

# When It Seems Like Everyone Is Against You

## Psalm 3

By Phillip G. Kayser at DCC on 1-12-2014

### Introduction

William Carey is often thought of as a tough guy that wasn't fazed much of anything. People portray him as calmly facing the the persecution that he received from the Hindus, from the British East India Company (which gave missionaries huge opposition), or the opposition that he faced from authorities in England, and even from fellow missionaries. There is no doubt about the fact that he's an amazing example of courage and tenacity in the face of opposition. But we would be hugely mistaken if we thought that he wasn't emotionally fazed by overwhelming opposition. In his journals you see that he was. He was a human just like you and I are, and he was subject to hurt, disappointment, and on occasion with overwhelming sadness. He had to fight against that. One time he wrote to himself, "O that I had... an earthly friend on whom I could unbosom my soul."<sup>1</sup> He felt lonely and discouraged from all the opposition. And you can hear a bit of that "O!" in the heart of David in this Psalm. David appears to have written this Psalm sometime on the day of his big battle with Absalom. He had just discovered that week that his son and his closest friend had betrayed him. And now the whole nation seems ready to kill him.

And so the question that we want to look at today is, "What do you do when it seems like everyone is against you?" Some people (like a gal that we will call Katie) go to drugs in order to deal with the pain. She said,

*I was in a lot of trouble with the law. Basically, every time I got out of jail I'd go back in. I felt like I had no friends. I felt like everyone was against me. I didn't trust anyone. Didn't really feel anything, besides pain. And my family was disconnected from me and I just felt like there was no hope."*

Now, it's true that sometimes we can feel that way when there aren't good reasons to feel that way. We can lose perspective when we get depressed. But this haunting feeling that David expresses in the first two verses is a feeling of loneliness that many Christians have felt down through history. What do you do when it seems like everyone is against you?

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<sup>1</sup> Mary Drewery, *William Carey: A Biography* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1978), p. 74.

## I. Don't ignore the problem (title – v. 2)

### A. Evaluate the true severity of the problem (vv. 1-2)

#### 1. He saw the numbers

Well, first of all, you don't ignore the problem. David was evaluating the true severity of the problem. There are times when we do that that we come to realize that things are really not quite as bad as we feel that they are. But in David's case, they really were bad. And we don't want to ignore the severity of the problem or we won't take proper solutions. Verses 1-2:

**Psa. 3:1** LORD, how they have increased who trouble me! Many *are* they who rise up against me.

**Psa. 3:2** Many *are* they who say of me, “*There is no help for him in God.*” Selah

First, he looks at the numbers against him, and they really do look bad. David is not naïve. Nor is he exaggerating the problem, like we are sometimes prone to do. He realized that his enemies were overwhelmingly numerous.

And you might think, “Well, I can't relate to that. I've only got a few people against me.” Now, in our culture wars, that's not entirely true. But even apart from that, there are at least enemies unseen that rise up against you. And I think every one of you can take this Psalm on your lips at some point in your life as you feel the pressures of demonic attack. In Ethiopia we felt the heaviness of the demonic everywhere we went. But in the last fifty years, that demonic oppression has become much more common in America. And too many Christians don't understand why everything is going wrong with their lives. It doesn't make sense to them. But it doesn't make sense because they have not factored in these unseen enemies. It's true that they have fought successfully against their flesh and false worldview, but they have never even thought about fighting against Satan and his trillions of demonic warriors. I have read the Puritans on demons, and I am convinced that they are much closer to the truth in seeing the numbers of enemies that each one of us has to deal with.

#### 2. He saw the dangers

So David saw numbers. He also saw the dangers. Why else would he flee? There are times to fight and there are times to flee. Paul told Timothy to flee sexual temptation. Timothy needed to flee because there are contexts in which you will fall if you stick around. And David certainly fled from

Absalom because he knew he could not win without regrouping on the other side of the Jordan. So he recognized the dangers.

Too many Christians fail to do this with their own enemies, whether human or demonic. When was the last time that you did battle with demons? If you can't remember, then I would have to say that you do not really see those demons as being very dangerous. Paul was so conscious of the demonic behind his human adversaries, that comparatively speaking he was able to say, "we do not wrestle against flesh and blood." Now, there was flesh and blood that was coming against him, and he dealt with the flesh and blood issues. But ultimately he saw that his preaching to, arguing with, and fleeing from human enemies would not be successful if he didn't also wrestle with the demonic that was stirring up his flesh and blood enemies. Unfortunately, flesh and blood is the only thing that some Christians deal with. Know your enemy. Know how dangerous the enemy is. The enemy in America, both flesh and blood and the demonic, is very dangerous.

### **3. He saw the strategies of the enemy**

And know your enemies' strategies. We saw that one of the strategies that Absalom had used against David was propaganda. And in verse 2 David recounts one of the statements circulating about him. Since David had sinned so massively, the rumor was being circulated, "There is no help for him in God." They were claiming that God was against David, had struck David with sickness, and that David was dying. And David was quite aware of what was being said.

#### ***B. Take prudent actions (title)***

And the title of this Psalm indicates that he took prudent action. It says,

**Psa. 3:0** A Psalm of David when he fled from Absalom his son.

He didn't just passively wait for God to bail him out. And we too must take actions when we feel overwhelmed. It may mean fleeing to God for strength and renewal. It may mean getting counsel, like David did from Hushai and others. It may mean regrouping. It may mean making plans. But when we are overwhelmed, we cannot crawl into a hole and hope that the problems will go away. Rarely will our problems disappear on their own. So the first thing we see in this Psalm is that David didn't ignore the problem, but rather took prudent actions.

## II. Don't give up hope (Title – v. 4)

### A. *Bring your problems to the Lord (title-v. 8)*

But there was a second thing that David modeled to us. When everyone seems to be against you, don't give up hope. First, bring your problems to the Lord in prayer. I know that Gary and I harp on this all the time, but make prayer to God your first response. This whole Psalm was a prayer to God, and of course, David wrote at least seventeen Psalms on this two or three day period. He took prayer seriously, and since Joab and the other men refused to let him fight, he had plenty of time to give prayer support for his army. That whole day of fighting was probably entirely engaged in prayer.

### B. *Learn to find security in the Lord (v. 3a)*

Second, learn to find security in the Lord. Verse 3 begins,

Psa. 3:3 But You, O LORD, *are* a shield for me...

It's not that he *wishes* God would be a shield yet feeling that God has let him down. No. This is a total affirmation of faith that no one can harm him with God as his shield. He is standing in God; he has learned to find security in God. And God is the best shield we could possibly have. But too frequently we fear, and that fear drives away faith, and since it is impossible to please God without faith, a faithless Christian does not have God shielding him. So David is making an affirmation of faith that he cannot feel, does not make sense, and that he cannot see. We aren't told if David had to fight to keep his spirit believing that God is indeed a shield for him. From the first two verses, I suspect that verse 3 was a fight to say. He was preaching to himself. He was fighting against his feelings of hopelessness, despair, fear, and other faith killers. He was pressing into the Lord and insisting that he was going to believe the Lord and not the doubts that Satan might have been suggesting. But in any case, he had learned through the affirmations of faith to find security in the Lord.

### C. *Let God lift your spirits (v. 3b)*

The second half of verse 3 shows that he had learned how to get his spirits lifted in the Lord. It says,

... My glory and the One who lifts up my head.

When you are feeling downcast, your head tends to go down, and commentators say that when God lifts up your head, He has lifted up your

spirits and given you joy. And it is David's inner communion with God that enables even his body to respond with joy. The Puritan, Richard Sibbes, said on this verse:

God will have the body partake with the soul – as in matters of grief, so in matters of joy; the lanthorn shines in the light of the candle within.

In other words, he is saying that as our spirits by faith lay hold of God, it has an impact upon our body. Our bodies tend to drag us down when we get depressed, and we've got to resist that. Our spirit must lead our body, and not vice versa. We must strive violently against our flesh's temptations to give up and say, "No. I will not call God a liar by doubting. God is with me, and if God is with me, who can be against me? I am not going to give up." There are times when we need to subdue the natural impulses of our body and force our bodies to focus on God rather than the problem. And when our spirit rules our body in that way, our bodies do come around and we gradually feel the joy returning.

There have been countless times when I have physically felt the hope and joy return to my body as I verbally insisted that God is indeed my glory and the lifter of my head. Spurgeon had a fine one-sentence comment on this verse. He said, "What a divine trio of mercies is contained in this verse! – defence for the defenceless, glory for the despised, and joy for the comfortless."

#### ***D. Cry out to God, not man (v. 4a)***

Verse 4 gives yet another reason why David did not lose hope. It says,

**Psa. 3:4** I cried to the LORD with my voice...

It's hard for Westerners to do this. We have a tendency to make religion internal, private, and quiet. But if you remain quiet during times when you are tempted to abandon faith it will be much harder to maintain faith. You must force your body to affirm what your spirit wants to affirm. Paul says that the spirit is willing but the flesh is weak. The flesh is *the* weak link, and if you can force your flesh (in this case your mouth) to affirm what your spirit believes, you will find something remarkable happening. You will find the fear, despair, and hopelessness diminishing. It's just the way God made us. Our bodies and our spirits are so connected that one or the other will win out in the battle for faith. So, when you cry out aloud, it will affect your emotions, spirits, and even have an effect upon your bodies. There is a place for crying out aloud. And it's not just on issues of fear. It's also on issues of apathy. There are times when my mind wanders so much in

prayer and my body is so lethargic that I can't pray silently. If I do, I find myself praying for one minute and daydreaming for four, and I get frustrated with myself. There are times when I have to cry out to God with an audible voice to keep my prayer life going. And just so you don't think that is simply a Kayserism, let me quote Spurgeon on that phrase. (And I could quote many other godly teachers of the past who have said the same thing.) Spurgeon said,

Why doth he say, "with my voice?" Surely, silent prayers are heard. Yes, but good men often find that, even in secret, they pray better aloud than they do when they utter no vocal sound.

And I have certainly found this to be true. In fact, I pray aloud much more frequently when my hope is running low and when I am discouraged. It is one way in which I refuse to give in to discouragement. You may feel weird doing this at first – especially when you have to pray with vehemence against your flesh, but over time the benefits will be so profound that you will value this tip that David has given. It will be a huge help in your life.

#### ***E. Have faith that God has answered (v. 4b)***

And his statement of faith in verse 4 is the fifth way that David refused to lose hope. He said,

Psa. 3:4 I cried to the LORD with my voice, And He heard me from His holy hill.  
Selah

How could he say that God had heard him from his holy hill when the battle wasn't even over yet? Well, there are two possibilities, and I really think that they are both right – I think that they are always involved with each other. The first is that God gave him a sense that his prayer was already answered. And the second is that this was an expression of faith. I have many times been in continued prayer for something, and at some point it is as if God has flooded my soul with a recognition that I didn't need to pray about it anymore; that He had answered my prayer affirmatively. I can't explain it, other than that it is an assurance of the indwelling Holy Spirit that my prayers have been answered and I can now start rejoicing and thanking God for the answer. I haven't seen the answer yet, but I have it. And I start thanking God just like David did, that He has heard me. And so both reasons can exist together.

So next time you feel like giving up and losing all hope, stop and take these steps. In fact, I probably should have commented on the Selah's, because they factor into it as well. There is controversy on exactly what they mean, but I believe they mean pause and reflect. It may even be a term for a

musical interlude while the singer pauses. But certainly it is appropriate to pause and reflect on how God is the answer to our hopeless situation.

### III. Don't lose sleep (vv. 5-6)

#### *A. Lie down and ask God to help you sleep (v. 5a with Ps. 127:2)*

So don't ignore the problem; don't give up hope; and thirdly, don't lose sleep. Verse 5 is a remarkable statement. It says,

**Psa. 3:5** I lay down [Well, that's not remarkable, but it says, "I lay down"] and slept; I awoke, for the LORD sustained me.

How can you sleep soundly when you are anxious about the next day's events? He slept the night before the battle. My tendency would have been to worry all night, and I still occasionally have insomnia because of worries. I have told you a number of times that worry and anxiety is my besetting sin. I think I have gained great victory over it, and most of my times of insomnia have nothing do with anxiety because I am rejoicing in the Lord in prayer and totally relaxed. But there are times when I do catch myself lying awake because of anxiety, and have to repent and take the immediate steps needed to conquer that sin. Commentators on other Psalms say that David must have struggled with insomnia because of his anxieties, yet in those Psalms you see David in the middle of the night taking actions to calm his spirits. Because David was successful in this Psalm in being totally peaceful despite every reason to be anxious, he doesn't mention wrestling with insomnia. But let me remind you again to go to Philippians 4. Some weeks ago I dealt with the steps for conquering anxiety given by the apostle Paul in Philippians 4. And those have sustained me wonderfully well. But if your sleep loss is because of anxiety, anger, bitterness, brooding, or other negative emotions, you need to get rid of them. You have to process through them. Don't lose sleep when everyone is against you.

#### *B. Sleep can sometimes be a barometer of our trust in God's sustaining grace (v. 5)*

Sleep can sometimes be a great barometer of our trust in God's sustaining grace. David said,

**Psa. 3:5** I lay down and slept; I awoke, for the LORD sustained me.

Thomas Watson (another Puritan pastor) said,

A good conscience [And I should stop there and say that a bad conscience can also be a factor in insomnia sometimes. But he says, "A good conscience"] can

sleep in the mouth of a cannon, may be shot at but never shot through; grace puts the soul into Christ, and there it is safe... as the dove in the ark.

He has a wonderful way of putting things. This wasn't simply a sleeping pill. This was sleep given by the Almighty. God can give us sleep, and He is actually sovereign in the giving of sleep and the taking away of sleep. It belongs to him, and we are just stewards of our sleep. Sometimes God wakes me up to pray, so there can be good reasons to have insomnia. Obviously, two nights before David couldn't sleep because he was fleeing for his life all night long. So I am not saying that all sleep loss is due to negative emotions. I'm just saying to be aware that this is often a factor.

And to those of you who are workaholics, this verse is a good reminder that sleep is not a waste of time. It is part of God's sustaining grace in our lives. Solomon said,

Psa. 127:2 *It is vain for you to rise up early, to sit up late, to eat the bread of sorrows: for so he giveth his beloved sleep.*

Sleep is a gift of God. And whenever He gives it, I am thankful.

***C. Resist fear and anxiety (v. 6). I.e., Absalom was not his only enemy.***

If you look at verse 6 you will see that David explicitly ties his sleep in with the fact that he had no anxiety or fear. It's remarkable. He says,

Psa. 3:6 *I will not be afraid of ten thousands of people Who have set themselves against me all around.*

Too frequently fear makes people worry at the same time that it keeps people from duty. And when it does that, it becomes cowardice. J. Oswald Chambers once said,

Courage is that quality of mind which enables men to encounter danger or difficulty with firmness, or without fear or depression of spirits... The highest degree of courage is seen in the person who is most fearful but refuses to capitulate to it.

Now, that kind of courage is great, but this goes even beyond that courage. This was a supernatural peace that God had given to David that didn't make sense from a purely human perspective. That's why Philippians 4:7 speaks of it as "the peace of God [it comes from God], which surpasses all understanding [in other words, you can't wrap your head around it; it doesn't make sense from a human perspective; and he goes on to say that this peace], will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus." And that word guard implies that it is protecting us from something invading. And



that's exactly what demons want to do. They want to invade our hearts with fear, frustration, bitterness, and other negative emotions. And when we take the steps given in Philippians, God's supernatural peace prevents that. It guards our hearts and minds.

#### **IV. Use a godly offense against the true enemy (vv. 6-8)**

##### ***A. Take courage (v. 6)***

So don't ignore the problem, don't give up hope, don't lose sleep, and fourthly, use a godly offense against the true enemy. After taking courage in verse 6, verse 7 begins to use the nuclear weapon of the imprecatory psalms. Some of David's Psalms have a lot more imprecations than this one, but hey, there's at least a small nuclear device in this Psalm.

##### ***B. Use the "nuclear weapon" of the imprecatory psalms where appropriate (v. 7). Notice six implications of this verse.***

Psa. 3:7 Arise, O LORD; Save me, O my God! For You have struck all my enemies on the cheekbone; You have broken the teeth of the ungodly.

This is David's call to battle, and the amazing thing about it is that David is authorized by inspiration to call God to battle. And because this was included in the Psalter, God has authorized us to call God to battle. That's almost breathtaking. It almost seems impertinent. Who are we to call God to anything?! We can understand God calling us to battle, but for God to authorize us to call Him to battle almost seems inappropriate. And it would be inappropriate if God didn't command us to do so. But that's exactly what Numbers 10:35 says. It commanded Israel to say before every battle,

"Rise up, O LORD! Let Your enemies be scattered, And let those who hate You flee before You."

We are calling God to arms. And there are at least six applications of this verse that I want to quickly share. They are not in your bulletin, but I believe they are important.

First, God is committed to spiritual war. And the great war that started between God and His angels and Satan and his angels in the garden of Eden will not end until God has gotten the complete victory in our planet. So God is committed to battling against everything that is wrong on planet earth. We must be convinced of that or we will never engage in spiritual battle with the enthusiasm that we must. God is committed to battle. We sometimes doubt that. We wonder where He is. But He is committed.

The second implication is that God commits us to warfare. He wants us to be so committed to His cosmic war that we will not be satisfied until every enemy is put under the feet of King Jesus. 1 Corinthians 15 says that He must remain at the right hand of a God until he has put all things under His feet. Are we committed to that proposition? We must be.

Third, God wants us to *initiate* many of these battles in His name. He doesn't want us to simply be a passive spectator of what God and angels are doing. In fact, Revelation 8 shows a complete silence and inactivity of angels while the church on earth is silent. The angels have swords and trumpets in hand, and they are raring to go into battle, but they are doing nothing until the prayers of the saints go up. And the moment the incense of our prayers is mixed with the prayers of Jesus and comes before the throne of the Father, the signal goes forth, the angels sound trumpet blast after trumpet blast, and God casts judgments on the earth which advance His kingdom. But the point is, that none of those amazing changes in history happens until the church initiates the battle through prayer. So that is the third logical deduction that we can get from this verse where David initiates and asks God to scatter His foes. And David initiates through both prayer and through action. But we must be initiators in this cosmic warfare, and not passive spectators. Now obviously God is the first initiator in His eternal counsels, the inspiration of the Scriptures, the work of Christ, giving the Holy Spirit, regenerating us, justifying us, sanctifying us, stirring our hearts up to pray this kind of prayer, giving us faith to battle, giving us the armor and the strength, etc., etc. He gives us everything. So in an ultimate sense we don't initiate anything. But God has ordained that we will have not if we ask not, and that we will have not if we act not. It's God alone who can prosper, but we must be initiators by faith and not be passive. Sometime read Philippians 2:12-13 and you will see that a God does not put divine sovereignty against human responsibility.

The fourth implication is that God does not want us to fight these battles on our own, but to depend upon His name and to depend upon His strength. Yes David's men were going to get out their slings, swords, javelins, war clubs, and other instruments of battle, but David realized that it was ultimately God alone who makes the difference in the wars on planet earth. And so he says,

**Psa. 3:7** Arise, O LORD; Save me, O my God! For You have struck all my enemies on the cheekbone; You have broken the teeth of the ungodly.

The fifth implication is that it is appropriate for us to sing God's curses on the enemies of God and His church. We must use them with care,

because they are powerful weapons and must be used Biblically. And we know from 2 Samuel 18 that David hoped that Absalom would convert and receive the curses in Christ and be saved. But if we are committed to war, we must come into agreement with God's judgments against everything that stands against His throne - not our judgments, but God's judgments. In the book of Revelation, the reason the saints overcome the dragon and also overcome the persecution of humans is because they rejoice in God's judgments and come into agreement with God's judgments. They call for God's judgments. The church in America will not get anywhere if it continues to be a bunch of mild mannered people, teaching other mild mannered people, how to become more mild mannered. The book of Revelation is a War Manual that teaches us how to win the battle against Satan. And one of the essential components of winning is coming into 100% agreement with God's curses upon His enemies, and being willing to join with the saints of heaven and other saints on earth in singing the War Psalms. Jesus did. The apostles did. Just look at how the book of Revelation uses music in war, and I think you will be shocked on how important it is.

And the last implication is that we should pray these prayers in faith that God will answer. Notice that verse 7 is looking to the future in the first half of the verse because the battle hadn't begun yet, but he used the past tense for the second half of the verse. Because he sees it in faith, it is almost as if it is already done - similar to Jesus being the Lamb slain from before the foundation of the world. He said, "For You have struck all my enemies on the cheekbone; You have broken the teeth of the ungodly." In other words, by faith David was convinced that because he and his men had sung this Psalm in faith, that God would do it. Is that presumptuous? No, not at all.

I won't go into this in depth, but the New Testament says that the Psalms are the prayers of Christ. He inspired them. The preinarnate Son if God inspired them. So they are His prayers. Second, it says that the Father always hears Christ's prayers when they are offered up. And third, Hebrews says that Jesus is only willing to sing these Psalms in the midst of the brethren. In other words, He is only willing to offer up these prayers to the Father when the church is willing to take His prayers on their own lips and come into agreement with Jesus. Can you see the importance of using the imprecatory Psalms? If we sing them in faith, then Christ sings them in the midst of the church, and the prayers of Christ are always answered by the Father. That's why I call these nuclear weapons. So when we sing this Psalm at the close of the service, apply it in your minds to the enemies around the

world who are seeking to destroy Christ and His kingdom (both visible and invisible) and believe that the Father delights in answering Jesus' prayers. He is the second David.

***C. Be totally confident that if God is for you, who can be against you (v. 8)***

Finally, be totally confident that if God is for you, who can be against you? Verse 8 says,

***Psa. 3:8*** Salvation *belongs* to the LORD. Your blessing *is* upon Your people.  
Selah

Salvation from America's ills does not belong to the Republican Party, the Democratic Party, the Constitution Party, or the Christian Liberty Party, or to any man. Salvation belongs to the LORD. And it is the Lord's blessing that we should desire above anything else.

But there is something that Revelation 7:10 does with this verse that sends shivers down my spine. It quotes this verse as being on the lips of the church, and the angels respond to the church's use of this verse by saying, "Amen!" and coming into total agreement with the spirit of this Psalm and being part of the advancement of God's kingdom on earth. And why wouldn't the angels say "Amen!" to this Psalm when it is the prayer of Jesus?

But the situation in the first century was almost identical to the situation under David. When the book of Revelation was written, the church was a tiny persecuted minority. But they end up being described in Revelation as a great multitude which no one could number, of all nations, tribes, peoples, and tongues. So in the last book of the Bible God was reminding the first century Christians that even though it seemed like everyone was against them, and even though it seemed like they were about to be wiped out by Israel and by Rome, that they needed to look beyond the physical persecution and see the spiritual reasons. They needed to see that there was a great warfare for the souls of men, and that they had awesome power in confronting those spiritual demons and taking over strongholds in the name of Christ. Amen?

Revelation is a book of comfort for the church, and it tells us the final result: God wins. The book of Revelation is sort of like a battle cry for those who are willing to go into the fray of spiritual warfare. I hope to preach on that book when we are done with the life of David. It is not intended as a private study about irrelevant things. The book of Revelation is a

commitment on the part of God to fight for those who fight His battles. And so is this Psalm. God does not forsake His own. He recognizes that we are sinful and He cleanses us. He recognizes that we are weak and He strengthens us. He recognizes that we feel defeated, and He gives us the victory in Christ. But we must initiate by faith and refuse to give in to despair.

### **Conclusion**

So if you are feeling like everyone is against you, I would urge you first of all to not ignore the problem. There may be something in you and in them that needs to be dealt with. Our own sins can make us powerless against the enemy. One of my dad's fellow missionaries, Tommy Titcom, had this illustrated in his life very visibly. There was a group of Nigerians that was levitating a woman off the ground with demonic power. He walked up and sought to cast the demon out. The demons grabbed him by the throat and and threw him back several feet. He was shocked that demons had that power over him, and he asked "Why?" He had never had that happen to him before. The a Holy Spirit immediately pointed to a sin that he had refused to confess. He confessed it to God and promised to resolve it later, and he immediately had God's power to resist the demonic and cast the demon out. So don't ignore the problems. Deal with them whether the problems are in you or in others.

But I also urge you to not give up hope, to not lose sleep and to go on the offensive with a faith that God will use your battles to advance the cosmic war that is predestined to win all of planet earth for His glory. Can you say Amen? Let's pray.

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### Introduction

- I. Don't ignore the problem (title – v. 2)
  - A. Evaluate the true severity of the problem (vv. 1-2)
    1. He saw the numbers
    2. He saw the dangers
    3. He saw the strategies of the enemy
  
  - B. Take prudent actions (title)
  
- II. Don't give up hope (Title – v. 4)
  - A. Bring your problems to the Lord (title-v. 8)
  - B. Learn to find security in the Lord (v. 3a)
  - C. Let God lift your spirits (v. 3b)
  - D. Cry out to God, not man (v. 4a)
  - E. Have faith that God has answered (v. 4b)
  
- III. Don't lose sleep (vv. 5-6)
  - A. Lie down and ask God to help you sleep (v. 5a with Ps. 127:2)
  - B. Sleep can sometimes be a barometer of our trust in God's sustaining grace (v. 5)
  - C. Resist fear and anxiety (v. 6). I.e., Absalom was not his only enemy.
  
- IV. Use a godly offense against the true enemy (vv. 6-8)
  - A. Take courage (v. 6)
  - B. Use the “nuclear weapon” of the imprecatory psalms where appropriate (v. 7).  
Notice six implications of this verse.
  - C. Be totally confident that if God is for you, who can be against you (v. 8)

### Conclusion