

# A Confident Answer to an Agonized Plea

by David Guzik

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*David's agonized plea in Psalm 6 expresses his desire for mercy and deliverance from God's chastising hand, which he believes is a result of his sin.*

**Duration:** 29:44

**Scripture:** Matthew 6:33, 2 Timothy 2:10

**Topics:** "Repentance", "Gods Mercy"

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## Description

In this sermon, the preacher shares a story about a boxer who came to the Lord after winning a championship belt. Despite being ridiculed by his former boxing companions, the boxer boldly declared that he would give up his belt and them if they wouldn't go with him to heaven. He even convinced some of them to come to church with him and they got converted. The preacher also discusses the importance of repentance and turning away from sinful associations, using the example of David in the Bible. Additionally, he highlights the agony and plea for deliverance expressed by David in the Psalms, emphasizing the need for God's mercy.

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## Transcript

Psalm six. There are a series of seven songs known as the Penitential Psalms. There's psalms of confession of sin and brokenness before God.

Some of them are quite well known and you would probably recognize them. Like Psalm 32, blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered. Blessed is the man to whom the Lord does not impute iniquity and in whose spirit there is no guile.

Another well-known of these seven is Psalm 51, where David says, Have mercy upon me, O God, according to your loving kindness, according to the multitude of your tender mercies, blot out my transgressions, wash me thoroughly from my iniquity and cleanse me from my sin. Psalm six is known as the first of this series of seven Penitential Psalms. But I want you to notice that as we'll find out as we go through the psalm, it's a bit different than the other seven.

By the way, it was a custom in the early church to sing these psalms on Ash Wednesday, the Wednesday before Easter, when it was a time of real meditation on our sin and our need for God. The psalm begins with the title to the chief musician with stringed instruments on an eight stringed harp, a psalm of David. Look at David's agonized plea in verse one.

Oh, Lord, do not rebuke me in your anger, nor chasing me in your hot displeasure. Now, we don't know what the occasion of sin was at this time in David's life, but David sensed that he was under the rebuke of God. He sensed that God's chastising hand was upon him.

Now, there are times in our walk with God when we believe the chastising hand of God is upon us when it's not. Sometimes it's just the normal trials and afflictions of life. You know, a person is sick, they have a cold or the flu and, you know, their head just feels like it's heavy as a bowling ball and one of the heavy ones, too.

And there they are. They're just, you know, they're just so thick in their head and all this is agony. And then, oh, Lord, you know, I'm so sorry, God, for my sin.

I know this is your chastising hand upon me. And it's as if sometimes God would say from heaven, it's a virus. You know, sometimes we make more out of things than they are.

Nevertheless, there are certainly times when the Lord does chasten his children. There are certainly times when God uses trial or affliction or adversity like a spanking, a spanking from a perfectly loving parent, a perfectly wise parent. But it's spanking nonetheless.

Now, put yourself in the place of a child calling out to your father before it's time for the spanking. Oh, father, do not rebuke me in your anger, nor chasten me in your hot displeasure. You get the sense of it there? Now, it's not as if David says, don't rebuke me, Lord.

It's not as if he's saying, don't chastise me. The sense is, I may need rebuke, I may need chastisement, but God, don't do it in your anger. Don't do it in your hot displeasure.

Now, we know, especially on this side of the cross, that God's chastening hand is not primarily a mark of his displeasure, but it's a mark of adoption. Hebrews 12, seven makes it clear that chastening is evidence of our adoption as sons and daughters of God. It says, if you endure chastening, God deals with you as sons, for what son is there whom a father does not chasten? My youngest son, Jonathan, is playing on a football team and, you know, a young boy playing football and it's just his second season and there's other guys on the teams who've been playing for four or five years and he's enjoying it, but he's got a lot to learn out there.

And so sometimes the coaches will yell at him. Football coaches yell in a way that, you know, baseball or soccer coaches don't. And the other day I was there before the scrimmage and, you know, I was making sure Jonathan had his pads on and everything.

And the coach comes over and he says to Jonathan, he says, now, Guzik, that's the other thing about football coaches. It's never first names. It's always last name.

You know, now, Guzik, you know, I want you to know that sometimes I yell at you, but I'm only yelling at you because I think you're a good player and I want to make you better and I think I can make you better. And he says, and Guzik, I want you to know that the day you have to worry is when I don't say anything to you. Well, you know, in a way, that's kind of how it is with the Lord and us.

When we never feel the chastising hand of God, oh, what do you think your walk got perfect all of a sudden? No, not at all. You see, the chastising hand of God is evidence of his fatherly care and concern for us. So it's right that God would would it would chasten us.

It's right that he would rebuke us. But we're right in doing what David did. Lord, not in your anger, not in your hot displeasure.

Please, Lord, no. Now, we have greater confidence for praying that prayer than David ever did, because we know, especially on this side of the cross, we know very well that all the anger of God that we deserve was poured out upon Jesus in our place. We have even greater confidence for saying this than David did.

But look at his plea before God here in verse to have mercy on me, oh, Lord, for I am weak. Oh, Lord, heal me for my bones are troubled. My soul also is greatly troubled.

But you, oh, Lord, how long? See, David knew in this trial, he knew the trial of physical weakness and pain. My bones are troubled. Now, don't take that necessarily to mean that David was suffering from a physical sickness or disease.

Have you ever been under such great mental and spiritual stress that your insides are just in turmoil all the time? It's just stress. It's spiritual stress. It's terrible to live like that.

I mean, I know what it's like to go for a few days or many days like that. And it's a terrible place to be in. You feel like the trial or the affliction comes right down into your bones.

But it's not just physical, it's also spiritual, where he says, my soul also is greatly troubled. David knew this trouble in two ways in his bones and in his soul. He knew the trial of spiritual weakness and pain.

And so he says, oh, Lord, have mercy on me. I need your mercy. Now, these trials, the physical trial, the spiritual trial that David was going to, they were amplified by his sense that maybe God is angry with me.

Maybe God's hot displeasure is against me. You know, when we're not confident of God's love, when we're not confident of his assistance and help for us, even the smallest trial feels unbearable. But when you're confident in God's love, when you're confident of his help in your life, you feel like you can face anything.

But isn't it funny? Take that away. Have the devil bamboozle you in your mind to think that somehow God is really angry with you, that he's hotly displeased with you, though you stand in grace by faith in Jesus Christ. Have him shake that fundamental sense of your standing with God and the smallest trial feels like it weighs a thousand pounds.

Do you like what he says there at the end of verse three? You, oh, Lord, how long? You ever pray that prayer? I have. How long, Lord? How long? You know, Lord, it's running a little late here, God. How long, oh, Lord? You use that phrase in other areas of your life, right? How long until quitting time? How long until dinner? Are we there yet? How long? David sensed he was under the chastisement of God, and even in the midst of that, I think he did something that's good to do.

He asked God to shorten the trial. You know, there's a place for a humble resignation for chastisement, but I think God wants us to yearn for a higher ground. When you're in the midst of chastisement, I don't think God wants you to say, oh, Lord, man, this is great.

Keep it up forever, Lord. They got God sees through that. When the child is getting spanked.

Unless he's a very rebellious child and probably we have some stories like that. Unless he's a very rebellious, he's not, hey, bring it on more, more, more. No, it's like how long I'm being spanked, but but I

would like it to end, father.

And that's a legitimate thing for the child of God to say to God, his father. But let this accomplish its perfect work, and I want it to end. I want you to notice something that we've seen in the first three verses, which makes this psalm somewhat different from the other penitential songs.

Is in this psalm, David doesn't seem particularly sorry for his sin. Whatever he's aware of his sin, because he says there in the first verse, he's under God's rebuke, he's under God's chastisement. That implies he knows he deserves it.

So he's aware of his sin, but he's not particularly sorry for that. What really grieves David, the result of his sin, the rebuke of God upon him, the chastisement of God upon him. Now, let's say ideally.

We should all be terribly grieved by the sin itself. Isn't that ideal where we're not just sorry that we got caught and have to pay the consequences, but we're sorry that we did it in the first place. And we would be sorry if we did it, even if we would have never got caught.

You see, that's where we should be ideally. Yet there is something to be said for confession and humility before God just for the sake of the result of our sins. I mean, in a sense, isn't that what chastisement is about? If your child was at a place where they could be mortified all on their own, that they stole a cookie.

That they would come to you in tears. Mommy, mommy, I can't take it anymore. Well, what did you do, little Johnny? I stole a cookie yesterday and I can't get over it.

If that's your child. We invite you to teach a parenting class here at the church. More likely, your child isn't going to be sorry for the sin itself until a painful result of the sin is brought down upon them.

And this is the chastising hand of God again in fatherly love. But you just get a better understanding of how this works in our life, don't you? Well, look at his plea here and the urgency of it in verses four and five, he says, return, oh, Lord, deliver me. Oh, save me for your mercy's sake.

For in death, there's no remembrance of you in the grave. Who will give you thanks? You know, in his agony, David pleaded for deliverance, but on the grounds of God's mercy. Do you love it how he says that in verse four? Oh, save me for your mercy's sake.

God, that's why I'm pleading before you. It's because I know you're rich in mercy. See.

I want you to notice something else that David. Felt distant from God, I would say that his trial was in several parts. First, he felt that God was angry with him.

Right. Second, his trial was that he felt that God was distant from him because he says return, oh, Lord, return. Hey, God, come back.

Lo, would you please come back? That's how David felt. You're distant from me. And, you know, when you feel like God is close to you, you feel like you can face anything.

But when you feel like God is distant from you, you feel like you can't face just about anything. The smallest trial lays you waste. So he says, Lord, save me for your mercy's sake.

Again, the note of confession of sin is not strong in this particular psalm of penance, but it's not absence. The fact that David appeals to the mercy of God for deliverance is evidence that he knows he doesn't deserve it. And then he goes on and he says, Lord, you need to deliver me.

There's an urgency because in death there's no remembrance of you in the grave who will give you thanks. Now, I remember fairly early in my ministry. I used to love to go at it hammer and tongs with Jehovah's Witnesses.

I think I probably had almost a sick pleasure in it. Maybe not even godly. Friends and I, we would go to, well, we would go and we would steal the garbage from Kingdom Halls and we would look through it for papers.

Like when a Jehovah's Witness goes out on their rounds through the neighborhood, they have to fill out little time sheets and they have to submit them because they keep track. And, you know, if you're not keeping up your time, you're going to hear it from from one of the overseers or whatever they call them. And so we would raid the trash of the Kingdom Hall and take out stuff with names on it, get names.

And then we would look up the names in the phone book and we would call them or we would go to their house. Sometimes if we wanted to know, you know, let's say there were two, you know, Bill Smith's in the in the phone book, we would call up and I would pretend to be a guy from a blood bank talking about a blood transfusion, which Jehovah's Witnesses are very much against. This is my psalm of penance right now, confessing my sin.

And and, you know, when we got their names and addresses, we would go and we would go knock on their door. And and I would say, I'm here to share with you the good news of God's kingdom, to start with it just like they do and go into a whole spiel. And man, they would get so mad.

They would get so mad that we came to their door. And then I would start getting into it. Well, you're a Jehovah's Witness and you go around to people's doors.

And then what I would tell them, and this is the whole reason why I started doing this, because a Jehovah's Witness told me once, never has an evangelical Christian come to my door. So I would look him square in the eye and I would say, don't you ever say that a Christian never came to your door and told you about Jesus? I probably had the bad attitude in it all. In any regard, back to Psalm six, I remember Jehovah's Witnesses quoting this verse to me to prove their peculiar doctrine of annihilation, where they say that, you know, the damned cease to exist and that there is no hell, that if you're not with the Lord, you just cease to exist.

And they would say, well, look, it says in death, there's no remembrance of you in the grave who will give you thanks. Friends, it would be wrong to take these agonized words of David as evidence that there's no life beyond this life. We need to understand that the Old Testament has a shadowy understanding of the world beyond.

Now, sometimes the Old Testament shows a clear confidence, like in Job chapter 19, where Job says, I know that my redeemer lives. And on the last day, I will stand on the earth with him. But oftentimes there's a uncertainty about the world beyond.

And as they looked at it, is it David's just speaking from the realm of personal experience? David walked around the graveyard because, you know, it's awfully quiet around the graveyard. Now, I go into the

temple and they're singing there, they're worshiping God there, but at the graveyard, that's pretty quiet. So David says, listen, I don't know, I can't say with certainty that in the world beyond, they're praising you, but Lord, I know I can praise you right now, so deliver me.

There's another verse that really helped me in the understanding of this. It's Second Timothy, chapter two, verse 10, tells us that Jesus Christ brought life and immortality to light through the gospel. That's Second Timothy to 10.

You see, life and immortality only came to light. By the work of Jesus and the gospel, the understanding of the afterlife was murky at best in the Old Testament, but Jesus let us know more about heaven or hell than anyone else ever could. And Jesus could tell us about heaven and hell because he knew about them personally.

He had been to the world beyond and could report back, which is something that none of the biblical writers before really could. So, again, David's point here isn't to present a comprehensive theology of the world beyond. He's speaking from his own personal experience and what he can see with his own eyes.

He's in agony, fearing for his life, and he knows that he can remember God and give him thanks right now, but he doesn't have the same certainty beyond the world beyond. So he says, God, act according to my certainty. That's the whole point there in verse five.

Now, look here, he goes on in verse six. I am weary with my groaning all night, I make my bed swim, I drench my couch with my tears, my eye wastes away because of grief. It grows old because of all my enemies.

The chastising hand of God was heavy upon David. It seemed like his life was nothing but tears and misery. David's trial had at least three components.

He felt that God was angry with him. He lacked a sense of God's presence. That's when he said, return, oh, Lord.

And then finally, he couldn't sleep. He's awake at night, he's pacing, he's just bawling his eyes out all night. If you notice, it's a very vivid picture there in verse six.

All night I make my bed swim. And. I like to quote this verse a lot as an example of poetic exaggeration in the Psalms.

You know, sometimes people want to know, how do you understand the Bible? And they'll say things like this, maybe, well, you don't understand it literally, do you? And the correct answer is, of course, I understand it literally. How else are you going to understand it? What does anybody think here that David is really giving us a recipe for fruit salad and Psalm six, and it's just whatever you want to read into it. Well, this speaks to me about, you know, this or that.

No, friends, it means what it says right here. Of course, we understand the Bible literally, but that means according to its literary context. And sometimes in literary context, you use poetic exaggeration.

Does anybody here think that David cried so much that it flooded his room and his mattress floated on the water from his tears? That's what he's saying. Well, you know, if you're going to take it literally that no, we understand it according to its literary context. He's using poetic exaggeration.

When the Bible says that Joshua made the sun stand still. Well, if you take that literally, we know the sun does, it's the earth that's moving. Listen, by all human observation, it's the sun that moves and not the earth.

It's a legitimate way to speak. Oh, one guy heard about was he was about ready to have a stroke because he protested. The mustard seed is not the smallest seed in all the world.

And it's like and because Jesus said in one of his parables, look at the mustard seed, is it not the smallest of all the seeds? We understand the Bible literally as true according to its literary context. When it's writing historically, we understand it as a historical document. When it's speaking poetically, we understand it as poetry.

When it's speaking prophetically, we understand it as prophecy. This isn't hard to figure out. In any regard, look at how David describes it, verse seven, my eye wastes away because of grief.

It's like his eyes are red and sore from all the tears and all the lack of sleep. And it says it grows old because of all my enemies. This is like the final nail in David's coffin of despair.

David's brought so low that his enemies no longer spur him on to seize victory. Now, David was an active soldier, competitive kind of guy. But when his enemies raised up, he usually got David's competitive juices flowing.

And he's like, come on, I'm ready for a fight. You come against me. All right.

Not anymore. He's so beaten down by this trial, by this affliction that has come as a result of his sin. He's like, oh, my enemies.

OK, I quit. That's a low place to be. And.

So look at the great turnaround in verse eight, depart from me, all you workers of iniquity, for the Lord has heard the voice of my weeping. The Lord has heard my supplication. The Lord will receive my prayer.

Let all my enemies be ashamed and greatly troubled. Let them turn back and be ashamed suddenly. I hope I'm not reading too much into verse eight, but I wonder if there's not a hint there of what David's sin was.

I'm wondering if David's sin was not association with the ungodly. You know, he was a king, he was a ruler, maybe, you know, he had got sucked into some alliances, some business deals, some contracts with the ungodly, you know, and maybe it was starting to bring him down. And that was the sin that God brought his chastising hand upon him for.

And so where's the turnaround? Well, it's in verse eight where David turns from his sin. Depart from me, all you workers of iniquity. No, I'm not associating with you anymore.

I think David is acting consistently with his change of heart. Lord, I've come to seek you now. So depart from me, all you workers of iniquity.

On that point, let me just say how important it is to separate from ungodly associations. You know, I've read of a man 150 years ago in Great Britain. He was a boxer who got saved.

Now, you know, in some ways, I won't quite say that the profession of boxing is honorable in the world today. But 150 years ago, it was thought to be a very dishonorable profession. It was thought that no Christian man could be a boxer because basically back 150 years ago, they fought with bare knuckles.

And the idea was, well, it was basically that you were there to injure your opponent as badly as possible. If you could gouge out his eye, it was extra points in your favor. And so this this boxer came to the Lord and he came to the Lord just as he had won a championship belt.

And as he was going to a church meeting, some of his old boxing companions stood outside of the church hall and they were ridiculing him and they started shouting, he's getting converted. What about your belt? You'll either have to fight for it or give it up. You know what the boxer replied to these former friends of his? He said, I'll both give it up and you up.

If you won't go with me to heaven, I won't go with you to hell. I like that. Maybe there's some people in your life that you need to say that, too.

If you won't go with me to heaven, then I won't go with you to hell. You know what he did? The boxer, he gave them the belt right then and there, and he talked some of them into coming into the service with them and some of them got converted. Well, you've got to think about that, friends, separating yourself from ungodly associations.

If you won't come with me to heaven, then I won't go with you to hell. David found great relief, though. I love how it's phrased there in verse eight, for the Lord has heard the voice of my weeping.

God heard him. You know, weeping has a voice before God. Isn't that a great phrase? Your tears have a voice before God.

And sometimes the most eloquent prayers you pray are the tears that you shed before the Lord. It isn't that God is impressed by emotional displays. And if you can work up more emotion, you're going to please God more.

But friends, a passionate heart impresses God. And David was not afraid to cry before the Lord. And God honored the voice of his weeping.

A gal came up to me after service a couple of weeks ago and she says, Pastor David, I don't know what to do. Every time I come here on Sunday morning, just the Lord says, I just am so touched by the worship. And by the message, I just feel like crying all through the service.

And it's not necessarily sad tears. It's just I just and I said, there's no problem there. So would the God that there were more people like you who just were not afraid to just be touched by the Lord and to let it out.

Now, I'm not saying that you have to shed tears to be moved by God, but it's wrong if you're just saying, well, I will not cry in church. You have all your defenses up. No, you're weeping can have an eloquent voice before the Lord.

Charles Spurgeon said, is it not sweet to believe that our tears are understood even when words fail? Let us learn to think of tears as liquid prayers. I like that. Well, finally, David concludes the song was saying that all my enemies be ashamed and greatly troubled.

Let them turn back and be ashamed suddenly. Who was troubled at the beginning of the song, it was David under the chastising hand of God, and who's troubled at the end of the song, it's David's enemies. What a great turnaround.

That's how the Lord wants it to be in our life, turned around for his glory and by his grace. Friends, you feel like you're under the chastising hand of God. Well, receive it with gratitude, not with resignation, but with gratitude.

Don't be afraid to ask God to shorten it. But by the same token, repent of your sin and come before the Lord and make it right and receive the joy that he has to give you. Lord, that's our prayer tonight.

Lord, we don't want to understand these things just just intellectually, just in our heads. Lord, we want to experience. We're not satisfied, Lord, with merely having a Christian understanding or knowledge.

We want Christian experience as well. Thank you for showing it to us in the Psalms. Touch us deeply and by your truth, Lord.

We pray this in Jesus name. Amen.

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