

"The Multitude of Thy Mercy"

Psalm 69

This psalm is a mixed-type psalm, functioning primarily as an individual lament, but it heavily overlaps with two other distinct categories: Messianic and Imprecatory (vs. 22-28). So, this is a lament of David that serves as a Messianic prophecy of Jesus. It begins with lament (weeping), moves to imprecation (judgment), and ends with singing.

The superscription of this psalm has "To the chief Musician upon Shoshannim" as its purpose. We saw this term in our study of Psalm 45, called the "Royal Wedding Psalm," where we defined it as "lilies." In the context of that psalm, the title made perfect sense. We saw that the lily speaks of beauty, purity, fragrance, and elegance. It was a fitting banner for a song about a King and His Bride.

But there is a contrast in this psalm to that view of the lily. In this psalm, that title seems out of place.

- We don't find a wedding here; we find a war.
- We don't see the King on a throne; we see Him sinking in the mire (vs. 2).
- We don't smell sweet perfume (as in Psalm 45); we see (taste) bitter gall (vs. 21).

We might ask why the Holy Spirit would use "lilies" for this Psalm of such suffering? Martin Luther suggested a beautiful connection to Song of Solomon 2:2: *"As the lily among thorns, so is my love among the daughters."*

In the Song of Solomon, the Bridegroom compares his Beloved to a "Lily among thorns" (Song 2:2). It is a picture of something beautiful and pure surrounded by things that tear and hurt.

In Psalm 69, we see the ultimate "Lily among Thorns" – the Lord Jesus. He is the Holy One surrounded by the thorns of the thorns of hatred and the mire of sin. The mire did not stain the Lily; rather, the Lily brought grace into the

mire.

David is writing this during a time when his life felt anything but beautiful. He was drowning in trouble, but he directs this song to the "Chief Musician" to be played to the tune of "Lilies." It is a reminder for us that our circumstances may be ugly, but our song can still be beautiful.

In our study of this psalm, we will look at the Sufferer. We will see the mire that tried to swallow Him, the men that tried to break Him, but ultimately, we will see the "Multitude of Mercy" that delivered Him. Although there is a clear Messianic aspect to this psalm, those same points can be said of the child of God today.

I. THE DEEP NEED FOR MERCY – VS. 1-12

The Condition: "We cannot appreciate the cure until we feel the weight of the crisis" (source unknown).

A. The danger of the deep (vs. 1-3)

1. The image is found in the phrases, "I sink in deep mire" and "the floods overflow me."

The term "mire" (יִנּוּ) refers to the sediment at the bottom of a cistern or swamp (similar to the pit that Jeremiah was in). It signifies a place of no foothold.

2. There is intense fatigue found in the "mire" (vs. 3).

The application for us today is this weariness is considered fatigue from prayer. It describes the Savior in the Garden of Gethsemane, as well as the believer who has prayed until they have no words left.

3. David was not physically threatened here; he is spiritually exhausted ("mine eyes fail while I

wait for my God"). Waiting on mercy can be a wearisome work.

B. The debt of the innocent (vs. 4)

1. In the last clause of the verse – “then I restored *that* which I took not away” – we find that we often need mercy, not because we have sinned, but because we are sinned *against*.
2. There is a Messianic fulfillment in this verse. Jesus quotes the phrase “they hate me without a cause” in John 15:25 to explain the world’s rejection of Him.

John 15:24-25

²⁴ If I had not done among them the works which none other man did, they had not had sin: but now have they both seen and hated both me and my Father. ²⁵ But *this cometh to pass*, that the word might be fulfilled that is written in their law, They hated me without a cause.

C. The disgrace of the believer (vs. 5-12)

It’s not that we are a disgrace but that we will be disgraced – we will suffer for our testimony.

1. Our testimony begins with a recognition of sin (vs. 5).

Although there is much in this psalm that applies to Christ, this verse does not. While David had to confess his *personal* sin, Jesus (the Antitype) had to bear *imputed* sin.

2. It’s for the Lord’s purpose and according to His will that we suffer, not because of ourselves, so be a testimony for Him, not yourself (vs. 6-7).
3. We’ll be an unfamiliar stranger to those we once were friends with, even our families, if we

live a Christian life, and are the kind of testimony we ought to be (vs. 8).

4. We need to have "zeal," enthusiasm, desire, a burden, that burns within us so badly, that it "eats us up" (vs. 9a).

Enthusiasm is so important for pastors and Christian workers. There's an old account of a preacher who was asked, "How come so many people come and hear you preach?" He said, "I guess because I'm enthusiastic." "How do you get enthusiastic?" "Well, I'll tell you how to do it. Get a can of kerosene, pour it all over you, light yourself on fire, and they'll come watch you burn."

5. We need to hurt when God is hurt (vs. 9b-12).
6. There are two portions here that are quoted or referred to in the New Testament:
 - a) "The Zeal of the thine house hath eaten me up" (vs. 9a) – the Disciples remembered this verse in John 2:17 after Jesus cleared the Temple.

John 2:17

¹⁷ And his disciples remembered that it was written, The zeal of thine house hath eaten me up.

- b) "The reproaches of them that reproached thee are fallen upon me" (vs. 9b) - Paul quotes this in Romans 15:3 to show that Christ did not please Himself, but bore the insults intended for God.

Romans 15:1-3

¹ We then that are strong ought to bear the infirmities of the weak, and not to please ourselves. ² Let every one of us please *his* neighbour for *his* good to edification. ³ For

even Christ pleased not himself; but, as it is written, The reproaches of them that reproached thee fell on me.

II. THE DIRECT CRY FOR MERCY – VS. 13-21

This is the turning point in the psalm. The world offers criticism; the believer turns to the “acceptable time” of prayer.

A. The access to mercy (vs. 13)

“But as for me...in the multitude of they mercy hear me”

He anchors his prayer in the character of God (הַסֵּד – His steadfast love) and His truth (“the truth of thy salvation”).

B. The appeal for rescue (vs. 14-18)

1. Verses 14-15 point back to verse 1 and 2 and show that deliverance is more powerful and more complete than the flood of trouble.
2. Verses 16-18 show that the urgency of the plea matches the intensity of the trial. Deliverance comes when we decide we can’t do it on our own, by our own power, and we turn to the only One who can.

C. The absence of human mercy (vs. 19-21)

1. The contrast is stark: the psalmist asked God for *mercy*, but man gave him *gall*.

“Gall” (רַעַשׁ) was often used as a narcotic to dull the pain of criminals being executed. It was a poisonous plant, likely hemlock or poppy head, representing something bitter and toxic (possibly wormwood at the time of Christ).

2. There is a Messianic fulfillment to verse 21,

found in Matt. 27:34 and Mark 15:23.

Matthew 27:34 [writing to a Jewish audience so he deliberately refers back to Psalm 69]

³⁴ They gave him vinegar to drink mingled with gall: and when he had tasted *thereof*, he would not drink.

Mark 15:23 [writing to a Roman audience so he identifies the specific ingredient]

²³ And they gave him to drink wine mingled with myrrh: but he received *it* not.

In Matthew and Mark, Jesus *tasted* it but *refused* to drink it. Why? Because He was determined to drink the full cup of God's wrath with a clear mind, purchasing the "multitude of mercy" for us. He refused the physical comfort so He could secure our spiritual comfort.

III. THE DOOM OF THE MERCILESS – vs. 22-28

The Justice: Because they showed no mercy, they received judgment. The believer hands the gavel to God.

A. The darkening of their eyes (vs. 22-23)

The Apostle Paul quotes this entire section in Romans 11:7-10 to explain why Israel was temporarily blinded and the Gospel went to the Gentiles. Their "table" (vs. 22 - privileges) became a trap because they rejected the Messiah.

Romans 11:7-10

⁷ What then? Israel hath not obtained that which he seeketh for; but the election hath obtained it, and the rest were blinded ⁸ (According as it is written, God hath given them the spirit of slumber, eyes that they should not see, and ears that they should not hear;) unto this day. ⁹ And David saith, Let their table be made a snare, and a trap, and a stumblingblock, and a recompence unto them: ¹⁰ Let their eyes be darkened, that they may

not see, and bow down their back away.

B. The desolation of their house (vs. 24-25)

Peter quotes this in Acts 1:20 regarding Judas Iscariot. The betrayal of the King results in the loss of office and place.

Acts 1:16-20

¹⁶ Men and brethren, this scripture must needs have been fulfilled, which the Holy Ghost by the mouth of David spake before concerning Judas, which was guide to them that took Jesus. ¹⁷ For he was numbered with us, and had obtained part of this ministry. ¹⁸ Now this man purchased a field with the reward of iniquity; and falling headlong, he burst asunder in the midst, and all his bowels gushed out. ¹⁹ And it was known unto all the dwellers at Jerusalem; insomuch as that field is called in their proper tongue, Aceldama, that is to say, The field of blood. ²⁰ For it is written in the book of Psalms, Let his habitation be desolate, and let no man dwell therein: and his bishoprick let another take.

C. The deletion from the book (vs. 26-28)

1. Verse 26 is why the judgment mentioned here is so severe: *"For they persecute him whom thou hast smitten."*

This is the ultimate crime. It wasn't just that they attacked a man; they attacked the one God was already chastening (Isaiah 53:4). It highlights the cruelty of the enemy – kicking a man when he is down (or, in Christ's case, mocking Him while He was under the Father's wrath).

Isaiah 53:4

⁴ Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows: yet we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted.

2. Verse 28 speaks of *"the book of the living."*

- a) In the Old Testament context, the "book of the living" usually refers to the census of the living citizens of Israel (Exodus 32:32, Isaiah 4:3). To be "blotted out" meant to die physically or be removed from the roll of citizens.
 - b) This is distinct from the "Lamb's Book of Life" in Revelation, which records the believers. David is praying for their physical removal and the end of their family line (which happened to Judas), not making a soteriological statement about losing salvation.
3. We are not to avenge ourselves – we leave the "recompense" to the Judge of all the earth.

Romans 12:19

¹⁹ Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves, but rather give place unto wrath: for it is written, Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord.

IV. THE DELIGHT IN GOD'S MERCY – vs. 29-36

The Result: Mercy received results in worship offered.

A. The distinction of the saint (vs. 29)

In contrast to the wicked that are blotted out (vs. 28), the saint is seen set on high (vs. 29).

B. The declaration of praise (vs. 30-33)

1. Our delight ought to be seen and heard when we realize there is coming a day when all will be over (vs. 30-32a).

True worship pleases God better than mere ritual sacrifice ("an ox or bullock") - vs. 31

2. Our delight should be in the seeking of the Lord, not in the pleasures of life (vs. 32b).

C. The deliverance of Zion (vs. 34-36)

1. The psalm ends with a vision of the coming Kingdom: *"God will save Zion"* (vs. 35).
2. The mercy shown to the Servant extends to the *"seed of his servants"* (vs. 36).

Conclusion:

In the first 12 verses of this psalm, we saw the psalmist in despair, and in type, we see the agony of the suffering of our Savior.

Things change beginning with verse 13. David appeals to the "multitude of [God's] mercy." Because Jesus went to the cross and drank of the cup for us, we can rely on that same mercy David speaks of. He has been in the "mire," He has paid the debt, and He stands ready to deliver.