

Deliverance Requested
Psalm 3, 35, 53, 59, 64, 79, 83, 140, 144
People of the Word
by Dellena Ludwig

Each of us have faced times when we needed help. It could have been something as simple as opening a jar or finding where we put our keys; or as serious as a dire illness, financial crisis or an accident. There are times when we just need someone else to help us. The difficulty comes because we don't know when to ask for help or who to ask. Who is your "go to" in those times? Who do you ask for deliverance?

We have probably all heard the old joke about the man who had to climb up on his roof because of rising flood waters. He began praying for God to deliver him. A neighbor came paddling up in a canoe and said, "Come on! I'll get us both out of here!" But the man refused to go, and the water continued to rise.

He prayed again, "Oh, God please save me!" Next a rescue team in a rubber raft came by to help him. But the man refused to go, and the water continued to rise.

The man prayed again, "Oh God please help me!" Next a police helicopter spotted him and offered to air-lift him out. But the man refused to go.

Finally the flood overwhelmed his perch on the chimney and the floods swept him away. But the man was a Christian and found himself standing before the Lord in heaven. He asked God, "Why didn't you save me? I was praying for Your deliverance!" The Lord looked at this man with a sad smile and said, "Well I sent your neighbor, the rescue team, and the police. What more did you want!"

Today our topic in Psalms is Deliverance Requested. We will examine in these Psalms how the Psalmist Requested Deliverance, showed Reliance on God for His Deliverance, and the Result of God's Deliverance for His people. Let's begin by looking at the types of deliverance God's people requested.

David was a soldier. He led the armies of Israel for most of his life. He faced giants as a teenager, the armies of enemy nations as a soldier and fellow soldiers who were sent to kill him. So, many of his requests for deliverance were because of enemies he faced.

In Psalm 144 David was preparing for war against an enemy nation. His requests were like many soldiers who consider the fears of the coming battle. He began, "Praise be to the Lord my Rock, who trains my hands for war, my fingers for battle." [Psalm 144:1] Before the battle every good soldier needs to train to use their weapons; repeating their practice, their aim and shooting over and over until the motions become automatic muscle memory.

David was at the point where he realized that God had indeed honed these skills and he was ready for battle. So he thanked the Lord for helping him be ready for battle.

But battle is also unpredictable. David also requested that the Lord would use His weapons also, during the coming battle. In verses 6 and 7 he asked the Lord, "Send forth lightening and scatter the enemy; shoot your arrows and rout them. Reach down your hand from on high; deliver me and rescue me from the mighty waters, from the hands of foreigners." [Psalm 144:6,7]

Now today, unless you are enlisted in the armed forces, you probably don't feel any need for the kind of help David requested in these verses. However, we do face enemies of another kind in our suburban life style. Paul reminded us that we do have a common enemy. How are we to prepare for this battle? "Put on the full armor of God, so that you can take your stand against the devil's schemes." [Ephesians 6:11]

Peter gave a similar warning about this enemy: "Be alert and of sober mind. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour." [1 Peter 5:8]

In the next verse, Peter stated the spiritual muscle practice we need to use to prepare for Satan's attacks: "Resist him, standing firm in the faith, because you know that the family of believers throughout the world is undergoing the same kind of sufferings." [1 Peter 5:9]

We face an enemy that seeks to destroy us. He sends his soldiers against us daily. Sometimes it is a frontal attack. He may send robbers or violence into our neighborhood. But most often he uses temptation in our weakest moments to get us to give in, rather than resist him. He tries to wear us down rather than “standing firm in the faith.” We must have help to fight this foe. So we ask for deliverance.

The Psalmist, Asaph, also recognized that the enemies he faced were prowling about. In Psalm 83 he called on God when he found enemies plotting against Israel. “See how your enemies growl, how your foes rear their heads, with cunning they conspire against your people; they plot against those you cherish. ‘Come,’ they say, ‘let us destroy them as a nation, so that Israel’s name is remembered no more.’” [Psalm 83:2-4]

Our enemy is always at work to “seek and destroy” God’s people. Sometimes Satan is overt with his temptations. But sometimes he is sneaky, using his soldiers dressed as news reporters, or entertainment actors. We are attacked by warped arguments and lies that tell us our faith should be a private thing.

Keep it to yourself. Stay at home when you feel like praying. Keep silent when you remember a Bible lesson that could help someone else; we don’t want to hear it. By conspiring to make you fearful, the enemy thinks he will be free to pillage and destroy people without resistance. We need to ask for deliverance.

David also was dismayed by the covert plots of his sneaky enemies. Being a man of war David had many enemies. Psalm 140 is David’s prayer against them. His request to God was, “Rescue me, Lord, from evildoers; protect me from the violent, who devise evil plans in their hearts and stir up war every day.” [Psalm 140:1,2]

These evildoers made plans to entrap David beginning with spreading rumors about him. In verse 3 he cried out to the Lord about what he had heard, “They make their tongues as sharp as a serpent’s; the poison of vipers is on their lips.” “Those who surround me proudly rear their heads; may the mischief of their lips engulf them.” [Psalm 140:3,9]

People can be vicious when they spread rumors about others. God hates lying tongues giving false witness about others which we studied in Proverbs 6:16-19. David dealt with lies and rumors spread by those he had counted as friends and work partners.

In Psalm 35 he requested that the Lord would contend with these enemies. “Ruthless witnesses come forward; they question me on things I know nothing about. They repay evil for good and leave me like one bereaved.” [Psalm 35:11,12] It is devastating when someone we counted as a friend betrays us and accuses us of things we did not do. We need to ask for deliverance.

In Psalm 3 David faced these same false accusations thrown by someone in his own family! 2 Samuel 15 records how David’s son, Absalom plotted to take the throne by turning the people’s loyalty away from David and toward himself. He told people who came seeking help from David that the King had no time or inclination to help them. However, if he were king, he would certainly have time to help.

After four years of this subterfuge, Absalom moved to Hebron and gathered an army to declare himself king. David fled Jerusalem in tears and took his family and loyal army and servants with him. He was dismayed that so many people who had been his subjects would now turn against him. And now it looked like he would have to fight a war against his own son.

In verses 1 and 2 of Psalm 3 David called on the Lord. “Lord, how many are my foes! How many rise up against me! Many are saying of me, ‘God will not deliver him.’”

We also may feel at times that we are outnumbered, out equipped, and out maneuvered by our enemies. It is overwhelming when people we trusted and counted as friends, or even family turn against us. So what can we do but cry for help. We need His deliverance.

David cried for the Lord’s help. Psalm 3:4-6 reads, “I call out to the Lord, and he answers me from his holy mountain. I lie down and sleep; I wake again, because the Lord sustains me. I will not fear though tens of thousands assail me on every side.”

I don’t know about you, but I have spent many sleepless nights worried about what was happening around me. I kept tossing all those fearful “what ifs” around in my head, trying to out-think

my problems. But I found that I was going over the same thoughts again and again and sleep was not to be had.

How could David feel so secure that he could sleep believing that tens of thousands were waiting to attack him? He gives us the answer in these Psalms. Let's read about his Reliance on God to help him.

Psalm 3:3 "But you Lord, are a shield around me, my glory, the One who lifts my head high."

Psalm 35:10 "My whole being will exclaim, 'Who is like you Lord? You rescue the poor from those too strong for them, the poor and needy from those who rob them.'"

Psalm 53:2 "God looks down from heaven on all mankind to see if there are any who understand, any who seek God."

Psalm 59:16 "But I will sing of your strength, in the mourning I will sing of your love; for you are my fortress, my refuge in times of trouble."

Psalm 64:10 "The righteous will rejoice in the Lord and take refuge in him; all the upright in heart will glory in him!"

Psalm 79:9 "Help us, God our Savior, for the glory of your name; deliver us and forgive our sins for your name's sake."

Psalm 83:18 "Let them know that you, whose name is the Lord – that you alone are the Most High over all the earth."

Psalm 140:7 "Sovereign Lord, my strong deliverer, you shield my head in the day of battle."

Psalm 144:1,2 "Praise be to the Lord my Rock, who trains my hands for war, my fingers for battle. He is my loving God and my fortress, my stronghold and my deliverer, my shield, in whom I take refuge, who subdues peoples under me."

What do we need when we are in a battle? What do we want for protection?

- We need preparation, so we follow our trainer: "who trains my hands for war, my fingers for battle."
- We need a defensible position: "He is my loving God and my fortress, my stronghold and my deliverer."
- We need good equipment: God is "my shield, in whom I take refuge, who subdues peoples under me." (Psalm 144:1&2)

And most important of all,

- We need a Deliverer we can trust and follow: "He is my loving God." "Sovereign Lord, my strong deliverer" (Psalm 140:7) "you alone are the Most High over all the earth." (Psalm 83:18) "our Savior" (Psalm 79:9)

We know we can "rejoice in the Lord and take refuge in him" (Psalm 64:10) He is our "strength, in the morning I will sing of your love; for you are my fortress, my refuge in times of trouble." (Psalm 59:16)

God is aware of our problems because "God looks down from heaven on all mankind." (Psalm 53:2) "My whole being will exclaim, 'Who is like you Lord? You rescue.'" (Psalm 35:10)

Psalm 3:3 brings us back to placing our reliance on the Lord Himself. "But you Lord, are a shield around me, my glory, the One who lifts my head high." When our Captain is the Lord God Almighty, we know we can have reliance on Him. We can trust that He will lead us through the darkest battle. He will protect us, because He loves us. He can save us and give us the victory over all our fears and troubles.

How, then should we react when troubles hit us full force? Like our memory verse says, we should call on God! "Deliver me from my enemies, O God, protect me from those who rise up against me." [Psalm 59:1] We cry for deliverance from the Lord. He is the only One who can deliver us.

However, unlike the man on the roof during the flood, we must be willing to accept His deliverance! Many times we try to help ourselves first. We embrace those sleepless nights because we hope that if we think it through, we can figure how to get out of this predicament by ourselves, or with our own resources.

Is it only after many sleepless nights, that yield no answer, that we are finally willing to ask the Lord to deliver us? The unbelieving world tends to try to handle everything on their own, and in their pride may never come to the realization that God desires to deliver them. Determine now that you will "get into that boat" when the Lord answers your cry for deliverance.

However, sometimes the Lord chooses to have us join in the battle as His means of deliverance. God has equipped us with His spiritual armor. But He never intended us to do battle without Him at our side.

Ephesians 6 talks about the armor of God. Verse 11 mentions that we are to put on this armor “so that you can take your stand against the devil’s schemes.” Verse 13 reminds us, “Therefore put on the full armor of God, so that when the day of evil comes, you may be able to stand your ground.”

Notice that when we are equipped, we are to stand. It is God our Captain who does the battle. Jesus told His disciples that He would give them the Holy Spirit who provides our armor. Then He assured them as their Deliverer, “I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world.” [John 16:33]

So when we face enemies, when we find ourselves accused falsely, when enemies plot against us, when we are overwhelmed by temptations that threaten to drown out our faith – cry to our Lord God for deliverance. He is well able to save us, shield us, be our refuge and fight the battle for us. He equips us and asks us to stand in the faith that He alone has already overcome the trouble we face.

Then, when we have asked Him to help us, what should we do? Scripture has an answer for that too. Our Response must be reliance on His faithfulness; knowing He will handle it. Psalms 3:4 reveals the confidence of the writer. “I call out to the Lord, and he answers me from his holy mountain.” [Psalm 3:4] David was not in fear of his enemies because he knew God heard his request and would answer him. David could sleep in peace and arise to face his foes the next morning in that confidence.

David could see the victory before the battle, because of the Lord God’s faithfulness to help when he was unjustly accused. In Psalm 35:7 he said, “May ruin overtake them by surprise – may the net they hid entangle them, may they fall into the pit, to their ruin. Then my soul will rejoice in the Lord and delight in his salvation. My whole being will exclaim, ‘Who is like you, Lord? You rescue the poor from those too strong for them, the poor and needy from those who rob them.’” [Psalm 35:7-10]

David went on to say, “I will give you thanks in the great assembly; among the throngs I will praise you.” [Psalm 35:18] One of the most important things we can do as believers is to pray for each other in our times of distress. But equally important is our response to His deliverance.

When we see His faithful answer to our prayers, we should respond with praise. Hearing how God has answered our prayers builds our faith to trust Him with our next battle. Praising Him together builds our corporate strength to face our next challenge.

In Psalm 35:27 David encouraged praise of God, among those who trusted God would answer his prayer. “May those who delight in my vindication shout for joy and gladness; may they always say, ‘The Lord be exalted, who delights in the well-being of his servant.’” [Psalm 35:27]

David himself wrote many of these Psalms to exalt the Lord before the people. He stood as their example of giving praise to God for His deliverance. Psalm 35 goes on to say in verse 28, “My tongue will proclaim your righteousness, your praises all day long.” When you turn your problems over to the Lord, do you find yourself singing a song of praise all day long? That is the praise God deserves and His praise encourages you as you sing it too.

Our praise can even be in anticipation of God’s deliverance. In Psalm 59 David’s enemies were still lurking about and stirring up dissent among the people during the night. But in response to their rabble rousing, David anticipated God’s deliverance. He chose the way of praise. “But I will sing of your strength, in the morning I will sing of your love; for you are my fortress, my refuge in times of trouble.” [Psalm 59:16]

In Psalm 64:9 and 10 David realized that even unbelieving people who hear of how God has answered prayer for His people will think about His greatness. “All people will fear; they will proclaim the works of God and ponder what he has done. The righteous will rejoice in the Lord and take refuge in him; all the upright in heart will glory in him.” [Psalm 64:9,10]

Praising God for what He has done will spread faith to the next generation. “Then we your people, the sheep of your pasture, will praise you forever; from generation to generation we will proclaim your praise.” [Psalm 79:13] Your children will learn by your example to face adversity with praise when they see that you always turn to God this way.

After all, God desires to save all people. Paul described this process in Romans. “How, then, can they call on the one they have not believed in? And how can they believe in the one of whom they have not heard? And how can they hear without someone preaching to them?” [Romans 10:14]

You may not consider yourself a preacher. But your testimony about your faith can do so much more than a polished sermon. People can deny that God exists, and still curse Him for their trouble. But they can’t deny what you have witnessed. They have no way to explain away the mighty works of our God as He delivers us from evil day by day.

Psalm 140 ends with this verse: “Surely the righteous will praise your name, and the upright will live in your presence.” [Psalm 140:18] Surely it is our desire and purpose to praise God for His deliverance in our past. Surely it is our delight to praise God for how He will deliver us in answer to our prayers today. And surely it is our joy to trust His deliverance for our future, when we will dwell with Him forever.

Therefore, surely David’s proclamation at the end of Psalm 144 could be our cry of faith in God’s deliverance: “Blessed is the people of whom this is true; blessed is the people whose God is the Lord.” [Psalm 144:15]

Let’s pray

Let’s make our proclamation of praise to God today as we sing the Doxology together.