

## Prayer

Praise You Lord Jesus Christ, for You fill my soul with joy and gladness. Joy because I know You are alongside me in everything I do, and gladness because You bring the best out of me in every situation. These gifts of grace enable me to stand above the strife, suffering and evil in this world, and when they touch me, I can know for sure that Your love will restore my body and soul, and lead me back again to You. Thank You Jesus; AMEN

## Prayer Suggestions

### Prayer ideas

Go on-line and look at the websites of the churches in your neighbourhood. Pray for the Christian witness of these churches

### On-going prayers

- **Pray for countries of different religious beliefs.** Pray for secular countries, especially those that demean religion and attempt to suppress it
- Pray about the education of small children in your country
- Give thanks to God for sleep and for health

## Meditation

Brother, sister, friend; the Lord watches His people.

Take time to speak to a friend who needs help and comfort;  
Especially those with whom you have had your differences.

Offer love and affection to everyone within your family;  
Especially to any who find it hard to show love to others.

Give attention to those who seek your help, whatever the need;  
Especially the poor and downtrodden, rejected by others.

Present yourselves well, and speak no ill of your colleagues;  
Especially those who hate you, or make life difficult for you

Take care to conclude your work properly, for you do it for the Lord;  
Especially when time is precious and others depend on you.

Bring your prayers to the Lord, day or night, whenever the need arises;  
Especially if life is tough, and you need His help all the more.

Brother, sister, friend; the Lord watches out of love.

## Bible passage - Psalm 6

**Psalm 6 is a cry from the heart of one who suffers, and it seeks the Lord's help for various physical and spiritual problems. It ends with a shout of triumph at the Lord's deliverance!**

For the director of music. With stringed instruments. According to sheminith. A psalm of David.

<sup>1</sup> O LORD, do not rebuke me in your anger  
or discipline me in your wrath.

<sup>2</sup> Be merciful to me, LORD, for I am faint;  
O LORD, heal me, for my bones are in  
agony.

<sup>3</sup> My soul is in anguish.

How long, O LORD, how long?

<sup>4</sup> Turn, O LORD, and deliver me;  
save me because of your unfailing love.

<sup>5</sup> No-one remembers you when he is dead.  
Who praises you from his grave?

- <sup>6</sup> I am worn out from groaning;  
all night long I flood my bed with weeping  
and drench my couch with tears.
- <sup>7</sup> My eyes grow weak with sorrow;  
they fail because of all my foes.
- <sup>8</sup> Away from me, all you who do evil,
- for the LORD has heard my weeping.  
<sup>9</sup> The LORD has heard my cry for mercy;  
the LORD accepts my prayer.
- <sup>10</sup> All my enemies will be ashamed and  
dismayed;  
They will turn away in sudden disgrace.

## Bible Study

### Review

This is the fourth psalm of David (Psalms 3-6) in which a worshipper comes before the Lord with troubles. This Psalm is different from the others however, because it deals with the suffering of an individual. Here, the worshipper pours out feelings of distress, physical pain and mental anguish (6:1-7) before finally finding deliverance (6:8-10). These themes make the psalm particularly suitable for use in the church's healing ministry. In addition, Christian tradition links the psalm with Jesus' weeping in the garden of Gethsemane (6:6,7), and because it speaks of deliverance (6:8-10) coming after death (6:5), it seems to tell the story of salvation, as won for us by Jesus!

Before we go further, there are two things of interest within the psalm. Firstly, most of it can be found elsewhere in Scripture, either in the Psalms or in Jeremiah (Psalm 38:1, 42:4, 109:26, Jeremiah 45:3, Psalm 31:10, 119:115, 35:4,26 and 83:13). This suggests that Psalm 6 may have been important in Old Testament times. Also, the superscription (before verse 1) gives interesting musical instructions, but also contains a rare word, 'sheminith', which means 'eighth'. This could be a request to sing in 'eighth's', or as a musician would understand it, in 'octaves', meaning in unison. If sung in this way the psalm would have a considerable sense of 'gravitas', in line with its theme!

Historically, psalm 6 is the first of the seven 'Penitential Psalms' (6,32,38,51,102,130,143), used in Christian worship for confessing sin and asking the Lord for help. Most of the psalm is an anguished cry for help, and it seems obvious that it would be used by someone who was in trouble. The striking feature of the psalm is the way that the worshipper ultimately calls out to the Lord confident that He has done what was asked of Him, and given victory! The worshipper has cried out for help, and is almost startled by God's answers to prayer (6:8-10)!

Most of this psalm describes suffering of one kind or another, so in verse 3 the worshipper calls out, '*my soul is in anguish*' (6:3). We assume that this means mental suffering, but we need to be careful, because in the Old Testament, the word 'soul' refers to the whole person, it does not mean the 'spirit' bit, as we think today! So, the suffering in psalm 6:3 might be either physical, mental, or spiritual. But whatever it is, it causes the worshipper to break down and cry out to God '*how long, O Lord, how long*' (6:3)! The psalm is an appeal for God's mercy rather than His discipline, and in verse 4 the worshipper calls on God's 'unfailing love', that great covenant love of God He is always ready to show His own people.

Then, a pertinent question is asked, does this love of God extend beyond the grave (6:5)? The worshipper in Old Testament times does not know the answer to this, and continues to pour out troubles to God; fear of death (6:5), loss of sleep with worry (6:6), and physical distress (6:7). Moreover, these verses describe the consequences of such suffering; exhaustion, weeping and failure. Will God hear the suffering of His own?

Then quite suddenly, verse 8 comes on us with surprise! The worshipper cries 'away from me, you evil doers!' What does this mean? This cry is a shout of confidence from the heart of the worshipper who has come to the Lord in deep suffering but has been inspired to be utterly confident in the Lord. Then, having accepted the Lord's mercy, the worshipper looks to the future in confidence; '*all my enemies will be ashamed and dismayed, they will turn away in disgrace!*' (6:10).

All this is inspiring, but how does it connect with us today? To begin with, we could imagine a worshipper coming before the Lord in the Temple, presenting these troubles to the Lord, perhaps reading from the psalm and therefore being encouraged by the uplifting tone of the last three verses. The psalm might also have been used as a prayer, said by a King of Israel or Judah in the midst of troubled times and gaining confidence from the assurance of the psalm that God would save His people.

Whatever use the psalm had in the past, we now read this as Christians, and the psalm seems to reflect the saving work of God in Christ. Each worshipper brings to the Lord the troubles of life, knowing that in Christ, they may be confident of victory over all troubles. The victory of Jesus' life, death and resurrection encompasses all things, and all life and death are in the Lord's hands. Ultimately this is what matters,

whatever our health issues, whether or not the Lord grants us special healing for particular woes. In this psalm, we claim all that our Lord has already done for us and for our ultimate deliverance!

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## Discipleship

### **Questions** (for use in groups)

1. Recall times when you believe that God has saved you. What has changed in your life as a consequence?
2. Look at the expression 'save me because of Your unfailing love' (6:4). Reflect on God's 'unfailing love'. Is that how you experience God now?
3. What enemies do you feel it right to ask God to 'strike down' or 'put to shame' (6:10)?

### **Personal comments by author**

*I have found that the resolution of suffering can come through prayer for healing, or it can come through handing over my condition to God and being content that He is in control of my life. It is so sad that many people leave the church because they can find no way of coping with suffering or sadness, when in reality, the Lord alone is able to offer the only way out of such inner turmoil and distress. It is therefore all the more important that I and everyone else with a testimony of God's grace, should speak out about what God has done for us. The message of God's love is needed out there!*

### **Ideas for exploring discipleship**

- *Within this psalm, a great deal of suffering is resolved eventually by faith. What does trouble and strife do to your life of Christian discipleship? Ask yourself some hard questions about whether anything stops you from following the path of discipleship. How can you deal with it?*
- *Pray for those who struggle with suffering, and especially any people you know personally who have difficulty with suffering and their faith.*

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## Final Prayer

Lord God, we are restless in our spirits until we find our rest in You. Give us a purposeful and single-mindedness approach to life, so that nothing stops us from pursuing all that is good, true and beautiful in this world, and nothing stops us from finding You within Your world. AMEN

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