that he won’t fear the tens of thousands drawn up against him. Notice what an enormous shift that is from the first verses where he cries out, “How many are my foes—how many rise up against me!” Having remembered who God was and having gotten some sleep, David’s faith and hope were renewed.

Praying For Victory (vv 7-8)

Verses 7-8 conclude, “Arise, O LORD! Deliver me, O my God! Strike all my enemies on the cheek; break the teeth of the wicked. 8From the LORD comes deliverance. May your blessing be on your people.” The Psalm concludes with a prayer for victory. Numbers 10:35-36 recounts the words spoken by Moses. “35Whenever the ark set out, Moses said, “Arise, O LORD! May your enemies be scattered; may your foes flee before you.” 36Whenever it came to rest, he said, “Return, O LORD, to the countless thousands of Israel.” Even though it’s likely the ark did not go out to war with the Israelites during David’s rule, still the Israelites invoked these words interceding for God to intervene. The people knew that unless God went out with his people to fight on their behalf, their efforts would be in vain.

Striking someone on the cheek was a gross insult in the ancient world. Job 16:10 makes that clear. In it Job says, “Men open their mouths to jeer at me; they strike my cheek in scorn and unite together against me.” By asking God to strike his enemies on the cheek, the Psalmist asks God to insult those who had insulted his people. He then calls on God to smash the teeth of the wicked. For those who think of God as a kindly, senile old man, this can be disturbing. However, God is pictured as a mighty warrior in the both the Old and New Testaments and he comes to do battle with those who seek to destroy his people. Smashing the teeth of wicked men can be seen in a few different ways, but wherever you put the emphasis, having your teeth smashed is a picture of being overpowered and it renders a person unable to speak words like, “God will not deliver him (v 2).”

The Psalmist ends on a note of confidence—deliverance (or salvation) comes from the Lord! God’s deliverance would not only mean victory on the battlefield, but blessing upon God’s people. So what do we take away from this Psalm? How do we use it in prayer?

Conclusions

One, Psalm 3 teaches us that there is no better way or place to deal with our fears than to pray them out in our prayers. Whether your fears are words that were spoken to you or words that you speak to yourself or words that the enemy speaks to your heart, the place to get those fears out is in prayer. There are at least two ditches on this road. One ditch leads us to believe that we should never acknowledge our fears, never talk about them, never think about them. The other ditch leads us to believe that we can never get past our fears or that we should talk about them all of the time. Scripture leads us to admit our fears to God and receive his compassion, but also then to allow him to lead us through them and beyond them by remembering who he is and what he does. And that leads us to the second point.

Two, Psalm 3 teaches us that there is no better way to deal with our fears than to remember and affirm God’s character as it relates to our fears. If you’re afraid God will abandon you, remember and affirm that God is your shield and the one who will not let you be put to shame. If you’re afraid that God will condemn you, remember and affirm that in Christ there is no condemnation because you are the righteousness of God in Christ. If you’re afraid that your strength will run completely out, remember and affirm that God’s grace is sufficient and it transcends your weakness. If you’re afraid that God won’t provide for you, remember and affirm that God is faithful to his people and though we walk through difficult times, he sustains us by his mighty outstretched arm. The antidote to your fear is God’s character and the promises he makes to us.

Three, Psalm 3 teaches us that it is possible to have such confidence in God’s provision that we can lay down and sleep when it seems like that should be impossible. I’m not saying that you’ll never have a sleepless night. But I am saying that as we spend more time remembering and affirming who God is and what he has promised us, we can live in peace. In this world we will have trouble. But take heart, Jesus has overcome the world.

Four, Psalm 3 teaches us that we can ask God to intervene. We can and should ask God to get involved. We should ask God to heal the sick. We should ask God to defend us and strengthen us and give us discernment and wisdom and joy. In fact, God gets upset when his people don’t ask him to get involved because that’s almost always the result of disregard or pride.
Psalm 3

Today I want to look at Psalm 3, which provides a great model of prayer during times of battle and uncertainty. The psalms are songs, and as such were sung, it is, like many of the songs we sing, a prayer to the Lord. While the superscriptions of these Psalms do not have the authority of the text itself, where present there’s no reason to ignore them. David’s flight from his murderous son Absalom would provide just the kind of occasion that would give rise to Psalm 3. You’ll remember that Absalom turned the heart of Israel against his father and then attempted to take the kingdom, even entering Jerusalem while David fled with those loyal to him.

Psalm 3 states, “1 O LORD, how many are my foes! How many rise up against me! 2 Many are saying of me, “God will not deliver him.” 3 But you are a shield around me, O LORD; you bestow glory on me and lift up my head. 4 To the LORD I cry aloud, and he answers me from his holy hill, 5 I lie down and sleep; I wake again, because the LORD sustains me. 6 I will not fear the tens of thousands drawn up against me on every side. 7 Arise, O LORD! Deliver me, O my God! Strike all my enemies on the cheek; break the teeth of the wicked. 8 From the LORD comes deliverance. May your blessing be on your people.”

Fear of Abandonment (vv 1-2)

Psalm 3:1-2 says, “1 O LORD, how many are my foes! How many rise up against me! 2 Many are saying of me, “God will not deliver him.” In verses 1-2, David comes to terms with how many enemies he has. It’s not just that they don’t really like him, but that they have taken up arms against him—they’re ready and willing to fight. Not only was David in considerable trouble, you’re probably familiar with the term lent. If you didn’t grow up in a liturgical church and aren’t aware, here’s a quick lesson. Lent is an old English word for spring, which happened to be the time when the church prepared itself to celebrate the crucifixion, death, and resurrection of Jesus. Because forty is an important number in Scripture, especially because it’s the number of days Jesus was tempted in the wilderness, the church took forty days to prepare itself for the Easter season. The forty days run from Ash Wednesday to Easter.

Psalm 3 records them, in the third person, makes it sound like David overheard people talking about him and saying, “God will not deliver him.” More literally, they are saying, “There is no salvation for him from God.” In other words, not only had David witnessed scores of people turn against him, he heard the insidious whisper that God had turned against him as well.

If this Psalm was written during the time of Absalom’s rebellion, then it took place after his affair with Bathsheeba and the murder of her husband, Uriah. The consequences of David’s actions threw his family into chaos and it would be easy for people to look at this as evidence that God had forsaken David altogether. If that’s the not the case then this is a common ancient near eastern taunt wherein one military would taunt another by saying that their god had forsaken them. Whatever the case, not only was David concerned about the threats to his life, but now had the question of where God was whirling around in his mind.

Declaration of Confidence (vv 3-4)

Verses 3-4 continue, “3 But you are a shield around me, O LORD; you bestow glory on me and lift up my head. 4 To the LORD I cry aloud, and he answers me from his holy hill.” You can see and hear a shift in David’s perspective in these verses. David is no longer looking at the enemy, nor listening to their taunts, but instead he looks to the Lord and what he knows to be true about the Lord.

Scripture attests to the fact that when God’s people spend too much time dwelling on the enemy, the enemy becomes inflated in their eyes and they lose faith. In Deuteronomy 1:28, Moses recounts why the Israelites did not enter the promised land the first time. Quoting them, he says, “Where can we go? Our brothers have made us lose heart. They say, ‘The people are stronger and taller than we are; the cities are large, with walls up to the sky. We even saw the Anakites there.’” Moses responded to their fear by saying, “29 Then I said to you, ‘Do not be terrified; do not be afraid of them. 30 The LORD your God, who is going before you, will fight for you, as he did for you in Egypt, before your very eyes...’” In other words, Moses is pleading with the people to look at God.

David remembered that God was a shield around him. In other words, God was his protection on every side, a luxury many shields did not have in the ancient world of warfare. God wouldn’t take David out of the fight, but David knew that God would protect him. But not only would God protect David, but David knew God would bestow glory on him and lift up his head. 2 Samuel 15:30 recounts David leaving Jerusalem when it says, “But David continued up the Mount of Olives, weeping as he went; his head was covered and he was barefoot. All the people with him covered their heads too and were weeping as they went up.” David knew that God would lift his head again. Finally, David knew that the Lord would hear his cries and answer him from his holy hill, from Jerusalem. Jerusalem was the place where David had been anointed as king, and it would be the place from which God would rescue him.

Sleeping Like a Baby (vv 5-6)

“5 I lie down and sleep; I wake again, because the LORD sustains me. 6 I will not fear the tens of thousands drawn up against me on every side.” So confident is David in who declares God to be that he can lay down and sleep. One shortcoming of human beings is that we need sleep. You can be the biggest, baddest, most powerful warrior, but a cheekbone bruised from sleeping. David was so confident in God’s provision that he could lay down and sleep because even though he was at his most vulnerable, he knew God was on the scene.

David woke up in the morning knowing that God had sustained him. In light of that, David can now look at a new day in a new way. Now David says...