



# BIBLE STUDY

# The Penitential Psalms Psalm 6

## OVERVIEW

**Author:** David

### Outline:

- Cry of anguish (v. 1–3)
- Life and death (v. 4–5)
- Impact of sin (v. 6–7)
- Confidence in answered prayer (v. 8–10)

### St. Augustine on

#### Psalm 6:

““Make me whole,” he says, “for [the sake of Your steadfast love].” He knows that it is not of his own merits that he is healed: for to him sinning, and transgressing a given command, was just condemnation due. Heal me therefore, he says, not for my merit’s sake, but for [the sake of Your steadfast love],” (The Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers, Vol. VIII:17).

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## Issues, Etc.



**Christ-Centered Cross-Focused Talk Radio**

*To the choirmaster: with stringed instruments; according to the Sheminith. A Psalm of David.*

- <sup>1</sup> O LORD, rebuke me not in your | anger,\*  
nor discipline me | in your wrath.
- <sup>2</sup> **Be gracious to me, O LORD, for I am | languishing;\***  
**heal me, O LORD, for my bones are | troubled.**
- <sup>3</sup> My soul also is greatly | troubled.\*  
But you, O LORD— | how long?
- <sup>4</sup> **Turn, O LORD, deliv- | er my life;\***  
**save me for the sake of your | steadfast love.**
- <sup>5</sup> For in death there is no remem- | brance of you;\*  
in Sheol who will | give you praise?
- <sup>6</sup> **I am weary with my moaning;**  
**every night I flood my | bed with tears;\***  
**I drench my couch with my | weeping.**
- <sup>7</sup> My eye wastes away be- | cause of grief;\*  
it grows weak because of | all my foes.
- <sup>8</sup> **Depart from me, all you workers of | evil,\***  
**for the LORD has heard the sound of my | weeping.**
- <sup>9</sup> The LORD has | heard my plea;\*  
the LORD ac- | cepts my prayer.
- <sup>10</sup> **All my enemies shall be ashamed and greatly | troubled;\***  
**they shall turn back and be put to shame in a | moment.**  
**Glory be to the Father and | to the Son\* and to the Holy | Spirit;**  
**as it was in the be- | ginning,\***  
**is now, and will be forever. | Amen.**

### The Penitential Psalms

The Church has designated psalms 6, 32, 38, 51, 102, 130, 143 the penitential psalms (for a biblical description of penitence, see Psalm 51:17). Why did Psalm 6 make the list? What is penitential about this psalm?

#### v. 1: The Lord’s anger/wrath against David

What might provoke the anger/wrath of the

Lord?

To what does Moses connect the anger of the Lord in Deuteronomy 9:18?

What did the Israelites do to provoke God’s wrath, according to Psalm 78:9–22?

David considers all of life to be in God’s hands (his worldview is theological, not secular). How, then, did David regard his sin of murder and adultery (2 Samuel 11)? See Psalm 51:1, 4.

The discipline David speaks of is not the positive kind (compare Jeremiah 10:24 and Hebrews 12:11; to be disciplined in justice/mercy). Here David prays that he will not be disciplined in the Lord’s wrath, that he will not experience a chastisement that bears no fruit. Luther: “It is hard to be struck by one who is angry and to be struck only in a punitive way without constructive result,” (AE:10, 81).

What happens to those who ignore discipline? See Proverbs 5:12–14.

What do we learn about a person from their response to reproof? See Proverbs 9:8.

#### v. 3 “My soul also is greatly troubled”

What did our Lord do when His soul was troubled? See John 12:27.

How ought we respond to our own suffering? See 1 Peter 2:21–23.

How might it be beneficial if God does not intervene and remove our suffering immediately? See Psalm 37; Psalm 119:67; 2 Corinthians 12:7–9.

#### v. 5 “Remembrance”

Remembrance, biblically speaking, is more than a purely mental activity. See Genesis 8:1; Exodus 2:24–3:10; Psalm 45:17.

Remembrance is also tied to action in the Lord's Supper (see 1 Corinthians 11:24–25). What action do we perform in the Lord's Supper, according to 1 Cor. 11:26? What action does Jesus perform for us, according to Matthew 26:28?

Luther: "This is a remarkable verse, that the saints dread blasphemy of God more than hell... [David is not praying to avoid hell because it is hell,] but for the reason that there is no praise of God there." (AE 10:81-82). As unpleasant as an eternal bath in the lake of fire would be (Rev 20:15), the most terrible aspect of hell is that it is devoid of the Lord's praise.

#### **v. 6–7 Outside intervention required**

These verses indicate the Psalmist is beyond his ability to help himself. What hope is there for us when we are unable to help ourselves? See Psalm 121:1–2; Ephesians 2:4–9.

Compare the description of God in the hymn, "Abide with Me." *Abide with me, fast falls the eventide. The darkness deepens; Lord, with me abide. When other helpers fail and comforts flee, Help of the helpless, O abide with me.*

How does the hymn characterize this life? How does Scripture portray night? See John 9:4. Darkness? See Ephesians 5:8. Both? See 1 Thessalonians 5:5.

#### **v. 7 "my eye wastes away"**

A clear eye is an indication of strength/good health; see Deuteronomy 34:7.

#### **v. 8–10 Peace in the midst of turmoil**

Note the shift in tone in these final verses. Though his external circumstances have not changed, David considers his prayer as good as answered. Consider also the shift between lament to praise in Psalm 22 (with the turning point occurring in v. 21).

Compare also Isaiah 52:13–53:6, where the prophet describes the crucifixion in the past tense despite the fact that it will not happen for over 700 years from the time this was written.

There is a constant tension between the "now" and the "not yet" in the Christian life. Though we have already (now) been baptized into Christ's victory over death and eternal life (see Romans 6:3–5)—a life which has already begun and will never end (see Romans 8:38–39)—we nevertheless await the final realization of Christ's victory in the resurrection (see 1 Corinthians 15:54–55).

#### **v. 8 "workers of evil"**

How do the "workers of evil" regard themselves? How does our Lord regard them? See Matthew 7:22–23.

#### **v. 9 "the Lord has heard my plea"**

When else has God heard the cries of His afflicted people and

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acted to help them?  
See Exodus 2:7–8.

#### **v. 10 "All my enemies shall be ashamed and greatly troubled"**

In verse 3 David's soul was "greatly troubled." Who is greatly troubled in verse 10?

For other such reversals in Scripture, see Psalm 94; Luke 1:46–55.

How do the wicked (v. 7–8, 10) serve to accomplish God's purposes? See Isaiah 7:20; Jeremiah 20:4.



### Summary of Psalm 6

#### Petition

to avoid rebuke (v. 1)  
to avoid chastening (v. 1)  
for grace (v. 2)  
for healing (v. 2)  
for quick aid (v. 3)  
for deliverance (v. 4)  
for salvation (v. 4)

#### Malady

The Lord's anger over sin (v. 1)  
The Lord's wrath over sin (v. 1)  
languishing (v. 2)  
bones troubled (v. 2)  
soul troubled (v. 3)  
weary with moaning (v. 6)  
tears flood bed (v. 6)  
weeping drenches couch (v. 6)  
eye wastes away (v. 7)  
eye grows weak (v. 7)  
workers of evil (v. 8)  
enemies (v. 10)

#### Rationale for appeal

the Lord's covenant faithfulness (v. 4)  
the dead cannot remember the Lord (v. 5)  
those in Sheol cannot praise the Lord (v. 5)

#### Confident Faith

confidence that aid will eventually come (v. 3)  
weeping has been heard (v. 8)  
plea has been heard (v. 9)  
prayer has been accepted (v. 9)  
enemies will be ashamed/greatly troubled (v. 10)  
enemies will turn back/be put to shame (v. 10)

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