

Psalms 69

Imagine a time of shame, big or small.

Read Psalm 69.

Prayer: Father, you know the shame your people have endured. Sometimes for being Christian, sometimes the shame of great sin committed against us, sometimes the shame people who claim to operate in your name of unjustly put on us. Sometimes we feel shame because of our own actions and sin. We cry out to you, knowing that you are our hope in the midst of shame. You are no stranger to shame. Your Son, Christ endured shame and reproach on our behalf so that we might have a vindication not from men, but from you. You welcome us into your family to cleanse us of shame and allow us to stand tall in the confidence of your love. Help us to see that hope from Psalm 69 today. In Jesus name we pray, Amen.

Intro: I hope as we read Psalm 69 you were able to begin to see how this Psalm may echo the cries of your own heart. In this Psalm we have a writer who is being very honest with himself, with God, and with his community about the pain he feels from the shame that has been ladled on top of him by people who have decided to come up against him. Counselor Dr. Chip Dodd says this about shame: **"Shame is the emotional and spiritual recognition of the potential to fail and to do harm, to succeed, and to love. Shame elicits the experience of conscience and consciousness of our limitation and giftedness."**¹ In other word, shame exposes us and weaknesses, our sins and our hurts, our hopes and our desires to harsh light of the world. That can be a good thing! But it's often very painful and if its not responded too correctly, shame can become toxic.

¹ Chip Dodd, *The Voice of the Heart: A Call to Full Living* (Franklin, TN: Sage Hill Resources, 2014), 111.

With all that is coming against David, the ancient Israelite king who wrote this Psalm, we might expect him let shame become toxic and to lash out in wrath and simply beat his enemies into submission or to stuff his emotions and feelings and try to muddle through on the power of a stiff upper lip. That's what we would want to do right? We might want to person who embarrassed us to be made to suffer and we might want to physically hurt them or to hurt their reputation and to slander them. And we'll see that David is not exactly above that. Or we might just try to ignore the person who hurt us and pretend like we are just fine, that sticks and stones might break our bones but words will never hurt us. Or decide that the shame we are experiencing is simply too painful to think about and never do the hard work of processing what we are experiencing and to put it under the magnifying glass of the gospel to learn what God has to say about our shame.

Psalm 69, however gives us a template for understanding and processing our shame with God and others. It helps us avoid wallowing in our shame *and* pretending like we haven't been hurt. We will see David work through his shame and land in a place of gospel hope and rest in God as his salvation.

We'll see David

1. Cry out for Help
2. Confess his Shame
3. Search for False Vindication
4. Experience Righteous Anger
5. Find Gospel Freedom

1. Cry out for Help –

Right from the gate, we see David's cry for help. He's not trying to man up and pretend like this pain he feels isn't there. Instead he writes,

Save me, O God!
For the waters have come up to my neck.
I sink in deep mire,
where there is no foothold;
I have come into deep waters,
and the flood sweeps over me.
I am weary with my crying out;
my throat is parched.
My eyes grow dim
with waiting for my God. ²

You have to appreciate the mixture of images here. One minute David is drowning, up to his neck in water, the next he's dying of thirst. By the way, the Hebrew word for neck is the same as life; it's a kind of a pun or idiom that David uses to say this is killing me. But also the ancient Hebrews tended to identify the grave with deep water. They were desert people after all and nothing was scarier or viewed as more evil than the seas. And yet, as a desert people, the ancient Hebrews know what it is to feel deep thirst as the sun beats down on their heads and saps all their strength. They know what dehydration can do to a person. As an image, thirst was often used in the Bible to express a deep need for God himself.³ David is saying, "God, I'm going through hell; this is killing me. And the only thing that will save me is you. I need you, God." Ever feel like that? You're not alone. David is being forced to recognize that no matter how hard he tries to swim, he cannot, in his own strength, overcome the weight and pain of the shame that he is experiencing. He needs God to save him, to rescue him, to pull him out of the waters, to quench his thirst. Shame often forces us to recognize our limitations and that's a good thing. Shame, at its best, does not humiliate us, but can be used by God to grow in us humility. It

² [The Holy Bible: English Standard Version](#) (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2016), Ps 69:1–3.

³ Leland Ryken et al., *Dictionary of Biblical Imagery* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1998), 864-865.

shows us that we are not capable, at the end of the day, of simply trying hard enough, working long enough, there is no rug capable of hiding enough for us to escape shame. We need God to meet us in our shame. And he will. But we need to be prepared to do what David does and confess our shame.

2. Confess his Shame

What are you ashamed of? Are you willing to talk about it with trusted people? A pastor, a friend, a counselor? More importantly are you willing to talk about with God? Do you even know why you feel shame? Or have you thought about it enough to have an answer? Well, we do see that David is willing and able to put a name to his shame. While commentators are less certain about the specific circumstances, we can tell that David is experiencing shame because of his zeal for the Lord. In verses 4-5, we see that David is being slandered and lied about and while David knows he has sin to confess to God, the accusations floating around aren't true, but it is for **"[God's] sake that [David has] borne reproach, that dishonor covered [his] face. [He has] become a stranger to [his] brothers, an alien to [his] mother's sons."** (vv. 7-8). David then says, **"For zeal for your house has consumed me, and the reproaches of those who reproach you have fallen on me. When I wept and humble my soul with fasting, it became my reproach."** (Reproach is just another word for shame.) But David had been attacked and ridiculed because he loved God and was passionate about the things that God values, namely his "house" or his kingdom.

Now, this might, in our context seem to be kind of the self-righteous preening that we see people in our culture engage in often. People in our day often take the enemies as a badge they wear and are glad to find opponents. It gives them a false sense of importance. That's not

true for David. He lives in a culture where coming up against the community, even as king, is of huge personal, emotional, and spiritual cost. It is isolating. And rather than thumping his chest to tell God all that he has done for God, he's kind of saying, "God, um, this is your fault, so where are you at? Why do I not feel like I'm hearing from you?"

Maybe the reason you are experiencing shame isn't because of your zeal for the Lord. Maybe it's something someone said to you about your appearance or something someone has done to you or the effects of your own sin. No matter what the reason, God is inviting you to be honest and frank with him about your shame. He can take it. He wants you to trust him enough to call on him to be the solution for your shame and while David is exasperated, he does confess that God "at an acceptable time" God will answer him.

Now here's something interesting we should note: verse 9 is quoted twice in the New Testament, once in John 2:17 and once in Romans 15:3. In John, the disciples remember this Psalm in the context of Jesus cleansing the temple and they apply the "zeal" for God's house to Jesus, because no one, but no one cares about God's house more than the Son of God. In Romans, Paul is encouraging believers to bear with one another because it is Jesus who has borne the reproaches, the shame of those who opposed God on our behalf, rather than pleasing ourselves. David may not have chosen shame, but Jesus did. For you. God can take you telling him about your shame, because his Son endured shame for us when in no way did he deserve it. He endured the shame and humiliation of a human life when he was the God of the Universe and suffered the indignity and mockery thrown at him before his crucifixion at a point when he was completely abandoned by all his friends. Which means he understands the next

part of Psalm 69 and what David is talking about when he goes on a search for friends and allies and can find none.

3. Search for False Vindication

You see, like us, David wants vindication, he wants someone on his side. The problem is that we look for that vindication in other people. We want their approval or their anger to align with ours or for them to take our side or give us comfort. That's a wrong desire necessarily. But it can leave us disappointed or lead us into sinful actions or attitudes.

In David's case, when facing shame and reproach, he says in verse 20: **I looked for pity, but there was none, and for comforters, but I found none. They me poison for food and for my thirst they gave me sour wine to drink.** The people that David thought he could trust him the most have "failed him". If they haven't actively joined the opponents, they have still not been the kind of friends we hope for who can comfort and encourage David. We all hope for those people in tough times in our life when our world seems to be collapsing, but sometimes what we do is put all of our hope in those people and when they don't show up in the way we expect, we can become embittered against them. I can think back to some situations where I was experiencing shame, and all I wanted was someone to show up and defend my honor or take down the person who was giving me grief a notch or at least commiserate with me by gossiping and slandering that person with me. And, probably for the best, there weren't a lot of those folks around.

You see what I wanted to be vindicated by other people. I wanted to be right in the eyes of man. But the truth is, I wanted, and David confesses to wanting, far too little. We don't need the pats on the back or the group complaint session. For the same reason that the words of

those who wish to cause us shame aren't the most important thing said about us, neither are the things our friends say about us. We need to hear what God has to say about us. That he has justified us through faith (Ro 5:1). That we were dead, but he has made us alive (Ro 6:21). That we have peace with God (Ro 5:1). That there is no condemnation for those in Christ (Ro 8:1). That we are beloved children (Eph 5:1). That we are new creations (2 Cor 5:17). It's God's voice in Scripture that we need to listen to for comfort and his work in vindicating us through Christ's work on the cross that we ought to crave. I'm not saying human comfort is bad or friends aren't to be desired but it is a gift on top of that which most need; God's friendship and comfort.

4. Experience Righteous Anger

But having God as our Father and friend does mean that, like David, when outside sources seek to put shame upon us, we may experience righteous anger. When people are out of alignment with God's truth or when people sin against one another, because we are created in his image and saved to be his children, anger is an appropriate response. If you feel angry, you're in good company! I'm not sure if you'd sing a song like David does when he writes the lyrics from an Iron Maiden song:

**Let their own table before them become a snare;
and when they are at peace, let it become a trap.
Let their eyes be darkened, so that they cannot see,
and make their loins tremble continually.
Pour out your indignation upon them,
and let your burning anger overtake them.
May their camp be a desolation;
let no one dwell in their tents.
For they persecute him whom you have struck down,
and they recount the pain of those you have wounded.
Add to them punishment upon punishment;
may they have no acquittal from you.**

**Let them be blotted out of the book of the living;
let them not be enrolled among the righteous.** ⁴

So metal.

I appreciate that again, David is frank and honest with his suffering with God. He's upset and letting God know about it. But in asking God to bring justice to the situation and for God to do the shaming of those who have shamed David, he is trusting the Lord to be the one who carries out judgment. David isn't taking matters in to his own hand. That's important. If you've been put to shame, it can be tempting to want revenge, to get even. But revenge is not justice. Only God is perfect, only God can bring truly righteous judgment to bear. He punishes sin. He metes out judgment and wrath for attacks on his image bearers. He does that, either through eternal judgment in hell or by crowning justice with atonement by putting his wrath on Christ.⁵ Either, way, as angry as we might be, we are freed from the need to execute our wrath upon those who've hurt us. We get to trust that the Lord, who is good in all things, does see our pain and has a plan to respond to it that we can't fathom.

5. Find Gospel Freedom

And while David is certainly not out of the situation he finds himself in, and while the pain is ongoing he is still able to find freedom. Freedom to not try to save himself, but instead to cry out to God. Freedom to confess his shame. Freedom from trying to find allies and get people on your side. Freedom from needing to exact revenge. And like David we can enjoy this freedom

⁴ [*The Holy Bible: English Standard Version*](#) (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2016), Ps 69:22–28.

⁵ Derek Kidner, [*Psalms 1–72: An Introduction and Commentary*](#), vol. 15, Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1973), 266–267.

that comes from being recipients of the Gospel, that Jesus, not us, is our salvation and reconciliation to God. It's this freedom that leads David to sing:

**But I am afflicted and in pain;
let your salvation, O God, set me on high!**

**I will praise the name of God with a song;
I will magnify him with thanksgiving.
This will please the LORD more than an ox
or a bull with horns and hoofs.
When the humble see it they will be glad;
you who seek God, let your hearts revive.
For the LORD hears the needy
and does not despise his own people who are prisoners.⁶**

David is looking forward to a future hope, as you can when you experience shame. God is rescuing you and will rescue you. If you're humble, he'll bring you gladness. If you are a seeker, he will revive your heart. If you are needy, the Lord hears you. If you are in prison, the Lord does not despise you. He doesn't add to your shame. He doesn't pile on. He frees us. And so, Redeemer, we can, in the midst of our shame and pain, respond like David, with worship and join him in this song, these final verses.

**Let heaven and earth praise him,
the seas and everything that moves in them.
For God will save Zion
and build up the cities of Judah,
and people shall dwell there and possess it;
the offspring of his servants shall inherit it,
and those who love his name shall dwell in it.⁷**

⁶ [*The Holy Bible: English Standard Version*](#) (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2016), Ps 69:29–33.

⁷ [*The Holy Bible: English Standard Version*](#) (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2016), Ps 69:34–36.

Discussion Starters:

- 1. Read Psalm 69 and summarize in your words.**
- 2. Can you think of a moment or experience that caused you shame? If you're willing to share, does Psalm 69 resonate with you? In what ways did you see your own experience in the Psalm?**
- 3. Have you experienced the search for false vindication? What is wrong with this approach to our shame?**
- 4. What place has anger played in shame for you? Has your anger been directed toward God and asking him to respond with justice or toward others in a search for revenge?**
- 5. Finally, how is gospel freedom good news in the face of our shame?**

Works Cited

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