



Psalm 3: He is my Shield, My Rock, and the Lifter of My Head

### **The LORD Helps His Troubled People**

**A Psalm of David when he fled from Absalom his son.**

*3 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*

We have now studied Psalms 1, 2, and 19. We are still in the first book of the Book of Psalms that extends from Psalm 1 to Psalm 41. It is fitting that the first lament we come to will speak of how many things come against the faithful. David is being attacked by his son Absalom, but he is also receiving an attack on his faith.

What will become a familiar note in the is sounded here at the outset, namely, that there is an ever-increasing number of people who would like to destroy the righteous and their faith.

Their opposition to the people of God may be subtle at times, but at other times it may also be open and direct, far more dangerous than scorning (v. 1).<sup>1</sup>

It is easy to mistakenly believe that believers are somehow paranoid or somehow wrapped up in imagined enemies, but the reality is that we are indeed in a spiritual war (Ephesians 6). We recently learned that we "wrestle not against 'flesh and blood', but against principalities and powers in high places". This is not just spooky stuff that believers imagine. If we are in a battle, then we are both being attacked by the enemy, and we should also be ON the attack.

Is this psalm, David starts out doing what most of us do when we are under assault. He cries out "OH GOD HELP ME!" The first 4 lines are the parallelism that I have spoken about in Hebrew poetry. David is repeating the trouble he is in and he ratchets it up each time just telling how he feels overwhelmed in his flesh.

You know, as part of this struggle, we each have within us an old sin nature. That old sin nature was born in sin and is comfortable in sin. It is almost like it is our 'animal nature'. It wants what IT wants, and it is in tension with what God wants. It produces the opposite of the fruits of the Spirit as they are described in Galatians 5:22. It is always pushing us to disregard the things of God and those things that are desired of God. But, we also have the Holy Spirit of God within us. This flesh and this Spirit are at war with one another. It is that old sin nature that is our fleshly remnant. It is fallen and it pursues the things of the flesh. It might even be better to call it our "old fleshly nature". The Spirit within us is at war with the flesh from the moment we are born until the moment we die. I remember thinking about this alot a few months ago when my mother was dying. It was like her spirit wanted to be free to go be with the Lord, but her body stubbornly hung on trying to stay physically alive.

This is what we're seeing in this psalm and the next, David's flesh cries out "GOD, YOU'VE ABANDONED ME AND MY ENEMIES ARE EATING ME ALIVE", and then he speaks spiritual truth to his own flesh, reminding and schooling his flesh the truth that God's promises are good and His deliverance is real. Verses 1-4 are not just nonsense. For each of us as believers the struggle is real. David says, "**3 LORD, how they have increased who trouble me!** We have all kinds of assaults on our life and our emotions. Fred has related to us how as he has put more and more of his trust in the Lord it seems that the troubles have increased. They are not just people problems, but physical, emotional, financial, and spiritual problems. Yes. The struggle is real. As David relates indeed "**Many are they who rise up against me. <sup>2</sup> Many are they who say of me, There is no help for him in God.**" *Selah*

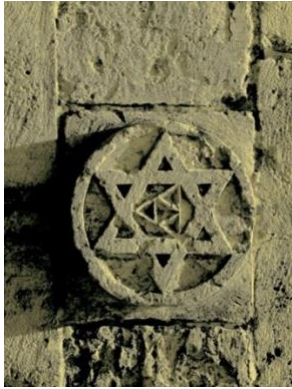
I will remind you that not all of our hardships originate in the spiritual realm. In other words, they may not originate in demonic attack or something like that. But the bottom line is that they do a number on us, and they can take a toll on our joy, our faith, and our walk with Christ.

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<sup>1</sup> Ross, A. P. (2011–2013). [\*A Commentary on the Psalms 1–89: Commentary\*](#) (Vol. 1, p. 218). Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Academic.

But you, O Lord  
are a shield for me  
you're my glory  
and the ONE  
who lifts up my head  
Psalm 3:3

Verses 3-4 present the the theological truth that Believers can find great confidence and protection in the midst of ANY kind of assault. In verses 1-4 David lays out the physical reality of what he is going through, and then he gloriously turns to the spiritual reality of God's "way out" so to speak. David turns the conversation with "BUT YOU, OH LORD". He is moving from lament and despair to confidence. He is going to now state the truth of God's provision and protection in his life. He uses two metaphors for God's deliverance: a "shield" and "His glory".



The word "**magen**" (מגן) is the Hebrew word for shield and it appears 63 times in the Bible. It is usually translated as a shield or a buckler, but it is also translated as "defense" or "armed". It comes from the Hebrew root "**ganan**" (גנן) meaning to defend, cover, or surround. Rabbi Hirsch's Etymological Dictionary of Biblical Hebrew expounds on the meaning: protecting, safeguarding, insulating, hardening, enclosing, ruling, protecting, and establishing.

It is a comforting thing to know that God shields and protects His people. He made this known to Abraham when He made everlasting promises to Abraham and his descendents. Before God promised Abraham the land, He said, "*Do not be afraid, Abram. I am your shield, your exceedingly great reward*". (Gen 15:1) This promise goes beyond Abraham. He said the same thing to the Nation of Israel. "*Happy are you, O Israel! Who is like you, a people saved by the Lord, the shield of your help, and the sword of your majesty!*" (Deut. 33:29). Without the shielding protection of the Lord, the children of Israel would have died at the hand of Pharaoh's army or they would have perished in the desert where they wandered for 40 years.

Repeatedly in the Psalms, we will see David refer to God as his shield. We can't cover them all, but in Psalm 18, when David is delivered from the hand of Saul he will say, "*As for God—His way is perfect; the word of the Lord is proven; He is a shield to all who trust in Him.*" What we each need to understand is that His way IS perfect, His word IS proven, He IS a shield to all who trust in Him. So, are you trusting in Him? Are you availing yourself of His promise to be YOUR shield? David learned through his relationship with God that God would be his shield not only in military battle, but also in the battles in his spiritual life. He would come out of it victorious. He would come out with his head 'lifted up' and not hung down in shame. If God is our defense, who can really harm us?

## Hebrew Word of the Week

# כבוד

Kavod - Glory/Honor

The second metaphorical image is when David calls God “my glory.” This word (כָּבוֹד; s.v. Ps. 19:1) is commonly used to describe God as the most important person in existence. It is based in the ancient meaning of the weightiness of battle armaments. (Think tanks and heavy stuff)<sup>2</sup> But it is important to go beyond the ancient foundations, and to look at the historical scriptural usage of the word *kavod* in Hebrew. Rabbi Hirsch fills out the meaning saying that *kavod* means "being heavy, giving honor, being serious, wealth, importance greatness". I think that what this means that it is God that gives our lives weight and substance. Without Him we go through life concentrating on the things that do not matter. He is the rock that gives us stability and holds us in the storm. This is why our mothers and grandmothers sang, "Rock of Ages cleft for me, let me hid myself in Thee." Think of this word glory as the opposite of being a flake or being flakey (something that has no weight). In Psalm 89, beginning at verse 15, Ethan the Ezrahite declares,

*<sup>15</sup> Blessed are the people who know the joyful sound!*

*They walk, O LORD, in the light of Your countenance.*

*<sup>16</sup> In Your name they rejoice all day long,*

*And in Your righteousness they are exalted.*

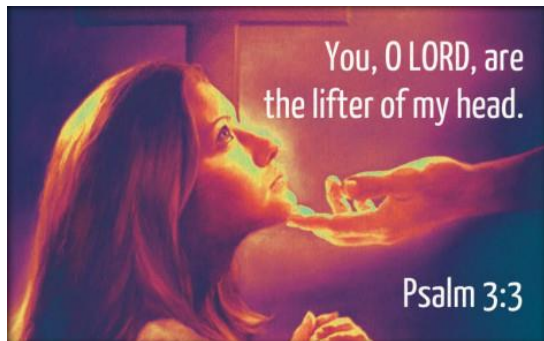
*<sup>17</sup> For You are the glory of their strength,*

*And in Your favor our horn is exalted.*

*<sup>18</sup> For our shield belongs to the LORD,*

*And our king to the Holy One of Israel.*

God is the rock of my life and He is the rock of your life. He is that solid, magnificent presence if we will just call on Him. Isn't this a beautiful picture? God is our shield. God is our rock. He is our protector and deliverer. David had been driven from his palace, but his glory was still intact because God was his rock and his shield. Believing in that, David was able to have his head lifted up from depression and despondency.



This is why David said, "He is the lifter of my head". The third metaphorical figure is the “lifter up of my head” (מְרִים רֹאשִׁי; s.v. Ps. 46:10). David felt dejected and put down, but in declaring God as his shield and as his glory, David was able to lift his head in the midst of the turmoil. As he reflected on his relationship with the Lord, he trusted that God was not yet through with him. He had a faith-based hope that he would be restored to his position on the throne.

When you and I are surrounded by "enemies", we can put our total confidence in three truths: 1) God is our shield, 2) God is our Glory, and 3) God is the 'lifter of our heads'. Like David, we can be assailed from every side by people and circumstances. We can feel hopeless.

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.ancient-hebrew.org/definition/glory.htm>

We can feel like we're at the end. We can feel like we'll never get out. We can feel like there is no hope, BUT we can have confidence in God's deliverance. David tells us that our mourning can be turned to dancing and our sleepless nights can be turned to peace. After letting his spirit speak truth to his flesh, David writes,

*<sup>5</sup> I lay down and slept;*

*I awoke, for the LORD sustained me.*

*<sup>6</sup> I will not be afraid of ten thousands of people*

*Who have set themselves against me all around.*

David understood that his only hope was in the Lord. That's exactly as it is with us. Scripture tells us several important truths as Believers concerning the hardship, trials, temptations, people, and circumstances that will come our way. When we are assailed by our "enemies", be they people or circumstances, God WILL provide a way out. In Paul's letter to the Corinthian church, he told them, "<sup>13</sup> Every test that you have experienced is the kind that normally comes to people. But God keeps his promise, and he will not allow you to be tested beyond your power to remain firm; at the time you are put to the test, he will give you the strength to endure it, and so provide you with a way out." (1 Cor 10:13 GNT)

This means that whatever we're going through has been gone through by other humans. And, God's marvelous provision is that we will receive whatever we need in the moment of trial or temptation to triumph through that trial or temptation. It is often when we're in the middle of these trials that we feel like we are about to be overwhelmed. We are tempted to ask, "God, why is this happening to me?" Many of us in this room or reading this sermon can give testimony to the fact that in the fire we have felt His holy presence. Our flesh felt abandoned and panicked, but our spirits were revived by our Precious Savior, our Jesus, who was tempted in every way just as we are (Hebrews 4:15) Somehow, through it all, God worked the difficult circumstances of our lives together for good.

Paul tells us, "<sup>28</sup> And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose. <sup>29</sup> For whom He foreknew, He also predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren." If David had not been assaulted by his enemies, perhaps he never would have let us know that God is our shield, our rock, and the lifter of our heads. The reason it is so important to either know these scriptures by memory or know where to find them quickly that we can get to the truth in times of need.

We have all felt like David felt in this psalm. How beautiful that the Holy Spirit of God spoke through David to give us an understanding of the weakness of our flesh, but even more importantly to help us realize the amazing power of God at work in our lives. He guides us, protects us, anchors us, and comforts us. Jesus, God the Son, truly is there for us in whatever we encounter. He is our rock, our sword, our shield, and the precious lifter of our heads. We truly can sing, "What a Friend we have in Jesus!"

Let us pray.