

Psalm 6

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Preacher: Chris Trousdale

[0 : 00] I'd like you to open up your Bibles to the book of Psalms, to Psalm 6.

If you're using one of the Bibles that we have in the chairs, it's on page 449. In December, before Christmas came, we stopped in our series on Romans. At the end of Romans chapter 4, which is a good, logical place to take a break there.

And we have now for the past few weeks not been in the book of Romans, and we plan on getting back there and beginning Romans chapter 5 a few weeks from now. But before we do that, we're going to spend a few weeks in the book of Psalms.

Because I've told you before, my goal is to preach roughly about five psalms per year. And then it'll only take us 30 years to get through the book of Psalms.

That's not bad, right? I mean, some of us might even still be alive by the time we finish this. I may not be the one who gets to finish it. Somebody else might have to pick up. But nevertheless, we're going to give it a shot.

[1 : 08] So we're in Psalm 6. We've covered five psalms so far. We're in Psalm 6 this morning. And we're going to read David's cry to the Lord. So I want to ask you guys to stand as we read together.

Psalm 6. To the choir master. With stringed instruments according to the shemineth. A psalm of David. Oh Lord, rebuke me not in your anger.

Nor inflict me in your wrath. Be gracious to me, oh Lord, for I am languishing. Heal me, oh Lord, for my bones are troubled. My soul also is greatly troubled.

But you, oh Lord, how long? Turn, oh Lord, deliver my life 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. I drench my couch with weeping. My eye wastes away because of grief.

[2 : 13] 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.

You guys take a seat. One of the things that I've noticed, because I enjoy reading biographies. In particular, I enjoy reading biographies of well-known saints from the past.

Whether they be great missionaries or great preachers or just people who did incredible things for the cause of Christ throughout history. I enjoy reading their biographies. I don't do it as often as I would like to, but I read at least one or two biographies a year generally on average.

And it's really enjoyable. But one of the things that I've noticed about biographies that have been written in the past, say, a couple of decades or perhaps even longer than that, is that many of the biographies that are written today are written as very entertaining, very good stories.

[3 : 20] They capture your imagination. They really do a good job of drawing you into the life of the person that the books are about. That's not necessarily the case if you read older biographies.

Sometimes to our ears they seem a little bit dry. They lack some of the exciting information that we might want to gather so that we can really try to understand, get into the heart and mind of the person that we're learning about.

Because I think that's maybe a characteristic of more modern writing. Whether you're reading a biography or you're reading a novel, a lot of times the writer will try to help you to get inside the head of the character.

They'll try to help you to understand their motivations, try to help you to understand what they're thinking. So if you're reading a novel, a story, a lot of times from the writer's point of view, you'll get what the characters are thinking about.

They'll tell you what's going through their minds. They'll tell you about their fears, tell you about perhaps their background even that led up to them having these particular kinds of fears. In fact, I remember reading one biography that went so far as to give you a whole chapter on the life of the grandfather and father of the main person that the biography was about so that you could get a sense of where he came from, get a sense of what his dad was like, what his grandpa was like, what values they passed down.

[4 : 37] So you could really kind of see the inward workings of his heart and his mind. But when you read the Bible, you oftentimes don't get that. You don't get that at all. Oftentimes you're reading, whether it's through the book of Genesis or Deuteronomy or perhaps one of the book of Judges or one of the books of Kings or Chronicles or something like that, these grand long narratives of the Bible, they move very rapidly through people's lives in a quick succession.

Sometimes you get one or two chapters on someone's life and very rarely do you get a glimpse of the people's sort of inward thoughts. You don't really... They're not really concerned to tell you about how so-and-so felt and why these things were going.

They want to give you the events as they occurred and they only give you the motives of someone's heart. They only let you in on their thinking if it's significant in helping you to understand what's happening.

I think that's the case because, for one reason, because in ancient writings they just don't do that very often. It just doesn't happen very often. But then also, on the other hand, it's because the biblical writers aren't concerned to help us become well acquainted with the characters.

The biblical writers want to point us to the God of these characters. They want us to understand the God behind these historical events, not the people in the midst of the historical events. But there is an exception in the Old Testament.

[5 : 53] David is a remarkable exception to that rule. Not because the stories about David include a whole lot of information about his inward motives and thoughts, but because we have another book, the book of Psalms, that contains many songs and poems written by King David that give us great insight into what he was thinking, give us great insight to his feelings, because they give us insight into what kind of person David was.

I mean, we can glean quite a bit about David and the kind of person he was just from reading the books of Samuel and Kings and Chronicles. We could get a lot. But when we open the Psalms, it's as if oftentimes David opens up his own heart and lets us have a glimpse, lets us have a look, which is helpful for us.

It helps us to see and to know that when we feel certain things, they're felt by others who have served the Lord in the past. When we experience certain painful events or great celebratory events, we can see those paralleled in the life of David often, and we can see that he oftentimes responded in the ways that we respond.

And Psalm 6 is a great example where we get a glimpse into the heart and life of David. And I think that if we can rightly understand what David is communicating out of his own heart and what the Spirit inspired him to reveal from his own heart, I think that we can be challenged.

I think that we can be encouraged. We can perhaps even be rebuked for things that ought not to be in our lives. And we can walk away this morning having learned from David what to do with some of the stuff that's packed inside.

[7 : 27] So I want you to take a look at this Psalm 6. We know that this is a song or poem that David wrote because the inscription tells us that. It says before verse 1 in our English translations that this was written to the choir master.

In other words, it was intended to be sung. It wasn't merely, despite the content, it wasn't private. David didn't intend to keep this to himself. This was meant to be used in the midst of the congregation.

Much like the passage I read earlier from 1 Chronicles 16, many of David's songs were written for the sake of Israel so that they might sing them as they approached the temple or while they were in worship in the temple.

Later on, in the synagogues, they would use these as a guide for worship. And so this was written, David opening up his own heart so that other people could connect to his feelings and understand and sing this song as a praise to God.

The other things mentioned in this inscription don't really tell us much because we don't know what these words mean. I mean, the ESV translates them as with stringed instruments according to the shemineth. We don't know what that means.

[8 : 29] I mean, it's all over the place in the English translation. Some of them say that it was written on an eighth because that last word means eighth. Some of them say it was written on an eighth stringed instrument. We have no idea what these words mean.

But the point of this is that it's not private. And in fact, it helps us to remember that that while there's raw emotion present in this psalm, it's not something that was hastily written out all of a sudden in the midst of David's struggles.

This is David's reflection afterwards. This is David putting down his genuine feelings after the fact so that you get to move from the beginning of it where David's in pain to the end of it where he's celebrating God having heard his prayer all in the space of ten verses.

But we shouldn't think that that happened in the time that it takes us to read those ten verses. There was a real event. We don't know what it was. There were real circumstances behind David's thoughts and feelings here.

And after he had passed through those, he looked back and he wrote this reflection so that we could see and feel what he felt. So if you look at the psalm, it's really neatly divided up.

[9 : 38] You can see it very easily. You see that in verses 1 through 3 is David's actual request, his plea to the Lord for help. And then you begin to get in verse 4 and 5, you get the grounds for David's request.

Why should God hear David's prayer? What grounds does David give? And we'll see those in a minute. And then in verses 6 and 7, you almost get an aside where David suddenly breaks down and begins to really poetically express his pain that he feels.

And then verses 8, 9, and 10 are David's celebration of God having heard his prayer. So you get the prayer, the grounds of the prayer, sort of an emotional outburst, and then you get the answer to David's prayer.

It's really a lot like some of the hymns, the old hymns that we sing, that if you really pay attention to the hymns, you will get the first verse. And the first verse may be about the death of Christ. And then the next verse might be about the resurrection of Christ.

And then the next verse might be about Christ's ascension and us being left on earth. And then the final verse will be about his return. So many old hymns follow that pattern there. But then in our modern songs, oftentimes, we will put in between, say, the third and fourth verse, or in between a couple instances of the chorus, we'll put what's called a bridge, which a lot of times is just an emotional outburst of the songwriter.

[10 : 56] Well, I think that that's what verses 6 and 7 are in the midst of something that's well-structured. Prayer, grounds of the prayer, celebration of it being answered. In the middle, you just get this emotional outburst so that we can connect, so that we can understand that this was real for David.

So I want us to talk about those different elements of this song. But the first thing I want us to see here is the actual real pain that David felt. You get a glimpse of it in the midst of his plea, in the midst of his request, in the first few verses.

So he says in the middle of verse 2, he says, Heal me, O Lord, for my bones are troubled, or my bones are shaking, my bones are hurting, my bones themselves are sick.

It's a beautiful way of expressing that all the way down to the inward part of who I am, even my bones themselves are in pain, Lord. I am hurting, I am in deep anguish.

And he goes on and he says in verse 3, My soul is greatly troubled. But you, you, O Lord, how long? In other words, I'm hurting. How long, O Lord, until I hear your answer?

[12 : 06] How long will it be? This is real, deep, intense pain. He goes on, verses 6 and 7, that sort of bridge, that outburst.

I am weary with my moaning. Every night I flood my bed with tears. I drench my couch with weeping.

My eye wastes away because of grief. It grows weak because of all my foes. David's in incredible, incredible pain here.

And it is tempting to think, because he mentions foes in verse 7, and then he begins to talk about his enemies and the workers of iniquity or evil in verses 8, 9, and 10 in his celebration. It's tempting to think that what's causing David pain is the oppression of others.

That David has now come under attack from other people, and that's why he's so sorrowful. That's why he's crying out to the Lord. That's why he's in such pain. And there are events that occur in David's life that we could say maybe that's the cause.

[13 : 15] We do see events in David's life where he is so attacked, he is so pressed down by others that we might think this psalm would fit there.

When his own son betrays him and chases him out of the capital city and out of the palace and sends soldiers to kill him. You could see David there, perhaps being in great pain and anguish because of his enemies, his own son who has become his enemy.

Or perhaps earlier in David's life, when he'd been anointed the king by Samuel, but he had yet to take the throne for himself because Saul still sits on the throne, and Saul was deeply jealous of David.

Saul, this man whom David had served faithfully, whom David had defended, whom David had sat at his feet and sung songs to him in order to calm him and help him through his own difficult days.

And now Saul is sending out his army to track David down and kill him. We could look and say, perhaps that was a moment when David was in pain because he was oppressed by enemies.

[14 : 18] But I don't think that David's cries here are primarily about external persecution. I think that the root cause of David's real, raw pain is his own sin.

Because this psalm begins with David pleading to the Lord not to rebuke me in your anger or discipline me in your wrath. He cries out that God might be gracious to him.

David, the root of David's pain is his own sin here. And that sin has no doubt brought with it external pressures, external difficulties that have compounded with his sin and David's in deep pain and anguish.

Now we know, of course, that not all of our pain and not all of the outward oppression that we receive from other peoples, not all of that, in fact, probably not most of that is caused directly by our own sins.

We know that. In fact, Jesus, when he brings up to his disciples, why do you think this gentleman over here was born blind? Was it his sin? Was it the sin of his parents, perhaps?

[15 : 29] And Jesus begins through that to teach his disciples that it was neither of those things. This man's sin didn't bring blindness upon him. His parents didn't do anything to bring blindness upon him. Jesus says that this man's blindness is so that the glory of God might be seen in his healing.

And Jesus' point there is to say that not all of our infirmities and not all of our bad experiences are directly caused by our sin.

But nevertheless, we have to realize that many times our pain, our heartache is in fact caused by our sin.

We don't have to immediately leap to that conclusion every time we get sick or every time that someone comes against us. We don't have to immediately conclude, I've done something wrong. Lord, what have I done?

But neither should we ignore that possibility. We should consider, always, there could be something that I've done. There could be some indwelling sin in my heart and in my life that's bringing some of this upon me.

[16 : 35] We are often so quick to dismiss that possibility and point the finger of blame everywhere else. And yet, I think David would have us look inwardly first.

Yes, there are outward pressures. David has enemies who are coming against him. But all of that is rooted in David's sin. We don't know what the sin was. But it's causing him great pain and great anguish and it has brought upon him other outside pressures.

Don't know what it is, but it's something tremendous. It's something terrible. This week, this Sunday, today is Sanctity of Life Sunday.

And many churches will have their entire service directed toward the issue of the sanctity of life and protecting the unborn. And we have done that in the past. We did not do it today.

But I think oftentimes when we come to preach on those sorts of things or when we come to talk about and deal with those issues, we only deal with one aspect of the issue of abortion.

[17 : 48] And that is that we want to make sure that people understand that abortion is wrong and sinful. And that's true. And we ought to do that. And I have done that standing right here on this stage before. We want to be clear.

We want to point to clear passages in Scripture that show that that's wrong, that we ought not to do that, that it's a blight upon our nation that so many babies have not been able to see the light of day because of our choices.

We ought to do that. But there's another side to that. There are those who have walked down that path and made wrong choices and incurred terrible results.

Some of you may have read or listened to the story this week. There's a well-known Christian rapper named Lecrae. Some of you, he's been on television. He's had a lot of hits even in the secular world. He's had some hit songs now.

And this week I read as he did an interview and he was opening up about the sins of his past and talking about how very early on when he was younger in his 20s that he had been involved with a woman and she had had an abortion.

[19 : 01] And he had encouraged that. He was the one sort of pushing that. And then after that he didn't ever really even speak to her anymore. He couldn't take it and he just went off. And he's now for years and years he had to deal with the pain of that and it surfaced as he was getting married and it all came out and he confessed it and he dealt with it.

But he talked about the pain that haunted him for years because of that. and I think how many people around us are crushed beneath the weight of the pain of that sin.

I imagine that the feelings in their heart would be very much akin to David's I'm weary with my moaning and every night I flood my bed with tears.

It's real. And we need to address not just the wrongness of it but we need to address the painfulness of it. We could multiply the number of things that have happened in our lives and some of your lives that have led to these moments and these deep times of pain.

We could multiply them. But David's going to help us and guide us and help us to see what we do with those things. Look at his prayer. Look at his plea itself. He begins in verse 1.

[20 : 20] O Lord, rebuke me not in your anger nor discipline me in your wrath. I think the key words here are discipline and rebuke.

Because these words are often used side by side to describe not simply the judgment of God that comes down because when we hear the words anger and wrath we think judgment day don't we? We immediately when I hear wrath in the Bible I immediately jump oh this is the final judgment that must be what David's addressing but I don't think that that's what he's addressing.

I think David is talking about God's fatherly discipline of those who belong to him. And I do not think that David is crying out God don't rebuke me. I have sinned but don't discipline me for it.

Don't rebuke me for it. I think David is calling out to God and saying as you rebuke me as you bring discipline into my life oh Lord do not do it in your anger.

Do not do it in your wrath. David is crying out here for fatherly discipline not for wrath. Give me your fatherly discipline.

[21 : 28] God speaks to this in Deuteronomy. In Deuteronomy he says in chapter 8 verse 5 Know then in your heart that as a man disciplines his son the Lord your God disciplines you.

David would have known that passage from the law. David would have been familiar with that concept. The Lord disciplines his people as a father disciplines their son.

And that's not just an Old Testament concept. That's in a New Testament concept as well. Under the New Covenant we see God lovingly yet painfully disciplining those who belong to him when they stumble and fall into sin.

So for instance in Hebrews chapter 12 we read this. Have you forgotten the exhortation that addressed you as sons? My son do not regard lightly the discipline of the Lord nor be weary when reproved by him for the Lord disciplines the one he loves and chastises every son who he receives.

It says it is for discipline that you have to endure God that God is treating you as sons. For what son is there whose father does not discipline? If you are left without discipline in which all have participated then you are illegitimate children and not sons.

[22 : 41] you want to be disciplined by God because it confirms that he is in fact your father. And when you sin one of the greatest signs of God's grace in your life is his painful discipline of you.

And David says oh God discipline me but not in anger. Rebuke me just don't do it don't do it in wrath.

In fact the way this is worded in the Hebrew draws that out because the words anger and wrath come at the beginning of these phrases. God in your anger do not discipline me.

In your wrath do not rebuke me. The word order itself in the original Hebrew indicates that David's concern is with what is the motive behind God's discipline and he is saying don't do it in that way but discipline me as a son.

Discipline me as your child. David expects the discipline of the Lord to come his way and in fact he has been feeling it pressed down hurting his enemies pursuing him because of his sin.

[23 : 55] He knows it and he feels it and he does not cry out to God to give him utter and complete relief. What he cries out for is don't discipline me in this way but discipline me in this way.

I deserve it. I'm your child. Fulfill your promise. Don't show wrath. Don't be angry.

Not when you discipline me. In fact, what David really wants is mercy. He says in verse 2, Be gracious to me, O Lord, for I am languishing.

Be gracious to me could be translated show mercy to me or be merciful to me. This is David's prayer. He's asking God, his God, to show mercy to him.

Which means that David does not automatically assume that he is entitled to additional mercy from God. We have all of us who know Christ, who have been saved by Christ. We have received God's saving, redeeming mercy.

[24 : 59] We have not received the wrath that we deserve. We are guaranteed eternal life and not hell because of our faith in Jesus. But all too often, having received that mercy, we then begin to think that we deserve more mercy from him so that when suffering comes our way, even when it comes our way because of our own sin, we feel offended that God would allow these things to take place.

Why are you doing this, God? Why are you letting these things happen? Why are these people allowed to come against me? Granted, I have sinned, but where's the mercy?

You're supposed to be showing me mercy. You're supposed to be my father. Where's the mercy? We begin to sort of think that it's owed to us, that we deserve it, but mercy by its very definition is undeserved.

It is God, in fact, not giving to us the punishment that we deserve. He doesn't owe it to us. We can't lay a claim on it. God identifies Himself to Moses as the one who shows mercy to whom He wants to show mercy.

Whoever God wants to give mercy to, He gives mercy to. And if He doesn't want to, He doesn't have to because He doesn't owe it to anybody. But sometimes we think, I don't deserve this, God.

[26 : 21] Why is this pain coming into my life? You should have protected me from this. You shouldn't have allowed this to happen. He doesn't owe us that. There are times when my kids will do something they will disobey and rather than the normal response that they get from me, which is like 99% of the time, rather than the normal response of spankings or groundings or something along with some sort of punishment, every once in a while, and not often lately, but every once in a while I'll sit them down and I'll say, you know what you did was wrong.

We count it, yes, no, you deserve to be spanked, yes, okay. I'm not going to spank you. Why not? I'm going to be merciful to you.

I'm not going to give you what you deserve. But I have learned if I do that too often, they begin to think that they do deserve it. And then we come time for spanking. Why won't you show mercy?

Be merciful! Because you don't deserve it. Mercy is never deserved and it's never owed. By definition, God does not owe us mercy.

And so David, not expecting it, not demanding it, cries out to God, would you be gracious to me? Would you show mercy to me? I'm hurting.

[27 : 39] My bones are hurting. My soul is sick. I'm in pain. Would you be gracious and show mercy to me? Would you do that? And his grounds for this is not, by the way, do this because you owe it to me.

Do this because I'm the king and you chose me. So just give me the mercy that you owe me. That's not the grounds upon which David bases his prayer.

That's not the appeal that David makes. Notice the grounds. The reason for his appeal. Verse 4. Turn, O Lord. Deliver my life.

Save me for the sake of your steadfast love. That word turn could be translated return. So that David's basic cry is here, I'm distant from you.

I'm far from you. Return to me. Come back to me. Establish the nearness that we have. I mean, David is after all called the man after God's own heart. Well, what could be more painful for him than to be distant from the Lord?

[28 : 44] Well, that ought to be the most painful thing that we can experience. And we ought to cry out, God, what I really need here, besides just healing, besides just deliverance from my enemies, what I really need is you to turn, return, come back to me, let me experience your presence, but do it for the sake of your steadfast love.

that's the grounds. That's the reason. Steadfast love is sometimes translated loving kindness, sometimes God's covenant love or covenant mercy because it's a word that we cannot copy, we cannot imitate it in English.

There is no English word to express the concept contained here. It's the idea of God's faithful, ever persistent covenant love that He especially gives to the people whom He has chosen and made a covenant with.

And David calls out to God on the basis of that. You made a covenant with Abraham. You made a covenant with Israel at Sinai. You made a covenant with me to be the king.

On the basis of your unmerited, undeserved covenant love for the sake of it, for the upholding of it, and for the declaring and display of your infinite mercy and covenantal love, would you save me for that?

[30 : 03] And then he goes on to make it clear exactly what he's talking about. He says, because in death there's no remembrance of you in Sheol or in the grave, who will give you praise?

So David is saying here, listen, Lord, I know that I deserve to die, but if I die, how am I to praise you before the peoples? If you take my life and surely I deserve it, how am I to give honor and glory to you in the midst of your people Israel so that they might see it and join me in singing your praise if I'm buried in the grave?

How is that supposed to happen? How can that happen? It cannot happen. Now we could get all theological here. We could, and we could say, well, surely David, surely you understand that when you die, you go to be in the presence of the Lord and there you will indeed be praising the Lord.

We could get theological there and try to correct David, who's writing, by the way, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. But we don't want to do that because David is not here trying to make a theological point here about what happens to you when you die.

David's just making a practical point about I can't in this body and with these lips and before these people that you have entrusted to me, I cannot before them give you praise and honor and glory that you deserve if I'm dead.

[31 : 22] That's the simple point that he's trying to make here. The grounds of David's prayer is not simply so that I can be relieved.

Nor are the grounds simply because you love me and because I'm me and you love me so therefore show me mercy.

That's not the grounds upon which David cries out for mercy. No. No. For the sake of your love and the shining forth of your covenant faithfulness before your people for the sake of your praise so that I might live and prosper to give you honor and glory and praise.

Those are the grounds. And I wonder how often do we pray and beseech the Lord and ask him for things without a thought towards so that if he gives this to me he might receive the glory and the praise that he deserves.

The grounds of all of our prayers ultimately, ultimately ought to be so that you might receive honor and glory and praise. Yes, we pray because we're in pain and we want relief.

[32 : 34] Yes, absolutely. But why? Why do we want to be restored? Why do we want relief? What would we do if we were healed by him? Would we immediately respond by giving praise and honor and glory to him and calling others to join us in that?

That ought to be the response. So often Jesus would heal people and they were told that they would go off praising God, giving glory to God. That's the intended response. That's how we ought to respond.

That's what David says. Come and rescue me. Show me mercy. Deliver me from my sins and from my enemies and from the pain and the tears that I shed and I will praise you.

And your covenant love will be lifted up and honored among your people and by me, the king of your people. Your praises will be sung. The glory of God continuing to be displayed in our lives as we respond to him ought to be the primary and the most basic motivating factor of every request that we make to the Lord.

David models that for us here. But then what do we see David doing afterwards? Because remember, this is a song that's written after the fact summarizing David's sort of trip through all of this.

[33 : 56] David's experience of all these things. This is written afterwards to help us to understand. He cries out to God, gives the basis for his cry and then at the end having had his prayer answered, he celebrates God's deliverance of him.

Notice what he says. Verse 8, Depart from me all you workers of evil for the Lord has heard the sound of my weeping. God has heard me.

Get back. Stay away. God's redeemed me. Verse 9, The Lord has heard my plea. The Lord accepts my prayer and all my enemies shall be ashamed and greatly troubled.

They shall turn back and be put to shame in a moment. Now for David as the king of Israel he no doubt had a number of enemies. A number of enemies who were at times used by God to discipline him and correct him.

God has a history of doing that with his people. He takes wicked sinful people and he uses them to discipline his own people. He does that at times. In fact, he calls the wicked nation of Syria, he calls them the rod of his anger.

[35 : 07] They belong to him. They're like a staff in his hand that he uses to whip his kids. Israel. And he does it. But they belong to him.

Frequently he does that. He uses enemies. Not just our enemies but his enemies. And because he is sovereign he has the power to use them to correct and discipline his own children.

And now David with that process done with forgiveness having happened and he's received the discipline of the Lord and he has repented and God has delivered and rescued him. Now David celebrates the ultimate victory that he has because of God's work over his enemies.

And I think that we ought to be reminded that that can be true for us as well. We shouldn't merely identify our enemies as those who gossiped about us.

I think we should probably have a bigger view of who our enemies are and who God's enemies are. So for instance the Apostle Paul says in Ephesians that our battle is not against flesh and blood.

[36 : 12] It's against the powers and the principalities of the darkness. We battle not against mere human beings. That there's a greater enemy out there and there's a greater victory that has been won over him.

And God has in fact as he used David's enemies to bring David to repentance and discipline David. God has in fact and can use evil wicked spiritual forces to discipline and sanctify his own children.

He can do that. He has the power to do that. They do not participate in our sanctification willingly. They do not participate in the process by which God purifies his children willingly and yet because he is sovereign they participate and he uses them.

For instance the Apostle Paul. Some of you are familiar with the issue of Paul's thorn in the flesh as he calls it. We don't know what it was. Some people think it was bad eyes or some people think it was a great sickness or some people just think that it was oppression from his enemies.

Whatever. We don't know what Paul's thorn in the flesh was. Something that was very painful for Paul. Alright? But Paul says that it was Satan who gave him the thorn in the flesh.

[37 : 36] And yet he says that it was given to me to keep me from becoming boastful and prideful. Wait. Hold up there. Satan would never willingly try to keep you from becoming boastful and prideful.

That's what he wants you to do. He wants you to just fall with all and fall headlong into sin. So what's happening here? God is sovereignly allowing Satan to inflict pain upon the Apostle Paul but God intends for that pain to be used to make Paul more holy.

To keep Paul from becoming prideful and boastful. Well we have the same spiritual enemies. They still come against us. They are still arrayed against us and yet God is fully capable of using them to discipline us to correct us and to sanctify us and yet once the discipline is done and the plea has been heard and relief has come upon us we ought to celebrate the victory that Christ has won over those evil wicked forces of darkness.

We ought to celebrate God's victory over our enemies and then there will be times when we do not limit that celebration to those spiritual forces and powers at work.

There will be times when there are actual human enemies that come against us that I think it's legitimate at the end of it all to celebrate that God has delivered us from them.

[39 : 12] If you doubt that if you question that then put yourself in someone else's shoes. Maybe you live in Nigeria and you live in a village that is predominantly Christian your grandfather was Christian your great grandfather your father and now you have been taught about Christ and most of the people in your village are believers until that is one day they're dead because Boko Haram has come in and slaughtered people by the hundreds.

Why? Because you were Christian. Perhaps you survived. What do you want? Well on the one hand sure for the individual members of that organization you would want them to hear the gospel and respond and be delivered because even the worst sinners can receive God's mercy and be saved.

Part of the point of what we're seeing here. But on the other hand if say the United States or the United Nations or some other more powerful nation came in and wiped them out would you not celebrate God's victory over them through that other army?

Would you not celebrate God defeating your enemies? Of course you would. Of course you would. So yes at times this can be like David a celebration over actual physical human enemies that come against you but primarily and preeminently this is a celebration over the enemy that comes against us because on the cross Christ has disarmed the rulers and authorities.

On the cross Christ has taken on our behalf the curse that Satan would use in God's court to accuse us. Christ has muted his accusations against us by his death.

[41 : 09] So if you call God Father you can know that the ultimate enemy has been defeated and you can celebrate that. If you call God Father you can know that when you sin and he comes to discipline you he will at times allow that enemy to come against you temporarily and then you can celebrate when he delivers you from those temporal punishments.

You can. Or on the other hand perhaps you have no right to say oh Lord rebuke me not in your wrath nor discipline me in your anger.

Perhaps you cannot call upon his mercy because you never received his mercy. Perhaps you cannot call upon his covenant love because you are not a member of his covenant family.

Then I urge you to trust in the descendant of David who overcame all enemies and bore your curse on the cross.

Let's pray.