

Psalms 3:1

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

LORD, how are they increased that trouble me! many are they that rise up against me.

Analysis

Psalm 3's superscription attributes it to David's flight from Absalom (2 Samuel 15-18)—one of Scripture's most painful family betrayals. The opening lament '**LORD, how are they increased**' expresses shock at multiplying enemies. The Hebrew **rabbah** (increased/multiplied) suggests exponential growth—trouble not diminishing but expanding. The parallel '**many are they that rise up**' uses qum (rise, stand) depicting active, aggressive opposition.

The repetition of 'many' emphasizes overwhelming odds—David faces not isolated opposition but coordinated rebellion. Historically, this refers to Absalom's successful coup that turned Israel's armies and populace against their rightful king. Prophetically, this foreshadows Christ's experience: betrayed by Judas, abandoned by disciples, condemned by religious leaders and crowds who once welcomed Him.

The address '**LORD**' (Yahweh) invokes covenant relationship—despite betrayal, David appeals to the faithful God. This establishes the psalm's theology: human faithlessness contrasts with divine faithfulness. The interrogative 'how' doesn't seek information but expresses emotional distress—a cry of anguish. Yet this complaint is directed to God, demonstrating faith: David doesn't despair but prays, modeling proper response to overwhelming adversity.

Historical Context

Absalom's rebellion began with calculated subversion—standing at city gates, intercepting those seeking justice, and undermining confidence in David's rule (2 Samuel 15:1-6). Over four years, he 'stole the hearts of the men of Israel.' The coup's success forced David to flee Jerusalem barefoot, weeping, covered head in mourning (2 Samuel 15:30). Former loyal subjects joined Absalom; even David's trusted counselor Ahithophel defected (2 Samuel 15:12).

This historical crisis produced some of Scripture's most poignant psalms—prayers forged in desperate flight. David's vulnerability—displaced from throne and capital, uncertain of survival—makes this psalm profoundly human. Yet it transcends David's personal crisis, providing language for all believers facing betrayal and overwhelming opposition. The early church recognized Jesus as the ultimate 'David' betrayed by His own people, fleeing (in sense) from those He came to save, yet trusting the Father. Every Christian facing multiplied troubles finds voice in this ancient lament.

Related Passages

John 3:16 — God's love and salvation

Ephesians 2:8 — Salvation by grace through faith

Revelation 20:12 — Judgment according to deeds

Matthew 25:31 — Final judgment

Study Questions

1. How does David's example of immediately turning to God in crisis inform Christian responses to betrayal or overwhelming adversity?
2. What does the multiplication of enemies teach about spiritual warfare's progressive nature, and how should believers prepare?
3. In what ways did Christ experience the reality of this verse more fully than David, and how does this provide comfort?

4. How can believers maintain covenant confidence in God ('LORD') when circumstances seem to contradict divine promises?
5. What is the value of honest lament before God, as modeled in this verse, versus trying to maintain false cheerfulness?

Interlinear Text

הָיָה ! הַיְהָ
the LORD H4100 how are they increased H7231 that trouble H6862 me! many H7227 are they that rise up H6965

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H5921

Additional Cross-References

Psalms 17:7 (Resurrection): Shew thy marvellous lovingkindness, O thou that savest by thy right hand them which put their trust in thee from those that rise up against them.

2 Samuel 16:15 (Parallel theme): And Absalom, and all the people the men of Israel, came to Jerusalem, and Ahithophel with him.

Matthew 27:25 (Parallel theme): Then answered all the people, and said, His blood be on us, and on our children.