

Learn to handle Righteous Suffering

Seeing Christ in the Psalms

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Bible Text: Psalm 69

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Happy Mother's Day. We realize that today is a very encouraging day for some and a challenging for others. It is our prayer that our time in the Word and in song today serves everyone. We want to rejoice with those who rejoice and weep with those who weep.

Our annual theme is **In Christ Alone**. At this point we are considering how several Psalms look beyond the human author and point directly to the person and ministry of Jesus Christ. Thus, we have entitled our series **Seeing Christ in the Psalms**.

Two weeks ago Pastor Viars used Psalm 16 to show how we could be Confident in Christ, then Pastor Aucoin used Psalm 40 to show how our relationship with Christ leads us to praise.

- Today, we will use Psalm 69 to show how we can **Learn to handle Righteous Suffering**.

Let's begin by thinking about suffering in general.

1 Peter 4:15-16 Make sure that none of you suffers as a murderer, or thief, or evildoer, or a troublesome meddler; ¹⁶ but if *anyone suffers* as a Christian, he is not to be ashamed, but is to glorify God in this name.

Verse 15 is clear that sometimes our suffering is due to the consequences of our sin. Sin has a price.

- The proper response when we experience suffering from God's discipline is to repent of our sin and turn to God.
- Sometimes our gracious Lord allows the bitter taste of suffering to drive us to repentance.

But that is not our subject matter today. We are interested in the content of v. 16. What happens when my suffering comes when I am doing right?

I think this is part of the human experience.

Have you ever been treated harshly when you did nothing to deserve it?

- Maybe there are people in your school that are naturally bigger and stronger or maybe just with a whole lot more attitude than others and they bully people ... including you.
- Maybe you have a sibling or two that does not treat you very well and you have not done anything to deserve it.
- Maybe your spouse was grumpy and started taking out their bad attitude on you. All you did was occupy a similar space.

- Maybe your boss is all stressed out and under some pressure so he or she unloads their frustrations on you.

Righteous suffering, for a Christian, can be a normal experience. So what do we do? How do we respond? With that in mind please turn in your Bibles to Psalm 69. That is on page ____ of the back section of the Bible in the chair in front of you.

As you are turning there I would like to highlight a few points about our series.

1. The whole Bible, in one way or another, points in the direction of Jesus. Some passages point more directly than others. The Psalms that we are looking at in our series are Psalms that speak about the human author's experience (in our case that will be David), but also to the experience of Jesus in very direct ways. That is why we call them Christological Psalms. They clearly and directly point to Christ.
2. One of the reasons that we know certain Psalms describe Christ's experience is that the NT authors use the Psalm when talking about Christ. That is one of the defining features of Psalm 69. It is one of the most often quoted Psalms in the NT.
3. We are going to work our way through the Psalm. But we are going to do so by thinking about David, about Jesus, and about us all at the same time.

Please follow along as I read the entire Psalm. This is the Word of the Lord. [Read Psalm 69]

I would like us to consider **5 truths to apply when you suffer for doing what is right**

1. Explain your hardships to the Lord (Psalm 69:1-4)

I am amazed at the way David especially opens up his heart to the Lord. In Psalm 6 he says that he cries himself to sleep. In Psalm 13 he asks God how long he will forget about him. Now in Psalm 69 we see him saying ...

A. "I feel like I am drowning" (v. 2)

Downing is one intense experience. I was not a great swimmer growing up, but about 6 years ago I learned to swim reasonably well.

- But this day was the first time I had ever swam in open water. It was a terrifying experience.
- Obviously, I made it, but for while there I wondered.

David uses the drowning analogy to describe the condition of his hardships. We all have to wrestle with how much we say in a 10 second conversation with another person... "How are you?" "Fine" "Awesome, have a great day!" When we are not fine we wonder just how much we should say.

But friends, please listen, when you speak with the Lord he wants you to lay it all out there.

- God did not want his people trying to bury all of their emotions and struggles.
- That is especially true when you are suffering, like David in this Psalm and like Jesus, for doing nothing wrong.
- In Hebrews, one of the reasons Jesus suffered was to be a faithful high priest sensitive to the struggles of the human life.

Save me O God, I feel like I am drowning.

B. "I am in a regular state of grief" (v. 3)

David often speaks of his tears. I have always found it amazing that David would do that.

- Even as a young man he was not afraid of a fight. In fact, when he hears Goliath he decides he has to do something.
- But before he speaks with King Saul. He learns that Saul has made an offer. He offered his daughter in marriage, riches, and tax free status to the soldier that kills Goliath.
- What more could a man need?
 - o A Girl, gold, and tax free status. David was not afraid of a fight.

Later, King Saul did not give David any of those things.

- So when Saul's daughter wanted to marry David, Saul makes him a deal (he deserved her anyway!). Bring back 100 Philistine foreskins.
- It is safe to assume that you did not ask for those. Nor could you set up a gofundme page in order to have my dream wedding.
 - o David brings back 200. David was a warrior.

Yet, David was not afraid to tell the Lord all about his suffering. He was not afraid to go to the Lord and tell him that his eyes hurt from crying so much. He was not afraid to tell the Lord that his constant crying made him thirsty.

C. "Everywhere I turn there is more hurt" (v. 4)

For David, the suffering seemed relentless. It is here that we get our first quotation in the NT.

Jesus teaches his disciples that despite all the miracles Jesus has done the people have rejected him and the disciples needed to be prepared for rejection themselves.

John 15:20, 24-25 ²⁰ Remember the word that I said to you, 'A slave is not greater than his master.' If they persecuted Me, they will also persecute you; ²⁴ If I had not done among them the works which no one else did, they would not have sin; but now they have both seen and hated Me and My Father as well. ²⁵ But *they have done this* to fulfill the word that is written in their Law, '**They hated Me without a cause.**'

Friends, we live in a world that is not always friendly to the things of God. When you have those moments where you righteously suffer ... you are in good company. So Jesus completely understands.

He wants you to tell him like it is. He wants you to express your thoughts and emotions to him. While we explain our hardships we also ...

II. Remain Passionate for God's Glory (vv. 5-12)

Righteous suffering was never meant to result in idleness. Righteous suffering is a time for action.

- Even though David feels like he is drowning and that he there is nowhere that he can go where one of his enemies is not there, he remains passionate for God's glory.
- He is interested in faithfulness to the Lord.

Righteous suffering sure has a few obstacles ...

A. Despite your personal sin (v. 5)

This verse clearly shows that the entire Psalm is not first about Jesus, but about David. David acknowledges that he is a sinner, but he is also arguing that his suffering (this time at least) is not the direct result of sin.

I find this helpful as well. I can remain humble about my own sin and yet remain steadfast that this time someone is causing me grief without reason and I can continue pursuing God's glory in the process.

B. Despite the poor treatment by others (vv. 6-8, 10-12)

David's reputation and his relationships have been impacted by his enemies.

- Maybe they spread false rumors about him.
- Maybe they shared true things about him that other people did not need to know.
- Either way, it is impacted his public reputation and his family environment (v. 8)

But it actually got worse. In v. 12 those who sit in the gate area (a common place for judges and town leaders to gather).

- If that were not bad enough, David is the subject of the made up songs drunks sing when they are belly up at the bar.

That is rough ... but did you notice v. 9? It speaks to what David was doing while all this hot mess was happening around him.

He was zealous for the Lords house.

C. In order to follow the example of Christ (v. 9)

This is huge. When Jesus cleanses the temple ... he removes all the merchants and drives out this special temple economy where the religious leaders were getting rich from the parishoners. Then we find these words ...

John 2:17 His disciples remembered that it was written, "Zeal for Your house will consume me."

When the disciples thought about the cleansing of the temple their minds went to Psalm 69. Jesus is exhibiting passion for God's house. They know that the religious leaders are not going to like that. The very next verse says, "by what authority are you doing these things?"

When Paul was teaching, he reminded the Romans that they may experience suffering just as David did and just as Jesus did by quoting Psalm 69:9.

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

Friends, when you stand strong in your faith. When you stand strong in your actions ... zealous for the cause of Christ ... in the midst of unjust suffering then you are following the example of Christ and the heroes of the faith.

- Just in case the Romans got a little nervous about following that example Paul gave them v. 4 which explains that the Scriptures (all the Scriptures) were written so that we might have hope.

So, when that bully is messing with you again ... saying mean things trying to destroy your reputation ... remain passionate (zealous) for God's glory.

- When your spouse is treating you unfairly and you are tempted to unload on them ... choose to remain zealous for the Lord.
- When your boss is angry at you because he or she is facing a lot of pressure and you just happen to be present ... choose to remain zealous for the Lord.
- When your employees bad mouth you and you know that you are doing everything you can to allow them to keep their jobs ... remain zealous for the Lord.

What I have suggested so far is that when you suffer you first determine whether your suffering is a consequence for your sin or whether it is righteous suffering.

- If it is righteous suffering then you first explain all your hardships to the Lord. While you talk to the Lord you also remain passionate for God's glory.
- Psalm 69 continues by encouraging us to...

III. Cry to the Lord for Rescue (vv. 13-21)

I think the overwhelming testimony of Scripture is that suffering for righteousness is a good thing. According to 1 Peter 4:15 we glory God when we have that opportunity.

- That does not mean, however, that our life will be defined by suffering.

One of my seminary professors used to say that he believed in a call to suffering. Some believers, by the plan of God, were going to suffer for Christ.

- However, it is normally the case that suffering is for a season.
- David asks God to deliver him from his suffering.
- O God, answer me (v. 13)
- Deliver me (v. 14)
- Rescue me (v. 15)
- Answer me (v. 16)
- Do not hide from me (v. 17)
- Draw near to me (v. 18)

A. Rather than complaining about it or just dwelling on it (vv. 13-19)

At times unjust suffering makes us feel powerless. We think that our only option is to take it from our classmate, neighbor, brother, sister, spouse, boss, or co-worker.

- We have no recourse because either they have leadership over us or the leadership does not seem to care.

So what we do is start complaining about it. We might find sympathetic voices.

- Leaders can get together with other leaders and talk about how hard it is to lead people. Spouses can find people who also believe they are suffering unjustly.

But sometimes we don't even have to share it. We can dwell on it instead.

- We can spend hours upon hours being impacted in our hearts.
- The big problem with this is that it cripples us for accomplishing what God wants us to accomplish.
- We use our emotional energy to complain in our hearts. Instead, we need to ask God to rescue us.

David turns to the Lord over and over again asking with a series of imperatives for God to take action.

B. Because the Lord has a compassionate character (v. 13, 16)

David thinks very carefully about the reason God would act.

- He would act because he is a compassionate person.

Earlier this year I was reading through Judges and I came across a verse that caught my attention.

Judges 10:16 So they put away the foreign gods from among them and served the Lord; and He could bear the misery of Israel no longer.

In context, Judges is in response to the consequences for sin ... not righteous suffering. Even then, even in the midst of our own foolishness, God can only bear so much. How much more for the Lord to see his righteous suffering.

The Lord may call us to a special ministry of suffering for specific purposes. But the general way God works is that suffering is for a season and while we are in that suffering we can ask the Lord to rescue us.

C. Rather than finding other sources of comfort (vv. 20-21)

David looks for comforters, but he does not find any real comfort in them. In fact, what he receives is more ill treatment. It is this verse that every gospel writer uses to describe what the soldiers did to Jesus.

- He was thirsty. Rather than give him a drink of quality wine ... the dying are to receive some relief from their pain ... they give trashy wine to add the misery of a horrible taste in your mouth to the pain that exists everywhere else.

David Pao and Eckhard Schnabel beautifully described these events, **“The offer of ‘sour wine’ is an act of mockery and insult. The soldiers join the mockery of Jesus by offering him the cheap wine that**

was popular among the lower ranks of society, insulting the ‘king’ whom they have crucified. The allusion, if intended, explains another detail of Jesus’ crucifixion against the background of another psalm that describes the treatment of a righteous sufferer by his enemies, highlighting both Jesus’ suffering in being mocked and the fulfilment of Scripture in what Jesus had to endure at the cross.” (Pao and Schnabel, “Luke,” in *Commentary on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament*. Eds. G. K. Beale and D.A. Carson. Baker: Grand Rapids, 2007, 397).

Sam Wright’s testimony hit this point beautifully. She described the hurts that come from days like Mother’s Day and encouraged all of us to find our rescue in the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ.

- His suffering and the fulfillment of suffering is what makes rescue possible.
- So cry out to him ... there is a sympathetic ear on the other end of the line with the power to make a difference.

I hope at this point you are already encouraged that Psalm 69 not only describes the experience of David, not only is it fulfilled in Christ, but it also provides hope and help in the midst of suffering.

- I also hope that you are even a little convicted. I know there are times in my life where I truly was suffering righteously. I did not deserve the poor treatment given to me by others.
 - o But I did not (and maybe do not) respond like this. Talk to God? Maybe I just talk to myself. Remain passionate for God’s glory? Maybe I try to find a way to get a little bit of that glory. Cry to the Lord for rescue? Maybe I reserve myself to the fact that something is not going to change and do not ask the Lord for anything.

Psalm 69 is loaded with truth. I have received enough for the sermon already, but there is more encouragement and more conviction ...

IV. Remember that God will bring about justice at the proper time (vv. 22-28)

I mentioned David was a warrior. While David allowed people to say things against him, he was also pretty rough on his enemies. The #1 hit record (does that phrase show my age or what? I did not say CD, nor did I say 8 track, nor did I say music video) in ancient Israel was Saul has slain his thousands but David has slain his ten thousands.

Now he is praying that God would bring about justice. This is not a prayer of revenge as much as it is a prayer for God to properly repay the wicked for their wicked actions.

Verse 26 is what David is particularly upset about ...

- God has called him to suffer, but his enemies add persecution to it.
- God has brought about trouble, but his enemies go and tell others about it.

When we righteously suffer we must be careful not to create a revengeful or a competitive spirit. Where it is really about you and me. Instead we are asking for God to bring about his righteous justice.

A. However Jesus and Paul prayed for forgiveness rather than retribution

It is also helpful to remember that in the midst of righteous suffering Jesus prayed for those who were persecuting him. On the cross, Jesus was not asking for retribution, he was asking that they would be forgiven.

Even Paul confessed that he would rather suffer in hell than for his brothers to do so. It reflects a heart desiring people be saved.

So our first thought should not be one of retribution, but asking God to his work in the heart of a person so that they can be forgiven.

B. For when justice comes the opportunities are over (v. 28)

The sobering reality is that the NT uses this section of Psalm 25 two times.

Acts 1:20 “For it is written in the book of Psalms, ‘Let his homestead be made desolate, And let no one dwell in it’; and, ‘Let another man take his office.’

This is a reference to Judas. After he betrayed Jesus he kills himself, leaving his homestead to someone else and his position as one of the twelve is taken by someone else. This was a final decision. No more opportunities.

Romans 11:7-10 ⁷ What then? What Israel is seeking, it has not obtained, but those who were chosen obtained it, and the rest were hardened; ⁸ just as it is written, “God gave them a spirit of stupor, Eyes to see not and ears to hear not, Down to this very day.” ⁹ And David says, “Let their table become a snare and a trap, And a stumbling block and a retribution to them. ¹⁰ “Let their eyes be darkened to see not, And bend their backs forever.”

This is in reference to the nation of Israel. Paul explains how Israel refused to follow the Lord and refused to acknowledge that Jesus is messiah. As a result they do not have eyes to see or ears to hear.

In Psalm 69:28 we find the striking comment about “blotting their name from the book of Life.”

In each case, when justice came the opportunities were over.

- That is a sobering reminder regarding life and even how we process righteous suffering.
- There is a sense in which we want God to make all things right and knowing that God will make them right gives us comfort and encouragement to face each new challenge.

But before we run too quickly to the concept of justice let’s ask the Lord to rescue the people who are harming us.

- Let’s ask that the Lord would turn his lovingkindness in their direction just as he has turned it in our direction.

The final section of Psalm 69 encourages us to ...

V. Praise the Lord for his deliverance (vv. 29-36)

David's affliction did not disappear in the middle of this Psalm. But David nevertheless finds a way to praise. His praise centers on God's salvation. He believes that God will deliver him.

Praise is God's mind is better than an ox. Pastor Aucoin explained last week that while the sacrifices were required, they were never an end in themselves.

- It was the heart of the worshipper and ultimately the sin that Jesus would pay once for all that made the sacrifices so important.
- That is why we can praise the Lord for his deliverance ...

A. From individual sin (vv. 29-31)

In Christ there is rescue not just from the people who mistreat you, but more importantly from the sin that separates you from a holy God.

Just as every other part of this psalm has been a pointer to Christ so also does this part point to the ultimate deliverance found in the D/B/R of Jesus Christ.

In the last two months I have been part of two memorial services. Praise the Lord that both Lester and Margaret Bell knew the Lord. But as I looked out at the audience I could not help but wonder how many of the rest would spend eternity with the Lord if they died today.

I want to ask you that ... If you were to die today and God should ask you, Why should I let you into my heaven? What would you tell him?

- Would you tell him that you have been a good person?
- Would you tell him that you attended church reasonably frequently?
- Would you tell him that you invested your time and money into things that would make a difference for the cause of Christ?

The only answer that carries any weight is that you have acknowledged your sin and you have trusted in the D/B/R of Jesus Christ as your personal Lord and Savior.

- I want to encourage you to do that today.

B. To share with others (vv. 32-36)

When we experience deliverance, we want to share it with others. David invited other worshippers to come and celebrate the Lord's deliverance with him.

That is a significant part of our ministry. We do not want to hide the deliverance, we want to share it.

- I encourage you to pray for the youth (Finals, then missions trip to Lafayette)
- I encourage you to pray for the Hispanic class (beginning an ESL ministry)
- I encourage you to sign up and pray for VBS
- Part of the way that we let people know about the deliverance is that we go to them.

The concept of righteous suffering is an important one. David experienced it. He was willing to admit that he was a sinner, but that his sin (in this case) was not the cause of his suffering. But as David discerned how to process his righteous suffering the Lord also was the greater righteous sufferer.

In Christ he wants to hear our struggles ... he took on humanity, in part, to relate to the suffering we endure.

Christ wants us to be zealous for god's glory ... he was ... resulting in the cleansing of the temple.

Christ wants us to cry out for deliverance ... he is a compassionate God whose ear listens intently to the prayers of his people.

Christ wants us to follow his example and pray for forgiveness knowing that when God meters out justice, and he will, the opportunities for change are over.

Christ wants to praise him for our deliverance from sin and from our deliverance from those who cause us harm. That allows us to encourage others to share in that praise.

Life is full of struggles ... some of them we cause ourselves. Some of them are part of the Christian life. Thankfully we have a series of truths to apply and the perfect Christ to follow.