

“Have Mercy upon Me”

Psalm 6

Originally entitled, “How to Restore Fellowship.”

This psalm is considered one of seven “penitential” psalms (the others are 32, 38, 51, 102, 130, and 143). David is said to be the author of five of them (6, 32, 38, 51, and 143) but that isn’t to say he didn’t author any of the other ones – just that those five are documented as being from him. Psalm 51 is the most familiar of this type of Psalm.

They are called “penitential” because the main emphasis is on a sorrow for sin and a repentant heart in relation to that sin. “From as early as the time of Origen (AD 184-253) and Augustine (AD 354-430), the penitential psalms were set apart for liturgical use in the Christian church for the confession of sin and repentance” (as found on <https://www.gotquestions.org/penitential-psalms.html>).

As David was found sorrowful for his sins, so are we to be for ours today – nothing has changed from Old to New Testament theology on this issue. He realized that to restore proper fellowship with God he must show his sorrowfulness for sin.

This is not a psalm for salvation, as we would think in New Testament terminology – it is not David asking for mercy and grace for salvation – he would have already been considered a child of God, spiritually. It is showing his attitude toward a sin, or sins, he had committed. It is also to be our attitude when we sin as New Testament Christians. First John 1:9 gives us the New Testament equivalent relating to the believer. The whole purpose is to restore fellowship with God. That's what David wanted. He

found he couldn't live without it, nor should we.

So, how do we restore that fellowship once sin has gotten in the way? Remember, this is dealing with the believer in repentance and confession – in penitence (defined as the act of feeling or showing sorrow and regret for having done wrong; repentance) – not repentance unto salvation (although the same principles would apply there as well).

I. REALIZE WE HAVE SINNED

Although this point has no reference in the text, it is very much assumed in the first verse – “O LORD, rebuke me not in thine anger, neither chasten me in thy hot displeasure.” The primary purpose of chastening as seen in Scripture is to bring a child back to right action, and considering the psalmist is recognizing what he was going through was chastening then it is recognizable that he realized he had sinned and what he was going through was a result of that sin.

The first step in restoring fellowship with the Father is admitting we have sinned and knowing and admitting what that sin is (to the Father – not to man).

1 John 1:5–10

⁵ This then is the message which we have heard of him, and declare unto you, that God is light, and in him is no darkness at all.

⁶ If we say that we have fellowship with him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth:

⁷ But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin.

⁸ If we say that we have no sin, we deceive

ourselves, and the truth is not in us.

⁹ If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

¹⁰ If we say that we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us.

II. REALIZE WE WILL BE CHASTENED FOR THAT SIN AND THAT THAT CHASTENING CAN END WHEN WE ARE REPENTANT – VS. 1-4

A. If this is realized in our lives then we won't be so apt to blame God when it comes, knowing that it's for our good and His glory.

B. It's because we are God's children that we are chastened, as found throughout Scripture.

[Hebrews 12:5-11](#)

⁵ And ye have forgotten the exhortation which speaketh unto you as unto children, My son, despise not thou the chastening of the Lord, nor faint when thou art rebuked of him:

⁶ For whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth.

⁷ If ye endure chastening, God dealeth with you as with sons; for what son is he whom the father chasteneth not?

⁸ But if ye be without chastisement, whereof all are partakers, then are ye bastards, and not sons.

⁹ Furthermore we have had fathers of our flesh which corrected us, and we gave them reverence: shall we not much rather be in subjection unto the Father of spirits, and live?

¹⁰ For they verily for a few days chastened us after their own pleasure; but he for our profit, that we might be partakers of his holiness.

¹¹ Now no chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous: nevertheless afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby.

C. The words used here by the psalmist to show the consequence of sin are useful for us today to know that there are always going to be consequences to actions. It is because of the mercy of God that those consequences aren't more significant than they are, at times.

1. "Rebuke me not" – vs. 1a

a) The word for "rebuke" (נָקַח) is a very interesting one. It comes from a word that means "figuratively, to be in the sunshine, to be clear, manifest..." (GHCL0T).

b) In its use here, and other passages like this, it means "to correct by punishment, to punish; especially used of God dealing with men in discipline..." (GHCL0T). As it relates to the root word, God brings into the light the consequences of man's sin in order to cause correction of behavior in their lives.

That's what preaching is to do, in part, and sometimes that correction is to be done in public. To shine a light on the issues with the purpose of a change of heart and actions.

1 Timothy 5:20

²⁰ Them that sin rebuke before all, that others also may fear.

[This is speaking contextually about the elders in the church – today, the pastor]

2 Timothy 4:2-3

² Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine.

³ For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears;

2. "Neither chasten me" – vs. 1b

- a) This is the parallel to the first verset, and "rebuke me not." The rebuke is the chastening.
- b) The word used (יָסַר) means, literally, to correct by blows or stripes (GHCLOT) with the purpose of instruction.

3. "I am weak" – vs. 2a

- a) The only time this word is used in the Hebrew Old Testament – אָמַל – with a primary meaning in its lexical form of to languish or to droop.
- b) "Properly, used of plants hanging down their heads" (GHCLOT). The use here by the psalmist as he considers his plight under the chastening of the Lord is to show how both physically and spiritually weak he had become under the pressure.

4. "My bones are vexed" – vs. 2b – "my soul is also sore vexed" – vs. 3a

- a) The word for "vexed" – בָּהַל – is one that is often translated "troubled" or "afraid," and

carries the idea of trepidation (a feeling of fear or agitation), or literally, to tremble out of fear.

- b) His “bones” were “vexed” – they were weakened and trembled at the outcome of his sin.
- c) His “soul” was “sore vexed” – the very core of his being, what made him who he was, was greatly troubled at what had happened. It shows how sorrowful he really was.

D. Equally useful, equally helpful, is to know that God is there to hear us when we cry out in sorrowfulness and plead for mercy.

1. The psalmist realizes that his chastening is from the Lord and that He is a God that is merciful and will hear him when he calls, so he asks that the rebuking, that the chastening, ends – that the anger and “hot displeasure” would be removed from him – vs. 1.
2. He asks for mercy and for healing – indicating there were some very real, physical consequences to his sin – vs. 2.

Something we need to remember here is that not all our physical suffering is from our sin, or a particular sin, outside of man’s original sin in the Garden (Job is an illustration of this truth). However, it can be, and when it is we will know why we are suffering (refer to point I).

3. He asks the question, “O LORD, how

long?" When will it end? Indicating there can be an end, there will be an end, to the chastening.

4. He asks the Lord to "return" to him – that is, to return to blessing him rather than chastening him. He wants to be delivered from this trouble he's caused himself – vs. 4a.

Keep in mind, God is faithful to forgive and restore if we are faithful in our repentance and sorrow.

5. He then gives one of the greatest requests in the Bible – both for the saved and for the lost – "oh save me for thy mercies' sake." It is not because we deserve anything, it is because of who God is – a loving, merciful God – that we can plead with him in sorrow for sin and know that He will hear and answer that prayer – for His "mercies' sake." – vs. 4b

D.L. Moody once said, "There are two ways of covering our sins: man's way and God's way. If you seek to hide them, they will have a resurrection sometime; but if you let the Lord cover them, neither the devil nor man will ever be able to find them again."

George Woodall was a missionary to London's inner city. One day a young woman he had led to the Lord came to him and said, "I keep getting worried. Has God really forgiven my past?"

Mr. Woodall replied, "If this is troubling you, I think I know what God would say to you. He would tell you to

mind your own business." "What do you mean?" She inquired with a puzzled look. He told her that Jesus had made her sins his business. When he took them away, he put them behind his back, dropped them into the depths of the sea, and posted a notice that reads, "No fishing!"

III. REALIZE THE ANGUISH SIN AND ITS CONSEQUENCES CAN CAUSE – VS. 5-7

A. Verse five (5) finds the psalmist asking a rhetorical question – in essence, "If I'm dead, if You take my life from me, who will be left to give You praise?" David isn't being sarcastic or irreverent here – he's demonstrating how bad he felt, and how bad things had become for him in his life. He truly believed he would die from this agony.

Do we get that burdened because of our sin?

B. Verses six and seven (6-7a) deal with the emotional anguish, the emotional toil, this chastening had taken on him – he couldn't sleep, he couldn't function at all, he just wanted to weep. He wanted it over.

IV. REALIZE THERE IS VICTORY – THERE IS HOPE – VS. 8-10

A. Verse eight (8a), as well as the last verset of verse seven (7b), brings up the enemies the psalmist had. It would seem

that those enemies, and their immoral behavior ("iniquity" – אָוֶן – primary meaning of emptiness), were the means that the Lord allowed to bring David to his spiritual senses – they were the means of the chastening and rebuking.

Vs. 10 – David calls upon his enemies to be ashamed of what they had done, and to be vanquished from his presence. He had won the victory over those enemies (spiritually speaking) and they no longer had any value to his restored fellowship, for the restoration was now complete.

B. The answer came, as we can see, to every point of this penitence, to every point of this sorrowfulness for sin.

1. Vs. 8b – "for the LORD hath heard the voice of my weeping" (answers to verses six and seven)
2. Vs. 9a – "The LORD hath heard my supplication" (answers to verses one through three) – the word for "supplication" (תַּחֲנִיחַ) is one that means a cry for mercy.
3. Vs. 9b – "the LORD will receive my prayer" (answers to verses four and five)

The uniqueness here is the future tense of the verb יִקַּח – לָקַח (Qal imperfect). The others are past tense (Qal perfect), but this one shows that just as the Lord had heard him before, He would hear him now, and He would always hear him when he

prayed.

“As he has done it, so he will still do it. This allays all fears of the future, and makes the mind calm. The state of mind here is this: ‘The Lord has heard my prayer; I am assured that he will do it hereafter; I have, therefore, nothing to fear.’ (Barnes)

Conclusion: David found it was better to die than live without God's fellowship. Jesus found, while on the cross, the awful disparity there is without God's fellowship when He took upon Himself our sins and that fellowship with the Father was broken. Sin breaks fellowship – repentant prayer restores it.

Psalm 22:1

¹ My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me? why art thou so far from helping me, and from the words of my roaring?

Matthew 27:46

⁴⁶ And about the ninth hour Jesus cried with a loud voice, saying, **Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani?** that is to say, My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?