

Psalms 18-05-24

This is Thursday the, started to say the 34th, but that's the THR goes with Thursday. Thursday the 24th of May 2018 and we continue our study in the book of Psalms. We're going to move forward tonight to Psalm 6. It's amazing, seems like we only started a few weeks ago and we've already covered the first five Psalms and we're moving into Psalm 6. Let's take a moment as we begin our study to go to the Lord in prayer, ask his blessing and his Spirit's assistance for us and we'll get started.

Father, thank you for the provision that you've made for us first and foremost in rescuing us from our lost and fallen condition through the Lord Jesus Christ, entering us into the wonderful realm of privileges and opportunities that we enjoy in him. We thank you for loving us and being patient with us as we endeavor to learn and grow and become mature. We thank you for this portion of your Word that is before us this evening and we ask that you will bless it to each heart.

May each of us find in it motivation and encouragement and strength and guidance as we face the challenges and the potentials that come to us in each day's life. We pray these things in Jesus' name, Amen. Well, so far we have seen the overall picture of life in Psalm 1. We had morning songs and evening songs and we've seen the presence of foes in Psalm 2. We had a morning song in Psalm 3. We had an evening song in Psalm 4. We had another review of foes and their pressure and the need for guidance in their midst in Psalm 5. We gave a little bit of a light touch to the end of that song but it's pretty self-explanatory.

There are no real surprises there. Let them fall by their own counsels pretty well sums it up. Those who live by the sword tend to die by the sword even in this life.

Those who are players of politics and those who try to get ahead by leverage and by double dealing often end up suffering a similar fate at the hands of others who are younger and better at those same skills. This is more or less simply committing them into God's hands. Tonight in Psalm 6 you will see in your New King James if it's like mine that it is titled, A Prayer of Faith in Time of Distress.

I like this because it is often labeled as a penitential psalm or a psalm of individual request for forgiveness and we're going to see why that is but also why that is not. Why it's labeled that way but why it isn't really a good example of that. Let's begin by reading this song and I can tell you already because I know all of you that you're going to find points of identification with the psalmist in this particular circumstance.

All of us have been and some of us are now in the situation that he is going to bring to the Lord's attention. So it begins, To the chief musician with stringed instruments on an eight-stringed harp, a psalm of David. We have seen most of this before.

To the chief musician we know he is the leader of both the choir and the instrumentalists. He's

the one who puts the master songbook together for these Levites that have been tasked with providing the worship life through music in Israel. David organized them.

We're going to see this here in a few minutes. With stringed instruments goes back to what we saw at the beginning of Psalm 4. Then it says, On an eight-stringed harp. This is a surmise.

What it literally says is, On Shemineth, upon Shemineth. Well, Shemineth is derived from the word which means eight or literally eighth here. It has been suggested that perhaps this has to do not so much with how many strings an instrument has as with its tuning.

Those of you who play guitar know that there is a standard tuning, E-A-D-G-B-E, but there are alternate tunings that are suited to special songs or types of music. There's drop D where you take the lowest note and you drop it a little further from E, a full step down to D. It gives you a bass note. Many times you'll really thump that bottom D because it rings with a D chord that you play up high.

There's been a lot of songs that come to life because of that particular tuning. There's double drop D where you take both the top and bottom E strings and put them down a full note, a full step. This is suitable for another kind of music.

It often casts it into a bit of a minor key. My daughters have heard me fool with double drop D. I heard it first of all from my roommate who in turn was playing songs by Stephen Stills. He's done music.

If you've ever heard the song Find the Cost of Freedom, that's basically in double drop D. It's got kind of a chanting mournful sound to it. Mother Earth will swallow you, lay your body down, which bears a little bit on our psalm tonight. These tunings evoke a mood.

They create an emotional backdrop. Everybody is sort of making their best guess here on what Shemineth means. Keep your finger here and turn over to 1 Chronicles 15.

1 Chronicles 15. This is where David is setting up musical worship in Israel as king. And if you look beginning at verse 16, 1 Chronicles 15-16, David spoke to the leaders of the Levites to appoint their brethren to be the singers accompanied by instruments of music, stringed instruments, harps, and cymbals by raising the voice with resounding joy.

So the Levites appointed Heman, the son of Joel, and of his brethren Asaph, the son of Barakai. Remember there's a psalm of Asaph superscription you find often in the psalms. And of their brethren, the sons of Merari, Ethan, the son of Cushiah, and with them their brethren of second rank, Zechariah, Ben-Jazael, Shemiramoth, Jehiel, Uni, Elieb, Benaiah, Messiah, Mattithiah, Eliphileh, Mekneah, Obed-Edom, and Jehl, the gatekeepers, the singers, Heman, Asaph, and Ethan were to sound the cymbals of bronze.

Zechariah, Asael, Shemiramoth, Jehiel, Uni, Elieb, Messiah, and Benaiah with strings according to Alamot. See that? According to Alamot. That is actually the superscription of one of our

upcoming psalms.

Look at the next verse. Mattithiah, Eliphileh, Mekneah, Obed-Edom, Jehl, and Azaziah to direct with harps on Shemineth. Harps perhaps tuned to the octave.

And the suggestion is, and I think it's as likely as anything, perhaps more so, is that these would be a cello compared to a violin. They might be tuned an octave down. They're a deeper, fuller sound.

Tuned an octave low. It's possible that they were eight-stringed, but it would be easy enough to say eight-stringed. But it just says Shemineth.

And you don't typically just say, oh let me play you a song on my eighth. It doesn't quite fit as the name of a musical instrument. It's more likely that the instruments are named back here in verse 16.

Stringed instruments, harps, and cymbals, and so on. And these are perhaps tunings or specific types. So having said that, we know that because a particular kind of instrument, or perhaps more likely a particular tuning, is associated with this song, why would we care about that? Why would God leave it in the Bible for us to find? Anytime the music comes to the fore with a tune name, or a particular instrument, or a particular tuning, the music is wordless.

The melody and accompaniment is by definition wordless. You have words and music. You have lyrics and you have stringed accompaniment.

So if you're going to define the type of accompaniment in some way, we don't know exactly what it is. We'll find out. Isn't it going to be great to be able to hear some of these musicians that are named here play as they did in the days of David? I can't wait for that.

I can't wait to hear these stringed orchestras, hear the Levites singing in choral accompaniment, hear David himself give an original rendition of his psalms. That's going to be great and we'll understand Hebrew to do it. But it's the emotional side.

It is the non-verbal side. And so what it tells us, even if we don't have the specifics, is that there is an emotional component in this particular psalm to watch for. It will be in the accompaniment and we would expect to find it in the lyrics as well.

Come Ye Sinners Poor and Needy, as you know, is one of my favorite songs. You think about the minor cast that is in a goodly portion of that song or how does that begin? I'm only going over Jordan. Their minor songs will have a minor melody and then there are lyrics and in the lyrics you can see why somebody put that in minor and it'll shift to major for a little while and then it'll go back down.

Wayfaring Stranger is what I was trying to think of. That's got a minor and major shift and looking ahead, I'm going there to see my mother. She said she'd meet me when I come and so

on.

That's a hopeful note. But while you're trudging through the dark sojourn of life, you know, it goes back to a minor. Having said that, watch as we read Psalm 6, not just for concepts and not just for circumstances or here's the nature of my opposition, here's the nature of my challenge, but that there is a goodly amount of feeling.

How does this make you feel? I can describe my pain on a scale of one to ten. The doctor says, on the pain scale, is this a seven or is it a three? Is it a nine or is it a four? Well, you can say, okay, it's a seven. Well, how do you feel? I feel like somebody dropped a cinder block on my head.

I feel like there is somebody trying to escape my body with an ice pick. There's much more emotional richness there. Watch this now as we read Psalm 6 in the original English.

It's a Psalm of David and he says, O Lord, do not rebuke me in your anger, nor chasten me in your hot displeasure. Have mercy on me, O Lord, for I am weak. O Lord, heal me, for my bones are troubled.

My soul also is greatly troubled, but you, O Lord, how long? Return, O Lord, deliver me. O save me for your mercy's sake, for in death there is no remembrance of you. In the grave, who will give you thanks? I am weary with my groaning.

All night I make my bed swim. I drench my couch with my tears. My eye wastes away because of grief.

It grows old because of all my enemies. Depart from me, all you workers of iniquity, for the Lord has heard the voice of my weeping. The Lord has heard my supplication.

The Lord will receive my prayer. Let all my enemies be ashamed and greatly troubled. Let them turn back and be ashamed suddenly.

We begin in verse one, O Lord, do not rebuke me in your anger, nor chasten me in your hot displeasure. Now, this is one of the reasons people think, well, this is a plea for forgiveness. This is a penitential psalm, you know, a penitent is somebody that says, I messed up, please forgive me and help me.

And you can understand why, but keep your finger here and turn over to Psalm 38. Psalm 38 begins with the identical same verse. It's a Psalm of David.

O Lord, do not rebuke me in your wrath, nor chasten me in your hot displeasure. Now, see if you can detect a difference as we continue in Psalm 38 from what we just read in Psalm 6. For your arrows pierce me deeply and your hand presses me down. Same or different? What's going on in Psalm 6? My enemies are surrounding me.

I want my enemies to be put to shame. My eye is growing old and weary because of my foes,

right? So there's an external cause of distress in Psalm 6. What is the cause of distress here? Your arrows pierce me. Your hand presses me down.

There is no soundness in my flesh because of your anger, nor any health in my bones because of my sin. So in Psalm 38, you can see right off the bat a substantial difference. This is an issue in 38 of known sin producing anger and hot displeasure on God's part, resulting in divine discipline.

My iniquities have gone over my head like a heavy burden. They are too heavy for me. My wounds are foul and festering because of my foolishness.

I am troubled. I am bowed down greatly. I go mourning all the day long.

My loins are full of inflammation. There is no soundness in my flesh. I am feeble and severely broken.

I groan because of the turmoil of my heart. And it goes on in that vein. It starts the very same way.

Now, go back to Psalm 6. O Lord, do not rebuke me in your anger, nor chasten me in your hot displeasure. Have mercy on me, O Lord, for I am weak. O Lord, heal me, for my bones are troubled.

There's no acknowledgement of foolishness, wrongdoing. There's no recognition that this trouble is of divine origin. My soul is greatly troubled.

And you, O Lord, how long? There seems to be the idea that God has suspended blessing, suspended intervention, but it's of a passive nature. God seems to simply be waiting for something. And David says, Lord, how long? How long am I going to endure this situation? But he doesn't source it in God's anger.

What he does say is, do not rebuke or correct me in your anger and displeasure. And leading with that, you almost get the idea that he hesitates to bring this situation to God's attention. He's not confessing sin.

He's not going to the Lord because he knows he messed up. He is enduring a situation where there are foes and they've worn him down. There is opposition.

There is a negative circumstance, and he's just ground down to the point of death. That's why he says, return, O Lord, deliver me. Save me for your mercy's sake, for in death there is no remembrance of you.

In the grave, who will give you thanks? I am weary with my groaning. I'm crying in my bed. The thing is soggy.

It's about to dissolve and come apart because of my tears. My eye wastes away because of

grief. It grows old because of all my enemies.

And then there is a sharp turn there after verse seven. Well, do not rebuke me in your anger, nor correct me in your hot displeasure. What do we know about discipline and correction of children by parents? Is it best to rebuke and correct in hot anger and displeasure? Is this the most effective? We know just from experience, not to mention the Word of God, that an emotional component to rebuke and correction is usually part of a recipe for disaster and counterproductive results.

I don't feel like I was disciplined because I messed up. I got disciplined because dad is mad. Everything has gone dark and dismal because my parents are upset.

My mother is out of control. An emotional component on the part of the corrector gives an easy out to the correctee that, well, it's your fault. You're impatient.

You're something wrong with you. A cold, calm, objective, dispassionate pointing out of the standard, the breaching of the standard, and the well-known and previously predicted result of such breach leaves the person really no choice but to say, well, yes, you did tell me that this is the standard, and you did tell me what would happen if I broke it. I did break it, so I really can't be too surprised if this is the result.

And you can't lay it off on anger. That's one thought. A second thought here is David doesn't feel qualified for rebuke and correction in God's wrath and displeasure as he does in Psalm 38.

This situation is different. There's a time when he is going to ask God to suspend further discipline and judgment that comes from wrath and displeasure because it is already happening, and David knows why. That's Psalm 38.

And there's a sense in which you have the aorist tense imperative versus the present tense imperative in Greek. One of them means stop doing what you're already doing, and the other one is don't start doing a thing. If you are already under divine discipline, and you say, oh, Lord, please no longer discipline me in your anger and hot displeasure, even though I know I deserve it because here are my sins, now you're in Psalm 38.

David here is not aware of anything on his own part that would account for this. He says, Lord, don't rebuke me and correct me in wrath and anger because I won't know what that's about. I am in a situation that looks a lot like divine discipline, but I know in looking at my own heart that I'm not in line for divine discipline, so Lord, don't let this continue looking like discipline.

Do not discipline me. Do not rebuke me. Correct me in anger and displeasure because I am beaten down, and it's for an entirely different reason.

So we don't always have certainty about such things. If things are going extremely wrong, you begin to think, Lord, have I got an area of unknown sin? That would be the case in Psalm 6. David knows something against himself in Psalm 38. He doesn't in Psalm 6. So to what does he

appeal? He makes the same initial plea to God.

Oh, Lord, I don't want to be under your anger and wrath for rebuke and correction. He confesses in Psalm 38. He does a similar thing in Psalm 51.

What does he do here? Look at the repetition of terms. Have mercy on me, O Lord. Have mercy on me.

I am weak. Heal me. My bones are troubled.

Look again at verse 4. Return, O Lord, and deliver me. Save me for your mercy's sake. David doesn't appeal to his own righteousness.

He doesn't appeal to, even though he appears to be guiltless, he appeals to God's mercy. So if we examine ourselves to see if we're in the faith and we detect malfunction, we say, I really have gotten sloppy. I really am in an area of sin.

I need to stop doing that and I need to repent in the true biblical sense of that word. You're in Psalm 38 territory. Acknowledgement, 1 John 1.9. Oh, Lord, here is what I have been doing.

I see it. You have brought it to my attention in your displeasure. If not, there could be, you remember, if we confess he is faithful and just to forgive and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

We confess our sins. He forgives those sins. That's a correspondence.

The things I can figure out and list, he forgives. And then whatever I am not cognizant of or I'm insufficient to be aware of, he cleanses me of it anyway because we go to him and the rest of it is all mercy. It's all grace.

Well, David goes right to the well of grace here because he doesn't know of anything to confess. So he says, Lord, for your mercy's sake, deliver me. Hear my plea.

Pay attention to my tearful status. And he acknowledges his own insufficiency. God resists the proud.

God gives grace to the humble, right? So when we go to the Lord and we're going to cast ourselves on his mercy, one thing we can't do is say, you know, Lord, I've got most of this, but if you could just do this, this last 5%, I almost turned the corner. And if you could just give me a little nudge, I'll be there. I've largely done it myself.

David says, Lord, I am weak. My bones, the very core of my being is troubled. Now, this could be interpreted as literal physical illness.

He may be talking about his actual bones and his actual flesh being weak and contrasting that with in verse 3 with his soul also being greatly troubled. Troubled, afflicted in mind and body.

And the great thing about these psalms, keep in mind now, we're looking at a hymnal and this is hymnal that David delivers.

This particular hymn is delivered to lots and lots of people. So they are designed to be universal. They're designed to have a wide application.

He's not being autobiographical here and saying, well, you know, because I'm David and I'm King and I was anointed and Samuel and Saul, and I've got a real unique case here. Let me tell you what happened on this occasion when I was fighting Goliath. You know, most people don't fight Goliath, but, you know, in a metaphorical sense, we all have our giants that require us to trust to the very limits of our faith.

So here, when you see him saying, I am weak, my bones are troubled. This is a great psalm if you actually are fighting physical debility. And we know what this is like.

All of us have had it. You can have something of a temporary nature that you can heal up over. You can have things that are of a degenerative nature that are kind of dismal because you know, well, it ain't getting any better.

It's only going to get worse. And in this case, David says, Lord, the last thing I need is your hot displeasure and your anger. I am coming to you not to acknowledge that I need, you know, instruction, correction, rebuke, and all of that.

I'm coming to you because I'm below empty in my gas tank and I am weak. Heal me. My bones are troubled.

This can be your literal bones or this can be your figurative metaphorical bones. Sometimes we become just physically weary facing our challenges and our tasks. It works both ways.

If you're undergoing therapy, if you're trying to heal up from something, this is your verse. If you are just overall whelmed to the point of being overwhelmed by circumstances in the physical world, this is your verse. Either way, it is equally applicable.

I personally think that David is speaking figuratively here. We don't have much scripture indicating that David was in ill health until he was a very old man and he needed Abishag to, you know, be his human hot water bottle. Remember that? And then Adonijah wanted to take her into his household and get some credibility as the future king.

He says, My soul also is greatly troubled. So you can be facing physical circumstances or even physical illness and it wears and presses on your spirit, on your soul. And it's difficult to be optimistic.

It's difficult to produce the fruit of the spirit when you are beset with constraint and pressure and limitation and grinding friction around you, whether it is your own body fighting you or it's just the immediate circumstances fighting you. Your own body can be your enemy. Your

immediate surroundings can be your enemy.

The inability to get up and out of a particular circumstance or situation can almost be like facing a foe that's got a spear and a shield and a sword and a helmet or maybe just a big bat and it's just beating you into the ground. You recognize this because you've been in this situation and I know how to talk about it because I've been in this situation. You just almost circumstantially feel like somebody's got a great big Louisville slugger and is just bruising you to a pulp with it.

And it's discouraging. And you go to the Lord and say, Lord, I sure hope this is not divine discipline. I don't know why it would be, but I throw myself on your mercy.

Look at me and my condition. It just can't get any worse unless I die. And that's where he's going in the next stanza.

Return, O Lord, and deliver me. Save me for your mercy's sake. David doesn't claim to be righteous.

He doesn't claim to be important. He doesn't claim to be necessary. He doesn't claim to have earned or deserved God's grace.

He says, Lord, deliver me because of your mercy. I'm not saying I deserve it. I'm not saying the world wouldn't be just as good or better without me.

But I know you are a merciful God and I'm laying claim to your grace. Then he says in verse 5, for in death, notice there is as in italics, in death, no remembrance of you. In the grave, who will give you thanks? There is a great set of parallel verses for this and you might want to make a note of them in the margin.

One is Psalm 30 verse 9. What profit is there in my blood if I go down to the pit? Will the dust praise you? Will it declare your faithfulness? David here is making that classic kind of prayer that we've talked about so often in the past. Give God a good reason to answer your prayer. One that appeals to him, not one that appeals to us.

Oh Lord, this washing machine I've got is really ugly. Wouldn't it be great if I had a nice new dishwasher or a nice new clothes washer or a nice new power washer, whatever kind of a washer? Wouldn't it be great if I had that? Think of all the things I could do. David says, Lord, if man exists to reflect your praise and your glory, I can do it a whole lot better alive than dead.

If you leave me here, I will find new and creative ways to praise you and tell of your glory. But if I go down to the pit, my dust can't praise you. Maybe you could write a little epitaph on your gravestone.

Will my dust declare your faithfulness? Preserving David through extreme difficulties, and you can think of many in his life, is a wonderful reflection of God's power and God's grace. And David knows it. So David uses that as quote-unquote leverage with the Lord.

Lord, your glory is going to bounce off of me much more effectively if I'm alive than if I'm dead. Psalm 88, verses 10 through 12. O Lord, will you perform wonders for the dead? Will departed spirits rise and praise you? Selah.

Let's have a little music while we think about that concept. Will you perform wonders for the dead? Will the departed spirits rise and dance in your praise? And then there's a little musical interlude. Will your loving-kindness be declared in the grave, your faithfulness in Abaddon? Will your wonders be made known in the darkness, and your righteousness in the land of forgetfulness? He's making a pretty strong case here in Psalm 88, 10 through 12.

Psalm 115, 17. He just flat out says, The dead do not praise the Lord, nor do any who go down into silence. You could say, well, this is an argument against a conscious afterlife, an interim body or whatever else.

Not really. I would love it if it was, but it's not really. What he's saying is, the dead do not praise the Lord to those of us who are living.

You don't walk by the graveyard and people call out from six feet under, you know, the Lord really is good, even though I'm down here. There's no praise coming from them to the living. It doesn't mean they're not able to praise the Lord, but if they're doing it, angels are hearing it.

And it's, in my view, they've skipped us and gone to the future. Nor do any who go down into silence. Notice the perspective here.

So important to look at context and where you are. We saw this in Genesis. What is the perspective? What is your viewpoint when darkness is on the face of the deep and when suddenly day and night begin to be visible and not until day four do you begin to see a visible greater light by day and lesser light by night and so on.

You're at ground level. Here, you're at ground level. You're above the daisies.

Those who go down into silence aren't praising God as I stand here above them reading their epitaph, right? Psalm 115, 17. Ecclesiastes chapter 9, verse 10. Whatever your hand finds to do, do it with all your might.

This is, you know, Paul will parallel this later. Whatever you do, do it heartily as unto the Lord and not unto men. Do it with all your might for there is no activity or planning or knowledge or wisdom in Sheol where you are going.

Make hay while the sun shines because when your life's sun sets, your activity and planning and knowledge and wisdom disappears from this earth, right? The perspective is this earth. You mean I will have no wisdom and no activity and no planning and no knowledge in the afterlife? That's not what he's talking about. This is a living guy speaking to other living people.

Now he's a dead guy speaking to living people, but he's talking about those who have departed

no longer have an effect here in terms of creating new activities and plans and so on. Isaiah chapter 38, verse 18. Sheol cannot thank you.

Death cannot praise you. Those who go down to the pit cannot hope for your faithfulness. Those who go down to the pit cannot hope for your faithfulness.

Whoa, that's a scary verse. Those who go down to the pit cannot hope for your faithfulness. The dead have no hope.

We've got abundant scripture that says there's nothing but hope because of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ, right? David himself knew that he would rise again. Job knew that he would rise again. What does this mean? Those who go down to the pit cannot hope for your faithfulness.

Those who have gone down to the pit, those who have gone to Sheol, to the murky afterlife that very little was known about in the Old Testament, are no longer in this realm where difficult circumstances give us the opportunity to hope and lay claim to God's grace and faithfulness. You've done that. There's a new paradigm after death that doesn't involve waiting in hope for God's faithfulness.

Faith is the substance of things hoped for and the evidence of things not seen. Then, Paul says, we will know even as we are known. It's not going to be a matter of faith.

Have you ever thought about the fact that there'll be no faith after your resurrection? Faith is trusting what you can't see. You'll be able to see everything. You will recognize it and enjoy it and enter into it and exploit it and fulfill its potential and possess it and leverage it into new and better things.

But faith is due to our limitations. We can't see the future. We can't know ahead.

We have to trust that God tells us the truth when we don't yet know what the outcome is going to be. So there is no hope for God's faithfulness after you leave this life. That's for now.

That's in the present. If we are going to lay hold of righteousness by faith, this is the time. You're not going to grab righteousness by faith when the Lord Jesus comes with the shout, trumpet, voice of the archangel and the dead in Christ rise and the alive and remain go up and join them in the air.

Your days of faith and laying hold of righteousness by faith are over. Now is the time. We should thank God for what we can't see.

Although I say this with a measure of reserve, there is an aspect, there is a sense in which we thank God for adversity and testing and challenges and difficulties, because without them, there is no opportunity for this. In Isaiah 38, 18, those who go down to Sheol can't thank, can't praise, can't hope for your faithfulness. And this is thankfulness and praise for new deliverance.

All our deliverance will be historic once we're raised. So these are all parallels to the idea here. David says, I want to stay in this life for more opportunities to remember you, not only to myself but to others.

That's what he's doing in this psalm. Because David lived to write this psalm, we're enjoying it 3,000 years later. Do you think there's anything that you and I can do today or tomorrow or the next day that is going to exist and be a blessing to people 3,000 years from now? This is the kind of prayer that David prayed and God is using him to bless people 30 centuries later.

30 centuries. David had no clue. David didn't look down the corridors of time and say, you know, there's going to be people reading.

Sam Hall is going to be standing there reading my psalm. He had no notion of that. But God honored his prayer in ways even he couldn't understand at the time and God will do the same for you and for me.

We have so little appreciation for what God is going to do with our hidden, small, daily, stumbling acts of faith. We're imperfect, we're weak, our bones ache, we do not know how to pray as we should, God the Holy Spirit has to fill in. But I'm telling you, there is going to be spectacular Washington DC fireworks levels of glory bouncing off of the smallest, humblest, most ordinary, nameless day-to-day saints like us in the eternal future.

That's the promise. Look at this pattern. This guy was a shepherd and even when he was a king, he was a king of one of the smallest kingdoms that's ever existed on the planet.

Only maybe an African village king would be smaller than David. He's not Caesar. He's not the King of England.

He's not the King of France. He's not the Tsar of Russia. He's not the Kaiser of Germany.

He's not any of the great figures of the historical past. That country is the size of a postage stamp and at its biggest extent, most states of the Union here are bigger than Israel ever was. But look at what God has done with David.

The Messiah descends from David and he had only an inkling. He didn't know the extent of the work of Christ. He didn't know the magnitude.

He didn't see the church age coming. He didn't see the body of Christ. He didn't see the filling of the Holy Spirit.

All of these things and David is an instrumental key part of it. He's the man here in a trying circumstance, praying to God and casting himself on God's mercy. And that's what God is looking for in you and in me.

So, he says, my bones are aching, my soul is troubled, and you oh Lord, how long, and he doesn't even finish the sentence. How long are you going to wait? How long is this going to

last? He just says, how long? But we know what this means. Is there any end? Is there an upside? Is there a door out? Is the light at the end of the tunnel the end of the tunnel or is it something else coming my way? How long? It's a very resonant concept, isn't it? We often think, well, I just don't see any way out.

This is just going to be endless. This has nowhere to go but ahead or down. How long? Notice what he says, return, oh Lord, and deliver me.

Now, if you say to somebody, return, what does that mean? Elvis sang a song, Return to Sender. What does it mean? Write a letter, send it to the girl, she refuses delivery, I got my letter back. Return to Sender, address unknown.

If a thing returns, it started out there and then it left, right? And now it's coming back. When God calls Israel, return to me. Why will you die, oh house of Israel? Return.

It means they used to be with God and they left. They're not unbelievers. They're not wild goats that he's bringing into the fold to domesticate.

They're his sheep and they have left the fold and he says, return to the shepherd and keeper of your soul, right? So when David says, return, oh Lord, how long is there going to be this situation where you seem distant? It's a legitimate claim on God's mercy. He says, Lord, you have been gone so long and what do we know about separation from God? What happened when Satan and the angels that followed him decided to separate themselves from God? Whereas by one man, sin entered the world and death by sin. Separation from the source of life can only eventuate in death.

In the day that you eat thereof, you will die. In the day you eat thereof and separate yourself from God, the death clock starts ticking. Well, David says, Lord, in this situation, I don't know why, but you're far away.

I am declining. I am dying here. Return and deliver me.

Save me for your mercy's sake because if you continue to be distant, I'm going to be dust. I'm going to be in the grave. Then he gives two full verses here, right in the center of the psalm to the depth of his suffering.

I am weary with my groaning. You know, it's one thing to be really tired and you groan when you get up, you groan when you sit, these old man noises. I promised myself when I was young, I would see old people and they would make noises when they moved or they got up or they sat down.

Our dog does this now, Major. When he lays down, he gives out with this old man noise as he folds his bones. I'm sure his joints are aching.

There's this groan that escapes him every time he lays down. I feel so bad for him. I wish I could

put him on meloxicam or something.

But if you're groaning with this kind of suffering and then your groaning is wearing you out. I'm weary with my groaning. I don't even have enough energy left to groan anymore.

I'm weary with my groaning. All night I make my bed swim. This is the kind of pressure that keeps you up at night, that your mind keeps chewing on like a bone.

You can't get to sleep. You wake up with it. It gives you insomnia.

It is distress of soul. You know what it's like. All of us know what it's like to have some sort of physical discomfort where you can't sleep.

The pain is too great. You're constricted in some way. I tried sleeping on an international flight in a seat that was sized for small people.

I don't know who. Small people designed this plane and significantly smaller than me. It was an international flight.

There was a four-seat row. I was on one side. I couldn't straighten out my legs.

My knees were aching. I couldn't straighten out my back, my shoulders. I couldn't straighten my arms out.

That's about the only thing you can straighten your neck. You can't lean your seat back because there was a lady with a child sitting directly behind me. I thought that's all she needs is me to put my seat back in her lap and her trying to find her child underneath the meal tray or something.

But you're just constricted and you ache. Have you ever had restless leg syndrome or something like it where I have actually gotten up not since I've been married so much but when I was single I would get restless leg in the middle of the night. I would actually get on put a pair of running shorts and go run at 2 or 2 30 in the morning to just get some blood flowing and feel different.

Well this is what David is talking about and this can be circumstantial. It doesn't have to be physical although it can be. He says all night I make my bed swim.

It just brings tears to my eyes. I can't quit weeping about this. There's just no recourse.

There's no alternative. There's no escape and the frustration and the disappointment and the suffering of it. I'm constantly crying.

I can't quit crying. I drench my couch with my tears. Notice the bed is one thing and the couch is another.

He doesn't say I'm crying while I'm out there slaying the Philistines or I'm crying while I'm riding

my chariot down the road. This has produced immobility on his part. By night he's in his bed.

By day he's on his couch. It has laid him out. He can't do anything and he cries by night and he cries by day.

The implication here is day is no better than night. At night his bed is soaking. By day his couch is soaking.

His recliner is the place where he drops in a heap. My eye wastes away because of grief. It grows old because of all my enemies.

This grows old doesn't really catch it. Remember what Jesus talked about the eye? When your eye is clear, your whole body is full of and he was talking about consistency inside and out. But your eye stands in for as a metonymy of part for the whole or metonymy of the adjunct probably.

But you put the organ of seeing for sight. And this is your viewpoint of life. It's not just your physical eye is growing weary.

I get tired of even looking at the situation. I don't even want to look. Did you ever get so sick of the news you just turn it off and you don't watch it for several days? I've been in that mode now for about two years and I'm really enjoying it.

I watch as little news as possible. I only find out when something catastrophic happens or somebody tells me when I wasn't looking for it. I never seek out the news except maybe the weather.

But my eye wastes away. My desire to even look around and see what's going on. My grief makes the whole world uninteresting.

This is like the name of that beauty salon curl up and die. You just want to you just want to not even look. So it grows old because of all my enemies.

Now this can be physical adversaries but it can also be that which opposes me. The things that are creating the onslaught. Well let's turn the corner here into verse 8. Depart from me you workers of iniquity.

For the Lord there's three positive statements. David prays this prayer and suddenly there is a shift in his heart. He's no longer soaking his couch and his bed swimming and so on.

He's no longer weary with groaning. Once he unburdens himself to the Lord he takes his cares and he casts them on God. He then turns now he the first seven verses he is looking at and talking to God in every verse.

You know we always watch who's the speaker, who's the audience. Consistently there's no change in pronouns here. David is talking to the Lord all the way through.

You O Lord. O Lord in verse one. O Lord in verse two.

O Lord in verse three. O Lord in verse four. You in verse five.

He describes himself in verses six and seven. This is his condition right. Now look at verse eight.

Who's he now talking to? He's finished talking to the Lord and he knows something now. God is not distant. God is not rebuking him in anger or correcting him in hot displeasure.

If that were the case it would be your iniquities is separated between you and God and your sins have hidden his face from you so that he will not hear. But what does David say and who does he say it to? He's no longer praying and he's no longer describing himself on the couch. He says you workers of iniquity.

Now in the physical realm this could be actual people that are causes of opposition. This could have been Amnon or Absalom or Joab when he murdered Abner or any one of the descendants of Saul other than Jonathan or who knows what it might be. It could be physical enemies.

It could have been Saul himself in the Adullam days. But keep in mind again this is universal and you can say to your troubles. You used to remember the old song at least World War II maybe earlier pack up your troubles in your old kit bag and smile smile smile.

Well pack up your troubles. Non-literal abstract troubles can't be packed into a kit bag. But what's the attitude? I'm going to take that stuff and wrap it up in a tight knot and put it someplace and I'm going to smile about something else.

Well here he talks to these sources of pressure whatever they are. It could be a physical malady. It could be weakening bones.

It could be whatever these things are that we've talked about earlier. Depart from me. What did the Lord Jesus say after his temptations in the wilderness? Devil took him up to a high place, turned these stones into bread, showed him the kingdoms of the world.

What did Jesus say at the end of all that? Depart from me. Devil departed from him. Resist the devil and he will flee from you.

Depart from me you workers of iniquity. If these are abstractions and not literal people, then where does the iniquity get worked? In us. We can be subject to worry.

We can be subject to depression. We can be subject to ungodly despair. It's okay to worry for a little while, despair for a little while, be shocked and dismayed and upset for a little while.

Jesus looked over the city of Jerusalem that refused to recognize who he actually was and wept. Jesus looked at the reaction of the people when Lazarus was in the tomb and wept. It's okay to have sorrow.

It is okay to weep with those who weep. What is not okay is for it to persist into a pattern. It should be episodic.

In the same way that we rejoice with those who rejoice, we shouldn't just be giddy and hysterical all the time with laughter. There is a time to laugh. There is a time to cry.

But then that time ends and is over. And there is a time to take that issue, whatever it is, physical or in the realm of circumstance, take it before the Lord, claim his mercy and grace, and then say to that thing, you're out of here. I have laid you before the Lord.

I'm Hezekiah. I've laid this letter out. I'm going to let God deal with this.

I'm done. My bones are weak. I've got no strength.

I can't control this. But I've put it in the hands of somebody who can. So you, potential worker of iniquity here, depart.

You're over with. You're out. And you have to let it go.

Now you say, but I still have it. I'm still sick. I'm still afflicted.

I'm still limited. I'm still constrained. I'm still on the jetliner and there's 12 more hours to go before we land in France.

Depart from me, you workers of iniquity, for the Lord has heard the voice of my weeping. Remember at the outset, this was on Sheminoth, Shemineth rather, the octave lower heart perhaps. It's in a darker emotion.

What is the first thing David recognizes God has registered? These are in order and they're coming back out. If you remember, he began crying out to God and he ended in six and seven describing his weeping and his tears, right? He comes out and he says, the Lord in verse eight has heard the sound of my weeping. This is again, can be sound or voice.

Here I would use sound. It's incoherent. It's sobbing, but he knows now that the Lord is not far away.

The Lord is not potentially rebuking and correcting him in anger and hot displeasure. He says, the Lord has heard my sobs. He's heard my cries weeping.

Secondly, verse nine, the Lord has heard my supplication. When he says, oh Lord, deliver me. Oh Lord, save me.

And the argument, the reason, the lever, the persuader for God to do that is Lord, it's your mercy and it's your praise that's on the line. If I get extinguished by this problem, I won't be here to praise you. I want to praise you.

I want your glory to reflect off of me and your loving kindness, your mercy to be demonstrated.

You make a case to God. Don't just say, oh God, help.

Tell him why. Lord, it'll be a demonstration of your mercy. Certainly aware that I don't earn or deserve anything and whatever you do for me will be a reflection of your grace.

Praiseworthy. The Lord will receive my prayer. Verse nine, he has heard my supplication.

He will receive my prayer. Trouble's still here, but two things have already happened. He knows I'm sobbing and he's heard my supplication and he will receive, i.e. favorably act upon my prayer.

Where there was no hope, now there's hope. Two things are already true. One is about to take place and David expresses confidence because God has heard my weeping, because God has heard my supplication.

God is going to deliver me in some way. Sometimes it's not the deliverance we expect. He may give us strength for a journey that we're still going to be on.

He may sustain us in new ways through something that is still going to decline or that isn't going to change because it's unchangeable, but the Lord will receive my prayer. Now in verse 10, let all my enemies be ashamed and greatly troubled. Now the confusion of face and the tears and the sorrow and the lack of hope are pushed onto that which opposes.

These circumstances are not going to persist. They will not overcome. They are not going to prevail.

They are not going to be lauded as having the final say. My enemies, let them be ashamed and greatly troubled. Let them turn back and be ashamed suddenly.

David says, I am now waiting. Remember in an earlier psalm when he said, I'm going to keep watch after he prayed? You get the idea here. I'm going to watch and see how God deals with these troubles.

And do you think that if we pray this kind of prayer to God and lay our situation before him and then push that thing aside and say, I am now going to watch for the deliverance of the Lord. I don't know how he's going to do it, but I know he's going to do it. Do you seriously think that our heavenly father is going to look down to see someone with that faith and that hope and not act? Disappoint them, leave them hanging, not show up.

Never going to happen. God is searching the earth looking for someone who's got faith as big as a mustard seed. And if we go to God, even at this level of despair and work through this process in prayer and then confidently await his action and his provision, it is the promise of God.

It is as sure as our salvation. It is as sure as the first and second comings of the Lord Jesus that he is going to act. He is going to sustain.

He is going to manifest his mercy to us. You can't confidently trust in the mercy of God and be disappointed. You can't.

It's just not possible. Let them turn back and be ashamed suddenly. So first and foremost, in a situation of physical stress where your bones really are weakening and your body and flesh really are in trouble of some sort, this is a great psalm.

But in the broader extent, it applies. We've talked about this in Corinthians, you know, the principles regarding marriage and fornication and so on in Corinth extend to every area of life. Same thing here.

This is focused perhaps on an actual sickness, an actual illness, but by extension, it's both and. So it's a wonderful pattern of prayer, not so much for penitence. If you want a penitential psalm, please forgive me, O Lord, I recognize that I messed up and your discipline has done its work.

There are other psalms for that as we've seen. This one is confidence in the face of overwhelming circumstantial adversity. And who of us hasn't had that? Perhaps recently, perhaps now.

Read this psalm, think through it, take it to the Lord, pray it before the Lord with confidence, and then tell your situation, depart from me, all you workers of iniquity. I've been talking to the Lord and between Him and me, you've got no further presence here, depart. And this is part of where our fruit of the Spirit comes from, part of where our peace comes from.

God provides it in His grace and in His mercy. Let's close here in a word of prayer, and we'll pick up again next time with an even more specific appeal for deliverance in Psalm 7. Father, thank You for the truth of Your Word. Thank You for the cases where we do not even know how to pray as we ought, but reading the prayers of faithful believers like David in the hands of Your Holy Spirit enables us to give voice to our concerns, to express ourselves effectively before Your throne in a way that enables You to bless us and to deliver us and to reflect Your glory in and through us.

We pray that each one will find encouragement and see the specific areas of application for these wonderful divine truths that have been imparted to us this evening. We ask it in Jesus' name. Amen.