

## **When it All Falls Apart and You Have Nothing Left to Give**

### Psalm 6

In 1942, things were going well for my parents. They had grown up in the depression, and when they had married 4 years earlier, they didn't have two nickels to rub together. But now Dad, at age 28, gave up his dream of becoming a teacher in order to take a good job in management at International Shoe Co in Perryville, Mo. Mom had been teaching every school year and taking college classes during the summer, working toward a B.S. in Education. But then my oldest sister came along in September of that year and Mom was now a stay-at-home mother. Still, Dad and Mom had enough income to buy a car and purchase a farm for my dad's mother to live on. Life seemed to be on an upswing.

Then in early 1943, Uncle Sam tapped my dad on the shoulder and drafted him into WWII. He left home when my sister was 6 months old. He wouldn't see her again until she was 3 and a half.

Mom was always a can-do kind of woman, with a character forged by living through the depression. Her husband had been sent to the Pacific to fight the Japanese and she had a baby to raise and provide for. She found a job teaching in a country school. The superintendent and his wife offered her cheap room and board in the upstairs of their home and the wife offered to babysit.

Not long before she died four years ago, I asked Mom what it was like being a single mother in a wartime economy. She said, "Every weekday, I went to school. Every evening, I came home and took care of Carolyn. Most nights, I cried myself to sleep." She told me she could still feel my sister's hand patting her on the back and her little tiny voice saying, "Don't

ky, Mommy.” This went on day after day. Every week. Every month. Every summer she went to Cape Girardeau to live with her parents and finish her degree. And that was her life. For three long years.

She told me, “I never went to the movies. I never went out to eat. I never did anything but teach and take care of Carolyn and go to school.” She saved what she could from her paycheck and the money Dad sent home. She paid off the car. She paid off the farm. She paid for her summer classes.

This period in Mom’s life seemed endless. There was the constant worry that Dad would be killed in action as her brother-in-law had been. There was the persistent loneliness. There was the consistent monotony of the routine of her life. She battled depression. I’m sure she wondered if this time of constant stress would ever end. I’m sure there were times when she cried out to God as David does in Psalm 6, “How long?”

I wonder if we are heading into a period of time in our nation where many of us will find ourselves in desperate situations like Mom did during WWII. And if we are, it will be helpful to relate to David here in Psalm 6 and look for clues to help us overcome our circumstances.

I’ve split this message into four sections and I probably went a little overboard on the alliteration. But here they are. In Psalm 6, we are going to see

- David’s Depth of Despair
- David’s Dread of God’s Discipline
- David’s Dependence on God’s Determined Devotion
- David’s Deliverance from Despondency

### **David’s Depth of Despair**

So, let's get started with David's Depth of Despair. David is a hot mess in Psalm 6. Just listen to the language he uses.

- He's languishing.
- His bones are troubled.
- His soul is greatly troubled.
- He feels close to death.
- He floods his bed with tears.
- He is weary with moaning.
- He drenches his couch with weeping.
- His eye wastes away because of grief and grows weak.

This is poetic language that is intended to make us feel the depths of David's despair. He is spiritually, emotionally, and physically wrung out. He is too weak to do anything. He is racked with grief. He cries himself to sleep like Mom did. He doesn't think he can take any more.

We don't know what the surface cause of David's torment is. Perhaps verse 7 gives us a clue--he says he is weeping because of his foes. In the Psalms, the David's enemies are often people. Saul was an early enemy. Later on it might have been traitors in his inner circle. Late in his reign, his own beloved son, Absalom, was his enemy. Psalm 6 doesn't specifically tell us the details. But when David speaks of foes, he's usually talking about people.

But in 21st century America, most of us don't have people trying to kill us. Most of us don't have to dodge a King Saul hurling his spear at us. And even if our enemies are people, Paul assures us in Ephesians 6:12, that our true enemies--ours today and David's back then--are spiritual.

**12 For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places.**

Maybe our enemies are lies told us by Satan and fed to us by the world, by the media, or maybe by people who are close to us. Our enemies might be doubts. Our enemies might be emotions which we allow to rise up and hold us captive. Whatever our enemies are, they threaten to pull our eyes away from Jesus Christ, our only hope for salvation. They can pull us down into a quagmire of depression, despair and doubt.

But David has an important lesson to teach us in Psalm 6. It's really not important what or who David's actual enemies are. Whatever crisis David is suffering through, he sees it ultimately as the discipline of the Lord.

### **David's Dread of God's Discipline**

Look at verse 1.

**O Lord, rebuke me not in your anger, nor discipline me in your wrath.**

Whatever he is going through, David sees the Lord's hand of discipline in it.

Now, before we go on, I want to distinguish between punishment and discipline. Punishment is suffering, pain, or loss that serves as retribution for committing an offense. Retribution has the sense of vengeance, the sense of getting even. Punishment is something negative and often painful that a person earns by committing an offense. Discipline is training that corrects, molds, that perfects the mental faculties or moral character. But there is always a refining nature to discipline. There is a positive purpose to it.

It's important to understand that if you are a child of God. Because the Bible teaches us that God, our Father, disciplines his children. He disciplines those whom He loves.

Proverbs 3:11-12

**11 My son, do not despise the Lord's discipline  
or be weary of his reproof,  
12 for the Lord reproofs him whom he loves,  
as a father the son in whom he delights.**

David viewed the tribulation he was suffering as the discipline of the Lord. God doesn't punish His children for the purpose of vengeance or retribution. He isn't getting even with us for sinning. If you have placed your faith in Jesus Christ, God the Father has already punished Jesus for your sin. Rather, when we are disciplined by God, it is always for the purpose of refining, purifying, and sanctifying us. It is for our training. It is to mold us to be conformed to the image of His Son.

So if you are a child of God, whatever you are suffering at this moment, whatever you have suffered in the past, or whatever you are going to suffer in the future is the discipline of the Lord. Is there sometimes a direct link between our sin and our suffering? Absolutely. If I lose my temper and sock Pastor Nathan in the nose, I might get arrested and thrown in jail. There is a direct link there between my sin and the punishment that is part of the Lord's discipline of me. But sometimes there's not. Jesus was pure and sinless. He never did anything wrong. And yet, He suffered. Hebrews 5:7-8 says,

**7 In the days of his flesh, Jesus offered up prayers and supplications, with loud cries and tears, to him who was able to save him from death, and he was heard because of his reverence. 8 Although he was a son, he learned obedience through what he suffered.**

Jesus prayed with loud cries and tears. Sounds a lot like David in Psalm 6. And verse 8 says Jesus learned obedience through what he suffered. That

doesn't mean He was disobedient and was punished with suffering so that he would learn to obey. It means He was being trained by His Father and His obedience was perfected by His suffering.

And David sees that hand of the Lord in this affliction that he is suffering in Psalm 6. And as children of God, our worldview should be such that we should see every circumstance in our lives as ordained by the will of God for our training, as God chisels away the sinful flesh so that the image of His Son might shine through more brightly.

But although David recognizes the hand of God in his suffering, he is not happy about it. He dreads the severity of it. He dreads the possibility that God is disciplining him in anger and will go too far and that David will die. Hebrews 12 tells us that all discipline seems painful for the moment. God does not spare the rod and spoil His children. His discipline is painful. And David is languishing under the rod of God's correction. He feels it is too much. He feels it has gone on too long. He pleads for mercy. And the basis of his pleading is his covenantal relationship with God as his Father.

### **David's Dependence on God's Determined Devotion**

David has been in a lot of pain for a long time. He cries out to God to end His misery. But let's notice what the basis is for his appeals to God. Start in verse 1.

- Verse 1 O Lord. Remember that when we see the capital L followed by smaller capital ORD, that is the ESV's way of saying the covenant name of God, Yahweh. O Yahweh, rebuke me not in your anger nor discipline me in your wrath.
- Verse 2--Heal me, O Yahweh.
- Verse 3--But you, O Yahweh--how long?
- Verse 4, Turn, O Yahweh, deliver my life.

Every appeal he makes is made to Yahweh, and preceded by the word O. Not O-H. Just capital O. That word O makes the appeal more personal. More intimate. Just listen to the difference. I might say to my wife, "Sandy, I love you." But if I say, "O Sandy, I love you," that is more emphatic. More intimate. David isn't crying out to a dusty statue sitting in the corner. This is a personal God to whom he relates as father. The God of the covenant. Yahweh. The God who never goes back on His Word. The God who made a covenant with David, set the terms of the covenant, and is determined to fulfill that covenant. Notice David says in verse 4 that he is appealing to God on the basis of His steadfast love. That phrase in Psalms always refers to a covenantal kind of love. David can depend on Yahweh. David knows deep down that if he cries out to Him, Yahweh will ultimately deliver him.

But the circumstances don't match David's faith. In his present situation, David is overwhelmed by the Lord's discipline. He pleads with Him to stop. It **feels** like God is angry with him. The Lord's rebuke is painful. David is suffering physically, mentally, emotionally, and spiritually. It feels like torture. How long will it last?

Then in verse 4, David beseeches Yahweh to deliver his life. He feels that if this goes on much longer he will die. He says in verse 5 that there is no remembrance of God in death. In Sheol, who would praise him?

In the OT, Sheol is the name given to the place where the spirits of people go when they die. Most of the wisdom literature deals with life here on Earth. There are only a few OT references to the resurrection. But these verses in Psalm 6 are not a denial of life after death or that God is sovereign beyond the grave. Rather, we find in Proverbs 15:11 that Sheol lies open before Yahweh and Psalms 139:8 in its beautiful affirmation of the omnipresence of God says that if I make my bed in Sheol, God is there.

David is saying here in Psalm 6 that there is more life to be lived now. He wants to go on living so that he can give praise to his covenant God. He therefore asks for his life to be delivered, based on the steadfast faithfulness of Yahweh.

And so, we come to verses 6 and 7. David is weary with moaning. Then we have a parallelism typical in Hebrew poetry.

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.

The parallels add emphasis to David's grief and weakness. This is the portrait of a man who has come to the end of himself. He has nothing left to give. If he is to be delivered, it will only happen as a result of a miraculous work of God.

And that is exactly the place God wants David to be. It's the place God wants us to be. He wants us to come to Him with empty hands and ask for help. He wants us to recognize and acknowledge our total dependence on Him. Only those who realize the depths of their own weakness will seek help from God, and those are the people God helps. Those are the people God delivers. Those are the people God saves.

One word of caution. The wickedness of our hearts can be so subtle that we could acknowledge our total dependence on God as a strategy to get Him to rescue us. God is never forced to do anything. He does what He pleases, when He pleases. We cannot force His Hand. So don't become angry with God when He doesn't deliver us when we want or in the way that we desire. When you come to the end of yourself, patiently wait and



endure and watch to see how God will deliver you. He WILL deliver you, but only in His timing and in His way.

Notice that David didn't sit around and do nothing. He cried out to God. And God faithfully strengthened him in his inmost being and delivered him from his bout of despondency.

### **David's Deliverance from Despondency**

There is no evidence that David's circumstances changed. Nothing in the Psalm tells us that all of David's trials disappeared. But a change in David's demeanor, a spark in his attitude is apparent starting in verse 8. He is confident. It's as if he got out of bed, washed his face and combed his hair. He says to his enemies, "Depart from me, all you workers of evil!" And in verse 10. "All my enemies shall be ashamed and greatly troubled; they shall turn back and be put to shame in a moment." Whatever or whoever David's enemies were, he is confident that they will be thwarted by His covenant God. Why? Because he is confident that Yahweh has heard the sound of his weeping, that Yahweh has heard his plea, that Yahweh accepts his prayer. Not because of David's inherent goodness or faithfulness but because of Yahweh's steadfast faithfulness to His covenant people.

By way of application, I want to leave you with three takeaways. The first takeaway is that David was delivered from his fears and despair by His faithful covenant God because he was a part of the people of God by grace through faith. David could cry out to God because God was his Father. David could be confident that God would act on his behalf because he was a child of God.

Maybe you are not sure that God is your Father. You're not sure if you are a part of the covenant people of God. You can be. It starts with recognizing that you have sinned against God, that you have a broken relationship with Him that you cannot fix. Only God can fix it. And He made it possible for

you to be reconciled to Him by coming to Earth in the person of Jesus Christ. Jesus lived a perfect, sinless, life, pleasing to God. Yet God allowed Him to be slaughtered on a Roman cross as a substitute for sinners. The only person who ever lived who didn't deserve to die took your place and received your punishment so that rebels like us can be reconciled to God. And God proved that He had accepted Jesus' sacrifice for sinners by raising Jesus from the dead. And Jesus ascended into heaven where He sits now on the throne ready to reconcile sinners like me and you to God if you will place your faith in what He has done to save you. Do it today. Cry out to Him. Ask Him to deliver your life. Ask Him to forgive your sins. And then submit yourself to Him as your King.

Those who do not submit themselves to the Son of God are considered His enemies. Things do not end well for the enemies of God. Psalm 6 says they will be ashamed and greatly troubled. Psalms 6:1-7 will be their reality for eternity. Only it won't be the discipline of God. It will be their justly deserved punishment. In the gospel of Matthew, chapter 7, beginning in verse 21, Jesus quotes Psalm 6:8.

**21 "Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but the one who does the will of my Father who is in heaven. 22 On that day many will say to me, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and cast out demons in your name, and do many mighty works in your name?' 23 And then will I declare to them, 'I never knew you; depart from me, you workers of lawlessness.'**

No one should want to hear those words from Jesus. Put your faith in Him today.

The second takeaway is for followers of Christ who are suffering. All of us have either been there, we are there now, or we will be some day. There are times when the discipline of God can be overwhelming. There are times when we, like Mom, like David, flood our beds with tears. Have you ever

been at the end of yourself? Has suffering brought you to your knees? Maybe some of you are struggling right now with fear. Fear that you or those you love will catch the virus and die. Fear that you will lose your job. Fear that you will not be able to pay your bills. Fear that there you won't be able to buy food or toilet paper. Fear that your life savings that you struggled so hard to build will crumble into dust. Fear that your life will never be the same and that there will be a new normal for you.

If so, then let me encourage you as followers of Christ to cry out to God to deliver you. He may not deliver you from your circumstances. Listen! Do not measure God's faithfulness by your circumstances! God may deliver you out of them or He may not. But what He will do is deliver you from fear. He will deliver you from anxiety. He will deliver you from bondage to your emotions. If you are child of God, if you have been justified by faith in the life death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, if you have peace with God, if you rejoice in the hope of the glory of God, He will use every ounce of your suffering to train you, to mold you into the image of His Son. Cry out to Him to help you endure with patience.

The third and final takeaway is that every child of God is disciplined in order to become more like Jesus. Jesus is our example for how to patiently endure discipline and He offers us grace to enable us to endure the discipline of the Father. Look at Hebrews 12, starting in verse 3.

**<sup>3</sup> Consider him who endured from sinners such hostility against himself, so that you may not grow weary or fainthearted. <sup>4</sup> In your struggle against sin you have not yet resisted to the point of shedding your blood. <sup>5</sup> And have you forgotten the exhortation that addresses you as sons?**

**“My son, do not regard lightly the discipline of the Lord, nor be weary when reproved by him.**

**6 For the Lord disciplines the one he loves, and chastises every son whom he receives.”**

**7 It is for discipline that you have to endure. God is treating you as sons. For what son is there whom his father does not discipline? 8 If you are left without discipline, in which all have participated, then you are illegitimate children and not sons. 9 Besides this, we have had earthly fathers who disciplined us and we respected them. Shall we not much more be subject to the Father of spirits and live? 10 For they disciplined us for a short time as it seemed best to them, but he disciplines us for our good, that we may share his holiness. 11 For the moment all discipline seems painful rather than pleasant, but later it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it.**

Followers of Christ, we must walk by faith through whatever circumstances we are facing that our covenant God, our heavenly Father, the One who says that not a hair will fall from our head except by His command--we need to walk by faith that He has heard our prayer, He has heard our weeping, and He has accepted our prayer. He is the almighty King of Kings and He will accomplish His purpose in us.

That's why James can say that we should count it all joy when we encounter various trials. Not that we deny the pain of suffering. Not that we walk around with a painted on happy face and say, "I'm counting it all joy!" That's deceitful. Discipline hurts! It makes us cry. It may cause us to lament. But we can walk by faith and have an undercurrent of bubbling joy in the midst of our sorrow, if we will walk by faith and not by sight. If we don't let our faith in God be defined by our circumstances, but rather hold firm and cling to the promise that God will hear and accept and answer our prayer. And afterwards, when we are reaping the peaceful fruit of righteousness, we can look back on those times of suffering in which that peaceful fruit was cultivated and we can rejoice.

Let's pray.