

**Psalm 3: 1-8; “Salvation Belongs to the Lord”, A Sermon delivered in
Preparation for the taking of the Lord’s Supper, Delivered by
Pastor Paul Rendall on February 7th, 2010,
in the Afternoon Worship Service.**

This psalm was written sometime during that awful time in David’s life when he was forced to flee from Jerusalem because his own son Absalom had become proud and selfishly ambitious; when he had risen up against him in an attempt to take the kingdom away from him. David’s having to flee from Jerusalem came about because the Lord was disciplining David in relation to his sexual sin with Bathsheba, and his having her husband Uriah killed in order to attempt to cover up the fact that she had become pregnant after they had sinned together and committed adultery. But God loved David too much to let him get away with this. Let us all think about this solemn fact; that the Lord loves His people enough to discipline them for their sins. Let us thank God that it is so and rejoice that if we are trusting in Jesus we will not die eternally because He is faithful and just, not only to forgive us our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness; He is also faithful and just to discipline us diligently where we need it. We are cleansed by Christ’s precious blood. But it does say in Hebrews Chapter 12 verse 5, “My son do not despise the chastening of the Lord, nor be discouraged when you are rebuked by Him; for whom the Lord loves He chastens, and scourges every son whom He receives. King David was a man after God’s own heart; God most certainly loved Him with an everlasting love. But even though God’s grace was so greatly at work in his heart; even though he had been given so many blessings of help and care and grace; he still fell to a great temptation of the flesh at this one point in his life. It happened in the spring of the year at the time when kings go out to battle, that David sent Joab and his servants with him, and all Israel; and they destroyed the people of Ammon and besieged Rabbah.” “But David”, it says in 2 Samuel 11: 1, “remained at Jerusalem.” Temptations to sin, often come for a believer when they step aside from the path of duty, and when they are looking for rest and relaxation and physical enjoyment when they ought to be out fighting the battles of the Lord. Staying in the path of duty will often safeguard you, as a believer, from falling into grievous sins which will leave lasting scars upon your life.

You and I have no command from the Lord to engage in holy wars with other people and other surrounding nations, as Israel did in Old Testament times. But we do have a command from God to be holy, even as He is holy. We do have a command given to us which is found in 1st Peter 2, verse 11, which says “Beloved, I beg you as sojourners and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts which war against the soul, having your conduct honorable among the Gentiles, that when they speak against you as evildoers, they may, by your good works which they observe, glorify

God in the day of visitation.” This; David did not do at this one critical point, and oh how dearly he paid for it in his family, and in his life, because he failed to keep his heart. The result of David’s sin was that God’s holy name was blasphemed among the Gentiles. Someone once said, “Sin will take you farther than you want to go; keep you longer than you want to stay, and cost you more than you want to pay.” This is certainly true. But what we want to see this morning, as we come to the Lord’s table, is the greatness of the grace of Christ to help David up out of the pit that he had dug for himself. We will look, first, at the truth that God’s saving help is not seen by unbelievers, but only by believers. Secondly, we will look at how God’s saving help lifted David up out of the mire of sin. And thirdly we will look at how God’s saving help gave David confidence and a sure hope of victory against all of his enemies. We want to see this morning that “Salvation belongs to the Lord.” This is what David confesses in verse 8 and we want to see it in David in order that by faith we might come to experience it ourselves; the great love, and help, and care that God exercises over all of His saints; over all those who are trusting in the Lord Jesus Christ for their salvation. We want to come to the Lord’s table with these great thoughts resonating in our hearts.

1st – Let’s think together about the truth that God’s saving help is not seen by unbelievers, but only by believers. (Verses 1 and 2)

“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 the Lord.” When a true Christian falls into sin, and others around that person come to know what that sin was; they often wrongly think that God is no longer for that person; He is against them. And so they think that they should no longer be those who will treat that person with real caring consideration; they think that they are justified in turning against them. So it was with Absalom, David’s son, and Ahithophel, David’s trusted friend and counselor. They turned against David because they really didn’t believe that God would help him. The reason that some people think that way about a true believer who has sinned terribly, is because they do not understand God’s great salvation. They do not understand that God is the One who justifies the ungodly. God is always and forever “for” the one whom He sets His love upon, and saves. Salvation does not come to us based upon our good works and our perfect record of doing and keeping God’s commandments. It comes to us through God’s sovereign mercy and favor. Turn with me over to Romans Chapter 4, verse 1 for a moment. “What then shall we say that Abraham our father has found according to the flesh?” “For if Abraham was justified by works, he has something to boast about, but not before God.” “For what does the Scripture say?” “Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness.” “Now to him who works, the wages are not counted as grace but as debt.” “But to him who does not work but believes on Him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is accounted for righteousness, just as David also describes the blessedness of the man to whom God imputes righteousness apart from works: ‘Blessed are those whose lawless deeds are forgiven, and whose sins are covered;

blessed is the man to whom the Lord shall not impute sin.” You see, if salvation is by your works, then you would have something to boast about before God. If salvation were by your works, God would owe it to you as a debt. You have worked hard at being spiritual and keeping His commandments and now He owes you eternal life, you think. But you do not see yourself and know yourself to be a sinner. But both Abraham and David will say to you; “No, this cannot be; that you can be saved by just trying to be a pretty good person; because God justifies “the ungodly” by faith. He justifies those who do not work, but trust in what God will do for them and how He will help them.

Some will say to me then, “Well, how about that!” “I can sin, and practice sin, and if I trust in God, He will save me. This is great! No, my friend; you have not understood. If you do that you will end up in hell. Listen to what it says in Proverbs 17: 15. “He who justifies the wicked, and he who condemns the just, both of them alike are an abomination to the Lord.” The verses that we just looked at in Romans 4 are not saying that God justifies the wicked. They are saying that God justifies the ungodly. There is a difference. The wicked person is the person who will willfully and deliberately practice sin and lawlessness, and despises all of God’s offers of mercy in the gospel which would result in their salvation. The wicked man when God calls to him in the gospel will not repent. God does not justify the wicked, and Christ did not come to call the righteous; that is, those who are self-righteous. He came to call sinners; the ungodly, to repentance, and to learn the way of the Lord. This does not mean that God cannot change a wicked person and make them willing to repent and trust in Him for His great salvation. God can save the vilest of sinners who truly believe. It simply means that when God saves any person, whatever their background, He does so by sovereign, omnipotent, merciful grace. He forgives all their sins and imputes the righteousness of Christ to them when they believe. Their lawless deeds are forgiven, and their sins are all covered in the blood of Christ. The grace to create faith in their hearts was merited by the Lord Jesus at the cross. There was grace purchased to give them a new heart so that they could believe. All this comes to those who God chooses, because the Lord Jesus went to the cross. Let me ask you if you have really seen this? If you are a young person, growing up in a Christian family, you may look at your parents and you might, at times, see that they are people who have faults and sinful weaknesses. This is no doubt what happened with Absalom in regard to his father David. And so you may think, therefore, that you are justified in not obeying the gospel, and not coming to Christ. You may feel that if they were once worldly, and sensual, and demonic before their conversion that you have missed out on something if you don’t go the same route. This is extreme foolishness and folly. This is sinning against light and grace. Your parents will tell you that they once pursued the world and their flesh because they did not believe in God’s judgment, but God’s judgment does not seem in your mind to be something which is upon you. So you do not believe and enter into faith in Jesus Christ. It seems so unreal that no one except your parent’s parents,

or some Christian friend ever really confronted them with the truth of the Bible that God is a righteous judge. It seems so unreal that God holds His righteous wrath against sinners in this life, keeping His wrath in a slow burn now, so that He can store up and pour it out on the ungodly later on. And so you think to yourself that you can continue to disbelieve the gospel and all will somehow be well for you. Ah me! When will you wake up? God's saving help; His most precious gift, of everlasting life, only comes by your exercising faith in Jesus Christ. If you really have faith, you will enter in at the narrow gate and believe in the Lord Jesus and receive Him unto yourself for salvation. Faith does not ignore the claims of God and the Bible upon your life. You may not be much of a reader, but if you knew that your whole eternal destiny depended upon your believing what is written there in the Bible; would you not read it until your eyes grew dim? If you believed the truth that God was a just judge; you would.

David believed God even when many around him were saying of him; there is no help for him in God. Even when many people rose up against him; among them, his own son, and own trusted counselor, he still believed. What I am trying to say to you this morning is that God's saving help came to David at the very time that many around him were saying, "There is no help for him from God." That was the way that it looked. That was not the way that it really was. There is blessed help which does indeed come from God. And it comes to us in the form of grace to save us from our sins; grace to help us in our time of need when other people are mocking; and grace to keep us safe from spiritual and eternal harm. His grace will sustain us here, and His grace will bring us safely into the heavenly kingdom. It comes to us who believe. To you who believe, Christ is precious. The Lord Jesus when He went to the cross, was confronted with evil religious men; men who thought that they were being saved by their being outwardly religious. And they shouted things at Jesus when He was on the cross. What were they saying? It is found in Matthew 27, verse 39. "And those who passed by blasphemed Him, wagging their heads and saying, 'You who destroy the temple and build it in three days, save Yourself!' "If you are the Son of God, come down from the cross." "Likewise the chief priests also, mocking with the scribes and elders, said, 'He saved others; Himself He cannot save.'" "If He is the King of Israel, let Him now come down from the cross, and we will believe Him." (Notice that language; if He does certain things to prove to us publicly, openly, outwardly; His power to do them; we will believe. That is not saving faith. Saving faith trusts in God even when it cannot see with physical eyes.) "He trusted in God; let Him deliver Him now if He will have Him." This is why we worship the Lord Jesus in the partaking of the Lord's Supper this morning. It is because even when he was on the cross, and even when men were mocking, He did not come down. They were saying, "There is no help for Him from God; but Jesus knew that for all of God's Elect; for all of the sinners who would trust Him; that He must not come down from the cross. He must not call for the more than 12 legions of angels who could come and rescue Him at a moment's notice; at His slightest appeal for help. He would trust

in God, His Father, even when the Father would punish Him in our place. Have you believed in this Lord Jesus; the only Savior of sinners; the King of glory, and the Captain of our salvation? David was sustained in all of his trials in relation to his son's attempt to take away the kingdom from him, because He had grace coming to him from the God who would help him, for the sake of the sufferings which He knew God's Christ would someday undergo on his own behalf. Oh how great are the grace and mercy which Jesus purchased with His blood and His righteousness, both before and after our conversion.

Now 2ndly - We will look at how God's saving help lifted David up out of the mire of sin.

"But you, O Lord, are a shield (about or for) me, my glory and the One who lifts up my head." "I cried to the Lord with my voice, and He heard me from His holy hill." David is exulting in God who is the One who protected him body and soul; the One who took away his shame and reproach and encouraged him; and the One who answered all of his prayers. Do you see God in this way, and do you thank Him for giving you Christ? God was opposed to you and to your sins before you believed in Christ. You were His enemy because of your sin. But even though so rebellious to His laws and so opposed to seeing yourself as a sinner; yet He loved you and sent Christ. Now Christ has become the life of your soul. It says so in Romans chapter 5 and verses 8-11. "But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we still sinners, Christ died for us." "Much more then, having now been justified by His blood, we shall be saved from wrath through Him." "For if when we were enemies we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, much more, having been reconciled, we shall be saved by His life." "And not only that, but we also rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have received the reconciliation." Christ is our shield from the wrath of an all seeing-all knowing God. It is because He took it upon Himself to interpose Himself between us who were sinners and His holy Father who was angry with our sins; that we are here celebrating and rejoicing in His victory. His precious blood flowed down upon the wood of the cross, upon which He was nailed, while the Father focused all of His righteous anger upon His person there; as though He were looking at us. This is how He brought about our reconciliation to God. When we believe in the Lord Jesus we are not punished for our sins for all of eternity. And the reason that we are not punished is that the Lord Jesus has become our shield about us; taking the blow of God's fiery sword of judgment upon Himself so that we would not have to bear it. Setting Himself up as the target for the Father's wrath was what He undertook to do for you; for every one of you who have trusted in Him. And because he did this; then God can surround us favor as with a shield as it says in Psalm 5, verses 11 and 12. "But let all those rejoice who put their trust in You; let them ever shout for joy, because you defend them; let those also who love Your name be joyful in You." "For You, O Lord, will bless the righteous; with favor You will surround him as with a shield."

You can see this more clearly yet if you will turn with me over to Psalm 84. Turn with me over there and you will see what Christ does by His resurrection life working in us, to be a shield; as I read to you these words from verse 5 and following. Here is how we are saved by His life. Here is how He shields us not only from the Father's wrath, but also from all our discouragements which come to us as we try to live the Christian life. "Blessed is the man whose strength is in You, whose heart is set on pilgrimage." "As they pass through the Valley of Baca, (that is – the valley of weeping) they make it a spring." "The rain covers it with pools (or blessings)." "They go from strength to strength; each one appears before God in Zion." "O Lord God of Hosts, hear my prayer; give ear, O God of Jacob!" "Selah". "O God, behold our shield, and look upon the face of Your anointed." "For a day in Your courts is better than a thousand." (outside) "I would rather be a doorkeeper in the house of my God than dwell in the tents of wickedness." "For the Lord God is a sun and shield; the Lord will give grace and glory; no good thing will He withhold from those who walk uprightly." "O Lord of hosts, blessed is the man who trusts in You." Here is, portrayed before our eyes, the same situation that David was facing in Psalm 3, in having to leave Jerusalem because of Absalom. Psalm 3 is written from David's perspective. Psalm 84 from the perspective of the sons of Korah. All the people that were loyal to David went across the brook Kidron with Him, weeping as they went, as they all fled the city. They had all been driven out from the place where they regularly worshiped God in Zion, and they did not know if they would ever return. But those who were loyal to David cried out to God in prayer and asked the Lord to look upon him and the people with mercy. They were praying for the continuance of his kingdom. They knew that he had been a shield to them, as the Lord's anointed. He was a shield to the people and to establish the stability of the kingdom. Now, that stability was threatened. So the sons of Korah prayed that God would behold their shield, and look upon the face of His anointed, and remember His promises which He had given to David; that God would then show mercy to them all. David, himself, during their pilgrimage through the Baca valley, the valley of weeping, prayed that God would have mercy upon them and cause the counsel of Ahithophel to become foolishness to Absalom. This is exactly what happened, and the Lord shielded David through the counsel of Hushai to Absalom. Hushai was still loyal to David. And Absalom thought that the counsel of Hushai was better than that of Ahithophel. David and the people loyal to him had to flee Jerusalem for that time of awful uncertainty. But they came back later in triumph later because God had become a shield to them. The valley of weeping had been made a spring. David and the people were able to go from strength to strength and appear before God in Zion literally. They were able to return and worship the Lord in His tabernacle. God became to David literally his shield and the One who lifted him out of the mire of sin and lifted up his head.

But this passage is also prophetic of our Lord Jesus Christ in a greater sense. We pray, when we see the greatness of our sins, and when we see what they really

deserve, “O God, behold our shield, (that is the Lord Jesus Christ), and look upon the face of Your anointed. (Again referring to the Lord Jesus Christ.) If we have really had our eyes opened to the greatness of the mercy and the grace which has been given to us in Christ; we will see Him as our shield in everything. We will see Him as our glory; everything good and righteous and excellent and true in ourselves is all due to His grace; His life working within us. He becomes the One who is the lifter up of our head. He takes away all of our guilt, all of our shame, and He encourages us with His presence and power in our lives. He gives us peace, and true joy, and real happiness in what He is doing for us day by day. He is a Sun to shine upon us the light of truth. He is a Shield to protect us from the schemes of the evil one which threaten to undo all the good work of His grace in our lives. “No good thing will He withhold from those who walk uprightly.” “How blessed,” indeed, “is the person who trusts in Him!” And that is all because the Lord Jesus Christ has become a shield for you; your glory (the One that you boast in all the day long), and the One who lifts up your head. Let us come down front now and renew the covenant that we made with Him by faith in His finished work on the cross!

Then 3rdly, We want to look, for a few moments, at how God’s saving help gave David confidence and a sure hope of victory against all of his enemies. (Verses 5-8)

“I lay down and slept; I awoke, for the Lord sustained me.” “I will not be afraid of ten thousands of people who have set themselves against me all around.” “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.” “Salvation belongs to the Lord.” “Your blessing is upon Your people. We have come to see, this morning, the consequences of loving discipline brought by God against that person who has sinned against Him; even though they are a believer in Christ. Some people mistake the loving discipline of the Lord for His hatred and judgment. They should not do this. But the Lord’s discipline is not hatred at all, for the one trusting in Jesus. Adultery and murder are great sins against God and the consequences are very great in relation to many people around the one who has sinned. Many people, looking on, at David’s sin and the chain of consequences which followed in his family, wrongly thought that because David had really done these awful things, that there was no help for him in God. God would punish him and set him aside from his kingdom, just like he had done with Saul. But when people think this way it is because they do not understand that salvation belongs to the Lord. He gives this gift to whomever He wills. He does not give it to them because they are righteous. He gives it to them because they are needy sinners and He would have mercy upon them through Christ and save them. Salvation is all of grace, and so once God undertakes the great work of salvation in saving a person from their sins; He never turns back. “He who has begun a good work in you will perfect it until the Day of Christ.” (Philippians 1: 6) The sins which are committed by the true believer after their conversion are all forgiven for Jesus’ sake, as they confess

them. But a believer does need to examine their heart frequently, and especially when they come to this ordinance of the Lord's Supper. Listen to the words of the Apostle Paul which are found in 1st Corinthians 11, verse 27. "Therefore whoever eats this bread or drinks this cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord." "But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of the bread and drink of the cup." "For he who eats and drinks in an unworthy manner eats and drinks judgment to himself, not discerning the Lord's body." "For this reason many are weak and sick among you, and many sleep." "For if we would judge ourselves, we would not be judged." "But when we are judged, we are chastened by the Lord, that we may not be condemned with the world."

When you come to this table, will you not remember the death of the Lord Jesus for your sins in particular? Not someone else's sins; but your own. David said in verse 7, "Arise, O Lord, and save me, O my God!" And he was delivered. But the Lord Jesus said the same thing and yet He was not delivered from the death of the cross. Instead He said this in John Chapter 12, verse 23 and following. He said, "The hour has come that the Son of Man should be glorified." "Most assuredly I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it produces much grain." "He who loves his life will lose it, and he who hates his life in this world will keep it for eternal life." "If anyone serves Me, let him follow Me; and where I am, there My servant will be also." "If anyone serves Me, him My Father will honor." "Now My soul is troubled, and what shall I say?" "Father save Me from this hour?" "But for this purpose I came to this hour." "Father, glorify Your name." The Lord Jesus lay down and slept; not upon a bed of roses, but upon the cruel cross. He died there for you and I who are unworthy sinners. But He awoke; He rose from the dead, for the Lord sustained Him; He was pleased with Him in every respect. Death could not hold Him. He struck all of our enemies on the cheekbone; He has broken the teeth of the ungodly. In our case, He has made us a new creation in Himself. We have new teeth and a new mouth to partake of Holy Food. And that is why we come to this Supper; to eat His flesh and drink His blood in this symbolic act. May we know the reality of the presence and Spirit of Christ working in our hearts as we partake of it. May our eating lead us to greater holiness. We can add nothing to what Christ has done.