

The Prayer of a Chastened Saint

Text: Psalm 6:1-10

Introduction:

1. The Title: The heading of the Psalm gives us a couple of details:
 - To the Chief Musician – the **administrator** of the Psalm. The “Chief Musician” was “the master or director of the sacred music of the sanctuary” (C.H. Spurgeon).
 - Neginoth – the **accompaniment** of the Psalm. The word refers to stringed instruments in preference to wind instruments. “The flutes are silent, and the music of the stringed instruments, better fitted to express the deeper emotions of the heart, follows them: and, indeed, in the bass notes, upon the octave.” (F.W. Grant)
 - A Psalm of David – the **author** of the Psalm.
2. The Theme: This Psalm is the first of seven Penitential Psalms, the others being Psalm 32, 38, 51, 102, 130 and 143. Psalm 51 is perhaps the most well-known and touching. Allen Ross summarizes the message of the Psalm as follows: “The penitent believer pleads with the LORD for relief from intense chastening for sin inflicted on him by his enemies, and finding assurance that his prayer has been heard, warns his persecutors to leave before God destroys them.”
3. Structure: “You will observe that the Psalm is readily divided into two parts. First, there is the Psalmist’s plea in his great distress, reaching from the first to the end of the seventh verse. Then you have, from the eighth to the end, quite a different theme. The Psalmist has changed his note. He leaves the minor key, and betakes himself to sublime strains. He tunes his note to the high key of confidence, and declares that God has heard his prayer, and hath delivered him out of all his troubles.” (C.H. Spurgeon)
4. Expository idea: “When God chastens his people with the rod of their adversaries, the truly penitent may pray for relief because of God’s faithful love.” (Allen P. Ross)
5. We will divide the Psalm under three headings for our brief expository study – 1. The Appeal of his Prayer (Vs. 1-4). 2. The Argument of his Prayer (Vs. 5-7). 3. The Assurance from his Prayer (Vs. 8-10).

I. THE APPEAL OF HIS PRAYER (VS. 1-4)

The Psalmist employs two lines of appeal in his plea to God:

A. His Abject Frailty (Vs. 1-3)

1. He Feared God’s Righteous Displeasure (Vs. 1)
 - a. “O LORD” = David repeats this 5 times in the first four verses. He is plain spoken about his doubts and fears throughout the Psalm but He does not lose the tone of reverence toward God.
 - b. “rebuke me not in thine anger” = he does not pray for a total removal of God’s correction from his life but that God would not discipline him in

Heaven's Hymnbook: Singing through the Psalms

anger. David clearly had a godly fear of God's pure and holy anger and pleads that God not chasten him according to that anger. Jeremiah prayed a similar prayer – "O LORD, correct me, but with judgment; **not in thine anger**, lest thou bring me to nothing.:" (Jer. 10:24)

- c. "hot displeasure" = translated elsewhere numerous times as 'fury' (e.g., Gen. 27:44; Lev. 26:28), 'wrath' (Num. 25:11; Deut. 29:23, 29:28), 'rage' (2 Kings 5:12), 'anger' (Est. 1:12). The word has the idea of heat, hence why it is translated "**hot** displeasure".
 - d. Chastening is a necessary part of the Christian life and is an act of God's love. However, we can appeal to God to show us grace by not giving us the full discipline we deserve.
2. He Felt God's Discipline (Vs. 2-3)
- a. Physical Suffering (Vs. 2)
 - i. "I am weak" = has the idea of "one that droops" (Spurgeon).
 - ii. "my bones are vexed" = the word 'vexed' means 'troubled' (Gen. 45:3; 1 Sam. 28:21; 2 Sam. 4:1). It means to be "provoked, irritated, troubled, agitated, disquieted and afflicted". David was suffering the consequences of his sin in the body. It may well be a reference to the chastisement of God subsequent to his adulterous affair with Bathsheba.
 - iii. "heal me" = the root Hebrew word is translated 'physicians' (Gen. 50:2; 2 Chr. 16:12; Job 13:4; Jer. 8:22), 'cure' (Jer. 33:6), and "make whole again" (Jer. 19:11). David clearly needed healing on account of his physical condition but it may also refer to spiritual healing. Not all sickness is the direct result of sin but some is and David clearly saw a link between his sin and what was happening in his body.
 - b. Spiritual Suffering (Vs. 3a)
 - i. "my soul also is sore vexed" = David was troubled in heart and mind over his situation.
 - ii. Note: David's suffering affected his whole person – it was physical, mental, emotional and spiritual.
 - c. Emotional Suffering (Vs. 3b)
 - i. "how long" = His words trail off in an incomplete sentence revealing the depth of his emotion. His sorry was intensified on account of God's silence. This question has been asked by multitudes of saints down through the ages.
 - ii. Illustration: The tribulation martyrs - Rev 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?"
 - iii. The apparent delays in God's working on the believer's behalf have often been the source of soul agony. In reality, God's

Heaven's Hymnbook: Singing through the Psalms

timing is always best but as frail creatures, we wrestle to wait upon God in our hour of need.

B. God's Abundant Mercy (Vs. 4)

1. "Return, O LORD" = it seems that God is afar off. He longs for the return of the presence of God in his life.
2. "Return...deliver...save" = a passionate request for deliverance.
3. "thy mercies sake" = the basic meaning is "to be gracious, show favour, be merciful" (Ross). Notice the word mercy is plural in number signifying that it is in abundant supply. The word 'mercy' has the idea of loving kindness. One author defines it as God's "faithful love". Since love is the basis of our discipline, we can appeal to that love for relief (Hebrews 12:4-11). As a chastened saint, we do not ask for the total removal of God's discipline from our lives for without it we would no progress in holiness and learn the lessons God has for us. But we can appeal to God's attribute of mercy in the hopes that He may show us grace.

II. THE ARGUMENT OF HIS PRAYER (VS. 5-7)

He reasons with God concerning:

A. The Grave and Giving of Thanks (Vs. 5)

1. Remember that David is not denying the afterlife. He is speaking in terms of life on this earth. If he dies, he will no longer be able to a channel of praise and thanksgiving to God on this earth before others.
2. This reveals the motive behind David's prayer. It is more than a natural desire to live. He desires to have his life extended on this earth so that he might have further opportunity to magnify and glorify His God.
3. "The Psalmist reasons that if God does not deliver him, he will die, and God will not receive any praise from him." (Ross)
4. Spurgeon: "Churchyards are silent places the vaults of the sepulchre echo not with songs. Damp earth covers dumb mouths."

B. The Groaning and Grief of his Tears (Vs. 6-7)

David uses several powerful word pictures to describe his deep grief:

1. Weary with Groaning (6a). The word 'groaning' means 'sighing' (Job 3:24; Ps. 31:10; Is. 21:2, 35:10) and 'mourning' (Is. 51:11). David was left exhausted from the mental and emotional strain. "God's people may groan but they may not grumble." (Spurgeon)
2. Floods of Tears (Vs. 6b). The Psalmist employs hyperbolic descriptions of weeping that heighten the intensity of his distress.
 - a. "all the night make I my bed to swim" = pictures the heart broken David weeping in the night season so much he said it was like he made his bed swim in his tears. The great sin of David's life took place in his bed (adultery with Bathsheba). The place of his sin becomes the place of his repentance and restoration with God. Another possibility for the context of this Psalm is during the time of Absalom's rebellion which

Heaven's Hymnbook: Singing through the Psalms

was a form of chastisement from God due to his sin with Bathsheba (See 2 Sam. 12:10).

- b. "I water my couch with my tears" = "The word here rendered "water" means to melt, to flow down; then, in the Hiphil, to cause to flow, to dissolve. The sense here is, that he caused his couch to "flow" or "overflow" with his tears." (Albert Barnes)
3. Eyes Consumed in Grief (Vs. 7). The eyes are like windows to the soul and can reveal much about one's mental and emotional state. Much crying leaves the eyes red, puffy and pinched.

III. THE ASSURANCE FROM HIS PRAYER (VS. 8-10)

There is an abrupt change in tone at this point in the Psalm. It turns from a tone of lament and anguish to one of triumph and victory. This is a common feature of the Penitential Psalms. How long David sought the Lord we don't know but we do see the outcome of his fervent petitions. He came to a place of assurance that God had answered his prayer. He had assurance that:

A. God had Heard his Tears (Vs. 8)

1. "Depart from me" = David's charge to the "workers of iniquity". David's enemies wanted to take advantage of his vulnerable state but he could repel them based on the assurance of answered prayer.
2. "heard the voice of my weeping" = God had taken account not just of David's words in prayer but his tears. His tears were that of true repentance, not remorse. What a precious truth! Our tears speak with a voice before God. Tears shed in the presence of God are not wasted. They reach the Heart of our Heavenly Father. Psalm 56:8 "Thou tellest my wanderings: **put thou my tears into thy bottle: are they not in thy book?**"
3. Spurgeon: "Is it not sweet to believe that our tears are understood even when words fail! Let us learn to think of tears as liquid prayers, and of weeping as constant dropping of importunate intercession which will wear its way right surely into the very heart of mercy, despite the stony difficulties which obstruct the way. My God, I will weep when I cannot plead, for thou hearest the voice of my weeping."

B. God had Heard his Prayers (Vs. 9-10)

1. "hath heard my supplication" = assurance God had heard past prayers.
2. "will receive my prayer" = assurance God will hear future prayers.
3. 'ashamed' = the word "expresses the sense of confusion, embarrassment, and dismay when matters turn out contrary to what one expected." (Ross)

Conclusion:

1. Theological lessons (what we learn about God)

Heaven's Hymnbook: Singing through the Psalms

- God chastens his children and sometimes uses other people (in this case David's enemies) as his instruments of chastisement.
- God's righteous anger can be kindled when a believer disobeys.
- God is a God who is plenteous in mercy and so often does not give us all that we truly deserve.

2. Practical lessons (what we learn about the Christian life)

- Chastening is grievous but through it we learn valuable lessons in the Christian life. Without it we would not learn the seriousness of sinning against God.
- Believers can pray with faith in their trials, knowing God will answer.
- Believers need to pour out the burdens of their hearts before the Lord. While a tone of reverence is to always be present, we can pour out our confusion souls to our loving Heavenly Father.