

PSALM 3

INTRODUCTION TO PSALM 3

A Psalm of David, when he fled from Absalom his son

This is the first of the psalms that has a title, and is called a Psalm; the word for which, “mizmor”, comes from one which signifies to “cut” or “prune”^{f41}, as trees are lopped of their superfluous branches; showing this to be a composition of even feet, in proper metre, formed for the modulation of the voice, to some tune or musical instrument; and it is said to be “a psalm of David”, which may be rendered “a psalm for” or “to David”^{f42}, as if it was wrote by another for his use, and inscribed to him; or rather that it was given to him by the Holy Spirit, who was the author of it, though he was the penman. It is observed by some, that wherever the dative case is used in the title of the psalm, as it most frequently is, as such a psalm to David, or to Asaph, it may signify that it came from the Lord to him, or was divinely inspired; just as it is said, the word of the Lord came to the prophets; though some render it “a psalm concerning David”^{f43}, his troubles, his faith and security in God, his victory over his enemies, and salvation from the Lord. However, David was the composer of this psalm, under the inspiration of the Holy Ghost, occasioned by his flight from Absalom; who, having stolen away the hearts of the people of Israel, entered into a conspiracy with them to dethrone his father and place himself in his stead; and the people so increased continually with him, that David thought it advisable to flee from Jerusalem, (~~1012~~2 Samuel 15:12-14); and at the time of his flight, or after it, he penned this psalm on account of it, and as suitable to it. And now was fulfilled what God had said, by Nathan the prophet, should befall him, because of the affair of Bathsheba and Uriah; (see ~~1021~~2 Samuel 12:11 16:21,22). David was an eminent type of Christ, and so he was in his troubles, and in these; as one of his sons conspired against him to dethrone him, and take away his life; so Judas, one of Christ’s disciples or children, for disciples were called children, his familiar friend, that did eat of his bread, lifted up his heel against him, and sought to betray him, and did; and who, though he knew the designs of Judas against him, and did not flee from him, but rather went to meet him,

yet it is easy to observe that he took the same route from Jerusalem as David did. At this time he went over the brook Kidron, and to the mount of Olives; (see ~~<681>~~ John 18:1 ~~<1273>~~ Matthew 27:30); compared with (~~<1052>~~ 2 Samuel 15:23,30); And indeed the whole psalm may be applied to Christ; and so as the second psalm sets forth the dignity of Christ's person, as the Son of God, and the stability and enlargement of his kingdom, notwithstanding the opposition made to him; this expresses his troubles from his enemies, his death and resurrection from the dead, his victory over his enemies, and the salvation he wrought out for his people. In short, it may be understood of David as the type, of Christ as the antitype, and of the people of God, being suited to their experiences, more or less, in all ages; and in this large and extensive way I shall choose to interpret it.

Ver. 1. *Lord, how are they increased that trouble me?* etc.] David's enemies increased in the conspiracy against him, (~~<1052>~~ 2 Samuel 15:12); the hearts of the men of Israel were after Absalom, and against him. Christ's enemies increased when Judas with a multitude came to take him; when the body of the common people cried out, Crucify him; when the assembly of the wicked enclosed him, and pierced his hands and his feet. And the enemies of God's people are many; the men of this world are against them; legions of devils oppose them; and they have swarms of sins in their own hearts; and all these give trouble. David's enemies troubled him; he wept as he went up the hill, to think that his own son should seek to destroy him; that his subjects, whom he had ruled so long with clemency, and had hazarded his person in war for their defence, and to protect them in their civil and religious rights, should rebel against him. Christ's enemies troubled him, when they bound and led him away as a malefactor; when they spit upon him, smote and buffeted him; when they scourged and crucified him, and mocked at him. The enemies of the saints are troublers of them; in the world, and from the men of it, they have tribulation; Satan's temptations give them much uneasiness and distress; and their indwelling sins cause them to cry out, "Oh wretched men that we are!" This address is made to the Lord, as the Lord God omniscient, who knew the case to be as it was, and who had a concern in it not being without his will, but according to it, he having foretold it, and as he who only could help out of it: and the psalmist delivers it in a complaining way, and in an expostulatory manner; reasoning the case why it should be so, what should be the reason of it, for what end and purpose it was; and as wondering at

it, suggesting his own innocence, and how undeserving he was to be treated in such a way;

many [are] they that rise up against me; many in quantity, and great in quality, great in the law, in wisdom, in riches, and in stature, as Jarchi interprets it; such as Ahithophel and others, who rose up against David in an hostile manner, to dispossess him of his kingdom, and to destroy his life. And many were they that rose up against Christ; the multitude came against him as a thief, with clubs and staves: the men of this world rise up against the saints with their tongues, and sometimes with open force and violence; Satan, like a roaring lion, seeks to devour them, and their own fleshly lusts war against them.

Ver. 2. *Many [there be] which say of my soul*, etc.] Or “to my soul”^{f44}, the following cutting words, which touched to the quick, reached his very heart, and like a sword pierced through it:

[there is] no help for him in God; or “no salvation”^{f45}: neither in this world, nor in that which is to come, as Kimchi explains it. David’s enemies looked upon his case to be desperate; that it was impossible he should ever extricate himself from it; yea, that God himself either could not or would not save him. And in like manner did the enemies of Christ say, when they had put him upon the cross; (see ^{<42>}Matthew 27:43); and how frequent is it for the men of the world to represent the saints as in a damnable state! and to call them a damned set and generation of men, as if there was no salvation for them? and how often does Satan suggest unto them, that there is no hope for them, and they may as well indulge themselves in all sinful lusts and pleasures? and how often do their own unbelieving hearts say to them, that there is no salvation in Christ for them, though there is for others; and that they have no interest in the favour of God, and shall be eternally lost and perish? And this account is concluded with the word

selah, which some take to be a musical note; and so the Septuagint render it *διαθαλμα*, which Suidas^{f46} interprets the change of the song, of the note or tune of it; and the rather it may be thought to be so, since it is only used in this book of Psalms, and in the prayer of Habakkuk, which was set to a tune, and directed to the chief singer. Kimchi derives it from a root which signifies “to lift up”, and supposes that it denotes and directs to an elevation, or straining of the voice, at the place where this word stands. Others understand it as a pause, a full stop for a while; and as a note of attention, either to something that is remarkably bad and distressing, as

here; or remarkably good, and matter of rejoicing, as in (^{<1901>}Psalm 3:4,8). Others consider it as an affirmation of the truth of anything, good or bad; and render it “verily”, “truly”, as, answering to “Amen”; so be it, so it is, or shall be; it is the truth of the thing: to this sense agrees Aben Ezra. But others render it “for ever”, as the Chaldee paraphrase; and it is a tradition of the Jews ^{f47}, that wherever it is said, “netzach”, “selah”, and “ed”, there is no ceasing, it is for ever and ever; and so then, according to this rule, the sense of David’s enemies is, that there was no help for him in God for ever. A very learned man ^{f48} has wrote a dissertation upon this word; in which he endeavours to prove, that it is a name of God, differently used, either in the vocative, genitive, and dative cases; as, O Selah, O God, or of God, or to God, etc. as the sense requires.

Ver. 3. *But thou, O Lord, [art] a shield for me*, etc.] Or “about me” ^{f49} protecting and defending me. David was a military man, and often alludes to military affairs; and borrows words from thence, expressive of his great security from the Lord; (see ^{<1982>}Psalm 18:2). So Jehovah the Father was a shield to Christ, in his infancy, from Herod’s rage and fury; and afterwards from the insults of the Pharisees, and their attempts to take away his life before the time; and in his sufferings and death, so as that his faith and confidence in him were kept up, and he got the victory over sin, Satan, and the world; (see ^{<1920>}Psalm 22:9,10) (^{<2807>}Isaiah 50:7-9). And the Lord is a shield unto all his people, (^{<0151>}Genesis 15:1) (^{<1841>}Psalm 84:11). They are kept by his power, and encompassed about with his favour, as with a shield; his veracity and his faithfulness in his promises, and his truth, are their shield and buckler: and especially his Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, is the shield which faith makes use of, particularly his blood and righteousness, and salvation by him; which it holds up, and defends itself with, against the charges of the law, the accusations of conscience, and the temptations of Satan; and which are a security from the justice of God, and wrath to come;

my glory; who took David from the sheepfold, and made him king over Israel, and raised him to all the glory he had enjoyed; and in whom he gloried as his covenant God, and of whom he made his boast; and not of his strength, valour, wisdom, riches, and honour. So God the Father is the glory of Christ, the glorifier of him, by supporting him under his sufferings, raising him from the dead, and setting him at his own right hand, where he is crowned with glory and honour: he is the glory of his people, in whom they glory, and by whom they are called to eternal glory; and who will give

it to them, and reveal it in them, even an eternal weight of it, which the sufferings of this life are not worthy to be compared unto;

and the lifter up mine head; such as the helmet is: the Lord was lifter up of David's head when he brought him to the throne, and afterwards gave him victory over his enemies; for so the phrase of lifting up the head signifies; (see ^{<1257>}2 Kings 25:27 ^{<1276>}Psalm 27:6). And he was the lifter up of Christ's head when he raised him from the dead; and exalted him, both with and at his right hand, to be a Prince and a Saviour, and gave him a name above every name. And he is the lifter up of the heads of his people in conversion, when he raises them from a low estate, and sets them among princes to inherit the throne of glory; and when he gives them comfort, peace, and joy, which causes them to lift up their heads; whereas in sorrow, and mourning, and distress, the head is bowed down like a bulrush, (^{<2815>}Isaiah 58:5); and when he gives them boldness and confidence, as at the throne of grace now, through the sprinkling of the blood of Christ upon them; so at the bar of judgment hereafter, through the righteousness of Christ put upon them, as that they shall not be ashamed nor confounded; (see ^{<1213>}Luke 21:28 ^{<1128>}1 John 2:28); and he will be the lifter up of their heads in the resurrection morn, and when they shall appear with Christ in glory.

Ver. 4. *I cried unto the Lord with my voice*, etc.] The experience which the psalmist had of being heard in prayer, was what gave great encouragement to his faith, as to his interest in God and salvation by him, when his enemies were so increased about him; for crying here is to be understood of prayer, as it is often used in this book of Psalms: and so the Targum renders it, "I prayed"; and this designs vocal prayer. Sometimes there is a crying in prayer and no voice heard, as it is said of Moses, (^{<1245>}Exodus 14:15); and was the case of Hannah, (^{<1013>}1 Samuel 1:13); but this was with a voice, and a loud one, as in (^{<1057>}Psalm 55:17); denoting ardour, fervency, and importunity; and such prayer avails much with God. The object addressed in prayer is the Lord, the God of his life, and who was able to save him, and supply all his wants;

and he heard me out of his holy hill; either out of the church, the holy hill of Zion, (^{<1016>}Psalm 2:6); where David prayed and God granted his presence, and gave an answer to his prayers; or out from the mercy seat and ark, which was a type of the propitiatory, Christ, and which David had brought to his own city, the hill of Zion; or from heaven, the habitation of God's holiness: David was a man of prayer, and he was often heard and

answered by God. And this also is true of Christ, he offered up prayers and supplications with strong crying and tears to God (^{<3887>}Hebrews 5:7), that was able to save him; and he was heard by him, yea, the Father always heard him: and God is a God hearing and answering the prayers of his people, sooner or later: sometimes before, sometimes at, and sometimes after their crying to him.

Selah; on this word, (see Gill on "^{<4982>}Psalm 3:2").

Ver. 5. *I laid me down and slept*, etc.] After the battle was over between Absalom's men and his, says Aben Ezra; but rather this was in the midst of his trouble and distress, since he afterwards prays for salvation: and this sleep was either, as Jarchi observes, through his heart being overwhelmed with grief; for there have been instances of persons sleeping through sorrow, as Elijah, Jonah, and the disciples of Christ, (^{<1194>}1 Kings 19:4,5 Jon 1:3 ^{<4225>}Luke 22:45); or rather this is expressive of the calmness and serenity of his mind amidst his troubles; he laid himself down in peace, and slept quietly and comfortably; he did not lose a night's rest, his sleep was sweet unto him; which was a blessing of life from the Lord that everyone does not enjoy; (see ^{<8070>}Psalm 127:2);

I awakened; in the morning, alive and cheerful, Some lay themselves down and never awake more, as Sisera the captain of Jabin's army, and Ishbosheth the son of Saul; and this might have been David's case, considering the circumstances he was in: and others, through perplexing thoughts and cares, or pains of body, or uneasy dreams, rise fatigued and distressed; but David arose in good health of body, and tranquillity of mind, and comfortably refreshed;

for the Lord sustained me; the psalmist committed himself to the care and protection of God; he laid himself down in his arms, and there slept in safety; the Lord preserved him, who is Israel's keeper, that neither slumbers nor sleeps: and he rose in health and cheerfulness in the morning, supported by his right hand. This shows, that lying down to sleep, when in such circumstances, and awaking with cheerfulness, were not owing to rashness, stupidity, and insensibility, but to divine supports. These words may be interpreted, as they are by some of the ancients, of the death of Christ, and of his resurrection from the dead by the power of God; death is often expressed by sleep, and the resurrection of the dead by an awaking out of sleep, (^{<2712>}Daniel 12:2) (^{<2369>}Isaiah 26:19); and Christ's death being signified by lying down and sleeping, may denote both the voluntariness of

it, that he laid down his life freely and willingly; and his short continuance under the power of death, it was but like a night's sleep; and his resurrection from the dead, being expressed by an awaking through the Lord's sustaining him, shows that it was by the power of God, even the exceeding greatness of his power: and the whole of this may be applied to the case and state of the saints and people of God, who at times have rest and peace amidst their enemies; though they have tribulation in the world, they have peace in Christ; and notwithstanding the temptations of Satan, and the corruptions of their own hearts, they have joy and comfort through believing in Christ; the Lord sustains them with precious promises, and supports them with the discoveries of his love, and upholds them with the right hand of his righteousness.

Ver. 6. *I will not be afraid of ten thousands of the people*, etc.] David was a man of courage from his youth; the instances of his attacking the lion and the bear, when he kept his father's sheep, his engaging with Goliath, and his military exploits, show it; and though there were now many thousands up in arms against him, and his own son at the head of them; all the tribes of Israel were revolting from him, and he was only attended with a few of his friends, yet he was not dismayed; for that he refers to this insurrection appears by what follows,

that have set [themselves] against me round about; and this was owing not to himself; but to the Lord's sustaining of him; (see ^{<1271>}Psalm 27:1-3); and such courage and greatness of soul did his antitype the Messiah express, and to a greater degree, when Judas, with his band of soldiers, and the multitude with clubs and staves, entered the garden to apprehend him; and when the prince of this world was marching towards him, and when he was engaged with all the powers of darkness, and when the sorrows of death compassed him about, yet he failed not, nor was he discouraged: and something of this spirit appears in true believers, When they are in the exercise of faith, have the presence of God, and the discoveries of his love; they are then not afraid what man can do unto them; nor are they afraid of devils themselves, but wrestle against them; nor of any nor all their enemies, they having victory over them, given by God through Christ.

Ver. 7. *Arise, O Lord; save me, O my God*, etc.] God sometimes, in the apprehension of his people, seems to be as if he was asleep: when he does not appear to them and for them, and does not exert his power on their behalf, then they call to him to awake and arise; (see ^{<1423>}Psalm 44:23); and

it may be some respect is had to the words of Moses when the ark set forward, (~~CHAPS~~ Numbers 10:35); and it may be observed, that though David enjoyed so much peace and tranquillity of mind, and was in such high spirits as not to be afraid of ten thousands of men, yet he did not neglect the right means of deliverance and safety, prayer to God, who he knew was his God; and he addresses him as such, and uses his covenant interest in him, as an argument with him to arise and save him from his enemies, who was able to do it, and to whom salvation belongs: so Christ, his antitype, prayed to God as his God to save him, and was heard by him in like manner; so the saints call upon God in a day of trouble, cry to him in their distresses, to be delivered out of them;

for thou hast smitten all mine enemies [upon] the cheekbone; to smite anyone upon the cheek is reckoned reproachful, and is casting contempt upon them; (see ~~ORIGO~~ Job 16:10) and the sense is, that God had poured contempt upon his enemies in time past, and had brought them to shame and confusion: hence he puts up the above prayer as a prayer of faith for salvation, founded on past experience of God's goodness; he prayed that his God would arise and save him, and he believed he would because he had hitherto appeared for him, and against his enemies;

thou hast broken the teeth of the ungodly; who were like to beasts of prey, whose strength lies in their teeth, whereby they do the mischief they do; and the breaking of their teeth signifies the taking away from them the power of hurting, and refers to the victories which God had given David over the Philistines, Edomites, Syrians, and others; and maybe applied to Christ, and be expressive of sin, Satan, the world, and death, being overcome and abolished by him, and of the victory which the saints have through him over the same enemies.

Ver. 8. *Salvation [belongeth] unto the Lord*, etc.] As the author of it; temporal salvation is of him; all the deliverances of the saints out of their troubles are from him; and to him is owing their spiritual and eternal salvation; this belongs to Jehovah, Father, Son, and Spirit: Jehovah the Father resolved upon it, chose men to it from everlasting, contrived the scheme of it in his infinite wisdom, made a covenant with his Son, in which he secured it, and appointed him to be the author of it, and sent him in the fulness of time to effect it; and Christ the Son of God, being qualified for it, being mighty to save, came into this world for that purpose, and is become the author of eternal salvation; his own arm has brought it to him, though

there were many difficulties in the way; such as fulfilling the law, satisfying justice, making an end of sin, grappling with all the powers of darkness, and undergoing an accursed death: and the Spirit of God, he makes men sensible of their need of this salvation; he brings it near to them, and works faith in them to lay hold upon it, and shows them their interest in it; and in consequence of all this the glory of salvation belongs to the Lord, Father, Son, and Spirit, and should be given to the Father as the contriver of it, to the Son as the author of it, and to the Spirit as the applier of it; (see ~~REV~~ Revelation 7:10);

thy blessing [is] upon thy people; or it may be considered prayer wise, let “thy blessing [be] upon thy people”^{f50}; either upon those that were on the side of David, or on those, as others interpret it, who had imprudently joined themselves to Absalom; which latter sense, if right, shows in what a divine frame and disposition of mind the psalmist was, to pray for his enemies: or the words are an assertion, that the blessing of the Lord was come upon his covenant people, and does descend upon them as they are called by grace; even all spiritual blessings, the blessings of a justifying righteousness, of pardon of sin, of reconciliation and peace by the blood of Christ, of adoption, and of eternal life; the blessing of grace, and the blessing of glory.

Selah; on this word, (see Gill on “~~REV~~ Psalm 3:2”).