

FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH OF VILLA RICA, PCA

Faith In Time of Trouble

By

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Psalm 6

It is a fact of Christian experience that life is a series of troughs and peaks. In his efforts to get permanent possession of a soul, God relies on the troughs more than the peaks. And some of his special favorites have gone through longer and deeper troughs than anyone else. -- Peter Marshall, *Leadership*, Vol. 5, no. 2.

David was a great man of faith, but faith is not simply walking with the Lord when things are going well. Faith must experience trials and tests, pain and sorrow, as well as triumph and victory. David in this Psalm resembles Jeremiah, the weeping prophet. He might be compared to Job as he went through his time of lamentation due to his setbacks and sickness. Faith develops its strength more in times of trouble than in times of prosperity and peace.

This psalm is a good one for any person to read or sing when going through affliction, sickness or conviction. David begins with doleful pinning and groaning over his state of mind and body. He may have been physically ill. We can't be sure. But he certainly is discomforted in mind and soul. His heart is in a sorrowful state as he begins the psalm, but by the end of the psalm he is recovered and his faith is renewed and jubilant. What medicine for the downcast child of God during his own time of trial and suffering.

I. Humbling Providences Are Sent

Let no Christian think that he can go through this life without humbling providences being sent. The Bible tells us that whom the Lord loves he chastens and scourges every son whom he receives. This is not because God simply desires to test our faith, though this is a result of humbling providences, it is because we all have sinned and still carry with us remnants of that old sinful nature we were born with. In that old nature there is pride and unrighteousness. We are born with a nature that is vain and selfish and disobedient. This was true for David and it is true for every son of Adam. Providence is always good to the child of God but that goodness will necessarily include experiences that are humbling and disciplinary. While going through those times of chastening and humbling we are not going to be on cloud nine.

As David begins Psalm 6 he is in a time of trouble and trial. We aren't told the exact nature of his problems, but we can be sure they were severe. His pleadings with the Lord reveal that David understood that his distress is due to sin. He has been guilty of things that brought upon him humbling providences.

David had enough understanding of God to know that what was happening to him was not without God's hand being involved. We tend to think in human terms when it comes to illness and accidents and problems of all sorts that come our way. But David knew that God was sovereign and that every circumstance was under sovereign management and direction. Nothing that happens to us is meaningless or pointless. God has a lesson he wants us to learn, and the humbling of the soul that comes by way of his chastening does something in us that nothing else could have done or would have done. We might think of it this way. God is preparing us for an eternity in heaven where all is holy and perfect. We come out of a stock that is diseased and corrupt because of sin. We are born deformed and incapable of entering or enjoying heaven until a radical change has come to our souls. This begins with a new birth, regeneration and this commences a life-long process called sanctification.

In preparing places for planting new trees, the diggers found it necessary in certain spots to lay aside the spade and use the pickaxe. In those positions there had been a well-graveled carriage road, and hence the ground was hard to deal with.

How often, when we are under sanctifying influences, do we find certain hard points of our character, which are not touched by ordinary influences? These are most probably sins in which we have become hardened, tracks worn by habitual transgression. We must not wonder if the severest processes of affliction should be tried upon us, if the pickaxe is used instead of the spade, that our stony places may yet yield soil for the plants of grace and holiness.

Sanctification removes uncleanness, ill temper, pride, self-will and ugliness. God uses many means to bring about the changes that are necessary before any redeemed soul can go to heaven. We do not comprehend all of the

delicate operations that God must perform before we can enjoy His holy presence, but they are necessary. David understood in the same limited sense that we all should if we are Christians that God was doing his strange and secret work. But that did not make the experiences through which he was passing easy or painless. He was hurting,

that's for sure. He begins by saying, **O Lord, do not rebuke me in Your anger, Nor chasten me in Your wrath. Psa. 6:1**

By saying this he is acknowledging that he is deserving of this chastisement and pain. He is not innocent of guilt for he has sinned. David attributes his problems and suffering to his own fault. This is where we see the faith of David shining out at the very beginning. He is not complaining to God that his chastening is undeserved or that God is unfair. His only request is that God would not let the things happening to him be from the Lord in anger or wrath.

Then it would be a hopeless

situation. He knows that salvation is owing to the mercy of God and that restoration from sinful mistakes is a part of that salvation process. So he says, **Be gracious to me, O LORD, for I am pining away; Heal me, O LORD, for my bones are dismayed.³ And my soul is greatly dismayed; But You, O LORD—how long? Psa. 6:2-3**

David is pleading for a shortening of his chastisement. His argument before the Lord is that because he has acknowledged his sinfulness and is mourning over his errors that have brought upon him this providential state of affairs, that he would mercifully lift him up and restore his soul. David does not go public with his repentance, though this psalm and others are testimony enough of his contrition and sorrow over his sins.

The Pharisees would wear sorrowful faces and by this want to be seen of men as solemn and serious about their piety. But David is not ashamed to weep in secret, to review before God his inward corruption and outward conduct that had brought on this deserved chastisement.

How many people look to themselves when they experience trouble? Usually we look at the circumstance and try to fix the blame on others rather than on ourselves. David is not complaining about what he is going through, he is agreeing with God that he had it coming to him, that God is just in all His ways and righteous in all His chastening. He is not asking for an explanation, as Job did. He is trusting God in this time of pain and misery. He asks that because of God's lovingkindness he be rescued from his present distress, for, he says, **Return, O LORD, rescue my soul; Save me because of Your lovingkindness.⁵ For there is no mention of You in death; In Sheol who will give You thanks? Psa. 6:4-5**

David has a proper fear of God during this time of humiliation and pain. He knows that sin deserves death. To die without being restored would be a terrible event as far as David was concerned. To die in the gall of bitterness or anguish, as did Judas and Saul and other suicides is something David did not want to happen to him. You certainly don't feel like praising God when you are going through conviction of sin and an overwhelming sense of anguish and distress. That is not a time to die. David wanted to be brought out of his distress and grief into a renewed time of fellowship and praise.

The Old Testament saints did not have the same measure of light that we do now since the victory of Christ over the grave and know that to be absent from the body is to be present with the Lord. So David viewed death as a time of lost opportunity unless he was at peace with God and walking in the joy of his salvation. David wanted to die the death of the righteous when it came time to die. And even the saints in heaven cannot do what saints on the earth can do, namely, glorify God by being employed in the war against Satan and bearing witness to the grace of God, seeing the Church advance against unnumbered foes. Being a part of the body of Christ on earth is an opportunity for service that not even the saints in heaven have. Their labors are finished and there is no more that they can do, but we left on earth can still pray and do the Lord's work while it is yet day.

II. David's Faith Obtains Assurance Of Deliverance

Verse 8-10 abruptly changes from a pleading for mercy and restoration to one of assurance that God has heard his prayer and will forgive his sins and restore him to fellowship and blessings as in times past. **⁸ Depart from me, all you who do iniquity, For the LORD has heard the voice of my weeping. ⁹ The LORD has heard my supplication, The LORD receives my prayer. Psa. 6:8-9**

His enemies will either be converted or they will be destroyed. When a person is converted to the Lord there

will be a time of repentance and shame for sins committed, and so David's words, All **my enemies will be ashamed and greatly dismayed; They shall turn back, they will suddenly be ashamed. Psa. 6:10** can be interpreted to mean that they are defeated in their opposition to him and unloving treatment of him, or they will become converted to the Lord and thus also be ashamed for their shabby treatment. In either case, conversion or providential circumstances that will turn against them and remove them as a threat or annoyance to David will be the outcome.

When we are shamed it can be with a good ending or a bad ending. Sinners will all be ashamed one way or another. They can be shamed through the convicting work of the Holy Spirit and then saved by the mercy of God in Christ, or they will be ashamed in the Day of Judgment and their defeat at the hands of God without salvation. Every Christian has learned to be ashamed of sin in order to be saved and established in the fellowship of God. Every unbeliever will be ashamed of his sin unto condemnation forever unless he repents and turns to Christ for mercy. So David gains the assurance that the Lord has heard the voice of his weeping. He knows that his prayers have not been in vain and that he will be victorious over all his foes.

What a great psalm for all of us to understand. We can always be lifted back up to God's favor as we truly repent of our sins and seek the Lord's pardon. We may go through down times, through pain and sorrow and distress, but God will restore the soul that seeks for mercy as David did. This psalm was given to the choir director to be sung to the music of stringed instruments. So all of God's people can be lifted up in times of deep distress by following the guidelines of this penitential psalm.

Can you identify with David? Have you had or are you having trouble that is pressing down on your soul? Follow David's pattern in this psalm until you come to the same relief and peace of mind that he obtained.

Do you need to come to the Lord for salvation? Jesus Christ died for you. He is extending the hand of his mercy and forgiveness. Believe on him, repent of your sins and be saved today.

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