

A Sleepless Conscience

Psalm 6 (KJV)

1 O Lord, rebuke me not in thine anger, neither chasten me in thy hot displeasure. **2** Have mercy upon me, O Lord; for I am weak: O Lord, heal me; for my bones are vexed. **3** My soul is also sore vexed: but thou, O Lord, how long? **4** Return, O Lord, deliver my soul: oh save me for thy mercies' sake. **5** For in death there is no remembrance of thee: in the grave who shall give thee thanks? **6** I am weary with my groaning; all the night make I my bed to swim; I water my couch with my tears. **7** Mine eye is consumed because of grief; it waxeth old because of all mine enemies. **8** Depart from me, all ye workers of iniquity; for the Lord hath heard the voice of my weeping. **9** The Lord hath heard my supplication; the Lord will receive my prayer. **10** Let all mine enemies be ashamed and sore vexed: let them return and be ashamed suddenly.

The Sleep Industry

Time Magazine did an article in January 2013 on the sleep industry. The article was entitled, "The Sleep Industry: Why We're Paying Big Bucks for Something That's Free." Here are some snapshots of the article:

Sleep is one of life's great free pleasures.

Spending related to sleep has increased 8.8% annually since 2008, reaching about \$32 billion in 2012.

Last year (2012), 73% of American Internet users went online to research health information, and 43% looked specifically for sleep remedies.

According to the National Sleep Foundation, only 56% of Americans say they get a "good night's sleep" on a typical work or school night.

Recent sleep studies have linked insufficient sleep to a host of problems including hypertension, depression, anxiety, diabetes, improper immune functioning, forgetfulness, clumsiness, jumpiness and even things like teen sports injuries.

To beat the lack of sleep, young adults are largely responsible for supercharged sales of energy drinks such as Red Bull, 5-Hour Energy, Rockstar, and Monster.

In 2012, sales of energy drinks grew 19%. (The annual number of ER visits due to energy-drink consumption doubled over the past four years as well.)

Product marketers constantly launch new sleep remedies that include sleep-monitoring devices, aromatherapy, teas, supplements, botanicals, balms, bath salts and over-the-counter sedatives in new formulations like tongue strips.

While overall sales of mattresses have been sluggish throughout the recession era, the opposite is true of more expensive specialty mattresses. Sales of high-end brands like Tempur-Pedic and Select Comfort have skyrocketed over the past few years.

When you tack on the pharmaceutical industry's efforts to get physicians to prescribe medicines to help people go to sleep, more money is to be made.

Most all of us at some point have had difficulty sleeping for whatever reason. Sometimes it has been the pressures of life, the challenges of the tasks facing us the next day, or some emotional trial that robbed sleep from our eyes. I have to think that there have been times where we've been in the same condition that David mentions in Psalm 6:6. He says that his tears have robbed him from sleeping. He has a conscience that will not go to sleep. There is a reason that his conscience cannot allow him to sleep; unconfessed sin.

The Background of Psalm 6

This psalm is about one of the most important things that a saint can do; the confession of sin and repent of it.

As you read through this psalm, it begins with an attitude of allowing the heart to listen and hear the voice of God as it speaks to the conscience.

Sin is a great hindrance to our walk with the Lord. The only remedy for sin is to walk in the constant power of the Holy Ghost and allow the Spirit to guide you.

Sin breaks fellowship with God.
Sin hinders the work of the Holy Ghost.
Sin opens us up to the disciplining hand of God.
Sin declares a contention against God in the soul of a man.
Sin has fruit that's growth can only be hindered by Spirit of the Lord.
Sin has a power to cause men to lean toward the world and its enticements.
Sin gives great strength to carnality and puts a soul in jeopardy.

Those who realize that the only hope they have is the dependence on the Lord will go a long way toward spiritual success.

Historical Background

The historical background of this psalm is hard to pin-point in the life of David. What we do know is that David wrote Psalms 3-41 and that this one came at some point in his life when he was burdened by the impact that sin had upon him.

This psalm is the first of what is called a penitential psalm. This means that it is one that expresses a need for God to remove the sin that has come in. It is a psalm marked by confession of sin and then a request for mercy and forgiveness.

There is a total of seven penitential psalms in the book of Psalms. Psalm 6, 32, 38, 51, 102, 130, and 143 are their locations. The most famous of these is Psalm 51, where David cries out in pain for his breach against God with the sin he committed with Bathsheba.

Just as Psalm 6 has words that you immediately see as those of contrition the others have similar aspects to them also. Just the phrases give way to an understanding of the anguish in the soul of a man:

32:3—My bones waxed old... Roaring through the night.

32:4—My moisture has turned into the drought of summer.

38:2—Arrows stick fast in me...

38:3—There is no soundness in my flesh...

38:5—My wounds stink and are corrupt because of my foolishness.

38:7—Filled with a loathsome disease...

38:8—I am feeble and sore broken...

38:11—My friends stand aloof from my sore...

102:3—My days are consumed like smoke...

102:9—I have eaten ashes like bread and mingled my drink with weeping...

143:3—The enemy hath persecuted my soul; he hath smitten my life down to the ground...

143:4—My spirit overwhelmed within me... my heart is desolate...

There are some who might say that this is a depressing language to hear, but the reality is that every single one of these Psalms all end on a note of faith in God, who can remove the guilt that sin has brought to their lives.

That is one of the devil's nasty secrets that he wants to keep from every child of God. He wants us to think that there is no remedy. That once we've got involved with some hideous sin we can't recover. That is nothing more than one of his devices that he uses so effectively!

Two Directions

I am going to borrow an outline from Steven Lawson's fine preaching commentary on the Psalms. He breaks Psalm 6 in two. The first seven verses are the problem of unconfessed sin and the last 3 verses is the power of confessed sin.

The Problem of Unconfessed Sin

Psalm 6:1-7 (KJV)

1 O Lord, rebuke me not in thine anger, neither chasten me in thy hot displeasure.

2 Have mercy upon me, O Lord; for I am weak: O Lord, heal me; for my bones are vexed. **3** My soul is also sore vexed: but thou, O Lord, how long? **4** Return, O Lord,

deliver my soul: oh save me for thy mercies' sake. **5** For in death there is no remembrance of thee: in the grave who shall give thee thanks? **6** I am weary with my groaning; all the night make I my bed to swim; I water my couch with my

tears. **7** Mine eye is consumed because of grief; it waxeth old because of all mine enemies.

Even just a quick look at this passage allows us to see that there are some things that we lose when we get involved in the low-life of sinful activities.

6:1—A loss of divine pleasure... David cries out because of his awareness that God is not pleased with the direction of his life. Rebuke, anger, and chasten are strong words and yet that is how David described the conditions he was living under.

There are times that life just seems to come at us like a torpedo. It seems as if there are no breaks, no favor, no opportunities, almost as if everything has turned against us.

Stability erodes away. Divorce. Wayward children. Marriages under pressure. Dire financial straits. Unrelenting job stress.

Some may even feel like that they have greatly sinned against God because of some of the matters that are taking place. You are more prone to this belief if you have a sharp conscience and are alert to the things of the Word. Be careful that you don't allow the devil to buttonhole you into believing that you have some deadly sin that God is disciplining you over.

Sometimes life is just hard! In fact, Paul refers to this in Romans:

Romans 5:3-5 (KJV)

3 And not only so, but we glory in tribulations also: knowing that tribulation worketh patience; **4** And patience, experience; and experience, hope: **5** And hope maketh not ashamed; because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us.

It is imperative that when things seem to be moving in the wrong direction that we fall to our knees and plead with the Lord and ask Him if there is a work in our lives that He is trying to sort out for His own glory. Could it be that there have been some sinful patterns that have slipped in and now the hand of discipline is moving against us?

To all who are honest in their walk with God, there is a sense of knowing deep down when we are not walking in the fellowship with the Lord that He has intended for us. If we choose self-deception, we will continue to stay in that place of God's displeasure.

The goal of every man is to be saved!

6:2—A loss of physical strength... I am weak... heal me... my bones are vexed.

He gives an expression that he is weak. In 6:6 he expresses it, “I am worn out from groaning...” It’s in times like these that we feel like all of the energy we have for life has escaped us.

Too tired to get out of bed and get dressed for the day. Too worn out to get in the car and even drive to work. Too weary to clean the house. Too exhausted to cook for the children. Too depressed to go to church. Too burdened to read the Bible. Too sluggish to even bend our knees in prayer.

That is the sort of thing that David is saying about his life.

He also cries out that his bones are in agony. This is a poetic way to describe the inner turmoil that is taking place.

Our bodies wear out and with age they give way to weakness, but there is a thought that most of us do not want to entertain and yet is very biblical in its view. There are times that sickness comes on us because of the judgment of God. The Bible is loaded with examples of this:

Miriam was smitten with leprosy because she spoke against Moses. The Israelites were bitten by serpents and were sick and some died because of their rebellion. Jeroboam reached out his hand in opposition to the altar and God withered his hand. Uzziah was smitten with leprosy because he stepped out of his spiritual boundaries. The man who was in sin in 1 Corinthians 5 had his health stricken so he would turn from the sin. Some Corinthians were sick and even died because they abused communion.

Even scriptures we take encouragement from sometimes gives hint that some sickness can be linked to sin:

James 5:14-15 (KJV)

14 Is any sick among you? let him call for the elders of the church; and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord: **15** And the prayer of faith shall save the sick, and the Lord shall raise him up; and if he have committed sins, they shall be forgiven him

There's not scriptural evidence that all sickness is caused by sin, but we can be certain of one thing; some have physical sickness because of their sin. It's crucial for us to make sure that our lives do fall into this category.

6:3—A loss of peace of mind... My soul is vexed, he says.

You can say it in this way; I am about to lose my mind! That's where David was and it was to such a degree that he asked the question, "How long?"

You will find this phrase 61 times in the KJV and it is specifically in the Psalms 18 times. It is the cry of a man who is longing for relief.

All the "how longs" help us to learn that all of God's delays are maturing times. He is using it either to mature the time such as in Psalm 37 so that His purpose prevails or He is using it to mature the man as in Psalm 119:67 (Before I was afflicted I went astray: but now have I kept thy word).

Here is where you can begin to see hints of God's greatness when He can use sin for His own benefit in the salvation of man! That ought to stir something in our heart to realize that even on our bad days, God is working due diligence to save us from this untoward generation!

6:4—A loss of spiritual fellowship... Return, O Lord, deliver my soul...

David is at that pleading point of longing for the Lord to work in him once more!

You can pick up on that cry when you hear David seeking for the Lord to "return to me" and then "deliver me... save me."

There is an admission that his prayer has been hindered because of his unconfessed sin. To a degree, all of us who are honest enough to admit it have found that there have been times when our own sin has blocked the ears of God.

I realize that some Christians are very uncomfortable with the idea of having to battle with sin even after they have received the wonderful gift of the Holy Ghost. But consider with me the fact that jealousy, envy, pride, arrogance, gossip, lying, corrupt words out of our mouths, railing accusations, arguments, and so forth are

all matters that we must repent of. These kinds of activities hinder the flow of the Spirit in our lives and one of the devices of the devil is minimize the fact that we may be holding on to these things.

Turn away from these things so that your prayers may be productive! David wanted the Lord to put him back into a place of sweet fellowship again and to restore him. He longed to be free from the physical, emotional, and spiritual pain he was experiencing.

6:5—A loss of physical health... Deliver me from death... Deliver me from the grave...

David realized that his sin was in the process of destroying his life! If things did not turn around soon, he was going to die. He was in the mode of reasoning with the Lord in his prayer.

Do you ever reason with the Lord in prayer? There are hints of this in Scripture where the Lord urges men to reason with him.

Isaiah 1:18 (KJV) Come now, and let us reason together, saith the Lord: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool.

Isaiah 41:21—Bring forth your strong reasons...

Isaiah 43:26—Let us plead together... that you may be justified...

Job 40:7-8—I will demand of thee... and declare thou unto me...

There is something of substance to this when we can talk out the greatest matters of the soul with the Lord!

David further concluded that the only time praise can be uttered in a person's life is when they are still alive. No public praise or service is offered to God after a person has gone the way of the grave.

(NOTE: Those who persist in unconfessed sin may be subject to premature death; Acts 5:1-11; James 5:20; 1 John 5:17.)

6:6—A loss of physical sleep... Weary with groaning... My bed is swimming in tears...

David gives us the picture of a man who is fighting with weariness and fatigue and yet he still cannot sleep. He tosses and turns, but all of that is compounded by his tears. His eyes were so swollen he could not close them in sleep.

David's mind turns to his enemies whom God is using to discipline him. It is highly unlikely that they even had a thought of David, but his mind was on them as God was using it as a threshing floor of the soul.

(this is just extra that I dug out while working on this: The marks of a contrite spirit are found when we look at Psalm 6. The Sorrow for Sin (vv. 3, 6 , 7); The Humiliation of Sin (vv. 2, 4); The Hatred of Sin (v. 8).)

The Power of Confessed Sin

Psalm 6:8-10 (KJV)

8 Depart from me, all ye workers of iniquity; for the Lord hath heard the voice of my weeping. **9** The Lord hath heard my supplication; the Lord will receive my prayer. **10** Let all mine enemies be ashamed and sore vexed: let them return and be ashamed suddenly.

Earlier, we mentioned that this is a psalm going in two directions and now you see the second part of it. Repentance put a heaviness on the soul, but the change starts in verse 8. It takes place because of the weeping and turning away from sin in the first seven verses.

This psalm is for those who scarcely have the heart to pray and it brings them within sight of victory.

Aron Ralston—127 Hours

My brother loaned me a book sometime back and I finally got around to reading it. It is the story of Aron Ralston who was trapped in a canyon and had to resort to drastic means to save his own life.

Aron Ralston amputated his right arm five days after a boulder had pinned it.

May 03, 2003—By Stephanie Simon and J. Michael Kennedy—Times Staff Writers

ASPEN, Colo. — His right arm was pinned beneath an 800-pound boulder. His water bottle was empty. It did not seem likely that a rescue crew could ever spot him in the narrow slit of Blue John Canyon, in the wilds of southeast Utah.

So, after five days, Aron Ralston took out his pocketknife and amputated his arm below the elbow. Then he rigged anchors into the cliff, fixed a rope and rappelled 60 feet to the canyon floor. Bleeding heavily through a makeshift tourniquet, Ralston began to hike.

He had walked about five miles when a helicopter search team spotted him Thursday afternoon on a trail through Canyonlands National Park, drained and dehydrated, but still pushing forward.

"That's true grit," park ranger Glenn Sherrill said.

On Friday, Ralston was recovering from surgery at a Colorado hospital. And his friends were predicting he would return to the mountain wilderness the first chance he gets.

"I expect him to be out there, doing everything he ever did," nature photographer John Fielder said.

Ralston, 27, is an audacious mountaineer who has climbed 59 of the highest peaks in Colorado. A story this spring in his hometown paper, the Aspen Times, described him climbing alone, in midwinter, in the dead of night, without cell phone, radio, beacon, or rope. A mechanical engineer by training, an explorer in spirit, Ralston relishes pushing his body over ice-slick cliffs. He delights in standing alone at a 14,000-foot summit as lightning crashes around him, as gray wolves howl from distant ledges.

The adventure that ended with his self-amputation was supposed to have been a modest one: a bike ride up a canyon, then a hike down through the sculpted sandstone bluffs on a bright spring Saturday. The round trip would take perhaps

eight hours. Ralston thought so little of it, he didn't bother to give his roommates a detailed itinerary, as was his practice on mountain climbs.

He completed the ride without incident and left his bike at the top, planning to drive up in his truck later to retrieve it. On the way down, he used rock-climbing equipment to navigate the narrow passages of Blue John Canyon, which in places is just 3 feet wide. After an hour or two, he came to a giant boulder wedged in the canyon, per Sherrill, the park ranger.

Ralston scrambled over the boulder and was lowering himself down when it shifted, pinning his arm. He managed to maneuver his feet so that he was standing upright. But he could not free himself. Authorities said he used his climbing gear to rig a webbed sling so he could try to push the rock away with his feet. It was too heavy.

He stood there, trapped, for five days, during which temperatures dropped to 30 degrees.

On Tuesday, he ran out of water. On Thursday, he "realized that his survival required drastic action," according to a statement by the sheriff's office in Emery County, Utah. He used his pocketknife to free himself the only way he could, by cutting off part of his arm. Though such brutal surgery is hard to imagine, others in desperate straits have done it, managing to sever the muscles and tendons that attach limbs to joints with a modest jackknife.

It is unclear whether Ralston hacked through his bone or whether the bone had been crushed by the boulder. Once he had completed the job, he used his first-aid kit to tie a tourniquet around his bicep. Then he rappelled down the cliff -- and started walking. "His instinct for survival was great," Fielder said.

Hours later, Ralston met two hikers in Horseshoe Canyon. They gave him water and walked with him until they could flag down a helicopter from the Utah Department of Public Safety. Ralston's co-workers had alerted the mountain rescue crews just that morning that he had not shown up for work all week. "He was obviously in major distress, having cut his own arm off, but he was still ambulatory," park ranger Jim Blazik said.

Ralston remained conscious through the brief helicopter ride to Allen Memorial Hospital in Moab, Utah, and walked into the emergency room on his own. He was later flown to St. Mary's Hospital in Grand Junction, Colo. Rescuers returned to the canyon later to try to retrieve the amputated limb; they saw it, but couldn't budge the boulder. "It's a phenomenal story, but Aron is a phenomenal person," said Tim Mutrie, the Aspen reporter who profiled Ralston.

Ralston underwent surgery Thursday night and is in serious condition in the intensive care unit. His "spirits are high and he anxiously looks forward to returning to his love of the outdoors," his mother, Donna Ralston, said in a statement Friday.

Though relieved that Ralston survived, Blazik chided him for hiking through such rugged, remote terrain alone and without leaving a detailed itinerary with friends.

"As far as I'm concerned, that was a foolish act, very, very unwisely done," Blazik said, emphasizing that he was not speaking for the park service.

Ralston is accustomed to such criticism.

He has conquered all 59 of the Colorado peaks he counts as "Fourteeners," summits of at least 14,000 feet, with names such as Challenger Point and Mount Massive. (Some climbers, using a different ranking method, count only 54 Fourteeners.)

Five years ago, he set out to make history by climbing those summits again; this time alone, in wintertime. Veteran climbers have watched with a blend of awe and alarm as he has methodically scrambled up one after another, risking frostbite and worse as he pushes to the top, then signs his name triumphantly in the summit log. Because the risk of avalanche is greatest when the sun is out, he often climbs after midnight. Only three climbers have ever reached the summit of every Fourteener in Colorado. None has done it solo. Ralston has 14 more to go.

Mutrie, who considers Ralston a friend, says the climber finds joy in tackling monster peaks without the oxygen canisters, satellite-guided tracking systems, and communication gear that many mountaineers routinely pack. Stripped down

to the essentials, Ralston pits himself against nature. "For him, it clarifies the goal," Mutrie said.

An avalanche in February nearly buried Ralston alive as he skied backcountry with two friends; the experience sobered, but did not stop him. Described by friends as soft-spoken and easygoing off the mountains, Ralston focused on his climbing goals with an intensity few could rival.

"He was trying to be one of the top mountaineers," said Joe Wheadon, who shares a rented house with Ralston in Aspen. "That was what he wanted to do."

Ralston graduated from Carnegie Mellon University in Pittsburgh with a double major in French and mechanical engineering and a minor in performance piano. According to Mutrie's story, he worked for several years designing "clean rooms" for microchip production. When his employer, Intel, wouldn't give him three weeks off to climb Mt. McKinley, he quit.

"I could live out of my truck," he told Mutrie. "That's kind of an attractive lifestyle to me, actually."

Instead, Ralston moved to Aspen, took a job in a mountaineering store and packed his truck for the wilderness every chance he got. Alone with the elements, testing his strength and his savvy, pushing himself past every limit he thought he had, he thrives.

"To challenge yourself, to survive in what can often be hostile conditions; it's a very primal thing that people like Aron do," his friend Fielder said. "It's all unnecessary," Ralston told Mutrie, "but at the same time it's entirely necessary for me. I wouldn't lead a happy life doing anything other than what I'm doing. This is my ultimate contribution, whether anybody likes it or not. It's my art."

Sometimes you have to resort to what others may consider drastic means just for your own survival. That is what Aron Ralston found himself being forced to do.

The Power of Confessed Sin

But when we look to the last three verses of Psalm 6, we find that David puts his enemies in one place and he puts the Lord in another place.

His enemies:

Depart from me...

You workers of iniquity...

Let my enemies be ashamed at their treatment of me...

Let my enemies be vexed with suffering as I have suffered...

His Lord:

He heard the voice of my weeping...

He heard my supplication... (my pleading, my reasoning, my groaning)

He will receive my prayer...

Power Over Sin

God grants all power over sin and it comes from two directions:

The empowering work of His Spirit and His Word.

The work of repentance and confession on the part of the saint.

It can restore hope and faith!