

THE UNDESERVED SUFFERINGS OF THE SAVIOR

PSALM 69

Introduction:

The New Testament writers found this Psalm useful in explaining the sufferings of the Lord Jesus. He Himself turned to this Psalm three times when He needed to explain what was happening.

This indicates to us that we should approach this psalm as a work of prophecy. While it was surely born in the painful experience of David, it does more than record his experience. The psalm probably comes from that period of the persecution from Saul. Surely the sufferings that came upon David from the hand of Saul were undeserved. But it points us to the greater Son of David, and His experiences of undeserved sufferings. Just as David writes as a representative righteous man in the psalm, our Lord was the ultimate righteous man. He demonstrated to the world what a righteous life looks like, and received the typical treatment that the world gives to the righteous.

Larry Richards in the Bible Reader's Companion points to the prophetic element in the+ Psalm. He writes, "This psalm grows out of David's personal experience, but also foreshadows the experience of Christ.

Passages that the N.T. applies to Jesus are: * the antagonism of his fellows (v. 4 with John 15:23). * his zeal to serve God (v. 9 with John 2:17). * the vinegar offered the sufferer (v. 21 with Matt. 27:48).¹

²Richards, L. 1991. *The Bible reader's companion*. Includes index. Victor Books: Wheaton, Ill.

As we study the psalm, we must never forget the warning that Jesus gave to His followers. He warned them that if He had provoked the world to unjust attitudes and actions by His loyalty to God, so would His followers if they were faithful to Him. We should never be surprised when our good deeds and loving actions are misinterpreted by the world.

I. THE UNDESERVED SUFFERINGS OF JESUS WERE MANY.

David did not experience just one incident of unjust treatment; it was a common experience in his life. The same is true of the Son of David, our Savior. Even though much of His suffering occurred the last hours of his life, some of it was evident in the beginning of His life and ministry.

1. He suffered undeserved hostility. (v.4)

“Those who hate me without cause are more than the hairs of my head; they are mighty who would destroy me, being my enemies wrongfully; though I have stolen nothing, I will restore it.” (v. 4)

The hostility against David was stirred up by the suspicions and accusations of Saul. Saul saw David as a threat to the succession to the throne by Jonathan, and was determined to eliminate him. He would not allow any rival to his son.

The hostility against our Lord was without cause. He himself used this expression in setting forth the claims of His life. He never gave anyone any cause to be hostile toward him, but He encountered it in many ways and places. He received hostility from the High Priest and the Sanhedrin at His trial. He received hostility from the soldiers to whom He was committed. He received hostility from the crowd that watched His crucifixion. He even heard hostile words while He died from those who were crucified with Him.

2. He suffered undeserved rejection from His family. (v. 7-8)

“I have become a stranger to my brothers, and an alien to my mother’s children.” (v. 8)

There is evidence of this developing in the life of David when he first appears in the Biblical record after his anointing. When he shows up at the battle with the Philistines, and makes his offer to confront Goliath, his older brothers seem to be embarrassed by his youthful zeal. There is no report of support from them during the years of fleeing from Saul, though later some of their children do find a place in his kingdom.

Jesus experienced the same thing. Mary's other children were slow to believe that her Firstborn was the Messiah. John reports concerning them, "For even His brothers did not believe in Him." (John 7:5) They questioned his sanity when He persisted in ministering to the people at His own expense. This must have taken an emotional toll on the Lord Jesus. This is sometimes the path the righteous must walk—families do not always understand.

3. He suffered undeserved reproach from His critics. (v. 9-12)

"Because zeal for Your house has eaten me up, and the reproaches of those who reproach You have fallen on me. When I wept and chastened my soul with fasting, that became my reproach. I also made sackcloth my garment; I became a byword to them. Those who sit in the gate speak against me, and I am the song of the drunkards." (v. 9-12)

David's devotion to the Lord was evident to all who knew him. He was so zealous that the corrupt of the land found him to be offensive. Their rejection of the ways of the Lord God was transferred to him.

Interestingly the disciples of Jesus remembered this word of David when they observed the reaction of the religious leaders when he cleansed the temple. His demand for the purity of the house of God was repulsive to them. They preferred the system of compromise that they had concocted.

“Then His disciples remembered that it was written, ‘Zeal for Your has eaten Me up’”. (John 2:17)

This was the lot of our Lord all the way to the end. At his trial they heaped mockery upon him when he stood before the Sanhedrin. The Roman soldiers relished the opportunity to mock a Jewish man like him. The bystanders at Golgotha entered into the sport of mockery; and even the two thieves who shared his plight used the opportunity to join the crowd. He deserved their praise at every point, but endured their mockery.

4. He suffered undeserved demeaning deeds from His persecutors. (v. 21)

“They also gave me gall for my food, and for my thirst they gave me vinegar to drink.” (v. 21)

We do not know of a specific instance of such in the life of David. It may be simply a poetic way of describing the hard time the crowd gave him. Instead of helping him during this period of his life, they gave him bitterness and a hard time.

But the Gospel writers see literal fulfillment of these words in the life of Jesus. Each of them reports such an incident at the Cross. When he cried out, “I thirst!”, they gave him sour vinegar to drink. Matthew’s report reads like

this: “Immediately one of them ran and took a sponge, filled it with sour wine, and put it on a reed, and gave it to Him to drink. The rest said, ‘Let Him alone; let us see if Elijah will come and save Him.’” (Matthew 27:48-49) The soldier who brought the vinegar probably intended it as an act of mercy, but the crowd did not want Him to receive even this act of mercy. They asked the soldier to stop giving Him the wine, and to see if Elijah might come and help Him.

O the extent of the underserved sufferings of this Righteous Man, the Son of Man. How many indignities fell upon Him simply because He was doing the will of His Father.

II. THE UNDESERVED SUFFERINGS OF JESUS WERE PAINFUL

The language of this psalm is not just metaphorical. It expresses real sufferings that happened in real time to the young David on his way to the throne. He uses poetic imagery to express just how real and hard the pains of the sufferings were. It is the nature of suffering that you can report it only by the use of images.

1. The sufferings were like the threat of drowning (v. 1-3, 14-15)

“Save me, O God! For the waters have come up to my neck, I sink in deep mire, where there is no standing. I have come into deep waters where the

floods overflow me. I am weary with my crying; my throat is dry; my eyes fail while I wait for my God.”

“Deliver me out of the mire, and let me not sink; let me be delivered from those who hate me, and out of the deep waters. Let not the floodwater overflow me; and let not the pit shut its mouth on me.”

This imagery plumbs the depth of David’s emotions during this time of trial. He felt as though he was being overwhelmed by the attacks of Saul and the opposition of the people of Israel. The water boarding controversy of our day could be understood in this context.

Can you imagine what our Lord in His humanity must have felt as the opposition to His ministry and life mounted across the years? The author of Hebrews alludes to this in this insightful reference to those days, “Who in the days of His flesh, when He had offered up prayers and supplications, with vehement cries and tears to Him who was able to save Him from death, and was heard because of His godly fear, though He was a Son, yet He learned obedience by the things which He suffered.” (Hebrews 5: 7-8)

2. The sufferings were depressing (v. 20)

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

On the night before His death our Lord said to His closest followers, “My heart is exceedingly sorrowful, even to death. Stay here and watch.” (Mark 14:34) Mark adds a word about this incident—He began to be troubled and deeply distressed.” (v. 33)

3. The sufferings were grievous (v. 29)

“But I am poor, and sorrowful; let your salvation, O God, set me up on high.”

III. THE UNDESERVED SUFFERINGS OF JESUS WERE INEFFECTIVE.

1. He continued to pray. (v. 1-3, 13-15, 22-28)

“Save me, O God!”

“But as for me, my prayer is to You, O LORD, in the acceptable time; O God, in the multitude of Your mercy, hear me in the truth of Your salvation. Deliver me....”

“Let their table become a snare before them, and their well-being a trap. Let their eyes be darkened, so that they do not see; and make their loins shake continually.”

As you would expect, the Son of David prays a greater prayer than David. The greater Son prayed for the withholding of God’s indignation rather than the pouring out of His indignation. The Son prayed for strength rather than

deliverance, but the amazing thing is that they both prayed. The unjust treatment they received did not turn them from the Father, but rather turned them to the Father with supplication.

2. He continued to trust (v. 34-36)

David closed his prayer with praise to the Father who governs over all situations. The Son of David closed his prayers with a prayer of quiet resignation into the hands of the Father. “Let heaven and earth praise Him, the seas and everything that moves in them. For God will save Zion and build the cities of Judah, that they may dwell there and possess it.” The accusations and mistreatment of the world would not cause either of them to abandon their gratitude toward God nor their trust in Him.

3. He made it to the throne.

Even though the hostility of Saul and his friends were designed to keep David from the throne of Israel, they failed. In God’s good time at the age of thirty what Samuel had done by anointing him as a youth was confirmed in a public ceremony by the whole nation as they publicly declared him to be the King of Israel. All of their plots against him had failed. The undeserved pain they inflicted upon him only prepared him to be a better king for the nation.

The same is true in the experience of the Lord Jesus. The world system did their best to keep him from the throne. But at the age of thirty-three after a violent and shameful death, and glorious resurrection, He ascended into the heaven and was enthroned at the right hand of the Eternal God of the universe. They rejected all of His claims and spurned His offers of the kingdom of God, but He is still enthroned at the right hand of the Father today, and awaiting the time when He will be crowned King over kings, and Lord over lords in the consummation of the kingdom of God.

All of this should be an encouragement to all who suffer for His name's sake, who feel the rejection of the world system. Those who follow the suffering Savior will rule with him in the end. We must not allow the hostility of the world to turn us from the path his will has assigned us. We must be faithful unto the end. Those who suffer with Him will reign with Him in glory.