

Psalm 69: Disoriented, Yet Being Held

More than 1/3 of the psalms are complaints to God in situations of limitation or threat. These *laments* were a form of prayer and praise based on the conviction that God is concerned about people and answers the human cry in ways surpassing human expectation or understanding. Israel's laments out of distress were a way of praising God even when he seemed absent. The faith of the psalmists is founded on the good news that God intervenes in desperate situations to help those who are distressed. The psalmists show a deep confidence that God is compassionate, concerned, hearing his people and involved with them; God is faithful and trustworthy. A lament is an outcry to God from a responsive heart.

1. How has reading and praying *psalms of lament* impacted your view of God, of yourself, or human suffering/disorientation?

The Psalms are deeply interactive, an ongoing conversation between God and his people Israel. Like Israel, we converse with God in response to the faithfulness and generosity of God who takes all initiatives. Yet a **role reversal** also happens in the complaints and protests of the *laments*. **God is willing to be a full participant in a lively dialogue—an initiator or responder—in an intimate, face to face relationship.** He longs for, even demands, our willing participation in dialogue with him, asking us **to initiate** our thoughts and feelings and **to respond** to his call for trust and obedience.

2. Effective communication starts with *listening*, followed by *responding* to what is heard and then *initiating* thoughts and feelings to be listened to, continuing meaningful dialogue. What part of that process tends to be most difficult for you with God? With other people?

Think about how your own listening, responding, and initiating habits impact your use of *psalms of lament* or *elements of lament* in your dialogue with God.

Psalm 69 is a frank and powerful example of a personal lament out of an experience of *underserved suffering for obedience*, a shared experience of many who live by faith, by entrusting themselves to God. Most of us can see our own and/or other faithful people's experiences in the description of the psalmist's troubles.

In a mood of tearful complaint, the psalmist is shaken by his circumstances and turns to God for help. **Psalm 69** is an extended prayer of an innocent sufferer who has been vigorously abused by his adversaries and now wants retaliation

against them. Parts of it will sound familiar to you from the New Testament since it is the second most quoted psalm, second only to Psalm 22, another personal lament by an Old Testament sufferer. Like Psalm 22, **Psalm 69** describes experiences of difficulty that Jesus and the New Testament authors applied to his life and the lives of his followers.

69:4=John 15:25 (Jesus said to his disciples.) But the word that is written in their Law must be fulfilled: “They hated me without a cause.”

69:9a=John 2:17 (Jesus cleanses the temple of the money changers.) His disciples remembered that is was written, “Zeal for your house will consume me.”

69:9b=Romans 15:3 (Paul uses 69:9b to point to Jesus as a model of one who strengthens others and lives for the glory of God.) For Christ did not please himself, but as it is written, “The reproaches of those who reproached you fell on me.”

69:21=Matt. 27:34, 48; Mark 15:36, Luke 23:36, John 19:28 (Jesus’ crucifixion experience) 69:21b - “and for my thirst they gave me sour wine to drink”

69:22-23=Romans 11:9-10 Paul uses imprecations (curses) from Psalm 69 to pray for God’s judgment over the Jewish leaders of his day who have rejected Christ.

69:25=Acts 1:20 (Peter quotes this verse after Jesus’s Ascension when the apostles were choosing Matthias to replace Judas .) “May his camp become desolate, and let there be no one to dwell in it.” Peter also quoted Psalm 109:8, “Let another take his office.”

69:28=Rev. 3:5, 17:8, 20:12, 20:27 These are all references to the “book of life.”

3. How do any or all of these NT quotations impact your current understanding of and use of the parts of this lament psalm in your life in Christ now?

Psalm 69 contains all of the *typical parts* of a lament:

an invocation in v. 1,

pleas for help in v. 1 and 13-18,

confession of sin in vv. 5-6,

complaints in vv. 1-4, 7-12, 19-21;

imprecation, curses, and calls for vindication in vv. 22-28,

transition in v. 29,

expressions of confidence and trust in God and final praise in vv. 30-36

4. Label these 7 parts of **Psalm 69** in your Bible. Consider each part and reflect on how you incorporate that element into your own dialogue with God.

1. How honest are you with God and yourself about who God is to you and about your need for God's help?

2. How specific and timely are your complaints to God? How does honest, up to date confession impact those complaints?

3. When do you set aside time to identify and express your emotions to God, especially your anger, hurt, fear, and shame?

4. What is your experience with moving through a truly painful situation and discovering God redirecting you to His goodness? (69:29-30)

5. What helps you or motivates you to express your confidence and trust in God?

6. Who sees you singing sincere praise to God? Who hears you talking about God's character, speaking well of who God is to you?

Ask our Triune God to show you which of these areas needs more attention and give you grace for your ongoing following of Jesus.