
For the Chief Musician. To the tune of "Lilies." By David.

PSALM 69: 1 Save me, God, for the waters have come up to my neck!

The psalmist describes his afflicted state, and the wickedness of his adversaries, vv. 1-21; he declares the miseries that should come upon his enemies, Psa 69:22-28; enlarges on his afflicted state, and expresses his confidence in God, Psa 69:29-34; prophesies the restoration of the Jews to their own land and temple, Psa 69:35, Psa 69:36.

The title is: "To the chief Musician upon Shoshannim, A Psalm of David." See this title explained on Psalm 45 (note).

The Psalm is supposed to have been written during the captivity, and to have been the work of some Levite Divinely inspired. It is a very fine composition, equal to most in the Psalter. Several portions of it seem to have a reference to our Lord; to his advent passion, resurrection, the vocation of the Gentiles, the establishment of the Christian Church, and the reprobation of the Jews. The ninth verse is quoted by St. John, Joh 2:17. The twenty-first verse is quoted by St. Matthew, Mat 27:34, Mat 27:48; by St. Mark, Mar 15:23; by St. John, Joh 19:29; and applied to the sufferings of our Lord, in the treatment he received from the Jews. St. Paul quotes the twenty-second as a prophecy of the wickedness of the Jews, and the punishment they were to receive. He quotes the twenty-third verse in the same way. See Isa 6:9-10 (note); Joh 12:39-40 (note); Rom 11:10 (note); 2Cor 3:14 (note). Those portions which the writers of the New Testament apply to our Lord, we may apply also; of others we should be careful.

Verse 1

The waters are come in unto my soul - I am in the deepest distress. The waters have broken their dikes, and are just ready to sweep me away! Save me, Lord! In such circumstances I can have no other help.

In the first, second, third, fourteenth, and fifteenth verses, the psalmist, speaking in the person of the captives in Babylon, compares their captivity to an abyss of waters, breaking all bounds, and ready to swallow them up; to a deep mire, in which there was no solid bottom, and no standing; and to a pot, in which they were about to be inclosed for ever. This is strongly figurative, and very expressive.

PSALM 69: 2 I sink in deep mire, where there is no foothold. I have come into deep waters, where the floods overflow me.

PSALM 69: 3 I am weary with my crying. My throat is dry. My eyes fail, looking for my God.

Verse 3

I am weary of my crying - A pathetic description of the state of the poor captives for about seventy years.

PSALM 69: 4 Those who hate me without a cause are more than the hairs of my head. Those who want to cut me off, being my enemies wrongfully, are mighty. I have to restore what I didn't take away.

Verse 4

Then I restored that which I took not away - I think, with Calmet, that this is a sort of proverbial expression, like such as these, "Those who suffered the wrong, pay the costs." *Delirant reges, plectuntur Achivi.* "Kings sin, and the people are punished." "The fathers have eaten sour grapes, and the children's teeth are set on edge." Our fathers have grievously sinned against the Lord, and we their posterity suffer for it. See on Psa 69:12 (note). Some have applied it to our Lord. I restored, by my suffering and death, that image of God and the Divine favor, which I took not away. That is, In my human nature I expiated the crime that human beings had committed against God. But such applications are very gratuitous.

PSALM 69: 5 God, you know my foolishness. My sins aren't hidden from you.

Verse 5

Thou knowest my foolishness - Though we have been brought into captivity in consequence of the crimes of our fathers, yet we have guilt enough of our own to merit a continuation of our miseries. How can such words as are in this verse be attributed to our blessed Lord, however they may be twisted or turned?

PSALM 69: 6 Don't let those who wait for you be shamed through me, Lord GOD of Armies. Don't let those who seek you be brought to dishonour through me, God of Israel.

Verse 6

Be ashamed for my sake - The sins of the Jews were a great stumbling-block in the way of the conversion of the Gentiles. They had been the peculiar people of the Lord. "How," say the Gentiles, "can a pure and holy Being love such people?" They were now punished for their crimes. "How," say the Gentiles, "can God deal so hardly with those whom he professes to love?" The pious among the captives felt keenly, because this reproach seemed to fall upon their gracious and merciful God.

PSALM 69: 7 Because for your sake, I have borne reproach. Shame has covered my face.

Verse 7

For thy sake I have borne reproach - The Gentiles have said, "Why such an obstinate attachment to the worship of a Being who treats you so rigorously, and who interests not himself in your comfort

and deliverance?" And in these cutting reproaches some of the ungodly Jews took a part: "I am an alien to my mother's children."

PSALM 69: 8 I have become a stranger to my brothers, an alien to my mother's children.

PSALM 69: 9 For the zeal of your house consumes me. The reproaches of those who reproach you have fallen on me.

Verse 9

The zeal of thine house hath eaten me up - The strong desire to promote thy glory has absorbed all others. All the desires of my body and soul are wrapped up in this. This verse is very properly applied to our Lord, Joh 2:17, who went about doing good; and gave up his life, not only for the redemption of man, but to "magnify the law, and make it honorable."

PSALM 69: 10 When I wept and I fasted, that was to my reproach.

PSALM 69: 11 When I made sackcloth my clothing, I became a byword to them.

PSALM 69: 12 Those who sit in the gate talk about me. I am the song of the drunkards.

Verse 12

They that sit in the gate - At the gates were the courts for public justice; there were complaints lodged, and causes heard. No doubt many vexatious complaints were made against the poor captives; and false accusations, through which they grievously suffered; so that, literally, they were often "obliged to restore that which they had not taken away." See Psa 69:4.

The song of the drunkards - These poor miserable people were exposed to all sorts of indignities. Though the conduct is base, the exultation over a fallen enemy is frequent. How miserable was this lot! Forsaken by friends, scorned by enemies, insulted by inferiors; the scoff of libertines, and the song of drunkards; besides hard travail of body, miserably lodged and fed; with the burning crown of all, a deep load of guilt upon the conscience. To such a life any death was preferable.

PSALM 69: 13 But as for me, my prayer is to you, LORD, in an acceptable time. God, in the abundance of your loving kindness, answer me in the truth of your salvation.

Verse 13

My prayer is unto thee, O Lord, in an acceptable time - This seems to refer to the end of the captivity, which Jeremiah had said should last seventy years, Jer 25:11, Jer 25:12 : "The whole land shall be a desolation, and an astonishment; and these nations shall serve the king of Babylon seventy years. And it shall come to pass, when seventy years are accomplished, that I will punish the king of Babylon," etc. The conclusion of this period was the accepted time of which the psalmist speaks.

Now, they incessantly pray for the fulfillment of the promise made by Jeremiah: and to hear them, would be the truth of God's salvation; it would show the promise to be true, because the salvation - the deliverance, was granted.

PSALM 69: 14 Deliver me out of the mire, and don't let me sink. Let me be delivered from those who hate me, and out of the deep waters.

PSALM 69: 15 Don't let the flood waters overwhelm me, neither let the deep swallow me up. Don't let the pit shut its mouth on me.

PSALM 69: 16 Answer me, LORD, for your loving kindness is good. According to the multitude of your tender mercies, turn to me.

Verse 16

Thy loving-kindness is good - The word **טוֹב** chesed signifies exuberance of kindness, and the word **רחמים** rachamim, which we translate tender mercies, signifies such affection as mothers bear to their young: and in God, there is **רַב** rob, a multitude, of such tender mercies towards the children of men!

PSALM 69: 17 Don't hide your face from your servant, for I am in distress. Answer me speedily!

PSALM 69: 18 Draw near to my soul, and redeem it. Ransom me because of my enemies.

Verse 18

Deliver me because of mine enemies - Probably they now began to think that the redemption of these captives was not an impossible thing; that it was not far off; and therefore they had great rage, because they found their time was but short.

PSALM 69: 19 You know my reproach, my shame, and my dishonour. My adversaries are all before you.

Verse 19

Thou hast known my reproach - This is one of the most forcible appeals to mercy and compassion that was ever made. The language of these two verses is inimitable; and the sentiment cannot be mended. I can devise no comment that would not lessen their effect.

PSALM 69: 20 Reproach has broken my heart, and I am full of heaviness. I looked for some to take pity, but there was none; for comforters, but I found none.

PSALM 69: 21 They also gave me gall for my food. In my thirst, they gave me vinegar to drink.

 Verse 21

They gave me also gall for my meat - Even the food, necessary to preserve us in their slavery, was frequently mingled with what rendered it unpleasant and disgusting, though not absolutely unwholesome. And vinegar, sour small wines, was given us for our beverage. This is applied to our Lord, Mat 27:34, where the reader is requested to consult the notes.

PSALM 69: 22 Let their table before them become a snare. May it become a retribution and a trap.

Verse 22

Let their table become a snare - The execrations here and in the following verses should be read in the future tense, because they are predictive; and not in the imperative mood, as if they were the offspring of the psalmist's resentment: "Their table Shall become a snare; - their eyes Shall be darkened; - thou Wilt pour out thine indignation upon them; - thy wrathful anger Shall take hold of them; - their habitation Shall be desolate, - and none Shall dwell in their tents."

The psalmist prophesies that the evils which they had inflicted on the Israelites should be visited on themselves; that as they had made them eat, drink, labor, and suffer, so God should in his judgment treat them.

PSALM 69: 23 Let their eyes be darkened, so that they can't see. Let their backs be continually bent.

PSALM 69: 24 Pour out your indignation on them. Let the fierceness of your anger overtake them.

PSALM 69: 25 Let their habitation be desolate. Let no one dwell in their tents.

PSALM 69: 26 For they persecute him whom you have wounded. They tell of the sorrow of those whom you have hurt.

PSALM 69: 27 Charge them with crime upon crime. Don't let them come into your righteousness.

Verse 27

Add iniquity unto their iniquity - עוֹן עַל עוֹנָם tenah avon al avonam; give iniquity, that is, the reward of it, upon or for their iniquity. Or, as the original signifies perverseness, treat their perverseness with perverseness: act, in thy judgments, as crookedly towards them as they dealt crookedly towards thee. They shall get, in the way of punishment, what they have dealt out in the way of oppression.

PSALM 69: 28 Let them be blotted out of the book of life, and not be written with the righteous.

Verse 28

Let them be blotted out - They shall be blotted out from the land of the living. They shall be cut off from life, which they have forfeited by their cruelty and oppression. The psalmist is speaking of retributive justice; and in this sense all these passages are to be understood.

And not be written with the righteous - They shall have no title to that long life which God has promised to his followers.

PSALM 69: 29 But I am in pain and distress. Let your salvation, God, protect me.

Verse 29

I am poor and sorrowful - Literally, I am laid low, and full of pain or grief. Hence the prayer, "Let thy salvation, O God set me on high!" My oppression has laid me low; thy salvation shall make me high!

PSALM 69: 30 I will praise the name of God with a song, and will magnify him with thanksgiving.

PSALM 69: 31 It will please the LORD better than an ox, or a bull that has horns and hoofs.

Verse 31

An ox or bullock that hath horns and hoofs - Oxen offered in sacrifice had their horns and hoofs gilded; and the psalmist might mention these parts of the victim more particularly, because they were more conspicuous. Others think that full-grown animals are intended, those that had perfect horns, in opposition to calves or steers. I think the first the preferable sense; for the horns, etc., of consecrated animals are thus ornamented in the east to the present day.

PSALM 69: 32 The humble have seen it, and are glad. You who seek after God, let your heart live.

Verse 32

The humble shall see this, and be glad - Those who are low, pressed down by misfortune or cruelty, shall see this and take courage; expecting that thou wilt lift them up also; and thus the heart of those who seek the Lord shall be revived.

PSALM 69: 33 For the LORD hears the needy, and doesn't despise his captive people.

Verse 33

For the Lord heareth the poor - אֲבוֹנִים ebyonim, of the beggars. He perhaps refers here to the case of the captives, many of whom were reduced to the most abject state, so as to be obliged to beg bread from their heathen oppressors.

His prisoners - The captives, shut up by his judgments in Chaldea, without any civil liberty, like culprits in a prison.

PSALM 69: 34 Let heaven and earth praise him; the seas, and everything that moves therein!

Verse 34

Let the heaven and earth praise him - The psalmist has the fullest confidence that God will turn their captivity, and therefore calls upon all creatures to magnify him for his mercy.

PSALM 69: 35 For God will save Zion, and build the cities of Judah. They shall settle there, and own it.

Verse 35

God will save Zion - This fixes the Psalm to the time of the captivity. There was no Zion belonging to the Jews in the time of Saul, when those suppose the Psalm to be written who make David the author; for David after he came to the throne, won the stronghold of Zion from the Jebusites. 2Sam 5:7; 1Chr 11:5.

Will build the cities of Judah - This refers to the return from the captivity, when all the destroyed cities should be rebuilt, and the Jews repossess their forfeited heritages. Some apply this to the redemption of the human race; and suppose that Zion is the type of the Christian Church into which the Gentiles were to be called. What evangelists and apostles apply to our Lord, we safely may. What others see so clearly in this Psalm relative to Gospel matters, I cannot discern.

PSALM 69: 36 The children also of his servants shall inherit it. Those who love his name shall dwell therein.
