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Participating in God’s Purpose by Following the Cruciform Pattern of Christ:
The Use of Psalm 69:9b in Romans 15:3

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In his letter to the Romans, Paul emphasizes the importance of Israel’s Scripture for his gospel (1:3–4; 16:25–27). In 15:4, he specifically links the Scriptures with endurance, consolation, and hope. Immediately before this verse, Paul cites Ps 69:9b. Commentators customarily—and rightly—think that Paul uses this citation to support his exhortation on community harmony in Rom 14–15. But is this the sole function of the citation? Does it, directly or indirectly, support other themes in Romans? Psalm 69 is significant for Romans, because it is cited in 11:9–10 and 15:3. It is also probable that Ps 69 played a significant role in the early church’s understanding of Christ’s suffering and death, because it is alluded to in the passion narratives in all four canonical gospels. But the use of Ps 69:9b in Rom 15:3 has drawn relatively little attention among scholars. This article suggests that the function of the citation is extensive, and it strengthens several main themes of the letter. More specifically, this article argues that the citation serves to reinforce Paul’s call for believers to participate in God’s purpose by following the cruciform pattern of Christ.

Key Words: Romans, Paul, Psalm 69, cruciform, participation

INTRODUCTION

In summarizing his exhortation concerning harmony between the weak and the strong, Paul asks his audience to follow Jesus’ way by citing

Author’s note: I am thankful to the reviewers of this article, whose wise and kind suggestions I have largely taken on board. I am also grateful to Professor Sean Winter, who encouraged me to write an article on this topic. I also want to thank my friend, Jim Reiher, who read my first draft and gave me his helpful comments.
Ps 69:9b, which says, “The reproaches of those who reproached you fell on me” (Rom 15:3). The citation is immediately followed by an affirmation of the Scripture’s role in teaching (διδασκαλία), endurance (ὑπομονή), consolation (παράκλησις), and hope (15:4). This suggests that the scriptural citation in v. 3 is important and that it may provide clues to the letter’s argument concerning communal life, suffering, and hope. Somewhat surprisingly, there is not much interest in Paul’s use of Ps 69:9b in recent scholarship. In the following, I will argue that the citation, by virtue of its call to follow Christ’s model, significantly reinforces several important themes in the letter. More specifically, the use of Psalm 69 enables Paul to engender his appeal for the believers in Rome to participate in fulfilling God’s purpose for the eschatological people of God through their faithful sharing in Christ’s suffering.

PRELIMINARY ISSUES

The bulk of this essay will consist of a detailed analysis of the function of Ps 69:9b in Rom 15:3, primarily in relation to the main themes of the letter. But before that, several preliminary observations are in order. First, Paul often follows the LXX in Romans. In the case of 15:3, he cites verba-
tim 68:10b LXX, and the LXX follows the MT closely. Second, there are good reasons to assume that Paul and his readers had a reasonable working knowledge of Ps 69. Most significantly, Paul has already used Ps 69:22–23 in Rom 11:9–10. In addition, the Psalm is used or alluded to in all four canonical gospels (Matt 27:34, 48; Mark 15:23, 36; Luke 23:36; John 2:17; 15:25; 19:29). It is, thus, probable that Ps 69 was widely used among early Christians, especially in relation to Jesus’ suffering at the cross. This is not to say that the audience knew every detail of the Psalm, but they were likely familiar with such an important Scripture for the early church.

Third, the citation is commonly—and rightly—regarded as primarily a reference to Christ’s suffering and death. Most likely, the word “reproaches” (ὀνειδισμοί) in Rom 15:3 refers to the disgrace and insults Jesus of these figures may be disputed, but minor adjustments do not affect the fact that Paul often follows the LXX in Romans.

4. As will be seen, the MT seems to play no significant role in my analysis of Paul’s use of Ps 69:9b in Rom 15:3. (Other citations in the letter would be different though.) It is largely because the variations between the MT and the LXX bear no notable effect on the thematic and verbal links between the Psalm and the letter. Also, a large part of my study will depend on the cited text itself, where Paul cites the LXX directly—which, in turn, follows the MT closely.


6. As noted by, e.g., Matera, Romans, 321; Dunn, Romans 9–16, 839; Klaus Haacker, Der Brief des Paulus an die Römer (ThHK 6; Leipzig: Evangelische, 1999) 294.

7. Here I do not mean that all believers in Rome were literate but that they were familiar with the Psalm. The predominately oral culture of the ancient world means that believers could gain reasonable scriptural knowledge by listening to the text. Their ability to memorize sacred texts should not be underestimated. See, e.g., Sam Tsang, “Are We ‘Misreading’ Paul? Oral Phenomena and Their Implication for the Exegesis of Paul’s Letters,” Oral Tradition 24 (2009) 219; Leonard Greenspoon, “By the Letter? Word for Word? Scriptural Citation in Paul,” in Paul and Scripture (ed. Christopher D. Stanley; Atlanta: SBL, 2012) 10–23; Jeremy Punt, “Identity, Memory, and Scriptural Warrant: Arguing Paul’s Case,” in Paul and Scripture, 33. A psalm such as Psalm 69 would have been commonly read to believers. Also, it seems likely that many believers attended synagogues before, and hence their scriptural knowledge would be quite good. See, e.g., Bruce Fisk, “Synagogue Influence and Scriptural Knowledge among the Christians of Rome,” in As It Is Written: Studying Paul’s Use of Scripture (ed. Stanley E. Porter and Christopher D. Stanley; Atlanta: SBL, 2008) 184–85; Andrew Das, Solving the Roman Debate (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2007) 83.

endured on the cross, especially given the fact that the use of Ps 69 in the Jesus tradition is largely about the scorns Christ endured at his suffering and death. Fourth, scholars generally recognize that Paul applies the prayer of the psalmist to Jesus, and in doing so, he effectively applies that prayer to each person in the audience in Rome. That is, the prayer of the psalmist is, figuratively speaking, the cry of Jesus on the cross, which, in turn, will become the experience of Paul’s readers if they take heed to his call to follow Christ’s way of suffering and death. Fifth, the terms προγράφω, γράφω, and γραφή in Rom 15:4 probably refer first to the psalm cited in 15:3 and second to all the Scriptures used in the letter (or Israel’s Scripture as a body of sacred texts). The proximity to the citation in v. 3 makes it likely that the prayer of the psalmist is in view. But the plural γραφῶν in 15:4 suggests that multiple Scriptures are also in view. It is, therefore, possible that v. 4 speaks of the perseverance and consolation of the Scriptures that serve as teaching for the Christ-community in his letter, with special reference to the endurance of Christ and of the community referred to by Ps 69:9b in Rom 15:3.

THE FUNCTIONS OF THE CITED TEXT ITSELF

Christopher Stanley remarked recently that there was no consensus regarding the role of the original context of a cited Scripture in Paul’s letters. Can we, then, assume that Paul intends to convey more than what the cited

14. Christopher D. Stanley, “What We Learned—and What We Didn’t,” in Paul and Scripture, 324–25. See also the robust discussions of Steve Moyise, “Does Paul Respect the Context of His Quotations?” and Mitchell Kim, “Respect for Context and Authorial Intention: Setting the Epistemological Bar,” in the same volume (pp. 97–114 and 115–30, respectively). I am of course dealing with what Stanley E. Porter, “Further Comments on the Use of the Old Testament in the New Testament,” in The Intertextuality of the Epistles: Explorations of Theory and Practice (ed. T. L. Brodie, D. R. MacDonald, and S. E. Porter; NTM 16; Sheffield: Sheffield Phoenix, 2006) 107, calls the “Formulic Quotation,” which is quite different from “echo” or “allusion.” However, as will become clear later in this essay, one of my concerns is
The Use of Psalm 69:9b in Romans 15:3

text itself says? More specifically, does he think that the Scriptures surrounding Ps 69:9b provide extra resources for his audience, in addition to what the cited text already communicates? My sense is that this is possible, although we cannot be absolutely certain. We will do well if we carefully study the full extent of the role of the cited text on its own, as well as pay attention to the possible role of the rest of the Psalm. In this article, I will first focus on how the cited text itself may reinforce the argument of the letter. I will show that the cited text on its own can function as a valuable tool for Paul to strengthen several key themes of the letter. I will then consider the ways in which certain elements of Ps 69, apart from v. 9b, may provide extra resources for Paul to convey his message. While I do not think that we can claim with certainty that the audience can detect these resources, they are available to them nonetheless.

Christ’s Self-Giving Suffering and Death as a Model to Bring About Community Harmony

Along with numerous scholars, I hold that the weak and the strong in Rom 14:1–2 and 15:1 refer to two opposing groups of believers in Rome. The issue in 14:1–15:13 is the intergroup conflict concerning the observance of Jewish dietary laws and Sabbath-keeping. The “weak” are those who observe those laws, and the “strong” are those who do not.15 In particular, I tend to agree with John Barclay’s proposal that Paul’s teaching protects the weak by urging the strong not to despise them and in doing so allows for a “Jewish Christianity” that observes the Jewish law. At the same time, by identifying himself as someone among the strong, Paul advocates for the validity of a “Gentilized Christianity,” where law-observance is not needed.16 With this, Paul’s teaching aims at promoting social cohesion within a Jew-Gentile community, where the Jewish law serves as an

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15. John M. G. Barclay, *Pauline Churches and Diaspora Jews* (WUNT 275; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2011) 43–44; Matera, *Romans*, 309; Wright, “Romans,” 731; Byrne, *Romans*, 403–7. Cf. Kruse, *Romans*, 509–10. This does not mean that every believer in Rome belonged to one of the two groups, although it would have been a big enough issue for Paul to mention in the letter. Paul expects everyone to follow Jesus’ way. The alternative views regarding the identities of the weak and the strong are well known (such as those of Mark Nanos and Andrew Das), and there is no need to repeat here. For recent, and concise, surveys, see Matera, *Romans*, 306–9; Witherington, *Romans*, 330–33. For a detailed discussion of interpretative options, see Mark Reasoner, *The Strong and the Weak* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999) 1–22.

important social-religious identity marker. The following will proceed with this assumption.

Romans 15:1–6 summarizes the exhortation that started in 14:1, with a renewed call for οἱ δυνατοί to bear τὰ άσθενήματα τῶν ἀδυνάτων (15:1). The basis of this call is found in v. 3. Christ did not please (ἀρέσκω) himself, and, therefore, the strong should not please themselves and everyone should please their neighbor (vv. 1–2). The threefold use of ἀρέσκω in 15:1, 2, and 3 and the γάρ at the beginning of 15:3 indicate the importance for believers to follow Christ’s model of not pleasing himself. But what does this pattern look like? The answer is found in the scriptural citation οἱ ὀνειδισμοὶ τῶν ὀνειδίζοντων σε ἐπέπεσαν ἐπ᾿ ἐμέ. This means that the strong are to welcome the weak—and indeed everyone is to welcome one another—by following Jesus’ posture and practice of enduring unjust disgrace (14:1; 15:2, 7). And, as mentioned, most likely what is in view here is the shame, suffering, and pain that Christ endured before and at his death on the Roman cross. Christ’s suffering, therefore, is the pattern that believers are to adopt in order to bring about communal harmony.

What does this pattern look like in practice in the Roman house churches? Paul does not give us sufficient information here, but I suggest the following as a possibility, one that seems to account for the data available. The commands not to despise (ἐξουθενέω) and judge the weak in Rom 14:3 suggest that the weak had been enduring insult and disgrace. The exhortation in 15:1–3 is, then, about mutual forbearance, with an emphatic appeal for the strong to follow Christ’s model of not pleasing himself. The posture of mutual forbearance would counter the contemptuous and judgmental attitudes and practices and subsequently promote communal harmony. In particular, the strong are to model Jesus’ sacrificial and self-giving pattern and do so for the sake of the weak. In addition, the terms ὀφείλω, δυνατός, and ἀδύνατος in 15:1, as pointed out by several scholars, remind us of the social convention of obligation, honor, and shame in antiquity.

17. Religion and social identities, in my view, were inseparable in the ancient world. But note the potential longer-term social issues that may subsequently happen due to Paul’s allowance for law-nonobservance, according to Barclay, Pauline Churches, 57–59.
18. This notion of believers patterning their lives after Christ’s can be found in Rom 15:7. They are to welcome one another just as Christ has welcomed them. See also Seifrid, “Romans,” 686.
21. Here I draw on the insights of scholars such as Jewett, Romans, 880; Matera, Romans, 321; Barclay, Pauline Churches, 55, without following their interpretations in their entirety.
The intergroup conflict among Roman believers would not be simply a matter of difference of opinion but involved quarrels and/or competitions about who were socially and religiously superior/inferior and so deserved honor/shame. But the obligation of the strong, Paul insists, is to pattern their lives after Christ's disgraceful suffering and death. This notion subverts the conventional understanding of honor and shame. When it is put into practice, it will serve to reverse the destructive behavior of contempt and honor-seeking and foster a united Jew-Gentile community that glorifies God (15:5–6).

At any rate, the cited Scripture serves as an authoritative text to prompt the Roman believers to welcome one another (Rom 14:1; 15:7) by following Christ's self-giving model—a cruciform way of existence shaped by his suffering and death on the cross. Hence, the cited text reinforces the exhortation in 14:1–15:13.

A Basis for a Love-Centered Communal Life

It seems that the citation of Ps 69:9b plays an important role in strengthening the themes in Rom 12:1–15:13. Several verbal and thematic factors lead me to this view. First, the imperative to please one's neighbor in Rom 15:2 is based on the fact that Jesus does not please himself (15:3), which, in turn, cites Ps 69:9b. The only other—but prominent—place in the letter where the term πλησίον appears is 13:9–10, which says that the commandments are summed up in ἀγαπήσεις τὸν πλησίον σου ὡς σεαυτόν, and that ἀγάπη constitutes the fulfilling of the law. The love command, thus, serves as a link that interconnects the citation in 15:3 with an important theme of love in the section 12:1–15:13. Second, ἀγάπη, in turn, acts as a verbal and thematic link to the exhortative unit 12:9–21, which begins with the call of sincere love (v. 9). The mention of κατὰ ἀγάπην περιπατεῖς in 14:15 suggests that there is continuity between the call to love in 12:9–21 and 14:1–15:13. The love-centered community envisioned by Paul formerly in 12:9–21 is to be lived out by pleasing one’s neighbor at a time of intergroup conflict, which is, in turn, based on Christ’s self-giving pattern.

Third, 9 out of the 14 uses of ἀλλήλων in Romans appear in 12:1–15:13, fairly evenly spread out throughout the section. The term highlights the concept of mutuality in Paul’s teaching. A love-centered community is to honor and live in harmony with one another (εἰς ἀλλήλους φρονοῦντες)

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24. Dunn, Romans, 842, notes the patronizing tone of Rom 15:1. But note also how 15:3 turns this upside down.
(12:10, 16). Its members need to love their neighbor and hence one another (13:8–9). They are not to pass judgment on each other (14:13) but to pursue peace for the οἰκοδομή of one another when there is intergroup conflict (14:19). The verbal and thematic links of “neighbor,” “one another,” and “upbuilding” between the exhortation in 15:2 and the interrelated teachings on mutuality above are noteworthy. In 15:2, 7, Paul says that believers must please their neighbors for the good purpose of their upbuilding (cf. 13:9; 14:19). Then Paul explains (γάρ) that his exhortation is based on the fact that Christ did not please himself and cites Ps 69:9b as an authoritative text to reinforce his instruction (15:3). Just two verses later, we find Paul’s prayer for his audience to live in harmony with one another (φρονεῖν ἐν ἀλλήλοις) (15:5), which echoes 12:16. The κατὰ Χριστὸν Ἰησοῦν in 15:5 is presumably a reference to v. 3—and hence the citation—for it is in accordance with Christ’s cruciform pattern that they may live in harmony.

In sum, the scriptural citation in Rom 15:3 plays a significant role in weaving together the many themes in 12:1–15:13. The practical outworking of Paul’s vision of a love-community depends on its members taking heed to modeling their life after Jesus’ self-giving death. Hence, the citation not only reinforces the exhortation in 14:1–15:13, but it also plays a significant role in supporting Paul’s teaching in 12:1–15:13.

Invitation to Participate in God’s Salvific Purpose

Richard Hays has famously, and, in my view, rightly, suggested that the lament psalms play a significant role in dealing with the theodicy question in Romans.26 That is, Israel’s experience of adversity called into question YHWH’s faithfulness to his chosen nation.27 Has he abandoned his people despite his goodness and covenantal relationship with them? Likewise, Sylvia Keesmaat’s essay on the psalms in Romans insightfully articulates how the use of the Psalter throughout the letter assists in answering the theodicy question.28 One particularly pertinent observation by Keesmaat is the use of Ps 69:23–24 in Rom 11:9–10.29 Keesmaat says that the psalmist pleads for God’s deliverance and calls down curses on the oppressors. But

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“Paul applies to a part of Israel the curses that the psalmist applies to his oppressors.”  

This hermeneutical move creates a tension concerning God’s faithfulness and the depiction of Israel in terms of the wicked. Keesmaat then suggests that the tension is not resolved until Rom 15. According to Keesmaat, Paul uses Ps 69:9b in Rom 15:3 to “Christologically describe the strong within the Christian community in Rome.” A communal life that identifies with Christ’s suffering would result in the welcome of the weak, and this self-sacrificing service would affirm “God’s truthfulness, thus confirming the promises to the patriarchs, and results in Gentiles glorifying God for his mercy (Rom. 15:7–9).”

I am, in broad terms, in agreement with Keesmaat’s analysis. One important theme throughout Rom 1:16–15:13 is God’s salvific purpose for both Jews and Gentiles through Jesus, and the embedded question is God’s faithfulness to Israel in light of the inclusion of Gentiles in his salvific purpose, while most Jews are rejecting the gospel. Paul’s eagerness to deal with the intergroup conflict in ch. 14 is not simply because he wants to see a church that is united but also because a harmonious community is a demonstration that its members truly participate in God’s purpose of gathering a Jew/Gentile-inclusive people of God. Such a love-centered, inclusive community is a sign of God’s faithfulness to Israel, because through Christ he has caused the Gentiles to praise him through the fulfilling of his promises to the patriarchs (15:8–12).

If this is correct, then the Christological use of Ps 69:9b in Rom 15:3 functions as a call for the people of God to partake in God’s purpose by modeling themselves after the cruciform pattern of Jesus. In fact, the strong affirmation of the Scripture in the following verse (15:4) is noteworthy. The noun γραφή appears in the letter seven times. Four of those are used (together with λέγει) to substantiate a specific point Paul makes at

31. Ibid., 156.
32. Ibid.
33. Space limitations do not allow me to discuss this in detail, but it is argued well by Hays, Echoes, 36–41. In my view, the following features of Romans provide good evidence for reading the letter in light of God’s salvific plan for a harmonious Jew-Gentile community and the question regarding God’s faithfulness: the assertion of the salvation for Jews and Greeks in Rom 1:16–17, the Jew-Gentile language in Rom 1–4, the explicit question concerning the faithfulness of God in 3:3, the extended discussion on God’s salvific purpose for Jews and Gentiles in Rom 9–11, the assertion that ultimately Israel will be saved (11:26), the exhortation regarding the intergroup conflict concerning Jewish laws, and the repeated affirmation and celebration of the inclusion of Gentiles in 15:7–13.
34. Rulmu (“Use,” 232–33) seems to have come to a similar conclusion, although his discussion is shorter than mine and it focuses on the sacrifice of Jesus and that of the believers.
the time (4:3; 9:17; 10:11; 11:2)—hence, they function somewhat like the γέγραπται. Otherwise, the term γραφή appears only three times in 1:2; 15:4, and 16:26, each of which highlights the emphatic role of Scriptures in the argument of the letter. In 1:1–4, the Scriptures are said to contain the former promises of God that are now fulfilled through the Davidic Messiah, the Son of God. In 16:25–27, the Scriptures are said to be the channel through which the gospel of Jesus Christ is made known to all the Gentiles. If the Scriptures play such an important role in the revelation of the gospel of Christ, then the Christological use of Ps 69:9b in Rom 15:3 must be taken seriously. My sense is that the “obedience of faith” (ὑπακοὴ πίστεως) that is mentioned in 1:5 and 16:26 refers, at least in part, to the obedience of the Christ-community in following Christ’s self-giving way, which includes mutual love and acceptance in the intergroup conflict. (Note the proximity of the phrase ὑπακοὴ πίστεως and the word γραφή in 1:2, 5; 16:26.) That is, the obedience of faith brought about by the Scripture-revealed gospel (as in 1:1–6; 16:25–27) includes identifying with Christ’s suffering, which is, in turn, prompted by the citation of the Scripture in 15:3–4.

One may say, therefore, that the call to follow Jesus’ cruciform pattern—as affirmed by the Scripture—plays an important role in the whole letter. The Jew-Gentile eschatological people are to participate faithfully in God’s purpose of salvation through their harmonious communal life, despite their differences regarding the observation of the Jewish laws. This, in turn, is an expression of their obedience of faith and hence the way through which his promises to the patriarchs are fulfilled.

Thus, the citation in Rom 15:3 reinforces the exhortation in 14:1–15:13, supports the teaching in 12:1–15:13, and plays a role in enhancing the argument of the entire letter.

**A Call to Share in Christ’s Suffering**

Paul’s dual hermeneutical move to apply Ps 69:9b both to Christ and to the believers in Rome effectively means that Rom 15:3 is a call for the community to participate in Christ’s suffering. It is by taking up his cruciform model to bear up reproach that God’s purpose may be fulfilled in them. This sounds remarkably familiar to the notion of participation in Christ in Rom 8:17, and, arguably, in Rom 5–8. The concentrated συ- compounds in 8:17, συγκληρονόμος, συμπάσχω, and συνδοξάζω, strongly point to the presence of the notion of participation in Christ; that is, believers identify

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35. The term ὑπακοὴ appears seven times in Romans, but it is used with πίστις only two times, in 1:5 and 16:26.

with Christ’s heirship, suffering, and glorification. Indeed, most commentators agree that 8:17 speaks of believers’ inevitable—or, indeed, their vocation of—sharing in Christ’s suffering.37 Because they are God’s children, they are co-heirs with Christ. They co-suffer with him, so that they may be glorified with him. The notion of participation in Christ is also clearly present in 6:1–11. In 6:4, 5, 6, 8, there are four συ- compounds and an instance of the preposition συν, namely, συνθάπτω (6:4), σύμφυτος (6:5), συσταυρόω (6:6), [ἀποθνῄσκω] σὺν Χριστῷ (6:8), and συζάω (6:8).38 Believers are said to have been crucified and buried with Jesus, and they will live with him. Tyler Stewart argues convincingly that there is a “rhetoric of participation” in Rom 5–8.39 Stewart also argues that the citation of Ps 44:22 in Rom 8:36 should be treated as a cruciform reading of Scripture, where the lament psalm can be read as “an anguished prophetic announcement of participation in the crucified Messiah.”40 I think Stewart is, in the main, correct here.41

With such a strong theme of participation in Christ, and given the fact that believers do share in Christ’s suffering (8:17), Rom 15:3 can be read in terms of Paul’s call for the community to view welcoming one another as an expression of their willingness to identify with Christ. Just as Christ bore insults and disgrace at the cross, so should believers share in his suffering in the way they live as a Christ-community. Indeed, if Stewart is right about Paul’s use of a lament psalm in 8:36, then it is possible that 15:3 is another instance where the apostle employs a lament psalm to motivate his audience to conform to Jesus’ cruciform pattern.42 We may even say that the use of lament psalms is an apt application of Scripture to encourage believers to participate in God’s purpose for the eschatological people. That is, the lamentation of the Psalm functions as a creative tool for Paul to call on believers to identify with Christ’s suffering as an integral part of their vocation. God has not abandoned Israel. His promises are now fulfilled in the newly formed love-centered Jew-Gentile people of God. Their welcoming

37. Kruse, Romans, 340–41; Matera, Romans, 198; Jewett, Romans, 502–3; Dunn, Romans, 456.
38. Note that σύμφυτος applies to both death and resurrection. Morna D. Hooker, From Adam to Christ (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990) 45, rightly observes that there is an echo of Rom 6:4, 5, and 8 in 8:17.
40. Ibid., 44.
41. I arrive at a similar conclusion in Suffering, 198–207, although I approach the issue from a different angle.
42. Commenting on Ps 69 itself, Mays (Psalms [Interpretation; Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 2011] 232) notes the shared theme of lament and suffering in Pss 44 and 69.
of one another—through their willing participation in Christ's suffering—is a demonstration of the obedience of faith brought about by the gospel.

Bringing together our findings so far, we may say that the short citation in Rom 15:3 fulfills several significant functions for Paul's letter. It reinforces his exhortation in 14:1–15:13. It strengthens his call for a love-centered community in 12:1–15:13. It helps to invite his audience to participate in God's purpose for the eschatological Jew-Gentile community. Importantly, it reiterates the call in 8:17 for Christ-followers to participate in the suffering of Jesus. In a profound way, their obedient sharing in Christ's suffering and death is in fact an integral part of the gospel according to Paul's letter.

In view of this, one further reflection can be drawn from Richard Hays's observation that the petition of the psalmist has become the prayer of Christ in Rom 15:3, and that Paul wants the Roman Christians to pray the same prayer. Given the findings above, this shared prayer between Christ and the believers is no mere verbal petition. Paul's (implicit) call is for the Christ-followers simultaneously to pray and embody the prayer of Jesus in their corporate life through their faithful identification in Christ's suffering and hence God's salvific purpose.

THE SUFFERING OF THE PSALMIST
AND THAT OF CHRIST AND PAUL’S AUDIENCE

So far, our analysis has focussed on the cited text in Rom 15:3 itself, without considering whether the other parts of the Psalm may contribute to the reading of Romans. In the following, I will argue that various features of Ps 69 reinforce the functions of the cited text. Paul's Christological and ecclesiological reworking of the Psalm provides extra resources for the letter's audience to realize their place in God's salvific program.

Psalm 69 is primarily a prayer of an individual. It consists of two sections. The first (vv. 1–29) is bookended by pleas for deliverance. It contains alternating petitions and descriptions of affliction. The speaker endures scorns for the sake of the God of Israel, and zeal for God's house consumes him/her (69:7, 9). The second section (vv. 30–36) includes a vow of praise (vv. 30–33) and a hymn of celebration for the future restoration of Zion (vv. 34–36).

43. Hays, Conversion, 112.
44. This kind of “bodily corporate worship” is of course precisely what Paul emphasized in Rom 12:1.
At this point, one might question why Paul has chosen Psalm 69, for much of the Psalm’s content seems to be irrelevant to Romans. In fact, one wonders whether Paul simply uses 69:9b as a prooftext for his exhortation. But on closer inspection, we see that the choice is not surprising, given the verbal and thematic links between Romans and the Psalm. The theme of reproach is prominent in Ps 69. Indeed, the verb ὀνειδίζω and the noun ὀνειδισμός found in Rom 15:3 appear six times in Ps 69 (68:8, 10 [2×], 11, 20, 21 LXX), which suggests a strong connection between the Psalm and Rom 15:3 via the shared theme of disgrace. Table 1 demonstrates the other substantial links between Ps 69 and Romans. I will discuss several of the key links in the rest of this essay. Suffice it to say, the terms that signify injustice/wickedness, persecution, affliction, endurance, and consolation underline the theme of suffering and perseverance that is found in both the Psalm and various sections of Romans. The shared themes and vocabulary, however, do not mean that there are no significant differences between the Psalm and the letter. An obvious difference is the supplicant’s call for retributive justice against the enemies (Ps 69:23–28), which is largely absent in Paul’s letter. In fact, in 69:28–29 the supplicant asks God not to let the enemies enter his righteousness (צדק; δικαιοσύνη) or be listed among the righteous. The δικαιοσύνη of God in Romans, however, is about the gracious act of God for both Jews and Gentiles. It seems, then, Paul has reworked the Psalm to take advantage of the lament theme but avoided the motif of retributive justice against the wicked.

So, there are thematic and linguistic links between Ps 69 and Romans, and Paul has reworked the Psalm for his own purposes. But how exactly does the Psalm provide extra resource for the audience to understand the letter’s argument? I will make three suggestions below.

**Perseverance in Affliction as Believers Bear Reproaches for the Sake of the Community**

In terms of its contribution to the reading of Romans, the most important feature of Ps 69 is its multiple references to suffering and endurance.

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47. Table 1 is meant to be sufficiently detailed to show the shared themes and vocabulary between the Psalm and the letter. Obviously, not all references shown are relevant to our discussion, although most of them are.

48. Even though the apostle says that God will repay everyone according to his or her deeds (Rom 2:6) and that vengeance belongs to God (12:19), these examples are a far cry from calling on curses against one’s oppressors. In fact, Paul asks his readers to overcome evil with good (12:21).
Table 1. Substantial Links between Psalm 69 and Romans

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Key Words</th>
<th>Themes Represented</th>
<th>Examples in the Psalm (LXX)</th>
<th>Examples in Romans</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>διώκω, ἐκδιώκω</td>
<td>persecution</td>
<td>68:5</td>
<td>8:35; 9:30–31; 12:13–14; 14:19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ἐντρέπω, αἰσχύνη, αἰσχύνω, ἐπαισχύνομαι</td>
<td>shame</td>
<td>68:7, 20</td>
<td>1:16; 6:21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>θλῖψις, θλίβω</td>
<td>affliction</td>
<td>68:18, 20</td>
<td>2:9; 5:3; 8:35; 12:12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>παράκλησις, παρακαλέω</td>
<td>comfort, consolation</td>
<td>68:21</td>
<td>12:1, 8; 15:4–5, 30; 16:17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ὀνειδίζω, ὀνειδισμός</td>
<td>reproach, disgrace</td>
<td>68:8, 10 (2×), 11, 20, 21</td>
<td>15:3 (2×)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ἀδικία, ἄδικος, ἄδικως</td>
<td>injustice, wickedness</td>
<td>68:5</td>
<td>1:18, 29; 2:8; 3:5; 6:13; 9:14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>κληρονομέω, κληρονόμος, συγκληρονόμος</td>
<td>inheritance, heir</td>
<td>68:36</td>
<td>4:13, 14; 8:17 (3×)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>οἶκος, οἰκοδομή, οἰκοδομέω</td>
<td>house, build</td>
<td>68:10, 36</td>
<td>14:19; 15:2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Psalm 69 contains a vivid description of the psalmist’s affliction. Significantly, the words for reproach/scorn/insult (ὀνειδίζω and ὀνειδισμός) in Rom 15:3 are used in Ps 69 in association with the terms “afflict” (θλίβω), “endure/persevere” (ὑποφέρω, ὑπομένω), and “console/comfort” (παρακαλέω), which, in turn, provide significant intertextual links with the theme of suffering in Romans. In Ps 68:7–8 LXX, the speaker asks God to help those who endure and says “for your sake I endured scorn.” In 68:20–21 LXX, the psalmist says that God knows the reproach and shame she/he suffers at the hands of “those who afflict”; and no comforters can be found. Immediately after citing Ps 68:10b LXX in Rom 15:3 to encourage his hearers to bear insults, Paul speaks of the endurance and the consolation of Scriptures (15:4). While the psalmist cannot find any comforter, Paul says that believers can find comfort in Scripture. The terms θλῖψις and ὑπομονή are, of course, key words in Romans when Paul speaks of suffering (Rom 5:3, 4; 8:25, 35; 12:12). Affliction produces endurance (5:3, 4), and as believers share in Christ’s suffering, they are to persevere in hope (8:17, 25).

In the context of a love-centered community, Paul exhorts the church to persevere in affliction (12:12).

The combined result of these intertextual links is highly significant, because a number of suffering-related teachings are brought together to help the audience as they follow Christ’s self-giving cruciform pattern. To live in harmony as a community, there will be times when they experience the type of suffering that the psalmist describes in Ps 69. They may suffer disgrace, and there may be no one to bring comfort. But Christ has gone before them. He endured reproaches at the cross, and believers can follow his footsteps. Thus, by participating in Christ’s suffering and by persevering in affliction, they live out the love-centered community that Paul envisages.

Zeal for God’s House Reworked to Signify the Upbuilding of the Community

Another way Ps 69 may assist Paul’s audience is the psalmist’s zeal for the house of God. I want to suggest that the speaker’s devotion to God could encourage believers in Rome to offer themselves to the service of the community. The cited text in Rom 15:3 is in fact the second half of Ps 68:10 LXX. The first half of the verse says, “because zeal for your house (ὁἰκός) consumed me.” It seems, then, that the experiencing of scorn and the

49. Likewise, Clifford, Psalms 1–72, 322, notes the association between reproach and other forms of suffering in Ps 69.

50. The “house” (ὁἰκός) in here is often understood to refer to the temple—e.g., Goldingay, Psalm 42–89, 343–44; Mays, Psalms, 231; Clifford, Psalms 1–72, 323. But the
suppliant’s zeal for God’s house are intertwined. Notably, just before the citation, Paul states that the believers in Rome are to please one another for the οἰκοδομή of the neighbor (Rom 15:2). And a few verses earlier, Paul has asked the audience to pursue εἰρήνη and mutual οἰκοδομή in the community (14:19). It seems that the psalmist’s zeal for the house of God can be reinterpreted as the desire for the building of the Christ-community in Rome—and indeed, God’s kingdom, for Paul has said in 14:17 that the kingdom of God is about the δικαιοσύνη and εἰρήνη in the Holy Spirit. When the believers in Rome live in peace with one another, they are building up the kingdom of God.

Also worth noting is the psalmist’s desire that God will save Zion and that the cities of Judea will be built (οἰκοδομηθήσονται) so that his people will inherit (κληρονομήσουσιν) it (Ps 68:36 LXX). This reflects God’s promises of restoration to postexilic Israelites found in Isa 40–66 and Jer 30–33. For example, Jer 33:6–7 speaks of ΥHVH’s promise of peace and security and the return of the exiles from captivity, and that he will “build” (οἰκοδομέω) them as they were before (cf. Isa 44:26; 61:4). Interestingly, the term ὀνειδισμός appears three times in Ezek 36, a chapter concerning the restoration of Israel, with ΥHWH promising that they will no longer suffer from disgrace (36:6, 15, 30). Thus, the psalmist’s yearning for God’s restoration represents the sentiment of postexilic Israelites, who have suffered scorn from their enemies and eagerly await God’s deliverance. Paul seems to have reworked this expectation and framed God’s salvation within the formation of an eschatological Jew-Gentile people in Christ. In view of this, the psalmist’s longing for the rebuilding of Judea in the midst of affliction may be understood in terms of the believers’ participation in building up the Christ-community through mutual forbearance in suffering. For the psalmist, Israel is still to inherit Zion (Ps 69:36). But for the believers, they are already joint-heirs (συγκληρονόμοι) with Christ, even though they have to share in Christ’s suffering (Rom 8:17).

It would be going too far to suggest that the audience of Paul’s letter would definitely detect the above nuances. But the shared theme of building God’s house and the upbuilding of the Christ-community cannot be ignored. Importantly, it is worth reiterating that the citation in Rom 15:3

historical background for this is disputed. See, e.g., A. Groenewald, “Post-exilic Conflict as ’Possible’ Historical Background to Psalm 69:10ab,” HTS Teologiese Studies 61/1–2 (2005) 131–41. This is not my concern, however, for it is how the “house” connects Ps 69 and Paul’s letter that matters most.


is the second half of Ps 69:9, where the psalmist has just spoken of the zeal for God’s house (οἶκος). In light of the emphasis of the οἰκοδομή of one another in Rom 15:2 (and 14:19), it is possible that the audience is led to think that their obedience to endure reproach is intrinsically linked to their own devotion to God, not unlike the zeal of the psalmist. That is, their faithful endurance in pursuing communal harmony is an expression—and a necessary component—of their participation in God’s salvific program.

**Linking the Use of Psalm 69:22–23 in Romans 11:9–10**

As mentioned above, Paul has already used Ps 69:22–23 in Rom 11:9–10. Paul is speaking of the nonelect portion of Israel here (see 11:7), who opposes the gospel because of their hardened heart. Paul applies to them the psalmist’s words concerning the enemies, saying that their eyes are darkened and wishing retribution against them. But the mystery is that their stumbling means salvation for the Gentiles and the κόσμος, which in turn causes Israel to envy (11:11, 12, 14). Their rejection leads to the reconciliation of the κόσμος (11:15), and eventually, all Israel will be saved (11:26). In this way, although the retributive justice in Ps 68:23–24 seems to be applied to part of Israel, the ultimate purpose is restoration and salvation, not only for Israel but also for the entire κόσμος. Thus, God is faithful and the suffering of Israel at the present time will lead to the salvation of the whole world.

It is true that we cannot be certain about whether Paul intends any connection between the two uses of Ps 69 in Rom 11:9–10 and 15:3, or whether his audience would detect any correlation. But Rom 11—with the help of Ps 69:22–23 and other Scriptures—does spell out God’s plan of redemption for both Jews and Gentiles. This, in turn, makes the use of Ps 69:9b in Rom 15:3 particularly pertinent. Believers in Rome are called to emulate the psalmist’s affliction and zeal for the Lord. They are not to follow the way of the psalmist’s enemies, which is the way of the portion of Israel that rejects the gospel. To identify with the suffering of the speaker of Ps 69, in their context, is to participate in Christ’s suffering and seek to live in harmony as a united Jew-Gentile community.

We can now summarize our discussion concerning the three ways in which Ps 69 (outside 69:9b) may provide extra resources for Paul’s audience. First, and importantly, the theme of affliction and endurance reinforces the letter’s teaching of identification with Christ’s suffering and perseverance in affliction. Second, the psalmist’s zeal for God’s house encourages

the believers in Rome to build up the Jew-Gentile community by following
the self-giving pattern of Christ. Third, the fact that the psalm is used in
Rom 11 may prompt the audience to emulate the psalmist's determination
to suffer righteous for the sake of God—or more precisely, to participate
in the suffering of Christ—so that they will walk in God’s purpose for the
world.

CONCLUSION

I have argued that the use of Ps 69 is a valuable tool for Paul. It is not a
random prooftext to ask the audience to please God and not themselves.
Rather, Paul uses an important Psalm—one that the early Christians were
familiar with—to reinforce his exhortation on communal harmony (Rom
14:1–15:13) and his teaching on a love-centered community (12:1–15:13).
The citation encourages the believers to participate in fulfilling God's plan
for his eschatological people through their faithful sharing in Christ's suf-
fering. Indeed, Ps 69 is an important Scripture that helps to bring about
the obedience of faith that the gospel calls for. The cited text itself
serves these functions. But several other elements of the Psalm provide ex-
tra resources to reinforce those functions.

Only one further observation needs to be made here. Romans 15:4
says, “For whatever was written formerly was written for our instruction,
so that by the perseverance and the consolation of the Scriptures we may
have hope (ἐλπίς).” Although “hope” (ἐλπίς or ἐλπίζω) only appears once
in Ps 69, it is used in Romans frequently, mostly in the context of suffering
(Rom 4:18; 5:2, 4, 5; 8:20, 24, 25; 12:12; 15:4, 12, 13, 24). On the one hand,
believers find hope when they suffer and persevere (5:1–5)—and when they
suffer with Christ (8:17–27)! On the other hand, they, as a love-centered
community, are to rejoice in hope and persevere in affliction (12:12). But
Paul also talks about hope within the overall purpose of God for the world.
It seems clear that the gospel is about hope for the Gentiles (15:12) and
that the Jew-Gentile people of God may abound in hope through the “God of
hope” (15:13).

This sets the context for the ἐλπίς in Rom 15:4. The Scriptures, not least
the citation of Ps 69:9b in Rom 15:3, provide a vehicle for hope. It is a hope
that the believers may have as they embody the cruciform pattern of Christ
in their communal life by welcoming one another.54 While the psalmist's
hope is fading (Ps 68:4 LXX), the hope of the Christ-community is alive,

precisely because of the consolation of the Scriptures.\textsuperscript{55} Thus, Paul has taken full advantage of the lament theme of Ps 69 and reworked it to give hope to his audience, because God’s eschatological salvation has been inaugurated through Christ and is in the process of being realized by the faithful cruciform attitude and practice of the Christ-community.

\textsuperscript{55} See, Hafemann, “Eschatology,” 166–69, for a fuller treatment, although Hafemann’s focus is on Rom 15:9–12 and the future redemption of Israel and the judgment of the nations.