

Joining Suffering with Triumph

In this series of articles we've seen that some of David's Psalm looks forward across redemptive history and points to Jesus. For example, Psalm 69:9 connects to John 2:17 and reminds us that both David and Jesus are zealous for God's house. We don't know the historical event that's directly connected to this Psalm. It's at least possible that David is speaking of persecution that's coming from some of his fellow Israelites as he makes preparations for the Temple to be built by his son Solomon after his death (1 Chronicles 29). Clearly, David is consumed with the proper worship of God. In Psalm 69, thus far, we've seen that David is all consumed with God's glory, which we see in the life of Jesus as well. *This is what all Christians are called to!* To glorify God is to be the priority of our lives. But, lest we forget, David is seeking to do this even amidst terrible suffering.

Let's further this thought with the second phrase of verse 9: "...and the reproaches of those who reproach you have fallen on me." This phrase is quoted by Paul in Romans 15:3. Notice how it's used there: "We who are strong have an obligation to bear with the failings of the weak, and not to please ourselves. Let each of us please his neighbor for his good, to build him up. For Christ did not please himself, but as it is written, 'The reproaches of those who reproached you fell on me.' For whatever was written in former days was written for our instruction, that through endurance and through encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope." (Rom. 15:1-4) And so, once again, we see an example of seeking to honor God in the midst of suffering and reproach. The word translated "reproach" is pervasive in this section of Psalm 69 (vss.7, 9, 10).

Notice now verses 10-12: while David humbles himself before the Lord, he's "reproached" or it could mean "mocked and treated with open dislike and disrespect." Once again, we see a picture of the laughing and mockery of others as David seeks to honor God in the midst of reproach and shame. Let's move on now from seeking to honor God in the midst of reproach to:

—Steadfast Love and Faithfulness of God is Our Hope

This last section has David continuing to pray for God's help. Notice that David's prayer expresses his trust in God's *timing* as well as his trust in God's *character*: "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*." But, notice as the prayer continues in verses 14-15 we can see that David is, not yet, finished with his suffering. "Deliver me from sinking in the mire; let me be delivered from my enemies and from the deep waters. Let not the flood sweep over me, or the deep swallow me up or the pit close its mouth over me."

Verse 16 shows David's hope in God's character of *steadfast love* as well as his trust in God's *mercy*. Verses 17-18 have David crying out for help again. "Hide not your face....I am in distress; make haste to answer me. Draw near to my soul, redeem me; ransom me because of my

enemies!” The language of “Hide not your face” and “Draw near...” indicate that, in the moment, God seems to be far away. And yet, God’s people know that, in spite of our feelings or how things may appear, God is never, truly, far away from us. The language of “redeem” in the context can mean something like “protect me” as in the language of a *kinsmen redeemer* as we see in chapter four of the book of Ruth (see also Psa. 44:26). The word translated “ransom” carries the idea of “deliver me from my enemies.”

Old Testament scholar, Palmer Robertson, has very capably made the case that there are a number of Psalms that point to the fact that the Messiah, when he comes, will be a suffering Messiah. This is seen in some of the Psalms of David like this one (see also Ps. 41:9; 109:4-5, 8). Robertson notes, “The theme of a suffering Messiah has not always been appreciated or even understood....A triumphant Messiah delights everyone. But the joining of suffering with triumph is a concept most difficult to grasp.” As we saw today, David’s words quoted by Paul (compare Psalm 69:9 with Romans 15:3) remind us that we need to be examples of those who have hope in the midst of our suffering. No matter how much we have to suffer, the steadfast love and faithfulness of God is our hope. Because of the suffering and triumph of Jesus Christ, those who hope in God will never be put to shame (Romans 5:5).

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