

Summer Psalms

*¹ Blessed is the man who walks not in the counsel of the wicked,
nor stands in the way of sinners, nor sits in the seat of scoffers;
² but his delight is in the law of the LORD,
and on his law he meditates day and night.
(Psalms 1:1–2 ESV)*

*Ascribe to the LORD the glory due his name;
worship the LORD in the splendor of holiness.
(Psalms 29:2 ESV)*

For Your Sake I Have Borne Reproach

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Psalm 69

Rev. Paul Carter

Introduction:

Good morning! Open your Bibles to Psalm 69; that's on page 482 in your pew Bibles. This Psalm is quoted more often in the New Testament than any other Psalm. It is almost impossible to over estimate the influence this Psalm has on the New Testament narrative. It is everywhere. One theologian put it this way:

“This Psalm is so frequently quoted and applied to Christ in the New Testament, that it must be considered as directly prophetic.” – Charles Hodge¹

So we have are going to try to hear this Psalm in a couple of different ways this morning. Of course we are very interested in how the New Testament uses this Psalm to teach us things about the life of faith, the person of Jesus and the end of all things but before we get there we need to look at this Psalm in its original context. David was a real person with a real problem and an urgent prayer and so it makes sense for us to start there.

Psalm 69 In Its Original Context:

¹ As cited in William Plumer, *Psalms* (Edinburgh: The Banner Of Truth Trust, first printed 1867, reprinted 2016), 674.

Scholars suggest that Psalm 69 was written near the end of David's life when he was gathering resources and making plans for the eventual construction of the temple. You will recall that David was told by God that he himself would not build the temple – his son Solomon would do that – but David was to assemble all the resources. This would have exposed David to all manner of political and personal antagonism. The expense of this project was absolutely staggering! Joab must have begrudged the funding that could otherwise have gone to the military – others must have begrudged the resources that could otherwise have gone to infrastructure, agriculture or even towards the alleviation of poverty – but David had something PRIMARY on his mind. The temple was the place where people would meet with God, hear from God and receive mercy from God – David understood that these things are PRIMARY! These things have to come first – everything else flows from a right relationship with God. David understands that, but his enemies do not and David is being persecuting for doing God's will. That's the background.

I'll read the text and make a few comments a long the way. Hear now the Word of the Lord:

1 Save me, O God! For the waters have come up to my neck. 2 I sink in deep mire, where there is no foothold; I have come into deep waters, and the flood sweeps over me. 3 I am weary with my crying out; my throat is parched. My eyes grow dim with waiting for my God.

4 More in number than the hairs of my head are those who hate me without cause; mighty are those who would destroy me, those who attack me with lies. What I did not steal must I now restore?

David was being accused here of “robbing” the country of what it needed in order to indulge his pet project. Even though he didn't steal, he finds it easier simply to repay – probably from his own funds.

5 O God, you know my folly; the wrongs I have done are not hidden from you.

David is saying here that while he is not guilty of what he has been accused of, he is by no means perfect. God knows his faults. But David is worried that the things he is accused of will cause the faithful among God's people to lose hope:

6 Let not those who hope in you be put to shame through me, O Lord GOD of hosts; let not those who seek you be brought to dishonor through me, O God of Israel. 7 For it is for your sake that I have borne reproach, that dishonor has covered my face. 8 I have become a stranger to my brothers, an alien to my mother's sons.

9 For zeal for your house has consumed me, and the reproaches of those who reproach you have fallen on me.

David knows that the real issue here is the attitude of his opponents toward God. They don't love God the way they should and therefore they hate David without cause. David knows that it isn't really about him – even though it feels like it is.

10 When I wept and humbled my soul with fasting, it became my reproach. 11 When I made sackcloth my clothing, I became a byword to them. 12 I am the talk of those who sit in the gate, and the drunkards make songs about me.

Everything I do out of my love for you is misunderstood and mocked by the people around me!

13 But as for me, my prayer is to you, O LORD. At an acceptable time, O God, in the abundance of your steadfast love answer me in your saving faithfulness. 14 Deliver me from sinking in the mire; let me be delivered from my enemies and from the deep waters. 15 Let not the flood sweep over me, or the deep swallow me up, or the pit close its mouth over me.

16 Answer me, O LORD, for your steadfast love is good; according to your abundant mercy, turn to me. 17 Hide not your face from your servant, for I am in distress; make haste to answer me. 18 Draw near to my soul, redeem me; ransom me because of my enemies!

19 You know my reproach, and my shame and my dishonor; my foes are all known to you. 20 Reproaches have broken my heart, so that I am in despair. I looked for pity, but there was none, and for comforters, but I found none. 21 They gave me poison for food, and for my thirst they gave me sour wine to drink.

22 Let their own table before them become a snare; and when they are at peace, let it become a trap. 23 Let their eyes be darkened, so that they cannot see, and make their loins tremble continually. 24 Pour out your indignation upon them, and let your burning anger overtake them. 25 May their camp be a desolation; let no one dwell in their tents. 26 For they persecute him whom you have struck down, and they recount the pain of those you have wounded. 27 Add to them punishment upon punishment; may they have no acquittal from you. 28 Let them be blotted out of the book of the living; let them not be enrolled among the righteous.

Now that part of the Psalm is the part that feels very foreign to us, and in a sense it should. We are not David. David was the Lord's anointed and he knew that the Scriptures said that how we respond to the seed of Abraham and the anointed of God is received by God as our attitude towards him. God said that to Abraham:

I will bless those who bless you, and him who dishonors you I will curse (Genesis 12:3 ESV)

St. Augustine understands this part of David's prayer as directly prophetic. He says:

"These things are not said by way of wishing, but under the form of wishing, by way of prophecy". – St. Augustine²

David knows that God will judge and punish those who oppose the Lord's anointed. He will administer a just and proportionate recompense. David sees that and takes comfort in the knowledge that God will sort it out. He then turns away from that vision of the future back to his own present circumstance; verse 29:

29 But I am afflicted and in pain; let your salvation, O God, set me on high!

30 I will praise the name of God with a song; I will magnify him with thanksgiving. 31 This will please the LORD more than an ox or a bull with horns and hoofs. 32 When the humble see it they will be glad; you who seek God, let your hearts revive. 33 For the LORD hears the needy and does not despise his own people who are prisoners.

34 Let heaven and earth praise him, the seas and everything that moves in them. 35 For God will save Zion and build

² As cited in Plumer; *ibid.*, 682.

up the cities of Judah, and people shall dwell there and possess it; 36 the offspring of his servants shall inherit it, and those who love his name shall dwell in it. (Psalms 69:1–36 ESV)

This is the Word of the Lord – thanks be to God!

Now it is a wonderful thing when you can read the Bible backwards. The New Testament Apostles are our authorized interpreters of the Old Testament. Jesus showed them what the Old Testament was saying about him and then they shared that with us through their writings – and this Psalm is more frequently cited in their writings than any other Psalm in the Bible, so we have lots of material to look at. I'm only going to show you the highlights. Turn in your New Testament first of all to John 2.

Psalm 69 In The New Testament:

In John's Gospel Psalm 69 is understood as:

1. As predicting the commitment of Jesus to the purpose and purity of God's "temple"

In John 2 Jesus goes into the temple in Jerusalem and he makes a whip of chords and he drives out all of the money changes who have squeezed out all of the Gentiles who have come to the temple to worship. John then explains this action with a reference to Psalm 69. He says:

it was written, "Zeal for your house will consume me." (John 2:17. ESV)

Where was it written? In Psalm 69:9. Now, John goes on to explain that Jesus' commitment to the purpose and purity of the temple actually had nothing to do with the physical building. He was actually speaking about himself. John says that at the conclusion of this story. In verse 21 he says:

But he was speaking about the temple of his body. (John 2:21 ESV)

Jesus is committed and supremely invested in the purpose for which he was given a body. The author of Hebrews tells us why Jesus was given a body:

For it is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins. 5 Consequently, when Christ came into the world, he said, "Sacrifices and offerings you have not desired, but a body have you prepared for me; 6 in burnt offerings and sin offerings you have taken no pleasure. 7 Then I said, 'Behold, I have come to do your will, O God,

as it is written of me in the scroll of the book.’” (Hebrews 10:4–7 ESV)

Why was Jesus given a body? Why did he come in the flesh? Because it is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sin. Jesus is **FUNDAMENTALLY** and **FULLY** committed to reconciling human beings to God by dealing decisively with human sin! He does that by obeying the will of the Father. He obeys the law of God – he lives a perfect life – and he obeys the judgment of God by paying for human sin with a human life – an infinitely valuable human life. That is the plan of redemption and that is what Jesus is principally and primarily committed to. And it looks like madness to the world.

That is John’s second use of Psalm 69. Flip forward in your Bibles to John 15. In John 15 Psalm 69 is understood as:

2. As predicting the hatred of the world towards Christ and his disciples

In John 15 Jesus says a bunch of things about the hatred of the world directed at him and at all those who follow him. He says for example:

If the world hates you, know that it has hated me before it hated you. (John 15:18 ESV)

If they persecuted me, they will also persecute you. (John 15:20 ESV)

Whoever hates me hates my Father also. (John 15:23 ESV)

Jesus says to his disciples: “I know it feels like its about you, but its not. They hate you because they hate me. And they hate me because they hate the Father.” What does that sound like? It sounds like David in Psalm 69 and in fact Jesus himself provides that footnote. He says at the end of this section:

But the word that is written in their Law must be fulfilled: ‘They hated me without a cause.’ (John 15:25 ESV)

Psalm 69:4. Their own Bible predicts that they will hate the Messiah because they hate God.

Thirdly, in John 19:28 Psalm 69 is understood as:

3. As predicting the abuse and mockery that Jesus suffered on the cross

All of the Gospels record some version of this. Jesus is hanging on the cross and he is baking in the sun as he slowly wastes away; John 19 records:

Jesus, knowing that all was now finished, said (**to fulfill the Scripture**), “I thirst.” 29 A jar full of sour wine stood there, so they put a sponge full of the sour wine on a hyssop branch and held it to his mouth. (John 19:28-29 ESV)

To fulfill Scripture; what Scripture? Psalm 69:21:

for my thirst they gave me sour wine to drink. (Psalms 69:21 ESV)

Every important detail of the Messiah’s life and death was predicted by the prophets – David chief among them. That’s why Jesus said to his disciples before they went to Jerusalem:

“See, we are going up to Jerusalem, and everything that is written about the Son of Man by the prophets will be accomplished. 32 For he will be delivered over to the Gentiles and will be mocked and shamefully treated and spit upon. 33 And after flogging him, they will kill him, and on the third day he will rise.” 34 But they understood none of these things. (Luke 18:31–34 ESV)

Jesus understood – but the disciples didn’t. But afterwards, on the other side of the cross and with the help of the Holy Spirit, they did. They finally understood that for our sake Jesus had to suffer.

Fourthly, in Acts 1:20 as also in Romans 11:9 Psalm 69 is understood as:

4. As predicting the judgment of God upon all those who have rejected Christ

In Acts 1 the disciples are trying to process what has happened to Judas – the disciple who betrayed the Lord. He died a horrible death! He hung himself and it appears that his body went undiscovered for an extended period of time and in the hot Judean sun his insides went rancid and he basically exploded and his guts came out and fouled the land all around him. He died the most shameful and disgusting death imaginable. Why did this happen? Judas was one of the disciples! The answer is drawn from Psalm 69. Peter says:

“For it is written in the Book of Psalms, “‘May his camp become desolate, and let there be no one to dwell in it’

(Acts 1:20 ESV)

That is a quotation from Psalm 69:25. Now, this gets more interesting still. When we were talking about the background for Psalm 69 I mentioned that David was coming under intense scrutiny and opposition because of his extravagant investment in the temple. People were offended by the amount of money he was spending on this project. That's what turned them against David. Now, do you remember what event is immediately associated with Judas' turn against Jesus? It was the anointing of Jesus at Bethany. A woman came and anointed Jesus with \$30,000 worth of perfume and Judas was horribly offended. John 12 says:

4 But Judas Iscariot, one of his disciples (he who was about to betray him), said, 5 "Why was this ointment not sold for three hundred denarii and given to the poor?" 6 He said this, not because he cared about the poor, but because he was a thief, and having charge of the moneybag he used to help himself to what was put into it. (John 12:4–6 ESV)

Jesus replied famously:

For the poor you always have with you, but you do not always have me." (John 12:8 ESV)

Yes, of course the poor are important – but what I'm doing is primary. My body is going to be the meeting place between and God mankind - she sees that and you don't. Just like David's investment in the temple was misunderstood so was this woman's! Now, Matthew tells us something very interesting. Right after this event, he says:

14 Then one of the twelve, whose name was Judas Iscariot, went to the chief priests 15 and said, "What will you give me if I deliver him over to you?" (Matthew 26:14–15 ESV)

This is Psalm 69 all over again and so Peter in Acts 1:20 connects the dots and he says – this – this whole thing with Judas' gross and horrible death – this is Jesus in his glorified and ascended state answering the prayer of David in Psalm 69! Jesus – now exalted, now reigning in heaven is beginning to recompense those who have opposed the Lord's anointed – that's why Judas died the way he did! The entire episode is understood by Peter through the lens of Psalm 69.

Fifthly, in Romans 15:3 Psalm 69 is understood as:

5. As commending the example of Christ to us

In Romans 15 Paul says:

1 We who are strong have an obligation to bear with the failings of the weak, and not to please ourselves. 2 Let each of us please his neighbor for his good, to build him up. 3 For Christ did not please himself, but as it is written, “The reproaches of those who reproached you fell on me.” (Romans 15:1–3 ESV)

Psalm 69:9. The Apostle Paul understands Psalm 69 as predicting the righteous suffering of Jesus Christ and as commending his suffering as an example to us. Jesus suffered for God and for us – therefore we ought to be able to make sacrifices and to suffer some difficulties also. We ought to be able to bear with immature Christians who are not fully sanctified. We ought to be able to put our own pleasures on hold as we serve and care for one another. The cross of Jesus Christ is MORE THAN an example, but it is never LESS THAN an example to all those who would follow him.

Now I mentioned when we began this series that I wanted to do more than “explain” the Psalms. The Psalms are poetry, they are songs and songs are meant to impact our emotions. I want to help us FEEL THE PSALMS and so let’s end our time together by asking a very simple question:

How Should Psalm 69 Make Us Feel?

First of all I think Psalm 69 should make us feel:

1. Grateful for the salvation that is ours in Jesus Christ

Remember that this entire Psalm was instigated by the reaction of people to David’s lavish investment in the temple. People thought it was too much, people thought David was obsessed. They were offended actually; just like Judas was offended by how much money the woman from Bethany had “wasted” on Jesus. Both of these stories are supposed to remind us that RECONCILIATION WITH GOD IS NOT CHEAP. The response of David was appropriate, the response of the woman was appropriate in light of what it cost GOD to reconcile humanity to himself. His gift was LAVISH, our response should be similarly LAVISH.

Let me put this to you in another way. Is anyone in your life presently offended by the amount of money and time you invest in your worship and response to Jesus Christ?

Everything David did in his worship offended the people around him. They ridiculed his investment in the temple, they mocked his fasting and prayers – he seemed way too serious, way too committed and a little bit fanatical. Is anyone in your life expressing similar concerns?

You know there are folks in this church who concern me in terms of their investment in baseball or gymnastics. You can drop \$10,000/year and spend half your life servicing those gods – I’m concerned about that, that looks crazy to me – so let me flip that around and ask is anyone in your life concerned about how lavishly you are investing in your worship of Jesus Christ – because they should be! If you understand what God has done to secure your redemption – if you understand the price that has been paid, then your response should look “all in” and maybe even “over the top” to people who are not seeing what you see.

Psalm 69 should make us feel CRAZY GRATEFUL for the gift we have been given. It should inspire in us worship and response that is concerning to other people.

Secondly, I think Psalm 69 should make us feel:

2. Encouraged to be prayerful and patient when enduring persecution

David’s example is very helpful to us. When David is being pressed and persecuted by people he immediately goes to the LORD in prayer. He says:

But as for me, my prayer is to you, O LORD. (Psalms 69:13 ESV)

I’m not going to go and try and explain myself again, I’m not going to go and recruit allies – I’m going to go to you, Lord. I’m going to pray. Prayer is the refuge of the persecuted.

The example of Jesus is even more encouraging. David at least knew that he was not perfect – he said in his prayer, the charges they are making against me are false, but you know very well that I am a sinner. David was never, truly, a righteous sufferer – but Jesus was. He never sinned – not once – and yet he was mocked, reviled, scorned and abused by men. He didn’t sin – he BECAME SIN – that we might become the righteousness of God.

Paul turns that around in Romans 15 and says ‘if he did that for you, then surely you can bear some suffering and some unjust treatment as you serve and minister the Gospel to other people’. Of course you’ll be misunderstood – if they hated me they’re going to hate you – of course you will be shamed from time – Jesus was crucified naked on a cross by a major highway on a feast weekend. In light of that - people making fun of you on Facebook is probably something you can handle.

Psalm 69 should remind us that suffering while doing God’s will is more or less PAR FOR THE COURSE. It is certainly no reason for hand wringing or course correction or compromise. It is reason only for refuge in prayer.

Thirdly and lastly, Psalm 69 should make us feel:

3. Urgent to pursue reconciliation with God through the Body of Jesus Christ

Psalm 69:28 says:

Let them be blotted out of the book of the living; let them not be enrolled among the righteous. (Psalms 69:28 ESV)

He’s talking there about what happens to people who are not in right relationship with Lord’s anointed. The Apostle John takes up that same imagery in Revelation 20:

And if anyone’s name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire. (Revelation 20:15 ESV)

God carefully records the names of all of those who are in right relationship with the person of Jesus Christ. If you’re in the book then you are in the kingdom, if you aren’t in the book then you are not. You will be outside, in the dark, under judgment, away from God – forever.

Psalm 69 reminds us that those are the stakes. That’s what’s on the line here and therefore our mission to invite people into right relationship with Jesus Christ ought to be understood as very **SERIOUS BUSINESS**. We ought to be like David who called on people to:

Kiss the Son, lest he be angry, and you perish in the way, for his wrath is quickly kindled. Blessed are all who take refuge in him. (Psalms 2:12 ESV)

This is the day of salvation my friends, and this is the Word of the Lord, thanks be to God. Let's pray.