

**Psalm 69: 22-34; “A Table of Thanksgiving and Gladness”, A Communion Sermon,
Delivered by Pastor Paul Rendall on July 3rd. 2016,
in the Morning Worship Service.**

In verse 22, we find either David, or the Lord Jesus Christ, or both, saying this; “Let their table become a snare before them, and their well-being a trap.” It is the first line of an imprecatory prayer that runs down to verse 28 where it says, “Let them be blotted out of the book of the living, and not be written with the righteous.” These are the ultimate of strong words in prayer; to ask God to deal with other people in this way where He would not care for them or do them good, but rather “pour out His indignation and wrath upon them”, as it states in verse 24. How do we fit this together with what has gone before in this psalm, where it is obvious that Jesus Christ our Lord is speaking and asking God to help Him in His sufferings, His sufferings on behalf of sinners? How do we fit this together with what comes after this section where the speaker is praising and magnifying the Lord in triumphant joy because the Lord has heard His prayers? That is what I want to unfold to you now, before we partake of the Super. The Lord has prepared a table for us by means of His sufferings, that we will sit down together at, in just a few minutes. I trust that it will be a table of thanksgiving and gladness for each of us. I trust that it will never be a snare to any one of us. This table is for the well-being of each believer here. It is a table which “proclaims the Lord’s death until He comes”. So we want to ask this question: Why is this table, a table of Thanksgiving and Gladness to all believers? I think that there are 3 reasons that it is so.

1st of all – The Lord’s Table is a table of thanksgiving and gladness because none of these imprecations applies to the believer in Jesus. (Verses 22-28)

Almost every commentator that I consulted says that the word “let”, at the beginning of each of these verses, should be understood in the future tense, as a “shall”. Their table shall become a snare before them. “Their eyes shall be darkened, so that they do not see.” “Their loins shall shake continually”. In other words, these are not the words of a man seeking private revenge; they are more prophetic and predictive. These are the words of a man who knows full-well, and understands by the Spirit of God, what God will do to those who deliberately and willfully betray, persecute, oppose, and put to death God’s Elect, and especially those who killed the Lord Jesus Christ. If they do not come to repent of such sins, what is described in verses 22-28 would most certainly come upon them; and it did. It came upon Judas who betrayed Jesus, and it came upon the nation of the Jews, who were primarily responsible for His death. This is provable if we will simply look at a few verses and remember the history of the aftermath of Christ’s death.

Turn with me to Matthew 26: 21. The context is the Last Supper. And in verse 21 it says, “Now as they were eating, He said, ‘Assuredly, I say to you, one of you will betray Me.’” “And they were exceedingly sorrowful, and each of them began to say to Him, ‘Lord, is it I?’” “He answered and said, ‘He who dipped his hand with Me in the dish will betray Me.’” “The Son of Man indeed goes just as it is written of Him, but woe to that man by whom the Son of man is betrayed!” “It would have been good for that man if he had not been born.” “Then Judas, who was betraying Him, answered and said, ‘Rabbi, is it I?’” “He said to him, ‘You have said it.’” These prayers and statements of imprecation, set in the midst of Psalm 69 are there to let us understand prophetically what was to happen to the one who would betray our blessed Lord. The Lord Jesus was on His mission; sent from God, to accomplish our redemption. Just because these events were prophesied of Christ, and just because they happened according to the pre-determined plan and foreknowledge of God, does not excuse the real guilt of the one who betrayed Him to His death.

Both David and Christ had enemies who wanted to overthrow them personally, and everything that their kingdoms stood for. Neither David nor our Lord Jesus sought personal revenge when they were betrayed, but they did pray for God's justice to be executed. It is recorded of our Lord Jesus in Luke 23: 34, that He prayed, "Father, forgive them for they do not know what they do." He acted righteously in praying this prayer. The prayer in Psalm 69, the prayer which was uttered to God prophetically for judgment to come to, and upon, the one who betrayed Him and those who approved of this betrayal who would never change their minds about it; this is what these verses are talking about. Their hearts were right to pray for forgiveness of the wicked acts done against them, for if God does have a purpose in Election, that eventually frees the guilty one that He chooses, when they come to repentance and faith. It in no way clears the guilty, but makes provision for their sin, for all of God's Elect. The only place and the only way that any guilty sinner can find mercy in regard to their sins is through what the Lord Jesus Christ did, in going to the cross. If a person believes in Jesus Christ, they will never fall under these imprecations and judgments. But if they do not, they will fall under these imprecations, either in this life or the next, according to the sovereign will and justice of God. David came to understand and approve whole-heartedly of what God did to his unrepentant enemies. Their final end on earth, and their final end to all eternity, was to fall under the judgments predicted in these verses in Psalm 69.

Let us look and see God's just punishment of Judas. Acts chapter 1 records it. In verse 15 it says this: "And in those days Peter stood up in the midst of the disciples (altogether the number of names was about a hundred and twenty), and said, 'Men and brethren, this Scripture had to be fulfilled, which the Holy Spirit spoke before by the mouth of David concerning Judas, who became a guide to those who arrested Jesus; for he was numbered with us and obtained a part in this ministry.' (Now this man purchased a field with the wages of iniquity; and falling headlong, he burst open in the middle and all his entrails gushed out.)" "And it became known to all those dwelling in Jerusalem; so that field is called in their own language, Akel Dama, that is Field of Blood." "For it is written in the Book of Psalms: 'Let his dwelling place be desolate, and let no one live in it.'" This is a quote from Psalm 69: 25.

Let us also look and see that these imprecations applied also to the whole nation of the Jews of that day, who rejected their Messiah. Turn to Romans chapter 11, verse 1. Paul has asked the question of whether God has cast away His people Israel. He answers it with an emphatic, "Certainly not!" "God has not cast away His people whom He foreknew," he says. These elect Jews are those among the nation of Israel that God in His mercy has chosen to eternal life out of that nation. In verse 5 he says, "Even so then, at this present time there is a remnant according to the election of grace." "And if by grace, then it is no longer of works; otherwise grace is no longer grace." "But if it is of works, it is no longer of grace; otherwise work is no longer work." "What then?" "Israel has not obtained what it seeks; but the elect have obtained it, and the rest were blinded." "Just as it is written: 'God has given them a spirit of stupor, eyes that they should not see and ears that they should not hear, to this very day.'" "And David says: 'Let their table become a snare and a trap, a stumbling block and a recompense to them.'" "Let their eyes be darkened, so that they do not see, and bow down their back always." "I say then, have they stumbled that they should fall?" "Certainly not!" "But through their fall, to provoke them to jealousy, salvation has come to the Gentiles."

The first quote Paul gave here, was from Isaiah 29: 10 and 13, but the second quote is from our Psalm 69, verses 22 and 23. The Jews who rejected Christ set a table for Him at His crucifixion; a table of vinegar and gall, a table of violence against Him. And God repaid the ones who did not repent and come to faith later, with these judgments. Jesus had wept and cried over Jerusalem as He approached it before His trial and crucifixion. But in Matthew 23: 37 and 38 He says, "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the one who kills the prophets and stones those who are

sent to her!” “How often I wanted to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, but you were not willing!” “See!” “Your house is left to you desolate.” This our Lord took directly from Psalm 69: 25.

The thing that we should remember in coming to this table this afternoon, is that none of these imprecations will fall upon the one trusting in Jesus. “There is no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.” Even if you had been there at the crucifixion and had been approving of Jesus’ death in that day, if you would have heard Peter’s sermon on the Day of Pentecost and believed the gospel message, you would have been saved. And so, what we come to celebrate here, now at the table, is this special kind of powerful grace that Christ has purchased for us. Grace for the vilest of sinners; grace for the worst of men and women who believe. Those of us who partake of this table know that they were under the curse of God for not keeping God’s commandments. It is written in Galatians 3: 10, “For as many as are of the works of the law are under the curse; for it is written, ‘Cursed is everyone who does not continue in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them.’” Verse 13 continues, “Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the law, having become a curse for us.” This is what we cling to, and this is what we hold fast to, here at this hour. It is Christ’s cross that we cling to. We have joy and gladness; we have great Thanksgiving because of what Christ has done for us.

2nd – The Lord’s table is a table of Thanksgiving and Gladness because He who was made poor and sorrowful because of our sins, has been set up on high.

(Verses 29- 33)

This verse 29 has a reference to Christ in the primary sense, and to all believers in Christ in the second place. Let’s think about both. “But I am poor and sorrowful; let Your salvation, O God, set me up on high.” What made our Lord Jesus poor and sorrowful? It was our sins and everything He experienced in His 33 years of identification with fallen mankind’s lost estate. This is called by theologians, His humiliation. 2nd Corinthians 8: 9 says, “For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though He was rich, yet for your sakes He became poor, that you through His poverty might become rich.” This verse gives us the meaning of our Lord’s poverty which is spoken of first in the Psalm. The Lord Jesus, before He came down from heaven and into this fallen world through Mary’s womb, was rich. He was rich in the blessing of communion with the Father; having every delight related to being His Son. It was not just that He, with the Father, created all things and thereby owned all material things. No doubt this was true. But rather, it means that He possessed supreme happiness and blessedness in that state and relationship with His Father. Nothing could have been more wonderful or desirable.

He became poor when He willingly chose to come to earth and become our Savior. He was born into material poverty in a stable in Bethlehem. He had no real social or material advantages from being a part of Joseph’s family. When He began His ministry He had to be supported by the women that followed Him, out of their own substance. (Luke 8: 3) At one point in His ministry he had to ask someone to “show him a denarius”. To another person He said, “The foxes have holes, the birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has no place to lay His head.” But the deeper poverty that Jesus suffered was related to His becoming poor in the way that He was regarded and treated for our sakes. “He made Himself,” it says in Philippians 2: 7, “of no reputation, took the form of a bondservant, and coming in the likeness of men, and being found in the appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross.” His was a poverty of being truly and properly regarded as righteous and holy by men, but having to be “oppressed and afflicted, not opening His mouth,” as it says in Isaiah 53. “He was led as a lamb to the slaughter and as a sheep before its shearers is silent, so He opened not His mouth.”

He poured out His soul unto death at the cross, and gave all of His precious life for our salvation. There at the cross, “He bore our griefs, and carried our sorrows; yet we esteemed him

stricken, smitten by God, and afflicted.” He was indeed, for much of His life leading up to the cross, “a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief”. It was this kind of poverty that ran deeper than the material poverty. And as He came near to His time to suffer and die at the cross, when He was in the garden of Gethsemane, He began to be “sorrowful and deeply distressed”. Then it was that He said to His disciples, “My soul is exceedingly sorrowful, even unto death.” This is the kind of poverty and pain that Jesus endured for each one of us, His people.

But look at the prayer of Jesus while He suffered. “Let your salvation, O God, set me up on high.” And truly, after all the sufferings were accomplished, this is the very thing that God the Father did with His Son. “Therefore, God also has highly exalted Him and given Him the name which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee shall bow, of those in heaven, and of those on earth, and of those under the earth, and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.” (Philippians 2: 9, 10) And Psalm 2: 6, “Yet I have set My King on My holy hill of Zion.” And Ephesians 1: 19, ...“and what is the exceeding greatness of His power toward us who believe, according to the working of His mighty power which He worked in Christ when He raised Him from the dead and seated Him at His right hand in the heavenly places, far above all principality and power and might and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this age but also in that which is to come.” This is why when we come to this table that we will magnify Him with thanksgiving. This is why we will praise Him with a song; and our praises will please the Lord more than an ox or bull which has horns or hooves.” What pleases the Lord is when we bring praise to Him, when we live a life faith in Him in obedience to His commands. When came to Him the first time as those who were poor and sorrowful because of our sin, He raised us up, set us up on high through Christ's salvation. (Let us now gather around the table and I will give you the last point.)

3rd - The Lord's table is a table of Thanksgiving and Gladness because the Lord hears the poor and does not despise His prisoners.

We have seen how that God the Father heard the prayers of the Lord Jesus and answered Him after He paid the price for our salvation on the cross. He raised Him up and set Him on high. We have come here to this table to remember Christ's resurrection and His exaltation as well as His sufferings and death. Let me ask you this question as I lead you to the table today. Are you poor and sorrowful in regard to your ability to save yourself from your sins? Have you come here to partake because you are one who has been struck by the Lord, and wounded by Him on account of your sins. It talks about this in verse 26 of our Psalm. Have you ever been persecuted for your faith in Christ? Listen to verse 26 again. “For they persecute the one whom thou has smitten; and they talk to the grief of those whom thou hast wounded,” it says in the King James. The NAS77 says, “For they have persecuted him whom Thou Thyself hast smitten, and they tell of the pain of those whom Thou hast wounded.” Take careful notice of the fact that those who are being persecuted are those who have already been smitten and wounded by God Himself. I believe that this refers to the conviction of sin that comes to us when we see how far short of God's glory we come, and when our sense of sinfulness prevails upon us by the power of God's Spirit, when we see our unworthiness in the sight of the holy God to be saved from our sins and even to partake of this holy Supper. This is the kind of person who should draw near and partake of it. This is why Christ died.

Have you come to see yourself as the “prisoner of the Lord?” His is the best prison to be in, by far. Often in prisons, men are not spoken to, except roughly, and not listened to much at all. But in verse 33 it says, “For the Lord hears the poor, and does not despise His prisoners.” Are you the Lord's prisoner? The Lord's prisoner is the one who although he is convicted of sin, is a believer in Jesus Christ. And because of Jesus Christ, God, it says, “hears the poor”. “He does not despise His prisoners.” He treats them much, much better than they deserve through Jesus Christ our Lord. It is the humble that see that they cannot do anything or bring anything to God

to satisfy Him or to atone for their sins. It says, "The humble see this and are glad." "You who seek God, your hearts shall live." Your hearts do live because of the grace of Jesus Christ. This is why you should magnify God, and magnify Christ, with Thanksgiving today. This will please Him. "Let heaven and earth praise Him." That is, let all the redeemed of the Lord in heaven and earth praise Him for this great salvation wrought by Christ. God is saving Zion, Christ is building His church, the cities of Judah. We dwell there, and we possess all the spiritual blessings of our salvation in Christ. It is our prayer that our children shall inherit it and that those who love Christ's name will come and join us in our praises here at the table today. God prepared a table in the presence of His enemies, of vinegar and gall and all the sufferings that they could heap upon Him. But you and I sit at the table that Christ has prepared for us by those very sufferings.