

# Psalm 6 - The Repenting Prayer of the Suffering Saint

Wednesday, September 05, 2012  
9:01 AM

Passages to Read:

1. Micah 7
2. Matthew 5:1-11
3. Psalm 38

## Introduction

### a. Sermon Introduction

- i. As I mentioned last week, for some reason in God's providence, we have been directed to meditate on suffering in our times together as a church many times over the last month
  - 1) We saw the persecution of the church described in Zechariah 10 and promised in Zechariah 12
  - 2) We listened to Ryle promise that Christians would not be spared earthly trouble two Wednesdays ago
  - 3) Last Sunday we studied Psalm 5, which I titled, "The Glorifying Prayer of the Suffering Saint"
  - 4) So, persecution and suffering seems to be our theme for August and September
- ii. Last week, as we looked at Psalm 5, I asked the question: if a Christian ought to expect worldly trouble and persecution, what then should we do when we are suffering?
- iii. Psalm 5 answered that question last week in one way
  - 1) When the godly meet troubles they cry out to God for salvation and orient their prayer towards the glory of God
- iv. Psalm 6 is going to answer that question in another way
  - 1) Psalm 6 is also the prayer of a suffering saint
  - 2) Here, David, pours out his heart before God and gives us an example of how we should deal with suffering
  - 3) Psalm 6 is an excellent companion to Psalm 5, because it helps us focus on both sides of the issue - Psalm 5 looking outward and Psalm 6 looking inward

### b. Passage Introduction

- i. Psalm 6 is part of a group of Psalms from Psalm 3 to Psalm 7 that are concerned with the suffering of God's people
- ii. It is especially closely related to Psalm 5, both are prayers to God for relief from suffering
- iii. But there are major differences between Psalm 5 and Psalm 6
  - 1) Psalm 5 primarily looks outward at the cause of suffering and calls on God to glorify Himself in salvation
  - 2) Psalm 6 on the other hand looks inward at the cause of suffering and calls on God to be merciful in salvation
- iv. Psalm 6 is a short Psalm of four stanzas
  - 1) The first three stanzas are again a prayer to God in the midst of suffering where David makes several petitions to God and describes his situation to God
  - 2) The last stanza is an address to bystanders, especially David's enemies who are rejoicing in his suffering

### c. Read Psalm 6

### d. Proposition and Outline

- i. Proposition - When the godly suffer, they cry out to God with genuine repentance which leads to eternal relief
- ii. Outline
  - 1) Recognition - In suffering, the godly understand that God's hatred of sin is the ultimate cause of suffering (1-3)
  - 2) Reaction - In suffering, the godly seek God because only God can save from suffering because only God can save from sin (2, 4-5)
  - 3) Reaction - In suffering, the godly repent with tears because their sin has brought God's displeasure (6-7)
  - 4) Result - God hears the prayer of the penitent sinner and grants eternal relief (8-10)

# 1. Recognition - In suffering, the godly understand that God's hatred of sin is the ultimate cause of suffering (1-3)

## a. David understands who is in charge of his suffering

- i. Notice how David starts Psalm 6 - four times he addresses the 'LORD'
  - 1) Verse 1 - 'O LORD, rebuke me not in your anger'
  - 2) Verse 2 - 'Be gracious to me, O LORD'
  - 3) Verse 2 - 'Heal me, O LORD'
  - 4) Verse 3 (the most pronounced instance) - 'But you, O LORD - how long?'
- ii. These addresses, and especially the last address, show that David recognizes God as the ultimate cause of his suffering, whatever the temporal situation may be
- iii. This is a point of similarity between Psalm 5 and Psalm 6
  - 1) Both Psalms view God as ultimately sovereign over suffering
  - 2) But Psalm 6 views God as more directly responsible for it
- iv. So, once again, we see that God is ultimately in charge of all things including the suffering of His people

## b. David understands why God has appointed suffering

- i. Notice how David describes God's attitude toward him
  - 1) Verse 1 - 'O LORD, rebuke me not in your anger'
  - 2) Verse 1 - 'nor discipline me in your wrath'
- ii. These phrases indicate that David understood God to be rightly angry and wrathful with him
  - 1) God saw sin in David and God's response was to rebuke and discipline with suffering
- iii. David understands his suffering to be caused ultimately by God's anger at His sin
- iv. This is a point of departure between Psalm 5 and Psalm 6
  - 1) Although Psalm 5 is not opposed to this view (which is important), Psalm 5 does not meditate on the fact that suffering is due to our own sin
  - 2) Psalm 6 is almost entirely concerned with that concept - suffering is due to God's wrath at sin
- v. We must be careful how we generalize this truth, but this is a general truth
  - 1) Suffering in this world is the result of sin
    - a) None of us are free from sin, so all of us deserve suffering
    - b) None of us, in this life, receive all of the suffering we deserve, so whatever suffering we receive is not more than but less than we deserve
    - c) So, we can rightly attribute our suffering to our sin
      - i) If we were without sin, we would be without suffering
      - ii) The only one who was without sin did experience suffering, but this is only because He submitted Himself willingly to suffering on our behalf
      - iii) In fact, this demonstrates the point, if Christ had not been rightly free from suffering then His experience of suffering would have had no atoning benefit for us
  - 2) This does not mean, though, that someone who is suffering more at any given time is necessarily being judged more for sin or is guilty of more sin
    - a) Again, no one, in this life, receives all of the suffering they deserve, so the amount of suffering cannot be directly correlated to the amount or severity of sin
    - b) So, we must be careful to recognize that when suffering happens, it is less that we deserve because of sin
    - c) But we also must be careful not to use this truth as a means to judge others, the presence of suffering in someone else's life is not proof of a more sinful state
    - d) Luke 13:1-5 - *There were some present at that very time who told him about the Galileans whose blood Pilate had mingled with their sacrifices. And he answered them, "Do you think that these Galileans were worse sinners than all the other Galileans, because they suffered in this way? No, I tell you; but unless you repent, you will all likewise perish. Or those eighteen on whom the tower in Siloam fell and killed them: do you think that they were worse offenders than all the others who lived in Jerusalem? No, I tell you; but unless you repent, you will all likewise perish."*
  - 3) Also, this does not mean that we can always correlate specific suffering to specific sin
    - a) Sometimes specific sins do lead to specific sufferings
    - b) But often times suffering is merely the general result of sin in the world
    - c) We are liable to it because we are sinners, but our experience of suffering is not always directly related to sins we commit
    - d) So, we must be careful not to use this truth to try to determine what specific sin has brought about specific suffering in our life or in others (unless there is an obvious answer)

## 2. Reaction - In suffering, the godly seek God because only God can save from suffering because only God can save from sin (2, 4-5)

### a. After understanding who and what is behind his suffering, David calls out to God to save him

- i. Four times David cries out to God for salvation
  - 1) Verse 2 - *'Be gracious to me, O LORD'*
  - 2) Verse 2 - *'Heal me, O LORD'*
  - 3) Verse 4 - *'Turn, LORD, deliver my life'*
  - 4) Verse 4 - *'Save me'*
- ii. Crying out to God for salvation is the only logical step once the relationship between sin and suffering is realized
  - 1) If suffering is due, ultimately, to the wrath of God against sin, then only the pacification of God's wrath can truly remove suffering
- iii. But, this again begs one of those unanswered questions - if God is angry with David because of his sin, how can God also be the gracious healer and savior?
  - 1) So, this is where this Psalm points to Christ
  - 2) Only in Christ can God possibly be both the Just and the Justifier, the One who has wrath and the One who has mercy
    - a) Romans 3:22-26 - *For there is no distinction: for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and are justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, whom God put forward as a propitiation by his blood, to be received by faith. This was to show God's righteousness, because in his divine forbearance he had passed over former sins. It was to show his righteousness at the present time, so that he might be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus.*
- iv. If God can be merciful in Christ despite His anger at sin, then crying out to God for salvation in suffering is the only thing to do
  - 1) God is the only one who can save from suffering because God is the only one who can save from sin
  - 2) God can only do this through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus
  - 3) So, crying out for mercy in Christ is the proper response to suffering

### b. David gives three purpose statements for why God should save him

- i. God should save David because David is in distress
  - 1) Verse 2 - *'Be gracious to me, O LORD, for I am languishing; heal me, O LORD, for my bones are troubled.'*
  - 2) Verse 3 - *'My soul also is greatly troubled'*
- ii. God should save David because God can demonstrate His steadfast love
  - 1) Verse 3 - *'Save me for the sake of your steadfast love'*
- iii. God should save David because David desires to praise God with the righteous
  - 1) Verse 5 - *'For in death there is no remembrance of you; in Sheol who will give you praise?'*
- iv. Again, like last week, the reason David urges God to hear are not about him primarily, but about God's glory
  - 1) David's distress is a means for God to glorify Himself
    - a) David holds up his pain and his distress as a symbol of his inability to deal with the situation
      - i) David is, at this point, totally helpless
      - ii) David cannot relieve his suffering
      - iii) More importantly, David cannot deal with his sin that brings on suffering
    - b) David's inability emphasizes God's ability to deal with both sin and suffering
      - i) When David is unable to right the situation, God is
      - ii) Therefore, God can display His glory in David's distress
  - 2) David's invocation of God's steadfast love is a call for God to glorify Himself
    - a) God's steadfast love is one of the central essences of His character that He wants to display for His glory, which is why we see it listed in God's name in Exodus 34
    - b) So, when David holds up God's steadfast love as a reason for salvation, He is calling on God to display His character in order to glorify Himself
  - 3) David's desire to praise God with the righteous is a means for God to glorify Himself
    - a) When David talks about none of the dead praising God, he is envisioning the worship at the temple - David's death would cut him off from the public worship of God
    - b) This is representative of being eternally cut off from God's people and God's praise
    - c) When David holds up his desire to praise God, he is appealing directly to God's glory as a reason for salvation

### 3. Reaction - In suffering, the godly repent with tears because their sin has brought God's displeasure (6-7)

#### a. In Psalm 6, we see a twofold response to sin

- i. We see first that David applies to God for mercy, which we discussed above, and second that David mourns over his sin as we see in these verses
- ii. This twofold response to sin is the command and testimony of the entire Scriptures
  - 1) For example, Mark 1:14-15 - *Now after John was arrested, Jesus came into Galilee, proclaiming the gospel of God, and saying, "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe in the gospel."*
  - 2) Usually when I talk about this twofold response I use the terms from Mark 1, repent and believe
  - 3) In this Psalm, the idea of believe is covered by the application to God for mercy, point 2 that we just finished
  - 4) Here in the third stanza we see that second response, repentance from sin

#### b. In Psalm 6, we see that repentance is mourning over sin

- i. Notice the words that David uses to describe his emotions about sin
  - 1) Verse 6 - *moaning*
  - 2) Verse 6 - *flooding his bed with tears*
  - 3) Verse 6 - *weeping*
  - 4) Verse 7 - *grief*
- ii. These words amply paint the picture of David's emotional state toward sin - when David repents from sin he mourns over it
- iii. David is not lighthearted about his application to God for mercy, he sees sin for what it is, an vile offense before God, and he regrets it to the point of tears
- iv. This is the nature of true repentance, not dismissive or forgetful toward sin, but truly sorrowful and mournful over it

#### c. In Psalm 6, we see that repentance is heartfelt and genuine

- i. Notice when David describes his emotions about sin
  - 1) Verse 6 - *'every night I flood my bed with tears'*
  - 2) Verse 6 - *'I drench my couch with my weeping'*
- ii. Notice also how intensely David mourns over his sin
  - 1) Verse 6 - *'I am weary with my moaning'*
  - 2) Verse 7 - *'My eye wastes away because of my grief'*
- iii. Both when and how David mourns for sin demonstrate the true nature of His repentance
  - 1) He mourns at times when he would be alone before God
    - a) On his bed at night
    - b) On his couch in his private rooms
  - 2) He mourns in ways that demonstrate that this is no small matter to him
    - a) He is weary from mourning, he has done it so long and so intensely that it has worn him out
    - b) His eyes waste away, he has wept so much over his sin it feels like his eyes are going to fall out
- iv. David's mourning is not merely a show or a temporal emotional feeling - David's mourning is heartfelt and genuine

#### 4. Result - God hears the prayer of the penitent sinner and grants eternal relief in Christ (8-10)

##### a. An assurance of hearing (8b-9)

- i. As soon as David has repented and sought God for salvation, he is sure that God has answered his prayer
  - 1) David repeats this three times as though to make it absolutely certain that it is true
- ii. God always hears the prayer of those who genuinely repent and turn to Him for salvation
  - 1) John 6:37 - All that the Father gives me will come to me, and whoever comes to me I will never cast out.
  - 2) Isaiah 42:3 - a bruised reed he will not break, and a faintly burning wick he will not quench; he will faithfully bring forth justice.
  - 3) Psalm 34:18 - The LORD is near to the brokenhearted and saves the crushed in spirit.
  - 4) Matthew 5:3-4 - "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. "Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted."

##### b. An assurance of relief and vindication (8a, 10)

- What does the prayer of repentance have to do with a rejection of the wicked?
  - The phrase 'depart from me, you workers of evil' or its close conjugates are found several times in the Bible
  - The usage of this phrase throughout the Bible helps us understand why David's prayer of repentance ends with the hopeful rejection of the wicked
  - Four ways the departing of the wicked represents the penitent's relief

- i. God saves assuredly - God relieves the penitent sinner from the dishonor of those who mock at his downfall

*Micah 7:7-9 - But as for me, I will look to the LORD; I will wait for the God of my salvation; my God will hear me. Rejoice not over me, O my enemy; when I fall, I shall rise; when I sit in darkness, the LORD will be a light to me. I will bear the indignation of the LORD because I have sinned against him, until he pleads my cause and executes judgment for me. He will bring me out to the light; I shall look upon his vindication.*

- 1) Why does David want wicked men to depart from him? Because they are rejoicing in his downfall, but God has granted David relief from his suffering
- 2) This is the straightforward reading of the last stanza - the wicked are those who rejoiced that David was suffering calamity and David anticipates vindication over them
  - a) David is sure of his vindication like Micah is sure of his vindication even though current circumstances look as though they are bearing the displeasure of God
- 3) But why does David find so much hope in his vindication over those who look for his downfall? Let's look at three other places that use similar language to see how the removal of the wicked represents God's salvation.

- ii. God saves positionally - God relieves the penitent sinner from God's enmity and vindicates him over those who mock God's enmity

*Psalms 139:19-24 - Oh that you would slay the wicked, O God! O men of blood, depart from me! They speak against you with malicious intent; your enemies take your name in vain! Do I not hate those who hate you, O LORD? And do I not loathe those who rise up against you? I hate them with complete hatred; I count them my enemies. Search me, O God, and know my heart! Try me and know my thoughts! And see if there be any grievous way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting!*

- 1) Why does David want wicked men to depart from him? Because they are enemies of God, deserving of God's hatred and God has granted David relief from God's enmity
- 2) David understands if God has heard and granted his prayer, then God has freed him from enmity
  - a) Instead of David's portion being with God's enemies, now God's enemies are David's enemies
  - b) David's position before God is changed - God saves positionally
- 3) This is the promise of salvation - when God saves, He saves from His enmity

*Romans 5:10-11 -For if while we were enemies we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, now that we are reconciled, shall we be saved by his life. More than that, we also rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received reconciliation.*

- iii. God saves effectively - God relieves the penitent sinner from bondage to sin and vindicates him over those who entice to sin

*Psalm 119:113-120 - I hate the double-minded, but I love your law. You are my hiding place and my shield; I hope in your word. Depart from me, you evildoers, that I may keep the commandments of my God. Uphold me according to your promise, that I may live, and let me not be put to shame in my hope! Hold me up, that I may be safe and have regard for your statutes continually! You spurn all who go astray from your statutes, for their cunning is in vain. All the wicked of the earth you discard like dross, therefore I love your testimonies. My flesh trembles for fear of you, and I am afraid of your judgments.*

- 1) Why does David want wicked men to depart from him? Because they are incentives to forget the commandment of God and God has granted David relief from sin
- 2) David understands if God has heard and granted his prayer, then God will free him from his bondage to sin
  - a) David's susceptibility to sin has been changed - God saves effectively
- 3) This is the promise of salvation - when God saves, He saves from bondage to sin

*Romans 6:5-11 - For if we have been united with him in a death like his, we shall certainly be united with him in a resurrection like his. We know that our old self was crucified with him in order that the body of sin might be brought to nothing, so that we would no longer be enslaved to sin. For one who has died has been set free from sin. Now if we have died with Christ, we believe that we will also live with him. We know that Christ, being raised from the dead, will never die again; death no longer has dominion over him. For the death he died he died to sin, once for all, but the life he lives he lives to God. So you also must consider yourselves dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus.*

- iv. God saves eternally - God relieves the penitent sinner from eternal judgment and vindicates him over those who reject God ultimately

- In two different places, Christ quotes from this psalm

*Luke 13:22-30 - He went on his way through towns and villages, teaching and journeying toward Jerusalem. And someone said to him, "Lord, will those who are saved be few?" And he said to them, "Strive to enter through the narrow door. For many, I tell you, will seek to enter and will not be able. When once the master of the house has risen and shut the door, and you begin to stand outside and to knock at the door, saying, 'Lord, open to us,' then he will answer you, 'I do not know where you come from.' Then you will begin to say, 'We ate and drank in your presence, and you taught in our streets.' But he will say, 'I tell you, I do not know where you come from. Depart from me, all you workers of evil!' In that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth, when you see Abraham and Isaac and Jacob and all the prophets in the kingdom of God but you yourselves cast out. And people will come from east and west, and from north and south, and recline at table in the kingdom of God. And behold, some are last who will be first, and some are first who will be last."*

*Matthew 7:21-23 - "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. 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?' And then will I declare to them, 'I never knew you; depart from me, you workers of lawlessness.'"*

- 1) Why does David want wicked men to depart from him? Because they are destined for judgment and eternal destruction and God has relieved David from eternal judgment
- 2) David understands if God has heard and granted his prayer, then God will free him from judgment
  - a) Instead of David being liable to judgment, those liable to judgment are separated from David
  - b) David's liability to judgment has been changed - God saves effectively
- 3) This is the promise of salvation - when God saves, He saves from judgment

*Romans 5:9 - Since, therefore, we have now been justified by his blood, much more shall we be saved by him from the wrath of God.*

## 5. Applications

### a. We must understand suffering appropriately - we must see it as the result of sin, particularly our sin

- i. In Psalm 6, David sees that suffering is due to sin, specifically his sin, and that he rightfully deserves suffering (even though David is not necessarily tying specific suffering to specific sin)
- ii. Romans 5:12 - *Therefore, just as sin came into the world through one man, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men because all sinned*
- iii. Romans 3:23 - *for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God*
- iv. So, this Psalm calls us to see both ourselves and our suffering rightly
  - 1) We must understand ourselves as sinners
  - 2) We must understand suffering as the result of sin

### b. We must respond to suffering correctly - we must repent from sin and seek salvation in Christ

- i. David's reaction to suffering in Psalm 6 is twofold, as we saw above
  - 1) David repented of his sin with mourning
  - 2) David sought mercy from God
- ii. This twofold response is the only correct response to sin and suffering
  - 1) We must repent of our sin, mourning over it with heartfelt and genuine repentance
  - 2) We must apply to God for mercy that He might relent from His wrath and show us favor
  - 3) Mark 1:14-15 - *Now after John was arrested, Jesus came into Galilee, proclaiming the gospel of God, and saying, "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe in the gospel."*
- iii. This twofold response is only available in Christ
  - 1) Only the sacrifice of Christ is able to change God's attitude toward us from one of wrath to one of peace
  - 2) Therefore, we must repent and believe on Christ for mercy, we must seek God's favor in Christ
  - 3) Romans 5:1, 10 - *Therefore, since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ...For if while we were enemies we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, now that we are reconciled, shall we be saved by his life.*

### c. We must rest in salvation joyfully - we must anticipate relief and vindication in Christ

- i. God will ultimately save us from all of our suffering, therefore we can rest joyfully in salvation now regardless of our situation because salvation will eventually appear
  - 1) 1 Peter 1:5 - *Who by God's power are being guarded through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.*
- ii. God has positionally saved us, therefore we can rest joyfully in salvation now regardless of our situation because we are no longer enemies with God, but friends
  - 1) Romans 5:1, 10 - *Therefore, since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ...For if while we were enemies we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, now that we are reconciled, shall we be saved by his life.*
- iii. God has effectively saved us, therefore we can fight joyfully for sanctification now regardless of our situation because we are no longer bound to sin but free from it
  - 1) Romans 6:2-7 - *How can we who died to sin still live in it? Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? We were buried therefore with him by baptism into death, in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life. For if we have been united with him in a death like his, we shall certainly be united with him in a resurrection like his. We know that our old self was crucified with him in order that the body of sin might be brought to nothing, so that we would no longer be enslaved to sin. For one who has died has been set free from sin.*
  - 2) Romans 8:12-14 - *So then, brothers, we are debtors, not to the flesh, to live according to the flesh. For if you live according to the flesh you will die, but if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live. For all who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God.*
- iv. God has eternally saved us, therefore we can rest joyfully in salvation now regardless of our situation because, for the believer, all things will ultimately work together for salvation
  - 1) Romans 8:28 - *And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose.*
- v. So, if you have sought Christ in repentance and faith, rest joyfully and fight joyfully in salvation