

## Psalm 6

### table of contents

psalm 6. <sup>1-5</sup> .....	2
psalm 6. <sup>6-10</sup> .....	4
psalm 6. <sup>2-7</sup> .....	6

Psalms 6.<sup>1-5</sup>

<sup>1</sup>YHWH! Please don't correct me in anger!  
Don't discipline me while inflamed.  
<sup>2</sup>Have pity on me, YHWH, for I am incapacitated.  
Restore me, YHWH, for I am shaken to the core.  
<sup>3</sup>I am filled with great terror.  
And I ask you, YHWH,  
"How long will this go on?"  
<sup>4</sup>Come back, YHWH! Deliver me!  
Rescue me commensurate with your unwavering devotion,  
<sup>5</sup>for in death there is no thought of you.  
Who praises you in š'ôl? (author's translation)

This is the first of two readings that come from the first of seven psalms known as penitential psalms (Ps. 6, 32, 38, 51, 102, 130, and 143). These psalms have, for millennia been a source of inspiration. They have provided motivation to repent and served as a guide or example on how to engage in repentance with faith in God. Christians have utilized them to deepen their commitment to repentance during Lent, when the penitent "afflicts their soul" and hopes for a renewal and/or deepening of engagement and lively relationship with God.

For those who wish to compare translations, here is the KJV

<sup>1</sup>O LORD, rebuke me not in thine anger,  
neither chasten me in thy hot displeasure.  
<sup>2</sup>Have mercy upon me, O LORD; for I am weak:  
O LORD, heal me; for my bones are vexed.  
<sup>3</sup>My soul is also sore vexed:  
but thou, O LORD, how long?  
<sup>4</sup>Return, O LORD, deliver my soul:  
oh save me for thy mercies' sake.  
<sup>5</sup>For in death there is no remembrance of thee:  
in the grave who shall give thee thanks?

1. The Psalmist speaks of God's "anger" and of God bring "inflamed." Some question whether God really experiences in his own being "anger." Some who feel that he does experience anger, emphasize that what is called "anger" in God is something very different than the anger experienced by humans—whereas anger in humans manifests, among other things, a lack of self-control (increase in heart-rate increases, for example, which cannot be controlled, etc), God is always in control.
  - ? What do you do with statements about God's anger?
  - ? In the midst of the penitent's disappointment, guilt, and, sometimes, despair over sin, does it really matter to the penitent whether God's anger is something different than or similar to human anger?
  - ? Given the penitent's intense feelings concerning their sins, does it even make a difference to the penitent's mental and emotional state whether God is indeed angry, in whatever manner, or whether that sense of divine anger is only imagined?
2. In today's short reading, the Psalmist pleads for God's "pity" and speaks of God's "unwavering devotion."

- ? In general, under what circumstances is “pity” needed and under what circumstances is “pity” offered?
  - ? “Pity” is nearly always associated with human difficulty, trouble, anguish, and pain that is overwhelming. How does God show “pity” in human trial?
  - ? Are you in need of God’s pity—that is to say, do you need assistance in relation to any trials?
  - ? How much “control” do you really have over whether God has pity on you or not?
3. The Psalmist’s speaks of being “incapacitated,” of being “shaken to the core,” and of being “filled with great terror.”
- ? What do you think and feel when you read such intense language?
  - ? What do you think and feel when you hear the Psalmist boldly ask, “How long will this go on?” and when you hear the desperate plea, “Come back!”?
  - ? What do you think and feel when you consider the Psalmist’s intermittent feelings that God has abandoned him?
  - ? Have you ever felt that God had abandoned you? How might this Psalm help in such moments and times?
4. In the KJV, the Psalmist ask that God “save me for thy mercies’ sake respond to his need “for thy mercies’ sake.”
- ? What does that phrase, “for thy mercies’ sake” mean to you?

My translation reads, “Rescue me commensurate with your unwavering devotion.”

- ? How does my “commensurate with...” clarify the KJV, “for thy mercies’ sake”?
  - ? What do you think and feel when you consider that “pity” for those in need and an “unwavering devotion” to them is part of God’s character that can be counted on?
5. This reading ends with this heavy complaint.
- “For in death there is no thought of you.  
Who praises you in šē’ôl?”
- ? What does this tell you about the seriousness of the Psalmist’s trial?

Psalm 6.<sup>6-10</sup>

- <sup>6</sup>I am worn out from mourning.  
All night long I inundate my bed with tears.  
I flood my bedchamber.
- <sup>7</sup>My sight blurs because of my anguish.  
It dims because of my all-embracing distress.
- <sup>8</sup>Leave me alone, all you, who would do me harm,  
or YHWH has heard my weeping.
- <sup>9</sup>YHWH has heard my cry for help.  
YHWH has accepted my prayer.
- <sup>10</sup>All my enemies will be disappointed and greatly dismayed.  
They retreat. They are thwarted, in the blink of an eye (author's translation)

This reading is the second of two that come from the first of seven psalms known as penitential psalms (Ps. 6, 32, 38, 51, 102, 130, and 143). They have, for millennia been a source of inspiration. They have provided motivation to repent, and served as a guide or example on how to engage in repentance with faith in God. Christians have utilized them to deepen their commitment to repentance during Lent, when the penitent “afflicts their soul” and hopes for a renewal and/or deepening of engagement and lively relationship with God.

For those who wish to compare translations, here is the KJV.

- <sup>6</sup>I am weary with my groaning;  
all the night make I my bed to swim;  
I water my couch with my tears.
- <sup>7</sup>Mine eye is consumed because of grief;  
it waxeth old because of all mine enemies.
- <sup>8</sup>Depart from me, all ye workers of iniquity;  
for the LORD hath heard the voice of my weeping.
- <sup>9</sup>The LORD hath heard my supplication;  
the LORD will receive my prayer.
- <sup>10</sup>Let all mine enemies be ashamed and sore vexed:  
let them return and be ashamed suddenly.

- ? What language in today's reading indicates that the Psalmist “afflicts his soul” as he seeks forgiveness and atonement.
  - ? What helps does Psalm 6 offer in your life of repentance and search for forgiveness?
1. It might seem odd that in his distress concerning his sins, the Psalmist also vents concerning his “enemies” (this is a common feature of the Psalms).
    - ? What do you make of the presence of enemies in this setting?
    - ? Many interpret these enemies as accusers, who look for and charge the Psalmist with error. If we understand the enemy in this light, how do you feel about their accusations in light of the Psalmist's already severe self-affliction; for he does not, after all, deny his guilt?
    - ? How does the Psalmist respond to this accusation?
    - ? When aware of our sins, might we be attacked and “prosecuted” by an accuser?
  3. As to an accuser, consider the following passage.

“Now is come salvation, and strength, and the kingdom of our God, and the power of his Christ:

for the accuser of our brethren is cast down, which accused them before our God day and night” (Rev. 12.<sup>10</sup>).

- ? Who is being spoken of here as “the accuser of our brethren”?
- ? Satan not only “tempts,” he also “accuses.” In moments when you are aware of and acknowledge sin, what can you do and think to resist the accuser’s attempts to prosecute and discourage you?
- ? Does the Psalmist provide any helps in dealing with this common phenomenon of “accusation” and discouragement over sin?

Psalms 6.<sup>2-7</sup>

<sup>2</sup>Have pity on me, YHWH, for I am incapacitated.  
Restore me, YHWH, for I am shaken to the core.  
<sup>3</sup>I am filled with great terror.  
And I ask you, YHWH,  
“How long will this go on?”  
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Rescue me commensurate with your unwavering devotion,  
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Who praises you in šē’ôl?  
<sup>6</sup>I am worn out from mourning.  
All night long I inundate my bed with tears.  
I flood my bedchamber.  
<sup>7</sup>My sight blurs because of my anguish.  
It dims because of my all-embracing distress (author’s translation).

This is the 9th reading for Lent 2025.

For those who wish to compare translations, here is the KJV.

<sup>2</sup>Have mercy upon me, O LORD; for I am weak:  
O LORD, heal me; for my bones are vexed.  
<sup>3</sup>My soul is also sore vexed:  
but thou, O LORD, how long?  
<sup>4</sup>Return, O LORD, deliver my soul:  
oh save me for thy mercies’ sake.  
<sup>5</sup>For in death there is no remembrance of thee:  
in the grave who shall give thee thanks?  
<sup>6</sup>I am weary with my groaning;  
all the night make I my bed to swim;  
I water my couch with my tears.  
<sup>7</sup>Mine eye is consumed because of grief;  
it waxeth old because of all mine enemies.

For this Lent reading, we return to the Penitential Psalms (Ps. 6, 32, 38, 51, 102, 130, and 143). These psalms have, for millennia been a source of inspiration. They have provided motivation to repent, and served as a guide or example on how to engage in repentance with faith in God. Christians have utilized them to deepen their commitment to repentance during Lent, when the penitent “afflicts their soul” and hopes for a renewal and/or deepening of engagement and lively relationship with God.

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  - ? Have you ever felt that God had abandoned you? How might this Psalm help in such moments and times?
4. In the KJV, the Psalmist ask that God respond to his need "for thy mercies' sake."
  - ? What does that phrase, "for thy mercies' sake" mean to you?

My translation reads, "Rescue me commensurate with your unwavering devotion."

- ? How does my "commensurate with..." clarify the KJV, "for thy mercies' sake"?
  - ? What do you think and feel when you consider that "pity" for those in need and an "unwavering devotion" to them is part of God's character that can be counted on?
5. In verse 5, the Psalmist complains.

"For in death there is no thought of you.  
Who praises you in še'ôl?"

    - ? What does this tell you about the seriousness of the Psalmist's trial?
  - ? How will you utilize today's reading as you seek forgiveness and the willing and happy presence of God in your life?

*(edition: March 12, 2025)*