

Hated for Doing Right

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[0 : 00] Well, good morning again, church. Our sermon text today is Psalm 69. Let me invite you to go there with me. If you're at home, let me encourage you to grab a Bible. If you're here in the sanctuary, it's going to be on the screens as well. I'm going to start by reading the first 13 verses of Psalm 69, and then we'll kind of walk through the rest of the psalm as we go. But before I read the first half of the psalm, let me pray for us, and then we'll dive in. Let's pray. Lord Jesus, thank you that we can come to you as we are, that we don't need to clean ourselves up or get ourselves right before we come to you, because God, you promise that you are the one who can make us right, that you're the one who loves us as we are and changes us by your grace into who we need to be.

And we thank you that it's through your written word that you do that work of sanctifying us, changing us, and transforming us more and more into the likeness of your own self, Lord Jesus. So, would you in your mercy come and meet with us now as we turn to this psalm? Help us to understand it. God, help us to receive it and help us to live it out. We pray this in Jesus' name. Father, amen. Psalm 69. To the choir master, according to the lilies of David, Save me, O God, for the waters have come up to my neck. I sink in deep mire where there's no foothold. I've come into deep waters and the flood sweeps over me. I'm weary with my crying out. My throat is parched. My eyes grow dim with waiting for my God. More in number than the hairs of my head are those who hate me without cause. Mighty are those who would destroy me, those who attack me with lies.

[1 : 47] What I did not steal must I now restore? O God, you know my folly. The wrongs I've done are not hidden from you. Let not those who hope in you be put to shame through me, O Lord God of hosts.

Let not those who seek you be brought to dishonor through me, O God of Israel. For it is for your sake that I have borne reproach, that dishonor has covered my face. I've become a stranger to my brothers, an alien to my mother's sons. For zeal for your house has consumed me, and the reproaches of those who reproach you have fallen on me. When I wept and humbled my soul with fasting, it became my reproach. When I made sackcloth my clothing, I became a byword to them. I'm the talk of those who sit in the gate, and the drunkards make songs about me. But as for me, my prayer is to you, O Lord. At an acceptable time, O God, in the abundance of your steadfast love, answer me in your saving faithfulness.

Well, you know, I think sometimes we can think that the Christian life is a bit like a computer program. If we put in the right code, if we put in the right commands, then we sort of get the outcome that we want. As long as I do it right, then I get a good result. Or we can think of the Christian life kind of like a vending machine. If I put in the money, if I slide my credit card, then the candy kind of drops to the bottom, and everything's good. But you know, you don't have to read the Bible for long, especially the Psalms, to realize that is not how things work. Sometimes we can do all the right things for all the right reasons, and the result is not material blessing and comfort, but rather increased trouble and trial. Sometimes our genuine devotion to God, in other words, can lead to just a flood of trouble and a flood of hatred, even, from other people. And that's what Psalm 69 is all about.

In this Psalm, it kind of falls into two broad halves. In the first half of the Psalm, David kind of lays out his situation, and then in the second half of the Psalm, he sort of takes that situation to God in prayer. So today I want to kind of explore this situation together, and then we'll kind of explore that prayer together as well, and see how we can respond when our devotion to God results in hatred sometimes from other people. So first, let's look at that situation. In these first 13 verses that we just read, David prays, and he just lays out his heart before the Lord. And you know, that just, just in and of itself, that is a good example for us. Sometimes when we're feeling so overwhelmed, when we

feel like we're sinking, the best place to start is to just open our hearts to God in prayer, and just express what's welling up in there. The Psalm just starts like a rocket, doesn't it? Save me, God! I'm sinking! And sometimes that's where we need to begin. And these opening verses where David says, I'm sinking beneath the waves of the flood, he's desperate, but we find out in verse 4 why he's so desperate, why he feels like he's sinking. He says, more in number than the hairs of my head are those who hate me without cause. And as David keeps on praying, we start to see that the reason why he's so hated, the real root of that animosity, that reproach from other people, is actually David's sincere devotion to God. Look at verse 8. I become a stranger to my brothers, an alien to my mother's sons. Why? For zeal for your house has consumed me, and the reproaches of those who reproach you have fallen on me. David says, when I wept and humbled my soul with fasting, it became my reproach.

[5 : 33] When I made sackcloth my clothing, I became a byword to them. I'm the talk of people now. You know, drunkards are making songs about me. They're reviling me. So what we see here is that David, that people have seen the psalmist, they've seen David's devotion to God, they've seen his humble repentance, his sincere heart of worship to God in spirit and truth, and how have they responded?

With reproach and hatred. So this psalm has a pretty particular focus. It's not just about praying when people are out to get you in general. It's about praying when your sincere faith leads to a flood of criticism, contempt, mockery, even hatred. So it's good to pause here and say, has that ever happened to us? Has that ever happened to you? Has your sincere desire to please God ever made you the subject of mockery or contempt? Has it ever gotten you into trouble with other people? David says that even some of his own family members have turned against him in verse 8. I'm a stranger to my brothers. I'm an alien to my mother's sons. His own brothers have rejected him. And then in verse 12, it's, you know, it's not just who he calls the drunkards, the sort of like hoi polloi, everybody out there. It's not just, it's not just those people who are mocking him, but he says it's those who sit at the gate.

And those who sit at the gate in the ancient world, they would have been sort of the leaders of the community. They would have been the respected community members who sit at the gate of the city to make judicial decisions over things that are happening in the life. They were sort of the ruling council. So everyone has turned against David here. Now, you know, as we think about this, you know, I'm sure we can think of lots of things about sincere devotion to God. There are lots of elements about having a heart sincerely devoted to God that could bring on this sort of alienation and contempt from other people. But in this Psalm, David pinpoints something very specific in verses 10 and 11. Verses 10 and 11, he says, I humbled my soul with fasting. I made sackcloth my clothing.

What is that describing? What is that reality talking about? Well, those are ways of talking about genuine, humble repentance. The mark of genuine spirituality, of real zeal for God is humble repentance, a contrite spirit. And David says that humble, contrite spirit, walking with repentance towards God, that has made him the target of countless enemies.

Friends, you see, in the gospel, we admit the biblical message of salvation, what the core message of the Bible is about. In that saving message of the Bible, we admit that we are sinners who are saved by sheer grace. There's nothing that we can do to make us right with God. We confess that we need a Savior.

[8 : 41] And that confession, that humble confession of repentance, that at the end of the day, the fact that we're all sinners, is the most offensive thing about the message of the Bible.

That we cannot save ourselves, that all our good works are not sufficient, that there are no truly good people in the world, that all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God. And only those who admit their sin and receive God's rescue and his son will be saved.

That message, what David is showing us here, is one of the most offensive things about true biblical spirituality. Because in our fallen hearts, we just, we recoil against that message, don't we? We want to think that my own performance, my own life is good enough for God to owe me favor. I want to think that what I have done is the thing that grants me a place in God's favor. We are inescapable in our self-justification. We're always going to look to something to then hold up and say, God, you have to bless me. I'm good enough now. My good works, my performance, my credentials.

But the gospel comes in and says, no, you still need a savior. Because whatever it is you're building your identity on, it's going to crumble in the end before the perfect wrath and love of God.

[10:04] That message is at the heart of the gospel. And it is always offensive to our natural human hearts. And so, as Paul says in 1 Timothy 3.12, all who desire to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted.

Now, this situation that David is laying out here that he describes, I think it's both a comfort and it's a challenge to us. Before we move on to the prayer, let's just pause and think about the situation. I think it's both a comfort and it's a challenge. It's a comfort because, brothers and sisters, if you have lost friends, or if you've been alienated from some of your family relationships, or if you've lost your reputation at work because of your sincere desire to please God, then Psalm 69 comes with a word of comfort and says, you're not alone.

You stand with a countless host of saints who've gone before you, who have walked that road. You're not alone. Be comforted.

Be encouraged. But, I think we also have to admit that this situation's a bit of a challenge to us, isn't it? You know, this week as I was studying Psalm 69, I've had to ask myself, you know, is my own humble heart of repentance and sincerity for God shaping my life so much that I experience reproach at times, exclusion, like David did?

[11:47] Or is my life really just indistinguishable from the world around me? Is how I use my money? Is how I use my time? Is how I use my body any different from the world around me who don't know the God of grace?

You know, there are always going to be things in the gospel, in biblical Christianity that will be appealing to any culture in which it stands. But there are also going to be things that go against the grain of any culture.

So we have to ask ourselves, we have to take the challenge and say, am I living in line with the truth of the gospel, with that humble, repentant heart, or am I just indistinguishable from the world around me?

So there's a challenge here for us. And it's a challenge to renew our sincerity towards God. To say, Lord, renew my passion for you, my zeal for you, my devotion to you, my humble commitment to you.

So that's the situation that David is under here and we can often relate to it and we can take comfort and we can take challenge from it. But starting in verse 13, David turns from kind of laying out the situation to now asking God to respond.

[12:59] He turns from the situation to prayer, to petition. He's not content just to lay it out. He says, okay God, now you've got to do something about it. And there are three broad things that David's going to pray for in the second half of Psalm 69.

First, he's going to pray a prayer for rescue. And second, he's going to pray a prayer for justice. And then third, he's going to pray a prayer of hope and encouragement for others.

So a prayer for rescue, a prayer for justice, and a prayer of hope and encouragement for others. So first, let's look at this prayer for rescue. We're going to pick up in verse 13 and go to verse 18. Let's read that. Let me read that for us.

David says, But as for me, my prayer is to you, O Lord, and an acceptable time, O God, in the abundance of your steadfast love. Answer me in your saving faithfulness. Deliver me from sinking in the mire.

Let me be delivered from my enemies and from the deep waters. Let not the flood sweep over me or the deep swallow me up or the pit close its mouth over me. Answer me, O Lord, for your steadfast love is good.

[14:00] According to your abundant mercy, turn to me. Hide not your face from your servant, for I am in distress. Make haste to answer me. Draw near to my soul. Redeem me. Ransom me because of my enemies.

Now, when we feel like we're sinking beneath a flood of unjust reproach and hatred, David's showing us here that first we have to pray for God to rescue, to deliver.

I mean, I think it would be very ironic, don't you, to try to save ourselves when the primary reason we're being criticized is because we believe that we can't save ourselves, right?

So rather than anxiously plotting and planning and fretting and maneuvering when we experience unjust pressure and attack and reproach, our first response should be to pray for God to deliver.

Don't let me sink, God. Sustain me. Hold me up. We can bring this to God in prayer. prayer. And David marshals, he sort of draws out of his experience all sorts of words and images here to talk about God rescuing him.

[15:15] But note where he ends in verse 18. He says, redeem me, God. Ransom me. You know, we can often glide pretty quickly over these words.

You know, David takes one, two, three, four, five, six verses here to basically say, save me, God, right? And we can sometimes just kind of glide over them. But sometimes it's good to slow down to sort of hit the brakes when we get to these parts of the Bible and really just sort of slow down and focus in on what's being said.

You know, the Bible uses all sorts of words to describe God's saving work. There's no one word that can capture its fullness. So sometimes it's good to just slow down and listen to these words. David says, redeem me and ransom me.

The language of redeem, of redeeming, that's the language you would use when a family member, when a near relative sees you in distress.

You know, in the ancient world maybe a famine has come through and you've lost your fields, you've had to sell your property, you've become a hired hand, your ability to get your feet under you has been lost, you're just systemically down and out.

[16:29] There's no way up. Well, a redeemer is that relative who comes, sees you in distress, they come to your side and they buy back your land for you and they buy back your equipment and your livestock for you and they restore it to you and they put you back on your feet again.

You remember the book of Ruth? The book of Ruth is sort of a great book in the Old Testament about redeeming, about a redeemer. Boaz was the redeemer, the nearest relative of Ruth and Naomi when they come back to the land of promise and they're completely destitute, they've lost everything and Boaz is the nearest relative and he sees them in distress and what it means for Boaz to be a redeemer in that moment is to marry Ruth the widow and rescue the family from ruin. He binds himself to the family in marriage to redeem them, to rescue them. Now think about Psalm 69.

David had lost his friends. He'd even lost his family relationships. Everybody was turning against him. But he prays to the Lord who's his redeemer.

The Lord is the one who sticks closer than a brother, the one who will not leave us destitute or alone, the one who will see us in our distress and restore to us what we've lost.

[17:52] David says, redeem me God. Be my redeemer. But the Lord doesn't just redeem, he ransoms.

David says, ransom me, oh God. Now a ransom in the ancient world was a payment. It was a price that you paid to set something free when it was trapped. If you had fallen into slavery, a ransom could be paid to give you your freedom again, to liberate you.

Now you see, in Psalm 69, David is experiencing the agonizing realization that there is a cost for sincere devotion to God. There's a cost for that.

But when we pray, ransom me, oh God, because of my enemies, we're reminded that God is willing to pay a cost for us. Ransom me. You know, when God liberated his people from slavery in Egypt, the great saving act in the Old Testament, the exodus from Egypt, when God liberated his people from slavery in Egypt, what was he doing there?

He was putting his own name on the line. His reputation was now bound up forever with the fate of his people. He was willing to pay the cost with his own name to set them free.

[19:10] But in the New Testament, we see that God isn't just willing to put his name on the line for us. God's willing to give his own son for us. God's willing to pay the cost fully.

Jesus willingly came and ransomed us, paid the price to set us free. And if that is true, if we know that the God of the universe has paid the price for us, if he has ransomed us, if God has ransomed us, then we know that our enemies can never really destroy us.

How could our enemies sink us when God is our redeemer, when God is our ransom? No flood could ultimately shake us. No amount of torrent or torment or criticism around us could shake us if we have the Lord God as our redeemer, if we have the Lord God willing to put his own self on the line for us?

How could he let us sink beneath the weight of our enemies? Never. So David's confident that at the acceptable time, in verse 13, at the right time, in God's good timing, he will be delivered.

But after praying for rescue, David then turns to praying for justice. This is the second part of David's prayer, a prayer for justice. And this is verses 19 through 29.

[20 : 41] Let me read 19 through 29 for us. David says, you know my reproach and my shame and my dishonor. My foes are all known to you. Reproaches have broken my heart so that I am in despair.

I looked for pity but there was none and for comforters but I found none. They gave me poison for food and for my thirst they gave me sour wine to drink. Let their own table before them become a snare.

When they are at peace let it become a trap. Let their eyes be darkened so they cannot see. Make their loins tremble continually. Pour out your indignation upon them and let your burning anger overtake them. May their camp become a desolation and let no one dwell in their tents.

For they persecute him whom you've struck down and they recount the pain of those you've wounded. Add to them punishment upon punishment. May they have no acquittal from you. Let them be blotted out of the book of the living.

Let them not be enrolled among the righteous. But I am afflicted and in pain. Let your salvation oh God set me on high. Out of his deep anguish David prays here in these verses that God would deal with his enemies in perfect justice.

[21 : 52] That all the wrong that they've done he says God let it be done back to them. You know you can look through these verses 22 through 28 and see all the ways in which David's sort of recounting his own experience.

His own table has become a snare. His eyes have been darkened. He's trembling continually. His enemies are always saying to him throughout the Psalms there's no salvation for you David. You're not going to be a part of God's plan.

And David's just saying God act in justice. Give to my enemies what they deserve. Now how do we make sense of a prayer like this?

It seems pretty harsh doesn't it? Well first we have to see that prayers like this in the Psalms and this prayer here in Psalm 69 in particular is an expression of a soul in deep anguish.

A soul that has experienced deep deep wrong. So before we criticize or we dismiss such a prayer you know maybe it's helpful to go back to those moments in our own life when perhaps we've tasted a bit of that anguish and injustice.

[23 : 04] And when we go back and we remember those moments in our own life that own bitter anguish you know we can start to realize that the hearts cry for justice the hearts cry for things to be made right that heart cry resounds deeply in the bones of creatures who are made in the image of God and sometimes that anguish it cries out in this kind of form.

So this is an expression of a soul in deep anguish crying out to God for real justice. But second notice that the prayer is horizontal it's not vertical and this is what I mean notice that what David is praying here is not God let me make things right with my enemies let me give to them what they gave to me just give me a chance God let me pay them back.

It's not what David is praying is it? He's praying a vertical prayer the psalm is saying God you be the judge God you give them what they deserve in other words it's putting God in the place of judgment not me and only when we can pray that prayer vertically only when we can we can pray that prayer vertically can we then respond rightly horizontally because if we don't put God in our own hearts in the rightful seat of judgment without minimizing the wrong without excusing the wrong if we don't sort of lift it up to God and say God you must be the rightful judge here if we don't put God in that place then we will inevitably put ourselves in that place if I don't honestly entrust the judgment to God I'm going to seek retribution or vengeance for myself I'm going to try to balance the scales and it might not be through physical harm but it might be through verbal attack or it might be through just harboring evil thoughts in my mind about another person but if I take my sense of justice to God if I can settle things vertically then I can respond rightly horizontally then when I respond to my enemies I can respond with equity or with justice where needs be and I can even respond with forgiveness David prayed this prayer from a place of deep anguish a place of deep hurt of being deeply wrong and he prayed it to God knowing that God would be the just judge but he also prayed it knowing that God promises to protect his people to stand up for the oppressed the downtrodden the afflicted this is one of the great messages of the Bible that God will protect his people from all harm in the end he prayed this prayer knowing that God sees the afflictions of his people that God knows what it's like do you remember at the end of Exodus chapter 2 where the people are sort of

they're sort of languishing in slavery in Egypt and at the end of Exodus 2 it says God heard their groanings he saw and God knew

David picks up that divine reality in verse 9 when he says God you know my reproach you know my shame you know my dishonor God knows my friends how much more can we say that God knows in light of the New Testament knowing that God the Son took our human nature was tested and tried in every way that we are but without sin Jesus lived a life of complete and perfect devotion to the Father and what did Jesus receive as a result of that perfect life of healing and righteousness and goodness and love contempt and hatred and eventually crucifixion you know when David writes they gave me poison for food and for my thirst they gave me sour wine to drink he was speaking metaphorically he was saying look I did good to them and they gave me the worst in return but when Jesus was hanging on the cross the gospel of Matthew tells us that literally they offered him wine to drink mixed with gall mixed with a dull poison to ease his pain

[27:18] Jesus was offered the worst of human enmity and hatred he was truly hated without cause and yet something happens at the cross Jesus the perfect judge prays for his enemies father forgive them now is Jesus overturning or is he kind of contradicting prayers like we have in psalm 69 is he saying forget about those prayers now that I've come no he's not Jesus taught again and again that perfect judgment would come that those who refuse to repent will be shut out of the kingdom that they will be blotted out of the book of life Jesus talked more about the reality of judgment than anybody else in the Bible in fact the risen Lord Jesus says that he will himself be the judge so Jesus wasn't contradicting the witness of the psalms from the cross he was fulfilling it the judge was standing in the place of the judged so that mercy free of charge could be extended to sinners the love of

God took up not only the complaint of the wronged but the wrong of the wrongers to rescue them so today we too can pray for God's judgment and for God's protection for his people we can pour out our hearts to God when we experience hatred without cause but when we do that we're actually letting God be the judge and when we set that straight that allows us then to deal with our enemies with both justice and with mercy as God has dealt with us through the cross in both justice and mercy and that brings us to the third part of David's prayer we've seen his prayer for rescue his prayer for justice and the psalm ends with a prayer of hope of encouragement for others let's pick up with 29 we'll read to the end and then we'll finish up David says I'm afflicted and in pain let your salvation O God set me on high I will praise the name of God with a song I will magnify him with our prisoners let heaven and earth praise him the seas and everything that moves in them for God will save Zion and build up the cities of Judah and people shall dwell there and possess it the offspring of his servant shall inherit it and those who love his name shall dwell in it you see when David prayed this prayer all of Psalm 69 he wasn't just praying as an individual before God he was praying also as the people's king as the people's representative as their head and that means that what was true of him was true of them as their king and that's why earlier in this psalm in verse 6 David is so concerned that the shame and dishonor he's experiencing for his devotion to God is going to undermine the faithful people as well if they see the king being brought low being riddled down with contempt will they not to be brought low will it not weaken their spiritual devotion to see their king suffer such a cost for his devotion to God David's rightly concerned about the people that they're going to lose heart when they see him experience this kind of attack so that's why the psalm ends with David's not just with David's own personal rescue or

David's own you who seek God even when you bear reproach let your hearts revive do not think that these afflictions are the last word no though we are brought low now God will set us on high and we can be so sure of that hope that even now we can praise him and magnify him with thanks giving David's hope and confidence in God's rescue means that the people can have the same hope and confidence as well because what's true of the king if God will rescue his king then God will rescue his people and so the psalm ends with this confident hope that God will save Zion he'll build up the cities of Judah in other words the people of God will one day flourish and get this in their flourishing creation will rejoice heaven and earth will praise God the sea just dragging us forward into the new testament pointing us ahead to the new and better

David to Jesus Christ crucified and risen if the old testament people of God could have hope when they saw David rescued from his enemies how much more brothers and sisters can we have hope now that we see Jesus the king of the universe resurrected and triumphant over sin and death and hell for us what's earlier if the world hated him it will hate us too but the new testament tells us that if

we share in his sufferings we will also share in his glory and the whole creation Paul says in Romans 8 is waiting and groaning with eager longing with bated breath for the children of God to enter into glory to experience the resurrection with Jesus when he returns and when that day happens and so when you are hated without cause because of your sincere devotion to God remember that when you share in his sufferings you will also share in his glory in fact the sufferings of this present time

[33 : 10] Paul says are not worth comparing with the glory that is revealed to us the new testament will even say that the sufferings now are preparing for us an eternal weight of glory beyond compare if we're willing to pray that sort of prayer of hope even in suffering and trial if we let that hope get into our prayers and we start to praise God then like David we can start to think of others too and we can start to think of their well-being even when we're going through extremely difficult times isn't it true that suffering and affliction can make us very self standard we just worry about ourselves and our own problems but you know if we have the hope of the Bible if we have the hope of the gospel even when we're suffering we can care for others and encourage others we can be thinking of others even in the midst of excruciating trial why because we have hope because this is not the last word so friends when our devotion to God brings a flood of contempt and even hatred even when it seems like we're sinking with nowhere to stand remember that you have a rescuer and there is a just

God who promises to protect you and we have hope this story that we are in ends like Psalm 69 it ends in praise let's pray together Lord Jesus help us to live into the hope of this Psalm help us not to be afraid when we face affliction Jesus you warned us that we would be hated help that not to destroy us God but help it to drive us to you and Lord would you advance your kingdom through us we pray in Jesus name Amen