

Turn to Us, O Lord

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 09 December 2016

Preacher: Shawn Woo

[0 : 00] Psalm 6, verses 1 to 10. I'll read it out loud for us.

To the choir master, with stringed instruments, according to the Shemineth, a psalm of David. Turn, O Lord, deliver my life.

Save me for the sake of your steadfast love. For in death there is no remembrance of you. In Sheol, who will give you praise?

I am weary with my moaning. 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. Depart from me, all you workers of evil, for the Lord has heard the sound of my weeping.

[1 : 38] The Lord has heard my plea. The Lord accepts my prayer. All my enemies shall be ashamed and greatly troubled. They shall turn back and be put to shame in a moment.

The word of the Lord. Now, we are physical beings. As we talked about this past Sunday, because we're physical beings with creatures affected by our senses, our souls are therefore affected by the things that affect our bodies.

So often, sometimes when we're physically ill, that could also affect how we feel spiritually. And it does not mean necessarily that we will struggle spiritually if we're struggling physically, but it can affect how we feel spiritually.

In a similar way, when we're spiritually sick, plagued by guilt and an unrepentant sin or anxiety, that could also affect us physically as well. And we find a similar situation here in Psalm 6.

So, he is in trouble. It says in verse 2, it says, I am languishing. Heal me, O Lord, for my bones are troubled. It says in verse 2.

[2 : 51] But it's not just his bones that are in trouble, which represents his body, but also his soul. It says in verse 3, my soul also is greatly troubled. And there's probably some kind of sin involved with the psalmist.

You can see a hint of that in verse 1, where he says, O Lord, rebuke me not in your anger, nor discipline me in your wrath. So, the psalmist is making a connection between his current predicament, where he is ailing in bone and soul.

He's being assailed by his enemies. He feels alienated from God. And he's tying that to God's discipline, that God may be disciplining him, rebuking him for his sin and his anger.

And what's remarkable about this is that even though he feels like he's alienated from God and God's attacking him, not attacking him, but rebuking him, disciplining him at this juncture, he doesn't withdraw from God in fear because of this punishment, but rather this becomes an occasion for him to draw nearer to God.

So, he prays in verse 2, Be gracious to me, O Lord, for I am languishing. Heal me, O Lord, for my bones are troubled. And he cries out in verses 3 to 4, But you, O Lord, how long?

[4 : 10] Turn, O Lord, deliver my life. Save me for the sake of your steadfast love. And the basis for the psalmist's prayer, the reason why he's able to approach him is because God's gracious, right?

It says in verse 2, it's his grace, and in verse 4, it's his steadfast love. They're very closely related ideas to God's graciousness and his steadfast love. And this is reminiscent of what Job says.

You guys know the story of Job. He's afflicted, allowed to be afflicted by Satan, by the sovereign God. He says of God in chapter 13, verse 15 of Job, Though he slay me, I will hope in him.

So, even though he says, God slay me, but I will hope in him. So, though God's letting him suffer, Job's putting his hope in him, and that should be our disposition also as we look at this psalm.

Even though we may feel like God's disciplining us, even though we may feel like God's distant from us, alienated from us, the temptation, when we feel that way, is to draw further away from him.

[5 : 11] When we're suffering, the temptation is to draw, isolate ourselves from God. And after we have sinned and feel guilty, the temptation is to say, oh, well, I'm not worthy to go to God right now. I'm going to stay away from him, do my own thing.

That's the temptation. But because we have a God who is gracious, as this psalm said, and because we have a God who is a God of steadfast love, rather, when we feel that way in suffering and sin, that's more of an occasion for us to approach God and draw near to him.

Like Job's saying, even though you slay me, I hope in you. Even though you afflict us, God, Lord, we turn to you. We hope in you. We trust in you. And that's actually what our children do when we discipline them appropriately.

I see this in my daughter, Ine. Like when, and I mean, I hate to discipline her in one sense because I love her and I hate to, it pains me to see her in pain, in discipline.

But at the same time, because I love her, precisely because I love her and I don't want her to grow up in selfishness and selflessness, as I discipline her. And when I discipline her, you would think that she would run from me, but actually she, like, extends her arm out like this and tries to come to me.

[6 : 25] She wants to hug me. And as I'm disciplining her. And I think she does that because she instinctively knows that by doing something wrong, by her wrongdoing, she has alienated herself from me.

And so she feels that there is a gap and that she's, and it's, she's to be blamed for it. And in order to right that wrong, she wants to embrace me.

She wants me to forgive her and to be reconciled to me. And that's why, so she comes to me even as I'm disciplining her. And I think that's kind of a picture of what God's calling us to be. Like the children who come to him even as he's disciplining us, we come to him because we know that that's our sin, that's done it, and we know that he's gracious toward us.

So we turn to him even in the midst of our sin and suffering. And so it's with this basis that the psalmist says in verse four, turn, O Lord, deliver my life, save me for the sake of your steadfast love.

And later, he goes on to say in verse five, four and five, read with me in verse four and five.

[7 : 48] It says, turn, O Lord, deliver my life, save me for the sake of your steadfast love. For in death, there is no remembrance of you. In Sheol, who will give you praise? And to us as Christians, that might seem kind of sub-Christian to ask in such desperation to be saved from death because we think of what Paul says and for example, in Philippians 1, 21, 25, for to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain.

And then he says later, it's far better for me to depart and be with Christ. So we think of that and say, well, why is this psalmist then so desperate to live?

Isn't it better for him to die and be with God? But we have to remember that by this point of God's revelation, that the Jews in this time understand death to be final.

They believe in the life with God to be this physical life. And that's why he's so desperate here. And it's not until Jesus comes in his clear teaching, his example of giving people spiritual life that we see that there's spiritual life even after death.

And this is what theologians call progressive revelation, that the revelation of God, he didn't give it all at once, but from the Old Testament to the New Testament, there's a certain progress.

[9 : 13] He reveals more and more and Christ is the final, ultimate revelation. And so we see that in the example of, for example, Israel's promised land. So they thought that promised land was that physical land of Israel in the Middle East.

So that's what they longed for. But when Jesus comes and he teaches us, we realize that the real promised land is our inheritance in heaven with God, the spiritual land.

And then in a similar way, we see that in the Old Testament, the Jews believed that God's people were people who were physically descended from Abraham. But in the New Testament, through Christ's teaching and through Paul's writing in Romans 9, we see that actually God's people are those who are spiritually descended from Abraham through faith.

And even in the Old Testament, that was the case, as Paul argues in Romans 9. And then finally here, as seen in this psalm, Jews believed that their life with God consisted primarily of the physical life here and now.

But in the New Testament, through Christ, we learn that first and foremost, the life he gives us in parts was a spiritual life. And later, that life will be combined with the resurrection of the body of the second coming.

[10:26] So that's the progression. And I read a poem by Emily Dickinson when I was in college that really helped me grasp, get my head around this idea of progressive revelation.

It's called Tell All the Truth, But Tell It Slant. And it goes like this. It says, Tell all the truth, but tell it slant. Success in circuit lies.

Too bright for our infirm delight, the truth's superb surprise. As lightning to the children eased with explanation kind, the truth must dazzle gradually, or every man be blind.

So she's arguing that you can't explain lightning to children. You explain that in an easy way for them to understand as an expression of kindness. And in the same way, the truth dazzles us gradually so that we don't go blind and are overwhelmed by the force of it or the beauty of it. And Jesus, or God, in a gracious way, in his sovereign wisdom, reveals his truth to us progressively. And so that's what we see here. And Sheol is simply realm of the dead.

[11:36] It's what, in the New Testament, is called Hades. So that's what he's saying, save me from Sheol, because in death there is no remembrance of you. He wants to praise God, continue to live, and live for him. And so this is a good lesson for us as well as we cry out to him in our sin and suffering as we turn to him, because it doesn't mean that, it shows us that we don't have to sanitize our feelings and only say nice and rosy things to God.

Because this psalm, his cry is pleased really raw and authentic and vulnerable and honest. So he says in verses 6 to 7, I am weary with my moaning.

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.

So this is very, it's not a pretty picture of how he's doing. He's really struggling and he lets God know that he's just really having a hard time. Every night I flood my bed with tears.

The literal expression in Hebrew is that he caused his bed to swim. So it's a hyperbole that talks about how much he's crying. And he's wasting away. His eyes are wasting away.

[12:48] And eyes, the healthy eyes are indicative of a healthy body throughout the Old Testament. So when in Deuteronomy 34, 7 to describe Moses' supernatural health when he's in his ripe old age of 120, it says that his eyes were undimmed.

So here, in contrast, the psalmist's eyes are wasting away. That means he's in the throes of death. He's about to die. His body's wasting away. And he lets God know that's how he's struggling.

But there's an amazing turn in verse 7, between verse 7 and verse 8. So psalmist is pouring out his heart to God, heart and soul to God, but he appears to have found some kind of comfort and faith because he says, in verses 8 to 10, that God's answered his prayer, that he's heard him.

And this shows us that it's when we have really expressed our lostness and admitted our hopelessness before God, that's when we're found by him and filled with hope.

It's when we confess our faithlessness to him honestly, that's when God renews our faith in him. And so this is, Psalm 6 is just a really powerful picture of what an intimate relationship with God looks like.

[14:02] And so the psalmist turned to God in his suffering and sin, and then now God turns to him in his grace. So that's what we see, that there's a turn here in the psalm in verses 8 and 10.

And we see that because there's several words in verses 8 and 10 that mirror verses 1 to 7 is to show that God answers the psalmist's prayer. So for example, verses 2 to 3, it says, that his bones and soul were troubled.

And the same word troubled is used in verse 10, but this time it's his enemies who will be troubled. Because God has answered his prayer, now he's no longer troubled, his enemies are going to be troubled. And in verse 2, the psalmist asks God, be gracious to me.

And then in verse 9, he says, the Lord has heard my plea. And the word plea literally means in Hebrew, a plea for grace. That's what, it comes from the same root as the word grace.

So he's saying that he cried out to God to be gracious to him and the Lord has heard his plea for grace. Verse 2 and then verse 9.

[15:05] And then finally in verse 4, he had asked God, turn, oh Lord, deliver my life. He asked God to turn to him. And then in verse 10, because God has turned to him and delivered him, now he's able to say to his enemies, turn back and be put to shame.

Same word, turn. So, and because God has turned to him, his enemies will turn from him. So we see it in all this, this kind of symmetrical structure that God's answered us on his prayer.

So when we turn to God in our suffering and say, God turns to us in grace. But for us, we have an even surer basis for this, that God's grace than even the psalmist.

And the reason for that is because Jesus has come. And because he quotes this, actually, Psalm verse 3, where it says, my soul also is greatly troubled. Jesus quotes this when he's speaking of his impending death in John 12, 27.

And he says, now is my soul troubled. And what shall I say? Father, save me from this hour. But for this purpose, I have come to this hour. So, Jesus is saying that now his soul is troubled.

[16 : 15] And the reason why, in the midst of our trouble, when we're in our suffering and sin, we can be assured that God's going to be gracious to us. Ultimately, for us, as Christians, it's because Jesus, his soul was troubled.

It's because he endured suffering. It's because he bore our sin. So that's why all the more we have, because we've seen the ultimate demonstration of God's grace and steadfast love in Jesus, we can turn to him in our suffering and sin, knowing that he will turn to us in grace.

So, with that in mind, let's turn to God and pray. Pray to him. Mind. sciences dni in