

Psalm 6 – A Cry for Mercy

To the Chief Musician. With stringed instruments. On an eight-stringed harp. A Psalm of David.

¹ ***O LORD, do not rebuke me in Your anger, Nor chasten me in Your hot displeasure.***

² ***Have mercy on me, O LORD, for I am weak; O LORD, heal me, for my bones are troubled.***

³ ***My soul also is greatly troubled; But You, O LORD—how long?***

⁴ ***Return, O LORD, deliver me! Oh, save me for Your mercies' sake!***

⁵ ***For in death there is no remembrance of You; In the grave who will give You thanks?***

⁶ ***I am weary with my groaning; All night I make my bed swim; I drench my couch with my tears.***

⁷ ***My eye wastes away because of grief; It grows old because of all my enemies.***

⁸ ***Depart from me, all you workers of iniquity; For the LORD has heard the voice of my weeping.***

⁹ ***The LORD has heard my supplication; The LORD will receive my prayer.***

¹⁰ ***Let all my enemies be ashamed and greatly troubled; Let them turn back and be ashamed suddenly.***

New King James Version

I. A Psalm written in the midst of deep affliction

- a. Authored by King David
- b. Unknown background/setting of the psalm – but some scholars speculate that it was written after David's sin with Bathsheba
- c. This is the first of 7 penitential psalms in the book of psalms
- d. The introduction to this psalm was written as “To the chief Musician on Neginoth upon Sheminith” – “Neginoth” is believed to mean stringed instruments (like psalm 4) and “Sheminith” is from a word meaning “eighth” referring either to an instrument of 8 strings as some scholars believe or as a reference to an octave – and particularly the lowest octave sung by male voices.

- e. This psalm has two distinct parts - repentance and cry for mercy for his well deserved affliction and then a distinct sense of relief and confidence that God has heard and received his prayer.

II. Verse by Verse Analysis

- a. Verse 1 - ***O LORD, do not rebuke me in Your anger, Nor chasten me in Your hot displeasure.*** The writer pleads with God for underserved mercies- he does not defend his actions.
- b. Verse 2 - ***Have mercy on me, O LORD, for I am weak; O LORD, heal me, for my bones are troubled.*** This clearly states that David's body was afflicted and he was suffering from some physical ailment. The word weak in this verse means "feeble" or "to languish." His bones were "troubled" (or "vexed" in the KJV) which means "to tremble" – or be in trepidation.
- c. Verse 3 - ***My soul also is greatly troubled; But You, O LORD—how long?*** The psalmist has a second problem – not only is his body affected but also his "soul" - a word meaning the mind and emotions. His emotions are in deep turmoil. The second statement – which in the original language is an unfinished sentence - is one prayed by many!
- d. Verse 4 - ***Return, O LORD, deliver me! Oh, save me for Your mercies' sake!*** The word "return" means "to turn back" implying that God's face had been averted from David. The expression "Deliver me" - means rescue me! And "Save me" means – liberate me! He asked on the basis of God's loving kindness not on the basis of his own merit.
- e. Verse 5 - ***For in death there is no remembrance of You; In the grave who will give You thanks?*** The psalmist pleads with God on the basis that he cannot praise Him in the grave.
- f. Verse 6 - ***I am weary with my groaning; All night I make my bed swim; I drench my couch with my tears.*** A reflection of his deep sorrow over his sin – and his separation from God.

- g. Verse 7 - **My eye wastes away because of grief. It grows old because of all my enemies.** He references the reproach of his enemies during his sickness. Even after he was made king of Israel – David still had enemies within the camp who undoubtedly reproached him after his sin with Bathsheba and would have liked to see him removed.
- h. Verse 8 - **Depart from me, all you workers of iniquity; For the LORD has heard the voice of my weeping.** The turning point in this psalm – he senses that God has heard his prayers. Spurgeon said, “Weeping is the eloquence of sorrow. Is it not sweet to think of tears as liquid prayers, and of weeping as a constant dropping of importunate intercession...?”¹
- i. Verse 9 - **The LORD has heard my supplication; The LORD will receive my prayer.** A supernatural confidence has been given to him that God has heard and received his cries. It is the place of breakthrough in prayer that cannot be explained only experienced in the secret place of intercession.
- j. Verse 10 - **Let all my enemies be ashamed and greatly troubled; Let them turn back and be ashamed suddenly.** This is not a prayer for his enemies’ destruction but rather for their conversion – to have the same experience he had of sorrowing over their sin.

A mother once approached Napoleon seeking a pardon for her son. The emperor replied that the young man had committed a certain offense twice and justice demanded death.

"But I don't ask for justice," the mother explained. "I plead for mercy."

"But your son does not deserve mercy," Napoleon replied.

"Sir," the woman cried, "it would not be mercy if he deserved it, and mercy is all I ask for."

"Well, then," the emperor said, "I will have mercy." And he spared the woman's son.

¹ *Psalms, Vol. 1 by Charles Spurgeon, p. 19.*

Luis Palau, Experiencing God's Forgiveness, Multnomah Press, 1984.