

God's King: Shamed, Suffering and Saved

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[0 : 00] Well, I wonder when you turn to the Book of Psalms, when was the last time you opened the Book of Psalms, and why did you go there?

Very often, I think, we go to the Book of Psalms looking for comfort, right, peace. I was looking at some nice prints recently to put up on the wall.

Nearly all of them were a verse from the Book of Psalms, and nearly all of them were a verse and came with a picture of a nice sunset, and a summer meadow, and a waterfall, nice and lovely and calming things.

But not every psalm is like that. Not every psalm is like that. And this is quite a shocking psalm. Even as I read it, I wonder if you wondered what it was going to be about.

It starts with an image of someone drowning in deep water. It talks about the experience of being shamed and punished for doing the right thing.

[1 : 03] And in the middle is the kind of prayer that really makes us squirm, doesn't it? An imprecatory prayer. The psalmist praying that God's anger and punishment would come on his enemies in a really graphic way.

And we could pick bits out of this psalm, couldn't we, that would look great on Instagram, with a nice background. But on the whole, this is the kind of psalm that might feel us leaving uncomfortable rather than at peace.

But what I hope we see this evening is that this psalm does hold out great comfort to us. What makes us uncomfortable about it is that the comfort comes at a cost.

Because the comfort we find in this psalm is on the other side of shame and suffering. And crucially for us, it is the shame and the suffering of whom?

Who is this psalm of? Who is it about? If you look at the heading, who is it of? It is of David. It is of God's king.

[2 : 15] One of the things that Christians around the world reflect on at this time of year is the truth. That there can be no crown without the cross. That God's king, that the Christ must suffer many things.

And be rejected. And must be killed. And only then, after three days rise again. There is no costless comfort in the Christian life.

Because we were bought at a price. And Psalm 69 helps us to reflect then on that cost. The price that Christ paid to redeem us. Helps us to reflect on our own experience of shame and of suffering as we walk with Christ.

And it gives us the promise of a lasting peace and comfort in Christ through his suffering. That's what I hope we'll see in our time in this psalm.

First of all then, the shame he suffered. The first 12 verses paint quite a vivid picture, don't they? Of somebody who is out of their depth. I wonder if you can feel the panic, the fear that comes with being in the water.

[3 : 28] Maybe in the sea, reaching down with your feet and finding nothing below you. You are out of your depth at the mercy of the water. And there's a helplessness that comes with not having a foothold, isn't there?

I wonder if you remember having felt that panic. And the terror that comes from being out of your depth. Well, that's the fear David feels as he writes this psalm. Look, he speaks of waters up to my neck.

I sink in the depths. There is no foothold. He speaks of deep waters, of floods. He feels he's about to go under and he can't do anything about it. And when he cries for help, verse 3, no one can hear him.

I don't know what your greatest fear is. But I've said before that this is the greatest fear of the Hebrew people. They feared the sea.

Wild water stands off of the chaos or, as in this psalm, rebellion throughout Scripture. And so the very thought of being out of your depth in the water and not having any rescue, this is what kept little Hebrew boys and girls up at night.

[4 : 38] And so this is David's worst nightmares coming true. But not, notice, in a kind of physical and watery way. He's not in the sea as he...

He's overwhelmed here by his enemies. This is what it feels like, his worst nightmare coming true. He is overwhelmed by his foes.

Notice how many and how fierce they are. Those who hate me without reason outnumber the hairs of my head. Many are my enemies without cause.

Those who seek to destroy me. Now, enemies come in all forms throughout Scripture. We see different kinds of opposition to God and to his king in the Bible.

We're not told specifically who the enemies are at this point. But why do they hate David? Why do they want to destroy him? Well, he says there is no why.

[5 : 37] They hate without reason, without cause. That is the most fearsome type of opposition, isn't it? It doesn't have a point. They just hate God and his king.

They do not want them in the picture. David's really clear as well, isn't he? He's done nothing wrong to provoke their hatred. David says he's been forced to restore what I did not steal.

It's vengeful punishment for a crime he didn't commit. Now, in the next verse, he confesses, doesn't he, to God that he's not perfect. But it's as if he's kind of inviting God who sees his heart, who sees all his sin, to sift through it all and see that in this case, he really is blameless.

He wants God to see that he's being wrongfully punished and persecuted for no reason that can be traced back to his own wrongdoing or his own sin.

And in fact, he's not only being punished despite being innocent. Notice he is being punished because of his devotion to God.

[6 : 47] See that in verse 7. For he says, I endure scorn for your sake and shame covers my face. For verse 9, zeal for your house consumes me and the insults of those who insult you fall on me.

David is saying, these are really God's enemies who hate God, but he is being attacked because he is God's king, God's representative.

A little bit like if two countries fall out. One sign that things are going very badly indeed is when one country sends the ambassador of the other country home.

Not because the ambassador himself or herself has done something wrong, but because the ambassador represents a country that is now an enemy. There's almost no greater shame for a country in peacetime than having your ambassador sent home.

And that is what's going on with David. That diplomatic relations with God have broken down. And so God's representative, his king, is getting shamed and punished as a result.

[8 : 00] And if we know the Gospels, indeed, if you heard the reading of the Gospel earlier in our service, we've maybe picked up on how another greater king sees himself in this king's suffering.

John says, Jesus' followers who knew the Bible much better than we do remembered verse 9 of this psalm as they watched Jesus turning over tables, currency exchange tables, driving livestock out of the temple.

Get these out of here, he said. Stop turning my father's house into a market. Get these out of here. What they were going to do with him because of his love for God. Destroy this temple, he said, and I will raise it again in three days. They didn't understand, but the temple that he spoke of was his own body.

They would destroy him, God's king, but he would rise again. Later in John's Gospel, in chapter 15, Jesus himself quotes verse 4 of this psalm when he says, whoever hates me hates my father as well.

[9 : 38] They have hated both me and my father, but he said, this is to fulfill what is written in their law verse 4, they hated me without reason. See, what did Jesus see when he read Psalm 69?

He saw himself. He saw himself. He saw in Psalm 69 a mirror of his own suffering. Brothers and sisters, what we've seen in these verses so far, the sense of drowning, the overwhelming hostility, the baseless hatred, the opposition to God, our Lord Jesus knew it firsthand.

This is his experience. This is what he suffered. He says so. Let me invite you to read those verses again later tonight, maybe tomorrow morning in the quiet, and to think of the Lord Jesus.

If we love the gospel, our hearts gravitate naturally to the point of his supreme suffering on the cross in his death. And that is the climax of his suffering, of course, but Psalm 69 rolls back the story to show that all his life, Jesus suffered this hatred, shame, and hostility.

His physical suffering on the cross was incredible, but the shame, the rejection, the opposition he suffered throughout his life was constant, punished wrongly for sins he didn't commit, blamed for what he had not done, shamed simply for being God's king and God himself.

[11:21] And rightfully, he would not ever have suffered because he had never sinned, and not just sinless with lots of small print like David, no, perfectly, truly, without sin, without guilt whatsoever.

And yet a cost was demanded of him, and he was made to suffer, not as a result of his wrongdoing, but at our hands, because he loved God, and we did not.

But notice his prayer in verse 6. It's repeated so we don't miss it there. May those who hope in you not be disgraced because of me, he says. May those who seek you not be put to shame because of me.

God's king prays that those who have their trust in God would not be put to shame or disgrace because of him, but actually be spared his suffering, which brings us then to verses 13 to 28, and our second point, the salvation he prayed for.

The salvation he prayed for. But I pray to you, Lord, in the time of your favor, in your great love, O God, answer me with your sure salvation. He circles back, doesn't he, to the drowning image in verse 14, and prays God would keep him from sinking to the depths, that he would be delivered from those who hate him.

[12:47] And he's appealing. It's a bit disguised in our translation. He's appealing to God's covenant promise. Key phrases pop out like steadfast love, saving faithfulness, mercy, compassion.

You could think of those phrases a bit like the tagline of God's covenant. And David's using those phrases, the very same phrases that John would later repeat to express what God has given in sending his son.

John writes, the law was given through Moses. Grace and truth came through Jesus Christ. That is chesed, steadfast love or grace, emet, saving faithfulness or truth.

David is appealing to that covenant love, incarnate in the Lord Jesus, and saying, this is who you have promised to be, Lord, so please be that God of grace and love and faithfulness to me now. And he prays to God because he knows that it is only God who can save him. Only he sees the depth of his pain. You know how I am scorned, disgraced, and shamed.

[14:05] Where else is God's king supposed to turn for comfort? Because we see there is no human help or support that he can rest on.

There was no close confidence, someone to share in his sadness. Scorn has broken my heart, he says, and left me helpless.

I looked for sympathy, but there was none. For comforters, but I found none. And again, it doesn't take much, does it, for us to picture Jesus suffering in this way as he prayed.

Where did he go? At the height of his suffering, he went to pray, didn't he, in the garden. And remember what he said to his friends, my soul is overwhelmed with sorrow to the point of death, he said.

Stay here then and watch. He then went and prayed. What did he pray for? He prayed for salvation. Didn't he?

[15:08] Going a little farther, he fell to the ground and prayed that, if possible, the hour might pass from him. Abba, Father, he said, everything is possible for you.

Take this cup from me. And we're so quick sometimes to resolve the tension in that prayer with the next line that Jesus prays that we don't pause, do we, to reflect on what it was Jesus went to the garden to pray, that if God could spare him the painful and shameful death of the cross, please would he?

Save me, oh God. He prayed to be delivered from his enemies, to be rescued from death. Is that not the experience of God's king on earth? That only God could save him.

Because when he went back to his friends with whom he'd shared that his soul was overwhelmed with sorrow as to the point of death, what were they doing? Not praying to God for him, not

discussing how to support him, or even sharing in his grief and sadness and weeping for him, but sleeping.

They could not save him. They would not help him. Could not the Lord Jesus himself have said in that hour, scorn has broken my heart and left me helpless?

[16:31] I looked for sympathy, but there was none. For comforters, but I found none. And of course, his death did come because he did pray to God the Father, not my will, but yours be done.

And he gladly submitted, did he not, to the shame and the suffering of his death again, out of love for the glory and honor and will of his Father.

He was fed the bitter wine. They gave me vinegar for my thirst. He was not delivered that night from his shame, but delivered over to his torment, delivered into the hands of his enemies, delivered into disgrace and humiliation, delivered over to death.

And as he died, he prayed, my God, my God, why have you forsaken me? Now, this is where Jesus deviates from this psalm in his prayer.

Because while he had taught on earth about the rightful punishment we are due for our sin, at the very point that you would expect him to pray that we would get what we deserve for having put him to death, in fact, he does the opposite.

[17:53] What does he pray? Father, he prayed, forgive them. Forgive them. He hung on the cross and prayed for the forgiveness of those who had put him there.

Now, to take in the depth of those words from the cross, we do actually need the background that this psalm gives us. Because what David prays in this situation, in verses 22 to 28, what does he pray?

He prays for punishment. Now, to understand Jesus' prayer for forgiveness, we need to understand that David's prayer is not wrong. It is intense and graphic, but he is praying for forgiveness.

But this is ultimately what his enemies deserve for shaming and hating God by shaming and hating him. Do we see that? But the reason that we today don't pray like this isn't because it's not true.

And it isn't because it's not deserved. And it should chill us and bring us to our knees to read those verses and think that that would be right for God to do to me in my sin.

[19:12] Because that is true. And if your trust is not in Jesus, these verses should send you running to him. Because this is what our sins deserve.

So David is praying this because this is what his enemies would rightfully suffer for wrongfully shaming and hurting him. And David can pray that only because he is God's king and they are attacking him as God's king.

So we see that what Jesus prays does not make David's prayer wrong. What Jesus' prayer does do is take this overwhelming rightful punishment and suffering and instead of heaping it upon his enemies, he takes it from his enemies and has it heaped instead upon himself.

So that instead of him being spared the shameful and painful death of the cross which he prayed for, instead, he went willingly to the cross to spare his enemies from that same shame and pain and punishment.

He suffered and died so that we would receive the steadfast love and saving faithfulness of God instead of his rightful wrath and punishment.

[20:34] that is why he prays, isn't it? Father, forgive them because he is suffering what they should have suffered so that they would not have to.

And friends, that is why we don't pray prayers like this in Psalm 69 because we are not the Christ and so we pray in light of what Christ has done for us and what he prayed.

The only one who has the right to pray like this is him and on the cross he chose not to. So that in the end, the prayer that he prayed for his salvation becomes a prayer for our salvation.

If it were possible, God, would he spare him that death? But if it is not possible, well, save them instead. Save them instead.

But that is not where this psalm finishes nor, praise God, where God's king finishes. Finally then, we see the certainty he offers in verses 29 to 36.

[21:39] The whole tone shifts at the end of this psalm from desperation to confidence. But as for me, he says, afflicted and in pain, may your salvation, God, protect me.

I will praise God's name in song and glorify him with thanksgiving. So he turns now from prayer to praise because he is so confident even in his suffering that he will be saved.

And praise God, we know God's king, the Lord Jesus Christ, was saved. That God heard his prayer and raised him from the dead. So that the lesson of this psalm ultimately is in Christ's salvation, find your salvation.

See that? Verses 32 and 33, the poor will see and be glad. You who seek God, may your hearts live. The Lord hears the needy and does not despise his captive people.

We see, don't we, how God ultimately did save his king and learn this lesson that he will save us too when we cry out to him. with our trust in the shamed and suffering king.

[22 : 54] See, if God had left his king only to suffer and die, we would not be saved. If Christ had died and not been raised to life, his death would have been in vain.

Because if Christ had not overcome death, then his death had not overcome the power of sin. or to put it more simply than that, how would we feel?

How would we feel if Christ had stayed dead? Would we feel as if he had taken away our sin? As if he had conquered death? Would we not feel as if death and sin and rebels had had the last word? Because they would have. Because death had overcome him. And his death had not overcome our sin. If he had not been raised, we could not be sure of our salvation, could we?

Because we would have no proof that his death could save us and that he had been saved. And so his resurrection to everlasting life tells us, doesn't it, that his death worked.

[23 : 59] that through him God did defeat sin and death and the world's rebellion by delivering his son over to death for our sins and delivering him from death in his resurrection.

So that seeing his salvation, his resurrection, his everlasting life, we can be sure of our salvation if our trust is in him such that we are united with him.

And that is how we know, brothers and sisters, that the Lord hears the needy and doesn't despise his captive people because he did not leave his son in the grave but raised him to life again.

And look at the certainty of the hope that God's king now offers for wills. If you see them there in verse 35, 36, let heaven and earth praise him, the seas and all that move in them for God will save Zion and rebuild the cities of Judah.

Then people will settle there and possess it. The children of his servants will inherit it and those who love his name will dwell there.

[25 : 12] He holds out a certain hope of rescue through his shame and suffering for all who love him, who trust in him for their salvation.

The Lord Jesus promises us, doesn't he, that his suffering and death have prepared a place for us in the Father's house, in the presence of God forever.

And friends, this is supreme comfort for us, isn't it? And life and peace but it does not come cheaply or lightly. It is costly, it is weighty, it is lasting comfort and joy because it comes to us at the cost of the king's life.

It comes to us through his death, through his suffering, by his resurrection. It surely leaves us not only comforted but rejoicing tonight.

It leaves us surely praising God with our king tonight, surely glorifying him with thanksgiving. Even if we came to the psalm wondering what was here for us tonight, surely we finish with a great big vision of him and great thanks for what he has done and saying, wow, look at him and giving him our praise.

[26 : 29] Surely we have seen Jesus in these words. Surely we want to worship him for what he has done for us, the shame he bore, the death he died, the life he now lives and it leaves us surely also confident in our comfort.

Now that is not the same as feeling comfortable, but being confident in our comfort is knowing and clinging to the comfort that God has secured and given us even when we do not feel comfortable and at peace.

Jesus himself promises that if we follow him, we will be treated wrongly and we will be shamed by the world. The servant is not greater than his master.

He said, if they persecuted me, they will persecute you also. But in that shame we face, we have this certain confidence of our comfort in our salvation through him.

We know because Jesus has suffered and died and risen again that his prayer will be answered in the end, that we will not be put to shame or disgraced because of him forever, because we have the certain hope of a glorious future that will not put us to shame.

[27 : 47] He will return to deliver us and our faith will be vindicated. But notice that David can praise God for his salvation even when he is still afflicted, still in pain, verse 29, because of his confidence in God's certain promised comfort and rescue.

We have reason, don't we, to have peace today comfort today, confidence today, because God has promised in Christ a day of coming comfort.

And we have all the more reason for confidence tonight if our hope is in Jesus because we see him once shamed, once suffering, once crucified, now risen, now living, now reigning, now interceding for us and our salvation.

So we have all the more reason to praise and thank God tonight and cling to his promise of salvation in and through his King, the Lord Jesus. Let's praise him together now as we pray.

God, our Father, how we thank you that all of your word speaks to us about our Savior, Jesus.

[29 : 12] Father, how we thank you for his suffering. Lord, how we thank you for what he endured that he would save us. how we thank you that he faced the rebellion, the opposition, the rejection of this world for loving you, honoring you, and that through him we come to you and are accepted.

Father, how we thank you that in and through him our sins are forgiven. Lord, that we who once turned from him can come to you and be forgiven and welcomed through him.

Father, what grace, what love, what mercy. Lord, we pray that you would change us by this, that as we have seen Jesus, that we would be transformed.

Lord, that our hearts would be thrilled by this good news and that you would comfort us in all our affliction. Father, even as we do suffer shame and as we do suffer in this world, that you would set our hearts on the hope that you have given us in and through him of a glorious future in his resurrection life.

Lord, grant us this comfort, we pray, in Jesus' name. Amen.