

Psalm 69: Where Do We Go When The Going Gets Tough?

Every one of us here to-day has experienced or will most likely experience hard times. It may be an illness, the death of a much loved family member, separation from loved ones, financial hardship, family dramas, personal discouragement, disappointment, disagreements, even some form of depression.

People respond to such situations in different ways. Some will turn to the grog. Some will be angry, withdraw from family and friends, hit out at others, self-harm and even suicide. Some will even blame God and some who claim to be Christians will turn their backs on Him.

How should the Christian respond when the going gets tough? Where is God in my pain?

Psalm 69 is a prayer of King David when he was 'in the pits'. We don't know the particular events which had brought him so low but we know there were many. Let's see how his faith in the Lord stood up to the test:

1. IN THE PITS OF DESPAIR: Verses 1-12

David comes to God in prayer and is very open about his misery as he asks God for help: *save me O God, for the waters have come up to my neck.* (Verse 1)

He vividly describes the mess he's in: he was suffering for God's sake with leaders having turned against him.

His heart was broken: *scorn has broken my heart and has left me helpless; I looked for sympathy but there was none, for comforters, but I found none.* (Verse 20)

How did you or are you or would you handle this experience?

How did David handle this trauma? We see in verses 13 to 18:

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2. CALLING ON GOD FOR HELP: Verses 13-18

But I pray to you. David turns to the Lord with confidence in the one who hears: *in your great love, answer me O God, answer me with your salvation.*

In the next verse he calls for rescue: *rescue me from the mire, do not let me sink.*

Why does David have such confidence in God? Because of God's love and mercy: *Answer me O Lord, out of the goodness of your love; in your great mercy turn to me.* (Verse 16)

Prayer is sometimes our last option when it ought to be our first. Each time we have our prayers answered we grow in our confidence in the Lord.

3. CALLING ON GOD TO JUDGE GOD'S ENEMIES: Verses 22-28

Having asked God for help, David now calls upon God to get stuck into his enemies because his enemies are God's enemies.

It isn't a vindictive prayer but is a request recognising God's sovereignty, calling on God to carry out the judgement which is their due.

4. PRAISE IN ANTICIPATION OF ANSWERED PRAYER: Verses 29-36

David's pain is great as he seems to utter a final gasp of prayer for help: *I am in pain and distress; may your Salvation, O God, protect me.* (Verse 29)

Then, David, still in the pits of despair, turns his focus away from himself and his troubles to God's honour and glory: *I will praise God's name in song and glorify him with thanksgiving.* (Verse 30)

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He knows that this will please the Lord and that ought to be the desire of all of God's people.

David's prayer then seems to turn to a word of testimony when he says: "*you who seek God, may your hearts live! The Lord hears the needy and does not despise his captive people.*" (Verses 32-33)

He even calls on the world of nature in some way to give God praise: *Let heaven and earth praise him, the seas and all that move in them.* (Verse 34)

Do we share with one another our testimony of God's intervention in our own difficulties?

David finishes his prayer with a confident word of prophecy about the city of Jerusalem and God's people. God will build His Church, even here in our community. David has a great concern for his people as a group and for individuals who know and love the Lord.

We too should have a concern for others to come to know and Love Him. Are we praying for others and seeking opportunities to tell them about the Lord Jesus.

FINISHING UP:

As we finish looking at this Psalm, we are reminded that we are not the only ones to experience difficulties in life, although some have more than others.

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Psalm 69 expresses the way of faith by being in a right relationship with God through Jesus Christ, depending on Him to sustain and strengthen us in the face of small difficulties and even in the face of overwhelming sadness.

A thousand years after this Psalm was written, the Apostle Paul wrote to the Philippian Church: *I can do all things through Him who gives me strength.*

We've seen here the appropriate response to answered prayer as we've seen David praising God and giving testimony to God's goodness.

Might our Lord, the only true and living God, help us all to be in continuous relationship with Him and look to Him when the going gets tough.

That continuous relationship with God can be greatly enhanced as we read the Bible for ourselves and meet together regularly to be taught from God's Word, encouraging and supporting one another in living for Christ.