



Central
Peninsula
Church

...to make and mature more followers of Christ

Help!

Psalm 3

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July 21, 2013

series: Songs of Summer

I knew something was seriously wrong when my dad called for a family meeting. He had recently undergone a biopsy and we were waiting for the results. My mom, dad, Cassie and I sat in the living room. The mood was somber. With teary eyes my dad delivered the news that the biopsy revealed that he had esophageal cancer. Surgery to remove his esophagus was scheduled. Fatality for this type of cancer is 85%.

Where do you turn when your world is turned upside down?

On February 27, 2008 Cassie heard a knock on the front door of our house. This was a house that we believed God put us in. We had lived there seven months and were already "in" with the close-knit circle of friends on the street. We were praying for their salvation and seeing spiritual fruit from early conversations. In our short seven months we had celebrated two birthdays, two major holidays and dozens of bible studies and social gatherings. It was starting to feel like home. When Cassie opened the front door, a real estate agent and the new owners of the house greeted her. Evidently our landlord had been lying to us from the very beginning. He had been quietly "shopping" the house. It was time for us to move again.

Where do you turn when your world is turned upside down?

In Psalm 3 we are going to see how King David reacts when his world is turned upside down and how we can learn from his example. To understand his crisis, turn in your Bibles to 2 Samuel 15. In 2 Samuel 15 we see that Absalom, one of King David's sons, is positioning himself to become the new King. In verses 1–5 Absalom provided himself with an entourage of 50 men to run before his chariot. Absalom engaged the people in conversation as they entered Jerusalem and told them that their complaints for justice would not be heard by David. However, if he was king, they would be treated with justice. Absalom would embrace people and kiss them.

Absalom did this for four years. For four years he slowly and strategically turned the hearts of the people away from David toward himself. That's when Absalom made his move for the crown official by aligning his supporters and declaring himself the new King of Israel.

In verse 13, David is told, "*The hearts of the people of Israel are with Absalom.*" Can you imagine the betrayal he felt? Can you imagine the frustration and injustice that he felt? In reaction, David gathered his officials and fled. It's in this moment that David wrote Psalm 3. See how King David responds.

Lord, how many are my foes! How many rise up against me! Many are saying of me, "God will not deliver him" (verses 1–2).

How appropriate is it that people are saying that God won't deliver him? What are our dangerous threats today? Work. Children. Spouse. Neighbor. Ourselves. I want you to think about whatever distress you may be having or whatever danger you may be in before going on with this sermon because it is in the midst of precisely that danger that God will appear to you and deliver you.

The first step of deliverance is honest acknowledgment of your need. After he honestly acknowledges his problem, in the space between verse 2 and 3, he shifts his attention away from his dire circumstances and to God during the *selah*, the pause. Look how his heart is filled with confidence.

But you, Lord, are a shield around me, my glory, the One who lifts my head high. I call out to the Lord, and he answers me from his holy mountain (verses 3–4).

David has stopped running for a moment. He is hiding, catching his breath, thinking about his next move. He has acted in haste; now he needs sound strategy. Instead of turning to wise counsel or yelling retorts to those who mock him, David turns his eyes to heaven and his heart to God. In these verses David is reminding himself of God's Truth. It's important to recognize that he's claiming this **before** he is delivered.

God is a shield. The shield was a protective barrier between a warrior and his enemy. This shield is a *megen*, which refers to a smaller round shield held in the hand and designed to protect the arm and upper torso. Notice in this phrase that God is a protective source that the verse says is "around me." This shield is in front and behind; from high to low. David is saying, "God, you're like the *megen* but even better because you completely surround me."

My glory. It's strange that in the middle of a crisis, David is now talking about glory. Protection makes sense but why glory? David is acknowledging that God has placed David in a position of power and there is glory and honor that David has because of God. In fact, it is only because of God's unimpeachable honor and glory that God supplies that David is ruling as King. Remember when David was anointed as King of Israel? He was a common boy. He had none of the normal attributes that kings possessed. But David had one attribute that no one else had—he loved and trusted God without reservation. Because of this kind of heart God made David King. And if David's kingship is being threatened, isn't God himself being threatened? This coup by Absalom is not just against David, it is against God and David is remembering this and meditating on this when he says, "you are my glory."

God lifts up is a continuance of this idea of dignity and honor. Because to lift up someone's head is a public indication of honor.

To lift one's own head is to be guilty of pride and arrogance. Confronted by his enemies, David is turning to God as his source of deliverance and honor.

I cry out; God answers. David is confident that God will answer him. David is reminding himself of God's truth and he's intentionally shifting his attention away from his circumstances to God. We do this when we apply the eternal, timeless truth of God's Word to our daily experiences.

Jim White was imprisoned in Cuba on charges of espionage. He was not a spy. He was a Christian missionary, from California, who had been dropping Christian Gospel tracts on low flyovers. Due to a severe weather system, Jim got disoriented after a drop and mistakenly landed back on the island of Cuba. He was immediately arrested and taken to prison. As a Communist country, the authorities were furious with Jim's evangelistic attempts. During his 14 months' imprisonment, he was tortured in a variety of ways. During one grueling period of time, the air conditioning in his cell was turned down to a bone chilling temperature and the fan turned to high. There was no stopping the relentless blowing of ice cold air into his cell. To cope, he tried jumping, running in place and pushups, anything physical to get his body temperature up. It was no use. He could not create enough heat to combat the cold air blowing in. Nor could he sit or lie down for the concrete floor and walls would draw his remaining body heat out of him. The best relief he could find was standing in the calmest corner of his cell, bending slightly forward and letting his forehead rest against the wall. He would sleep in this position drifting in and out of consciousness.

As he tells of his experience, he says that during this time he felt like he was losing his mind. The only comfort he experienced was the mysterious presence of God as he quoted every Bible verse his mind could remember, sang every hymn he could remember and reminded himself of the unlimited power of his Savior, Jesus Christ. And he would sense the presence of Jesus with him as tangibly as you sense the presence of the person sitting next to you. When we have nothing to cling to but God's strength and his truth, our hearts are aligned to his truth. And in the midst of confusion, misery, pain, disappointment, hurt, insult, betrayal, we have our perspective changed. Look what happens to King David in verses 5–6.

I lie down and sleep; I wake again, because the Lord sustains me. I will not fear though tens of thousands assail me on every side.

Look at the shocking peace that is filling David's heart. He's running for his life and he's able to sleep. He has no fear because he completely trusts God. His circumstances have not changed; he's still running for his life, yet his heart is at peace.

This is exactly what I was just describing of Jim White. In the middle of the crisis, he experienced peace. And this is what we can experience as well. It doesn't mean that all of our troubles go

away. But it does mean that our perspective on them and experience of them will be completely different. After David's heart is aligned to God's truth, it's then that he makes his request to God to rescue him.

Arise, Lord! Deliver me, my God! Strike all my enemies on the jaw; break the teeth of the wicked (v. 7).

Arise. This particular verb is only used 16 times in the Old Testament and 13 times are directed to God for deliverance. It is actually a command to get up from a sedentary position in preparation for action. David is not making a casual request here. He is not repeating a worn out dinner prayer. He is acutely aware of his difficult situation and he is calling on God to act in his behalf—now! He is saying "Deliver me."

Strike my enemies on the jaw. This seems like a vicious and violent act, a request that would be very strange for us to make today. To understand this, keep in mind that David was a fierce warrior who lived in a time where battles were as common as work meetings and swords as common as computers. David is envisioning God as a champion warrior in the battle, striking out right and left with a battle mace or club. He is unstoppable in his dominance of his enemy.

Break the teeth of the wicked is a by-product of striking someone on the jaw. It's a poetic way of repeating himself.

As we direct our attention to God and he aligns our heart to his truth, then you make detailed requests to God. Do you do this when you're in trouble? Is God your safe confidant you turn to when your world has turned upside down? Some people find it easier to turn to what their eyes can see than the invisible God. They turn to the comfort of a friend or loved one. They turn to food or drink to experience comfort. They turn to movies, TV, the internet for temporary escape. All of these offer us temporary solace yet leave our hearts unchanged and our requests unspoken.

Turn to God with your burdens. Lay out your honest needs without holding back. Write down your request in a journal. Pray as you walk or run. Pray as you drive. Find a time to bring your requests to God.

From the Lord comes deliverance. May your blessing be on your people (v. 8).

In this last verse David is using a technique that he used often in his prayers. He is reminding God of what God has said or promised. In this case, reminding God that he promises deliverance to anyone who turns to him. It's as if David is saying, "Remember God, you said..." And in the last phrase, David is tying in the blessedness that God speaks of from Psalm 1 and 2. God said that blessed is the man who walks down the path of the Lord.

I encourage you to turn to the Lord in prayer. Lay out your honest need to him, praise him for who he is, feel him align your heart to his truth and then give him your request.

This manuscript represents the bulk of what was preached at CPC. For further detail, please refer to the audio recording of this sermon.

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Catalog No. 1386–35

This message from Scripture was preached on Sunday, July 21, 2013 at Central Peninsula Church South
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