

## RECOVERING THE LANGUAGE OF PRAYER

### Psalm 3

#### INTRO/RECAP

Psalms 1 and 2 = the two pillars that form the gateway into this book. Psalms 1 and 2 remind us that when we pray, we're to always look back and remember what God has done and look forward in hope for what God seeks to accomplish in/through our lives through His Son.

#### THE THIRD PSALM: THREE QUICK OBSERVATIONS

1. Psalms Are Often Rooted in Historical Narrative.

*"A Psalm of David, when he fled from Absalom his son."* (Read 2 Samuel 13-18.)

2. Psalms Are Sung and Recited In Community.

*"The church prays the Psalms in solidarity with the great cloud of witnesses that has gone before us. They were the prayers of Jesus before they were ever ours, and now we pray those prayers with Him."*

—Dr. Mike McNichols

3. The Texture of Psalm Literature is Poetic.

*"We don't read and write poetry because it's cute. We read and write poetry because we are members of the human race. And the human race is filled with passion. Medicine, law, business, engineering, these are noble pursuits and necessary to sustain life. But poetry, beauty, romance, love; this is what we stay alive for."*

—Prof Keating, from Dead Poets Society

#### THE BASIC LANGUAGE OF THE PSALMS IS "FIRST LANGUAGE" PRAYER

Prayer is primal, first language. <sup>1</sup>*O Lord, how many are my foes! Many are rising against me; <sup>2</sup>many are saying of my soul, "There is no salvation for him in God."*

First language:

Second language:

Third language:

Much of the prayers we hear in church are second and third language prayer. Yet, in many of our favorite songs to God, which language do we use?

*"I only pray when I am in trouble. But I am in trouble all the time, and so I pray all the time."*

—Jewish-American author & Nobel-prize winner Isaac Bashevis Singer

#### THROUGH PRAYER WE BECOME WHO WE ARE

Eugene Peterson: *"According to the Psalms, the primary use of prayer is not for expressing ourselves but for becoming ourselves—and we cannot do that alone."*

### Psalm 3:

[A Psalm of David, when he fled from Absalom his son.]

*O LORD, how many are my foes!  
Many are rising against me;  
2 many are saying of my soul,  
“There is no salvation for him in God.” Selah  
3 But you, O LORD, are a shield about me,  
my glory, and the lifter of my head.  
4 I cried aloud to the LORD,  
and he answered me from his holy hill. Selah  
5 I lay down and slept;  
I woke again, for the LORD sustained me.  
6 I will not be afraid of many thousands of people  
who have set themselves against me all around.  
7 Arise, O LORD!  
Save me, O my God!  
For you strike all my enemies on the cheek;  
you break the teeth of the wicked.  
8 Salvation belongs to the LORD;  
your blessing be on your people! Selah*

### **Questions for personal reflection and/or discussion:**

1. Of the Psalms, which are your favorite and why? Has there even been a time when you thought about using your favorite Psalms as a part of your prayer life? How might this be done?
2. How do the Psalms invite you to pray in ways you might not have prayed before? How might praying the Psalms be an good companion to the prayers that we form on our own?
3. According to Eugene Peterson, there is “first language prayer” and “second” and “third language” prayer. First language “primal” prayer is the language of personal intimacy and relationship. It’s the first language we “utter” as we cry for help and comfort or we coo at the sight of a loving parent. First language prayer is the prayer of trust. Why is our most basic form of prayer “first language” prayer? How might we return to this form of prayer in our personal lives?
4. If you can, either speak or write a prayer, using the words of first language prayer.