

Opening Words

The God who disciplined David is the same loving Father who disciplines us for our good.

Psalm 6

O LORD, do not rebuke me in Your anger,
Nor chasten me in Your wrath.
²Be gracious to me, O LORD, for I *am* pining away;
Heal me, O LORD, for my bones are dismayed.
³And my soul is greatly dismayed;
But You, O LORD—how long?
⁴Return, O LORD, rescue my soul;
Save me because of Your lovingkindness.
⁵For there is no mention of You in death;
In Sheol who will give You thanks?
⁶I am weary with my sighing;
Every night I make my bed swim,
I dissolve my couch with my tears.
⁷My eye has wasted away with grief;
It has become old because of all my adversaries.
⁸Depart from me, all you who do iniquity,
For the LORD has heard the voice of my weeping.
⁹The LORD has heard my supplication,
The LORD receives my prayer.
¹⁰All my enemies will be ashamed and greatly dismayed;
They shall turn back, they will suddenly be ashamed.

Those are the words of King David, writing some 3000 years ago, preserved for us in God’s word in the Book of Psalms and serving as a guide in our times of distress, grief, and sorrow. Admittedly, this is a gloomy psalm. But, let’s be honest, most of us have gloomy times and feel as David felt when he wrote this. He speaks of pining away, of being dismayed, of sighing, of tears, and of problems caused by adversaries. In addition, he speaks of God’s rebuke and chastening.

Did you notice also that he brings everything to God? He calls upon the Lord for his grace. He asks God for healing. He asks God to come to him, and he ends triumphantly with a statement of faith and a statement of the tables being turned as he is delivered and others encounter trouble.

Let’s examine what David said more closely and learn from his experience.

David begins in verse 1 by speaking of the anger and wrath of God toward him. “Lord do not rebuke me in your anger. Do not chasten me in your wrath.” This is a bit surprising because other places in Scripture speak of God’s discipline as a sign of his love and guidance that corrects and steers us onto the right path. But David cannot see the love of God in this discipline. All he can see is the anger of God towards him. David knows God is a God of grace. He knows God is a God of healing, but in this circumstance, he has lost sight of that grace.

I understand – I have felt that way at times. Have you? Many times in my life I thought, “I have really blown it now. I have really messed up now. How can God forgive me? How can God forgive this?” More than once I have used these exact words in my prayers because I felt like God was going to come down hard on me, not because he is mean and vindictive, but because I am weak and foolish and did what I was not supposed to do and so I have cried out, “O Lord, I know I deserve your discipline, but in your discipline, I pray it would not be too hard. I pray it would not be with wrath and anger towards me.” Have you ever felt that way?

Now, I know God’s anger has been removed from us in Christ. I know Scripture tells us there is no condemnation for us in Christ Jesus. The wrath of God no longer exists for us in Christ. But, let’s be honest, sometimes *we feel like* he is really going to come down hard on us and that is what David is expressing.

David doesn’t describe what he did to receive such hard discipline. I guess it doesn’t matter. Whatever it was, he felt like he really blew it and was in danger of death from the Lord. He tells the Lord in verse 2, “I am pining away. All my bones are dismayed.” These expressions tell us that David was fading moment by moment. The very core of his being, his bones, were affected by the discipline upon him. Yet, even in this description of disease, David says something remarkable. He says “Be gracious to me O Lord! Heal me O Lord!” That my friends is a man of faith and a man who knows something about the lovingkindness of God! That is the way we need to be. Even when we are disciplined for our sin we need to call upon the Lord for grace and healing! God wants us to do this! And really, what else can we do? Where else can we go? God is the one who gives life, takes away life, and restores life to the fallen. It all comes from him! David realized this and amid his pain that came from the discipline of God, he called upon the Lord.

He continues in verse 4, “Return O Lord, rescue my soul. Save me because of your lovingkindness.” David appeals to God’s gracious character. In our previous message, we talked about the lovingkindness of God. It is from the Hebrew word *hesed* and it is almost impossible to translate with one word only. Some translations use the phrase “unfailing love”. Some use the phrase “steadfast love.” It has within it the ideas of grace, mercy, patience, compassion, faithfulness, loyalty, and love. These ideas are wrapped up in this one word. And this one word describes the way God revealed himself to Moses on Mt. Sinai, as the Lord who was full of lovingkindness, full of *hesed*.

Some commentators believe that David even had this event in Israel’s history in mind when he told the Lord to return to him because this is what Moses prayed in the incident of the golden calf. God said he was going to destroy Israel because of their wickedness but listen to Moses’ prayer:

“O LORD, why does Your anger burn against Your people whom You have brought out from the land of Egypt with great power and with a mighty hand ¹²Why should the Egyptians speak, saying, ‘With evil *intent* He brought them out to kill them in the mountains and to destroy them from the face of the earth’? Turn from Your burning anger and change Your mind about *doing* harm to Your people. ¹³Remember Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, Your servants to whom You swore by Yourself, and said to them, ‘I will multiply your descendants as the stars of the heavens, and all this land of which I have spoken I will give to your descendants, and they shall inherit *it* forever.’”

Did you catch the similarity in the words? Moses spoke of God's anger and he asked God to turn from his anger. David does the same in this psalm. In verse 1 he spoke of God's anger and in verse 4 he asks God to turn to him with compassion and rescue his soul. There is a good lesson for us in this. If David was thinking of the incident of the golden calf and asking for God's mercy based upon the example of God's mercy to his people, then that is an example for us to do the same. This is the reason why we need to learn the word of God. As we come into similar situations, like the ones recorded in Scripture, we can apply the solutions that the great men and women of Scripture used.

David also asks God to rescue him because he doesn't want to die. He doesn't want to go to the grave. He wants to remain on the earth for it is on the earth that God has called mankind to live and it is on the earth where he can sing praises to God. The world was in darkness and singing praises to false gods. David wanted to remain on the earth and sing praises to the true God.

In verses 6-7 David continues with a description of his grief. He speaks of his sighing. Some translations use the word moaning and others use the word groaning. David says he is crying so much that the volume of tears is going to wash away the couch on which he rests. His eyes are becoming old because of the grief brought upon him by his enemies. People rejoiced when David was having problems. Instead of helping him, they were happy when David had troubles. They wanted him to fail and to fall so they could seize power.

But at this moment in the psalm, the tables turn. David looks upon his enemies who surround him and demands that these workers of iniquity depart. Even though God has brought great discipline upon him for his sin, David declares that the Lord has heard the voice of his weeping, the Lord has heard his supplication, the Lord has heard his prayer. God came through for David.

The God who disciplined David is the same God of love who disciplines us for our good. He comes through faithfully with his hesed, his lovingkindness for us. In verse 2 David asked God for grace and mercy. In verse 9 he said that God heard his supplication. In verse 2-3 he speaks of the terrors that were coming his way because of his sin. But in verse 10, the terrors are gone from David and have come to his enemies. They are now dismayed. In verse 4 he asks God to turn back to him with lovingkindness and in verse 10 the enemies are turned back with shame because God has come through.

This is Psalm 6 and in the first centuries of Church life it became an important psalm of repentance. This psalm along with psalms 32, 38, 51, 102, 130, and 143 became seven psalms that Christians memorized and used as they wrestled with their sins. This psalm would be good for us to use today in our society that seems to have forgotten God is holy, that sin has consequences, and that sickness sometimes comes because of our sins and failure to obey God.

May God have mercy upon us and help us to pray through this psalm in our dark times and may we find the lovingkindness of God in an abundant way to restore us from our sins. This will bring true soul satisfaction!