

Psalm 69:29

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

But I am poor and sorrowful: let thy salvation, O God, set me up on high.

Analysis

But I am poor and sorrowful: let thy salvation, O God, set me up on high.

After intense imprecations (verses 22-28), David returns to personal lament and petition, creating striking contrast between his condition and enemies'. "I am poor" (עני/ani) means afflicted, humble, brought low—not merely financially poor but comprehensively crushed and vulnerable. "Sorrowful" (פֹאָב/ko'ev) indicates physical and emotional pain, the kind of deep anguish that affects the whole person.

The "but" (וְ/va'ani) creates deliberate contrast: while enemies prosper temporarily, David suffers; yet while he prays judgment on them, he prays salvation for himself. The difference isn't merit but trust. David casts himself on God's mercy despite his poverty and pain. "Let thy salvation" (ישְׁעָתֶךָ/yeshu'atekha) uses the root that gives us Jesus's Hebrew name (Yeshua/Joshua)—salvation, deliverance, rescue.

"Set me up on high" (תַּשְׁעַבְנִי/tesaggveini) prays for exaltation—lifting from the pit to heights, from despair to hope, from death to life. This anticipates Christ, who through poverty and sorrow was exalted to God's right hand (Philippians 2:5-11). It also reflects biblical pattern: God resists the proud but gives grace to the humble (James 4:6, 1 Peter 5:6).

Historical Context

The transition from imprecation to personal lament reflects ancient Near Eastern lament psalm structure, where the sufferer describes enemies, appeals for judgment, then returns to personal petition. This isn't schizophrenic but theologically coherent: God's justice requires judging wickedness and delivering righteousness. The two petitions complement rather than contradict.

David's self-description as "poor and sorrowful" echoes the Psalter's consistent theme of the anawim—the poor, humble, afflicted ones who trust God while being oppressed by the wicked (Psalm 9:18, 10:2, 12:5, 14:6, 25:16, 34:6, 37:14, 40:17). This became central to biblical piety: God sides with the downtrodden against oppressors, hears the cry of the afflicted, and vindicates the humble.

Jesus embodied this perfectly, becoming "poor" though He was rich (2 Corinthians 8:9), a "man of sorrows" (Isaiah 53:3), yet exalted to the highest place (Philippians 2:9-11).

Related Passages

John 3:16 — God's love and salvation

Romans 10:9 — Confession and belief for salvation

James 2:17 — Faith and works

Hebrews 11:1 — Definition of faith

Study Questions

1. How does acknowledging your spiritual poverty and sorrow position you to receive God's salvation?
2. What is the relationship between present humiliation and future exaltation in Christian experience?
3. How does Christ's example of being 'poor and sorrowful' yet ultimately exalted provide hope in present suffering?

Interlinear Text

אֱלֹהִים יְמִינְךָ וְעַל־אַנְךָ יְמִינְךָ

H589

But I am poor

H6041

וְשֹׁאַלְתָּךְ בְּנֵי־בְּנֵי־אָנָּה

H3510

and sorrowful

let thy salvation

H3444

O God

H430

תַּשְׁגַּבְנִי:

set me up on high

H7682

Additional Cross-References

Psalms 40:17 (References God): But I am poor and needy; yet the Lord thinketh upon me: thou art my help and my deliverer; make no tarrying, O my God.

Psalms 20:1 (References God): The LORD hear thee in the day of trouble; the name of the God of Jacob defend thee;

Psalms 109:22 (Parallel theme): For I am poor and needy, and my heart is wounded within me.

Psalms 109:31 (Salvation): For he shall stand at the right hand of the poor, to save him from those that condemn his soul.

Psalms 59:1 (References God): Deliver me from mine enemies, O my God: defend me from them that rise up against me.

Psalms 70:5 (References God): But I am poor and needy: make haste unto me, O God: thou art my help and my deliverer; O LORD, make no tarrying.

Psalms 18:48 (Parallel theme): He delivereth me from mine enemies: yea, thou liftest me up above those that rise up against me: thou hast delivered me from the violent man.