

Blunt Honesty in Prayer: Psalm 69

By Dana Olson

The blunt honesty of David in Psalm 69 has long ministered to my soul. It has freed me from the tendency to think that I need to dress up my prayers and make them pretty or nice—like a young girl dressing up her paper dolls. God’s shoulders are broad enough to carry any burden weighing me down.

Save me, O God,
for the waters have come up to my neck.

I sink in the miry depths,
where there is no foothold.

I have come into the deep waters;
the floods engulf me.

I am worn out calling for help;
my throat is parched.

My eyes fail,

looking for my God

Those who hate me without reason

outnumber the hairs of my head;
many are my enemies without cause

You, God, know my folly . . . (Psalm 69:1–5).

Tell It to God

Do you feel like you’re sinking in the muck today? Are you drowning in an abundance of cares and concerns and corruption? Tell it to God!

Do you feel like God is silent in your hour of great need?

Yes, sometimes when we long to hear the voice of God, His silence leaves us “waiting for my God.” Then, too, tell it to God!

Your boss’s demands leave you upset and disillusioned, ready to quit a job you desperately need. Your cancer has spread and you hear the medical staff speaking in hushed tones. Your toddler is drawing on the walls or your teenager is suspended from school or your adult child has gone prodigal. You turn on the news and get the distinct impression that the world has gone mad and the nation is coming apart at the seams.

It’s no time for paper-doll, dressed-up prayers. It’s time to tell God like it is.

“Father, I feel like I’m drowning! I’m sinking in the muddy muck of life. I don’t know what else to do. Hear my cry. Please rescue me!” (paraphrased prayer from vv. 14–15).

What a relief to know our heavenly Father is not sitting in judgment over our prayers. He’s not scoring our prayers like ice skating judges at the Olympic games. He knows we don’t live a Ken and Barbie life in an earthly utopia.

God knows our hearts. Before we cry out, He is fully aware and already working. It’s true that His timing is not our timing; His agenda is more complete than ours. Nevertheless, we can cast all our cares upon Him because He cares for us (1 Peter 5:7).

As we read on in Psalm 69, we hear echoes of the cross and Christ’s suffering. “They put gall in my food and gave me vinegar for my thirst” (v. 21). That’s helpful as well. Along with the psalm encouraging us to pray bluntly about the circumstances and situations that are troubling us, so also it points us to our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, who died to pay for our sins and rose to give us the hope of eternal life.

This world is not our home. Those who are in Christ will see

tribulation in the present but are buoyed up by the promise of the Holy Spirit now—and then eternity with God. Our present heartaches will give way to hallelujahs at the throne of God. Present distress will turn to delight at the return of Christ. Forever beckons.

I will praise God's name in song

and glorify him with thanksgiving (v. 30.)

Let heaven and earth praise him,

the seas and all that move in them,
for God will save Zion (vv. 34–35a).

To pray through Psalm 69 is to be guided by God's Word into several different kinds of prayer:

- We *confess* to God the utter folly of our own sins.
- We tell God honestly that life is hard and recount the things troubling us. We *ask* for deliverance.
- We pray the gospel truth of Christ's suffering, *thanking God* for the hope of the cross.
- We *praise* God that He reigns over all. We *exalt* His name and trust His timing. We sing!

One beauty of the blunt honesty of Psalm 69 is this: as we put into words the hardest distresses of our life and tell Him bluntly what is burdening us, the very act of doing so reminds us to turn to the Source of deliverance, the Source of hope, the Source of everlasting life.

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