

PSALM 3

A PEACE SONG



FIRST BYRON CHRISTIAN REFORMED CHURCH

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JUNE 27, 2021 (PM)

INTRODUCTION

I've had panic attacks a few times in my life, usually after times of prolonged stress. The first time it happened, I was sure I was dying and went to ER. As some of you also know, it's so embarrassing to walk in, warning, "I'm having a heart attack," and to walk out with a nurse saying, "It's just stress."

Since then, I've had other panic attacks, but I saved myself the embarrassment and the money by pausing and praying until peace returned. Prayer is much cheaper than healthcare, and also less embarrassing. **How do we pray ourselves from panic to peace?** In Psalm 3, David provides us with a pattern prayer that shows us how to move from panic to prayer to peace to praise.

BACKGROUND

This is our third sermon in the series, 'Psychology in the Psalms.' Psychology is the scientific study of how people behave, think, and feel. It investigates the connections between feeling, thinking, and doing. The Psalms are God's infallible study of the connections between feeling, thinking, and doing. They explain, heal, and stimulate healthy thoughts, feelings, and actions.

Psalm 1 helped us develop happiness in Christ, Psalm 2 encouraged us to find courage in Christ, and Psalm three invites us to find peace in Christ.



What's our first step when we panic?



1. WHEN CHRISTIANS PANIC THEY PRAY (1-4)

David's Panic

David's enemies were many and murderous. So much so that he cried out. **"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" (1-2).**

When he saw how many enemies he was facing and heard their plans to destroy him, alarm, horror, and dread gripped him. He felt the external pressure of his terrifying enemies, and the internal squeeze of his terrified emotions.

David's Prayer

He panicked, but he also prayed. He brought his panic to God. He didn't hide it, try to minimize it, or put a brave face on it. No, this courageous warrior was vulnerable and transparent before God and others (as seen by his honest prayer to God, and his writing of this prayer as a song for God's people).

Having laid bare his raw feelings of weakness and fear, he reminded himself of who the God was that he was praying to: **"But you, O Lord, are a shield about me, my glory, and the lifter of my head" (3).**

However many his enemies were, and however many attacks they made on him, God's shield was wider and thicker. Wherever he looked, between him and his enemies, by faith he saw God's 360 degree shield. Ashamed of his fear, he had no personal glory left, but God was his glory instead. Therefore, instead of walking about with his head down, he could lift his head high.

The result? **"I cried aloud to the Lord, and he answered me from his holy hill" (3-4).** We'll look at God's answer shortly, but for now just notice, God loves to hear and answer panicky prayers.

CHANGE YOUR STORY WITH GOD'S STORY

Vulnerability is strength. Vulnerability is human. Vulnerability is exposing ourselves in such a way that we risk criticism and failure. It's allowing ourselves to be seen and known as we really are. It is not weakness. Quite the reverse. Such emotional nakedness is the epitome of extraordinary courage and the heart of all meaningful relationships. Relationships are impossible without vulnerability. Vulnerability is the core of relationships.

Brenne Brown's decades of research into vulnerability found that "vulnerability is the cradle of the emotions and experiences that we crave. Vulnerability is the birthplace of love, belonging, joy, courage, empathy, and creativity. It is the source of hope, empathy, accountability, and authenticity. If we want greater clarity in our purpose or deeper and more meaningful spiritual lives, vulnerability is the path."

Vulnerability is Christ-like. This is not just a Psalm of David, but a Psalm of Christ. He experienced anxiety and panic (without sin) and didn't hide it, but brought it to God in public prayer (Matt. 27:46; Luke 22:44; Heb 5:7). No one has ever been more vulnerable than Christ on the cross. He was laid bare in every way. But look at what such courageous vulnerability accomplished. His heroic vulnerability connects us with him and with God.

Victory is assured. When we are at our most vulnerable, God's shield is most impenetrable and God's answers are most assured.

PANIC SHOULD LEAD TO PRAYER NOT DESPAIR



What happens when God answers our prayer?



2. WHEN CHRISTIANS GET PEACE THEY PRAISE (4-9)

David's Sleep

What happened when David prayed? Instead of panic overwhelming him, peace overwhelmed him. **"I lay down and slept; I woke again, for the Lord sustained me (5).** The Lord removed paralyzing fear and replaced it with refreshing sleep. God's provision of sleep was part of his answer to David's panic. A good night's sleep changes our perspective and psychology. When he opens his eyes, his enemies are still there, but his fears have diminished, even vanished. **"I will not be afraid of many thousands of people, who have set themselves against me all around"** (6). Instead of looking ahead and seeing darkness and death, he now saw hope and a future.

David's Salvation

Earlier his enemies had claimed, "There is no salvation for David," and David seemed to agree. But now he prays for salvation with confidence: (7).

The threat remains but peace has now replaced panic. Full of panic before, he is now full of prayer. Full of peace, he is now also full of praise. **"Salvation belongs to the Lord; your blessing be on your people!"** (8). He praises God for his sovereign salvation and special blessings, especially the blessed cycle of Panic > Prayer > Peace > Praise.

CHANGE YOUR STORY WITH GOD'S STORY

Seek God's gift of sleep. A couple of years ago, I had two prolapsed discs in my neck. I've never known such pain in all my life. I was on the strongest painkillers and steroids and yet hardly slept for two weeks. Although it was a physical problem it caused psychological problems. I've never known such depression, anxiety, and panic. It was only when sleeping pills were added to the concoction of meds that sleep returned and my emotional pain began to ease. I've never been so thankful for sleep in all my life. God uses sleep to give us peace of body, mind and soul. So let's accept his gift, use it as he intended, and thank him for it.

Seek God's gift of salvation. We may not be surrounded by physical enemies as David was, but we are surrounded by spiritual enemies (most of whom we cannot see). We are also invaded by spiritual enemies, our sins that seek to destroy us and that often cause us to collapse in despairing defeat. But following David, we pray, **"Arise, O Lord! Save me, O my God! For you strike all my enemies on the cheek; you break the teeth of the wicked."** And if we do, we will be able to praise God as David did: **"Salvation belongs to the Lord; your blessing be on your people!"**

We are not just singing of our salvation, but also of our Savior. We can hear him singing the first part of this Psalm in the Garden of Gethsemane, and the second in the Garden of the Tomb. "I lay down and slept (the tomb); I woke again, for the Lord sustained me" (the resurrection). "Salvation belongs to the Lord; your blessing be on your people!" (walking out of the tomb). Panic, prayer, peace, praise!

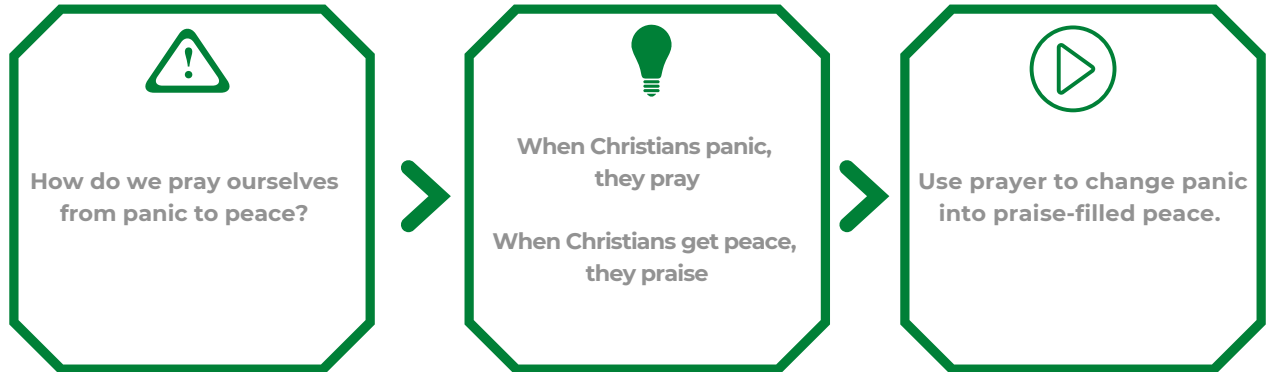
PEACE NOURISHES PRAISE
AND PRAISE NOURISHES PEACE



Hear God's Story > Change your story > Share your story > Change others' stories



CONCLUSION



PRAYER: My vulnerable Savior, help me to be vulnerable about my weaknesses so that I can be strengthened by prayer, peace, and praise. Amen.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. In what way has this Psalm changed your psychology?
2. Describe a time you felt anxiety or panic.
3. With whom and in what areas of your life can you learn to be more vulnerable?
4. How does lack of sleep affect you and what can you do to improve your use of God's gift of sleep?
5. What is your greatest spiritual enemy and how do you pray against it?
6. What did you learn about Jesus in this Psalm?

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