

From Sorrow to Success

Psalms 6:1-10 HCSB For the choir director: with stringed instruments, according to Sheminith. A Davidic psalm. LORD, do not rebuke me in Your anger; do not discipline me in Your wrath. (2) Be gracious to me, LORD, for I am weak; heal me, LORD, for my bones are shaking; (3) my whole being is shaken with terror. And You, LORD--how long? (4) Turn, LORD! Rescue me; save me because of Your faithful love. (5) For there is no remembrance of You in death; who can thank You in Sheol? (6) I am weary from my groaning; with my tears I dampen my pillow and drench my bed every night. (7) My eyes are swollen from grief; they grow old because of all my enemies. (8) Depart from me, all evildoers, for the LORD has heard the sound of my weeping. (9) The LORD has heard my plea for help; the LORD accepts my prayer. (10) All my enemies will be ashamed and shake with terror; they will turn back and suddenly be disgraced.

Introduction

"God could never forgive me. I've done such horrible things." How many times has that thought passed through the synapses of human brains? How many times has it lodged in your mind?

The frustrating thing about time is that it always moves forward. There is no "R" on the stick-shift, no reverse in the gears. Time never moves backward, not an inch, not a step, never. The hands of the clock always move clockwise, and the pages of the calendar are torn off in only one direction. Therefore a deed once done, can never be undone. A word once spoken, can never be unsaid. As a result, all of us live with certain regrets. People deal with those regrets in different ways (Nelson 363).

Drowning Sorrow. Many people today deal with sin and remorse by drowning it. Some drown it in alcohol and drug abuse.

- Marijuana use among teenagers increased 37% between 1994 and 1995.
- The use of LSD and other hallucinogens was up 54%.
- And the use of cocaine increased by 166%.
- Over fourteen million Americans are in 12-step programs.

Many Americans are drinking and drugging themselves to death in order to escape the pangs of our own sin and guilt.



Marlon Brando was once young, trim, and handsome. Millions of girls dreamed about him.



But now he weighs over four hundred pounds, and once said, "I'm sorry for all the harm I've done and all the troubles I've brought to others in my life. I've never been a good parent or a good husband. I've been too busy with my own life to have time for others. Now, I'm a

guilty old man whose ashamed of the kind of life I've led. There's nothing left for me except eating" (Nelson 367).

Denying Sorrow. Other people deal with guilt by trying to deny it. They base their morals on societal consensus. And then adjust them to any shape or size. Remorse becomes just a nagging relic, a Victorian antique, a psychosis to be denied.

Deflecting Sorrow. Some people deal with regret by deflecting it. They blame other people for their failures, faults, and shortcoming. They blame their parents or their environments--a technique that goes all the way back to the Garden of Eden, when Adam blamed Eve and Eve blamed the serpent.

But sooner or later, all these techniques fail, and we find that we can't escape the consequences of our own sinfulness and guilt. The Bible says,

- [Jeremiah 2:22 HCSB](#) Even if you wash with lye and use a great amount of soap, the stain of your guilt is still in front of Me. *This is* the Lord GOD's declaration.

Sin is the corrosion of the soul. How can we get rid of it? We can't drown it, deny it or deflect it.

Dissolve Sorrow. We can only dissolve it in the blood of Jesus!

Psalm 6 is the first of a special class known as "penitential psalms," expressing repentance and sorrow for sin. The inscription tells us that David wrote this psalm. He describes his plight--foes without, fear within--and cries out to God for mercy. He was sure he was facing death, which indicates that his experience was real and that he wasn't using sickness and war only as metaphors for his personal troubles. As we deal with our own failures and weaknesses, we could learn a great deal from David's example. In this psalm, David records three stages in his difficult experience of moving by faith from trial to triumph. The first is...

I. SORROW:

In verses 6-7, David's anguish is vividly described,

- [Psalms 6:6-7 HCSB](#) I am weary from my groaning; with my tears I dampen my pillow and drench my bed every night. (7) My eyes are swollen from grief; they grow old because of all my enemies.

Tremendous grief is exhausting, and the King was coming to the end of his endurance. Each night, he flooded his bed with tears of sorrow and pain. Sleeping had been replaced with suffering. Sleep is important for healing, so David's lack of sleep only made the condition worse.

It seems to be a universal experience, in times of suffering, sorrow, or disappointment, that a person's bed becomes a pool of tears. Some have actually tried to discover a scientific reason for this.

Gregg Levoy, writing in *Psychology Today*, reports that crying can actually remove chemicals that build up during emotional distress. According to Levoy, the amount of manganese stored in the body affects our moods, and the body stores thirty times as much manganese in tears as in blood serum.

Biochemist William Frey says that the lacrimal gland, which determines the flow of tears, concentrates and removes manganese from the body (Nelson 722).

I rather prefer M.R. DeHaan's explanation: "A tear is the distillation of the soul... From infancy to old age the record of every man's life is written in letters of tears" (Nelson 722).

The Bible records at least seven occasions on which David wept bitterly. Jeremiah compared his weeping to both a fountain and a river of tears. Even our Savior is recorded as shedding tears three times: over a doomed city, over a friend's death, and over a painful sacrifice.

For all humanity, crying is a natural part of dealing with loss, fear, frustration and pain. But to weep over one's own sins, is a sign of true repentance and can often facilitate the process of healing.

A little girl was once late coming home from play. When her mother asked her where she had been, she explained that her friend had fallen and broken her very special doll. "And," said the little girl, "I stayed to help her."

"How did you help her?" asked the mother.

The little girl replied, "I just sat down and helped her cry."

It is comforting to know that, in the Bible, the last mention of tears is in Revelation 21:4, the promise that God will wipe every tear from the eyes of the redeemed:

- **Revelation 21:3-4 HCSB** Then I heard a loud voice from the throne: Look! God's dwelling is with men, and He will live with them. They will be His people, and God Himself will be with them and be their God. (4) He will wipe away every tear from their eyes. Death will exist no longer; grief, crying, and pain will exist no longer, because the previous things have passed away.

Sorrow in itself will never bring healing nor forgiveness, however. Tears are meant to be wiped away. David did not drown himself in his sorrow. He, instead, dried his eyes and looked up. The second stage of David's experience was...

II. SUPPLICATION:

Please take a look back at the first stanza:

- **Psalms 6:1-3 HCSB** For the choir director: with stringed instruments, according to Sheminith. A Davidic psalm. LORD, do not rebuke me in Your anger; do not discipline me in Your wrath. (2) Be gracious to me, LORD, for I am weak; heal me, LORD, for my bones are shaking; (3) my whole being is shaken with terror. And You, LORD--how long?

Although he was "a man after God's own heart," David saw his affliction--his inner turmoil and possibly his surrounding enemies--as divine chastisement for sin. David thought that God was angry with him. And, when you consider that he was surrounded by foes, evildoers, and enemies, and that his body was weak and in pain and his soul troubled, you can see why he felt like he had a target on his back.

But, in the midst of a sea of anguish, David knew where to turn for salvation. Knowing that he deserved far more than he was enduring, David begged for mercy and asked God to send help quickly.

As I've already said, people will often do almost anything to avoid responsibility for their own mistakes. As our society has become increasingly secular, it has lost respect for the authority of God's Word, and that has led to a dangerous and destructive moral and spiritual chain reaction. We no longer have any sense of genuine guilt before God. Instead we deny, drown and defer our sins and mistakes.

The Bible says, "all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God" (Romans 3:23). In the Twelve Steps of Alcoholics Anonymous, the first step is admitting you have a problem with drinking and that you cannot overcome it by your own power. In a similar way, if we are interested in straightening out our lives--our relationship with God--and dealing with the shame of guilt, we have to confess our own sinfulness and seek God's healing.

When David pleaded with God, he prayed "Be gracious to me..." He asked not for justice, but mercy and grace.

There's an old story about an aged mother, in the Middle Ages, whose son had committed a capital crime. On the day that he was to be hanged in public, his mother went before the ruler of the parish and begged, "My lord, please have mercy on my son."

The nobleman replied, "What has your son done to deserve my mercy?"

"Nothing, my lord. For if he deserved it, it would not be mercy."

Every one of us is guilty. We have all sinned. And each of us deserves God's wrath. But in God's great mercy, He has provided a way. For those who have been washed in the blood of Jesus, we have access through repentance and prayer to the infinite mercy and grace of God.

When David realized his situation could have been the result of his own sinfulness, he knew what to do and where to turn. But David's experience did not end with supplication. Whenever we experience true godly sorrow and supplication we will inevitably end up with...

III. SUCCESS:

In the last stanza, David speaks with confidence:

- [Psalms 6:8-9 HCSB](#) Depart from me, all evildoers, for the LORD has heard the sound of my weeping. (9) The LORD has heard my plea for help; the LORD accepts my prayer.

At this point, there's a sudden and surprising change from suffering to joy--an experience recorded in many of the psalms. 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 mind. Perhaps word came to him that the enemy had retreated, or better yet, had been defeated, and he knew God had heard his cries. Or maybe his circumstances hadn't changed at all, but David remembered in his heart God's promise that all would be well. The Lord had heard David's weeping and requests, and had accepted his prayer.

Perhaps God said to David, as He later would to Hezekiah,

- [2 Kings 20:5 HCSB](#) "Go back and tell Hezekiah, the leader of My people, 'This is what the LORD God of your ancestor David says: I have heard your prayer; I have seen your tears. Look, I will heal you. On the third day *from now* you will go up to the LORD's temple.

In any case, David left satisfied. David experienced God's saving grace and all his sins were forgiven.

The Bible says,

- [Isaiah 59:1 HCSB](#) Indeed, the LORD's hand is not too short to save, and His ear is not too deaf to hear.

No one has ever gotten up from God's table, still in need of grace. Is your case a difficult one? Have your sins been shocking and frequent? Are your spiritual diseases strange and complex? Consider He who made the earth, stretched out the heavens like a tent to dwell in, has no bound to His strength, no limit to His might. In ten billion years--or even ten times that--God has never failed at anything; will His first failure be saving you? Will you prove too strong for omnipotence, boggle the omniscient mind, or be unlovable to an all-loving God? If He made you, He can remake you. If He claims you, He can cleanse you.

Sometimes it's hard for us to accept God's forgiveness. The sins of our youth often haunt us for many years. Dr. Paul Brand, writing with Phillip Yancey, told a story about his medical school administrator, a man named Mr. Barwick, who had a serious and painful circulation problem in his leg, but who refused to allow amputation.

But finally, the pain became too great for him to bear, and Barwick cried at last, "I'm through with that leg. Cut it off!"

Surgery was scheduled immediately and the leg was removed, but afterward Barwick suffered from phantom limb pain of the worst degree. Somehow locked in his memory were the sensations associated with that leg. Even after the wound healed, Barwick could feel the torturous pressure of swelling as the muscles cramped and itched and throbbed.

"He hated the leg with such intensity that the pain had unaccountably lodged permanently in his brain," wrote Brand, who then added, "To me, phantom limb pain provides wonderful insight into the phenomenon of false guilt. Christians can be obsessed by the memory of

some sin committed years ago. It never leaves them, crippling their ministry, their devotional life, and their relationships with others..." (Nelson 307).

The Lord has said,

- **Hebrews 8:12 HCSB For I will be merciful to their wrongdoing, and I will never again remember their sins."**

God's forgiveness is so complete that it is forgetfulness. Our testimony before the throne of God is the blood of Jesus which covers all our sins. Because of God's wonderful grace we can have confidence each time we rise from our bedside or church pew, that

- **1 John 1:7-9 HCSB** But if we walk in the light as He Himself is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus His Son cleanses us from all sin.
(8) If we say, "We have no sin," we are deceiving ourselves, and the truth is not in us.
(9) If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

Conclusion:

As we look back over our lives and consider the sins, failures, and mistakes we've made--whether it was ten years ago or ten minutes ago--it is easy to become discouraged and depressed, to believe that God could never forgive us. But David shows us that, through faith, we can move from turmoil and ruination to triumph and renewal! Through...

- Sorrow: a heartfelt repentance and regret for our iniquities. And...
- Supplication: a prayerful request for the grace and mercy of God. We can have...
- Success: the blood of Jesus will continually cleanse those who have bathed in its waters.