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6 | PSALM 6

OUR HEALTH & GOD'S HAND

Drawing Near to God in Sickness

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Announcements

1. Welcome visitors!

Introduction

Open your Bible if you will to **Psalm 6**. The title of our study this morning is: "Health & God's Hand." We are continuing a series through the Psalms called "Shadow of the Almighty." The goal of this series is to teach us how to pray and how to walk with God.

Everything in the Christian's life is designed by God to sanctify us, even our sickness. Sometimes sickness can be overwhelming. Many a marriage has been broken by the pressure and stress that sickness brings. Sickness can bring any of us to a point of unbearable sorrow.

I am from a family of eight children. We are well acquainted with constant sickness. Two of my brothers died very young, one was still born and the other died at six weeks of age due to SIDS: Sudden Infant Death Syndrome. I don't think my mother ever recovered from those two consecutive deaths of my brothers.

My childhood memories have a lot of hospital visits in them. All but one sibling had serious medical problems throughout childhood.

My oldest brother Scott had scoliosis. That meant six major back surgeries beginning at age 13.

My brother Don was born cross-eyed with what is called Strabismus or lazy eye. When they operated on him his heart stopped on the operating table because of a nerve that was touched. Thankfully he survived.

My brother Dave at birth was blue with a very low oxygen level. They gave him my Dad's middle name because they thought he was going to die. He has Scheuermann's disease which is the curvature of the spine that prohibits normal growth. He had to wear a back brace for it when he was a kid.

My sister Tammie and I were born premature and were flown by helicopter to Loyola University Medical Center in Maywood where our lives were spared. I had open heart surgery to fix a heart murmur at age 5. My wife says I'm "almost" normal!

My poor brother Jay was the only brother not to have any health problems. My brother was down and out because he felt invisible. Everyone was being pampered with gifts and attention because of their health problems. It was so bad that my mother decided to have a big party for my brother for not being sick so we could pay him some attention! He got this super big electric race track.

So sickness is a part of all of our lives. It was a part of David's life. We don't know when this was written, but it seems to be at a time when God is using sickness in David's life to humble him and draw him near.

God cares about our spiritual life *and* our physical life. He created the human body, and he is pleased when we enjoy health and vigor. But in this world our bodies endure sickness, pain, decay. Often our ailments occur in order to draw us near to himself. Sickness for the child of God is never for punishment, but only for discipline, to draw us nearer and nearer to God.

Scripture Reading

Let's stand and read our passage today, Psalm 6,

- O Lord, rebuke me not in your anger,
nor discipline me in your wrath.
- ² Be gracious to me, O Lord, for I am languishing;
heal me, O Lord, for my bones are troubled.
- ³ My soul also is greatly troubled.
But you, O Lord—how long?
- ⁴ Turn, O Lord, deliver my life;
save me for the sake of your steadfast love.
- ⁵ For in death there is no remembrance of you;
in Sheol who will give you praise?
- ⁶ I am weary with my moaning;
every night I flood my bed with tears;
I drench my couch with my weeping.
- ⁷ My eye wastes away because of grief;
it grows weak because of all my foes.
- ⁸ Depart from me, all you workers of evil,
for the Lord has heard the sound of my weeping.
- ⁹ The Lord has heard my plea;
the Lord accepts my prayer.
- ¹⁰ All my enemies shall be ashamed and greatly troubled;
they shall turn back and be put to shame in a moment.

This is God's Word.

Outline

1. The **Reality** of Sickness (6:1-3, 6-8)
2. God's **Purpose** of Sickness (6:4-5)
3. The **Grace** of God in Sickness (6:9-10)

1. THE REALITY OF SICKNESS (6:1-3, 6-7)

A UNIVERSAL EXPERIENCE (6:1-3)

This Psalm was one of those experiences that David didn't want to forget. It became sacred ground for him. Psalm 6 was "for the director of music" and was to be played "with stringed instruments." The word sheminith occurs in Psalm 12 and 1 Chronicles 15:21. It may have referred to an eight-string instrument. This psalm is classified as a penitential psalm, one in which the psalmist turns to God for forgiveness. This is the first such psalm in the Book of Psalms (cp. Pss. 32; 38; 51; 102; 130; 143).¹

¹ Steven Lawson. *Holman Old Testament Commentary – Psalms: 11* (Nashville: B&H Publishing Group, 2003), 41-42.

Sickness is a reality in every person's life on earth. We are all fallen, including our physical state. Scientifically, the second law of thermodynamics states that all things are falling apart into atrophy and disorder. We don't need a science text book to tell us that. We are all falling apart. Sickness is a universal experience.

The truth is, when it comes to God's children, sickness is a tool God uses

- to draw us nearer to him
- to awaken us that we might seek his presence
- to search ourselves for any sin and cleanse our conscience

Things change when you are sick.

"I used to be thinner."

"My hair used to be light blond."

"I could run miles and not get tired."

"I never used to be this forgetful."

"I hardly know myself anymore."

David felt this way. David was a mighty warrior. He was king of Israel. But on his sickbed he was helpless and weak. We hear his prayer in Psalm 6. David cries out, "**I am languishing**" (6:2a).

"**Heal me, O LORD, for my bones are troubled**" (6:2b).

"**O LORD—how long?**" (6:3)

He's in a time of deep sickness, sorrow, and pain. You've been there right?

A SEARCHING EXPERIENCE (6:1-2)

It's an experience that we sometimes feel in our sickness is God's anger, wrath and discipline. Something is not right. God must be punishing me.

O LORD, rebuke me not in your anger, nor discipline me in your wrath (6:1)

Of course, God is good, and he would never punish his own children. He's already punished Christ. None of us can ever add one merit upon Christ's atonement. He has paid it all. Remember his cry? It is finished! David also knows he cannot atone for his own sin. David said in Psalm 130:3, "**If you, LORD, kept a record of sins, Lord, who could stand?**" (NIV).

So the **wrath** and **anger** David speaks of here is not divine punishment, but divine **discipline**. It is the correction of Yahweh's child. Your heavenly Father loves you, and he is using sickness to draw David near. David knows that God is a God of grace. He says: I know what the purpose of this suffering is: I need your grace and healing!

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

Search Your Conscience

It is during his time on his sickbed that he gets to search his conscience. When we are sick, we need to feel God's **gracious** presence, right? You need to know your great

physician is caring for you. It's good to search your heart and make sure your conscience is clean. We need to pray as David did in Psalm 139.

Search me, O God, and know my heart!

Try me and know my thoughts!

²⁴ And see if there be any grievous way in me,
and lead me in the way everlasting! (Psa 139:23-24)

When you are sick, you need to connect with the presence of God. God slows you down, and you are "languishing." In his sickness David was made aware by the Spirit of God that he had lost favor with God: "**O LORD, rebuke me not in your anger, nor discipline me in your wrath**" (6:1). He was painfully aware God was displeased with some area of his life. David appealed to God to lighten the discipline.²

We need to come to the end of ourselves before we repent. Sometimes we can do that without crushing sickness. But sometimes God uses sickness.

When we are **languishing**, God has slowed us down. We need to connect with God, but that will not happen without a clean conscience. Anything that causes your heart to condemn you needs to be gone from your life, even if it does not seem to be an actual sin. Anything questionable needs to go. You must work towards living with a clean conscience at all costs. Media, TV, movies, news articles all introduce us to worldly and defiling concepts that will condemn us. Unwise friendships, curious searching of the internet for "harmless" but worldly things can hurt your conscience. All this leads to a hardening of heart to where your heart is condemning you. The more your heart hardens, the less assurance you have. So work toward having a clean conscience and reassuring your heart. If you live in this joyful clean heart state, you you're your heart will not condemn you and you will have confidence and joy before God. "**Beloved, if our heart does not condemn us, we have confidence before God**" (1 Jn 3:21). How vital it is to work every day having a clean conscience.

As Andy Naselli says in his book on Conscience:

Perhaps you, too, have had thoughts like this: "If I'm making progress toward holiness with the help of the Holy Spirit, why do I keep feeling like I'm a worse sinner than before? Becoming a Christian was supposed to relieve my conscience. What's going on?"

Not having a clean conscience is dangerous. Paul says in 1 Timothy 1:19 that we are to be "**keeping faith and a good conscience, which some have rejected and suffered shipwreck in regard to their faith.**" So very often sickness comes in our lives to help us purge our conscience from anything that would defile it.

*Not All Sickness is for **Chastening**, But All for **Conformity** to Christ*

Now that doesn't mean all sickness is for **chastening**, but all sickness is for **conforming** you to the image of Christ. The Lord Jesus said concerning **the man born**

² Ibid., 42.

blind in John 8, that his ailment of blindness was given to him not because of sin, but for the glory of God.

Job in the same way was made so sick he almost died, yet there is no great chastening going on. He's been given sickness and trials to put his genuine faith on display.

So dear saint, just because you are suffering does not mean you are in sin. But because we are sinful creatures, each of us should search our hearts and make sure our conscience is clean.

A TERRIFYING EXPERIENCE (6:2-3a)

David here in his soul is terrified. That's what the word "troubled" means. He is at the end of his rope. He is at the bottom.

² Be gracious to me, O LORD, for I am languishing;
heal me, O LORD, for my bones are **troubled**.

³ My soul also is greatly **troubled**... (6:2-3a)

Sometimes when God slows us down through sickness or something else, we start to think of our lives, and our hearts condemn us. David says his **bones are troubled** and his **soul also is greatly troubled**, agony of soul – literally terrified. Sometimes we may feel guilty about even the smallest sins and feel terrified like David, as if hell is going to open up and swallow you.

SOMETIMES AN ENDLESS EXPERIENCE (6:3b)

David can't take it. It seems like this sickness is going to last forever. He cries to the Lord one of the most notable prayers we all pray.

But you, O LORD—how long? (6:3b)

Sickness and trials may seem like they last forever, but they will not last forever. Peter says they last only for "a little while." "In this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while you may have had to suffer grief in all kinds of trials" (1 Pet 1:6).

We all cry out: "But you O LORD, how long?" How long till I get an answer? How long till Jesus comes again? I want to see the clouds split open. I want to see Jesus face to face. "Amen! Come, Lord Jesus!" (Rev 22:20). "But you, O LORD Jesus, How long?"

Listen, it seems long, but "What is your life? For you are a mist that appears for a little time and then vanishes" (Jas 4:14).

A WEARYING EXPERIENCE (6:6-7)

Sickness seems like an endless experience – it is a *wearying* experience. It sucks away your desire for life. Drowning in grief, David suffered from sleeplessness, tossing and turning in his bed. He lost sleep. He couldn't think straight. He began to lose hope and vision for living.

A Loss of Sleep

David is so tired, he needs to sleep, but he can't. All he can do is cry. He declared to the Lord:

⁶I am **weary** with my moaning;
every night I flood my bed with tears;
I drench my couch with my weeping.

His eyes were so swollen with tears that he can't sleep. He can't see because of the tears. In times like these we feel that we are too tired to do those many countless things that urgently need to be done. We are:

- too tired to get out of bed and get dressed
- too worn out to get into the car and go to work
- too exhausted to get the kids off to school
- too weary to clean the house
- too depressed to go to church
- too burdened to read the Bible
- too sluggish even to pray³

But this is the time we need to pray! Remember Jesus in the garden and found his disciples sleeping. "And he said to Peter, 'So, could you not watch with me one hour? 41 Watch and pray that you may not enter into temptation. The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak'" (Mt 26:40-41).

It's when you're weak that you need the fellowship of the brothers. It's when you are weary that you need the encouragement of friends. It's when you are weak that the Body of Christ can rally around you. If you are too weak to pray or read, then call a brother or sister and have them read and pray with you. If you are too weary to go to church, call your forever family. We will come get you. You can't do this alone. We are forever family.

So David had a loss of sleep and energy. We all experience that.

A Loss of Vision

His eye, or vision wastes away. That's not just speaking of physical sight, but spiritual sight. When we lose hope, we lose a vision for life. David says this loss of spiritual sight is "because of all my foes." All he can see are his enemies. Have you been there?

2. THE PURPOSE OF SICKNESS (6:2, 4-5)

GOD'S GRACE (6:2a)

When we are sick and in the middle of constant pain, it's hard to think straight. Why Lord? How long? What's the purpose? We see here several. First, God's grace.

³ James Montgomery Boice, *Psalms 1-41: An Expository Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2005), 54.

Be **gracious** to me, O Lord, for I am languishing... (6:2a)

I believe the entire universe exists to display the greatness of the glory of the grace of God. I might have said more simply that the entire universe exists to display the greatness of the glory of God. That would be true. But the Bible is more specific. The glory of God shines most brightly, most fully, most beautifully in the manifestation of the glory of his grace. Therefore, this is the ultimate aim and the final explanation of all things— including suffering.⁴

The Grace of God's Refining

One of my favorite memories as a child is **roasting marshmallows** over my dad's charcoal grill in Oak Forest, Illinois on the southside of Chicago. How well I remember standing close to the glowing flames, placing two white marshmallows on a stick, and igniting them just long enough to char a thin black crust outside and melt the gooey inside. Years ago, "fire" represented wonderful times of fun and food.

Years later, I learned that fire has a biblical application—not fun-filled as the fires of my youth . . . but infinitely more important! In both the Old and New Testaments, we find numerous references to God's *refining* His children through fiery trials in much the same way an earthly refiner uses fire to purify gold and silver. In Isaiah 48:10, the Lord says, "I have refined you, though not as silver; I have tested you in the furnace of affliction."

God's gracious purpose for you is to refine you – to make you like Jesus. Job knew about this refining process. He cried out in the middle of his suffering: "But he knows the way that I take; when he has tried me, I shall come forth as gold" (Job 23:10).

God has a gracious purpose for your suffering and sickness. Like David you may be **languishing**. But that crucible of refinement is to get all the dross and dirt off of you. It's to clean you up. It's to get rid of any mixture you have, to purify any worldliness out of you.

I don't know about you, but when I think about suffering and sickness that way, I want to rejoice. I can't be overcome by the pain and sorrow. God loves me. He loves you. He's cleaning you up, getting you ready for heaven.

The Grace of God's Growth

"Not only so, but we also rejoice in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces perseverance; perseverance, character; and character, hope. And hope does not disappoint us" (Rom 5:3–5). Whether you realize it or not, God's working on you through your times of sickness and trials. He's developing Christlike character in you.

GOD'S HEALING (6:2b)

Another purpose of God in your sickness is **healing**. This is David's request. He asks for divine healing.

⁴ John Piper and Justin Taylor. *Suffering and the Sovereignty of God* (Carol Stream, IL: Crossway, 2005), 81.

Heal me, O Lord, for my bones are troubled (6:2b).

How many of you believe that our great God is a healing God? Jehovah Rapha! The LORD who heals! The Lord is our Great Physician. God cares about your spiritual life *and* your *physical* life. Sickness was not in God's perfect plan. Sickness came into the world through mankind's fall into sin and desire to live independent from God.

But God is all about restoring us to the original creation. He says, "Behold I make all things new." By Christ's atonement... "by his stripes we are healed" (Isa 53).

Healing occurs – sometimes dramatically, as in the work of Jesus and his disciples. The Gospels overflow with stories of Jesus healing every kind of bodily affliction. The Bible promises divine healing. I am so thankful for our great God, the divine Healer, aren't you? Our great God still works to heal people in ways that defy medical knowledge. It is never wrong to pray for healing, either for ourselves or others. The Bible tells us to pray for whatever we need, and that surely includes freedom from pain.

Not everyone gets divine healing. God has his own plan for healing and for sickness and death. Paul prayed for the thorn in his side to be removed. Timothy was often sick. Not everyone got healed all the time. But God at times will grant divine healing to promote the glory of his name. I believe God would do a lot more healing if we asked him and interceded as we ought for the sick.

The Story of Billy Russell

Many of you know the story of Billy Russell. He was diagnosed with pancreatic cancer in 2001. Pancreatic cancer is considered incurable. Only 20% live past the first year. The five-year survival rate is around 2%. Almost no one lives past 5 years. Let's see, Billy's been "vertical and sucking air" (as he likes to say) for 17 years. So many prayed for divine healing, and God granted it!

The Story of Mike Moffat

Two years ago, our brother Mike Moffat was very near death. I spent many days with him believing he would never walk out alive. Jerry visited him, I visited him, and other visited him. He began confessing his sins and purifying his heart. It was truly a beautiful thing. And just as suddenly as he was near death, God healed him. He walked out of that hospital by the grace of God.

Of course, no divine healing is final. We all die. **Lazarus** who was raised from the dead finally had to die as well.

But let us always remember that doctors practice medicine, but it is God who is the divine healer in every case. So pray like David in Psalm 103.

Bless the Lord, O my soul,
and all that is within me,
bless his holy name!
² Bless the Lord, O my soul,
and forget not all his benefits,
³ who forgives all your iniquity,
who heals all your diseases,

⁴ who redeems your life from the pit,
 who crowns you with steadfast love and mercy,
⁵ who satisfies you with good
 so that your youth is renewed like the eagle's.

GOD'S LOVE (6:4)

Another purpose for your sickness is to be in awe of God's **love**. Look at how David prays.

Turn, O Lord, deliver my life; save me for the sake of your steadfast love (6:4)

In spite of your sin, God has a covenant with you. The word "steadfast love" is the word *hesed* in Hebrew, and it means God's electing covenant love. He's faithful, not because you've chosen him, but because he has chosen you.

If there is a turning point in this psalm, this is certainly it. It is when David, whether by training, habit, or sheer discipline, called upon the name of the Lord. Learn from David at this point.

- In times of **victory**, call upon God. Praise him.
- In times of **defeat**, call upon God. Ask for help.
- In times of **temptation**, call upon God. Seek deliverance.
- In times of **depression**, call upon God. Request light. Persevere. God is our pathway through the darkness.⁵

David now believes God is hearing him. So he says: "Turn O LORD, deliver my life." Now David begins to get the will to live.

We must pursue the Lord until we are connected with him again. The Bible calls this "waiting" on the Lord. You pursue the Lord. Wait on him. Wrestle with God like Jacob until he gives you a blessing.

Isaiah 40:31, "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."

GOD'S PRAISE (6:5)

David wants to stay alive because those in Sheol, in the presence of God, will not be able to evangelize. They will praise God face to face, but they will not be able to continue praising him in public worship, in the congregation.

For in death there is no remembrance of you; in Sheol who will give you praise? (6:5).

David knew that a believer who persists in unconfessed sin may be subject to a premature death. But he wants to be rid of his sin and live. He's got the will to live again. He wants to praise God in the land of the living. He wants to testify of God's love and grace. Is there anything better than praising the Lord? "Rejoice in the Lord always, and again I say, Rejoice!" (Phil 4:4).

⁵ James Montgomery Boice, *Psalms*, 55.

Transition: Now we come to our final point. This is a very special place we find David. We don't know if his circumstances have changed. His enemies are still out there. He may still be feeling the ravages of sickness. But what we see is he is forgiven. His relationship is reestablished with the Lord. He has perfect peace. **Isaiah 26:3**, "You will keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on you because he trusts in you."

3. GOD'S GRACE IN SICKNESS (6:8-10)

GOD'S GRACE LEADS TO A NEW CONFRONTATION (8a, 10)

David rejects any association with the opponents in the strongest terms. Before he was vexed and troubled, now he praying that his enemies would be troubled. David rejects any association with the opponents in the strongest terms.⁶

⁸ Depart from me, all you workers of evil for the Lord has heard the sound of my weeping.... ¹⁰ All my enemies shall be ashamed and greatly **troubled**; they shall turn back and be put to shame in a moment.

Suddenly David is as bold as a lion, rebuking those who had threatened his life. Why the dramatic change? David explained it was because the LORD had heard his weeping. This weeping surely involved the confession of his sin, now acknowledged to God with godly sorrow. David, the man after God's own heart, had sought forgiveness with the weeping of a broken heart. With remorse over his sins, he had been forgiven and had been given a new, holy boldness.

One thing the sickbed does for believers is give us a new love and commitment with God that will not compromise with the world.

Depart from Me: Separation

Jesus actually quotes these words of David in Matthew 7:23 and says, "Depart from me you workers of iniquity," I never knew you.

One of the things sickness can do is stop you in your tracks and separate you from bad influences. It can also help you to give those who persecute you to God. There are those who would discourage your walk with God either by persecution or by bad influence. David says, "Depart from me you workers of evil" – I don't want to know you. "Blessed is the man who walks not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor stands in the way of sinners, nor sits in the seat of the scornful, but his delight is in the law of the LORD and in his law he meditates day and night" (Psa 1:1-2). What a blessing to be in the sickbed meditating on the Lord.

Troubled and Terrified Enemies

Now the tables have turned. Instead of him being troubled, and his soul being vexed, now his enemies will be ashamed and greatly troubled.

⁶ Gerald H. Wilson, *Psalms*, vol. 1, The NIV Application Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2002), 181.

All my enemies shall be ashamed and greatly **troubled**; they shall turn back and be put to shame in a moment (6:10).

As I said, the term “troubled” means to be weary, terrified, troubled, vexed. The enemies of the LORD will not ultimately prosper. **In a moment**, when the trumpet sounds and Jesus comes, **they shall turn back and be put to shame**. They also will not prosper in this life. The wicked can gain momentary pleasure and happiness, but don't be fooled. They are miserable. They will never have the deep satisfaction of a clean conscience and a joyful heart that comes from knowing the Lord. His lovingkindness, steadfast love, is better than all this life has to offer (Psa 63:3).

GOD'S GRACE LEADS TO A NEW CONFIDENCE (8b-9)

Something powerful has happened in David's soul. The burden has been lifted. He says:

for the Lord has heard the sound of my weeping.
⁹The Lord has heard my plea;
 the Lord accepts my prayer (6:8b-9).

The Lord has heard. The idea is that he has answered! God is a prayer answering God. Now that David has unburdened his heart to the Lord, it's like he has put on a new character. He has put off his despair and now has attained a deep level of joy and assurance.

At this point, there's a sudden and surprising change from suffering to joy, an experience recorded in other psalms (22:22; 56:10; 69:30). It doesn't matter whether this change occurred later or immediately after David prayed, but he felt healing in his body and peace in his heart and mind.⁷

Conclusion

Each of us needs to walk in the peace of the Lord. That's what suffering and sickness is all about. It is God's tool to refine you. He wants to do good to you.

Think of the last time you couldn't sleep. Perhaps you were sick. Perhaps you had a headache that wouldn't go away. It is vital not to waste your pain and sickness. Reach out to God and he will heal your heart and soul, and he often heals our bodies to serve him again.

Are you feeling under it with such chronic illness? Are you sick and tired of being sick and tired? Know that his gentle hand is with you. He is using this to draw you near.

Paul says in **Romans 8:18**, “For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory that is to be revealed to us.”

⁷ Warren W. Wiersbe, *Be Worshipful*, 1st ed., “Be” Commentary Series (Colorado Springs, CO: Cook Communications Ministries, 2004), 36.