

IN THE MIDST OF FOES

Sunday Evening, 3rd July 2022

Chris Hand

(Sermon Summary)

Reading: Psalm 69:19-36.

We have seen earlier that this Psalm has plenty to say to us about the sufferings of Christ. There are some verses quoted exactly in the New Testament. But everywhere we can see where aspects of this Psalm carry over in the life and experience of our Lord Jesus. We can also say that the sufferings of David are also in this Psalm. He too knew from personal experience about the things he was writing. But it is also something we know about too.

1. The implications of belonging to Christ.

There are many privileges that Christians enjoy. We are justified, sealed with the Spirit, adopted, and have the gracious work of sanctification taking place in us. But there are sufferings too that are part of what it means to belong to Christ. We have foes (v19) and they are full of hate (v4). This is recorded often in Scripture (See John 15:18-21; Matthew 10:16-23; Acts 14:21-22; Romans 8:16-17; and Colossians 1:24).

We can feel overwhelmed and without footing. It can seem that the whole community is ranged against us. They express reproach and shame (v19), disapproval and offence (v9). Their hate led them to oppose the Lord (John 10:32; and John 18:22-23). There is such strength of feeling that we can be taken quite aback. Formerly friendly people can become very aggressive and make very personal attacks against us. People can affect great moral outrage against us. There is huge strength of opinion against the judges in the US following the ruling on *Roe v Wade*. Conviction of sin gets distorted, and people become irrational like the devil in his anger against the Lord and His people. People try to make us feel guilty. People tell us that we are filled with hate. We hear slander and untruth spoken against us. Publishers and broadcasters lap this kind of thinking up.

We do not reply in kind but seek to understand those who oppose us better. We try to see their spiritual needs, and understand their twisted purposes. This is part of what we will have to experience when we belong to Christ.

2. Destruction awaits.

As Christians we are in a 'long game'. We wince when we see the things that are said about the Lord and about His people. But we know that judgment awaits these people. Verses 22-28 are not ours to pray as such or for us to assert but it shows the urgency of their plight and what lies ahead for them. They are ensnared by their own folly and culpable of gross absurdity. They go forward to hell and will be left to experience desolation and darkness, the recompense for their folly. They will have awareness of divine indignation and will have to live in eternity with the reproach of God. The moral code is held up to people and so they will feel guilt. In fact, the case of Judas reported in Acts 1:20 is a quote from v25 of this Psalm.

Knowing what we know about the doom of sinners should not leave us unmoved about their plight. It does not make us cease to pray for them or to evangelise them. We feel sorrow for their choices. We do not hate them in return. We do not approve of their actions, but we look on them as fellow sinners.

3. Our duty of praise.

We see this in verses 30-36. This is how our Lord Jesus Christ also lived, expressing praise to God from a whole heart. Much of the time, like David, we are reflecting upon and praying about the troubles that we face from the ungodly. But there is more to us than this. We also spend our time in praising God. Praise is not therapy, but it is designed, among other things, to revive our spirits (v32). When we sing out truth it does have distinctive properties and gladdens the heart (v32).

It is our duty to praise because it follows on from what we know about the character and nature of God and His glory. All should praise God and not withhold from Him what is His due. One day all will praise Him. We, on earth, as the church militant, submit our dashed hopes, unfulfilled longings to Him and express praise and delight ourselves in Him. In so doing, in this fallen world, in the midst of foes, we declare what is not yet but what will be. This is a confidence we have which pleases God (v31) and He hears us (v33). Our praises are heard including the petitions that are wrapped up in those praises. God does not despise our praise because we are small and weak, or because we come to Him with questions as yet unanswered.

There is a future beyond here (vv33-34) although we should be careful not to underestimate or understate what the Lord is doing now. Our duty to praise shows that we need to be patient until what we sing about finally comes about. We trust God to bring about those great things in the future but also look to Him to do great things in the present too.