

# Rest In Peace

*Psalm 3-4*

**Ps 3:1** "A Psalm of David, when he fled from Absalom his son.

O LORD, how many are my foes! Many are **rising against [tsar]** me;

<sup>2</sup> **many are saying** of my soul, there is no salvation for him in God.

**Selah**

<sup>3</sup> But you, O LORD, are a shield about me, **my glory [kavod]**, and the lifter of my head.

<sup>4</sup> I cried aloud to the LORD, and he answered me from **his holy hill**.

**Selah**

<sup>5</sup> **I lay down and slept; I woke again**, for the LORD sustained me.

<sup>6</sup> I will not be afraid of many thousands of people who have set themselves against me all around.

<sup>7</sup> Arise, O LORD! Save me, O my God! For you strike all my enemies on the cheek; you break the teeth of the wicked.

<sup>8</sup> Salvation belongs to the LORD; your blessing be on your people!

**Selah"**

**Ps 4:1** "To the choirmaster: with stringed instruments. A Psalm of David.

"**For the End**, a Song of David among *the Psalms*." (Ps 4:1 LXA)

Answer me when I call, O God of my righteousness! You have given me relief when I was in **distress [tsar]**. Be gracious to me and hear my prayer!

<sup>2</sup> O men, how long shall **my honor [kavod]** be turned into shame? How long will you love vain words and seek after lies? **Selah**

<sup>3</sup> But know that the LORD has set apart the godly for himself; the LORD hears when I call to him.

<sup>4</sup> Be angry, and do not sin; ponder in your own hearts on **your beds**, and be silent. **Selah**

<sup>5</sup> Offer right sacrifices, and put your trust in the LORD.

<sup>6</sup> There are **many who say**, "Who will show us some good? Lift up the

- light of **your face** upon us, O LORD!"
- <sup>7</sup> You have put more joy in my heart than they have when their grain and wine abound.
- <sup>8</sup> **In peace** I will both **lie down and sleep**; for you alone, O LORD, make me dwell in safety."

Psalm 3:1-8

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## Absalom, O Absalom

THREE THOUSAND YEARS AGO in the city of Hebron a son was born to a king. **Absalom**, “**father of peace**,” an ironic name if ever there was one, ruddy and handsome with hair like Samson, David’s third-born son from his wife **Maacah**,<sup>1</sup> would one day be the cause of terrible sadness and great distress for his father.

Through a series of unfortunate events, Absalom had and had grown angry at his father, and jealous for a throne that was not to be his. The youth began to walk in the counsel of the wicked. He stood in the way of sinners, hoping to sit down in the seat of the king. **Ahithophel**—whose name means “**brother of foolishness**”—David’s counselor turned traitor said to Absalom, “**Let me choose**

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<sup>1</sup> Believe it or not, *Eerdmans Bible Dictionary* says her name means “Stupid.”

twelve thousand men, and I will arise and pursue David tonight” (2Sa 17:1). *LORD, how many are my foes! Many foes are rising against me.*

Meanwhile, David—who had not exactly been the banner of a happy law-keeping man, was no longer welcome in his own city. Absalom had won the hearts of the people. As David heard that his own son was taking counsel against the Lord’s anointed, he fled Jerusalem. On his way out, Shimei from the same tribe as king Saul began cursing David, “Get out, get out, you man of blood, you worthless man! The LORD has given the kingdom into the hand of your son Absalom. See, your evil is on you, for you are a man of blood” (2Sa 16:7-8). This was the feeling of many. *Many are saying of my soul, there is no salvation for him in God. Selah.*

On his way out the city, David crossed the Kidron and ascended “the Mount of Olives, weeping as he went, barefoot and with his head covered.” A great throng of people “covered their heads, and they went up, weeping as they went” (2Sa 15:30). *But you, O LORD, are a shield about me, my glory, and the lifter of my head.*

As he was looking back at Zion, he commanded the priests Zadok and Abiathar to carry “the ark of God back to Jerusalem” (2Sa 15:28-29) and remain there. He needed helpers in the holy city, and Christ’s throne must remain in the temple. *I cried aloud to the LORD, and he answered me from his holy hill. Selah.*

David was wandering around, night after night, hiding in this place and that. Early one morning, after Absalom’s scouts had moved away, “the men came up out of the well, and went and told King David. They said to David, ‘Arise, and go quickly over the water [this time it was the Jordan], for thus and so has Ahithophel counseled against you’” (2Sa 17:21). *I lay down and slept; I woke again, for the LORD sustained me.*

In the frustration of not finding David, Absalom’s men were disheartened. One of David’s loyal friends, **Hushai** the Archite, had infiltrated Absalom’s inner circle at the command of the king and gained the trust of the young man himself. He counseled to let “all Israel be gathered to you, from Dan to Beersheba, as the sand by the sea for multitude, and you go to battle in person” (2Sa 17:11). God had ordained that Absalom go into battle and thus hardened the

princes heart against the good counsel of Ahithophel, so that he might be killed in battle himself. For David had prayed, “O LORD, please turn the counsel of Ahithophel into foolishness” (2Sa 15:31). Hushai got word out to David who was able to flee and hide. But Hushai it seems was discovered and killed. *I will not be afraid of many thousands of people who have set themselves against me all around. Arise, O LORD! Save me, O my God! For you strike all my enemies on the cheek; you break the teeth of the wicked.*

When his son joined the battle, David gave strict order not to kill the boy. But Absalom’s vanity was his undoing. His hair got caught in a tree as his horse passed under it. While hanging there, he was viciously murdered. The battle belonged to the LORD and to his anointed. There was “victory” that day (2Sa 19:2), but also mourning, for the king’s son was dead. *Salvation belongs to the LORD; your blessing be on your people! Selah.*

## **Psalms 3-4 in Context**

This brief retelling of three full chapters in 2 Samuel is the inspired verbal parallel of Psalm 3. How do we know?

First, the psalm begins, “*A Psalm of David, when he fled from Absalom his son*” (Ps 3:1). This is **the first superscription** in the psalms. It gives us the historical setting or occasion for the writing of the psalm, and it is inspired holy text. Second, there are quotes from Samuel that parallel each verse of this psalm. This is a remarkable thing, and I thus I used them in the retelling of the story (see the chart at the end of the sermon).

A main idea I want to pursue in our study of the Psalms is to read the Psalms, not just as isolated songs. They are their own individual songs, of course. But we want to read them together as much as possible, for this is a book that has been compiled in a very specific order for a number of reasons. Again, the first Book of the Psalms are all Psalms of David. This gives us insight into his life, his state of mind, his worship, his sins, his repentance, his struggles, his suffering, his joys, his victories, and so on. Of course, David is a type of someone greater than himself. His is the Lord’s messiah, but one coming later is The Messiah—the Son of God. These songs are at the end of the day His songs, not just David’s.

If we read the psalms as a book, it is striking that Psalm 3 follows Psalms 1-2, which as we have seen are meant to be read together and are a kind of introduction to the Psalter. Psalm 1 is all about the happy law-keeping man vs. the wicked man who walks in his own way, forsaking God and his law. Psalm 2 is about the treachery of peoples and kings and princes and rulers who set themselves up against the LORD and his Anointed. But as the God will win, such treachery is foolishness. The Anointed will punish all rebels, but happy are they who take refuge in him.

Psalm 3 takes us immediately into one of those plots, those counsels to usurp the king. Thus, we don't start with ideal life. We don't start with a perfect life. We start with a life of suffering and people seeking harm. Someone writes this on the relationship of Psalms 2-3:

The political order of heaven envisioned in Psalm 2 is overturned on earth in Psalm 3. In Psalm 2, *I AM* installs his anointed king on his throne; in Psalm 3 the king's non-anointed son, the heir apparent, dethrones his anointed father. In Psalm 2 the father's anointed son, by faith, recites both his right to the throne and his prayer to

inherit the earth; in Psalm 3 he prays for deliverance from his own people, including his son, who like a mad animal seeks to devour him. Symbolically, the king is driven from social-political order (his palace) to social disorder (the wilderness). Nevertheless, though the anointed king's "landscape" is in disarray, his faith in God gives his spiritual "inscape" order. His faith expresses itself in Psalm 3 and serves as a model prayer that turns an upside-down world right-side up. The basis of this prayer is his covenant relationship with God, who orders the world through his immutable covenants.<sup>2</sup>

Taking it to us for a moment, Psalms like this don't do what we so often do. Ask someone "How's it going?" The response is almost always, "Fine, thank you." How many times is it not actually "fine" at all? Nor do they do what happens far too often in our culture: blame circumstances and any politically incorrect group or object for all the ills in the world or in our own lives. But David is not shy in crying out, not only to the LORD, but in song to the people.

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<sup>2</sup> Bruce K. Waltke, James M. Houston, and Erika Moore, *The Psalms as Christian Worship: A Historical Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI; Cambridge, U.K.: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2010), 194.

Leaders are not those impervious to pain and suffering. They are those who can show it to others at appropriate times, but who lead by pointing the way to the Savior instead of their circumstances. In this way, these kinds of Psalms are realistic rather than idealistic. They teach us about the horrors of life that our outside of our control. They teach us how to pray about them. How to trust in the midst of them. And why it is that our trust is not misplaced.

So if Psalms 1-2 are the Introduction to the book, Psalm 3 is its first chapter. However, Psalm 4 is part of this first chapter, for 3 and 4 are also meant to be read together. They have all kinds of literary connections. Both speak of “honor” [*kavod*] (3:3; 4:2). Both have “many who say” (3:2; 4:6). Both begin with someone rising against [*tsar*] him (3:1; 4:1). Both have the curious marker “selah” (3:2, 4, 8; 4:4). And finally in this same respect, the history of these two psalms is quite interesting. They are called “morning” and “evening” psalms respectively. Psalm 3:5, “I lay down and slept; I woke again.” Psalm 4:4, “Be angry, and do not sin; ponder in your own hearts on your beds, and be silent.” Thus, it is no surprise that these were monastic psalms read in the morning and evening. For some, they were read the

evening before the Christian Sabbath and the morning of, especially on Easter.<sup>3</sup> They are therefore good songs to open and close your own day's meditation on God's word. And as we will see later, they are especially good for celebrating our gathering here together today.

### *PSALM 3*

So let's take a look at our psalms. They both have a four-part outline.

Outline Psalm 3	Outline Psalm 4
I. Complains of Enemies (vv. 1-2)	I. The Lord Who Answers <b>Prayer</b> (vv. 1-3)
II. Confidence in God's Ability to Answer <b>Prayer</b> (vv. 3-4)	II. Trust in the Lord (4-5)
III. Safety and trust in sleep (vv. 5-6)	III. A <b>Prayer</b> of Confidence (vv. 6-7)
IV. Arousing <b>prayer</b> for Victory (7-8)	IV. Rest in Peace (vv. 8)

Looking carefully at them, we notice that they are **both centered on prayer**. Yet, thinking about prayer as typically ACTS of adoration, confession, thanksgiving, and supplication, they are opposites. Psalm 3 presents a situation,

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., 185.

and then shows a response of prayer. It then presents David's trust, and gives another prayer that follows it. Psalm 4 however begins with prayer. The prayer is first. He then reflects on his own attitude and trust in God, only to pray again. This is followed by the deep peace of Christ.

What you can see here is that sometimes life throws circumstances at you and your response to them must be to pray (Psalm 3). But the regular activity of the Christian is to prepare yourself for those circumstances by being strong in prayer first (Psalm 4). In this way, you can see the benefit of reading and singing these psalms together. Prayer is something we therefore do "without ceasing," before, during, and after the great events of our lives.

As we look at the life of David through the lens of this particular episode with his son Absalom, what comes to my mind first is how this man underwent much worse things in his life than I ever have in mine. And it then strikes me that if he can keep faith in the LORD through all of that, why in the world would I not?

This psalm actually does begin with prayer, but not prayer as we normally think of it. David brings a [complaint](#) to God. I'm not thinking of this word as David complaining

or having a pity party for himself. Rather, it is a more formal use of this word. He is **presenting his case** before the Judge of Heaven. It is a formal complaint that you might bring in a court of law. “**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. Selah**” (**Psalm 3:1-2**). There is absolutely nothing wrong with doing this, and wonder how comfortable many of us are with such an idea?

He uses the word “many” (*rab*) three times. This included his **friends turned traitors**, **his own people** who threw curses and stones at him, **his own army** which numbered in the thousands, and most sadly, **his own son**. I don’t know about you, but the last one alone would be enough to almost undo me. But David the king is now fleeing from his own castle, city, and countrymen. He left his home, his wives, his children, his friends, and even his God behind. That is, he did not abandon the LORD. In those days, the LORD dwelt upon the Ark of the Covenant, which David commanded be returned to Jerusalem when some of his priest-friends tried to take it with them in the escape. Why would he do this? Because David knows that

his God will go with him wherever he is, even in the OT times.

All of this treachery from the peoples and and princes is exacerbated by his complaint that they say “**there is no salvation for him in God.**” When we think “salvation,” our minds usually go to eternity, being saved from sin. One wonders just how bleak it had gotten for David to say this. To lessen the blunt of this, sometimes the word is translated as “**deliverance**” (NAS). But other times, you get “**redemption**” (Psalm Targum). But the LXX has the word *soteria*, from which we get soteriology—the doctrine of salvation. Curiously, the Hebrew word is *yeshuah* (יְשׁוּעָה, Ya Saves), which of course is the name: **Jesus** (יֵשׁוּעַ).

Verse two introduces us to a word that is found about 70 times in the Psalms (and three times in Habakkuk). The word is *selah*. No one is sure what it means. It is almost certainly some kind of musical notation (we have all kinds of those: ♪ ♫ ♬ ). It may mean “pause” (⏸). It may mean “louder” (< ). The Targum says it means “forever.” The LXX renders it as “pause.” Pause makes good sense, as these seem to come at key points in the songs, even at the end, thus causing the mind to reflect upon what has just been sung.

Spurgeon poetically said, “Harp-strings soon get out of order and need to be screwed up again to their proper tightness, and certainly our heart-strings are evermore getting out of tune.”<sup>4</sup>

Many are rising up against him, even saying that he will find no salvation in God. These are heavy burdens, a great complaint to bring before the God of heaven. How can his misery ever end? I am outnumbered, how can I survive? Does not your own mind go quickly to your trials, your bodily pains, your country falling apart, your children who have rebelled, your spouse who brings charges against you, a whole nation of people who so profoundly hate your God and therefore also you? What hope is there when such throngs are arrayed against you?

There is the hope of prayer to the Living God! “**But you, O LORD, are a shield about me, my glory, and the lifter of my head**” (Ps 3:3). David’s head was downcast and covered as he crossed the brook Kidron. It was covered as he ascended the Mt. of Olives. But when he thought of Yahweh, his head went high again. God was his glory, his

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<sup>4</sup> C. H. Spurgeon, *The Treasury of David: Psalms 1-26*, vol. 1 (London; Edinburgh; New York: Marshall Brothers, n.d.), 23.

covering. The glory is what caused Moses' face to shine. Here is the king's countenance. God was his shield and defender. The host aligned against him could not take this from him.

Thus he offers up the prayer, “I cried aloud to the LORD, and he answered me from his holy hill. Selah” (Ps 3:4). If the first two verses are his complaint, now we have his actual **supplication**. Before looking at what that was, it is important to note this reference to the “**holy hill**.” Why? This a deliberate echo of Psalm 2. “I have set my king on Zion, my holy hill” (2:6). In this way, these two psalms are related. David remembers that it is God who ordained him as king and put him on Mt. Zion.

So what was his prayer? We know that part of his overall prayer is for salvation, for he asks for this in vs. 7. But here he seems to be praying for something else. We know this because this cry in vs. 4 is found **prior to the battle** even getting underway. This prayer is offered not as a reflection on the good victory that was won, but in the midst of the desperation he felt while hiding out in empty cisterns, in caves, in forests, hoping that he would not be found.

It says God answered his prayer and the next verse must be related to it. “I lay down and slept; I woke again, for the LORD sustained me.” God saved him on the night of his great distress. He had fled the city and sought refuge in the wilderness, a cave, a hole, a tree, who knows. But he woke in the morning, alive. The sun still rose to warm his flesh. The world had not ended.

But more than that, the LORD let him actually gave him rest! I know this may seem like a trite thing, but for those who spend countless nights laying awake, worrying about every little thing, is this not the most important thing you can have? He is the God of peace in the middle of storms, of sleep in the midst of great evil.

Nighttime is associated throughout the Psalms and the Bible with evil, with disaster, with demonic and satanic forces. All of that. As **Theodoret** of Cyrrhus (393-460) noticed, “It suggests troubles and release from them at the same time. You see, the words, ‘I awoke because the Lord will defend [“sustained” ESV] me,’ mean this, ‘I benefited from divine intervention and so proved superior to the evils that further befell me’ that make the afflicted think they are

living in a kind of darkness.”<sup>5</sup> In the midst of such horrors, David went to sleep. God gave him rest.

In a world that is obsessed with pills and psychiatry and other ploys to make our sleep deprived society get drowsy, they ignore the heart of the problem. Worry. Anxiety. Lack of peace, hope, and contentment in the midst of hellish situations. That’s because the world has no answer for these things, and never will. The solution is found in crying out to God, and giving your worries and troubles to him. He will answer your prayers, for your problems are much less than those of king David. If you find yourself in a similar situation and are praying, do not give up! God will answer you.

Look at what David says so that you can confirm what I’m saying here is true. “I will not be afraid of many thousands of people who have set themselves against me all around” (Ps 3:6). “Set themselves up against the Lord’s anointed.” Again we think of Psalm 2. Certainly David remembers that the Lord’s Anointed—the Father’s Son, is the King on that Holy Hill, and that even if David should be

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<sup>5</sup> Bruce K. Waltke, James M. Houston, and Erika Moore, *The Psalms as Christian Worship: A Historical Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI; Cambridge, U.K.: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2010), 184.

removed, his Messiah, his Lord will not be moved. Therefore, he takes hope in his cry for salvation and goes to rest. His mind tells his soul the truth and he has peace. They say he can't be saved, but God answered him for just that request, and more.

But still, each new day has enough trouble of its own. David was still on the run. He awoke to a new dawn of worries. So he cries out, “Arise, O LORD! Save me, O my God. For you strike all my enemies on the cheek; you break the teeth of the wicked” (3:7). Salvation now becomes the theme of the last stanza. Many were saying he would find no salvation in this God. So the cry goes up, “Save me, O my God!”

For David, this salvation was literal, physical. Keep me from dying at the hands of my own son's sword. But how? At this point, David turns to what might seem like the first imprecatory words in the psalter. An **imprecation** is a cry to God to do something horrible to his enemies. We will come to those in due time. But it is enough here to see that David is not actually making this plea here at all. Instead, he is acknowledging rather than begging. He is trusting, rather than pleading. It does not say, “God, strike them down.” It

says, “God, you have struck them down from the beginning. You are a God who defeats your foes. Therefore, I trust in you.” David has not yet been saved from Absalom. And yet, he does not actually pray against Absalom here either. In fact, David desperately wanted Absalom to live. But he knew that difficult times were upon him, and he trusted in the Shield to now go to war with His own sword.

“Salvation belongs to the LORD; your blessing be on your people!” (Ps 3:8), the psalm concludes. We know the end of Absalom. We know David was restored to his throne. But we don’t know if David is reflecting on this later, or if the psalm leaves us in the middle of storm, simply trusting in God’s salvation. Selah. **Pause now** and reflect upon your own sense of trust in the God who has saved you. Is this the kind of prayer that you offer up each morning as you wake? It is given so that you might do just that.

## PSALM 4

As we turn the page, we find a new psalm with a new superscription. “*To the choirmaster: with stringed instruments. A Psalm of David*” (Ps 4:1). The word “psalm” means a song

sung to stringed instruments. Though all of them were, these words plainly teach that this particular psalm is the first in the psalter where the psalmist actually commands its music and lyric be sung in the temple. It must have been highly important then in the life of Israel. Its corporate feel should still be important today.

Psalm 4 begins when Psalm 3 left off: “Answer me when I call, O God of my righteousness! You have given me relief when I was in distress. Be gracious to me and hear my prayer!” (Ps 4:1). The word “distress” is the same Hebrew word found in 3:1 for the many “adversaries.” In the Psalm 3 it is a noun. Now it is an adjective. His adversaries caused him much distress. He was profoundly vexed and worried. It is part of our fallen condition, no matter how much faith we have. That is why even David needed to keep praying about it. Worry is never one and done. We must constantly battle against it. God gave him rest, and eventually gave him victory. But as each day brings new trials, his prayer continues. God, answer me again. Be gracious to me and hear my prayer.

Prayers like these can only be answered graciously. The translation “God of my righteousness” might make it sound

like grace wouldn't be needed, for it could sound like David is perfect. He is the righteous one, and God is his God. But this is not what he means. Other translations say, “**God of my justice**” (VUL) or “**God my vindicator!**” (TNK, CJB). This is the point of adding that God has given him relief from his distress. God has saved him. And this is *gracious*, for David's story is anything but a life of perfect obedience to the law; that is being “righteous.” Instead, his was a life of love for God's law, but time and again falling short of its perfect standard, yet trusting in Christ by faith who becomes his righteousness and declares him righteous. That is always the only way of a righteous sinner. So it is important not to misread this translation, lest we miss the grace!

His prayer continues, “**O men, how long shall my honor be turned into shame? How long will you love vain words and seek after lies? Selah**” (Ps 4:2). David, praying to God, inquires about the hearts of men. It is literally “**sons of men.**” We hear echoes of David's “glory” from **Psalm 3:3**, his brightness, his countenance, his hope now being shamefully mocked. They are going after his God! They taunt and ridicule and deny the God of Glory. We hear echoes of

Psalm 2 and Psalm 1 in the “vain words” and “lies” against God. David’s enemies set themselves up as politically expedient autonomous judges, as usurping rulers, as those who deal in falsehood and treachery. I look at our country, read this, and exclaim, “**There is nothing new under the sun.**” **Selah.** Pause and reflect on the generational, biological, wicked nature of human beings. What can be done about us?

Two things. “**But know that the LORD has set apart the godly for himself; the LORD Hears when I call to him**” (**Ps 4:3**). The first is that great hope of the Christian: **God’s electing love**. He sets the godly apart. It is worth noting that so many of David’s enemies were his fellow Jewish brothers, even members of his own family. It is common in some circles to say that election is only groups of people indiscriminate of individuals. This is a typical Arminian view of election. But David says that LORD sets apart the godly for himself. The godly are a group within a group (Israel).

At this time in history, those set apart were Jews (Gentiles who were set apart had to become Jews). But not all Jews were set apart in the same way. As Jesus teaches us,

some of them were sons of the devil. But the godly are those set apart by God. Now, the “godly” are those who are “holy” or “saintly” or “righteous,” as other translations put the word (*chasid*). The passage itself does not explicitly teach how a person becomes godly. Some might be tempted to think it is their own freewill that does it. They choose to become godly, then God sets them apart. It does not say this though. It simply says that they are godly and God sets them apart. How did they get this way?

The next verse helps guide us to the answer. It teaches that **this godly person is not perfect**, for David has to warn himself, “**Be angry, and do not sin; ponder in your own hearts on your beds, and be silent.**” He pauses again with *selah* for effect. How can a godly person not be perfect, when that is the definition of godliness in the Law? The answer has to be that Christ is our righteousness, and that will come in due time. For now, the godly person has to think long and hard on how not to sin when so many people are aligned against him. It is very, very difficult to be angry and not sin. He says that you can be angry, that anger is not necessarily a sin. Some think all anger is sin, and this important verse teaches us that this is not so. The Lord Jesus got angry, but

he never sinned. No. **It is not wrong to get angry. It is wrong to sin in your anger.**

The Apostle Paul quotes this verse in Ephesians and this helps us answer our question a bit more. **“Be angry and do not sin; do not let the sun go down on your anger, and give no opportunity to the devil” (Eph 4:26-27).** He even retains the context of going to bed. This is something to comment upon for a moment.

There is something about letting the sun go down on your anger that resembles **basting a turkey**. The heat of your anger works on the juice of your sins overnight, and in the morning, what was once a passion that erupted separate from your will has seeped into the pores of your very being and caused you to take on this great stench permanently. This kind of thing over many nights is the reason that so many marriages end in failure. There comes a point when forgiveness is no longer that which defines the marriage, because you have been basting in anger for so long that the meat of your marriage has become this wicked passion. You are not to let the sun go down on your anger, be it in a marriage, a business relationship, some abuse perpetrated

upon you, or whatever. Again, no one said this is easy, but it is vital to the life of a Christian.

But look at what Paul says next, immediately after this quote. “Let the thief no longer steal ... Let no corrupting talk come out of your mouths ... Do not grieve the Holy Spirit ... Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slander be put away from you” (Eph 4:28-31). Do these sound like perfect people, if they have to be told this? No. So where does godliness come from? It comes in the last verse: God in Christ forgave you (32). It comes from God setting people apart as godly. This is electing grace and love through justification. That is what Paul is talking about as he reflects on this Psalm.

**Selah.** Pause. Ponder God’s electing love for you, how he set his love upon you from all eternity if you have been called and received faith in Christ. And then pause to consider where you might be angry at someone. Perhaps they do not even know it, but you know it. Ponder it in your heart. Ponder God’s love for you and why you can’t love them as he has loved you. Ponder now and ponder in your bed and be silent. Don’t try to talk back to God about these things. Reflect and do not let the sun go down on your

anger. This is absolutely critical to spiritual health, for to be angry like this is to murder your brother in your heart.

He says next, “Offer right sacrifices, and put your trust in the LORD” (Ps 4:5). To obey God is better than sacrifice, and thus to do what he has just said is the “right sacrifice.” It is the sacrifice of your body, your mind, and your will. Any time you return to the LORD and put your trust in him rather than stewing in anger or worry or fear, this is true worship of the Living God.

The last three verses of the Psalm give the result of such obedience. This fleshes out more of the “blessedness” of the man who keeps the law in Psalm 1. “There are many who say, ‘Who will show us some good? Lift up the light of your face upon us, O LORD!’” (Ps 4:6). David was far from alone as he was expelled from his own city. He had throngs with him and they were as fearful as he was. Together they were crying out for God to come to their aid and rescue them.

Once God answered the prayers, the results were profound. “You have put more joy in my heart than they have when their grain and wine abound” (7). The psalmist is saying that even in the best of days with all of his friends gathered in comradery, with a castle full of food and feasting

joy, this cannot compare to the joy he feels *in the midst of* his trouble, if God has shown his Face to him. Nothing in the world compares with God, and circumstances are not a hindrance or a help. In fact, **the worse the circumstances, the more joy he is able to experience**, because there is nothing of this world that is able to turn God's heart from him. Suffering and tribulation is not the enemy of the Christian, not when we have a God like this.

Therefore, “**In peace I will both lie down and sleep; for you alone, O LORD, make me dwell in safety**” (8). He returns to the idea of rests from Psalm 3. What is remarkable about this is that the Psalm does not tell us that he has experienced physical deliverance yet. In fact, it seems to presuppose that he hasn't. For in the midst of such horrors from men all around, **he is still able to rest in peace**. This isn't talking about death, as we use the phrase. But again, returning to Psalm 3, it is about being able to rest and sleep in the midst of great suffering. Why? Because the LORD is his safety, and from this bulwark, he cannot be removed.

## Christ in Psalms 3-4

As we have surveyed these two psalms together, and noticed that they also have a relationship to the first two psalms, I want to conclude with what has been up to this point the most glaring absence in our time together. How is Christ in these Psalms? My basic premise is that Christ is the singer of all of the Psalms and that he authored them from above. This is all the more firm when we remember that Christ is “The Man” of Psalm 1 and the “Son” of Psalm 2. So what about these Psalms? Here are some thoughts.

**First**, it is always good to know that the Church Fathers knew that Christ was here. Augustine said of Psalm 3, “**That this psalm should be understood as spoken in the person of Christ is strongly suggested by the words ‘I rested, and fell asleep, and I arose because the Lord will uphold me’**” (**Ps 3:5**). For this seems more in tune with the Lord’s passion and resurrection than with the particular story in which we are told about David’s flight from the face of his own son who was at loggerheads with him.” (**Augustine**, *Expositions on the Psalms* 3.1). He and others like Eusebius, Jerome, and Origen were following the most ancient tradition outside of the NT that we have, where **1 Clement 26:2** speaks of this verse as referring to the Resurrection. In fact, Dr. Waltke says, “**An**

early tradition has it that the first three psalms reflect on the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ.”<sup>6</sup>

Second, remember the how the word “salvation” is Yeshua. A very interesting parallel exists between David’s flight from Jerusalem and Jesus’ last night on earth. The story tells us that “the king crossed the brook Kidron” (2Sa 15:23) after being betrayed by his son. He then went up to the Mt. of Olives (30). It is probable that his prayer was Psalm 3:3, “But you, O LORD, are a shield about me, my glory, and the lifter of my head,” as all of their heads were covered in lamentation and weeping on that terrible night.

John’s Gospel tells us that after eating the Last Supper in Jerusalem, Jesus likewise crossed the brook Kidron (John 18:1) where he went up to the Mt. of Olives to pray (Lk 22:39) and then to the garden of Gethsemane there where he was betrayed by his friend. Perhaps Psalm 3 was on our Lord’s lips as men were rising against him. Perhaps as they were striking him on the cheek that morning, he was

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<sup>6</sup> Bruce K. Waltke, James M. Houston, and Erika Moore, *The Psalms as Christian Worship: A Historical Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI; Cambridge, U.K.: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2010), 182. Waltke gives a footnote for this comment to John Eaton, *The Psalms: A Historical and Spiritual Commentary* (London and New York: Continuum, 2005), p. 49. I looked up this footnote and could not find what was supposedly being said. Doesn’t mean it is wrong though.

thinking of **Psalm 3:7** that the Lord will strike his enemies on the cheek, or on the cross when they were mocking **Psalm 22** back at him saying, “let God deliver him,” maybe he was thinking of **Psalm 3:2** where they were saying there is no salvation for him in God. It is worth noting as well that our Lord had no sleep that night or next day until he was dead. He did not sleep, so that we can find rest in him.

Finally, with Psalm 3 it is important to understand that this is a **psalm of war**. The language is that of “**foes**” (**3:2**) and “**enemies**” (**3:8**). God is a battle “**shield**” (**3:4**). The people are deployed as an army (**3:7**). God is called to rise up (**3:8**) and fight for David (**3:7**), ultimately giving him victory (**3:3, 8**). But who is the God who fights? **The commander of the armies of the Lord**, whom Joshua met on the field of battle and was commanded to take off his sandals because the place where he was standing was holy ground (**Josh 5:14-15**). The LORD is a “**man of war**” (**Ex 15:3**) Moses said. The LORD is his name. This is Christ.

As for Psalm 4, this psalm begins a different way in the LXX translation. Rather than “To the choirmaster” it says, “**For the End, a Song of David among the Psalms**” (**Ps 4:1 LXX**). Origen is representative of the tradition when he

says, “Therefore, since Christ is referred to as David, the psalms that are titled ‘for the end’ announce the end and victory of Christ.... Victory is granted to each one who is conquered by Christ; he overcomes the evil happening to him, and he is lifted from its midst as he is subjected to Christ. For Christ conquers no one who is unwilling but by persuasion since he is the Word of God.” (Origen, *Selections from the Psalms* 4:1).

Remember again the idea of God of my righteousness. Origen against says something remarkable, which I thought even before reading him. “The one who calls on the Lord must have true righteousness. Since Christ is righteous, the just person, the partaker of righteousness, must be a partaker of Christ. Lest saying ‘God of my righteousness’ should give birth to pride, we can say this also: He has been made wisdom and righteousness for us, and he is our Redeemer. Consequently, to say ‘God of my righteousness’ would be as if you said, “God of my Lord.”” (Origen, *ibid*).<sup>7</sup>

Perhaps you are like Augustine who writes all about Psalm 4 in his *Confessions*. “How loudly I cried out to you,

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<sup>7</sup> Craig A. Blasing and Carmen S. Hardin, *Psalms 1–50*, Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture OT 7 (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2008), 27.

my God, as I read the psalms of David, songs full of faith, outbursts of devotion with no room in them for the breath of pride! ... How loudly I began to cry out to you in these psalms; how I was inflamed by them with love for you ... when the Spirit turned to [me] saying, ‘How long will you be heavy-hearted, human creatures? Why love emptiness and chase falsehood?’ (Ps 4:2). I, certainly, had loved emptiness and chased falsehood, and you, Lord, had already glorified your Holy One (Ps 4:3), raising Him from the dead and setting Him as your right hand.” This, beloved, is how a proper application of the psalms moves. From you to Christ and back to you, like a sweet dance between you and the Savior. God convicting. You praying. Him washing. You praying. You pausing and reflecting and crying out for help. Him coming to your aid in great distress of soul, because he did not spare his own Son. Therefore, he will come to your aid. Whether he chooses to relieve you of your physical and temporary burden or not, he will always meet your needs.

May he be the God of peace for you when you lie down and when you sleep.

2 Samuel	Psalm 3
<b>17:1</b> Moreover, Ahithophel said to Absalom, "Let me choose twelve thousand men, and I will arise and pursue David tonight.	<sup>1</sup> LORD, how many are my foes! Many foes are rising against me.
<sup>16:7</sup> And Shimei said as he cursed, "Get out, get out, you man of blood, you worthless man! <sup>8</sup> The LORD has avenged on you all the blood of the house of Saul, in whose place you have reigned, and the LORD has given the kingdom into the hand of your son Absalom. See, your evil is on you, for you are a man of blood."	<sup>2</sup> many are saying of my soul, there is no salvation for him in God. Selah
<sup>15:30</sup> But David went up the ascent of the Mount of Olives, weeping as he went, barefoot and with his head covered. And all the people who were with him covered their heads, and they went up, weeping as they went.	<sup>3</sup> But you, O LORD, are a shield about me, my glory, and the lifter of my head.
<sup>15:28</sup> See, I will wait at the fords of the wilderness until word comes from you to inform me." <sup>29</sup> So Zadok and Abiathar carried the ark of God back to Jerusalem, and they remained there."	<sup>4</sup> I cried aloud to the LORD, and he answered me from his holy hill. Selah
<sup>17:21</sup> After they had gone, the men came up out of the well, and went and told King David. They said to David, "Arise, and go quickly over the water, for thus and so has Ahithophel counseled against you."	<sup>5</sup> I lay down and slept; I woke again, for the LORD sustained me.
<sup>17:11</sup> But my counsel is that all Israel be gathered to you, from Dan to Beersheba, as the sand by the sea for multitude, and that you go to battle in person.	<sup>6</sup> I will not be afraid of many thousands of people who have set themselves against me all around.
<sup>15:31</sup> And it was told David, "Ahithophel is among the conspirators with Absalom." And David said, "O LORD, please turn the counsel of Ahithophel into foolishness."	<sup>7</sup> Arise, O LORD! Save me, O my God! For you strike all my enemies on the cheek; you break the teeth of the wicked.
<sup>19:2</sup> So the victory that day was turned into mourning for all the people, for the people heard that day, "The king is grieving for his son.""	<sup>8</sup> Salvation belongs to the LORD; your blessing be on your people! Selah"

### **Outline Psalm 3**

- IV. Complains of Enemies (vv. 1-2)
- V. Confidence in God's Ability to Answer Prayer (vv. 3-4)
- VI. Full Trust in God (vv. 5-6)
- VII. Prayer for Victory (7-8)

### **Outline Psalm 4**

- I. The Lord Who Answers Prayer (vv. 1-3)
- II. Trust in the Lord (4-5)
- III. A Prayer of Confidence (vv. 6-7)
- IV. Rest in Peace (vv. 8)

## The Story that inspired Psalm 3

- <sup>ESV</sup> **2 Samuel 15:1** "After this Absalom got himself a chariot and horses, and fifty men to run before him.
- <sup>2</sup> And Absalom used to rise early and stand beside the way of the gate. And when any man had a dispute to come before the king for judgment, Absalom would call to him and say, "From what city are you?" And when he said, "Your servant is of such and such a tribe in Israel,"
- <sup>3</sup> Absalom would say to him, "See, your claims are good and right, but there is no man designated by the king to hear you."
- <sup>4</sup> Then Absalom would say, "Oh that I were judge in the land! Then every man with a dispute or cause might come to me, and I would give him justice."
- <sup>5</sup> And whenever a man came near to pay homage to him, he would put out his hand and take hold of him and kiss him.
- <sup>6</sup> Thus Absalom did to all of Israel who came to the king for judgment. So Absalom stole the hearts of the men of Israel.
- <sup>7</sup> And at the end of four years Absalom said to the king, "Please let me go and pay my vow, which I have vowed to the LORD, in Hebron.
- <sup>8</sup> For your servant vowed a vow while I lived at Geshur in Aram, saying, 'If the LORD will indeed bring me back to Jerusalem, then I will offer worship to the LORD.'"
- <sup>9</sup> The king said to him, "Go in peace." So he arose and went to Hebron.
- <sup>10</sup> But Absalom sent secret messengers throughout all the tribes of Israel, saying, "As soon as you hear the sound of the trumpet, then say, 'Absalom is king at Hebron!'"
- <sup>11</sup> With Absalom went two hundred men from Jerusalem who were invited guests, and they went in their innocence and knew nothing.
- <sup>12</sup> And while Absalom was offering the sacrifices, he sent for Ahithophel the Gilonite, David's counselor, from his city Giloh. And the conspiracy grew strong, and the people with Absalom kept increasing.
- <sup>13</sup> And a messenger came to David, saying, "The hearts of the men of Israel have gone after Absalom."
- <sup>14</sup> 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 for us 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."
- <sup>15</sup> And the king's servants said to the king, "Behold, your servants are ready to do whatever my lord the king decides."
- <sup>16</sup> So the king went out, and all his household after him. And the king left ten concubines to keep the house.
- <sup>17</sup> And the king went out, and all the people after him. And they halted at the last house.
- <sup>18</sup> And all his servants passed by him, and all the Cherethites, and all the Pelethites, and all the six hundred Gittites who had followed him from Gath, passed on before the king.
- <sup>19</sup> Then the king said to Ittai the Gittite, "Why do you also go with us? Go back and stay with the king, for you are a foreigner and also an exile from your home.
- <sup>20</sup> You came only yesterday, and shall I today make you wander about with us, since I go I know not where? Go back and take your brothers with you, and may the LORD show steadfast love and faithfulness to you."
- <sup>21</sup> But Ittai answered the king, "As the LORD lives, and as my lord the king lives, wherever my lord the king shall be, whether for death or for life, there also will your servant be."
- <sup>22</sup> And David said to Ittai, "Go then, pass on." So Ittai the Gittite passed on with all his men and all the little ones who were with him.
- <sup>23</sup> And all the land wept aloud as all the people passed by, and the king crossed the brook Kidron, and all the people passed on toward the wilderness.
- <sup>24</sup> And Abiathar came up, and behold, Zadok came also with all the Levites, bearing the ark of the covenant of God. And they set down the ark of God until the people had all passed out of the city.
- <sup>25</sup> Then the king said to Zadok, "Carry the ark of God back into the city. If I find favor in the eyes of the LORD, he will bring me back and let me see both it and his dwelling place.
- <sup>26</sup> But if he says, 'I have no pleasure in you,' behold, here I am, let him do to me what seems good to him."
- <sup>27</sup> The king also said to Zadok the priest, "Are you not a seer? Go back to the city in peace, with your two

sons, Ahimaaz your son, and Jonathan the son of Abiathar.

<sup>28</sup> See, I will wait at the fords of the wilderness until word comes from you to inform me."

<sup>29</sup> So Zadok and Abiathar carried the ark of God back to Jerusalem, and they remained there.

<sup>30</sup> But David went up the ascent of the Mount of Olives, weeping as he went, barefoot and with his head covered. And all the people who were with him covered their heads, and they went up, weeping as they went.

<sup>31</sup> And it was told David, "Ahithophel is among the conspirators with Absalom." And David said, "O LORD, please turn the counsel of Ahithophel into foolishness."

<sup>32</sup> While David was coming to the summit, where God was worshiped, behold, Hushai the Archite came to meet him with his coat torn and dirt on his head.

<sup>33</sup> David said to him, "If you go on with me, you will be a burden to me.

<sup>34</sup> But if you return to the city and say to Absalom, 'I will be your servant, O king; as I have been your father's servant in time past, so now I will be your servant,' then you will defeat for me the counsel of Ahithophel.

<sup>35</sup> Are not Zadok and Abiathar the priests with you there? So whatever you hear from the king's house, tell it to Zadok and Abiathar the priests.

<sup>36</sup> Behold, their two sons are with them there, Ahimaaz, Zadok's son, and Jonathan, Abiathar's son, and by them you shall send to me everything you hear."

<sup>37</sup> So Hushai, David's friend, came into the city, just as Absalom was entering Jerusalem.

**ESV 2 Samuel 16:1** When David had passed a little beyond the summit, Ziba the servant of Mephibosheth met him, with a couple of donkeys saddled, bearing two hundred loaves of bread, a hundred bunches of raisins, a hundred of summer fruits, and a skin of wine.

<sup>2</sup> And the king said to Ziba, "Why have you brought these?" Ziba answered, "The donkeys are for the king's household to ride on, the bread and summer fruit for the young men to eat, and the wine for those who faint in the wilderness to drink."

<sup>3</sup> And the king said, "And where is your master's son?" Ziba said to the king, "Behold, he remains in Jerusalem, for he said, 'Today the house of Israel will give me back the kingdom of my father.'"

<sup>4</sup> Then the king said to Ziba, "Behold, all that belonged to Mephibosheth is now yours." And Ziba said, "I pay homage; let me ever find favor in your sight, my lord the king."

<sup>5</sup> When King David came to Bahurim, there came out a man of the family of the house of Saul, whose name was Shimei, the son of Gera, and as he came he cursed continually.

<sup>6</sup> And he threw stones at David and at all the servants of King David, and all the people and all the mighty men were on his right hand and on his left.

<sup>7</sup> And Shimei said as he cursed, "Get out, get out, you man of blood, you worthless man!

<sup>8</sup> The LORD has avenged on you all the blood of the house of Saul, in whose place you have reigned, and the LORD has given the kingdom into the hand of your son Absalom. See, your evil is on you, for you are a man of blood."

<sup>9</sup> Then Abishai the son of Zeruiah said to the king, "Why should this dead dog curse my lord the king? Let me go over and take off his head."

<sup>10</sup> But the king said, "What have I to do with you, you sons of Zeruiah? If he is cursing because the LORD has said to him, 'Curse David,' who then shall say, 'Why have you done so?'"

<sup>11</sup> And David said to Abishai and to all his servants, "Behold, my own son seeks my life; how much more now may this Benjaminite! Leave him alone, and let him curse, for the LORD has told him to.

<sup>12</sup> It may be that the LORD will look on the wrong done to me, and that the LORD will repay me with good for his cursing today."

<sup>13</sup> So David and his men went on the road, while Shimei went along on the hillside opposite him and cursed as he went and threw stones at him and flung dust.

<sup>14</sup> And the king, and all the people who were with him, arrived weary at the Jordan. And there he refreshed himself.

<sup>15</sup> Now Absalom and all the people, the men of Israel, came to Jerusalem, and Ahithophel with him.

<sup>16</sup> And when Hushai the Archite, David's friend, came to Absalom, Hushai said to Absalom, "Long live the king! Long live the king!"

<sup>17</sup> And Absalom said to Hushai, "Is this your loyalty to your friend? Why did you not go with your friend?"

<sup>18</sup> And Hushai said to Absalom, "No, for whom the LORD and this people and all the men of Israel have chosen, his I will be, and with him I will remain.

<sup>19</sup> And again, whom should I serve? Should it not be his son? As I have served your father, so I will serve you."

<sup>20</sup> Then Absalom said to Ahithophel, "Give your counsel. What shall we do?"

<sup>21</sup> Ahithophel said to Absalom, "Go in to your father's concubines, whom he has left to keep the house, and all Israel will hear that you have made yourself a stench to your father, and the hands of all who are with you will be strengthened."

<sup>22</sup> So they pitched a tent for Absalom on the roof. And Absalom went in to his father's concubines in the sight of all Israel.

<sup>23</sup> Now in those days the counsel that Ahithophel gave was as if one consulted the word of God; so was all the counsel of Ahithophel esteemed, both by David and by Absalom.

<sup>ESV</sup> **2 Samuel 17:1** Moreover, Ahithophel said to Absalom, "Let me choose twelve thousand men, and I will arise and pursue David tonight.

<sup>2</sup> I will come upon him while he is weary and discouraged and throw him into a panic, and all the people who are with him will flee. I will strike down only the king,

<sup>3</sup> and I will bring all the people back to you as a bride comes home to her husband. You seek the life of only one man, and all the people will be at peace."

<sup>4</sup> And the advice seemed right in the eyes of Absalom and all the elders of Israel.

<sup>5</sup> Then Absalom said, "Call Hushai the Archite also, and let us hear what he has to say."

<sup>6</sup> And when Hushai came to Absalom, Absalom said to him, "Thus has Ahithophel spoken; shall we do as he says? If not, you speak."

<sup>7</sup> Then Hushai said to Absalom, "This time the counsel that Ahithophel has given is not good."

<sup>8</sup> Hushai said, "You know that your father and his men are mighty men, and that they are enraged, like a bear robbed of her cubs in the field. Besides, your father is expert in war; he will not spend the night with the people.

<sup>9</sup> Behold, even now he has hidden himself in one of the pits or in some other place. And as soon as some of the people fall at the first attack, whoever hears it will say, 'There has been a slaughter among the people who follow Absalom.'

<sup>10</sup> Then even the valiant man, whose heart is like the heart of a lion, will utterly melt with fear, for all Israel knows that your father is a mighty man, and that those who are with him are valiant men.

<sup>11</sup> But my counsel is that all Israel be gathered to you, from Dan to Beersheba, as the sand by the sea for multitude, and that you go to battle in person.

<sup>12</sup> So we shall come upon him in some place where he is to be found, and we shall light upon him as the dew falls on the ground, and of him and all the men with him not one will be left.

<sup>13</sup> If he withdraws into a city, then all Israel will bring ropes to that city, and we shall drag it into the valley, until not even a pebble is to be found there."

<sup>14</sup> And Absalom and all the men of Israel said, "The counsel of Hushai the Archite is better than the counsel of Ahithophel." For the LORD had ordained to defeat the good counsel of Ahithophel, so that the LORD might bring harm upon Absalom.

<sup>15</sup> Then Hushai said to Zadok and Abiathar the priests, "Thus and so did Ahithophel counsel Absalom and the elders of Israel, and thus and so have I counseled.

<sup>16</sup> Now therefore send quickly and tell David, 'Do not stay tonight at the fords of the wilderness, but by all means pass over, lest the king and all the people who are with him be swallowed up.'"

<sup>17</sup> Now Jonathan and Ahimaaz were waiting at En-rogel. A female servant was to go and tell them, and they were to go and tell King David, for they were not to be seen entering the city.

<sup>18</sup> But a young man saw them and told Absalom. So both of them went away quickly and came to the house of a man at Bahurim, who had a well in his courtyard. And they went down into it.

<sup>19</sup> And the woman took and spread a covering over the well's mouth and scattered grain on it, and nothing was known of it.

<sup>20</sup> When Absalom's servants came to the woman at the house, they said, "Where are Ahimaaz and Jonathan?" And the woman said to them, "They have gone over the brook of water." And when they had sought and could not find them, they returned to Jerusalem.

<sup>21</sup> After they had gone, the men came up out of the well, and went and told King David. They said to David, "Arise, and go quickly over the water, for thus and so has Ahithophel counseled against you."

<sup>22</sup> Then David arose, and all the people who were with him, and they crossed the Jordan. By daybreak not one was left who had not crossed the Jordan.

<sup>23</sup> When Ahithophel saw that his counsel was not followed, he saddled his donkey and went off home to his own city. He set his house in order and hanged himself, and he died and was buried in the tomb of his father.

<sup>24</sup> Then David came to Mahanaim. And Absalom crossed the Jordan with all the men of Israel.

<sup>25</sup> Now Absalom had set Amasa over the army instead of Joab. Amasa was the son of a man named Ithra the Ishmaelite, who had married Abigail the daughter of Nahash, sister of Zeruiah, Joab's mother.

<sup>26</sup> And Israel and Absalom encamped in the land of Gilead.

<sup>27</sup> When David came to Mahanaim, Shobi the son of Nahash from Rabbah of the Ammonites, and Machir the son of Ammiel from Lo-debar, and Barzillai the Gileadite from Rogelim,

<sup>28</sup> brought beds, basins, and earthen vessels, wheat, barley, flour, parched grain, beans and lentils,

<sup>29</sup> honey and curds and sheep and cheese from the herd, for David and the people with him to eat, for they said, "The people are hungry and weary and thirsty in the wilderness."

**ESV 2 Samuel 18:1** Then David mustered the men who were with him and set over them commanders of thousands and commanders of hundreds.

<sup>2</sup> And David sent out the army, one third under the command of Joab, one third under the command of Abishai the son of Zeruiah, Joab's brother, and one third under the command of Ittai the Gittite. And the king said to the men, "I myself will also go out with you."

<sup>3</sup> But the men said, "You shall not go out. For if we flee, they will not care about us. If half of us die, they will not care about us. But you are worth ten thousand of us. Therefore it is better that you send us help from the city."

<sup>4</sup> The king said to them, "Whatever seems best to you I will do." So the king stood at the side of the gate, while all the army marched out by hundreds and by thousands.

<sup>5</sup> And the king ordered Joab and Abishai and Ittai, "Deal gently for my sake with the young man Absalom." And all the people heard when the king gave orders to all the commanders about Absalom.

<sup>6</sup> So the army went out into the field against Israel, and the battle was fought in the forest of Ephraim.

<sup>7</sup> And the men of Israel were defeated there by the servants of David, and the loss there was great on that day, twenty thousand men.

<sup>8</sup> The battle spread over the face of all the country, and the forest devoured more people that day than the sword.

<sup>9</sup> And Absalom happened to meet the servants of David. Absalom was riding on his mule, and the mule went under the thick branches of a great oak, and his head caught fast in the oak, and he was suspended between heaven and earth, while the mule that was under him went on.

<sup>10</sup> And a certain man saw it and told Joab, "Behold, I saw Absalom hanging in an oak."

<sup>11</sup> Joab said to the man who told him, "What, you saw him! Why then did you not strike him there to the ground? I would have been glad to give you ten pieces of silver and a belt."

<sup>12</sup> But the man said to Joab, "Even if I felt in my hand the weight of a thousand pieces of silver, I would not reach out my hand against the king's son, for in our hearing the king commanded you and Abishai and Ittai, 'For my sake protect the young man Absalom.'"

<sup>13</sup> On the other hand, if I had dealt treacherously against his life (and there is nothing hidden from the king), then you yourself would have stood aloof."

<sup>14</sup> Joab said, "I will not waste time like this with you." And he took three javelins in his hand and thrust them into the heart of Absalom while he was still alive in the oak.

<sup>15</sup> And ten young men, Joab's armor-bearers, surrounded Absalom and struck him and killed him.

<sup>16</sup> Then Joab blew the trumpet, and the troops came back from pursuing Israel, for Joab restrained them.

<sup>17</sup> And they took Absalom and threw him into a great pit in the forest and raised over him a very great heap of stones. And all Israel fled every one to his own home.

<sup>18</sup> Now Absalom in his lifetime had taken and set up for himself the pillar that is in the King's Valley, for he said, "I have no son to keep my name in remembrance." He called the pillar after his own name, and it is called Absalom's monument to this day.

<sup>19</sup> Then Ahimaaz the son of Zadok said, "Let me run and carry news to the king that the LORD has delivered him from the hand of his enemies."

<sup>20</sup> And Joab said to him, "You are not to carry news today. You may carry news another day, but today you shall carry no news, because the king's son is dead."

<sup>21</sup> Then Joab said to the Cushite, "Go, tell the king what you have seen." The Cushite bowed before Joab, and ran.

<sup>22</sup> Then Ahimaaz the son of Zadok said again to Joab, "Come what may, let me also run after the Cushite." And Joab said, "Why will you run, my son, seeing that you will have no reward for the news?"

<sup>23</sup> "Come what may," he said, "I will run." So he said to him, "Run." Then Ahimaaz ran by the way of the plain, and outran the Cushite.

<sup>24</sup> Now David was sitting between the two gates, and the watchman went up to the roof of the gate by the wall, and when he lifted up his eyes and looked, he saw a man running alone.

<sup>25</sup> The watchman called out and told the king. And the king said, "If he is alone, there is news in his mouth." And he drew nearer and nearer.

<sup>26</sup> The watchman saw another man running. And the watchman called to the gate and said, "See, another man running alone!" The king said, "He also brings news."

<sup>27</sup> The watchman said, "I think the running of the first is like the running of Ahimaaz the son of Zadok." And the king said, "He is a good man and comes with good news."

<sup>28</sup> Then Ahimaaz cried out to the king, "All is well." And he bowed before the king with his face to the earth and said, "Blessed be the LORD your God, who has delivered up the men who raised their hand against my lord the king."

<sup>29</sup> And the king said, "Is it well with the young man Absalom?" Ahimaaz answered, "When Joab sent the king's servant, your servant, I saw a great commotion, but I do not know what it was."

<sup>30</sup> And the king said, "Turn aside and stand here." So he turned aside and stood still.

<sup>31</sup> And behold, the Cushite came, and the Cushite said, "Good news for my lord the king! For the LORD has delivered you this day from the hand of all who rose up against you."

<sup>32</sup> The king said to the Cushite, "Is it well with the young man Absalom?" And the Cushite answered, "May the enemies of my lord the king and all who rise up against you for evil be like that young man."

<sup>33</sup> And the king was deeply moved and went up to the chamber over the gate and wept. And as he went, he said, "O my son Absalom, my son, my son Absalom! Would I had died instead of you, O Absalom, my son, my son!"

<sup>ESV</sup> **2 Samuel 19:1** It was told Joab, "Behold, the king is weeping and mourning for Absalom."

<sup>2</sup> So the victory that day was turned into mourning for all the people, for the people heard that day, "The king is grieving for his son."

(2Sa 15:1-19:2 ESV)