

Christ Facing the Great Issue.

Text: Psa 69:1-6

Suggested Hymns:

59, 360, 73, 292, 508

1) An overview of our text

2) The magnitude of this issue

3) What caused it

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, be with you all. Amen.

The text for our sermon today is Psalm 69:1-6, *Save me, O God! For the waters have come up to my neck. ² I sink in deep mire, Where there is no standing; I have come into deep waters, Where the floods overflow me.*

³ I am weary with my crying; My throat is dry; My eyes fail while I wait for my God. ⁴ Those who hate me without a cause Are more than the hairs of my head; They are mighty who would destroy me, Being my enemies wrongfully; Though I have stolen nothing, I still must restore it.

⁵ O God, You know my foolishness; And my sins are not hidden from You. ⁶ Let not those who wait for You, O Lord GOD of hosts, be ashamed because of me; Let not those who seek You be confounded because of me, O God of Israel. (NKJV)

Lord God, heavenly Father, sanctify us through Your truth. Your Word is truth. Amen.

Dear friends in Christ,

When the Lord gave the command to Moses to go to Pharaoh and demand freedom for the children of Israel, so that they might go to the promised land of Canaan, Moses found quite a number of excuses and pleaded his lack of qualifications for carrying out this command.

When our Lord instructed the Prophet Jonah to go to Nineveh and preach repentance to this large heathen city, Jonah tried to flee from his task and from the presence of God, rather than do as he had been asked.

How differently from these types of people did our Lord and Saviour face the great issue which stood before Him! When He realised that the time had come for Him to carry out the determinate counsel of God for the salvation of all mankind, He said to His disciples, as written in Luke 18:31-33, ***“Behold, we are going up to Jerusalem, and all things that are written by the prophets concerning the Son of Man will be accomplished. ³² “For He will be delivered to the Gentiles and will be mocked and insulted and spit upon. ³³ “They will scourge Him and kill Him. And the third day He will rise again.”***

Throughout the entire ministry of our Lord and Saviour here upon earth there stands out again and again in His spoken word His determination and willingness to make the supreme sacrifice necessary for the salvation of man according to the plan of the Triune God.

Jesus said in Luke 24:44, ***all things must be fulfilled which were written in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms concerning Me.*** One of the prophecies which truly describes His Passion is found in Psalm 69.

Psalm 69 is matched only by Psalm 22 as a graphic prophetic description of Christ’s suffering. Like Psalm 22, it is frequently referred to in the New Testament.

This Lenten Season we are going to look at Psalm 69 to the glory of Jesus’ name and the edification and eternal welfare of our souls. Today we have before us in the text a summary of Christ’s Passion. Our theme is *Christ Facing the Great Issue of Man’s Salvation*. May the Lord bless our meditation.

1. An Overview Of Our Text

Let us first have an overview of our text. The first, three verses may be given the title of *Messiah’s Troubles* as we read, ***Save me, O God! For the waters have come up to my neck. ² I sink in deep mire, Where there is no standing; I have come into deep waters, Where the floods overflow me. ³ I am weary with my crying; My throat is dry; My eyes fail while I wait for my God.***

In the Old Testament, raging floodwaters and deep mud often symbolise troubles too difficult for the believer to overcome by himself. Here they symbolise the overwhelming burden of our sin and the depths of suffering that Christ endured. Verse 3, ³ ***I am weary with my crying; My throat is dry; My***

eyes fail while I wait for my God, reflects the urgency of Christ's prayer in Gethsemane and the anguished cry on the cross, "***My God, my God, why have You forsaken Me?***" These verses describe Christ's inner struggle.

The following section directs our attention to the hostility of Christ's enemies. Verse 4 reads, ***Those who hate me without a cause Are more than the hairs of my head; They are mighty who would destroy me, Being my enemies wrongfully; Though I have stolen nothing, I still must restore it.*** This section could be summarised as *The Unfairness of Messiah's Enemies*.

The words "***Those who hate me without a cause***" are used in John 15:25 as a fitting description of Jesus' enemies. Jesus went around doing good — preaching the Gospel of forgiveness, comforting the afflicted, healing the sick, feeding the hungry, and even raising the dead. In spite of this, yes, even because of this, the leaders of Israel hated Him. The more good He did, the more they were determined to put Jesus to death. Though Pilate admitted that he found no fault with Jesus, he caved in to the demands that Christ be crucified. Christ was forced to pay for crimes He had not committed.

Verse 5 reads, ***O God, You know my foolishness; And my sins are not hidden from You.*** It could be given the title "*Our guilt laid on the Messiah.*"

Christ, though He had committed no sin, was indeed a sinner before the judgement of God. Paul says, "***God made Him who had no sin to be sin for us.***"¹ He tells the Galatians, "***Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us.***"² Even the Old Testament tells us, "***The LORD has laid on Him the iniquity of us all.***"³ The Messiah could properly speak of His guilt, since our guilt was transferred to Him.

The Gospel Christ died to establish, is foolishness to the unbelieving world.⁴ In the eyes of this world, any message that preaches free forgiveness is foolish, and anyone who gives himself for others is a fool. So by this world's standard of judgement, Christ was a fool. How foolish to die for the wicked, for the ungrateful, and for the lowly!

But what the world regards as foolishness, we, by the grace of God, recognise as the wisdom of God. The One whom they thought was a fool we recognise as the very heart of God's wisdom — that is, our righteousness, redemption, and salvation.

We are told to become “fools” by following Christ’s example.⁵ This we gladly do, rejoicing that the Innocent One became guilty so we could become innocent in Him, and that the wise One became a “fool” so that we could become wise in Him.

Our text concludes with verse 6, ***6 Let not those who wait for You, O Lord GOD of hosts, be ashamed because of me; Let not those who seek You be confounded because of me, O God of Israel.***

Christ’s humble appearance and wretched death turned off many in Israel. How could such a miserable man be their Messiah? Christ’s humble life and the simplicity of the Gospel message are also an offence to many people today. Many people are ashamed of the Gospel and embarrassed by what they regard as the impossible claims of Scripture.

Let us pray that we may never be ashamed of Jesus Christ or His message, for only He can enable us to stand before God’s judgement without shame. This concludes the overview of today’s text.

2. Christ Facing The Great Issue Of Man’s Salvation The Magnitude Of This Issue

Looking at the New Testament we see that Jesus, our Lord and Saviour, had crossed the brook Kidron and entered into the Garden of Gethsemane with His disciples. Having separated Himself from them, He began to pray in awful anguish of His soul. There we see fulfilled what is written in the beginning of our text, ***Save me, O God! For the waters have come up to my neck.***

It is not David who in this Psalm is crying and complaining to God of his own afflictions. It is the suffering Saviour speaking through David, the prophet. Jesus says in Mark 14:36, ***Abba, Father, all things are possible for You. Take this cup away from Me; nevertheless, not what I will, but what You will.***

Our Lord and Saviour is pleading with His heavenly Father while undergoing bitter sufferings in His soul. He feels Himself swept away, as it were, by great waters that are about to overwhelm Him. One wave after another crashes over and threatens to submerge Him.

Jesus, who had stood in the midst of the storm and quieted the wind and waves is now Himself in greatest distress, as He states, ***the waters have come up***

to my neck. There is no escape. Down, down, deeper and deeper into the depth of suffering and anguish sinks our Lord and Saviour.

There is no foothold, there is no help. His life, His soul, go down into the depth of darkness. There is none that stands by. He is forsaken by His disciples and friends, He is alone. He is surrounded only by His enemies. He complains that He is without help.

Who is not reminded of His terrifying cry, *“My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me”*?⁶ From the time that all forsook Jesus and fled in the Garden until He bowed His head in death He was alone and forsaken.

His parched throat, His dried tongue, which sticks to His palate, cry in vain for water to quench His thirst. It is plain that Jesus, whose prayer is recorded here in our text is God’s judgement. God has sentenced Him to this punishment, severe and terrible beyond the imagination of our minds.

And what seems so strange to us in the suffering of this one Man is that not even one of His fellow human beings, people whom He helped, people to whom He showed every kindness, people to whom He gave every consideration, people for whom He prayed, have not one kind word, not even an intercessory plea in His behalf.

This picture of the suffering Saviour, sketched in these descriptive words of the 69th Psalm, is more fully revealed in the Passion history as we have it in the four Gospels.

The more we ponder the tremendous issues which Christ faced when He entered upon His great Passion, the more we marvel, and the more we are constrained to ask the question, *“Why should anyone, let alone the Son of the Highest, yes, Himself God, be made to suffer such intolerable and excruciating pain and sorrow, surpassing the very torments of the damned?”* We find the answer in the text.

3. Christ Facing The Great Issue Of Man's Salvation What Caused It

Our text states, *Though I have stolen nothing, I still must restore it.*” Indeed, the Sufferer is completely innocent. Neither Annas nor Caiaphas nor Pilate nor Herod, before whose judgement seat He was accused, could justly say anything, but what Pilate declared so often, *“I find no fault in Him at all.”*⁷

Neither does the Accused stand guilty in the sight of the almighty God. He alone among all mankind is perfect, holy, and sinless. Rightly does the Sufferer say, *“Though I have stolen nothing, I still must restore it.”*

But someone might say, “Does not the Sufferer, our Saviour, in the text make a confession of His guilt? Do we not read in verse 5, *“O God, You know my foolishness; And my sins are not hidden from You.*” Yes, that is true; it is His own confession. How then do we say that He is innocent?

It is because *“God laid on Him the iniquity of us all”* as we learn from Isaiah 53:6. Likewise, we read in 2 Corinthians 5:21, *“For He made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.*” That is the key to the solution of the awful picture puzzle penned for us by the sacred writer.

The robbery of which the Saviour speaks, for which He pays, and for which He is suffering, is one which He Himself has not committed. Jesus has assumed the sinner's guilt. He has taken it upon Himself willingly and gladly. He is bearing the sins of all people.

In our stead Jesus has sunken into the mire and the deep waters. In our stead He is being scourged, punished, and forsaken by God. *The chastisement for our peace was upon Him, And by His stripes we are healed.*⁸

As we see our Saviour in this terrible suffering, we see Him in the deepest depths of sin for our sake. This is the price of our salvation. By it we gain freedom and security. By it we obtain forgiveness and salvation. Our Saviour suffered the penalties and guilt of our and all people's sin. He is *“The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!”*⁹

Let us never forget this, but learn more and more to realise and appreciate just what it cost to effect our redemption. Here is portrayed God's grace and

mercy to the sinner, to you and me. Believe this. Doubt it not. Your salvation has been perfectly effected.

And while we view the suffering of our Saviour Jesus Christ as portrayed to us in God's Holy Word with awe and deep humility — since we realise that it is for us that He suffered and died — may God grant that we accept this sacrifice of love with a firm faith and thus appropriate to ourselves God's marvellous gift of salvation. Amen.

The peace of God, which passes all understanding, will keep our hearts and minds, in Christ Jesus. Amen.

¹ 2 Corinthians 5:21

² Galatians 3:13

³ Isaiah 53:6

⁴ 1 Corinthians 1:21

⁵ 1 Corinthians 3:18; 4:10

⁶ Mark 15:34

⁷ John 18:38

⁸ Isaiah 53:5

⁹ John 1:29