

A Firm Foothold: Preparing for the New Year

As we're anticipating the beginning of a New Year, it's axiomatic that we're living in uncertain times. The numbers of Americans who hold firmly to a Christian worldview are steadily declining. All around us there are those who are overtly willing to speak negatively against God, against Christ, and against those who're seeking to stand for Christ. Because this is true, persecution and suffering will come—in *some degree and at some point*—if we're seeking to honor Jesus Christ with our lives. And yet, although it may come from those in the non-believing culture, persecution can sometimes come from those who are either marginal Christians or those who show from their ongoing patterns of disobedience to the clear teachings of scripture that they may not be Christians at all.

Well-known Christian author and pastor Dr. John MacArthur once told of receiving a letter from a woman who shared the sad story of a friend who had decided to divorce her husband but had no biblical reason for doing so. The friend professed to be a Christian but when she was confronted with the truth that what she was doing was scripturally wrong, she became defensive and hostile. She was reminded of God's love and grace, of His power to mend whatever problems she and her husband were having, and of the Bible's standards for marriage and divorce. But she replied that she did not believe that the Bible was really God's Word but was simply a collection of men's ideas about God that each person had to accept or reject or interpret for himself. When her friend wanted to read some specific Bible passages to her, she refused to listen. She had made up her mind and would not give heed to Scripture or to reason. She accused the other woman of luring her into her house in order to ridicule and embarrass her, saying she could not possibly love her by questioning her right to get a divorce. As she left, she slammed the door behind her. The woman who wrote the letter concluded by saying, "I love her, and it is with a heavy heart that I realize the extent of her rejection of Christ. Painful as this has been, I thank God. For the first time in my life I know what it is to be separate from the world."

Today we begin a new series of articles taken from Psalm 69. We're going to get a look at the life of David and how difficult it can be when we try to stand for the truths of scripture against those who want things their own way. Let's begin our look at this Psalm today under the heading:

—Sinking in the Mire

In these first few verses, David is clearly *overwhelmed* by the attacks and persecution of others. Although we're not initially told *who* they are, it seems that the persecution is, almost certainly, coming from his *fellow Israelites* (e.g., vs. 12) . Let's look at the first phrase in verse 1, "Save me, O God!" The word translated "save" here can *also* mean "deliver." Looking at the next phrase we read, "For the waters have come up to my

neck,” which can also translate, “*the waters threaten my life.*” The metaphor that David gives us is of a man who is *overwhelmed* by people and circumstances in his life, analogous to being very near to drowning. He’s crying out to God to “save” or “deliver” him from those who are persecuting him. Verse 2 extends this metaphor of being *overwhelmed* with the phrase “I sink in deep mire, where there is no foothold....the flood sweeps over me.” David reminds us of the need for a firm “*foothold*” in life if we’re going to keep from being *totally overwhelmed* during difficult times.

This article may be a stark reminder that you’re having some of the same experiences of being overwhelmed with struggles in your life that David is experiencing. It may be that, no matter what you try to do or say, there are one or more of your relationships that are strained or coming unraveled. As we’ll see, this Psalm ultimately points forward to salvation in Jesus Christ. As you’re seeking to honor Christ with your life are you facing hostility? Hostility can come in a number of relationships including your family, your friends at work, or your friends in the church. Thankfully, we don’t have to live in continuing states of feeling as if we’re “sinking in the mire.” As we contemplate what the New Year potentially holds in store, may we continue to rest on the firm “foothold” of Jesus Christ. This is always a safe place from which to graciously stand against the struggles that we’ll inevitably face in the coming year.

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