

A Prayer of Desperation

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Preacher: Rev. Aaron Roberts

[0 : 0 0] Good evening, welcome everyone, nice to see you. My name is Aaron, if you're visiting, I'm the minister for this service. It's great to be here, great to see you, and goodness me, what a psalm, eh?

What a psalm. Let me start quite broadly. We're in week three of a series in the psalms, five, six weeks, five weeks, five weeks in the psalms.

They're amazing things, the psalms, and they operate on many different levels. In no particular order, they are words to God. So, number one, they're words to God.

People wrote hymns, prayers to God, so that we can sing them, we can pray them. And so they're very handy when we don't have words ourselves. We can pray the psalms, and often in times of great grief or despair, we don't have words.

We're overwhelmed, we're silenced by it. So, you can pick up psalms like this, and you can pray them. But they're not just that. They're also words from God to us.

[1 : 0 4] So, our words to God become God's words to us, which means that they're words that shape us, they inform us.

They can change our hearts. Last week, I preached on Psalm 51. That was good, meaty, beefy theology, right?

That was really, that was good stuff. This helped us transition from thinking about repentance as something quite small to repentance being something really big. So, God's words to us.

So, words to God, words from God. Lastly, some of the psalms, not all of the psalms, some of the psalms are prophetic, meaning they point to a future hope.

Here's a factoid. This psalm, Psalm 69, written by David, is one of the most widely quoted psalms in the New Testament, seven verses quoted directly, mostly in relation to Jesus, which is why it's not just called a psalm of lament, a psalm of desperation, it's called a messianic psalm.

[2 : 1 6] And you can see, you can see quickly, I think, why it's described as that, because if you think about it, if you kind of, you know, just slide that psalm through your mind, you'll go, you know what the vibe of this thing is?

It's about the innocent suffering of God's chosen king. So, as we look at this psalm, I'll come back to that, as we look at this psalm, keep those three things in mind, okay?

They're words to God, they're words from God, and they talk about the future. Okay, let's have at it. It's a biggie, so we're going to break it up, and I will miss quite a few sections.

So, verses 1 to 5, this man is in trouble. David just pulls metaphor upon metaphor, explaining how he feels. The waters are up to my neck.

I'm in a pit. I'm in the path of a flood. There have been a number of times in my life where I've felt completely overwhelmed.

[3 : 17] And the most recent example was the birth of our second child, B. That was, for those of you who know my family, this was a huge drama. And plus, just going from one child to two children.

Like, one child, the ratio works on your behalf, right? It's like a two-to-one thing. Two children, it's starting to work against you a little bit. And added all these kind of medical dramas on top of it.

It was like this, okay? Here's exactly what it was like. Imagine you are drowning, and you're sinking under the waters. And at that exact point, somebody throws you a baby, right?

Listen to these verses. Listen to these verses from David here. So, really, really tough situation, obviously.

And it's a wonderful psalm to pray when you're desperate and overwhelmed. When your heart does not know what to say. You can borrow these words.

[4 : 40] Save me, Father. I feel like I'm drowning. This was a psalm I actually memorized last year. Well, just the first few verses, anyway. I would say that to myself over and over again. Save me. Okay.

Remember what I said at the start? The psalm is not just about our words to God, though. It's God's words to us. So, what is God saying to us in this psalm? Well, I think it's quite plain.

One of the big things is this. Is that we should expect suffering in our life. We should expect suffering. Much of our suffering is sort of fairly random.

And we won't easily get behind the meaning or purpose of it. But in David's case here, we actually are given a source. So, why is David suffering?

The clues are in verses 4 and 9 to 11. Let me remind you of those. Verse 4. For more in number than the hairs of my head are those who hate me without cause, who attack me with lies.

[5 : 39] And 9 to 11. For zeal for your houses consume me, and the reproaches of those who reproach you have fallen on me. When I wept and I humbled my voice, my soul with fasting, I became my reproach.

When I made sackcloth my clothing, I became a byword to them. So, David's suffering because of his beliefs. He's suffering because of a stand he's making.

If you seek after God, people will think you're silly or worse. I remember my last year at Auckland Boys Grammar, my high school, becoming a Christian, and my friends I had grown up with, they would make just snide comments about what was happening in my life.

And it was the sense they gave me was like that I had betrayed them. I'd betrayed some friendship code by becoming religious, and they just kind of mocked me. Now, being a Christian in some parts of the world, obviously in places like Egypt right now, you really put your safety on the line.

Suffering, mockery, being misunderstood, death. I mean, this can kind of go with the territory of being a Christian. Have a look at verse 8.

[6 : 56] He kind of leans into this a little bit more. I've become a stranger to my brothers, an alien to my mother's sons. It's especially hard when the people that think you're stupid, the people that think you're weird or odd, are your family.

And some of you guys know this pain of being the only Christian in your family. I am. But for David, it's not just his family that thinks he's kind of like a crazy guy.

It seems like it's everyone. Verse 12. I am the talk of those who sit at the gate, and the drunkards make songs about me. So the guys at the gate, they're like the city's elders.

So the elders would sit at the gate, and they kind of make decisions. They're like the smart guys. So they think you're, you know, they think you're nutty. They think you're crazy for doing this.

You're foolish, right? But not only them. It's the drunkards. So the people that everyone else looks down upon, even those guys don't like you.

[7 : 58] And they're actually taking the time to write like dirty little limericks about you. The apostle Peter knows this scenario. He knows what it means to be mocked for your faith.

Let me read 1 Peter 12 to you. 1 Peter 12, 12 to 16. Beloved, do not be surprised. We just talked about that, right? Do not be surprised at the fiery trial when it comes upon you to test you as though something strange were happening to you.

This is not going to be a weird thing. Don't think this is an odd thing. This is just going to happen. But rejoice insofar as you share Christ's sufferings, that you may also rejoice and be glad when his glory is revealed.

If you're insulted for the name of Christ, you are blessed because the spirit of glory and of God rests upon you. Yet if anyone suffers as a Christian, let him not be ashamed.

I think that's important. Let him not be ashamed, but let him glorify God in that name. I think Peter's really straightforward here. He says you'll suffer. Don't be surprised by that. It means that you are probably living publicly as a Christian, and that is a good thing.

[9 : 11] And do you see this line of verse 16? Don't let that mockery shame you because it is easy to be shamed by that. Don't let the mockery shame you.

That's important. Shame is a lie. Shame will silence you. Don't let that happen. And do you see that it glorifies God when we suffer and we keep faith?

So, words to God. We can pray this psalm. Words from God. We can be informed by it. Now, a prophetic word. What does this passage so far say about the future?

What does it say about Jesus? Do you remember when we studied the book of Samuel very intensely a year or two ago? I love Samuel.

I know some of you guys thought it was a very long two books to tackle, and we tackled like five chapters at a time. But I just loved it. One of the high points of these two books was 2 Samuel 7.

[10 : 16] It's when the writer of Samuel puts David's life into perspective and says, listen, this is why we're talking about David. This is why David's really important.

Let me read it to you. A lot of Bible tonight, isn't it? Great. You love it. Moreover, the Lord declares to you that the Lord will make you a house. When your days are fulfilled and you lie down with your fathers, I will raise up your offspring after you, who shall come from your body, and I will establish his kingdom.

He shall build a house for my name. I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever. I will be to him a father, and he shall be to me a son. So this is God promising something to David.

So David was God's Messiah in the Old Testament, right? The Messiah to God's people in the Old Testament. He brought peace. He defeated God's enemies. But the promise was always that there would be another king that would come who would make all things right and would reign forever.

And that's Jesus. And Samuel points to Jesus. So David, when he's at his best, is this, I don't know how to say it, like a proto-Jesus. It's not a great phrase, but he's like a proto-Jesus.

[11 : 24] A king pointing forward to an eternally greater king who will come after him. Here, in Psalm 69, David is God's chosen king.

And he is remaining faithful while suffering innocently. And this, of course, points to Christ who will also suffer innocently.

Jesus, of anyone who has ever lived, knows what it means to be hated and misunderstood without cause. Herod tried to kill him at birth.

The Pharisees, ever since Jesus, you know, healed the guy with the wized hand in the temple, the Pharisees were planning, trying to work out how to kill the guy. His family thought he was foolish. When we read the Gospels, we don't get much kind of inner dialogue of Jesus.

We don't get kind of what's going on in his heart. It treats it more theologically. But here, in the Psalm, pointing to Jesus, we kind of can get a bit of an inside look into the heart of Jesus.

[12 : 33] And what an awful thing Christ went through. God's long-promised king, who should dwell in palaces, but comes out onto the streets to be with us, for us, at huge cost to himself.

And this gives us an insight into some of the emotional cost, the relational cost, the physical cost of Jesus. This king willing to be mocked and mistreated and lied about and abandoned, willing to be the song of a drunkard.

Folks, I hope this encourages you. Not just that Jesus went through this for you. He did. But not just that.

But that Jesus knows the darkness in our life. And he has experienced it. And he will stand with you in that darkness.

Moving on. Verses 13 to 18. And the last few bits I'll go over quite quickly. In 13 to 18, just slide your eyes over that really quick.

[13 : 46] David petitions God. You know, up until this point, David has been just kind of going, all this terrible stuff's been going on. He's been describing it. Which is actually okay to do.

You know, just complaining to God and saying that life is really hard and you're feeling like you're drowning. That is not a lack of faith. That is just being honest with God. I want to encourage that.

If you're not in your prayers honest with God, you are being religious in its worst sense and not in its good sense. But now David starts petitioning God.

He asks God for things. Deliver me. Answer me. Hide not your face from me. Draw near to my soul. What I want you to notice here is that it is not just a request to change his circumstance.

I mean, that's where we tend to go first. Well, that's where I tend to go first. And that's okay. Of course we want God to change our circumstances. Things are kind of terrible, right?

[14 : 48] Nothing wrong with that. But do you see here that David prays, God be with me. What a wonderful prayer. And one that we can sort of miss. God be with me.

Hide not your face from me. Draw near to my soul. There is a sense in which David is saying, I can get through this if I know you are with me. Following these nice requests, David makes another request of God.

One that doesn't seem as nice as the previous ones. This is 22 to 28. Let me read some highlights. He's basically praying kind of like a curse on the people that have troubled him.

Let their own table before them become a snare. And when they're at peace, let them become a trap. Let their eyes be darkened so they cannot see.

Let their loins tremble continually. Gee, there's a prayer. If you don't like somebody. Let your loins tremble continually. Pour out your indignation upon them.

[15 : 55] And let your burning anger overtake them. May their camp be a desolation. Just the highlights here. Add to them punishment upon punishment.

Let them be blotted out from the book of the living. It's very serious. It's not very nice at all, is it? I will now invoke the great preacher sidestep strategy of saying we don't have time to completely deal with this.

However, I will make a few comments. David's praying for justice here. First comment. He's praying for justice. And it's important that you see that what he's doing is he's praying for it.

He's not saying, God, I am going to cause their loins to tremble. I am going to set a trap at the table.

I'm going to darken their eyes. I'm going to put punishment on top of punishment. He's not saying, God, they've really annoyed me. Let me make you proud. Let me show you what I'm going to do.

[17 : 03] No, he's praying. He's praying that God will do it. You might think, well, that's not much better. But no, it's infinitely better. He's basically, he's offering up the injustice of the situation to God.

He's saying, God, this is your situation to deal with. And in doing that, he's like relinquishing his own right for revenge. And he's trusting God with that situation.

God, this is terrible what's been happening to me. You know, he would desperately want to take these people out. But he's saying, God, I entrust them into your justice.

And David can trust God to do this. Because God must do what is right. And wickedness can't go unpunished. So in David's really unjust situation, he is simply praying for justice.

But you might say, what about Jesus forgiving people and all that? Isn't that like a pretty big deal? Of course it is. Of course we must forgive. And of course God forgives if we ask him.

[18 : 08] But when God forgives somebody, it doesn't mean he sweeps wickedness under the carpet. That's not forgiveness. God doesn't pretend nothing happened. Sin must be paid for.

But the gospel tells us that Jesus paid for it. That God takes the injustice and the evil upon himself. So, our framework.

How does this help us pray? Folks, pray for justice in the world. Pray for justice. How does this shape us as a people of God?

What is God teaching us about how he works? Knowing that God will settle accounts with everybody. That all evil will be paid for. Either by the people that did the evil.

Or paid for by Jesus on the cross. Means that we can let go of our desires for revenge. We can let go of our anger. And we can trust in God's justice.

[19 : 08] And know that he will make things right. And we can get on with the business of forgiveness. Now, what does it tell us about Jesus? Well, it tells us about the death on the cross.

It tells us that this is not just an example of how to live self-sacrificially. No, it is punishment. The wrath of God, the Bible says, was on Jesus on the cross.

It was poured out on him. So that we can know forgiveness. Alright. Verses 30 to 36.

And we're finishing up here. It's amazing what David says after all of this. He begins with, God, I'm drowning. I can't put my foot anywhere.

I cannot get out of this situation. And then he says, I will praise the name of God with a song. I will magnify him with thanksgiving.

[20 : 12] Let the heaven and the earth praise him. The seas and everything that move in them. It's almost, no it is not almost. It is. This is a defiant act, I think.

Despite it all, I will praise God. And it will please him. Now the only way that we can, like David, be so cheeky.

That's probably a good word. So cheeky. As to take this position to praise God in the midst of deep waters with no foothold. Is to know that God knows what it is like for me.

And to know that God is with us. And to know that God will bring justice and make all things right. If we know that, well, I think we can praise him.

So closing up. One. When you don't have words, use the Psalms to pray. Two.

[21 : 26] Let this Psalm shape you. Let it inform you. Let it change your heart. Let it teach you that life is hard. That you will suffer for your faith.

And three. But be encouraged. Because the suffering King Jesus is with you. Amen.