

How Long, O Lord?

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[0 : 00] If you would, please remain standing. You might have noticed we changed up a few things this morning in our order of service. One of the reasons why we sing a song this week before I come up here is so that you would still be standing by the time I got here, so that you can remain standing while we read the Word of God together as a sign of reverence for the Word.

So if you would, I do want you to take your Bibles and open them to Psalm chapter 6. We'll read Psalm chapter 6 together as our sermon text this morning.

David writes, O Lord, rebuke me not in your anger, nor discipline me in your wrath. Be gracious to me, O Lord, for I am languishing. Heal me, O Lord, for my bones are troubled.

My soul also is greatly troubled. But you, O Lord, how long? 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? I am weary with my moaning. Every night I flood my bed with tears.

[1 : 20] I drench my couch with my weeping. My eye wastes away because of grief. It grows weak because of all my foes. 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. Amen. The grass withers and the flower fades, but the word of our Lord endures forever. You may be seated.

Let's pray. Lord, we have heard your word and now we pray that you would make it clear to us.

Help us to hear it not just with our ears, but now with our hearts. Lord, we ask, even as we've already prayed, Lord, would you comfort those who are discouraged this morning?

[2 : 21] Would you challenge those who are idle this morning? And would you call us all to deeper trust in Christ, we pray. In Jesus' name. Amen.

I was recently asked to share something that was encouraging to me about Seawee Bay. About the ministry that's going on here. And thankfully, I didn't have to think long and hard about that question.

Several answers came quickly to mind. But a few events over the past few weeks have given me a new answer. I am encouraged by the way that you suffer.

I'm not encouraged that you suffer. Don't get me wrong. I'm encouraged by the way that you suffer. I want to share a story with you of someone that you know.

I won't tell you her name. But if you know her, then you know exactly who I'm talking about. This woman has suffered maybe more than anyone I know.

[3 : 22] Especially so over the past few years. She had a heart transplant years ago and now is in need of a new heart. She had a kidney transplant years ago and now is on constant dialysis treatments.

She's had constant unexplained bleeding that keeps her in and out of the hospital. And the doctors really have no clear path forward. Not sure what to do. It has rained and it has poured on this woman's life.

And I went to go see her in the hospital a few weeks ago. And at this point, when I went to go visit her, at this point in her suffering, she thought she was at the point of death. In fact, everyone in the room thought that she was at the point of death.

Her family had gathered there. They called in a doctor there to hear what she wanted to do. Nobody had great options. And I'll tell you what she said. She sat up in her bed as best as she could and she said, You know, I have had a wonderful life.

And the Lord has given me 20 years on a borrowed heart. He's cared for me in so many ways. I love Jesus and I am ready to be with him.

[4 : 34] And the doctor's just sitting there listening to her. I tell you, there's not a dry eye in the room. And you know what she did? She kept quoting to herself and to everybody else there in the room out loud.

Psalm 23, she said, I know that surely goodness and mercy shall follow me. I know that surely goodness and mercy shall follow me.

I know that surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life. And I shall dwell in the house of the Lord forever.

And I thought, that is how a believer suffers. That, I pray, is how I will suffer. The next time affliction comes my way. What I want to do this morning from Psalm chapter 6 is to convince you, to let David convince you that this is how all believers must suffer in this life.

Psalm chapter 6, it teaches us that God's people face remarkable affliction with unshakable assurance. This is the big idea here for us this morning.

[5 : 40] This is actually going to be our outline. We'll look at each part. God's people face remarkable affliction with unshakable assurance. First, we see that God's people face remarkable affliction.

You know, some people would tell you that being a Christian exempts you from suffering. And I hope that we've seen over the past six weeks in the Psalms that those people are very wrong. Being a Christian does not exempt you from suffering.

On the contrary, believers face all sorts of trials in this life. And we saw last week, it's worth mentioning here again this morning, that over a third of the book of Psalms are Psalms of lament.

They're complaints. They're lamenting to God about some trial, some issue, some affliction, some discouraging event in the psalmist's life. This is normal for the life of the believer.

But aren't you thankful that the Bible gives us an honest perspective on life? It gives us an honest look at the life of a believer, that life on this side of eternity is difficult for everybody, believer or not.

[6 : 49] But the way a believer faces affliction is completely different from the rest of the world. Look here at all the afflictions that David is facing. I count five here, at least.

And I'd be willing to bet that as we go through these five afflictions, that you can find yourself in at least one or two of them. Number one is the affliction of our own sin.

We got everybody in the room already, didn't we? And number one is the affliction of our own sin. Look there to verse one. David says, Oh Lord, rebuke me not in your anger, nor discipline me in your wrath.

Be gracious to me, oh Lord, for I am languishing. What's the cause? What's the source of God's anger towards David? What's the source of his hard hand of discipline and his wrath against him?

It's David's own sin. You may remember some of the context of this section of Psalms that we're in. David is on the run from his son Absalom. Absalom has ripped the kingdom away from David.

[7 : 55] He's stolen away the hearts of the people. And now he's coming to kill him. And he's bringing a couple thousand men with him. Some of y'all thought that your family situations were difficult.

This is more difficult. But the cause of this, David knows all of it, all of it can be traced back to his sin. 2 Samuel 12, you can mark this down for later.

Nathan the prophet confronts David and he tells him that he has sinned against the Lord. He says, you are the man. The Lord has made David king. He's given him everything he could possibly ever need.

And yet, David wasn't satisfied. He stole away Bathsheba from Uriah the Hittite. He made her his wife. And then he had Uriah killed to cover it up.

David, the king of Israel, has sinned greatly against the Lord. And as is the case with all sin, his sin came with consequence. Listen to what 2 Samuel 12 says.

[8 : 58] Nathan says, Now therefore, the sword shall never depart from your house. Because you have despised me and have taken the wife of Uriah the Hittite to be your wife, thus says the Lord, Behold, I will raise up evil against you out of your own house.

It's clear that this is the source of David's trouble. It's his own sin. This is why David's asking for the Lord's grace. This is why he's asking for the Lord to relieve him of his discipline.

Because David knows at the root of his trouble, at the root of his suffering, is his own sin. Now unfortunately, it's not always this clear for us in our own lives, is it?

And we have the advantage of being able to have God's own commentary on this event in David's life, but we don't have that same level of clarity and certainty in our own lives.

And so I want to be clear. Not all suffering is directly related to a particular sin in your life.

[10 : 04] Now I'll say that again. Not all suffering in your life can be directly connected to a particular sin in your life. You might think of Job as an example, of someone who suffered in innocence.

Not all suffering is directly related to a particular sin in your life, but it might be. It might be.

We need to have this category in our minds. It might be that the Lord, as your heavenly Father, is disciplining you for a particular sin in your life.

David is clearly an example of this, isn't he? We often, I think we want God to do whatever he needs to do to make us comfortable, when in reality, God is committed to do whatever it takes to make us conform more into his holy image.

This is what Hebrews tells us in Hebrews chapter 12. He says, He disciplines us, children of God, for our good that we may share in his holiness.

[11 : 14] For the moment, all discipline seems painful rather than pleasant. Who enjoys discipline? No one. But later, it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it.

You know, if we are suffering, if we're experiencing some affliction, whether or not we know for certain that it's related to a particular sin in our life, we would be wise to seek out what the Lord might be doing in our affliction.

We would be wise to ask the Lord to reveal to us any sin in our lives so that it might be confessed and repented of. We would be wise to do as David does here and seek the Lord's gracious relief through prayer and repentance.

Sometimes affliction is a result of our own personal sin, but often, you know, it's simply a result of living in a sin-cursed world. Sometimes we face some trial, some affliction, some difficulty, and we just have no answer for it.

All we can do is look at it and say, that's not how things should be. That's sin. We should know that all brokenness, all affliction, all suffering, all sickness, all decay, all the stresses and issues that we face every single week, all of it are the consequence of sin in the world.

[12 : 39] And one of those consequences, it says we see affliction number two here is sickness. Sickness. Treg prayed earlier. I look around the room. I see several that are not here, and I know it's because of physical ailments that are plaguing our bodies.

He says there in verse two, look there. He says, I'm languishing. Heal me, oh Lord, for my bones are troubled. Do you know what it's like to have sick bones? Now you're so sick that you feel like you can count every single bone in your body.

They ache. You don't want to move. You don't want to think. You don't want to do anything. You just want to lay there. And it never comes at a good time, does it? I can't imagine a worse time for David to get sick than right now.

Can you? He's on the run. Armies are coming after him. He needs to be alert. He needs to be ready. He needs his strength. And now sickness comes. He's reminded yet again, he's not as strong, not as self-sufficient, not as self-reliant as he thinks he is.

But not only is his body sick, he says his soul is wearing out as well. He says, my bones are troubled and my soul also is greatly troubled. David is both in physical and spiritual turmoil, body and soul.

[13 : 57] They are interconnected. And David says, both here are feeling the effects of sin. Both body and soul are in distress with no end in sight.

And so he prays, he can hardly get out a sentence. Oh, you, oh Lord, but you, oh Lord, how long? Have you ever asked that question? How long, oh Lord, will I deal with this trial?

How long, oh Lord, will I deal with this sickness? How long, oh Lord, will I deal with this sin? How long, oh Lord, until you will bring me some relief?

All of us at some point or another, because we live in a sin-sick world, we've all experienced the affliction of sickness. For David, it seems like his sickness is bad enough, it seems to be closing in to the point of death.

Death, death, this is affliction number three, that all of us face. Look there to verse four. It's the affliction of death. He says, turn, oh Lord, deliver my life.

[15 : 03] 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? David is facing death.

And Romans three tells us that the wages of sin is death. All of us have sinned. All of us live in a sin-sick world. And so all of us face the grim reality of death.

No one will escape it. And with the presence of sickness, with the presence of death, you likely have experienced affliction number four, grief. Look there to verse six.

Just look at the depth of David's grief here. He says, I am weary with my moaning. Every night I flood my bed with tears.

I drench my couch with my weeping. My eye wastes away because of grief. It grows weak because of all of my foes. Are you depressed yet? This doesn't sound too encouraging, does it?

[16 : 08] You know what? I have never heard an attractional, seeker-sensitive pastor preach on Psalm chapter six. Have you? Well, there's a reason for that.

It's because passages like this are not attractive. We're talking about real life here. We're talking about suffering and sickness and grief and death. This isn't things that we want to hear, but the Bible knows this is our honest experience, and so it's things that we need to hear, and we need to hear them from God himself.

Grief, despair, sadness, groaning, crying, are all part of the believer's experience on this side of eternity. The Christian life is not always happy.

There are seasons of deep and dark and intense grief, sadness, isolation, loneliness, sickness.

And you know what? As I read through this psalm, what stood out to me was that the church of all places ought to be where we can be honest about this truth.

[17 : 18] We read this as David's individual prayer, vertically him in isolation, individually praying to the Lord, expressing his grief to the Lord, and that's true, but also all of us are reading this account right now, aren't we?

This book of the Psalms is shared with all of God's people. David is opening up about his grief, not just individually to the Lord, but corporately to all of God's people.

We should feel the freedom to walk through seasons of darkness and grief together. And not be ashamed that we're struggling. You know, part of our commitments to one another in our church covenant, we are called to rejoice with those who rejoice and to what?

To weep with those who weep. We've made this commitment to one another. And what an opportunity we have to share the love of God with our brothers and sisters who are struggling. I think of an older lady who, I served in North Myrtle Beach, and she's with the Lord now.

And she would just come into my office, and this happened more than once, she would just come into my office and sit down with no explanation whatsoever and start crying.

[18 : 36] And I couldn't get an answer out of her. I would try to prod her as best I could. What's going on? What's wrong? She had no answer to give. All she had was tears. And you know what?

When the Lord brought us down here and we moved, for all the sermons that I preached, all the lessons that I taught, all the tasks that I accomplished there at the church, the thing that stood out to her most, what she thanked me for on my way out the door, was that she could come in my office and cry.

I don't want to say that to pat myself on the back because my part was easy. I didn't do a thing. All I did was sit and listen. Her part, her part was difficult.

She had to open up about her grief and let others be the ministering spirit of Christ to her in the midst of her darkness. And so must we, church. Don't hold your grief in to yourself.

The body is here to care for those who are afflicted among us. One more affliction here. Affliction number five that all of us face.

[19 : 45] We face harm from other sinners. Why is David weak from crying? What's going on in his life? Verse seven, he says, I am worn out because of all of my foes.

It's interesting, isn't it, that out of all of these afflictions, five of them, this is the only one that's outside of us. You know, all these other ones are internal. We experience them internally.

They're personal. Our greatest enemy is our sin and all of its consequences in our life. But living in a fallen world, we also face affliction from other people, other sinners.

And sometimes, like David, sometimes it comes from those who are closest to us. Does this sound familiar to any of you?

Can you relate to David at all? The truth is, all of us, believer, non-believer alike, all of us face all sorts of afflictions in this life.

[20 : 51] But, for the believer, the good news is, like David, we don't stop at verse seven. The believer faces remarkable affliction with unshakable assurance.

That's what we see in verses eight through 10. Look there with me. This is our second point this morning. Second, God's people face remarkable affliction with unshakable assurance.

You know, the difference between a believer and a non-believer and our experience on this side of eternity is not a difference of suffering. It's not that they suffer and we don't.

In fact, oftentimes, to our eye, it seems like the wicked are doing just fine. They seem like they're doing well for themselves. The difference is that in the midst of our suffering, believer, we cling to the promises of God.

That's our assurance. That's our confidence. In the midst of any trial, any affliction, our assurance is the steadfast love of the Lord. This is what I want you to remember.

[21 : 56] This is the main message here from Psalm chapter six. The only way to endure the trials of this life is by clinging to the promises of God.

If you're suffering right now and you are just in the middle of it, do everything you can to hammer the promises of God into your weary soul.

And if you're not, if everything's going well for you, you're doing just fine, you would be wise to do everything you can to soak your roots deep down into the word of God before the storm comes your way.

What are those promises? We've seen David's requests. He's given seven of them. I don't know if you're counting. Don't rebuke me. Don't discipline me in your wrath.

Be gracious to me. Heal me. Turn, O Lord. Deliver my life. Save me. Seven requests that he makes. But what's the basis of his request? What's at the root?

[23 : 12] What's his assurance that God will act, that this will be done? What grounds does he have to make these requests before God? He has three unshakable truths here. Three promises here that give David assurance in the face of remarkable affliction.

Number one. Number one. Our assurance in the face of affliction is that no matter what happens, God will act for the good of his people and the glory of his name.

I'll say that again. I would love for you to write this down. Our assurance in the face of affliction is that no matter what happens, our God will act for the good of his people and the glory of his name.

Look there again to verses four and five. David prays, Lord, deliver my life. Save me. Why? For the sake of your steadfast love.

Save me. Why? For in death there is no remembrance of you. And Sheol, who will give you praise? And David knows that God's greatest motivator, the greatest motivator for God to act is the praise of his name.

[24 : 31] Everything comes back to this. God will always act for the glory of his name. And so David recognizes that there is an issue here. Do you see what it is?

Do you see the issue here? The issue is that God's glory is at stake. God's reputation is at stake. His praise is at stake in David's suffering.

The steadfast love of God is on trial in David's suffering. Do you see this? Despite his sin, David was God's anointed king, right?

And more than that, God had promised David, what had he promised David? A son from his line to sit on the throne forever. So here's the issue. How can God stay true to his word and allow David to die and suffer?

What would the nation say about a God that turned his back on his promises? What would this say about the character of God if he turned his back on his plan to lead his people through his anointed king?

[25 : 36] What would that say about the character of God? David prays that God would act because his own glory and praise is at stake. So he says, Save me for the sake of your steadfast love.

We need to realize God's greatest motivator in all that he does, God's greatest motivation in all of his actions and creation and redemption is the glory of his name.

And here's the good news for us, church. If we put our trust in the Lord, then our good is tied up with his glory.

Let me give you an example. If I tell my boys that we're going on a trip, I've got three boys. If I tell them we're going on a trip, maybe we're going to the Grand Canyon, okay?

Cross-country trip. First of all, could you imagine the length of that trip? We went to Georgia a couple weeks ago. I kid you not, 20 minutes into the drive, they were asking, Are we there?

[26 : 39] Are we there? Are we there? How long? How long? How long? Thankfully, they're pretty good riders. Most of the time, we've never tried cross-country, but all the stops, all the inconveniences, all the wrecks, all the hazards along the way to the mind of a child, that probably seems like it's an eternity, that they're never going to get there.

Their assurance, despite the long, difficult, hazard-wrought journey, their assurance that we're going to get there is that mom and dad told them they're going to get there.

And they know that if mom and dad turn back on their word and don't take them on the trip to the Grand Canyon, guess what? That's not only bad for them, that brings shame upon mom and dad.

Because our word has bound them up. Our glory, our praise in their good are now one. For us to do them good is to our praise.

For us to go back on our word brings us shame and brings them harm. Now, mom and dad aren't perfect on this side of eternity, are we? Sometimes things happen that we can't control.

[27 : 50] Sometimes stuff comes up that's beyond our ability to control. But the Lord God never turns back on his word. The Lord God, by his own grace, has graciously chosen to tie up our good with his glory.

David's confidence in the face of death is that God will bring praise to his name. But you know what? It's also his reason to go on living.

He says, For in death there is no remembrance of you and Sheol who will bring you praise. It is fascinating to me. David, he doesn't just pray to be made well, does he?

There's a reason here for his prayer. He grounds it in a greater purpose. He doesn't just pray, Lord, make me well so I can go back to being king. Lord, make me well so I'm more comfortable.

Lord, make me well so I feel better. He roots his request that good might come to him in the greater purpose of the praise and glory of God.

[28 : 59] Do we pray like this? Do we realize that the purpose of our life is to glorify God and enjoy him forever? That the purpose of your life is to bring him praise?

You know, you were made to honor and delight in him and bring glory to him. And so David prays, I want to live so that you might be praised.

I want to be made well again so that in the face of wickedness of this world you would have a witness. He prays, please heal me, O Lord, so that you would have yet another reason to give me so I could give you praise.

You know, I've heard a lot of prayers for healing, but I'll be honest, I have not heard a lot of prayers that sound like this. David wants to be healed so that he might bring glory to the Lord.

Do you pray like this in our suffering? And maybe we don't pray like this in our suffering because we don't live like this when we're well. The purpose of our being made well again is for the glory of God.

[30 : 09] If you were sick and now your mind is no longer foggy, use it to think clear thoughts about God. If your body was ailing and weak and now has regained strength, use it.

Use your mobility now to go out and serve him. If your throat is no longer sore, use your voice now to sing his praises and to speak of him. That's what they're there for. Here's our assurance, church, in the face of affliction.

Our present circumstances do not change eternal promises. God has spoken. Our assurance in the face of any trial is that God will fulfill his promises for our good and his glory.

But not only this, assurance number two, no matter what happens, our God hears our prayers. Our God hears our prayers.

You know, something shocking happens here in verse eight. Do you see it? There is a major shift. David moves from vertical prayer, his groaning, his weeping, to now horizontal proclamation in shocking confidence.

[31 : 26] In fact, this shift is so drastic that there's some critical scholars that say, well, this must be a mistake. There must be two different psalms happening here that are somehow smashed together.

This sounds like two different people here. Look there to verse eight. He just got done saying how his eyes were wasting away from grief because of his foes. But now in verse eight, he says, depart from me, all you workers of evil.

Why? What's his assurance? For the Lord has heard the sound of my weeping. Depart from me because the Lord has heard my plea.

The Lord accepts my prayer. This is the confidence of God's people. We go from pouring out our heart to God in prayer, letting him hear all of our growing, all of our lamenting, crying out to him for help.

And then we get up out of the closet and we walk into this sin-marked world with confidence. Why? Because we know that even when things are beyond our control, they're never beyond his control.

[32 : 34] Even when things are beyond our understanding, they are never beyond his understanding. Even when we can't do anything at all to change our circumstances, the Lord is always at work and he hears our prayers.

In fact, we know that even when we don't have the words to say, like David, we know the Spirit helps us in our weakness. For we do not know what to pray for as we ought, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with groanings too deep for words.

And he who searches hearts knows what is the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for the saints according to the will of God. And we know that for those who love God, all things work together for good for those who are called according to his purpose.

Church, we are called to pray to the King of all the earth with confidence because he hears us. He uses our prayers to accomplish his eternal purposes.

But not only this, third, our assurance in the face of suffering is that no matter what happens, our God will bring justice.

[33 : 51] Look there to verse 10. David closes here in verse 10 with the assurance that all my enemies shall be ashamed and greatly troubled.

They shall turn back and be put to shame in a moment. His assurance is that the God who hears his prayers, the God who works for his good, the God who will bring praise to his name, his God will bring justice.

On this side of eternity, the wicked may seem like they've won. And the curse of sin and all its effects may seem to have won the day, but David's confidence is that in a moment, in the blink of an eye, all will be made right.

The king of the earth will do what is right. The wicked will be judged and God will right every wrong. That's our hope, church.

In all the afflictions of a sin-cursed world, we trust with David that the judge of all the earth will do what is right. Those were David's assurances.

[35 : 01] But we have a fourth, don't we? David clung to the promises of God as clearly as he knew them, but we know with much greater clarity, don't we, that all the promises of God are fulfilled, are true, are extended to us in Jesus Christ.

Blessed assurance, Jesus is mine. That's our assurance. It's likely that David's trials are far greater than ours, but it's certain that our assurance is far more powerful than his.

We know with absolute certainty that in all things, God works for our good and for his glory. Why? Because he who gave up his own son for us, how will he not also along with him graciously give us all things?

We know that God has tied up our good with his glory. Why? Because he sent his own son to live and to die and to rise on our behalf that no one who trusts in him will be put to shame that no matter what happens in this life, if we suffer with him, we will also certainly be glorified with him.

If we die with him, certainly we shall also live, be raised with him that no matter what happens, neither death nor life nor angels nor rulers nor things present nor things to come nor powers nor height nor depth nor anything else in all creation will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.

[36 : 45] if the afflictions of this life ever feel like it's too much to bear, church, look to Christ who was afflicted for us.

If the sorrows of this life feel too much to bear, look to Christ the man of sorrows well acquainted with grief. If we should ever doubt in the midst of our trial that the Lord cares about us, look to Christ on the cross who came and suffered in our place that any who trust in him might be brought to full healing, full restoration, not now, but in the time to come.

You will suffer in this life, but Christian, we suffer with assurance that Christ has purchased for us a glorious future. Free from sin, free from death, free from sickness, free from grief, free from every affliction, safe and secure in the presence of God.

That's our assurance. As I left the hospital from visiting our friend, I actually ran into the palliative care doctor.

He was coming back from lunch and I was leaving to head to the parking lot and I got to speak with him for a moment and he commented how remarkable it was to see someone suffer so much and yet speak so confidently about their hope in the Lord.

[38 : 21] And I said, you know what? She's not afraid to die. And he almost stopped me. He said, no, no, no, no, no, we don't, that's a bad word around here. We don't say that word. I had the opportunity to say, you know, a doctor, she's a Christian.

We talk about death all the time. She's not afraid to die because she knows Christ who has delivered her soul from death so that no matter what happens in this life, she has assurance in the Lord.

Do you have that same assurance? Let's pray. Lord, you know the afflictions that we face.

Father, you sent Christ to suffer and to die on our behalf and we know that all who follow him, Lord, we will walk through many trials in this life but we take heart, Father, that Christ has overcome the world and we take heart knowing that the certain future that he's purchased for us.

We pray that you would comfort those who are afflicted this morning with the gospel of Christ. We pray this in Jesus' name. Amen. What we're going to do now is respond to the Lord.

[39 : 47] Respond to the word that we've just heard. We'll stand and sing our last song together in just a moment but what I want to do and Miss Priscilla is going to play through a verse. I want you to just sit and respond now in silent prayer to the Lord.

What truth stood out to you today that you need to praise God for and what application is there for you to take away? What sin is there to be repented of? Take a moment right now before we close and pray to the Lord in response.

Let's pray.