



Coptic Orthodox Diocese of the Southern United States



The Holy Book of Psalms

Psalm 6

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Introduction

- Psalm 6 is known as the first of the seven penitential Psalms (6, 32, 38, 51, 102, 130, and 143) songs of confession and humility before God
- These psalms are especially suitable to express repentance, a collection designated as such by St. Augustine
- The title of this psalm is ‘To the Chief Musician. With stringed instruments. On an eight-stringed harp. A Psalm of David.’
- The title tells us the recipient of the psalm – the Chief Musician, whom some suppose to be the Lord God Himself, and others suppose to be a leader of choirs or musicians in David’s time, such as Heman the singer or Asaph (1 Chronicles 6:33,16:5-7,25:6)



Introduction

- Not only was it written for stringed instruments, but specifically for the eight-stringed harp
- He instructed the chief musician to accompany the psalm with an eight-stringed instrument; therefore its title is "To the end, in the hymns of the eighth, a psalm to David."
- This psalm was used in the Jewish and Christian liturgies, as it was recited daily in the synagogues and in the ancient Latin Church
- It is a prayer of faith in time of distress
- It is also prayed every morning in the Book of Hours, Agpeya (Prime prayers)



Introduction

- Some scholars find that these seven psalms correspond to David's seven sins, which are
- 1. Pride or vanity when he called for general numbering of Israel
- 2. Adultery with the wife of Uriah the Hittite
- 3. Deceit upon calling Uriah from the army to hide his sin
- 4. Covering his sin by demanding Uriah to sleep with his wife
- 5. Killing Uriah
- 6. Tolerance and extreme leniency with his son Amnon who did evil with his sister
- 7. Deafness of heart as David was unwilling to confess his sin until Nathan the prophet came to him after 2 years



Introduction

The Psalm Outline

- The Agonized Plea to God for Mercy 6:1-3
- The Urgency of David's Plea 6:4-5
- An Intense Description of David's Agony 6:6-7
- Prayer Heard 6:8-10

The Agonized Plea to God for Mercy 6:1-3



- The Psalmist pleads for mercy, pointing to the severity of God's visitation
- He speaks of God as visiting him in His "anger," and in His *hot displeasure*, and pleads with him that He would not thus rebuke and chasten him
- He is conscious of some grievous sin, deserving rebuke and chastisement, and he does not ask to be spared his chastisement; but he would willingly be chastised in love, not in anger (Jeremiah 10:24), *"O Lord, correct me, but with justice; not in Your anger, lest You bring me to nothing"*

The Agonized Plea to God for Mercy 6:1-3



- There may be times when we are chastened by God's hand when really, we suffer trouble brought upon ourselves
- Nevertheless, there are certainly times when the Lord does *chasten* His children
- We know that God's chastening hand is not primarily a mark of His *displeasure*, but rather it is a mark of adoption
- Hebrews 12:7 makes it clear that chastening is evidence of our adoption, *If you endure chastening, God deals with you as with sons; for what son is there whom a father does not chasten?*
- When God corrects us it does not feel pleasant, but it is for our good

The Agonized Plea to God for Mercy 6:1-3



- *Have mercy on me*, I beseech not what I deserve, but Your free mercy
- He knew that what he had done deserved the wrath of God, even his *hot displeasure*; and he knew that there was mercy with God, and therefore he flees unto it, pleads for it
- He pleads no merits of his own, nor makes any mention of former works of righteousness done by him, but throws himself upon the mercy of God
- *I am weak*, The original word means properly to deteriorate or fade away, as plants do, Isaiah 24:7

The Agonized Plea to God for Mercy 6:1-3



- Or as fields do in a drought, Isaiah 16:8, and is here applied to a sick person whose strength is withered and gone
- The word is used in this sense here, as referring to the psalmist himself when sick, as the result of physical and mental sorrows
- He is asking God to deal gently with him, for he is weak
- *heal me*, Meaning either his body, for God is the physician of the body, or his soul by forgiveness as sin is the disease of the soul
- *my bones are troubled*, The bones are the strength and framework of the body, and the psalmist means here to say that the very source of his strength was gone

The Agonized Plea to God for Mercy 6:1-3



- His bones were "*shaken*," as the word in Hebrew means
- His terror had become so great that his very bones shook
- These trials of body and soul were intensified by David's sense of God's anger against him
- When we are not confident in God's love and assistance, even small trials feel unbearable
- *My soul also is greatly troubled*, Because of the burden of his sins, and the sense of God's anger and he means his whole being
- For the healing of his body and soul, the only way opened to the psalmist is to take refuge in the grace and mercy of God

The Agonized Plea to God for Mercy 6:1-3



- *O LORD—how long?* How long will You leave me suffer?
- How long shall my anguish continue?
- The language implies that in his anxiety it was already a long time and that he was constantly looking out for God to intervene and help him
- St. John Chrysostom says, “God is our greatest hope, his lovingkindness beyond telling, and the fact that He is such a one as to be ready to pardon. That phrase, how long, is the mark of someone exhibiting not resentment but suffering and grief, unable to bear the burden of temptation.”

The Urgency of David's Plea

6:4-5



- God seemed to have forsaken David and gone far away
- As God's absence was the main cause of his misery, so his return would be enough to deliver him from his trouble
- Nothing is so hard to endure as the feeling of being deserted by God
- St. Augustine emphasized that it was not His absence who is everywhere present, but our turning away that made us lose Him
- In his agony David pleads for deliverance – but on the basis of God's mercy, not his own righteousness

The Urgency of David's Plea

6:4-5



- Save my life; save me from going down to the grave
- Deliver me from these troubles and dangers
- *me for Your mercies' sake*, The fact that David appealed to the mercy of God for deliverance was evidence that he was aware that he did not *deserve* it
- Observe how frequently David here pleads the name of the Lord
- Five times in four verses because His name is full of consolation to the tempted people
- *For in death there is no remembrance of You*, He knows too that now is the time for turning unto God

The Urgency of David's Plea

6:4-5



- David was aware of the doctrine of the resurrection according to St. John Chrysostom
- After our departure from here there would be no time for repentance
- God's pleasure is in the righteous person who praises Him not only by his tongue but also by his life; therefore the psalmist incites God to grant him His divine grace before the proper time passes
- As St. Augustine and St. John Chrysostom comment that the rich man praised God and repented, but in the view of its delay it did him no good, Luke 16:19-31 and the virgins wanted to get some oil, but no one gave them any, Matthew 25

An Intense Description of David's Agony 6:6-7



- God's chastising hand was heavy upon David
- His life seemed to be nothing but tears and misery
- David, who could face Goliath himself, melts into tears at the remembrance of sin, and under the fear of divine wrath
- *All night I make my bed swim*, He wept so much that his bed seemed to be immersed in tears
- This is, of course, exaggerated language, expressing in a strong and clear manner the depth of his sorrows
- *All night*, In some translation it reads *every night* expressing that David persisted in ceaseless weeping

An Intense Description of David's Agony 6:6-7



- He did not simply weep, but soaked his bed night after night
- Repentance is considered a second baptism
- As an old man's eye grows dim with years, so, says David, *My eye wastes away because of grief*
- Conviction sometimes has such an effect upon the body
- And we also read John the Evangelist testifies how hatred blinds the eye of the heart, *"He who hates his brother, is in the darkness, and walks in the darkness, and does not know where he is going; because the darkness has blinded his eyes"* (1 John 2: 11)

An Intense Description of David's Agony 6:6-7



- *all my enemies*, God's people have many enemies, sin, Satan, and the world; and these are very oppressive ones, as the word here signifies
- Some think that the reference here is to Absalom and those who were associated with him
- However, it is a psalm on penitence and represent David's repentance



Prayer Heard 6:8-10

- The assurance that the worshiper's prayer has been answered, as a gift from God, fills his heart with new strength
- In answer to the prayer of the penitent heart the night's sorrows become the morning's salvation
- David has found peace, and he begins to clean his house from the wicked
- It may be that the sin that led David into this chastisement was association with the ungodly
- Repentance is a practical thing; it is important to separate from ungodly associations



Prayer Heard 6:8-10

- It is not enough to lament, we must cast out the buyers and sellers, and overturn the tables of the money changers
- David made his agonized cry to God, and God heard him
- David speaks from an inward conviction
- He knows that he has prayed sincerely and fervently
- He is certain, therefore, that his prayer is heard and accepted
- *LORD has heard the voice of my weeping*, It is not that God is impressed by emotional expressions, but a passionate heart impresses Him



Prayer Heard 6:8-10

- *The LORD has heard my supplication, He repeats the confident assertion of faith, that God has heard his prayer, and with equal confidence adds the assurance that He will accept it favorably, and not reject it, “This is the confidence that we have in Him, that if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us. And if we know that He hears us, whatever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we have asked of Him.” (1 John 5:14-15)*
- David knew that when God heard and answered his prayer, it would be trouble for his enemy
- David now saw that his *temporary* agony and trouble gave way to a *permanent* agony and trouble for his enemies



Prayer Heard 6:8-10

- The Psalmist with the eye of faith sees the answer to his prayer
- *Let them turn back*, The meaning either from him, from pursuing after him; or to him and be reconciled to him, and be at peace with him
- It can be also be his wish is that they might be brought to see their own guilt and repent of their sins
- *Suddenly*, He desired that there might be no delay, but that their defeat might be accomplished at once
- As it was right to pray that this might occur, so it was right to pray that it might occur without delay, or as speedily as possible
- The sooner the plans of sinners are confounded, the better



Prayer Heard 6:8-10

- Many of the repentant psalms end in this way, to instruct the believer to continually look forward, and be comforted that there will be an end and sin and sorrow shall be no more
- The sackcloth of the penitent shall be exchanged for a robe of glory
- This Psalm, like those which precede it, shows the different conditions of the godly and the wicked

Discussion



- What key words in this Psalm describe David's condition?
- What does David ask God for?
- Why is it important to not simply weep but to pray in our tears?
- What statements toward the end of the Psalm show David's hope and confidence in God?