

Hated Without a Cause

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After all these years, I still can't quite comprehend the fact that the Lord has given me the blessing to do what I do, to teach God's word, to teach it to people that I love, that I care about, that we've come to know and cherish. I am a man most richly blessed and I give thanks to God for that.

As I stand before you here today, I'm grateful for every one of you being here. I know almost all of you by name and we're going to open Psalm 69 which Andrew read earlier for us, and by way of introduction, let me just remind you of the nature of the life that we face as Christians. The Bible tells us that all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will be persecuted, 2 Timothy 3:12. Jesus said in John 16, in this world you have tribulation but take heart, I have overcome the world. And in Matthew 5:10 through 12, it speaks of blessed are you when men speak evil of you, when they insult you for the sake of the Son of man, for your reward in heaven is great. And that's so important for us to remember especially in this day and age where it's sometimes presented that God only wants blessing for his children and there is no hardship that comes with being a disciple of Jesus Christ. That's just not the case and the way that we contemplate these things has a great impact on the way that we anticipate life, what our expectations are for life, and how we respond to it when it comes. We are aliens in this world. We are sojourners. We are pilgrims passing through. Our home is in heaven. Our citizenship is in heaven, not in this world, so much so that Scripture would lead us to expect there are times as believers that we are going to experience unjust treatment; that there may be great injustice that is inflicted upon us as we follow Christ and that is part of the territory. It comes with what we are and who we are and what the Lord has called us to. And what I would encourage you with is to realize that as we go through those times, perhaps some of you going through them even now in your personal lives, is to realize that at those times where we suffer at the hands of wicked men in a wicked world, that surpassingly what is presented to you is an opportunity to draw into closer communion with Christ himself because Christ himself was hated without a cause, as we will see. And as we read in Psalm 69, we see David kind of functioning as an early forerunner of those greater sufferings of Christ as he himself was hated without a cause, and we find in Psalm 69 David responding to that kind of spiritual hostility that is the lot of those who belong to Christ.

Now, in Psalm 69, the primary theme of this Psalm is salvation, or you might say, deliverance, of God providing rescue from the troubles that David was experiencing. Let

me just show you this briefly. To go through this Psalm in particular in a single message means that we can only kind of hit it at the 30,000 foot view, but that's all right. We're glad to have the opportunity. Salvation is the primary theme of this Psalm. Look at verse 1 where he says, "Save me, O God, For the waters have threatened my life." The opening tone, the opening note, I should say, of this Psalm is, "God, save me," meaning that he is in trouble of some kind. In verse 13, he says, "as for me, my prayer is to You, O LORD," O Yahweh, "at an acceptable time; O God, in the greatness of Your lovingkindness, Answer me with Your saving truth." Your saving truth is what I need, he says. In verse 29, he says, "I am afflicted and in pain; May Your salvation, O God, set me securely on high." And finally in verse 35, he says, "God will save Zion and build the cities of Judah, That they may dwell there and possess it." Do you see it from beginning to end at critical points in between, this theme of God's deliverance, of God's saving power, of God's intervention to help him is the theme of this Psalm. So that's what we want to keep in mind. That's the context in which we are walking through this Psalm, and it's the context in which we live.

Let me just say by way of preface something that I've tried to emphasize over the years, maybe I haven't done as good a job as I could, but, you know, in the Lord's grace hopefully we'll have time to say it a lot more in the days to come. Beloved, there is something really really fundamental that must be clear in your mind when you think about God, when you think about God the Father, God the Son, God the Holy Spirit, and this is so fundamental and will frame everything else in your spiritual life. Get this point right, everything else will fall into place sooner or later. Go astray at this point, and it's very hard to untangle the damage that it brings to your heart. What you must understand fundamentally if you belong to Christ, is that God has made you an object of his love. He has made you an object of his compassion, of his affection, and all of his intentions toward you are good without exception.

Look at verse 16 just for example, just to pick up a point there. Why is it, you might ask, why is it that David could call so confidently upon God for salvation and deliverance in his trials when so much of the world and the people around him were arrayed against him? And you know what this is like from time to time in your life, it seems like every human being in your life is either upset with you, angry with you, or opposed to you. We go through times like that and yet David, in the spirit of one of those times, is praying with confidence that the Lord would deliver him. How is it that he can be so grounded and confident even when he is being hated without a cause? Look at verse 13. He says, "O God, in the greatness of Your lovingkindness," a word that means loyal love, steadfast love. "O God, in the greatness of Your lovingkindness, Answer me with Your saving truth." In verse 16, he says, "Answer me, O LORD, for Your lovingkindness is good; According to the greatness of Your compassion, turn to me." He knows and has it settled in his heart that God to him is a God of loyal love. God to him is a God of compassion who looks on him in his suffering with mercy.

Beloved, this frames everything in spiritual life for you. If you think that God is remote or if you think that God is a God not easily pleased, a God who requires a lot of rules to be obeyed before you can speak to him with any hope of your favor, of receiving his

favor, I should say, you are set on a path that is going to lead you into a sense of spiritual frustration and isolation because inevitably where that mindset leads you is to a place of frustration where you say, "I can never please him." Well, there is a sense in which that's true, there is a sense in which you can never offer to God enough righteousness to earn his favor, but you see, that's not the basis upon which we have entered into a relationship with him. We have entered into a relationship with him because he, out of his own character, out of his own prerogative, out of his own initiative, has initiated toward us all of his love, all of his compassion, all of the goodness and power of his being that he might be to you a God of blessing and a God of protection.

And I ask you as we enter into this Psalm, is that your fundamental perspective on the God that you claim to know? Do you realize that at the cross of Christ that love and that power was being so perfectly displayed as Christ voluntarily laid down his life for you? Why? Because you were already his friend? No, Scripture says that while we were still enemies God loved us and gave his Son for us. Was it because you were already somewhat righteous and therefore you had prompted that from him? Perish the thought. It was 2,000 years before you were born, right? It had nothing to do with your conduct that Christ laid his life down for you at Calvary. You didn't earn that. You didn't prompt that from God. This was all God's idea, God's initiative, and what you must see is that that was an expression of his eternal unchanging love, and now that he has brought you into this, he saved you not as a result of your works but according to his grace, according to his mercy, and beloved, now that he has saved you through faith in Christ, beloved, don't you see that his love, the love that first saved you hasn't changed, it hasn't altered? He didn't save you in love at the cross and then decide to become a grumpy old man toward you, a grumpy God who cannot be satisfied. That's not who our God is. He's a God of great compassion, a God of great love, a God of steadfast unchanging love. Micah 7:18 says, "He delights in unchanging love." He delights in being that kind of God to us.

So as we start this Psalm, that's our starting point is that we are dealing with a God of faithful love toward us. I hope to go into this more on Sunday as well and I hope that you'll be with us for that. But David is able to appeal to this God for deliverance because he knows that God is a God of love and compassion toward him, who cares for him in the midst of even his unjust suffering. Beloved, is that your fundamental concept of God? Answer the question carefully. Answer it well. Answer it according to Scripture because who you think God is, is going to determine the trajectory of the rest of your life. Theology has consequences and for us who are Christians, we look at the cross and we see our theology of the love of God fully informed. He loved us and gave himself for us. In this is love, not that we loved God but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins. Beloved, sink your roots deep into that groundwater of the character of God. Sink your roots deep into the ever flowing love of God toward you and I have a suspicion, informed by biblical truth, that it will change your life to realize that this God is so good and so loving and so gracious to his own, and that that is his fundamental disposition toward us.

Now, as we come to Psalm 69, David is pleading with God to save him from his trouble. He was bearing shame and rejection for the Lord's sake and he does three fundamental

things here. We'll just kind of break this down into three points here tonight. He asks God to answer him. He asks God to repay David's oppressors. And he looks forward to a time of universal praise and restoration. So there is the cry for help, the cry for judgment, you might say, and then there is a hope and an anticipation of a time of praise yet to come, and we'll see this in David's life, we'll see it mirrored in the life of Christ. Psalm 69 is frequently applied to Christ as we'll see, and so this is a Psalm of rich biblical significance.

How would we find our path forward when we are in these times hated without a cause? Well, first of all, let's just kind of follow the Psalm along here. We could put it this way, our first point, we'll state it this way: is that we ask God for deliverance. We ask God for deliverance. It's easy to forget to ask under the weight of the problems. We forget to ask. David didn't forget to ask. And so you open in verses 1 and 2, let's look at it together, David prays,

1 Save me, O God, For the waters have threatened my life. 2 I have sunk in deep mire, and there is no foothold; I have come into deep waters, and a flood overflows me.

Drowning here is a metaphor for his problems in the sense of vulnerability that he has. He realized that what is happening immediately could be an immediate threat to his life.

Now, when it comes to drowning, I don't often do this but, hey, we're friends, we'll do something a little bit different tonight. When I think of drowning, I can't help but think of the time on our honeymoon, not all of us but mine and Nancy's honeymoon, I literally nearly drowned in the pool of the hotel that we were staying in. It's a frightening memory to this day as I remember it. The pool wasn't that deep but I'm not too good in water and I'm not a swimmer and I went to stand up in the pool and I realized that I was in water that was over my head, and I took in a little bit of water and, you know, I started to panic and I had the sense, very vivid today almost 30 years later, that my life was in immediate danger here. Now, thanks be to God Nancy reached over and grabbed me and literally saved my life at that point. If she hadn't been there, I would have gone down, and that sense of vulnerability and panic and the fact that there is an immediate crisis here, is the sense that David is using as he describes in a metaphor the problems that he is facing. "God, this is sweeping over me! This is coming over my head and I need help right now before I go under!" And waters and mire point to the danger. There was no easy way out for David.

Look at verse 3 where he says,

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

So he's describing that in the midst of the danger, he's feeling the physical effects of the trials and the weight that it had upon him. "My throat is parched. Lord, I've been crying out to you so long my throat is dry. I've exhausted myself." And yet there he is still

waiting, still calling upon the Lord. The process had exhausted him but here in Psalm 69 he is calling out once more for God's deliverance.

He shows us in verse 4, the source of his trouble, the source of his difficulty, and it ties in with what we were saying earlier about the people and the enemies that he was facing. In verse 4 he says,

4 Those who hate me without a cause are more than the hairs of my head;
Those who would destroy me are powerful, being wrongfully my enemies;
What I did not steal, I then have to restore.

He's on the receiving end of injustice. There are multiplied enemies that it seems like there are more than he can count. And these aren't simply little snippy puppies biting at his heels, these are men that have influence, men with power who are rising up against him and who are arrayed against him and they are more than he can humanly handle. Been there, have you? Been there where someone had a measure of position or influence or authority and they are opposed to you? Exercising unjust things against you and you don't have the human ability to respond. You can't reach for the side of the pool to pull yourself up. That's the position that David was in.

Isn't it sweet to be a Christian? To believe in the full authority of the word of God? And to be able to come to a Psalm like this and find that we find expressed the deepest sorrows of our soul in a Spirit-inspired way that can encourage and help us? "Ah, I'm not the first person to go through this in spiritual life. I see that David has walked the path that I have trod. Let me find the way forward that he found. Apparently from the fact that he wrote this Psalm, he came out okay on the other side. Maybe, just maybe, the God of lovingkindness and compassion that delivered David would have the same kind of mercy on me that he had on David as well." And all of a sudden your eyes are pivoting, pivoting away from the enemies and toward the God who loves you, the God of compassion, the God who saved you, and that is a great encouragement. That alone, I should say, would be encouragement enough but then you realize that there is something even better, something even greater going on in this Psalm. David's life was merely a foreshadowing, it was merely something of a prediction of a greater fulfillment to come in a greater David, in our Lord Jesus Christ.

Look over at John 15 with me. John 15 in verse 24. What David experienced was to be fulfilled in the coming of Christ at this point. Jesus said in John 15:18, "If the world hates you, you know that it has hated Me before it hated you. If you were of the world, the world would love its own; but because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, because of this the world hates you. Remember the word that I said to you, 'A slave is not greater than his master.' If they persecuted Me, they will also persecute you; if they kept My word, they will keep yours also." He goes on to say in verse 23, "He who hates Me hates My Father also. If I had not done among them the works which no one else did, they would not have sin; but now they have both seen and hated Me and My Father as well." And look at what he says in verse 25 as it pertains to the Psalm that we are studying tonight, "But they have done this to fulfill the word that is written in their

Law, "THEY HATED ME WITHOUT A CAUSE." A quotation from this verse that we just saw in Psalm 69:4. David's life of suffering, the enemies hating David without a cause, were merely a foreshadowing of the greater fulfillment to come when Jesus Christ himself, the sinless Son of God, was hated by those around him.

If ever, beloved, if ever there was someone hated without a cause, you understand that it's not David primarily, it's not you and me primarily, right? The one in whom there is no cause for hatred is the Lord Jesus Christ. The sinless, gracious, glorious Son of God. There is nothing in him to provoke cause for hatred in those who hate him. The hatred comes from within their own wicked hearts. There is nothing in Christ to prompt such hatred. He was hated without a cause. When we find opposition in our own sinful selves, we look and say, "O Lord, you have gone down this path more perfectly. You have gone before me in this path. You know what it's like to be rejected and hated without reason. You know what that's like, Lord, and you tell me that it's part of discipleship, it's part of me walking in your footsteps. Well, Lord, I can embrace that. I'm not thrilled with the enemies that are hating me without reason, that doesn't appeal to me on a human level, but Lord, what appeals to me is you've been there. You know what this is like and you invite me into close communion and fellowship with you as a result." That's a precious place to be for the disciple of Christ, to realize that we have a Lord who understands and sympathizes and has been there in the sense of Hebrews 4:14 through 16.

Now, as we think about Psalm 69 applying to Christ, we should realize that the totality of the Psalm does not apply to Christ. Particularly as you look at verse 5, you see that David is not making a claim to being sinless. He realizes that he himself has committed wrong. So look at verse 5 with me. He says,

5 O God, it is You who knows my folly, And my wrongs are not hidden from You.

He says, "God, you know my sin but whatever my sin may be, I haven't done anything against these enemies to deserve this kind of treatment." David isn't claiming sinlessness as he goes through Psalm 69, he's confessing sin and fault before God. What he's saying is, "Lord, in relationship to these men, they have no reason to treat me as they do. I have not wronged them and yet they are opposed to me."

Now, in this confession of sin, we see this is a verse that could not possibly apply to Christ. Christ had no sin to confess. He was sinless. He had never committed wrong. He was free from all sin and so the hatred against him was even worse than the hatred against David, even worse than the hatred against you and me that we sometimes face. In the midst of that confession, David goes on in verse 6 to appeal to God for mercy so that others who trust God would not be put to shame as a result of his situation.

Look at verse 6, he says,

6 May those who wait for You not be ashamed through me, O Lord GOD of hosts; May those who seek You not be dishonored through me, O God of Israel,

Now, if you were with us last time as we talked about the imprecatory Psalms, we said that one of the motives for the imprecatory Psalms was a concern for the people of God; that one of the reasons that we pray is to look beyond our own circle and we see that the people of God are about us and we put our struggles and our difficulties in the context of the people of God who might be influenced by what happens to us, or be influenced by the way that we respond to our own trials and difficulties. David has these fellow saints in mind and he says, "God, as they are waiting for you, work and help and protect me so that they won't be ashamed, so that they won't fall into discouragement thinking that God does not help his own."

Beloved, let me step back and invite you to kind of maybe have a little bit of an alteration, a little bit of a change, a little bit of a different perspective perhaps on your own trials as you go through them; to be mindful of the fact that the circle that is affected by your trial is greater than yourself, it's more than just you that's at stake, to remember this. If you look over at Psalm 73, which we will soon get to, such a wonderful Psalm, and Psalm 73, the psalmist is troubled by the prosperity of the wicked and it discourages him. He sees them prospering when they have no eye toward God at all while he, seeking to be righteous, seeking to live a godly life, is suffering and in much difficulty, and he begins to think in verse 13, "Surely in vain I have kept my heart pure And washed my hands in innocence; For I have been stricken all day long And chastened every morning." He says, "I think," he's thinking, ruminating in his mind and he says, "With what I'm seeing, I must be a fool. I must be wasting my time. Why am I going through all of the hardship of trying to follow God in righteousness when it brings me sorrow and suffering? When people who have no regard for Yahweh are living the high life, they have prosperity and there are no pains in their lives? Why am I doing this?" he says.

Look at what changes him. Look at what restrains his thinking. He says in verse 15, "If I had said, 'I will speak thus,' in other words, 'I realize that if I gave voice to what I've been thinking here, something very bad would happen.'" Verse 15, Psalm 73, he says, "Behold, I would have betrayed the generation of Your children." He says and here's what I want you to see for tonight, beloved, he says, "God, this is not just about me. There are a circle of relationships that I have. I have responsibilities and commitments and I have love to your people who are around and who see me in my suffering, who see me in my difficulty. Father, for their sake, I can't speak what I have been thinking in my heart because I would betray them. If I gave voice to these kinds of accusations against God, I would deflate the spiritual encouragement of those around me. I'm not an island here. I've got to think about someone beyond myself as I go through this trial."

Now beloved, I realize that for some of you the trials are very deep and that you get discouraged. Some people, none of you in the room tonight because you're here, some people take the occasion of those things to withdraw from the people of God; to step back from them; to push the people of God away; to start to voice things that should never be

said like on social media and things like that. Not so for us, brothers and sisters, not so for us. We realize that we cannot let ourselves get carried away with our discouragements and questions. We can't voice these kinds of doubts because to do that would be a betrayal to those who would otherwise be encouraged as they see us persevere. Part of your responsibility in your trials, Christian friend, is to persevere. To the glory of God, yes, absolutely but also to persevere for the sake of those who are around you who will look to you, see your faithful life and say, "Oh, that's how it's done." To say, "Oh, they have it worse than I do and they are continuing in Christ. Well, then, that's what I should do also." And it takes us out of our naturally self-centered perspective and say, "Ah, I have obligations here that inform the way that I respond."

Go back to Psalm 69:6. You can see this in David's thinking there in verse 6. He's thinking about others beside himself. He says, "Let those who wait for You not be ashamed through me. God, be gracious and help me so that they would be helped in turn." But it's not just a horizontal aspect that is informing his cry for deliverance. In verse 7, he is consumed with the glory of God as well. We saw this last time. He says in verse 7,

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

"God, I am in this position because I have sought to be loyal to you. I have sought to be faithful to you and that has brought me this opposition." And how severe was the opposition? Look at verse 8, he says,

8 I have become estranged from my brothers And an alien to my mother's sons.

He says, "God, this is so bad that the closest members of my own family are opposed to me." And even in that, Christ had a greater fulfillment during his earthly life, didn't he? The Gospels tell us that even his brothers weren't believing in him, even his brothers were mocking him before the crucifixion. "Why are you hiding? If you're the Messiah, let it be known." So even his own family was not believing in him. Christ experienced this as well, the opposition of those closest to him. And beloved, if we think further and sympathize and enter into our Christ, wasn't it true that even all of the disciples fled from him on the night that he was betrayed? They all went up and fled and he was left alone.

Let's let that sink in for a moment. Why was he suffering alone? Why was he in that position in the first place? There to fulfill Scripture. There to carry out, to go to Jerusalem, as it were, with his face set like flint to Jerusalem, so that he would fully drink the cup that the Father had given to him to drink. Why? Because in love he would bring you into his kingdom and all of the alienation, all of the hostility was part of the price that he paid, part of the suffering that he experienced on earth in order to bring about a fulfillment of the saving mission for which he came, to save you and to save me. I love him, don't you? I love him for that. Our redemption was accomplished at the cost of great suffering to the sinless Son of God and he felt the full weight of the hostility of men and

went ahead and went through it. Now we walking through lesser trials with lesser virtue, find that our elder brother, that our champion, that our Savior has gone before us in the way. Having gone through it in his humanity, he knows how to lead us through it in our humanity and that brings us comfort and confidence and we cry out to him, in a sense, that he will receive us well because he has been there himself. Oh, this is all about understanding who Christ is and how we respond to him.

Verse 9, David says,

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

And again, Psalm 69, the New Testament quotes at this point, pointing to Christ. Let's look at John 2 for a moment. John 2:15, we see the zeal for the Father's glory that consumed the Son of God in his Incarnation. Verse 14, "He found in the temple those who were selling oxen and sheep and doves, and the money changers seated at their tables," profaning the temple of the Lord. "And He made a scourge of cords, and drove them all out of the temple, with the sheep and the oxen; and He poured out the coins of the money changers and overturned their tables; and to those who were selling the doves He said, 'Take these things away; stop making My Father's house a place of business.' His disciples remembered that it was written, 'ZEAL FOR YOUR HOUSE WILL CONSUME ME.'" David said in his life, "Lord, zeal is consuming me." What the New Testament says is that Christ was a greater David with an even greater zeal and it motivated him to act when the Father's glory was being impinged by the corruption in the temple. This was no mild, meek Savior at that point who simply wouldn't challenge anyone because he was a God of love, so-called, as it is distorted today, the concepts of meekness. No, we find Christ in his strength, resisting for the sake of the zeal of God.

In Romans 15:3, it says, "Christ did not please Himself; but as it is written, 'THE REPROACHES OF THOSE WHO REPROACHED YOU FELL ON ME.'" Those who would reproach God reproached Christ and it fell on him. And sometimes for us as we follow Christ and are faithful to him, sometimes a little bit of that reproach splashes over on us as people reject us, separate from us; as people treat us as enemies because of our desire to be faithful to Christ. Well, we embrace that and we say, "Okay, that comes with the territory." We say, "Okay, Lord, you have been there before me." So we see our Lord going before us in all of these things.

Well, as you go on in the Psalm in verse 10, look at verses 10 through 12 with me. David is dealing with the sorrow that all of this has brought to him. He said,

10 When I wept in my soul with fasting, It became my reproach. 11 When
I made sackcloth my clothing, I became a byword to them. 12 Those who
sit in the gate talk about me, And I am the song of the drunkards.

What he's saying is that the sorrow through which he is going has become an occasion for jest by sinful men. People mock him. They gossip about him. The city leaders who would

sit in the gates were opposed to him. The drunks, the lowest of society, made his suffering a topic of their songs. From the greatest to the least, men mocking him and opposing him – mark it, mark this – all of this going on while he is praying and fasting with righteous desires. "God, my godliness has become the occasion of contempt with my earthly contemporaries."

So he feels this deeply. You know, I like this aspect of David. I like this aspect of the Psalms. I like the fact that here we see a godly man who is articulating some of the desires and the passions and the sorrows of his soul; that this is not someone cold and remote that is walking with God, this is a man who knows something about sorrow, who knows something about expressing it; a man with feelings and a man with passions of godliness. When you and I have those same motions going on in our hearts, we have feelings of betrayed justice, feelings of being on the receiving end of unjust treatment, that we find in Scripture that those feelings of our heart are given a voice. I love God for that. I love his word for that. I love the fact that we find not shame and reproach from God as we go through such times as we feel that, "What's the matter with you, you weakling?" kind of thing. No. No, God doesn't deal with us that way. Why? Let's go back to where we started, because he's a God of steadfast love. He's a God of mercy. He's a God of compassion who as Hebrews 4 says, we have a Christ who sympathizes with us in our weakness. Isn't that a precious place to be? Isn't that a wonderful place to find yourself with a God who loves you like that? Yes, it is.

Well, while the drunks were singing in an ungodly manner, David goes in verse 13 and stands in contrast to them. He says in verse 13,

13 But as for me, my prayer is to You, O LORD, at an acceptable time; O God, in the greatness of Your lovingkindness, Answer me with Your saving truth.

He's desperate. It feels like he's drowning but he still has confidence in God's loyal love.

Look at verses 14 through 18. He says,

14 Deliver me from the mire and do not let me sink; May I be delivered from my foes and from the deep waters. 15 May the flood of water not overflow me Nor the deep swallow me up, Nor the pit shut its mouth on me.

"God, don't let me die like this. Don't let me die in this condition. Deliver me." In verse 16 he says,

16 Answer me, O LORD,

Yahweh, that name of God that particularly speaks of his covenant promise-keeping faithfulness to his people.

16 Answer me, [O covenant-keeping God,] O LORD, for Your lovingkindness is good; According to the greatness of Your compassion, turn to me, 17 And do not hide Your face from Your servant, For I am in distress; answer me quickly. 18 Oh draw near to my soul and redeem it; Ransom me because of my enemies!

The two things that I would have you see in that passage which just requires more time than we can give it this evening, is this call that he makes to God for help and for deliverance, and that call for help and deliverance is rooted in his knowledge and his trust in the eternal love of God. That is why he can pray in his distress. That is why he can pray for help. "God, I know I can appeal to you because you are this God of loyal love to me." And beloved, right there coming back to where we started, I ask you whether you know God like that. I ask you whether your sense of confidence and your knowledge of his attributes is such that you can pray to him with the exact same confidence that David did. "God, I know I can pray to you for help in my distress because I know that you are a God of love. God, I'll go so far as to say I know it better than David did because since David, Christ has come. Since David, you have become flesh. Since David, the cross has been there. Since David, Christ has given his life. I see the fullness of it and so I pray with even more confidence than David did, Lord. I know you love me. Help me in my distress." Do you know God like that? Is your trust in him like that?

David goes on and he expresses his certainty that God knows the situation even though there is no comfort for him on earth. Look at verse 20. He says,

20 Reproach has broken my heart and I am so sick. And I looked for sympathy, 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.

Gall was a bitter substance that was mixed with wine. It would not be pleasant to drink. It might even be poisonous. And what he's saying here is, "Here I am in my distress and these people come to me and rather than giving me food to strengthen me, rather than giving me drink for my thirst, they betray me even further at the simple basic level of basic human kindness and they give me that which would injure me further. God, that's the kind of enemy that I am dealing with." It is the height of treachery. It is the height of betrayal, from David's perspective. And what do we find with Christ? As he's hanging on the cross, John 19 says they offered him gall to drink, what was probably a cheap sour wine that very well, if he had taken it, would have prolonged his life therefore prolonged his pain, according to commentator D. A. Carson in his commentary on John. So that even in the midst of Christ's suffering, they are offering him something that would have made him suffer more. How wicked, how despicable, how vile is the sinful black heart of unregenerate men to deal with a man in suffering such? And not just a man in suffering, in David's case, a godly man. In Christ's case, the God-man. What is it that prompts such wickedness and how do we deal with that?

Well, we've seen in our first point that he asked God for deliverance. That's verses 1 through 21. What David does in Psalm 69 as we come to the second point here is he assigns the wicked to God. He hands them over to God. He asks the Lord to repay their evil and as we read this passage ever so briefly, let me remind you that we have dealt with this difficult topic of imprecatory Psalms in our prior two messages so I'm not going to repeat any of that here. Let's just look at it briefly for tonight. David prays and he says,

22 May their table before them become a snare; And when they are in peace, may it become a trap. 23 May their eyes grow dim so that they cannot see, And make their loins shake continually. 24 Pour out Your indignation on them, And may Your burning anger overtake them. 25 May their camp be desolate; May none dwell in their tents. 26 For they have persecuted him whom You Yourself have smitten, And they tell of the pain of those whom You have wounded.

What is he saying there? He's saying, "Lord, they have boasted and laughed in the suffering of your people. We are experiencing the discipline of your hand in our lives and rather than stepping back in reverence, they have made it a topic of sport and laughter of their own perverse entertainment. Lord, you see the injustice of this. Lord, you see the wickedness that is about them. Lord, this needs to be addressed. God, I'm asking you to deal with these wicked people."

Verse 27,

27 Add iniquity to their iniquity, And may they not come into Your righteousness. 28 May they be blotted out of the book of life And may they not be recorded with the righteous.

What David is saying is this, "God, you've already brought me a low. These circumstances have already humbled me and these wicked men are finding delight in adding to my pain and affliction. They should have shown me compassion, instead they have piled on, instead they are delivering late hits, you might say. God, what I'm asking for you to do is this: you see what they are doing, you see what they are sowing, the seeds of sin, the seeds of wickedness," what David is saying here in essence in this Psalm is, "God, let them reap what they have sown. They deserve to feel the consequences."

Now, just to make a point about it. Should a man pray this way? Listen, listen, David here, keep one thing really straight in your mind and a lot of the other aspects of imprecatory Psalms fall into place. David here in this Psalm is not taking his own revenge. David is not going out and striking them with his own hands. In fact, David's life shows remarkable restraint when he is the object of personal insult or personal attacks; from King Saul, from Shimei who cursed him as he was walking by, David said, "Let him alone." David had opportunities to take Saul's life and he always passed on it. David was not a man of personal vindictiveness and David was not taking matters into his own hands to extract his own vengeance here. He's praying. He's pouring his heart out to a God who knows his situation, who knows the wickedness that he is being subjected

to, and to the God who is a God of compassion and who is on his side. "God, I commit them to you. Let them reap what they are sowing. But Lord, I'll leave the outworking of that to your hand. Hold them accountable for their sin."

And when he asks God to blot them out of the book of life, he's asking that they would have no share in God's blessing. Charles Spurgeon says, "The inner meaning of this request is that David wants it to be made evident that their name was never written there at all; that they were never a part of the true family of God; they were never a part of spiritual Israel because they never would have acted this way if they had been." "God, make it manifest that they were never part of yours."

And he says, this is quoted in Romans 11, referring to how Israel's hard heartedness will bring judgment to them, look at verse 25 of Psalm 69. He says, "May their camp be desolate; May none dwell in their tents." Yet again, the New Testament draws upon Psalm 69 and applies this to Judas, that wicked man who betrayed our Lord. Speaking of Judas, it says in Acts 1:20, "For it is written in the book of Psalms, 'LET HIS HOMESTEAD BE MADE DESOLATE, AND LET NO ONE DWELL IN IT'; and, 'LET ANOTHER MAN TAKE HIS OFFICE'"; the New Testament writer showing a fulfillment of this judgment in the life of Judas.

So he commits the wicked to the Lord and, beloved, here you go. I'm going to say what I'm going to say. Let's apply this for just a moment and think rightly about things. As David is praying this, remember that he's praying in a representative capacity. Remember that others were affected by what's happening to him. Remember that zeal for the Lord and the glory of the Lord is animating everything that he says. There are broad consequences to what's happening to David. Many people are affected by it. This is not the situation where a man is individually in conflict with another individual man like much of our conflict comes up. This is not a good way for me to speak this way but this is not David being upset because another man had cut off his chariot on the freeway, right? You all can relate to that, and you get angry about that. "What's that So-and-so doing cutting me off?" It's not that kind of cheap, temporary, passing, personal insult. When you and I are personally insulted, when people personally react against us even in the cause of Christ, Christ calls us, "You pray for your enemies. You love those who persecute you." And on a personal level as we are responding to those things that are individually directed at us, we respond with that spirit of grace that the Lord showed to us in our salvation and our own wickedness against him. There is that personal response that is informed by things that we've seen in the Sermon on the Mount from Matthew 5. What David is doing here is different because the circumstances are different. Here the cause of God is at stake. Here the glory of God is at stake in a way that is usually not at all at stake if we are thinking rightly and clearly in the personal animosities that we deal with day to day.

That said, beloved, let me put it this way to give a sense of perspective. You know, I have people that are still hostile to me after decades. I don't like that but I'm not angry with them. I'm not asking God to bring judgment on them. I'm asking God to save them. "God, show mercy to them. They need mercy." And their hostility directed to me as a Christian

is dealt with in that perspective and that's the way you should deal with hostility that's directed to you in your personal thing, your personal situation, but think with me about something that is different. If, I wear that personal individual hat. I also wear the hat of a pastor. I also wear the hat of a shepherd. I have people like you that I care about and I have responsibility for in a spiritual realm. If there is someone who would come, I'm just speaking hypothetically, if someone came doing damage to you, someone doing damage to your spiritual lives, someone doing damage to your spiritual well-being, I'm going to pray differently about that. I'm going to pray differently about that because now I'm not personally involved, now I'm saying, "God, your people are at stake here. This person, these people," whoever it is. I'm just speaking hypothetically here to make the point. "God, for the sake of your people, I ask you to deal with them, to restrain them, to stop them, to do whatever is necessary to bring whatever is necessary of force of your omnipotence to stop the harm that they are doing to your people." I pray differently when other people are at stake, when the cause of God is at stake, when the people of God are at stake. I can't treat that, I can't lightly dismiss that following through on the hypothetical, because it's your well-being at stake. It's something beyond me and so I would say, "God, I give them to you and ask you to deal with them; to stop that wicked influence so that your people would not be harmed by what these wicked people are trying to do."

Do you see the difference? There is this representative capacity that changes the way that you think about it and so we kind of separate ourselves out and we say, "David knew what it was like. He didn't raise his hand against a personal enemy. Great. I see that. That's what Christ calls me to in Matthew 5. Ah, but Lord, when your glory is at stake, when people are perverting your truth, and when people are leading your people astray, God, I'm going to ask you to intervene. I don't have a personal stake in this, it's your people that are at stake, and for their sake, Lord, I ask you to exercise your strength to protect them, whatever that means for the wicked people that are bringing this harm upon them." I think that's the right way to see it. I don't think that people in spiritual leadership can just idly stand by in prayer and just say, "Well, you know, whatever is going to be, is going to be. God, this matters. These are people for whom Christ died. I won't raise my own hand against them but, God, I will sure appeal to you to exercise your protective shepherd care, to exercise your rod and staff to drive away the wolves whatever it takes so that your people would be safe and secure and protected." That's how I understand this. That's how I see the enduring relevance of imprecatory Psalms. Not done lightly but when the occasion presents itself, there is time for men of God to step up and pray, "God, you need to help us. This is greater than us. This is more than we can deal with. This is beyond our control. God, there are forces of wickedness behind these men. We are wrestling with principalities. Lord, deal with the whole situation so that your people would be safe and secure and delivered safely into your heavenly kingdom. I'll have it no other way, God. If I pray wrongly, discipline me but I'm going to pray for the protection of your people." So, there you go. I said I was going to say. I said it and that's it.

Point 3. We said that we ask for God's deliverance; we assign the wicked to God; point 3, David here in Psalm 69 anticipates final deliverance. He anticipates final deliverance. As almost always happens in the Psalms, you end on a high note of praise and David having

assigned the wicked to God in verses 22 through 28, in verse 29, he summarizes his overall lament and plea for help. He says, verse 29, "But I," he has turned his focus away from the wicked and now he's back. Verse 29,

29 But I am afflicted and in pain; May Your salvation, O God, set me securely on high.

Kind of a summary of everything he said up to this point, and from that summary, he turns to praise. I love this. Verse 30, having committed himself fully to God, his cause to God, the wicked to God, he has dealt with it all in prayer, now he pivots, leaves that behind and turns to praise. Verse 30 he says,

30 I will praise the name of God with song And magnify Him with thanksgiving. 31 And it will please the LORD better than an ox Or a young bull with horns and hoofs.

Thanksgiving, he says, is a better sacrifice to God than any animal ever could be, echoes of Psalm 51:16 when David speaks in a similar vein, "God, thanksgiving and praise is a better sacrifice. That's more pleasing to you than any animal ever could be, so I offer you my praise, Father, knowing that it pleases you."

Verse 32,

32 The humble have seen it and are glad; You who seek God, let your heart revive.

You see again his concern for the people of God. He says, "As I praise you, the people of God will draw strength, the humble will find encouragement. They will be glad in it as they see it, O God." And why can we have this corporate rejoicing in the midst of our affliction? Verse 33, for this reason, it's because,

33 For the LORD hears the needy And does not despise His who are prisoners.

We might be afflicted and despised by men but the Lord doesn't despise us. He doesn't afflict us. Do you know why? Let's answer the question. Let's keep coming back. Do you know why he never despises us? Do you know why he never despises our plea for help? It's because he is a God of loyal love who has compassion upon his children, and if we belong to him through faith in Christ, that is the infinite storehouse that we draw upon when we go to him in prayer. "God, I am confident in your presence because I know you love me. I know that you are gracious and I can come to you and I can pour out my heart before you with an absolute certainty that you will receive me well. And if my prayers are somehow misdirected, Lord, I know that you'll straighten all of that out."

So in verse 34 he says,

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 The descendants of His servants will inherit it, And those who love His name will dwell in it.

David here looks beyond his present situation to the future salvation of Israel and so he ends in praise. "God, the outcome for your people will be their final deliverance, and in that final deliverance, we will be offering you pure and unhindered, undistracted praise." And that's what he's looking forward to, that final deliverance that informs the way that he prays in the midst of his opposition now.

Let's draw this to a close. Let's bring this plane in for a landing. What can we draw from Psalm 69? Beloved, Christ has gone before you in sorrow and how did it end with Christ? He is exalted to the right hand of the Father. He went through sorrow, he went to the cross, he went to the grave, but he came out in glory and he ascended and he is exalted to glory. That's who Christ is and that is the pattern of God in dealing with his own.

Christian, are you walking the path of unjust affliction? Well, take heart. God knows the way of the righteous. Sometimes he takes us through affliction, sometimes we go through accusations, sometimes those who are close to us push us away, but God knows all of that. It's not the end of the story for you. God knew the way of David and David says, "This comes out in glory." God knew the way of Christ and Christ is now exalted to glory, one day to come back again from that glory to make it known over all the earth that he is Lord of lords and King of kings. In Christ, God himself walked that way.

Beloved, I beg you to take to heart that in your affliction, the love of God for you has not changed. He receives you now in sympathy and in the end, he will deliver you completely, and all that will be left for you after all of the sorrows of this life are done, what will be left with you will be your presence at the throne of Christ giving him praise and honor and glory with all of the tears wiped away, with all of the sorrows forgotten, and nothing but bliss and joy and praise consuming your every thought forever and ever, amen. God never forsakes his own. Your hard path, beloved, will end in praise.

Bow with me.

Father, for all that are here under the hand of affliction, take your word and encourage them greatly. Assure them with what your word says about yourself that you are a God of steadfast love. Let us draw upon that in prayer as we go through the times that would seem to drown us. Give us a proper sense of grace toward our personal foes. Father, protect your people from those who would cause them harm. There are many false prophets in the world, Lord, deal with them, isolate them, quarantine them so that they would not have an effect on those who truly are yours. And Father, bring us certainly to the end, to the conclusion that you have appointed for all of those who know you, that great conclusion of resounding praise at your throne when our lives prove to be one more infallible evidence of the fact that you are always good to you people. So with that, Father, we commit ourselves to you in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

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