

THE LORD WHO LIFTS UP OUR HEADS
Psalm 3

Intro: The heading of this Psalm tells us that David wrote it when he was fleeing from Absalom. This was probably the most humiliating time in David's life. His own son had turned traitor against him, had won the hearts of the people of Israel, and now was seeking not only his father's throne, but his father's life. Obviously many thoughts filled David's mind as he climbed up the mount of Olives when he was escaping from Jerusalem.

Let us look into:

I. THE BACKGROUND OF DAVID'S CIRCUMSTANCES (Psa. 3:1, 2).

In the back of David's mind there had to be thoughts of how his sin with Bathsheba had changed the whole character of his reign. Nathan had pronounced very severe judgments against David because of his adultery. He had been told that "the sword shall never depart from thine house" (2 Sam. 12:10). He had also been told that the Lord would "raise up evil" against him out of his own house (cf. 2 Sam. 12:11). So it was obvious to David that behind all of the hatred and rebellion which was directed against him, was the Lord. You will remember that when Shimei cursed David, and David's nephew wanted to go over and decapitate Shimei, David told him to let Shimei curse because he knew that the Lord had sent him to do that. See 2 Sam. 16:10.

This is the kind of a situation which leads to suicides. The future looked very dark for David. He did not know what the outcome might be. Yet instead of thinking about killing himself, when Shimei continued to curse David, we find these unusual words coming out of David's mouth, and from his heart. This is what he said,

Let him alone, and let him curse;
for the Lord hath bidden him.

It may be that the Lord will look on mine affliction,
and that the Lord will requite me good
for his cursing today (2 Sam. 16:11b, 12).

So, even in his despair and humiliation, we see evidences of faith from what David had to say.

But there is another very important thing which we must not overlook in this story. We must not forget David's confession of his sin. We have that in Psalms 32 and 51, with probable references to his deep sorrow for his sin in other Psalms. And we have Nathan's gracious words to David following his confession:

The Lord hath put away thy sin;

thou shalt not die (2 Sam. 12:13).

God had forgiven David of his terrible sins. He had not only sinned with Bathsheba, but he had had her husband killed. He didn't deserve to be forgiven of either one of those sins, but he was forgiven, and cleansed, and restored to fellowship with God.

Now if there was one thing that was being tested during this time, it was David's belief that God had forgiven him of his sins. His circumstances didn't seem to indicate that God had forgiven and forgotten his sin. The support that Absalom had was clearly amazing. David had been a good and godly king. He had been faithful to the Lord throughout his reign. The nation had thrived under his leadership. His kingdom had grown, and many victories had been his on the field of battle. But now it looked like the Lord was on Absalom's side, and that David could not expect any more help from the Lord. Even his appearance as he fled from Absalom seemed to indicate that he was defeated in his soul as well as in his body. This is how the write of 2 Samuel described David and his men:

And David went up by the ascent of mount Olivet, and wept as he went up, **and had his head covered**, and he went barefoot:
and all the people that was with him covered every man his head, and they went up, weeping as they went up (2 Sam. 15:30).

And the first two verses of our Psalm seem to indicate that the people added greatly to his misery as they sided with Absalom, and then said, "There is no help for him in God." If that were true, then David really had no reason to hope, and if he had no reason to hope, then he had no reason to live.

I think that the Spirit of God has painted this dark picture for us because we as the Lord's people are often in the same kind of a situation. We may not have sinned as David did, but we all have sinned. We all have reasons to wonder what our trials mean. And our fears may be compounded by the fact that we see very little, or possibly, no evidence of answered prayer. If the Lord is our Friend, then it doesn't make any difference who our enemies are, but if the Lord has turned against us, it doesn't make any difference how many may be on our side.

David put a "Selah" at the end of verse 2, that musical marking which was there for a pause, to emphasize what had been said. And it is proof that those words in the latter part of David hurt him as deeply as he could be hurt because

they struck right at his heart. They were really aimed at David's fellowship with the Lord. The people were seeking to undermine David's faith in the Lord. If people can make us believe that the Lord has become our ENEMY, then we face the worst kind of a defeat.

Now I would not for a moment minimize the agony that David went through in all of this. It must have been devastating to him. But I think that the Spirit of God wants us to see that things can be as dark, and apparently hopeless, as they were for David at this particular time, and yet for our faith in God to strengthen us so that we can face the dark hours with perfect peace.

At this point, in verse 3, we see:

II. DAVID'S CONFIDENCE IN THE LORD (Psa. 3:3, 4).

Was he in despair? Absolutely not! The future was just as dark and uncertain as ever. If anything, things were worse than they had been. David could not get to the Temple, nor could he go to that place in the royal palace where he was accustomed to meet God. I take it from these verses that as David was walking along in all of the confusion that was around him, with various people speaking to him, in the depth of his soul he was crying out to God. And when it was convenient, it seems that he was praying audibly. And he was conscious that the Lord was hearing him.

Now why do I say that?

I say that because while people were talking about Absalom and all of his forces, and wondering what all this was going to lead to, David, this man after God's heart, was practicing what he had preached so often, he turned to the Lord and expressed his confidence in the Lord.

There were three things that the Lord reminded him of:

- 1) That God was his shield, as He had been Abraham's shield. Cf. Gen. 15:1.
- 2) God was his glory.
- 3) God was the lifter up of his head.

Absalom was powerless to harm his father, David, except as the Lord might allow him to do something. David glory was not the fact that he was the King of Israel, but his glory was that he was a child of God. And that head which was inclined to be bowed down with grief, but suddenly lifted up, and the expression means that God not only lifted his head up, but that God held it up!

Often our heads are a testimony of where we are spiritually. If our heads are hanging down, it is apparent we need the great Lifter Up of our heads. And it is important to see that the Lord lifted up David's head while he was fleeing, and while everything, from a human standpoint, was in question. We can all lift our own heads when things are going well, or when the trials are over and we know that we are safe. But only God can lift up our heads right at the time when things are at their worst. This is what David experienced. He had cried to God for help, and God, instead of striking Absalom dead, made Himself known to in a most wonderful way to His servant, King David, and the whole situation looked different.

It is very fitting that we should have a second "Selah" here.

Now the change that had taken place with David was manifested in a very obvious way:

III. THE EVIDENCE OF DAVID'S PEACE (Psa. 33:5, 6).

When we are troubled, and worried about how things are going to turn out, probably the most difficult thing that we have to do is to sleep. Worry keeps us awake. We may be worn out physically, but if we are worried, it is meaningless to go to bed. We toss and turn, and think and think, but sleep escapes us.

Look at what David had to say about his sleep. (Read verse 5 and 6.) Why could he sleep? Was it because he was never inclined to worry? No! It was because "the Lord sustained" him. This word gives us the picture of David not only lying down in his bed, but resting in the Lord Who was watching over him. And so it didn't make any difference to him how many people might be following Absalom, he knew that he was safe with the Lord.

I don't think that David meant that he would not die. He couldn't have known that. But he knew that the Lord was watching over him, and that whatever happened would be under the direct supervision of the Lord Himself.

The Psalm closes with:

IV. DAVID'S PRAYER (Psa. 3:7, 8).

There is hardly anything that is a greater encouragement for us to continue to pray than for our prayers to have been answered. We saw evidence of one way the Lord answered prayer for David while he was escaping. We see others here.

We cannot say that Absalom was dead when David wrote the latter part of this psalm. That was a cause of great grief to David. No, it seems that what David was doing here was drawing on past answers to prayer. The Lord had helped him many times before. The Lord had not allowed sin to prevail against David. The Lord had not only delivered David from many enemies, but he had so overcome David's enemies that they were no longer a threat to him. Their teeth had been broken.

And so what was David's testimony. See verse 8. Deliverance always comes from the Lord, and, whatever the troubles might be, God works for the blessing of His people. And here we have the final "Selah."

Concl: There are times when the Lord gives us peace and joy by lifting us out of our troubles. And that is always wonderful when it happens. But probably most of the time, He seeks to teach us peace while the storm is raging. His sleeping during the storm when He was with His disciples in the boat, is a picture of the peace that He has for you and for me. Cf. Mark 4:35-41.

We all have our troubles. We can be thankful that they are not all major crises like David was going through. But they can be constant aggravations of many kinds, and we all need to learn to receive God's peace in those times. Then, if something major comes along, we will have been well trained in knowing how to be at peace when we are in the midst of the storm.

And let us remember, too, that when God forgives us of our sins, He never goes back on His word. So let us believe it, and enjoy the peace that comes when God does for us what we can never do for ourselves.

May we all learn the lesson that David learned while he was fleeing barefooted to escape from the murderous intentions of his son.