

Psalm 69: Plea from one who has been rejected



Psalm 69 (68) (Mode 3. 3...12 / 4...271)

The life of the psalmist is under threat because of the stand he is taking in obedience to God's will. He pleads for God's help, trusting that in God's good time it will be forthcoming, for he believes that **'The Lord hears the needy and does not despise his own that are in bonds'**(verse 33).

The psalm could have been composed by Jeremiah (see, for example Jeremiah 38:6). It could also have been composed by one of the leaders of the exiles in the years prior to the destruction of Jerusalem, who was being ridiculed because he refused to give up hope that ‘God will save Zion and rebuild the cities of Judah’(verse 35).

Much of the psalm can be prayed by Christians thinking of Jesus in his passion.

Save me, O God.

The waters have risen to my neck.

I sink into the mud,

and can gain no foothold.

‘I waited patiently for the Lord; he inclined to me and heard my cry. He drew me up from the desolate pit, out of the miry bog, and set my feet upon a rock, making my steps secure’(Psalm 40:1-2).

‘The floods covered the Egyptians; they went down into the depths like a stone’(Exodus 15:5).

You can see that I am struggling.
The water overwhelms me.

‘Was it not you who dried up the sea, the waters of the great deep; who made the depths of the sea a way for the redeemed to cross over?’(Isaiah 51:10)

I am weary with all my crying.
Parched is my throat.
My eyes are swollen
from looking for my God.

The psalmist is continually peering at the horizon with eyes worn out with crying. His throat is hoarse from calling for help.

‘Woe is me! The Lord has added sorrow to my pain;
I am weary with my groaning, and I find no rest.’

(Jeremiah 45:3).

More numerous than the hairs of my head
are those who hate me without cause.

Those who attack me with lies
are too much for my strength.

‘This was to fulfil the word that is written in their law,
‘They hated me without a cause’(John 15:25).

‘Lord, do not withhold your mercy from me; let your
steadfast love and your faithfulness keep me safe
forever. For evils have encompassed me without
number; my iniquities have overtaken me, until I
cannot see; they are more than the hairs of my head,
and my heart fails me’(Psalm 40:11-12).

How can I restore
what I did not take?

‘I have not lent, nor have I borrowed,
yet all of them curse me’(Jeremiah 15:10).

‘Malicious witnesses rise up; they ask me about
things I do not know. They repay me evil for
good; my soul is forlorn’(Psalm 35:11-12).

O God, you know my folly;
the wrong I have done is not hidden from you.

‘You know what came from my lips;
it was before your face’(Jeremiah 17:16).

God of Israel, do not let those who hope in you
be put to shame because of me.

Do not let those who seek you
be dismayed because of me.

If God fails to hear his plea others will give up
hope in God! They will be 'put to shame', shown
up as having been foolish in trusting God.

‘Israel is saved by the Lord with everlasting salvation; you shall not be put to shame or confounded to all eternity’(Isaiah 45:17).

‘I am the Lord; those who wait for me shall not be put to shame’(Isaiah 49:23).

‘Do not fear, for you will not be ashamed; do not be discouraged, for you will not suffer disgrace.’

(Isaiah 54:4)

It is for your sake that I have borne reproach,
that shame has covered my face.

‘Because of you we are being killed all day long, and
accounted as sheep for the slaughter’(Psalm 44:22).

‘Lord, you know; remember me and visit me, and
bring down retribution for me on my persecutors. In
your forbearance do not take me away; know that on
your account I suffer insult’(Jeremiah 15:15).

‘Do not let the downtrodden be put to shame; let the
poor and needy praise your name. Rise up, O God,
plead your cause; remember how the impious scoff at
you all day long’(Psalm 74:21-22).

I have become a stranger to my family,
an alien to my mother's children.

‘Even your kinsfolk and your own family, even they have dealt treacherously with you; they are in full cry after you; do not believe them, though they speak friendly words to you’(Jeremiah 12:6; + Job 13-15).

Zeal for your house has consumed me;

the insults of those who insult you have fallen on me.

‘Zeal for your house has consumed me’(John 2:17).

‘Christ did not please himself; but, as it is written,
“The insults of those who insult you have fallen on me”’(Romans 15:3).

When I humbled myself with fasting,
they insulted me for doing so.

When I made sackcloth my clothing,
I became the butt of their jokes,
the gossip of those who sit at the gates,
the subject of drunkard's songs.

‘You have made us the taunt of our neighbours,
the derision and scorn of those around us.

You have made us a byword among the nations,
a laughing stock among the peoples.

All day long my disgrace is before me,
and shame has covered my face
at the words of the taunters and revilers,
at the sight of the enemy and the avenger.’

(Psalm 44:13-16)

We think of Jesus mocked by the soldiers (Matthew
27:27-30).

I make my prayer to you,
my prayer for your favour.

In your great love, answer me, O God,
with your help that never fails.

‘Thus says the Lord: In a time of favour I have answered you, on a day of salvation I have helped you.’

(Isaiah 49:8).

‘You will rise up and have compassion on Zion, for it is time to favour it; the appointed time has come.’

(Psalm 102:13)

‘The Lord, the Lord, a God tenderly compassionate and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in kindness and faithfulness’(Exodus 34:6).

Rescue me from sinking in the mire,
from the deep waters.

Let not the flood engulf me.
or death swallow me up.

This picks up the imagery of verses one and two.

Compare Jeremiah 38:6-13.

‘They flung me alive into a pit and hurled stones on me;
water closed over my head; I said, “I am lost.” I called
on your name, Lord, from the depths of the pit.’

(Lamentations 3:53-55)

Answer me, Lord, in your great kindness,
according to your tender compassion.

Do not hide your face from your servant,
for I am in distress – make haste to answer me.

‘Do not hide your face from me in the day of my
distress. Incline your ear to me; answer me speedily in
the day when I call’(Psalm 102:2).

‘Answer me quickly, Lord; my spirit fails. Do not hide
your face from me, or I shall be like those who go
down to the Pit’(Psalm 143:7).

Come close. I long for you.

Redeem me. Free me from my enemies.

‘You came near when I called on you;
you said: Do not fear!’(Lamentations 3:57).

You know the insults I receive.

You know all my foes.

Insults have broken my heart.

I have reached the end of my strength.

I looked in vain for compassion,

for comforters, but none could I find.

‘My heart is crushed within me, all my bones shake.’

(Jeremiah 23:9)

‘Why is my pain unceasing, my wound incurable,
refusing to be healed?(Jeremiah 15:18).

They gave me poison for food,
for my thirst they gave me vinegar.

‘They offered Jesus wine to drink, mixed with gall;
but when he tasted it, he would not drink it.’

(Matthew 27:34; (see Mark 15:23)

These lines are not in the liturgy

Let their table be for them a trap,
a snare for their allies.

Let their eyes be darkened,
so that they cannot see.

‘David says, “Let their table become a snare and a trap,
a stumbling block and a retribution for them;
let their eyes be darkened so that they cannot see,
and keep their backs forever bent”’(Romans 11:9-10).

These lines are not in the liturgy

Make their loins tremble continually.
Pour out your indignation upon them;
let your burning anger overtake them.
Let no one live in their tents.

‘It is written in the book of Psalms: Let his homestead become desolate, and let there be no one to live in it’(Acts 1:20).

They persecute those whom you have struck down,
and those whom you have wounded they attack still m
Add guilt to their guilt.
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 just.

‘Moses said: “If you will only forgive their sin - but if not, blot me out of the book that you have written.”

But YHWH said to Moses, “Whoever has sinned against me I will blot out of my book””(Exodus 32:32-33).

‘Whoever is left in Zion and remains in Jerusalem will be called holy, everyone who has been recorded for life in Jerusalem’(Isaiah 4:3).

‘At that time your people shall be delivered,
everyone who is found written in the book’(Daniel 12:1).

‘My co-workers, whose names are in the book of life.’
(Philippians 4:3)

‘I will not blot your name out of the book of life.’
(Revelation 3:5; also 13:8)

I am brought low and in pain.

Let your salvation, O God, protect me.

‘May the Lord answer you in the day of trouble!

The name of the God of Jacob protect you!’(Psalm 20:1)

‘Deliver me from my enemies, O my God; protect me from those who rise up against me’(Psalm 59:1).

‘Those who love me, I will deliver; I will protect those who know my name’(Psalm 91:14).

‘The fear of others lays a snare, but one who trusts in the Lord is secure’(Proverbs 29:25).

Then I will praise your name in song;
I will acknowledge your greatness with thanksgiving.
This will please the Lord more than oxen,
more than beasts prepared for sacrifice.
Let the oppressed see it and be glad.
You who seek God, let your hearts revive.
For the Lord hears the needy,
and does not despise those who are in bonds.

‘My soul makes its boast in the Lord;
let the humble hear and be glad’(Psalm 34:2).

‘May all who seek you rejoice and be glad in you;
may those who love your salvation say continually,
“Great is the Lord!” I am poor and needy, but the
Lord takes thought for me. You are my help and my
deliverer; do not delay, O my God’(Psalm 40:16-17)

‘He raises up the needy out of distress’(Psalm 107:41).

The Lord does not despise those who are in bonds.
Let heaven and earth praise God,
the sea and all its living creatures.

The psalmist is thinking of the bonds of Egypt.

‘God gives the desolate a home to live in;
he leads out the prisoners to prosperity,
but the rebellious live in a parched land’(Psalm 68:6).

The psalmist is thinking, too, of the bonds of Exile.

‘Let the groans of the prisoners come before you.’

(Psalm 79:11).

‘From heaven the Lord looked at the earth, to hear the groans of the prisoners, to set free those who were doomed to die’(Psalm 102:19-20).

For God will rescue Zion

and rebuild the cities of Judah.

The servants of the Lord will live there;

the land will be their possession.

Their offspring will inherit it,

and those who love God will dwell there.

- not innocent, but falsely accused (69:4-5)
- abandoned even by family and friends (69:8,20)
- trouble caused by zeal for God's house (69:7,9).
- The Psalmist continues to cry out,
trusting in God's love (69:13-18, 29-30, 32-33).