

The Weeping King

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[0 : 0 0] Well, as we turn back to Psalm 6 in our Bibles, let's pray together for God's help as we do so.

Gracious Heavenly Father, we thank you that in this book of Psalms, you not only speak your words to us, but you give us words to speak back to you.

And therefore, we pray, our Heavenly Father, that as we turn to this psalm this evening, that you would minister its truth to us, Lord, that you would help its words to sink deep into our hearts.

And so that in time, that we might cry these words out to you ourselves. We thank you that your word is truth and that it is the light for our feet and a lamp for our path.

And so we ask for your help together now in Jesus' name. Amen. Amen. Well, as we walk through the first book of the Psalms together, we have now entered in through the great double doorway of Psalms 1 and 2.

[1 : 1 6] And we are standing this evening in the entryway. We are now into the Psalms. And we can feel it, can't we? Psalm 6 is perhaps more what we expect when we open the Psalms together.

It's intensely personal. And it's deeply emotional, isn't it? It's in the form of a prayer. Or is it a song?

See the heading there, to the director of music with stringed instruments. That heading isn't provided there by the NIV. That's original to the Psalm book.

So this is a prayer for singing together. We love to sing songs of praise, don't we? But the Psalm book also gives us songs of prayer.

Now, if there weren't Psalms like this in our Bibles, I suspect that these words would never get past the praise committee. All night long I flood my bed with weeping And drench my couch with tears.

[2 : 2 4] It's so emotionally raw. Can we sing that in church? Well, the heading says that God gave us these words to sing in church.

Why could it not just be a prayer of David for his own personal devotions? Well, when we sing the Psalms, who is it for? Yes, it's a prayer to God.

But when we sing the Psalms, we are also singing with and to and for one another. Think of Colossians 3.16. Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, teaching and admonishing one another in all wisdom, singing Psalms and hymns and spiritual songs with thankfulness in your hearts to God.

See, the Psalms give us words that go in two directions. Words to say to God and words to say and to sing to ourselves and to one another.

But before we get there, before we get to us, where does this Psalm fit into the Psalm book? Well, after Psalms 1 and 2, we get five Psalms together, Psalms 3 to 7, which bring us right back down to earth.

[3 : 43] Notice they're all Psalms of David, who was the king. In fact, only four out of the 41 Psalms in the first book of Psalms are not written by David. So he's quite an important figure in the Psalm book.

And it's as if we go from this kind of satellite image that we get in Psalm 2, the nations and the rulers and peoples of the world setting themselves against God's king.

And the camera zooms and zooms and zooms in right down into the king's bedroom, the royal chamber. Because Psalms 3 to 7 show us how God's king deals personally with the opposition we see in Psalm 2.

And there in the king's bedroom, we find that the word-loving king of Psalm 1 and the world-ruling king of Psalm 2 is also a weeping king.

A weeping king. If you glance back at Psalms 3 to 5, maybe later we see calm confidence and control in the face of his enemies.

[4 : 51] But in Psalm 6, the armor falls off. And the tears start to flow. There's no stoic, stiff upper lip here, no cold denial that it is hard.

It is hard to love and to live for God in this world. And so as we go through this Psalm together with the king, we're going to see how we too can call out to God in our suffering.

And then we are going to stand and sing it together. So firstly, then call out with the king. Call out with the king. Look with me again at verse 1.

The king says, So in his suffering, the king calls out to God.

And notice there how often the king uses God's name. Four times there and a fifth time in verse 4. The Lord in capitals. Okay, that stands in our Bibles for God's name.

[6 : 07] The name that he revealed first to Moses through the burning bush. The name by which he says he would be remembered through all generations. Yahweh. And our Bibles use that capital, block capital Lord for that name.

And his name tells us here that God, to David, isn't a distant deity. He's not far off and disinterested in this guy's life.

We could say he and God are on first name terms, so to speak. It speaks of a personal relationship, an intimate knowledge. And so the prayers we read here are not a desperate, you know, God, if you're out there, will you help me?

No, David is throwing himself on the one who he knows is near to all who call on him in truth. And so what does he pray to this personal, intimate God?

Verse 1. Oh, Lord, do not rebuke me in your anger or discipline me in your wrath. Now, perhaps that's a shock for David to pray to this personal God.

[7 : 14] God, don't come down too hard on me. Some writers think that there must be a secret sin hiding behind this psalm that we never get told about.

And that might be the case. David did sin. But I'm not convinced that's the issue here. Notice this isn't a prayer of confession. David isn't coming clean about where he's gone wrong.

Instead, as we look at the psalm as a whole, what David is probably saying is simply that it feels like God's hand is laying very, very heavy on his life.

He knows his suffering isn't an accident. God hasn't stepped off his throne for a moment. His days are in God's hands. And yet, yet his days are unbearable.

How do we square that? How do we make sense of that? If you've been a Christian for more than five minutes, then you know how hard it is to wrestle with God's sovereignty in our suffering.

[8 : 19] Well, David firstly recognizes God is in control. If I'm suffering, he says, then this must be God's discipline. His discipline. Notice discipline, not punishment.

Okay, punishment would be to pay for our sins with suffering. But if we trust in Jesus, we know that there is no punishment left for us from God.

He took the punishment for us in his death on the cross, in his suffering. But if we have trusted in Jesus and become children of God, then we must receive his discipline.

Listen to Proverbs chapter three. My son, do not make light of the Lord's discipline and do not lose heart when he rebukes you because the Lord disciplines the one he loves and chastens everyone he accepts as his son.

That's hard for us, isn't it? The Bible recognizes both sides of this. Hebrews 12 quotes that chapter and then goes on to say, for the moment, all discipline seems painful rather than pleasant.

[9 : 30] But later, it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it. It's hard for us, but it's good for us too.

God's discipline is hard for us to wrestle with. But understanding God's discipline is why David can call out to God in his suffering. Have mercy on me, Lord.

Have mercy. He's saying, Lord, I know you are in control. I'm reaching the limit of what I can take. See, in this call, there's an implicit trust, the trust of a child in his father that even when God deals firmly with us, he still deeply cares for us.

He is the surgeon who cuts only to heal. See that in verse two, David says, heal me, Lord, for my bones are in agony.

My soul is in deep anguish. His body and his spirit are broken. The word is actually terrified. We'll see later on why that is so.

[10 : 39] But his suffering isn't only a spiritual thing. He's hurting all over, he says. And so he calls out to God, the great physician, to put him back together.

And in fact, David's confidence that God will put him back together is so strong that his question isn't whether or not God will help him, but simply verse three, how long?

How long will it take? How long, Lord? How long? How long? Many of us know that suffering is sometimes a waiting game. There are often no easy answers and no quick fixes.

Lots of things in life we can put up with because we know that there is an end point. I can stay up studying for my exam because I know that this time next week, it's all going to be over. I can push through the pain because I know that my date for the surgery is in the diary.

I can keep working through the stress because I know that there's a change coming. But what about when a change isn't coming? When there is no deadline and the pain goes on and on and isn't going away.

[11 : 59] How long, Lord? How long? Lots of people have said in the Psalms, God gives us words to say back to him. Well, here are words for us to say to God in prayer when we don't know what to pray for anymore.

Lord, how long? See, the point of the Psalm isn't that David can say tritely, well, it's all going wrong, but don't worry because I know it'll be better in the end.

No, the point is that David, not knowing how his circumstances could get any worse, not knowing how or whether it's going to get better in this life can still come and still call out honestly to the one who holds his life in his hands.

So he calls out to God, not resting on his own grasp of the situation, but resting instead on God's unfailing love. See that in verse four. Turn, Lord, and deliver me. Save me because of your unfailing love.

This is a word that we've met before recently, hesed, covenant love, faithful love, unfailing love.

[13 : 15] David could have put it this way, deliver me, Lord, because you have promised, because you promised. Remember Psalm 2, God's promise, ask me, he said, and I will make the nations your inheritance, the ends of the earth your possession.

Lord, you promised in love that your king would live and would rule the earth from north to south, from east to west. So, verse five, what's your promise worth if you let me die in shame?

Among the dead, no one proclaims your name. He praises you from his grave. Where are your promises, Lord? Are they finished?

Have they failed? See, these are not easy, comfortable questions that David is asking God, are they? And I wonder, I ask myself, I ask us together this evening, do we ever pray to God like this?

Do you ever ask him questions that you don't have an answer for? Brothers and sisters, if there is one thing that you take away from this psalm tonight, let it be that you can come to God and pray difficult prayers.

[14 : 32] You have the things that we can barely say to ourselves, feelings that we struggle to know what to do with, are hard questions in life.

Because the point is that David is asking God those questions. He's honest with God about how hard it is. And yet all the while, he's asking God, deliver me, save me, heal me.

He's trusting God with the outcome of his situation. And so we have permission to come to God and call out with the king.

God himself invites us to come to him personally, honestly, openly. And his invitation is by putting this psalm in his Bible.

And so we can trust God that when we do call out to him in our suffering, he is not far off, for he is near to all who call on him in truth. We can call out to God with the king.

[15 : 35] And secondly, stepping in even deeper into this territory, we see here also that we can cry with the king. Look with me at verse six. I am worn out with my groaning.

All night long, I flood my bed with weeping and drench my couch with tears. My eyes grow weak with sorrow. They fail because of all my foes.

One writer, Dale Ralph Davis, calls this wet prayer. Whatever calm and steady composure the king may have in his public life and rule, or behind closed doors, he falls apart.

Psalm 5, notice, begins with David saying to God, consider my groaning. Well, by now, Psalm 6, verse 6, he is worn out with groaning. He has run out of words to pray and he has run out of tears to cry.

Now, we're all different, aren't we? Some of us are criers. Tears come easy. Others of us have tear ducts of steel.

[16 : 46] Perhaps crying is something we do once or maybe twice in a decade. I'm still learning who of you I need to bring tissues for when we meet. But the point is, it's not a good or a bad thing.

There's no right or wrong. It's just how we're wired. But whether we're criers or not, none of us will go through life never having cried and cried and cried until we can't cry anymore.

All night long, I flood my bed with weeping and drench my couch with tears. If you can't relate to that now, without wishing it upon you in any way, let me suggest that one day it will resonate.

Why can I say that? Well, because look why the tears come in verse 7. My eyes were weak with sorrow. They fail because of all my foes.

All my foes. This is getting to the heart of David's pain. Why are his body and soul terrified? Well, because at this point in time, he is the king who faces the hostility of the world.

[17 : 58] The nations rage, the kings of the earth plot together, the peoples rise up against the Lord and against his king. And he is that king.

All the warheads of the world are pointing at him. What a terrifying thought that is. Tears would be quite appropriate, wouldn't they? And in fact, we know that tears would be appropriate because they were, not just for David, but for God's true king who came to reign over the earth, the Lord Jesus Christ.

Many of you could probably quote me, the shortest verse in the Bible, but have we ever really let it sink in? Jesus wept.

Jesus wept. We have reduced that verse to trivia, but listen to what it says a few verses earlier than that in John 11. He was deeply moved in his spirit and greatly troubled.

That's a very English way of saying that he was overwhelmed with grief. When we read the words, Jesus wept, we're not meant to think that he had tears in his eyes, or even that a tear maybe escaped and rolled down his cheek.

[19 : 18] We see our Lord Jesus weep uncontrollably in the face of death. Not because death was a threat to him, or because he didn't have power over it, but because death is an enemy.

Death is an enemy. Death came into the world with sin, and God is sovereign over it, but in itself death is part of the fabric of the world that has fallen away from God.

It's common now to hear that we need to come to terms with death as just another part of life. I heard on the radio this week someone say dying well is part of living well.

And there's wisdom in that, isn't there? But there will never be a day when a person dies and those who love them don't cry, because death is an intruder and an enemy.

Our tears tell us that death will be the last enemy standing until Jesus finishes it forever. But even Jesus in his true humanity cried at the death of his friend.

[20 : 30] So brothers and sisters, if Jesus wept at a funeral, we are going to weep at funerals. We are going to weep in the face of our enemies.

And what Psalm 6 tells us is that we have permission to do so. It was right for our king to weep in the face of his enemy, and it is right for us too.

Well, what about our enemy sin? You again think of Jesus as he approached Jerusalem and saw the city, he wept over it.

The city in rebellion against him, the city that had turned him away at the door, he wept over sinners. You are sinners. The sins of others, sins inflicted upon us by others, the things that people suffer at the hands of sinners.

They bring us to tears sometimes. Another story I heard in the news on the radio was about an inquiry into potential abuse at a hospital for disabled children after it was discovered that four of these children had died in a very short space of time, and they interviewed a mother who in tears spoke of going to visit her son in this hospital and finding him in a horrifying restraint grip, and how her son cried to her, mummy, home.

[22 : 02] Mummy, home. It brings us to tears, what goes on in our world. The sins of our world, of ourselves, they should bring us to tears.

In the words of the hymn, did Christ over sinners weep, and shall our cheeks stay dry?
How long, O Lord, will I keep sinning?

How long will we suffer the sins of others? Friends, our Lord Jesus Christ cried over his enemies. He was a weeping king, and so in the face of our enemies, we too have permission to come to God and feel strongly, and to cry our eyes out sometimes.

The world's rebellion, our sin, death, the devil, they are not going away before the end of this age. So let's not pretend that we can cope with them on our own.

Let's not think that tears are embarrassing or shameful. let's not think that tears have no place in our worship. Don't get me wrong, I'm not saying we will have to be crying all the time, but some of us will cry sometimes, and all of us are allowed to cry all of the time, even Scottish Calvinists, for we worship a weeping king.

[23 : 28] But finally, we see that we can share the king's confidence. Look with me from verse eight. Away from me, he says, all you who do evil, for the Lord has heard my weeping.

The Lord has heard my cry for mercy. The Lord accepts my prayer. So we see that David is confident that all that he has poured out before God in the first seven verses has been heard and registered by God.

God. And that confidence gives him an answer for his enemies. Look away from me, all you who do evil. Now, what's changed here? Has God done anything to change his circumstances?

Is David now strong enough to face up to his enemies? Well, if he is, he doesn't say so. He doesn't say that anything has changed yet. David's confidence confidence comes simply from the fact that the Lord has heard him.

The Lord has heard his prayers. See, verse 2, David prayed, have mercy on me, Lord. And verse 9, the Lord has heard my cry for mercy. Even verse 6, I flood my bed with weeping, he says.

[24 : 44] And verse 8, the Lord has heard my weeping. Not one word groaned before God, not one tear that fell before God, was wasted or forgotten by God.

God's care for him has been constant. His love has indeed been unfailing, and it's that that gives David confidence to say to his enemies, away from me. We know, don't we, the feeling that our prayers are not going anywhere.

Prayers bouncing off the ceiling, they just don't seem to be getting through. That feeling can be a hundred times worse when we're suffering. lost for words, or just worn out and can't string two words together in prayer.

Well, if God hasn't lost track of our days, and he hears our weeping, well, how much more does he hear even the prayers that we can't get out in words?

Here's David again in Psalm 56, you have kept count of my tossings, and put my tears in your bottle. are they not in your book? Not one tear of frustration, pain, or sadness is wasted in prayer to God.

[25 : 59] As David says beautifully, he stores them up in his bottle, he keeps them in his record book. So much more than not one word spoken to God in prayer.

Not even our suffering prayers is lost on him. No prayer for mercy. No asking for deliverance, no request for salvation goes unheard by him.

And what confidence that gives us as we suffer, that our God of mercy hears us when we pray. From the silent cry of our heart towards him, to our simplest words whispered to him when we're on our own.

If you're here tonight and you have rarely or never prayed, perhaps you wouldn't call yourself a believer or a Christian, well let me speak to you for a moment.

You know what it is like to be in pain and to be sinned against and to suffer generally. You know perhaps you have a friend that you can talk to about these things and it helps.

[27 : 10] But if you have never prayed to God about it, then you do not know what it is like to be fully heard and truly understood. But you can come to God and tell him.

In and through our King Jesus, you can ask for relief and rescue and know that the God of the universe hears and cares and is powerful to act in his love and kindness.

Because the Lord Jesus is the King who not only wept but who died and he was raised and who now sits in the seat of power in heaven. And he is near to all who call on him in truth whoever we may be.

So would you call on him? Perhaps even for the first time. For God hears our prayers. But more than that, he hears his prayers, the prayers of Jesus for us.

How precious it is to know that we have a sympathetic high priest and king who ever lives to intercede for us, to pray for us before the throne of grace.

[28 : 21] He prays for us when we have run out of prayers. And his prayers are always heard because he is always righteous. His prayers save us for they present us perfectly before God without shame.

But as for his enemies, verse 10, all my enemies will be overwhelmed with shame and anguish, they will turn back and suddenly be put to shame. We can rest on this promise that he will indeed deal with his and our enemies.

David's confidence doesn't come from the way things are going in his life, but from God's word. Do we believe his promise that our king will come again and put right everything that is wrong one day?

That one day his fingers will wipe every tear from our eyes, for there will be no more death or mourning, crying or pain. Do we long and hope for that day when our enemies will be put to shame?

That day is what gives us confidence to live for God in a world in which we have very great enemies that won't go away until he comes.

[29 : 38] And so until that day we hope and trust in our king to rule and to restore as he has promised. I love the answer to the Westminster Confession of Faith question 26.

How does Christ execute the office of a king? Christ executes the office of a king in subduing us to himself, in ruling and defending us, and in restraining and conquering all his and our enemies.

The Lord Jesus is truly our king, and so let us confess confidently with David, even as we suffer, all my enemies will be overwhelmed with shame and anguish.

Even the last enemy has no hold on us, for at last the saying that is written will be true. Death has been swallowed up in victory. Oh, death, where is your victory?

Oh, death, where is your sting? That will be our song for all eternity. And if we are confident that we will sing it together then, then we have confidence to sing it together now.

[30 : 53] Death is strong, but Christ is stronger, for death could not hold him. he is alive, and he rules over heaven and earth. So let us pray confidently to God through him, knowing that our suffering prayers are heard by our merciful God.

Let's come to him now and pray together. Let's pray. Let's pray. God, our Father, we thank you that you describe yourself as the God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our afflictions.

We thank you, Father, that you are a very present help in time of trouble. And so, Father, we pray that as we suffer from the effects of living in a broken world, the effects of our own sin, the sins of others against us, from the intruder death, from the devil who prowls like a roaring lion.

Lord, we pray that you would draw us near and that you would assure us that you hear our prayers. Father, we pray for those who are suffering among us now, and commit them to you, such brothers and sisters, those who we dearly love, and pray that you would hold them close and give them the assurance of your presence.

Lord, we pray for those of us who are not suffering now, but that you would prepare us for such a day when we do, and that on that day you would give us confidence to call out to you, our heavenly Father, for your help and your unfailing love.

[32 : 43] We ask these things in Jesus' name. Amen. Amen. Up to Doershowidad