

**EXPERIENCING THE FULLNESS OF GOD'S PRESENCE (Vol. 1 - Psalms 1-10)**  
**Psalm 6: A Desperate yet Confident Prayer for Relief from God's Strong Discipline**  
**(Session 7 - April 26, 2015)**

***Introductory Remarks:***

- **A Psalm of Repentance:** Psalm 6 is the first of seven psalms that are often referred to as penitential psalms--psalms of repentance (Psalms 6, 32, 38, 51, 102, 130, 143). Some have argued that it is not really a penitential psalm because there is no mention of the psalmist's sin nor words of repentance in the psalm. However, the psalmist's humble and repentant attitude is clear in his cries for help. He never argues or even implies that the Lord's discipline is unjust. What we witness in this psalm is the cry of someone who realizes that he is being chastened/disciplined for his sin, but is still appealing to the gracious nature of his covenant keeping God (Exodus 34:6-7) to bring an end to his suffering. Therefore, it is appropriate to refer to this psalm as one of repentance. It is simply focusing on the aftermath of the psalmist's repentance when the harsh discipline of the Lord has not yet been removed.
- **A Psalm of Lament:** The psalm can also clearly be considered an individual lament. However, in this instance it is a lament over the ongoing chastening of God for his sin. This chastening continues in the form of oppression by his enemies. It is hard not to see a parallel in the strong discipline of God that the Israelites had to endure because of their unfaithfulness to God. This lament is, therefore, very similar to that of the Book of Lamentations. And like that book, there is a recognition that God is gracious and forgiving. Even though he may be disciplining his people in some very strong ways, he is still the God whose mercies are new ever morning (Lamentations 3:21-25).
- **God-Centered Self-Evaluation:** It is also important to point out that this psalm reflects an attitude that helps us understand the type of heart that can legitimately call upon God to judge his enemies. The psalmist in these psalms is not simply looking at others in his evaluation of what is righteous and what is not. He is also involved in God-centered self-evaluation. He not only sees God's hatred of sin in those who have rejected God and his people, but he sees God's hatred of sin in his people. God loves us enough to bring the discipline we need to become holy. This love is powerfully explained in Hebrews 12:1-17 where we read of the

fatherly love of God for his own. While he hates the one who remains in rebellion against him (see also Psalm 5:4-6), he loves the one who has received his steadfast love and now has the type of humble and dependent attitude we see in this psalm (see also Psalm 5:7).

### ***Outline of Psalm 6:***

- I. The psalmist prays for relief from his enemies who have inflicted great suffering on him in God's chastening (vv. 1-7)
  - A. David offers a prayer and a lament that the Lord's chastening not be with such anger (vv. 1-3).
    1. He asks the Lord not to chasten him in anger (v. 1)
    2. He appeals to the Lord for relief because he is at his end (v. 2)
    3. He laments that the Lord delays his deliverance (v. 3)
  - B. David pleads with the Lord to deliver him, basing his petition on God's love for him and his desire to praise God (vv. 4-5).
    1. He asks the Lord to deliver him because of his loyal love (v. 4).
    2. He asks the Lord to rescue him because of his desire to praise (v. 5).
  - C. David laments his extreme suffering for its severity and its prolonged distress (vv. 6-7).
- II. The psalmist warns his enemies to turn away from him because he is assured that the Lord has heard his prayer and will put them to shame (vv. 8-10).
  - A. David warns them to leave because the Lord has heard his prayer (v. 8)
  - B. David warns them that the Lord is about to deliver him (v. 9).
  - C. David warns them that they will be utterly defeated (v. 10).

[This outline is taken from *A Commentary on The Psalms (Volume 1 - Psalms 1-41)* by Allen P. Ross]

***Psalm 6:1-7: A desperate prayer for God to end his discipline and bring relief.***

- *O LORD, rebuke me not in your anger, nor discipline me in your wrath. (v. 1)* - This psalm begins at a time where David has already become aware of his sin and has repented before God (see Psalm 51 for the actual process of repentance). He now is crying out to God to bring relief from the strong discipline that he is facing. The word order of the Hebrew is significant as it emphasizes what the psalmist sees as the anger and wrath of God in this discipline: "O LORD, not in your anger rebuke me, not in your wrath discipline me." He sees the current discipline as being carried out with the anger and wrath of God that he has both warned his enemies about and even called for his enemies to be punished with. It is interesting that he is currently under attack from fierce enemies, but his primary concern is that God not continue to rebuke him with such ferocity. Again we see that these psalms are God-centered. They are the cries of one who has faith in God and they are directed by what the psalmist knows to be true of God. We see the same loving discipline here that we read about in Proverbs 3:11-12 and Hebrews 12:3-17 (see also Proverbs 9:7-12; 10:17; 12:1; 15:10; 22:31-33; 27:5-6; 28:13, 23).
- *Be gracious to me, O LORD, for I am languishing, heal me, O LORD, for my bones are troubled. My soul also is greatly troubled. (vv. 2-3)* - Whether or not the psalmist is actually suffering from some illness is debatable, but he is definitely facing a type of all-inclusive suffering stemming from God's discipline. The turmoil is affecting the way he feels physically and is felt in the deepest parts of his being--his bones and even his soul. The only answer he sees is for God to be "gracious" to him. Once again, there is the recognition that only God's grace and steadfast love can bring relief. So he cries out for the God he knows loves him to demonstrate that love in removing his discipline.
- *But you, O LORD, how long? (v. 3)* - Here we see the normal focus of the cry "how long" in the psalms. It is directed to God and not his enemies as in Psalm 4 (4:2). Psalm 13 is a clear example of the cry of one who is under intense oppression and is at the end of his rope as he cries out with these words. It has been going on for long enough in the psalmist's eyes. He feels he can't take another day under God's disciplining hand. He feels he has no strength left in his body and no

resources left in his soul to endure it any longer. Anyone who has felt such overwhelming and all-encompassing oppression can understand this feeling. This psalm teaches us to turn to the one who can bring true relief.

- *Turn, O LORD, deliver my life; save me for the sake of your steadfast love. For in death there is no remembrance of you; in Sheol who will give you praise? (vv. 4-5)* - His request for help is now made even clearer. He gives two reasons for his appeal to God. The first focuses on the character of God on which his faith rests. He asks God to bring deliverance because of his amazing covenant love (Exodus 34:6-7). Our prayer must be based on the character of God as revealed in the Bible. When we see the true nature of his grace and love, it should lead us to his throne. When we see the true nature of his grace and love, it should prompt us to see this great God exalted for such perfection. This attitude leads to his second reason for God to bring relief and that is his desire to go on exalting God in his life. He wants to be able to give himself wholly to the praise of God. He is finding it hard to celebrate his great God as he desires and he calls out for God to make it so that he can do that once again. In short, we could say that he is desiring to experience the fullness of God's presence so that he can declare God's greatness in every way possible.
- *I am weary with my moaning; every night I flood my bed with tears; I drench my couch with my weeping. My eye wastes away because of grief; it grows weak because of all my foes. (vv. 6-7)* - In these verses he lays out the depth of his suffering and depression over his current condition. It is verses like these that let us know how much God understands our suffering (this is especially evident when we consider the incarnation and subsequent suffering of our Lord Jesus Christ for us - Hebrews 2:5-18; 4:14-16). Anyone who has felt such depression and anguish knows what the psalmist is talking about. It is utterly debilitating. And the psalmist here makes it very clear that the enemies God has used to bring this chastening are the source of this unbearable suffering. It is one thing to be so depressed that we feel like we can't live another moment. It is even worse when there are people actively trying to drive you even further into the ground (and the psalmist feels he is close to literally being placed six feet under the ground if this doesn't stop soon - see verse 5).

***Psalm 6:8-10: An expression of confidence in God and a warning in the face of his enemies' attacks.***

- *Depart from me, all you workers of evil, for the Lord has heard the sound of my weeping. The Lord has heard my plea; the Lord accepts my prayer. (vv. 8-9) -* What an astounding statement of faith in God! David turns immediately from an expression of being unable to stop weeping because of the torment he feels to an expression of complete confidence that God hears his prayer and knows his anguish. The psalm could not emphasize the connection between faith and suffering any more powerfully than it does here. Those who have faith in God sometimes face what feels like unbearable suffering and anguish in this life. However, even though they could come to the conclusion that all is lost and that God is never going to help them, they cling to what they know is true about their God and his love for them. Without knowing their God, their despair would overtake them and they would surely die. With a knowledge of God, they can confidently face anything because they know who he is and how much he loves them (Romans 8:18-39). This is one of the chief lessons on prayer and worship from the Book of Psalms: Theology, when combined with true faith in God, leads to the worship of God in every aspect of our lives. The truth about God leads David to confidently confront his enemies and to warn them to stop oppressing him before God unleashes his anger and wrath on them.
- *All my enemies shall be ashamed and greatly troubled; they shall turn back and be put to shame in a moment. (v. 10) -* The psalm ends with the only possible outcome for these oppressors if they do not repent. They are seeking to heap trouble and shame upon David and they are setting themselves up to face the ultimate trouble and shame if they do not repent. The very judgment that David calls for his enemies to suffer in Psalm 5:10 is what these enemies will ultimately face if they continue to oppress him. The idea of unbelievers facing "shame" and believers being relieved from all shame has a decidedly Godward focus. It is not a promise that we will never have people who will seek to make us ashamed in this life. Nor is it some kind of statement that we should never be ashamed in this life when we sin. Sin is shameful. It is, however, a promise that when all is said and done those who trust in God will be vindicated. The ultimate truth is that

ultimately shame is removed when we place our faith in Jesus Christ. He has borne the guilt and shame that is legitimately ours, because of our sin, on the cross. Thus you are assured that *"if you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God has raised him from the dead, you will be saved. For with the heart one believes and is justified, and with the mouth one confesses and is saved. For Scripture says, 'Everyone who believes in him will not be put to shame'"* (Romans 10:9-11). David knows he will not face shame before God, but those who reject him will. This is a prayer that God will allow David to experience in the present what he knows is true before God for eternity. He trusts that God will not only allow him some relief from his current situation (and the shame that goes with it), but that his enemies will face the very shame they are seeking to bring upon him.