

# God Builds Up His Church

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[ 0 : 00 ] Let's turn for a little to the psalm that we read, Psalm 69, and the last two verses of the psalm.

Verse 35, For God will save Zion and build up the cities of Judah, and people shall dwell there and possess it. The offspring of his servants shall inherit it, and those who love his name shall dwell in it. This psalm, obviously, it reveals to us something of the agony and the vulnerability of a person who is experiencing slander and betrayal and hurt and danger.

There are all kinds of forces and enemies at work here. And this psalm has a psalmist praying passionately for himself, but he's also praying with regard to others, and he's praying for the cause. And it's very obvious that he is tied up with the cause, that the cause is central to his own life. Now, we know that this psalm speaks to us of the Lord Jesus Christ.

[ 1 : 17 ] There are verses there and parts that were fulfilled with regard to Jesus. Say, for instance, in verse 20 there, I looked for pity, but there was none, and for comforters, but I found none.

And in verse 21, and for thirst they gave me sour wine to drink. And, of course, these things were that was fulfilled in the Lord Jesus Christ. It's Spurgeon who says that the footsteps of Christ are all through this sorrowful song.

That's what he says. But we also know that, as in keeping with some of the other psalms that speak to us of Christ and are prophetic regarding the Lord Jesus Christ, that everything of this psalm can in no way apply to the Lord Jesus Christ.

For instance, in verse 5, O God, you know my folly. The wrongs I have done are not hidden from you. Now, we know that a verse like that, it would be impossible to say that that had any bearing upon the Lord Jesus Christ because he was sinless and pure and righteous and altogether holy. And let us say that that is a very common Christian experience. O God, you know my folly. The wrongs I have done are not hidden from you.

[ 2 : 44 ] And it's often true that when our own troubles come in upon us and when difficulties come into our lives, that it brings a seriousness into our life.

And it often brings us to examine ourselves in the light of God's word before God. And when we do that, the more we begin to examine ourselves against the light of God's word, the more it exposes our folly and our sin.

And that is often something that really, really troubles us. And it's amazing how in a moment we can be brought down from almost an element of self-righteousness where we have been, we could say, living to a certain extent in folly or there has been folly attached to what we've been doing and saying.

And in a moment, through the conviction of God's spirit, that we are brought like that. David is a classic example of that. After David had Uriah killed, he had, I remember, put in the front line to ensure that he would be killed to try and cover his affair with Bathsheba.

And he was oblivious at that period to exactly where he was. And we can see how self-righteous he was when Nathan the prophet came to him and told him a story about a man who, they had this wee pet lamb.

[ 4 : 20 ] It's the only one they had. And the neighbor was somebody who had loads of sheep. And a visitor came to the man with a wee pet lamb. And rather than take, a visitor came to the, sorry, to the rich man with all the sheep.

And rather than take one of his own, he went over next door and took the one little lamb, the one little, almost pet lamb that the poor man had and killed it and used that for the meat for the visitor. And at that moment, when David heard that story, he was so incensed by it. He said, that man will die. You can see how self-righteous David was. And Nathan said to him, David, you're that man.

And at that moment, the Spirit of the Lord brought with convicting power the reality of just what it was that David had done. And that's why, I don't believe that this psalm is connected to that particular episode.

But David, it was one of these moments, David is able to say, and he's a writer, this, oh God, you know my folly. The wrongs I have done are not hidden from you. And David knew that.

[ 5 : 35 ] He knew that personally in his life at different times. He just knew that there was, his whole life, everything was exposed before God. And when he was convicted by the Lord, you see, if we're living in a wrong way before God, and we're living in a self-righteous way, then everybody else's sins are very obvious to us.

But our own aren't. But when the Lord reveals himself to us, and when the Spirit convicts us of who we really are, then all of a sudden we're like this.

And we see our own sin. We don't see other people's sins, but we're so conscious and so aware of our own sin. And so we find in this psalm that the psalmist is plowing through all the trials and all the suffering and all these things, the persecutions that he's enduring.

Now, it's interesting here. We know that the Lord curses those who despise him and reject him right throughout his life and die without him.

That the curse of God descends upon them eternally. They are made to depart from him forever and ever and ever. And his judgments are true and righteous.

[ 7 : 05 ] These things often cause us many questions in our own mind. And we try to just even to think of what that is.

But we know that it is true. However, it's very interesting that when you come to David here, we find that David is calling down now.

Curses, the curse of God upon the persecutors, his persecutors. And there's part of it that we might find very, very strange.

But the one thing that we have to say in David's defense is this. That while David was being attacked personally, we've always got to remember that David saw himself as a representative of God.

And David was very conscious that he was somebody who had nailed his color to the mast. Somebody that God had chosen to do God's work and to rule God's people.

[ 8 : 09 ] And David saw that those who persecuted him were actually persecuting God. He saw beyond himself. And he saw that the persecutions, while they were personal, he always saw them far bigger than that.

And he saw that these persecutions were against God. And so we've got to understand that the Old Testament believers didn't, although they had amazing light.

And they saw the day of Christ. There were aspects of their lives and aspects of where they were that hadn't seen everything that Christ was to do, to be, to bring.

And that's where we see the great difference between the Old Testament and the New Testament. Because you see, David actually, when you go from, it's in verse 22 down to verse 28.

And it's in all the ordinary things of life that David is asking that God will curse the enemies. Like in their food, in their home, in their health, in their strength, in their relationships.

[ 9 : 21 ] In all these things. Let their own table before them become a snare. When they're at peace, let it be a trap. Let their eyes be darkened. Their loins tremble. Make their camp be a desolation.

And you look at it and it's really quite extraordinary what the curse that David is seeking to bring down upon them. But as we say, this shows us the huge difference between the type and the anti-type.

Because while David is that type, we see such a difference in the Lord Jesus Christ. Because when Christ's enemies were attacking him.

And when Christ's enemies were doing their very worst against him. We find him actually saying, as they were nailing him to the cross.

Father, forgive them. For they know not what they do. And you see, in the New Testament, Christ has come to deal with the curse.

[ 10 : 25 ] He has come to the place of the curse. Christ has taken the curse. Christ has made atonement for sinners. And it's in there that we see this gulf, this difference.

Although the Old and the New Testament are one. But the New Testament flows out of the Old. And there are actually no inconsistencies when you examine it closely. But we see how the old has moved into the new. Into this new, what Jesus Christ has done. And so, today, rather than us seeking to bring down curse. Let us remember that the Lord will curse those whom he will curse. And the Lord will deal with those with whom he will deal. And he deals righteously. Shall not the judge of all the earth do right? And we know that he will eternally judge those who have finally rejected him. But it is our duty, as New Testament believers, to pray. [11:26] Jesus says that. Pray for those who persecute you. Pray for them. And we are to seek that they will turn to the Lord Jesus Christ.

That is our great burden. Even in the town, we know there are loads of people who are opposed to the Lord Jesus Christ. It is our responsibility and prayer. Is that they would come to discover their folly.

And to see the error of their ways. And that they would turn to the Lord Jesus Christ. However, the psalm ends in great song and praise.

And we find that there is this notion that everywhere and everything. In heaven and on earth and in the seas shall praise the Lord. And there is this great assurance from the psalmist that the Lord will save Zion.

That he will build up the cities of Judah. And people shall dwell there and possess it. There were times when this psalm must have been a great comfort to God's people.

[12:30] Particularly when they were taken into exile and taken away. And they would be seeing the great promise that was held out there. Because while David is... You see, this is a wonderful thing. At the time when David was king.

David was establishing God's kingdom and God's rule. And so that Judah and Zion. They were being built up. They were being built up.

But there was a time when all of it was flattened. And it was desolate. And God's people were not there. None of them. And this must have been a balm to the souls of those who were taken into captivity.

Because they were seeing there, God will save Zion. And he will build up the cities of Judah. And people shall dwell there and possess it. And who will dwell there? Well, it is the righteous.

The people shall dwell. The offspring of his servants shall inherit it. Now, we know that at the end of the day, there is only one kingdom that will endure.

[13:33] And here is a great picture of the church. And God is building his church. Jesus Christ said that, I will build my church. And we've often said it before.

But the whole of world's history is the scaffolding round the church. The church is at the center of God's purposes. Today, tonight, it might not look like that.

When we put on our news and see what's happening all over the world, we might say to ourselves, oh, what's going to happen to the church? Because the news isn't bothered about the church.

The news is bothered about governments and empires and countries and societies and all the rest. They are the scaffolding. There is a scaffolding.

And they will all go. And you know, when scaffolding is taken down, sometimes you can't see the building while the scaffolding is at work. When the scaffolding is taken down and the building is seen, do people talk about the scaffolding afterwards?

[14:36] You don't find people saying, oh, remember the scaffolding that was there? It was beautiful. I loved looking at that scaffolding. No, scaffolding is forgotten. It was only there because it was part of what was being.

Used in order that the building would be built up. And that's how it is going to be. All the governments and all the nations and all the people of power and all these things, they're not going to be remembered.

But there's only one that will. And that is the church of Jesus Christ. This is what will endure forever. And the Lord of the city has given rights and benefits to the citizens of that city.

He's given us a means of grace, public and private, in order that we will develop and thrive and grow. And the city, in the Old Testament, the city was really, really important.

Because the city spoke of various things. In Psalm 107, you know how it talks about they strayed in deserts pathless way, no city found to rest. The desert was a place of danger.

[15:43] It was a place of vulnerability. A place of loneliness. The city was always looked on as a place of protection because it had walls around it. The city was looked at as a place with loads of people, of population.

The city was looked at as a place of rest. All the wandering in the wilderness was over. And now you're in a place of rest. A place of peace because of protection. That was the image that was often given in the Old Testament about the city.

And that is the picture that God gives us of the city that he is building. And particularly of the heavenly city. It will be populated with all his people.

And it will be protected forever by himself. There will be no enemy. There will be no death. There will be no curse. There will be nothing that will come in to defile or spoil the peace and the rest of that city.

And so the Lord has made this great provision. And he's already given us the beginning of it here. Once we enter into the church, into his building, that's one of the things we enter.

[17:01] The moment we enter into Jesus Christ, we enter in through the door. I am the door, says Jesus. And one of the things we experience is his peace.

We are conscious of his love. Even although there might be times we're uncertain about this and that and we have our troubles and our trials. Yet there is this sense of belonging, of knowing who he is and what he's going to do with us.

Because this is the great hope of the Christian. And we see then the characteristics of those who inherit or who belong to the city.

Those, that's what it says, and those who love his name shall dwell in it. You see, you love the name. Now we know that the Lord has been given many names.

But there's one name that we all love for a particular reason. We love every name that the Lord has given. But one in particular, and that is the name Jesus. Because it says, he shall be called Jesus because he saves his people from their sins.

[18:11] And that's why we love his name. Because of what he has done for us. And then it tells, we think about it.

This name is at the very center of our life. Because of what Jesus has done for us. You think about it personally. He left glory for you.

He came into this world for you. He went to the cross for you. He bore all your sins upon himself.

That's what he has done for you. Of course you love his name. But you don't only think about what he has done. But also what he is doing right now.

He is shepherding you. He's feeding you. He's protecting you. He's leading you. He's guiding you. And you know there are times you stop and you think and you reflect and you say, you know it's quite amazing.

[19:17] The way that the Lord has done and all that he has done for me. And all that he's actually doing for me right now. But also we think upon what he has yet to do.

And you know the shepherding and the leading, he never stops doing. Because it's part of what he will be doing with us in glory as well. Because we're told that he will lead them.

And he will feed them. He will lead them to everlasting fountains. And that's a wonderful thing.

Because he is yet going to exalt you. He is yet going to openly acknowledge and acquit you on the day of judgment.

Isn't that quite a thought? As you stand before him. He's going to do that. And he will say, enter into the joy of the Lord.

And he will present you with an everlasting crown. The crown of life. And there's just so much, so much that is yet ahead. And that is why, even although we live in a world that people are becoming, are growing so uncomfortable with people.

[20:30] There's so many people saying the world can't keep going the way it is. They're right. It can't. And the world isn't going to keep going the way it is. Because we're told in scripture that a day is going to come when the elements will melt with a fervent heat.

And we're told the Lord is going to return. The world, I don't know how they think about these things. But you know, for us, it's great. It's wonderful to know that the Lord is sovereign.

He's in control. He's building his church. You're part of that building. And you're going to be with himself forever. And as you look out on all the uncertainty of this world, you know there's one thing that's certain and sure.

It's my Savior. He has not changed. And he never will. And he's coming again to take me home with himself. That's what he has said.

I go to prepare a place for you. I will come again and receive you unto myself. It's no wonder that the believer has everything.

[ 21 : 37 ] And isn't it wonderful how David, despite all that he was going through and all that he was given to see, that as he often did, he finished with exultation and praise and such an assurance of God's purposes for God's people throughout all the generations.

Let us pray.

That have been set out before us by our Savior, who has said, this is the way, walk ye in it. And so we pray that you will bless us with every spirit you are blessing.

Protect us from our shells. Protect us from the enemies within and without that are seeking to devour. Go before us, we pray. Take us to our home safely and in your peace.

And grant us your grace and forgive us our sin. In Jesus' name. Amen.