

# IN TIMES OF TESTING AND TRIALS

## PSALM 6

We live in a world that can serve up some difficult circumstances to cope with. For example the death of a loved one, the loss of something precious, or a business going under after years of hard work. We can ask all sorts of questions of God and wonder why we draw the short straw. I know of one family that has gone through enormous heartache over a daughter who has been on drugs, and just continued to lie and cheat her way out of all sorts of situations. Then there is the child who has gone off to university and appeared to be strong in the Lord. Suddenly out of nowhere she has met a young man and decided to live with him. How could this happen we ask ourselves?

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Psalm 6 is a Psalm of Lament over a time of deep distress in David's life. It's a psalm that speaks to us who are or have gone through difficult times. For some of us our situation seems hopeless and helpless and we desperately look for a glimmer of light at the end of the tunnel, but God does not seem to be listening and at worst seems to be indifferent to our ordeal.

One thing I have learnt in my Christian journey is that times of testing and trial are never wasted in God's divine economy of molding and shaping us.



One thing that comes out of Psalm 6:1-3 is the pain of discipline. However, we need to see that often our trials and struggles come out of our own disobedience. The trial is simply the result of God allowing us to experience the natural consequences of our actions.

David does not deny that God needed to stop and discipline him, but pleads for God's mercy in the attitude and application of the discipline. What we tend to misunderstand when we are going through deep distress is God's motivation in disciplining us. Our conclusion is often that God does not love us and/or He is being unkind or vindictive in His actions. Often we think like this because that is the way we humans respond to one another, but it is not the way God operates; in fact it's the complete opposite. His overwhelming motive is His love for us. He wants us to experience all that it means to be a child of God.

In fact if He didn't discipline us we would have reason to question that He loved us at all. Hebrews 12:5-6 *"My Son, do not despise the chastening of the Lord, nor be discouraged when you are rebuked by Him: For whom the Lord loves He chastens..."*

So God's discipline is not only an expression of His love but does a number of other key things in our lives:

- ◆ It's necessary to get us back on track with God, to stop us just drifting along
- ◆ It's necessary to bring us to a place of genuine submission to God. This is particularly relevant when we want to know God's will for our lives.
- ◆ It's necessary to cause us to be more fruitful in our walk with God. John 15:2 says *"Every branch in Me that does not bear fruit He takes away, and every branch that bears fruit He prunes that it may bear more fruit."* God always wants to deepen our relationship with Him.

It may be necessary to prepare us for future ministry. For example, in 2 Corinthians 1:3-4 Paul says *"Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of compassion and the God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our troubles, so that we can comfort those in any trouble with the comfort we ourselves have received from God."*

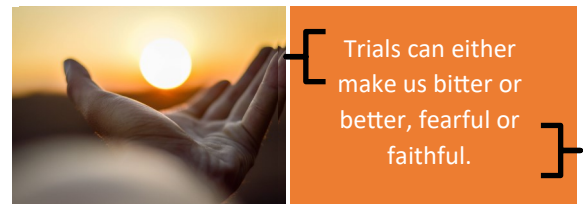
Then in verses 4-5 we see the futility of death. David appealed to God for His deliverance on the basis of three things.

First he appeals to God on the basis of His mercy. Another rendition of the word mercy is loving kindness. David knew the character of God and that He never revels in seeing His children in strife, but having said that He still desires that we learn the lessons we need to learn.

Second he appeals to God for deliverance on the basis of testimony. If he was to be consumed by his ordeal then there would be no one to testify to the goodness and provision of God.

This connects well with the third point that no one would be able to give praise to the Lord if they are in the grave. This points to David's concern that the Lord be glorified at all times.

What I love about the Psalms is their honesty. In verses 6-7 David transparently acknowledges the strain of despair. Trials can take a huge toll on our spiritual walk especially if we take a wrong attitude to them. One writer puts it like this; *"Trials can either make us bitter or better, fearful or faithful"*. Again our response to the Lord's testing or trials is critical as to what is achieved in our lives. Trials can make us ask two questions - When will I get out of this? What will I get out of this? I trust the latter is your response.



Lastly we see the joy of deliverance verses 8-10. Prayer brings confidence and helps us get our focus off the circumstances and onto the Lord. David rejoiced that God had heard his prayer and that the enemy would be dealt with. So we can have confidence that God will hear the genuine cry of His child and will teach us through our times of trial what we need to learn.

*Carl Carmody – Editor of Challenge*