

Psalm 6

Be Sad

Main idea: There are many reasons to be sad. Be sad over your sin. Be sad over the state of this world. But also rejoice that God is making all things new.

I love the hymn, *At the Cross*. In just a few short lines, the chorus expresses the joy of becoming a Christian and of having all your sins forgiven and of having a new and vibrant relationship with God. Here's what it says. Sing it with me.

At the cross, at the cross
Where I first saw the light
And the burden of my heart rolled away
It was there by faith I received my sight
And now I am happy all the day

We talked last week about being happy in Jesus. And I think that it's true that as we rest in Jesus, having faith in what He's done for us, we can be happy all the day. But does that mean that there's no room for other emotions? In other words, can I be both happy, and sad, at the same time?

Well, ask just about any woman who has given birth, and I think you'll find the answer is yes. Even in the midst of great pain, we can have joy. Even through the tears of today's sorrow, we can rejoice at what's soon to come.

Most of the Psalms are not what we would call happy songs, but sad ones. They lament how we've sinned against God, and how we therefore deserve His judgment.¹ And they lament how evil is so incredibly prevalent in the world to the extent that we might even think that Satan has won.² And yet, within nearly every sad song in the Bible, there is almost always a glimmer of hope of what will yet happen.³ Because no matter how bleak you may think things are, the story isn't yet finished.⁴

Father, help us to trust You, the Author of the story. And even when things seem so unbearable because of our sins or the sins of those around us, help us to remember that You're in control, and that You love us, and You're working for our good and Your glory. In Jesus's name, Amen.

Psalm 6, verse 1.

To the choirmaster: with stringed instruments; according to The Sheminith. (verse 1a)

Sheminith probably refers to an extremely expressive style of music. In other words, this was the kind of song just designed to make you cry, like Harry Chapin's song *Cats in the Cradle*, or Eric Clapton's *Tears in Heaven*. Or from the songs we sing at church, like how the song *Reckless Love* always gives me the feels. It's one of my favorites. And if those songs don't make you cry like they do me, just imagine the melody of the song that most makes you cry as we read go through this psalm. Let's continue reading.

¹ Psalm 51:3-4

² Psalm 22:1

³ Psalm 22:5, 29-31; Psalm 51:17

⁴ The story isn't finished until God declares, "It is finished." John 19:30

A Psalm of David. O LORD, rebuke me not in your anger, nor discipline me in your wrath. (Psalm 6:1b)

Now, why would David be afraid of God's anger and wrath? David was the king!⁵ He was anointed as God's ruler over the people of Israel!⁶ In the eyes of all, David was a great man!

But evidently, David wrote this psalm after he had sinned against God. You see, no matter how great people esteemed David to be, King David was accountable to the King of kings.⁷ And David knew this.⁸ David knew that God makes the rules, and that we're in no place to disregard those rules, and that when we do break them, it's fully warranted and even just that God should show us His anger and wrath.

So David cried out: "Lord, don't rebuke me. Don't discipline me."

A rebuke is a sharp warning or criticism.⁹ It's like the loving, yet stern voice I use with my kids when they disobey. And discipline goes even beyond that. Discipline is how we train our children to learn to obey rather than disobey.¹⁰ So I don't think it's an accident that we're to be called disciples of Jesus.

Jesus said this:

A disciple is not above his teacher, but everyone when he is fully trained will be like his teacher. (Luke 6:40)

As disciples, we receive discipline so that we would be fully trained to be like Jesus.

But it's no fun to receive a rebuke or discipline, is it? So David goes on. Verse 2.

Be gracious to me, O LORD, for I am languishing; heal me, O LORD, for my bones are troubled.
(Psalm 6:2)

And this is exactly the response that God desires that we have when we've sinned.¹¹ We see here that David cried out in sadness. He wrote, "I am languishing!" In other words, "God, I finally see how my sin hurts not only You, but me." He also wrote, "my bones are troubled." It's like he could feel the weight of his sin in his bones. You ever feel that sad?

I think usually when we sin, we do it thinking, "I'm the king of my life, and I can do what I want!" And in those circumstances, God rightly gives us a rebuke and disciplines us. But sometimes, immediately after we sin, we feel shame. After a lie, or a glance, or a denial, it's like we hear the rooster crow, and we know how we've dishonored our Lord.

That's where David was when he wrote this psalm. He felt God's sorrow over his sin, and so he prayed, "Don't rebuke me, Lord. Don't discipline me. You don't have to do that. I already know. Please, just be gracious to me, and heal me."

⁵ 2 Samuel 5:3

⁶ 1 Samuel 16:13

⁷ Deuteronomy 10:17

⁸ Psalm 136:3. Even if David didn't write this psalm, he was likely familiar with it

⁹ Proverbs 27:5

¹⁰ Proverbs 22:6

¹¹ Psalm 54:1

Verse 3.

My soul also is greatly troubled. But you, O LORD—how long? (Psalms 6:3)

You know, sometimes when we're sad, all we really need is a better diet and some exercise. Sometimes it really is a physical problem, and we really do have a chemical imbalance and medication could help. But David is talking about something deeper than all that, in which even the essence of his being, his soul, was greatly troubled.

Sometimes I feel that way. Even when things are going fairly well, I sometimes feel overly burdened, not by circumstances or fear, but just by my own inadequacies. And in those times, if even the slightest thing is going wrong, as is most often the case, I almost feel as if I'm paralyzed to do anything at all.

But I'm starting to think that maybe this is a good realization. David prayed, "But you, O LORD—how long?" God, how long should I be this sorrowful? How long until you fully heal me of this languishing? How long, O Lord?

In other words, our escape from such overwhelming sorrow doesn't ultimately come from anything we can do, but by waiting on the Lord. Isaiah 40:31 says:

but they who wait for the LORD shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings like eagles; they shall run and not be weary; they shall walk and not faint. (Isaiah 40:31)

You see, our strength is renewed by waiting on the Lord. Now, that doesn't mean that when you're depressed, you should wallow in it and do nothing. To the contrary, it means that you put your hope in God. You turn to His word, and remind yourself of His promises. Remind yourself of what Moses told the Israelites just before they were to enter the land of Canaan.

"It is the LORD who goes before you. He will be with you; he will not leave you or forsake you. Do not fear or be dismayed." (Deuteronomy 31:8)

Remind yourself of who God is and what He's done, and what He will do, and your strength will be renewed because you'll remember that God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble.¹²

You can trust that God is faithful.¹³ That He will deliver you.¹⁴

But have you ever wondered why He would? I mean, we've already established that God makes the rules, and that even the best of us are sinners, and that we all deserve His judgment. So why should God show us His mercy?

I think David hits the nail on the head in verses 4 and 5.

¹² Psalm 46:1

¹³ 1 Corinthians 1:9

¹⁴ Psalm 32:7

Turn, O LORD, deliver my life; save me for the sake of your steadfast love. For in death there is no remembrance of you; in Sheol who will give you praise? (Psalms 6:4-5)

God shows us mercy because God is love.¹⁵ He doesn't save us because we've earned it.¹⁶ He saves us for the sake of His steadfast love. And not only that, but God desires that we give Him praise for His love, and David notes that no one in hell will praise God for His love.

Therefore, God shows His love to undeserving sinners such as ourselves in order to rescue us from death and hell, so that we would praise His name forever.¹⁷

So David continues his prayer in verse 6:

I am weary with my moaning; every night I flood my bed with tears; I drench my couch with my weeping. (Psalms 6:6)

If you're anything like King David, and me, there are some seasons in your life in which you've been weary with moaning, and you flood my bed with tears every night. Perhaps, like me, you've met some people who say they cry themselves to sleep every night. And if that doesn't describe you now, I'd guess that most of you can remember a time when you went through something similar. And if not, be aware that it most likely will come. While David was writing a psalm about his own experience, the fact that it's a psalm means that it was also a song sung by the Jews and the early church as they worshipped God. So this wasn't just David's sorrow, but the sorrow of the people of God as they cried out to God. "How long, O Lord?"

So I think we can all relate to his sorrow, and the depths of sadness that we can sometimes experience in this life.

David writes in verse 7:

My eye wastes away because of grief; it grows weak because of all my foes. (Psalm 6:7)

Now, just as we don't know the exact sins that David grieved over in the first part of Psalm 6, we also don't know the specific foes he's talking about in the second part. He could have been talking about Saul, when Saul and Saul's army were trying to hunt him down.¹⁸ Or, more likely I think, he was talking about his own son Absalom, who rebelled against his authority and rose up to take the kingdom away from his father.¹⁹ We don't know. But we do know that David was broken over it.

So in addition to being sad over our own brokenness, another godly reason to be sad is over the state of our broken world.²⁰ Because of the presence of sin in the world, people commit crimes against others. Families are pulled apart. Troubled people do unspeakable things. We could go into detail, but there are children present. Suffice it to say, hurt people hurt people.

Our hearts ought to break over this.

¹⁵ 1 John 4:16

¹⁶ Ephesians 2:8-9

¹⁷ Philippians 2:9-10

¹⁸ 1 Samuel 19:11

¹⁹ 2 Samuel 15:14

²⁰ 2 Corinthians 5:18-20

You know, Jesus was described as the man of sorrows.²¹ He exclaimed at one point:

O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the city that kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to it! How often would I have gathered your children together as a hen gathers her brood under her wings, and you were not willing! (Matthew 23:37)

Jesus felt the weight of unrepentant sin, and He longed for them to trust in Him and be saved.

You see, it would actually say a lot about our hard and callous hearts if we didn't weep over some of the things that we hear about going on in the world, and going on around us in our lives and in the lives of our neighbors. Our hearts ought to break over the outcast, and over the refugee, and over the unborn, and over so many others who are victims of the sin of this world. It says a lot about our hearts when we do nothing about these things.

So in all of this, all I'm saying is that it's actually godly to be sad.

So it's interesting that the hymns and worship music that we sing are most often songs of joy. Very few songs that we sing are sad songs. But like Psalm 6, at least 40% and maybe even up to 70% of the psalms are not primarily songs of joy, but of sadness. So why, if so many of the psalms are sad, why do we feel the need to only sing that we're happy all the day?

Now, I'm not saying we shouldn't sing that we're happy all the day. I think we should, because we're reminding ourselves that life with Jesus gives us hope.²² God's grace does heal us, so that we can be happy all the day. But that doesn't exclude also expressing godly sorrow.

Because I believe the Scripture is teaching us that even in our sadness, we can rejoice. Verse 8.

Depart from me, all you workers of evil... (Psalm 6:8a)

And remember that when David says that, he's referring to people that he loves: Saul, or Absalom.

Depart from me, all you workers of evil, for the LORD has heard the sound of my weeping. The LORD has heard my plea; the LORD accepts my prayer. All my enemies shall be ashamed and greatly troubled; they shall turn back and be put to shame in a moment. (Psalms 6:8-10)

God hears your cries. He sees you in your pain and sorrows. And not only that, but God has a plan to heal all sorrow. From David's perspective, in that moment, he found comfort in the fact that his enemies would be dealt with. He found comfort in the reality that his enemies would be put to shame.

And you, too, can be comforted that God does not overlook your pain. God will judge the evildoer.²³

But let me ask you this: who are your enemies? And before you say the Muslims, or the Atheists, of a specific political party, I remind you that the Scripture says that we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against

²¹ Isaiah 53:3

²² 1 John 5:13

²³ Psalm 145:20

the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places.²⁴

So if people aren't ultimately our enemies, should we rejoice in their judgment? And if not, why did David want his enemies, possibly his own flesh and blood, to be ashamed?

Well, consider this. When you first repented, weren't you ashamed?

You see, Jesus taught us to love our enemies and pray for them,²⁵ not to wish them to experience an eternity in hell.

And I think David got that. Yes, he was at the point that he was simply comforted by the fact that God would right every wrong. Every sin would be judged.²⁶ No evildoer would be just let off the hook. But the ironic thing is that the same price that was paid for David's sin also paid the price for his enemies. So he placed his hope in God that his enemies—Saul, or Absalom, or whoever it was—would be ashamed of their sin, and turn back to the living God.

Just before going to the cross, Jesus said this in John 12:27-32.

"Now is my soul troubled. And what shall I say? 'Father, save me from this hour'? But for this purpose I have come to this hour. Father, glorify your name." Then a voice came from heaven: "I have glorified it, and I will glorify it again." The crowd that stood there and heard it said that it had thundered. Others said, "An angel has spoken to him." Jesus answered, "This voice has come for your sake, not mine. Now is the judgment of this world; now will the ruler of this world be cast out. And I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all people to myself." (John 12:27-32)

You see, every sin was judged on the cross. Your sin has been paid for, and we receive salvation as a gift.

There are many reasons to be sad. Be sad over your sin, and even over the sins of others. Be sad over the state of this world. But also rejoice that God is making all things new.

You see, our sadness now has a purpose. Trevor read it before in 1 Peter.

In this you rejoice, though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been grieved by various trials, so that the tested genuineness of your faith—more precious than gold that perishes though it is tested by fire—may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ. (1 Peter 1:6-7)

It's not merely that God allows trials now. God ordains trials now that grieve us so that our faith would be tested and proven, so that our hearts would be truly changed, and God would be glorified.

Now, if that doesn't make you happy, even while you're sad, then maybe you've still got to be ashamed in the sense that David meant it for his enemies. Maybe you still need to go through the fire, and be judged, so that

²⁴ Ephesians 6:12

²⁵ Matthew 5:44

²⁶ Isaiah 53:6

you no longer hold onto your pride, or your vengeance, and you give up your right to your vengeance, giving it to God, because it says, "Vengeance is Mine," says the Lord.²⁷

And the good news of the gospel is that God poured out His vengeance not on you, but on Christ. And from the cross, Jesus cried out, "It is finished."²⁸ Do you believe it?

²⁷ Romans 12:19

²⁸ John 19:30