

Psalm 6

To the chief Musician with stringed instruments upon Sheminith, A Psalm of David.

“Psalm 6”:

“Rebuke me not in thine anger”:

(verse 1), indicates that David is conscious of deserving rebuke.

However, he prays, as always, “Have mercy upon me, O Lord” (verse 2).

The miseries of the depressed are both physical and psychological, and often the description of the two conditions is interwoven (verse 2-3).

“In the grave who shall give thee thanks”:

(Verse 5), does not express doubt of the reality of the afterlife; rather, it serves to remind the LORD that David’s continued praise and witness depend on his preservation.

Verses 1-10:

This lament seems to be quite intensive, for apparently David is sleepless.

His circumstances seem hopeless and helpless.

The early Christian church regarded this psalm as the first among the “penitential psalms” (compare Psalms 32, 38, 51, 102, 130 and 143).

David’s cries, coming up from the depths of his personal pit of persecution, indicate a radical change in his frame of mind as he addresses two different audiences.

(1) Pouring out His Soul before God: A defeatist Frame of Mind (6:1-7).

A. A tone of Helplessness (6:1-4);

B. A tone of Hopelessness (6:5-7).

(2) Turning His Attention to His Enemies: A Defiant Frame of Mind (6:8-10).

A. His Boldness about it (6:8a);

B. His Basis for it (6:8b-10).

A new musical direction appears, literally “upon an eight”, indicating either “upon an eight-stringed lyre” or “upon the octave” (i.e., a lower bass melody to accompany these lyrics of intense lament).

Verses 1-3:

Psalms 6 is the first of the penitential psalms (6; 32; 38; 51; 102; 130; 143).

David prays the words of this psalm when he is deeply troubled by something, possibly an illness that his own sin may have caused (41:4; Hosea 6:1).

“Mercy”:

In this situation is not deserved but urgently needed.

“My bones” and “my soul” represent the whole person.

Psalms 6:1 "O LORD, rebuke me not in thine anger, neither chasten me in thy hot displeasure."

“In thine anger ... in thy hot displeasure”:

He does not ask for any immunity from judgment, but for the tempering of God’s discipline with His mercy.

We see David asking God not to turn away from him.

David, like many of us, is very aware that he has sinned.

He knows as we do, that he deserves to feel the rebuke of God.

He is asking for mercy.

Except for the mercy of Almighty God, we would feel the displeasure of God.

The grace of God is what David is asking for.

I do not believe that David wants to avoid the chastening that makes him grow in the Lord, He just asks that the chastening be done in love and not anger.

Verses 2 and 7:

“Bones ... eye”:

Many assume that because the psalmist mentions bodily “parts” his affliction was a grave physical illness.

Obviously, his circumstances would have had an effect on his physical dimension.

However, in Old Testament anthropology such references are picturesque metaphors for an affliction of his total being (compare all the parallel, personal references, e.g., “me”, “my soul”, i.e., by being or person, “I”, etc.).

Psalm 6:2 "Have mercy upon me, O LORD; for I [am] weak: O LORD, heal me; for my bones are vexed."

I plead not my merit, but thy free mercy.

"I am weak":

Or, I languish; my body pines away and my spirit fails through my excessive pains or troubles.

"Heal me":

I.e. the distempers of my soul and body, of both which this word is being used (Psalms 41:4, 107:18, 20).

"My bones are vexed":

My torment is so deep and so general, that it reaches and is very grievous even to my bones.

Though they are inward, and might seem to be out of the reach of it, and also strong and senseless, and therefore can best bear it.

See the like expressions at (Job 4:14; 33:19; Psalms 38:3; 51:8).

We are all weak and heavy laden, burdened with a load of care.

We are told to cast our cares upon Him for He careth for us.

We all cry for mercy and not justice.

In our weakness, He is strong.

God heals not only the body, but the soul as well.

The bones being vexed means that he is sick to the bone.

Psalm 6:3 "My soul is also sore vexed: but thou, O LORD, how long?"

“How long”:

This is a common exclamation of intense lament (compare Psalm 90:13; Hab. 2:6; Rev. 6:10).

We see in this that sin brings terrible guilt.

Physical hurt cannot compare to the sorrow that comes with knowing that you have sinned against God.

This sorrow is so great, that you could not endure it very long.

The only thing to do is repent and accept forgiveness, before it destroys you.

This cry (how long), is heard under the altar in heaven.

Revelation 6:10 "And they cried with a loud voice, saying, How long, O Lord, holy and true, dost thou not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth?"

I think that in the verse we find here in Psalms, it is saying, how long before the Savior comes who forgives?

Psalms 6:4 "Return, O LORD, deliver my soul: oh save me for thy mercies' sake."

"Deliver my soul ... thy mercies' sake":

This introduces a new synonym for salvation, connoting an action of drawing off or out.

He desires the LORD to graciously extricate him (compare Job 36:15; Psalms 18:19; 116:8).

The word translated "mercies" describes the deeply significant, loyal love of God (Gen. 39:21; Exodus 20:6; 34:6-7).

Without God, humanity is in a terrible place, miserable and without hope.

Yet God cares intensely and reaches out to rescue every single person who asks.

Many psalms use this word to describe why God is worthy of praise (e.g. 40:10-11; 57:3, 10).

Notice David is admitting that he does not deserve God's forgiveness.

He pleads for God's mercy.

It is only by the mercy of God that any of us are forgiven.

This is not only David's pleading for a Savior, but all of mankind's pleading for a Savior.

We cannot save ourselves.

God sent His Son to save us from our sinful way of life.

Titus 2:13 "Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Savior Jesus Christ;"

The only hope for David, or any of us, is that God would send a Savior.

He sent Him, not because we deserved it, but because He loved us.

He had mercy upon us the sinners.

1 John 4:9-10 "In this was manifested the love of God toward us, because that God sent his only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him." "Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son [to be] the propitiation for our sins."

Psalm 6:5 "For in death [there is] no remembrance of thee: in the grave who shall give thee thanks?"

"No remembrance of thee":

There is much about "death" and "the grave", i.e., Sheol, in Psalms.

Such language as that (of verse 5), does not imply annihilation, but inability to participate temporally in public praise offerings (compare Hezekiah's reasoning in Isa. 38:18).

Luke 20:38 "For he is not a God of the dead, but of the living: for all live unto him."

It is in this life, that we are grateful to God for His blessings.

It is too late to give Him thanks after we are dead.

There is nothing as silent as the grave.

"Verses 6-7":

"Weary" pictures the psalmist's anguish over immediate danger and the prospect of a person's untimely death.

It may also imply a long period of suffering.

"Is consumed": Describes the psalmist at the end of his resources.

He is spent beyond recovery with no earthly means of help left (31:9; Job 17:7).

Sleep has eluded him because of his severe sorrow.

Psalm 6:6 "I am weary with my groaning; all the night make I my bed to swim; I water my couch with my tears."

"All the night":

He mentions this time, by way of aggravation of his misery.

Because that season, which is to others by God's appointment a time of rest, was to him very sad and doleful.

"Make I my bed to swim":

To wit, with tears. See the like hyperbole at (Jer. 9:1; Lam. 3:48-49).

"I water my couch with my tears":

It may be applicable to David's antitype (Jesus), to the doleful night in which he was betrayed, when it was the hour and power of darkness.

And when he had no other couch or bed but the ground itself.

Which was watered, not only with his tears, but with his sweat and blood.

This groaning shows the intensity of the praying David is doing.

When prayer becomes so intense that you run out of words to say, you groan things that cannot be uttered in words.

This prayer brings tears, as well.

In fact, there are so many tears, the bed is wet.

This is a prayer of great agony of spirit.

This is the type of prayer that gets God's attention.

Psalm 6:7 "Mine eye is consumed because of grief; it waxeth old because of all mine enemies."

The word here rendered "consumed" means properly to fall in, to fall away, and is applied here to the "eye" as pining or wasting away from care, anxiety, and sorrow.

Tears were poured forth from the eye, and it seemed to be exhausting itself in this manner.

The meaning is, that it had grown "dim," or that its sight began to fail, like that of an old man, on account of his troubles.

"It waxeth old":

It seems to grow old.

It experiences the effects commonly produced by age in blunting the power of vision.

This is not an uncommon effect of grief and sadness.

"Because of all mine enemies":

From the trouble which they have brought upon me.

The reference here, according to the interpretation proposed of the psalm, is to Absalom and those who were associated with him.

Their conduct had been such as to bring upon David this overwhelming tide of sorrows.

When a person experiences such grief as this, there are physical signs around the eyes and also within the eyes.

The eyelids will become very swollen from much crying.

We would also see dark circles form around the bottom of the eye on the cheek.

The eyeballs themselves would become red and have little lines in them.

My own opinion about eyes, is that they are the window to man's soul.

We can look deep into the eyes and see what is going on inside of man.

Great sorrow of spirit shows up first in the eyes.

Verses 8-10:

Out of his dire straits, boldness surprisingly breaks through as he addresses his enemies.

This boldness also has only one basis, that the psalmist's confidence is wholly grounded upon his Lord's attention and ultimate intervention.

Psalm 6:8 "Depart from me, all ye workers of iniquity; for the LORD hath heard the voice of my weeping."

With whom I am resolved not to associate or have any fellowship.

And cease from opposing or molesting, or insulting, over me.

Or approaching me with designs of deceiving and betraying me, all ye my wicked enemies.

Desist from all your wicked contrivances against me, and be not so vain as to hope to triumph over me.

"For the LORD hath heard the voice of my weeping":

And will grant me that which I have sought with so many tears.

By the workings of God's grace upon his heart, he knew his prayer was accepted.

His tears had a voice in the ears of the God of mercy.

Silent tears are not speechless ones.

Our tears are cries to God.

Suddenly there is a change here.

David's sorrow has been turned into joy.

David has gotten an answer to his prayer.

What joy, at the end of such agonizing prayer to suddenly be aware that the LORD has heard and answered your prayer.

The first thing David did was to get rid of those evil people around him.

Do not fellowship with evil people.

People who do not put their trust in God will bring you down, if you are around them.

There is a time of weeping, but praise God! It is followed by joy.

The enemy may come as a storm against us, but if we stand, he will flee.

Do not stay in this depressed state.

You may weep and cry for help from God, but then you'll begin to thank Him and also rejoice for your deliverance.

The best policy of all is; fellowship with the household of faith.

You can build each other up in His most holy faith.

Psalm 6:9 "The LORD hath heard my supplication; the LORD will receive my prayer."

What a sudden change is here!

Having made his request known to God, the psalmist is confident that his sorrow will be turned into joy.

By the workings of God's grace upon his heart, he knew his prayer was accepted, and did not doubt that it would, in due time, be answered.

His prayers will be accepted, coming up out of the hands of Christ the Mediator.

The word signifies prayer made to God, the righteous Judge, as the God of his righteousness, who would plead his cause and right his wrongs.

A believer, through the blood and righteousness of Christ, can go to God as a righteous God, and plead with him for pardon and cleansing, who is just and faithful to grant both.

He prays for the conversion of his enemies or foretells their ruin.

Supplication is defined as the act of humbly praying for something, especially when pleading with God in prayer.

We see the confidence of David that all is well with him and God.

We call this praying through.

Have you prayed until you knew beyond a shadow of doubt that God heard your prayer?

He knelt down feeling guilt and shame and arose feeling forgiven of God.

Notice the word ("will").

David is saying, I am not doubtful that God heard my prayer and answered it.

No one can take this assurance away from you.

This is called trusting God.

Psalm 6:10 "Let all mine enemies be ashamed and sore vexed: let them return [and] be ashamed suddenly."

Be so brought to see their folly that they shall be ashamed of their conduct.

The wish is that they might be brought to see their own guilt.

A wish certainly which it is right to cherish in regard to all evil-doers.

"And sore vexed": (compare the notes at Psalm 5:10).

The same Hebrew word is used here which occurs (in Psalm 6:2-3), and rendered "vexed."

It is a word which denotes trouble, trembling, and consternation.

And the meaning here is, that the psalmist prayed that they might be confounded or disconcerted in their plans.

A prayer which is certainly proper in regard to all the purposes of the wicked.

No one should desire that the purposes of the wicked should prosper.

And not to desire this is to desire that they may be foiled and overcome in their schemes.

This must be the wish of every good man.

"Let them return":

Turn back, or be turned back.

That is, let them be repulsed, and compelled to turn back from their present objective.

And be ashamed suddenly, Hebrew, "In a moment;" instantaneously.

He desired that there might be no delay, but that their defeat might be accomplished at once.

As it was right to pray that this might occur, so it was right to pray that it might occur without delay, or as speedily as possible.

The sooner the plans of sinners are confounded, the better.

We saw in the story of Job, where even his friends (so called), had believed that the terrible thing that came on Job was because of sin in his life.

How sweet it was when these very same friends had to come to Job for prayer, before God would forgive them for their false accusations.

David says to God here, LORD open their eyes and let them see that I am a servant of God.

Many ministers feel the terrible rejection of those around them that David felt here.

They too sometimes want to pray; LORD open their eyes and let them see that I am a servant of the Lord Jesus Christ, doing the job He has given me to do.

We know that Jesus said in John;

John 4:44 "For Jesus himself testified, that a prophet hath no honor in his own country."

Usually the very ones whose moral support you need so badly, are the very ones who will not support you.

David, as well as workers for Jesus today, can take comfort in the fact that Jesus' half brothers and sisters did not believe He was Messiah until He arose from the grave.

What lesson can we glean for today out of this Psalm?

This is actually telling us how to cope with seemingly impossible problems around us.

Pray with your heart and soul. God will hear.

God has already won the war.

This too will pass.

Do not expect the people you live with, or those around you to realize that you are really called of God.

Stay humble, dependent on God to be your support.

Grow from every trial that comes along. Search the Scriptures; for in them is life.

Psalm 6 Questions

1. What type of rebuke was David asking God not to have?
2. What is David really asking God for in verse 1?
3. What type of chastening is David not trying to avoid?
4. We are all weak and _____.
5. Why are we to cast our cares upon Him?
6. We cry for mercy and not _____.
7. What does the bones being vexed mean?
8. What does sin bring to the sinner?
9. What is worse than physical hurt?

10. Where is the cry “how long” heard in heaven?
11. What does the author believe is meant by “how long” here in Psalms?
12. David and all mankind were actually pleading for a _____.
13. Who is the blessed hope?
14. 1 John chapter 4:9-10 describe whose love?
15. In _____ there is no remembrance of thee.
16. God is God of the _____.
17. There is nothing so silent as the _____.
18. What does David's groaning show us?
19. How much had David cried in this prayer?
20. What are some of the physical signs around, and in, the eyes that shows grief?
21. What does the author believe about the eyes?
22. In verse 8, David's sorrow has been turned into what?
23. What was the first thing David did when he realized God had answered his prayer?
24. The enemy may come as a storm, but if we stand, what happens?
25. Why is it good to fellowship with the household of faith?
26. What does supplication in verse 9 mean?
27. He knelt down feeling guilt and shame and arose feeling what?
28. What did Job have to pray for his friends?
29. A prophet hath no honor in his own _____.
30. What can workers for Jesus today, who are rejected by those around them, take comfort in?
31. Name some of the lessons we can glean from this chapter of Psalms.