

Salvation Belongs to our Lord

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[0 : 0 0] David, the hearts of men of Israel have gone after Absalom. Then David said to all his servants who were with him at Jerusalem, arise and let us flee, or else there will be no escape from Absalom.

Go quickly, lest he overtake us quickly, and bring down ruin on us, and strike the city with the edge of the sword. And the king's servants said to the king, behold, your servants are ready to do whatever my lord the king decides. So the king went out, and all his household after him. And the king left the ten concubines to keep the house. And the king went out, and all the people after him. And they halted at the last house. And of course, David is now on his own. And we'll follow this up with the corresponding psalm in the later part of this morning. Well, let's come to God in prayer.

And this morning, please turn to Psalm 3. Psalm 3. So as we've turned to Psalm 3 this morning, you'll notice Psalm 3 has a title that reflects back on our first reading this morning from 2 Samuel. It's a psalm of David when he fled from Absalom, his son. So now hear God's word. A psalm of David when he fled from Absalom, his son.

O Lord, how many are my foes! Many are rising against me! Many are saying of my soul, there is no salvation for him in God. But you, O Lord, are a shield about me, my glory and the lifter of my head. I cried aloud to the Lord, and he answered me from his holy heel. I lay down and slept.

I woke again, for the Lord sustained me. I will not be afraid of many thousands of people, who have set themselves against me all round. Arise, O Lord, and save me, O my God, for you strike all my enemies on the cheek. You break the teeth of the wicked. Salvation belongs to the Lord. Your blessing be on your people. Selah.

[2 : 5 2] Well, I've said over these past few weeks, or at least hinted and sowed the seeds, that the psalms are an incredible piece of poetry in God's word. But not only that, they take a huge amount of time to arrive at and to write. And so they deserve a certain amount of seriousness, where we spend that time meditating on that portion of God's word. Now, of course, if you're brought up in an Anglican church, you'll be very aware that you go through the psalms once a month, and you go through the Bible in a year. And this is because the psalms are very much a central part to the building of a person's character and walk with God, that faithful walk where you're consciously committed.

And so I'd like us to pray that we would perhaps enter into the seriousness of the psalm and be blessed by it this morning. So let's pray. Father God, I would ask of you this morning, we would ask that you would cause us to meditate upon your word with a seriousness that your word deserves, and that you would bless us with understanding. For Father God, the purpose of us reading your word is so that we can know what it means, and by knowing what it means, be blessed by it. That, Father God, your word is how you have spoken to us. That, Father God, you gave us language so that you could communicate truth with us. And we would ask, Father, this morning that as we reflect upon this very powerful psalm, an intense psalm, that we would be blessed by it. And that, Father God, that your word, which is able to speak to every generation, would speak to us this morning.

And we ask this in Jesus' name. Amen. Well, again, if you have Psalm 3 in front of you, great. If you don't, please try and turn back to it.

This is a wonderful psalm, and it is a psalm with a very clear historical context. If I can jump forward into the New Testament just for a moment, you'll be familiar with such passages that the Lord will never leave you nor forsake you, that there is nothing that can separate you from God, from his love in Christ Jesus. That for the Christian, we're very aware, perhaps, of the New Testament promises of security and of salvation. That like David here, we can say, salvation belongs to the Lord. And that we know that salvation in the person Christ Jesus. That there is then nothing that can separate us from God because of the accomplishment of Christ.

But we do need to be reminded of it. And we need to be reminded of it because like David, sometimes we can be in a situation mentally, emotionally, or in a real life circumstance where people are saying to us or we're saying to ourselves that there is no salvation for us in God.

[6 : 32] That is a debilitating spiritual condition if it's not true. And it's not true for David, and neither is it true for us who truly belong to Christ. And so as we come to this psalm, though it is in the Old Testament, it has very much that New Testament security about it that we find in the person of Christ Jesus. This psalm is David reflecting on a period of his life that he has gone through, a time where he has clearly been disciplined by the Lord, but recognizes at the same time that the Lord is the one who's saving him.

That the Lord is judging him and saving him at the same time. Now for a Christian, we know where that takes us. That takes us to the very cross of Christ, the very same place where we recognize we are being judged and saved at the same time. And so David comes to this point in his life as he reflects upon that very event and writes a psalm. And the psalm would have taken a great deal of time to write, a great deal of meditation on what the Lord has brought him through, what the Lord was doing. It is both intense and it creates this wonderful sense of relief, where suddenly we can breathe at last because we know that God has taken care of every last enemy.

And so it gives us a very clear understanding of why David has written this. The history, that is, gives us a very clear understanding of why David has written this psalm. So let's just walk through it as a summary as we begin. The title is what gives us the indication of its historical context. It is a response to Absalom's rebellion against the king, against King David.

And this is David's response to that rebellion. David has had to flee, but he's had to flee from many, many, many enemies. In other words, David is setting the scene here that he's not just on the run from Absalom, his son, but he's on the run from many, many, many others as well. And so this gives us its historical context. And that context can be found in 2 Samuel chapters 12 through to 16. There's a large section there to cover, but that section will give you the history of this particular psalm, 2 Samuel chapter 12 verse through to chapter 16. David has had to flee, and he's running away from many, many, many enemies that are after him. And so when you look at this psalm purely as a straightforward observation of what's happening, David is a man who's outnumbered. That David is fleeing from many, many, many. And so the conclusion that you would draw is that if David is outnumbered by so many enemies, then the enemies must prevail. Now the confidence that the enemies have is great, that they will prevail, and David will come to an end, because they say in verse 2 that there is no salvation for David in God, that there is no protection for him. And so if they have come to the conclusion that God is not on David's side, then David is without defense, that David is without protection. And so there is no salvation for him in God. And so they are very confident in their pursuit of David. But David is also confident. And David calls the Lord God his shield. And David plus the Lord tips the power balance. That David on the surface may look outnumbered with the many, many, many enemies.

But God being David's shield tips the balance of power so that David can be and will be protected. So much so, verse 5, David is able to sleep and wake up sustained, restored. That David is able to draw the conclusion that he does not even have to be afraid of many thousands of people. Because David plus God, or God alone, is enough to take care of all of those enemies. That David is absolutely confident that the Lord God will be his shield. That the Lord God will save him, verse 7, from his enemies. In fact, deal with his enemies.

[11 : 54] Why? Well, because of what he says. The conclusion that he comes to, or rather the promise that he believes, that salvation, verse 8, belongs to the Lord. This is the defining conclusion that we too must come and understand. So let's begin with this confidence of the enemies and why they might have arrived at it.

There is no salvation for David in God. Now that is a striking thing to say, but it's very unlikely that someone would simply say it unless they could back it up. Unless they had evidence or a reason for making such a strong and bold claim that there is no salvation for David in God. And the reason why they come to that conclusion is because of what David has done, that he should not have done, and what he has failed to do, something that he should have done. And because David has done two things that have brought great displeasure to the Lord, then they are confident that if this man David has brought that displeasure to the Lord, then there is no way the Lord can offer salvation to him. He is without the Lord's protection.

Well, what are the two things? Well, David is a man who has killed another man's wife, a woman that he took for himself, and he sent the man off to the front wall knowing that he would die. It was a premeditated murder. And then secondly, David overlooked, turned a blind eye to the rape of a young woman. Instead of disciplining his son, he said nothing. So you can understand why the enemies of David, Absalom and others, have arrived at this conclusion that given what David has done, there can be no salvation for him in God. That there is no way a man like that can bring upon himself such displeasure from the Lord and still be in the protective guard of the Lord God. David, however, sees it very differently.

But these enemies draw the conclusion that given what David has done and what he has failed to do, that there can be no salvation for this man, David. And in fact, David actually knows that Absalom's rebellion is God's judgment on him. In other words, this isn't just something that has happened, but rather David understands that God has raised up Absalom and to rebel against him as a judgment for David's actions. In other words, David knows that God is angry at him, that he is displeased with David, he is displeased with the king. And David understands that Absalom's rebellion is God's present judgment on him. And so you would assume that David would arrive at the same conclusion that Absalom does and the enemies do, that there is no salvation for him in God. But instead, verse 3, David arrives at the conclusion that the Lord is his shield. That though he has sinned and sinned greatly, and though it would be an obvious conclusion to draw, that there would be no salvation for him in God, no protection whatsoever from his enemies, yet because David belongs to God, and because God has made promises to David, David is confident in the fact that the

Lord will be his shield from the very judgment that he is experiencing. That though he has sinned, God will be the one who protects David from his own judgment.

[16 : 26] Now, for any of us who have been disciplined by the Lord, and I would suggest it takes a certain amount of wisdom to understand that sometimes life circumstances are not merely happenstance, but they are God dealing with us. And for any of us who know what it is like to be disciplined by the Lord, will also know if they belong to the Lord, that at the same time the Lord is being their shield. That though they recognize that they are under the heavy hand of God, at the very same time, God is their shield. And so David testifies in verse 4 that he is so confident and so assured that he is able to demonstrate this and prove it, verse 4, that God is the one who has answered his prayer, verse 4, that he has slept peacefully because the Lord has sustained him, verse 5. And as David reflects back on this situation, he has seen and experienced that though it is God who is judging him, at the same time, it is God who is protecting him. That he recognizes that the rebellion is God's judgment, but he also recognized that God is the one who is the one who will protect him from that judgment. Why? Because salvation belongs to the Lord.

Salvation belongs to the Lord. What does that mean? Well, this is really our second point, I guess. Salvation belongs to the Lord. We might remember, as an illustration, if I can use this, how Jonah found himself in a similar situation when he ran away from God, it brought the displeasure and judgment of God upon Jonah. That Jonah, going in the opposite direction of Nineveh, gets on a boat and God causes a storm to arise. Jonah is then thrown overboard and God ordains a fish to swallow Jonah. And inside the belly of the fish, Jonah comes to this point of confession, Jonah comes to this point of confession. Well, what is Jonah experiencing? He's experiencing the judgment and displeasure of God, the discipline of God, while at the same time, God's protection. That Jonah has brought these circumstances upon himself. And what looks like just a circumstance? He knows that this is God dealing with him. And yet at the same time, God is dealing with him, not to destroy him, but so that Jonah, like David, would recognize that salvation is of the Lord. And that's indeed what he actually says, that salvation is of the Lord, that those who cling to worthless idols forfeit the grace that could be theirs. Why? Because salvation belongs to the Lord. Salvation is of the Lord.

And that is the very same conclusion that David comes to, that salvation belongs to the Lord. And so the point that David is making is that the decision over protection is the Lord's, not his enemies. That the one who gets to decide whether or not David will receive the Lord's protection is indeed the Lord. That the one who gets to decide whether or not David is saved is not the enemies, but it is the Lord. And so the end result is not determined by the enemy's fervor or how confident that they might be, but rather it is determined by the Lord, verse 8, because salvation belongs to the Lord.

And so though these enemies have arrived at perhaps a fair conclusion, I mean, you can understand why they have arrived at thinking and believing that there is no salvation for David in God.

Because he is under God's judgment. Who would ever think that a person under the judgment of God would be at the same time in a place where he would be protected by God?

[21 : 00] And so the enemies draw the conclusion that there is no salvation for David in God, but it is the wrong conclusion. They are wrong. And they are wrong because salvation belongs to the Lord.

Now when David refers to the Lord God as his shield, we are given an image that takes us straight to the cross.

The point of a shield is to protect the one behind the shield from the enemy's attack. That when the enemy is attacking, they're not attacking the shield, they're attacking the person behind the shield.

What the shield is doing is absorbing the blows. It is taking the shots. The shield is protecting the person behind it.

And we know this shield is Christ. That Christ on the cross has not only removed our sin and imputed Christ's righteousness to us, but like a shield, he absorbs the judgment of God.

[22 : 12] And so in the very place where we are judged, we are protected. And that's what David is saying here in verse 3, that the Lord is my shield.

And we are able to say the same thing about the Lord as we take it to the cross. And recognize in the very place of our judgment is the same place where we find our protection, our shield in the person of Christ Jesus.

Christ is not only the one who removes our guilt and who removes our sin and imputes his righteousness to us. We are made righteous with the righteousness of Christ.

We are righteous in Christ. But he is at the same time the shield that protects us from the wrath of God, absorbing it all himself so that we may not face it and be protected, so that we may have salvation in the Lord.

Well, God says that he will never leave us nor forsake us. That's what it means. That God says that nothing can separate us from his love.

[23 : 24] Nothing can separate us from him for those who belong to Christ Jesus. And we hear those promises, and we recognize that those promises were made a very long time ago, even before our own birth.

And recognize that we have sinned much since then, and yet also recognize that those promises hold true. That even though we have sinned, like David, we are no better, we are no worse.

God is our shield, because salvation belongs to the Lord. And sometimes when you are disciplined by the Lord, it's not always possible for some people to recognize it.

It needs to be pointed out to them. In much the same way, Nathan had to point out to David his sin. But once it has been made aware, then suddenly you're able to see the glorious reality of salvation belonging to the Lord.

What else does this mean? Well, another thing that it means is this, that the devil will want to tell you that there is no salvation for you in God.

[24 : 42] He will remind you of your past sins, and he will tell you that they are big enough, and they are wide enough, and they are great enough, so great in fact, that you cannot help but draw the conclusion that there is no salvation for you in God.

And he's a liar. And sometimes you can find yourself in the company of others whose mouths are used by Satan.

Like Peter's was in Mark 8, and Jesus had to say to Peter, get behind me, Satan. For you do not have your mind on the things of God, but on the things of men.

Well, sometimes people's mouths can be used by Satan. And they will say to us, effectively, there can be no salvation for you in God. And they're not telling the truth.

Because they don't get to decide. That even though the conclusions that they draw may be fair, they don't get to decide. And they do not get to decide, because salvation belongs to the Lord.

[25 : 54] The Lord is both our judge and our shield. Well, here's the exhortation as we come to reflect, finally, upon this psalm.

David composes this psalm after all of that emotional and physical turmoil. Now, it's hard to know exactly when he wrote the psalm. It could have been during the time that he was fleeing, or it could have been after all of this was over.

I'm not entirely sure when he penned the psalm, but it would be fair to say that it took him a long time to write these words down, because they are both intense and clear.

They give a sense of relief and the danger that David was in. Well, the psalms have been given to us for exactly the same reason, that we would meditate upon them, that we would slow our life down with them, that we would reflect heavily upon the Lord's grace towards us, that salvation belongs to the Lord.

And this is why, that generally speaking, the psalms don't include the names of the enemies. It just so happens in Psalm 3 it does, but you can read many of the psalms, and you'll find many of the times that the enemies are not mentioned.

[27 : 18] And the reason that they're not mentioned is because God has designed his word in such a way so that it can be read by generations to come. If the enemies were named, if the details were too specific, then what would happen is that people would read them as a piece of history, of something that someone else was brought through in the past.

But the reason certain details are left out is because God has designed his word to be read by people today and generations to come, because our enemies are different.

Though our enemies can actually say the same things. And we can be comforted in the same way David was, and others are throughout the psalms by reading and slowing our life down to the speed that they take.

In many ways, we could arrive at the conclusion of singing a psalm of thanksgiving, much like Mary did. Her psalm is not in the Psalter, but it is nonetheless a psalm that she sings when she realizes that she will give birth to the Savior of the world.

This is how the psalms are to be used. They are to slow us down, cause us to think, cause us to reflect, and to give thanks to the Lord our God in song, in prayer, thanksgiving continually.

[28 : 47] Well, think of it like this, and we'll close with this. A modern day love song, it's Valentine's Day after all, if you like Valentine's Day. And imagine a modern day love song.

The way a modern day love song works is that the artist who writes the song and sings the song never mentions the girl's name. He never mentions what color her hair was, not really.

He never mentions what clothes she wore, or none of it's too specific. And the reason why the artist writes a song about a girl that's not too specific, that broke his heart and whatever, is so that other people could sing it.

Because if he named her, no one else could sing it. It'd be just like listening to someone else's piece of history. So the way a love song works is that it has this deliberate ambiguity of not knowing, so that it can be sung by future generations, and you can apply the certain people into it, if you like that kind of thing.

For me, more of a blues man. Blues are sad songs sung by sad people to make themselves feel better.

[30 : 08] That's how the blues work. Sad songs sung by sad people to make themselves feel better. And in many ways, the psalms work like blues songs. There are parts that are incredibly sad, and they're sung by people feeling sad, so that they can make themselves feel better.

That's how the psalms work. That's how they speak. That's how they cause us to enter into them with a full array of emotions.

That's how they work. And that's why we would spend, should spend, a great deal of time on them. And if you do this with this psalm, if you do that with this specific psalm, reflect on it heavily, then you will come to this very clear conclusion.

That your enemies will not be right about you. Because salvation belongs to the Lord. In the Lord, you have experienced both judgment and protection.

And that is something to sing about. Amen. Well, we're going to come to our final hymn, and then we'll come back for the blessing before we leave.

[31 : 28] Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you.

Thank you. Thank you. Thank you.

He's given Jesus Christ His Son Gives thanks With a grateful heart Gives thanks To the Holy God Gives thanks Because He's given Jesus Christ His Son And now Let the weak say I am strong Let the poor say I am rich Because the poor The Lord has done For us And now Let the weak say I am strong Let the poor say I am rich Because the poor The Lord has done

For us Give thanks With a grateful heart Give thanks To the Holy God Give thanks Because He's given Jesus Christ His Son Give thanks With a grateful heart Give thanks To the Holy God Give thanks Because He's given Jesus Christ Jesus Christ His Son And now Let the weak say I am strong Let the poor say I am rich Because I'm gone And the Lord has done For us And now

Let the weak say I am strong Let the poor say I am rich Because the Lord The Lord has done For us Is thanks Well the call this morning And the blessing this morning Is for you to remember it is to remember that salvation belongs to the Lord to which the people of God say Amen Amen Amen

[35 : 49] Amen