

Did You Bring Your Shield to the Struggle?

Psalm 3 (1st Sunday in Lent)

O Lord, how my foes are multiplying! Many are rising up against me! Many are saying about my life, “There is no salvation for him in God.” But you, O Lord, are a shield for me. You are my glory and the one who lifts up my head. With a loud voice I cry out to the Lord, and he answers me from his holy mountain. I lie down, and I sleep. I awake, because the Lord sustains me. I will not be afraid of the thousands of people who line up against me on all sides. Rise up, O Lord! Save me, my God! Yes, you will strike all my enemies on the jaw. The teeth of the wicked you will break. Salvation belongs to the Lord. Your blessing rests on your people.

Over the centuries shields have been shaped differently. They have been made out of different materials from wood to iron. They have come in different sizes. Some have been smaller while others cover more of your body. No matter their size, the material, or their shape, the shield serves a very important purpose. They are a defense against the enemy. When you have your shield and use it properly, it blocks your enemy’s sword blows and protects you from the arrows of enemy archers. If a soldier doesn’t have his shield, he is left vulnerable and defenseless in his struggle against the enemy.

Struggling against the enemy, we too need that all important shield in our lives. Today as we think about that struggle with our enemy and the tactics that he employs, let’s contemplate this question: Did you bring your shield to the struggle?

The heading of this psalm tells us the circumstances of David which led him to write. It was written when he fled from Absalom, his son. 2 Samuel chapters 15-18 tell us that Absalom had rebelled against David and in a coup-d’etat he had taken control of Israel away from David. When Absalom rebelled, fair-weather friends of David, such as his advisor Ahithophel, deserted him because they thought Absalom would win. The secret hatred of David’s enemies, such as Shimei, came out into the open, and they rushed to kick David while he was down. Most painful, however, was the terrible reality that leading his enemies was Absalom, his own son! What a blow to a father’s heart! In their taunts, David’s enemies wanted to discourage him and lead him into despair thinking that God who had been with him before and saved him so many times would not save him now. “O Lord, how my foes are multiplying! Many are rising up against me! Many are saying about my life, “There is no salvation for him in God.”

In the world there are many who stand against Christ and his Word and therefore rise against us. Our foes are multiplying all around us, but there is one enemy who isn’t seen. Yet we hear his whispers. He remains at work on us constantly every day wanting nothing more than to see us fall. The struggle against our enemy of Satan is a very real struggle. His tactics are no different than David’s earthly enemies. In fact he’s perfected his tactics and he hasn’t changed them. He rises up against us tempting us to sin. He whispers in our ears with the goal of getting us to do whatever our sinful nature simply feels good and right to do. Then when we give in and fall to his temptations, the tempter becomes the taunting accuser. He jabs at our conscience thrusting guilt into our face with his taunts. “Your sin is too great. There is no hope for you. God can’t and he won’t save you this time.” Satan wants nothing more than to see you fall into sin and then lead you into hopeless despair over your sin. Without your shield in that struggle, you are defenseless against the enemy.

Even as David’s enemies taunted him, surrounded him, and seemed like there were more than could be counted, David knew who his shield was against the enemy. That made all the difference as he struggled against those enemies. Holding on that shield, David finds peace and rest behind his shield despite what seemed to be true. His shield was not his own might or his battle plans to win the kingdom back. It was the Lord, his Savior God. **“But**

you, O Lord, are a shield for me. You are my glory and the one who lifts up my head. With a loud voice I cry out to the Lord, and he answers me from his holy mountain.” (vs. 3-4) The Lord is the one who lifts David’s head up to look not at the enemies surrounding him but to see his Savior. His shield was right there and ready to answer his cries for help defending him against the approaching enemy proving the taunts to be lies.

The Lord Jesus, our Savior, is our shield. He lifts up our eyes so that instead of looking down at our sins and Satan’s taunts, we see him standing right there in front of us. He stands ready to help and defend us as our perfect shield in the struggle with our enemy. So what makes Jesus the perfect shield? Jesus faced off with the enemy of Satan. For 40 days in the desert, Jesus was being tempted just like you and I are tempted. Yet even past that time, Jesus continued to struggle under the weight of more temptations. Jesus endured Satan’s temptations, but what makes him our perfect shield is that he was unbroken by any of Satan’s temptation. Jesus remained perfectly sinless. Jesus entered our struggle against the enemy and he won. The writer to the Hebrews said, **“For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are, yet was without sin.” (4:15)** Then earlier in his letter he wrote, **“Indeed, because he suffered when he was tempted, he is able to help those who are being tempted.” (2:18)** Jesus, your shield is your help who has come to be your defense against your enemy. Like a child’s security blanket we carry him with us.

A little child loves his security blanket. They want to take it with them wherever they go, but they especially want to have it with them when they go to sleep at night. No matter how dirty or tattered it gets, they want to have it with them. When it is right there by their side in their bed, the little child feels safe and secure in the darkness of their room as that blanket acts like their shield. They fall fast asleep.

David says, **“I lie down, and I sleep. I awake, because the Lord sustains me. I will not be afraid of the thousands of people who line up against me on all sides.” (vs 5-6)** With the Lord as David’s shield, despite the thousands that surround him, David was unafraid of the danger his enemies presented. He could rest securely because the Lord was his security blanket, his shield that would never fail him even as he struggled.

We struggle against our enemy’s temptations. We struggle against his discouraging taunts. Without our shield those taunts would leave us feeling hopeless as we toss and turn because of our guilt and shame. Yet we have nothing to fear. Like David, we have that security blanket, that shield and holding on to that shield gives us peace. When we wrap ourselves in his love and his saving might, we lie down at night confident in the protection Jesus our shield provides us. Peaceful rest is ours every day knowing that Jesus who endured Satan’s temptations has indeed also broken the teeth of our enemy giving us certain victory. With our shield in front of us and wrapped around us like that security blanket, we know that through him there is salvation for us no matter what our enemy’s taunts say to us.

Confident in his shield, David says, **“Rise up, O Lord! Save me, my God! Yes, you will strike all my enemies on the jaw. The teeth of the wicked you will break. Salvation belongs to the Lord. Your blessing rests on your people.” (vs. 7-8)** When the teeth of a predator are broken, they are rendered completely powerless. David ultimately confesses that with the Lord as his shield, the power and might of his enemies will be broken. Ultimately salvation and victory belong to the Lord, his Savior God.

Jesus as our shield breaks the teeth of our enemy to give us certain victory. On the cross Jesus smacked Satan on the jaw and broke his teeth rendering him ultimately powerless to harm us. With the guilt of our sins taken away by Jesus himself, Satan’s accusations have no teeth. The enemy may continue to taunt us with thoughts of hopelessness and despair. **“There is no salvation for him in God.”** But with sins forgiven, how could his taunts have

any power anymore? How could they be true? They can't. Jesus has already won and so we rejoice with David, "Salvation belongs to the Lord! Your blessings rest on your people."

David's confidence in the Lord as his shield against his enemies was not misplaced. The Lord restored David's kingdom to him. God kept his promises to David just as he had always done. In the face of the struggle against his enemies, David had his shield and he took refuge behind that shield.

Did you bring your shield to the struggle against your enemy? Holding on to your shield trusting his might as your defense in your daily struggle against the enemy, you are given strength for that struggle. If Jesus is your shield, you have help to stand tall against the enemy's temptations. He who was tempted is able to help you when you are being tempted. Even when you fall under those temptations which daily come your way, you have protection against the enemy's accusing taunts.

My friends, you have an impenetrable shield at your disposal. Pick up your shield. Trust Jesus' protecting might. Hold on tight to it. March forward remembering that Jesus has already struggled against the enemy for you. He will remain in front of you as you struggle against the enemy today, tomorrow, and every day until the mighty foe is forever vanquished. When that day comes, forever we will declare with David, "Salvation belongs to the Lord."
Amen