

Psalm 69:11

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

I made sackcloth also my garment; and I became a proverb to them.

Analysis

I made sackcloth also my garment; and I became a proverb to them.

Sackcloth (שְׂעִיר/saq), coarse goat-hair cloth, was traditional mourning attire, worn to express grief, repentance, or desperate supplication (Genesis 37:34, Jonah 3:5-8). David's prolonged wearing of sackcloth signaled deep spiritual anguish and penitential seeking of God. Yet rather than evoking compassion or respect, this became a "proverb" (מְשַׁחַל/mashal)—a byword, taunt, object lesson of ridicule.

"I became a proverb" indicates David became the subject of mocking sayings, jokes, and contemptuous references. In oral culture, being made into a proverb meant one's name became synonymous with failure, foolishness, or divine curse (Deuteronomy 28:37, Jeremiah 24:9). Enemies would point to David as an example of what not to be, evidence that serving God leads to disgrace and ruin.

This anticipates Christ supremely. Isaiah prophesied the Servant would be "despised and rejected of men" (Isaiah 53:3). At the crucifixion, passers-by "wagged their heads" in mockery (Matthew 27:39), making Jesus the ultimate object of scorn. Yet paradoxically, what appeared as cursed foolishness became "the power of God and the wisdom of God" (1 Corinthians 1:24).

Historical Context

Sackcloth appears throughout biblical narrative as mourning garment: Jacob (Genesis 37:34), Nineveh's king (Jonah 3:6), Mordecai (Esther 4:1), and prophets

(Isaiah 20:2). Wearing it publicly was neither theatrical nor optional but culturally appropriate expression of grief or repentance. That David's sackcloth provoked mockery indicates a deeply corrupt society where even traditional piety was ridiculed.

The concept of becoming a "proverb" or "byword" appears in covenantal curses (Deuteronomy 28:37, 1 Kings 9:7). When covenant people suffered conspicuously, it raised theological questions: Has God abandoned them? Is their piety false? David's situation threatened to make God look weak or unfaithful.

Early Christians similarly became proverbial objects of mockery—"Christians" itself began as a term of derision (Acts 11:26). Believers were accused of cannibalism, atheism, and hatred of humanity. Yet this reproach became their glory, as Peter wrote: "If ye be reproached for the name of Christ, happy are ye" (1 Peter 4:14).

Related Passages

Romans 2:1 — Judging others

Matthew 25:31 — Final judgment

Study Questions

1. How do you respond when faithfulness to Christ makes you an object of mockery or a cautionary tale to others?
2. What does society's ridicule of genuine spiritual expression reveal about its spiritual blindness?
3. How does Christ's experience as ultimate object of scorn transform the meaning of our own reproach?

Interlinear Text

לִמְשָׁלָה: לְבָשׂ שׁ תִּאְתַּנְתָּ הָנָה
and I became a proverb also my garment sackcloth I made
H4912 H3830 H8242 H5414

Additional Cross-References

Job 17:6 (Creation): He hath made me also a byword of the people; and aforetime I was as a tabret.

Jeremiah 24:9 (Parallel theme): And I will deliver them to be removed into all the kingdoms of the earth for their hurt, to be a reproach and a proverb, a taunt and a curse, in all places whither I shall drive them.

1 Kings 9:7 (Parallel theme): Then will I cut off Israel out of the land which I have given them; and this house, which I have hallowed for my name, will I cast out of my sight; and Israel shall be a proverb and a byword among all people:

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