

## Glorifying God in the Midst of Our Suffering

We began this series of articles from Psalm 69 with a reminder that, as we go forward into this New Year of 2024, we may find ourselves overwhelmed by personal suffering. Although suffering may come into our lives in a variety of ways, David's suffering, as given in this Psalm, is directly connected to the attacks and persecution of others. How should Christians respond to suffering in a way that honors God? The New Testament epistle of

1 Peter is very instructive in this regard. "For this is a gracious thing, when, mindful of God, one endures sorrows while suffering unjustly. For what credit is it if, when you sin and are beaten for it, you endure? But if when you do good and suffer for it you endure, this is a gracious thing in the sight of God. *For to this you have been called*, because Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example, so that you might follow in his steps." (1 Peter 2:19-21) In our Psalm, David, like Peter, is giving us an example of *glorifying God* in the midst of our suffering.

When we come to verse 7, David declares that his suffering is "for your sake," i.e., the suffering is coming because he's seeking to honor God. "I have become a stranger to my brothers, an alien to my mother's sons." (vs. 8) It seems likely that, rather than biological siblings, "brothers" and "my mother's sons" is metaphorical language pointing to the fact that those who are causing his suffering are his fellow Israelites. This is supported in verse 12 with the phrase, "those who sit in the gate." (e.g., Ruth 4:1-2; 2 Samuel 15:2) David's desire that he would not be a negative influence in the midst of his suffering (vs. 6) is not merely a good idea. This is the kind of life that all of God's people are called to live! This is a part of our example to others as well as our worship of God! David, by his example, is instructing God's people as to where our focus needs to be in times of suffering. We don't want to be a negative influence on others—certainly our children—who would be prone to try and follow our example. Our lives are to be lived seeking to honor God in good times as well as in times of suffering. And, like David who was a king and leader among his people, this is especially important for leaders. Generally speaking, most of us *will be leaders* in some degree and at some time, whether in the home, the workplace, or in the church. So, initially, David is praying that he might not sin in this difficult time and be a *negative* example to others. But notice next David's *positive* example in the midst of continued reproach from others which we see in these next few verses.

"For *zeal for your house has consumed me....*" David is expressing an overwhelming desire. He's *consumed* with making sure that the Covenant God is worshiped and honored by his people. This is what is meant by "zeal for your house" as we'll see. This first phrase of Psalm 69:9 propels us forward across redemptive history. It's quoted in the New Testament in John 2:17. You may remember that after Jesus' first miracle at the wedding at Cana, he went down to Capernaum and then eventually goes to Jerusalem. It's the time of the Passover when Jesus arrives at the

Temple. There he finds the money changers at work. Though their role in exchanging Roman coins for the shekels that are needed for paying the annual Temple tax

(Mt. 17:24-27), as well as providing animals to purchase for the Temple sacrifices, is not wrong in and of themselves, the implication is that *where* they're doing this will interfere with the proper worship of God. These traders should not be doing their work in the courts of the Temple at all. Their presence makes *genuine worship impossible* because of all the distractions! There can be no prayer, praise, or hearing from God's word with all this noise of animals, as well as the noises of people buying and selling as if they were in a loud and busy marketplace. Jesus exhibit's *deep concern for the worship of God*. This money changing was likely taking place in the Court of the Gentiles which would have been the *only place* that Gentile converts were allowed to be in the Temple courts. These loud and boisterous distractions have the effect of *completely* excluding the Gentile converts from worship. This is not acceptable to Jesus! In Psalm 69 we see that David, like Jesus many years later, is all consumed with God's worship and His glory. *This is what all Christians are called to!* To glorify God is the priority of our lives. We're to do this always, even in times when we may be experiencing terrible suffering.

Rev. Dr. Steve Jones is the pastor of Westminster Presbyterian Church PCA in Paxton, Illinois.