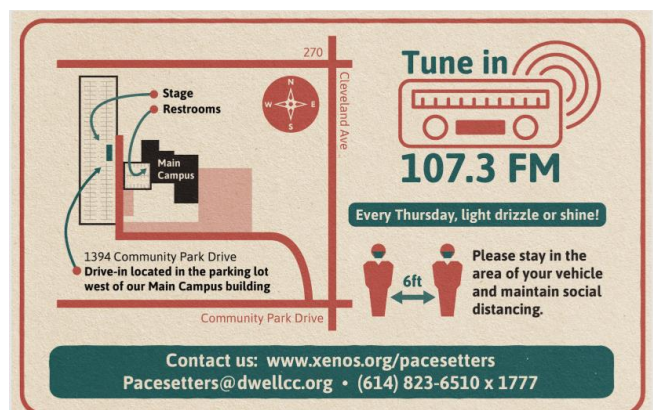


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