

# IN THE PRESENCE OF THE LORD

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Most of the Psalms were written by David while he was King of Israel as songs to the Lord. And most of them are songs of praise from gladness of heart. This is because, it is gladness that makes a person feel like singing, and it was gladness that made David want to sing to the Lord. So, how is it, then, that a number of the Psalms are sad and seem to have been written in times of trouble and temptation? They are not all joyous songs. Some are prayers for help. So it is with the Third Psalm.

The Third Psalm was written when David was in great trouble. He had sinned against the Lord and rebelled against His Commandments. Because of this, the Lord permitted Absalom, David's son, to steal away the hearts of his people. And then Absalom turned away from David and sought to become king himself, in his father's stead. He sent spies throughout the land telling all the people to rise up and declare Absalom the king, in the place of David.

Then David had to flee from Jerusalem, lest he should be killed. He was indeed in great danger. He did not know which of his servants were loyal to him and which were really loyal to his son. He did not know when one of them might seek to take his life. And because all the people of the land had turned away from him to follow Absalom, he did not know whether he would ever regain the throne.

Then it was that David turned to the Lord. He acknowledged that he had sinned, and he asked the Lord to forgive him. As he went up out of the city along the slope of Mount Olivet, he wept. He covered his head and walked barefoot, and everyone who was with him did likewise, as a sign to the Lord of their repentance. And in the midst of all this danger and trouble, David wrote the Third Psalm.

He began by describing the trouble that had come upon him. "Lord how they have increased who trouble me! Many are they who rise up against me. Many are they who say of me, 'There is no help for him in God'" (verses 1-2). All David's people who had loved him, who had proclaimed him king and fought with him to conquer the enemies of Israel, had now turned against him. They mocked him and sought his destruction.

But David still believed in the Lord. He remembered all that the Lord had done for him in the past, and he trusted that the Lord still had the power to help him. And so he sang, "But You, O Lord, are a shield for me, my glory and the One who lifts up my head" (verse 3). The Lord had protected David in times past, as a shield protects a soldier in battle. He had lifted him up from being a poor shepherd boy and had made him the King of Israel.

David sang, "I cried to the Lord with my voice, and He heard me from His holy hill" (verse 4). Many times before, when Saul had sought his life and when he had been in great danger, David had cried to the Lord, and the Lord had answered him, guarding and protecting him. "I lay down and slept; I awoke, for the Lord sustained me" (verse 5). So, why shouldn't David trust in the

Lord now, in the midst of this new trouble? “I will not be afraid of ten thousands of people who have set themselves against me all around” (verse 6).

Then, having confessed his trust in the Lord, David prayed to Him with full confidence that the Lord would indeed come and save him. “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” (verse 7).

And David was not only thinking of himself in praying to the Lord. He loved his people, even those who had risen up against him. David knew that they could be saved by the Lord alone; no human power could guard or protect them. And he longed for them to remain true and faithful to the Lord, whatever they might do to him. So he closed the Psalm with these words: “Salvation belongs to the Lord. Your blessing is upon Your people” (verse 8).

The Lord did answer David’s prayer. He protected him from his enemies and restored him to the throne. And so the Lord will guard and protect everyone who turns to Him from a humble heart, confesses faith in Him, and prays for help in time of trouble. For no one who is in the presence of the Lord can ever really be harmed. So, even in the midst of his trials and temptation, David was still glad—glad in the presence of the Lord and in His protection.

No evil people or spirits can really make someone who loves the Lord and trusts in Him sad. A person may have to suffer hard things and come into danger; he may have great pain of body and mind. But if, in the midst of all his troubles, this person can think of the Lord, pray to Him, and faithfully keep His Word, then he will be comforted.

For the Lord is present with us all, even in our suffering. He allows us to pass through trials for the sake of making us happier in heaven after death. And we will be delivered and our joy increased if only we remain faithful to the Lord and to His Word.

If we know this to be true, we can be glad in the midst of suffering, even as David sang to the Lord as he fled Jerusalem. We, too, can rejoice in the presence of the Lord and delight in the knowledge of His protection. So all of the Psalms, even those expressing sadness, have joy within them—joy within the sadness because of the trust in the Lord’s presence. And the Lord can give this joy to all who trust in Him and keep His commandments.

Reading: Psalm 3