

Psalm 69 NKJV

To the Chief Musician. Set to "The Lilies." A Psalm of David.

"Perhaps in no psalm in the whole psalter is the sense of sorrow profounder or more intense than in this. The soul of the singer pours itself out in unrestrained abandonment to the overwhelming and terrible grief which consumes it."

(G. Campbell Morgan)

This is an imprecatory Psalm. Imprecatory psalms are those psalms that contain curses or prayers for the punishment of the psalmist's enemies. To imprecate means to invoke evil upon, or curse. Psalms 7, 35, 55, 58, 59, 69, 79, 109, 137 and 139 all contain prayers for God's judgment on the psalmist's enemies. Psalm 69 is one of the most frequently quoted psalms in the New Testament behind Psalms 22 and 110.

In this whole chapter, we will see the Son of God (messianic psalm) portrayed, as well as David. Not in every verse will He be shown, but in nearly every verse. In the very first verse, we can see Jesus in the garden of Gethsemane praying so earnestly to the Father for the cup to pass from Him that a sweat of blood was on His forehead. We also see David in this, crying to God to save him. Christians all over the world are crying this same cry now. God, please do not turn from us. Save Us!

I. Drowning in disapproval: Verses 1-3 Drowning in a flood of trouble.

1 Save me, O God! For the waters have come up to my neck.

2 I sink in deep mire, where there is no standing; I have come into deep waters, Where the floods overflow me.

3 I am weary with my crying; My throat is dry; My eyes fail while I wait for my God.

a. Save me, O God (verse 1): David needed this prayer many times in his life. He felt he was about to drown (the waters have come up to my neck). Centuries later, the Son of David heard a drowning disciple cry out, Save me! When Peter walked out on the water, but he removed his eyes from the Lord (Matthew 14:30).

Sometimes we may feel like things are rushing in on us, like drowning in a flood. Other times we feel as if the water level slowly rises until we are overwhelmed. Each has its own type of fear and misery. Remember to say the name of Jesus in those times you feel as though you are drowning. He will lift you up and set your feet upon the rock.

b. I sink in deep mire (verse 2): In other psalms David rejoiced at being set upon a rock (Psalm 40:2).

"He also brought me up out of a horrible pit, out of the miry clay, and set my feet upon a rock, and established my steps" (Psalm 40:2 NKJV).

Here he is in the opposite position, sinking down in the mud and the mire, where there is no standing. We can picture Jesus sinking down into the deep mire of humanity's sin and guilt, coming truly to the deep waters, where the floods overflow. No wonder it was said of Jesus before He went to the cross, He began to be sorrowful and deeply distressed (Matthew 26:37).

c. I am weary with my crying (verse 3): David was worn out with all the energy spent in his crying and crying out as he waited for God to rescue him.

"I am exhausted from crying for help; my throat is parched. My eyes are swollen with weeping, waiting for my God to help me" (Psalm 69:3 NLT).

Jesus prayed three times for the cup to pass (Matthew 26:39-44). He submitted His will to the will of the Father. David is crying desperately to God. Have you felt this same despair in your Christian walk? It is as if there is no strength left in you to fight with? Waiting sometimes can be a painful experience. But God says in Psalm 40:1-2, "I waited patiently for the LORD to help me, and he turned to me and heard my cry. 2 He lifted me out of the pit of despair, out of the mud and the mire. He set my feet on solid ground and steadied me as I walked along".

Why did Jesus pray three times? Did God not hear Him the first time? Was Jesus trying to persuade God? No, to these questions; Jesus needed to work through the pain and praying allowed him to do that until He was satisfied, at peace with the inevitable that was to come. How many times do we need to pray? When we earnestly seek God and His will, He gives us the heart and the words.

Prayer is asking, pleading, praising, praying; prayer is coming to that place of peace, that place where "Thy will be done on earth as in heaven" is completed within us; this can require repeating.

II. Verse 4 The problem described.

"Those who hate me without a cause Are more than the hairs of my head; They are mighty who would destroy me, being my enemies wrongfully; Though I have stolen nothing, I still must restore it".

a. Those who hate me without a cause are more than the hairs of my head:

This begins the description of the real problems David poetically described in the previous verses. He lived under the great stress of knowing there were many people who simply hated him, and without cause. Undeserved reproach (accusation) is the most stupendous grief possible to the sensitive soul." (Morgan)

It's hard for us to believe that such a wonderful, godly man as David would be so hated. This is human nature and was even more evident in the hatred without cause directed to Jesus Christ.

Jesus specifically referred to Psalm 69:4 when He spoke to His disciples the night before His crucifixion. He said, but this happened that the word might be fulfilled which is written in their law, "They hated Me without a cause." (John 15:25)

b. They are mighty who would destroy me: Among the many who hated David were some who went beyond the feelings of hatred to active efforts to destroy him. Those set on David's destruction were mighty; they could make it happen.

c. Though I have stolen nothing, I still must restore it: The fundamental injustice of David's misery increased his sense of despair. More than anyone else who ever lived, Jesus was hated without a cause. Truly those opposed to Jesus were more than the hairs of His head. Jesus had done nothing to harm any of these people who were against Him. Jesus went around doing good. He healed the sick, cast out evil spirits, and raised the dead.

III. Verses 5-12 Living with the constant disapproval of man.

5 O God, You know my foolishness; And my sins are not hidden from you.

6 Let not those who wait for You, O Lord God of hosts, be ashamed because of me;

Let not those who seek You be confounded because of me, O God of Israel.

7 Because for Your sake I have borne reproach; Shame has covered my face.

8 I have become a stranger to my brothers, And an alien to my mother's children;

9 Because zeal for Your house has eaten me up, And the reproaches of those who reproach You have fallen on me.

10 When I wept and chastened my soul with fasting, that became my reproach.

11 I also made sackcloth my garment; I became a byword to them.

12 Those who sit in the gate speak against me, And I am the song of the drunkards.

a. You know my foolishness; and my sins are not hidden from You (verse 5): In many of the psalms, David proclaimed his innocence compared to his adversaries. In Psalm 69 David confessed his sin and failings, appealing to God's mercy.

We may spiritually apply this to Jesus, noting the public nature of His humiliation on the cross. Nailed to the cross, likely with no clothing at all before a mocking public, Jesus accomplished His great work on the cross with nothing hidden. He had no sins of His own to bear, but the bearing of our sins was not hidden from either God or man.

b. Let not those who seek You be confounded because of me (verse 6): David's concern was not only the effect it had upon himself, but especially the effect it had upon the people of God. The thought of embarrassing those who seek God was painful to David. David did not want to be a stumbling block to others because of his miserable situation.

"It ought to be the prayer of every Christian, especially if he be a minister of the gospel, that his sufferings in the world may not give just offence to the brethren, or the church." (Horne)

c. Shame has covered my face (verse 7): Among the other problems caused by David's sin, he also had to deal with damaged relationships with his brothers.

d. I have become a stranger to my brothers (verse 8): David felt rejected by his own brothers. How strange it was that Jesus' own brothers rejected Him and treated Him as a stranger (John 7:5, Mark 3:21). If any should have stood by Him and defended Him to the death, it should have been His own brothers.

e. Because zeal for Your house has eaten me up, and the reproaches of those who reproach You have fallen on me (verse 9): David's sin was not the only cause of his problems. He was also rejected and spoken against because of his zeal (passion) for God and His house. (See 2 Samuel 7:1-3 and 1 Chronicles 22:1-5 for additional reading)

When Jesus drove the moneychangers out of the temple courts at the beginning of His ministry, His disciples remembered this very passage from Psalm 69:9 (John 2:17).

John 2:17 NLT "Then his disciples remembered this prophecy from the Scriptures: "Passion for God's house will consume me".

f. When I wept and chastened my soul with fasting, that became my reproach (verse 10): David was rejected because of his foolishness and sins (Psalm 69:5). When he repented, then people disapproved of that.

g. I also made sackcloth my garment (verse 11): David's wearing of sackcloth, a symbol of grief, brought even more ridicule. When a person was dedicated to prayer, it was the custom to wear sackcloth and not eat. This showed total separation from the world. It was saying that the world and all it has to offer were not important.

h. I became a byword to them (verse 11): The idea is becoming a proverb, a label. In our world this is a deliberate strategy, to dismiss people simply by giving them a label so that you don't have to think about or engage their ideas. Faithful believers know the sting of this today. They are mocked as religious nuts, radicals, and haters.

i. Those who sit in the gate speak against me, and I am the song of the drunkards (verse 12): David became the target of scorn and disapproval from almost everyone, from the leaders of the city to the city drunks. The High Priest and the thief on the cross both despised Jesus.

IV. Verses 13-15 The prayer for rescue; the appeal to God.

13 But as for me, my prayer is to You, O Lord, in the acceptable time; O God, in the multitude of Your mercy, Hear me in the truth of Your salvation.

14 Deliver me out of the mire and let me not sink; Let me be delivered from those who hate me, And out of the deep waters.

15 Let not the floodwater overflow me, nor let the deep swallow me up; And let not the pit shut its mouth on me.

a. As for me, my prayer is to You (verse 13): With the constant disapproval from men, David naturally and wisely turned to God. He would seek God and make his prayer to the One who would hear in the multitude of Your mercy.

b. Let not the floodwater overflow me (verse 15): With poetic repetition, David returned to the image of him drowning, asking God to rescue him from those who hate him. David felt it worth repeating again verse 2 of this passage.

V. Verses (16-18) Asking for speedy deliverance.

16 Hear me, O Lord, for Your lovingkindness is good; Turn to me according to the multitude of Your tender mercies.

17 And do not hide Your face from Your servant, For I am in trouble; Hear me speedily.

18 Draw near to my soul and redeem it; Deliver me because of my enemies.

a. Hear me, O LORD, for Your lovingkindness is good (verse 16): Appealing to God because of his loyal love (lovingkindness), David once again asked for the multitude of God's tender mercies.

b. Do not hide Your face from Your servant, for I am in trouble (verse 17):

By presenting himself to God as His servant and in trouble, David hoped to appeal to God's compassion.

VI. Verses (19-21) The plea for compassion.

19 You know my reproach, my shame, and my dishonor; My adversaries are all before You.

20 Reproach has broken my heart, And I am full of heaviness; I looked for someone to take pity, but there was none; And for comforters, but I found none.

21 They also gave me gall for my food, and for my thirst they gave me vinegar to drink.

a. You know my reproach, my shame, and my dishonor (verse 19): The appeal to God's compassion continued, especially because David bore much reproach in his loyalty to God (Psalm 69:9b).

b. I looked for someone to take pity, but there was none (verse 20): David asked God for help because there was none to help him.

c. They also gave me gall for my food, and for my thirst they gave me vinegar to drink (verse 21): Instead of help, David found cruelty from his enemies. They gave him bitter things to eat (gall for my food) and sour vinegar to drink.

This is another line in Psalm 69 that is referred to in the New Testament, specifically in the suffering of Jesus. On the cross they gave Him vinegar to drink. This is described in Matthew 27:34; John 19:28-29 is even more clear with John adding that this was done that the Scripture might be fulfilled.

VII. Verses (22-28) Asking for the defeat of his enemies.

22 Let their table become a snare before them, And their well-being a trap.

23 Let their eyes be darkened, so that they do not see; And make their loins shake continually.

24 Pour out Your indignation upon them, and let Your wrathful anger take hold of them.

25 Let their dwelling place be desolate; Let no one live in their tents.

26 For they persecute the ones You have struck and talk of the grief of those You have wounded.

27 Add iniquity to their iniquity and let them not come into Your righteousness.

28 Let them be blotted out of the book of the living, and not be written with the righteous.

a. Let their table become a snare before them, and their well-being a trap

(verse 22): David hurt under the scorn of those who sat comfortably while he was in misery. He prayed that their ease (comfort) would become a trap.

This peril waiting for those who rejected the man after God's heart as described in Psalm 69:22-23 was quoted by the Apostle Paul in Romans 11:9-10 as appropriate to those among his own people who rejected Jesus.

b. Let their eyes be darkened, so that they do not see (verse 23): David's enemies had distorted vision when they looked at him; he prayed the distortion would become permanent blindness.

c. Pour out Your indignation (anger) upon them (verses 24): David asked God to fulfill a series of curses upon his enemies, ending with the wish that they would be blotted out of the book of the living, and not be written with the righteous (verse 28).

d. Let their dwelling place become desolate (verse 25): This line is twice referred to in the New Testament. Jesus quoted it in sadness over Jerusalem (Matthew 23:38) and Peter quoted it as descriptive of the desolation of Judas (Acts 1:20).

e. For they persecute the ones You have struck (verse 26): As David ask God to defeat his enemies, this verse tells us why he wants the enemies defeated. We find that this persecution has never stopped. The sinful persecute the followers of Jesus the same as they persecuted HIM. Even now, there are many who persecute the name of Jesus. They use His name in vain. The worst thing of all, they are still rejecting Him today.

f. Add iniquity to their iniquity (verse 27): Instead of taking away their iniquities by forgiveness, let one iniquity accumulate upon another till they are crushed by the load. The Lord will not force His righteousness on anyone. There is no hope for those who totally reject Jesus.

g. Let them be blotted out of the book (verse 28): "But to blot names out is not only to kill, but to exclude from the national community, and so from all the privileges of the people of God." (Maclaren)

VIII. Verses (29-33) Lifting up the poor and humble one.

29 But I am poor and sorrowful; Let Your salvation, O God, set me up on high.

30 I will praise the name of God with a song and will magnify Him with thanksgiving.

31 This also shall please the Lord better than an ox or bull, which has horns and hooves.

32 The humble shall see this and be glad; And you who seek God, your hearts shall live.

33 For the Lord hears the poor and does not despise His prisoners.

a. I am poor and sorrowful (verse 29): "Literally, I am laid low, and full of pain or grief. Hence the prayer, 'Let thy salvation, O God set me on high!' My oppression has laid me low; thy salvation shall make me high!" (Clarke)

b. Let Your salvation, O God, set me up on high (verse 29): David did not only pray for the downfall of his enemies. He also asked God to rescue him from drowning in the mire of hateful men and to establish him up on high.

c. I will praise the name of God with a song (verses 30 & 31): Moving to greater confidence, the psalmist vowed to praise and magnify God for His rescue. This sincere praise honored God even more than an animal sacrifice. I will praise the Lord, O my soul, and all that is within me praise His holy name. We have so much to praise Him for. We, of all the people in the world, have the hope of the resurrection. We are the bride of Christ. Our Groom is off preparing a place for us. He will come again and receive us unto Himself. Our lips should be filled with praise and thanksgiving.

d. The humble shall see this and be glad (verse 32): "The humble." That is; others who are afflicted. The poor, the needy, the oppressed, the sad shall be made acquainted with what has been done in My behalf and shall take courage and be strengthened. They will learn to trust that God will also intervene in their troubles and bring them out of their distresses.

e. You who seek God, your hearts shall live (verse 32): Shall be revived; shall be encouraged and strengthened.

f. For the Lord hears the poor (verse 33): The needy; the humble; the unprotected. The reference is to those who are in circumstances of want and distress. The truth stated here is in accordance with all that is said in the Scriptures (compare the notes at Psalm 34:6; 10:14; 12:5; 35:10; 68:10).

g. And does not despise his prisoners (verse 33): He does not overlook them; he does not treat them as if they were worthy of no attention or regard. The word "prisoners" here may refer to those who are oppressed, or are held as captives, or are thrown into prison, on His account. The reference here seems to be to David, and to those associated with him, who were deprived of their freedom for the cause of God.

IX. Verses (34-36) The triumphant conclusion.

34 Let heaven and earth praise Him, the seas and everything that moves in them.

35 For God will save Zion and build the cities of Judah, that they may dwell there and possess it.

36 Also, the descendants of His servants shall inherit it, and those who love His name shall dwell in it.

a. Let heaven and earth praise Him (verse 34): As low as this psalm began, it soars to the highest praise in the end. Heaven and earth are not big enough to give God the praise He is due. The seas and everything that moves in them will also bring Him praise. The Word of God created all the things mentioned above (see John chapter 1). It is right that the creation would praise its Creator. Let everything that has breath praise the Lord.

b. For God will save Zion and build the cities of Judah (verse 35): The vision is lifted high above the problems of one man. Now David prayed for blessing for Jerusalem and Judah, that they may dwell there and possess it.

c. Those who love His name shall dwell in it (verse 36): Scorned by his enemies, David knew that he and others who love His name would inherit the land and dwell in it. These are the seed of Abraham. Those who are in covenant relationship with God.

Galatians 3:29, "And if you are Christ's, then you are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise". Praise God! All true Christians are the seed of Abraham.

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