

Psalm 69

Read Psalm 69:1-3: A number of verses here describe the very difficult passion week of Christ. He followed God's word; and did not turn back. He was confronted with some very intimidating thoughts and emotions. We walk by faith, not by sight. Sometimes we get tested on our ability to keep putting one foot ahead of the next.

The psalmist feels like he is drowning. He is having a panic attack as he assesses his situation before him. This happens to believers and unbelievers. He is describing his situation like being in quicksand. He cannot get a handle on his situation. He is at the mercy of the overwhelming situation. He is flailing around and yelling to the lifeguard or rescuer for help. It is reassuring that Jesus quoted a number of verses in this psalm as he was in his final days leading to the cross. Even faithful followers will find themselves at their ropes-end at times.

Sometimes we are in over our heads. We may not be able to see our way out of the situation. We all want a sense that we have some level of control and stability. Surely this feeling of dread and despair is how Jonah felt as he was swallowed by the large fish.

For You cast me into the deep, Into the heart of the seas, And the floods surrounded me; All Your billows and Your waves passed over me. 4 Then I said, 'I have been cast out of Your sight; Yet I will look again toward Your holy temple.' 5 The waters surrounded me, even to my soul; The deep closed around me; Weeds were wrapped around my head. 6 I went down to the [a]moorings of the mountains; The earth with its bars closed behind me forever; (Jonah 2:3-6)

I had a business partnership years ago that became stressful. I had a partner that I could not control. He was making threats about what he might do with our credit lines and bank accounts. The stress of all of that caused me to develop what is known as a *drowning man complex*. I went to a couple of speech therapists to figure out what was happening to me. I would begin to speak; and then run out of air, producing a diminishing speech volume as my sentences continued. I was taking large gulps of air; and not breathing in mid sentence. I was asked if I was *trying to control something that I could not control*. I confirmed "absolutely". She said that I was using a swimming reflex that comes when a person is under high anxiety. I would take a large gulp of air as if I had been thrown overboard in the water. I would not breathe again until I squeaked out my final words.

Then I would take in a gasp of air to continue. In other words, the prospect of being financially responsible for large sums of money that others were trying to control was giving me sleepless nights. We apparently have the same physical and emotional response to the prospect of drowning as we do to being flooded with overwhelming responsibilities and forces way beyond our control.

I met a woman at church who felt like she too was drowning in her anxiety this week. We went to church on Saturday night; and ended up sitting in front of an old friend we had not seen in years. She brought a friend with her to church. This older woman was very disturbed about her upcoming colonoscopy. She was certain that they were going to find cancer. Her family had a history of this. She had no peace; and she asked for prayer and to put anointing oil on her. We gladly did.

Regardless of our situation; life gets too big for us at times. That is not necessarily a bad thing. I have discovered that for me; Satan spends more time at *doorways than hallways*. That means that when I am contemplating stepping through a new door in my faith, everything goes wrong. Once I commit to serving God, I laugh at the intrepidity I had over nothing. In other words; facing a strong headwind could be a sign that you are sailing in the right direction. Any dead fish can float downstream. God wants us to fight the current of this world.

Read Psalm 69:4-5: Now we learn about the specifics of the problem in this psalmist's life. He is in a season of life where he has a lot of enemies. Some people will hate us for what we stand for; because they hate God. Some people will hate us for what we are not. We do not measure up to their expectations. He wisely tries to make peace with his antagonists. It is always better to put out the fire before it spreads any further. At other times; it is not up to us. He recognizes that his past errors in judgement may have caught up to him. Facing a looming situation is different than having committed enemies who are active in bringing you down.

Read Psalm 69:6-9: This psalmist has a lot of zeal for the things of God. He does not want to be the cause of other's discouragement. This was exactly like the apostle Paul. He had a lot of energy for the things of God. The demonic forces resisted him at every turn. How could he build the church from jail? He almost died a dozen times.

Are they ministers of Christ?—I speak as a fool—I am more: in labors more abundant, in stripes above measure, in prisons more frequently, in deaths often. 24 From the Jews five

times I received forty stripes minus one. 25 Three times I was beaten with rods; once I was stoned; three times I was shipwrecked; a night and a day I have been in the deep; 26 in journeys often, in perils of waters, in perils of robbers, in perils of my own countrymen, in perils of the Gentiles, in perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness, in perils in the sea, in perils among false brethren; 27 in weariness and toil, in sleeplessness often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness— 28 besides the other things, what comes upon me daily: my deep concern for all the churches. (2 Corinthians 11:23-28)

As Christians we can find ourselves pretty far out on a limb. We select God's ways over what our friends and family are doing. We can find ourselves feeling alone; and questioning our decisions that led to this feeling of isolation. We might spend extra time in the word or at Christian activities; while our loved ones are watching football or playing golf. Many of the other comforts of life are given up. Jesus was all in.

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

Once you become known as a believer; the last thing that you want is to trip and have a moral failure; or to stumble others somehow. Our acquaintances are aware of our life strategy and are keenly aware that you have trusted God. It would not look good to give up or fail or do something really regrettable that reflects on the kingdom.

Jesus had sweet fellowship with the father; and yet he was very lonely and rejected among his peers at times. God's love makes us become team players, who focus on *the team* gaining a first down. In other words; being *others-oriented* can put you in a position of not needing to explain your actions...or taking the blame for things that you didn't orchestrate.

For even Christ did not please Himself; but as it is written, “The reproaches of those who reproached You fell on Me.” (Romans 15:3)

Read Psalm 69:10-12: The psalmist had become a laughingstock for completely buying into God's plan. He is becoming more noticeable. God will let his followers become a spectacle, so that others will clearly see the cause and effect of our blessings. He was left looking like he put his money on the wrong horse. The demonic world intimidates and stifles any way that we honor God. The Devil would have us paralyzed with fear. We can become incapacitated.

For God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power and of love and of a sound mind. (1 Timothy 1:7)

No matter how much we trust God; we still want to be surrounded by people who respect and love and support us. Once you become estranged by speaking the truth in love; it can feel like you did something wrong. Our faith gets tested by our own doubts; and the doubts of others.

I remember a time in High School when my quiet time and bible study were developing. I was told that perhaps I was being *too religious*. I was told that perhaps I was *overdoing it*. There is an old saying that is not true: “*Being too heavenly minded to be any earthly good.*” My absence from my normal entertainment was being used as a measurement of feeling normal and healthy. Once we step out in faith, we do not want to fail; and reflect poorly on the faith walk.

Read Psalm 69:13-18: The psalmist is now more willing to accept God’s timing....while gently reminding God that his situation requires immediate attention. When things go south, we make quick generalizations towards the worst outcome. Being confident that God is driving is a very freeing thing. At least you know that you will come out of it at some point. The urgency of the matter serves as a reminder to put our prayer petition into God’s hands. After we hand it over; it is no longer our fault. We don’t have to rescue anything. If God wants to let the car crash; we need to find a way to embrace that. Paul was thrown into prison, and put in stocks. He could have given up on life altogether. Instead God filled him to overflowing with the Holy Spirit.

Then the multitude rose up together against them; and the magistrates tore off their clothes and commanded them to be beaten with rods. 23 And when they had laid many stripes on them, they threw them into prison, commanding the jailer to keep them securely. 24 Having received such a charge, he put them into the inner prison and fastened their feet in the stocks. 25 But at midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns to God, and the prisoners were listening to them. 26 Suddenly there was a great earthquake, so that the foundations of the prison were shaken; and immediately all the doors were opened and everyone’s chains were loosed. 27 And the keeper of the prison, awaking from sleep and seeing the prison doors open, supposing the prisoners had fled, drew his sword and was about to kill himself. 28 But Paul called with a loud voice, saying, “Do yourself no harm, for we are all here.” (Acts 16:22-28)

Read Psalm 69:19-21: The life of a prophet was not all glory and fame. It involved a lot of humbling and isolation. Jesus quoted a number of verses from this psalm. These feelings of being separated came rushing at him as he approached the cross. There was a flurry of mental and emotional attempts that Satan made to dissuade him. Jesus was trying to save those who were killing him. What an empty feeling that was. He also had to experience the Father turning away his fellowship from him in his darkest hour.

Jesus came for sweet fellowship; but he experienced bitterness and rejection. Wine is symbolic of what comes out of a man when he is crushed like a grape. The cultivated grape is sweet and thankful; like the cultivated Christian life. The natural man is bitter on the inside; like a wild grape. How do we act when someone steps on us. Do we release bitter content...or is it sweet? We are like tea bags. You really do not know what is in them until you put them in boiling water.

So He expected it to bring forth good grapes, But it brought forth wild grapes. 3 “And now, O inhabitants of Jerusalem and men of Judah, Judge, please, between Me and My vineyard. 4 What more could have been done to My vineyard That I have not done in it? Why then, when I expected it to bring forth good grapes, Did it bring forth wild grapes? (Isaiah 5:2-4)

Read Psalm 69:22-28: This life is the closest to hell that we will ever know. This life is the closest to heaven that the evil man will ever know. Just realize that you are in a loving test. Recognize that there are contrary forces out there; but Jesus will brush them back. He is trying to strengthen our faith and resolve to trust him. Jesus and his disciples experienced many perils and much opposition together. These things are all part of the normal Christian experience. Just focus on trusting God; and making the most of the situation at hand.

Last week we had \$25,000 of tools and long-lead materials stolen as thieves broke into a number of site storage containers. Upon my return that following Sunday night; I discovered that the large and expensive power cords to our office trailers had been cut and stolen. I was trying to get a lot done; without the benefit of a computer, etc... I experienced feelings of anger and frustration. Like the psalmist, I wanted the thieves to somehow share in the inconvenience they had caused.

Read Psalm 69:29-36: The term Hosanna means ‘save us now’. We sing it as a praise. It is really also a cry for help. When you think about it; it's also a context for our praise. The scary journey's are the foundation of our testimony and ability to help others in need.

Thank You Jesus!