

Morning and Evening

Psalm 5-6

Psalm 5:1 *To the choirmaster: for the flutes. A Psalm of David.*¹

Give ear to my words, O LORD; consider my groaning.

² Give attention to the sound of my cry, my King and my God, for to you do I pray.

³ O LORD, in the morning you hear my voice; in the morning I prepare a sacrifice for you and watch.

⁴ For you are not a God who delights in wickedness; evil may not dwell with you.

⁵ The boastful shall not stand before your eyes; you hate all evildoers.

⁶ You destroy those who speak lies; the LORD abhors the bloodthirsty and deceitful man.

⁷ But I, through the abundance of your steadfast love, will enter your house. I will bow down toward your holy temple in the fear of you.

⁸ Lead me, O LORD, in your righteousness because of my enemies; make your way straight before me.

⁹ For there is no truth in their mouth; their inmost self is destruction; their throat is an open grave; they flatter with their tongue.

¹⁰ Make them bear their guilt, O God; let them fall by their own counsels; because of the abundance of their transgressions cast them out, for they have rebelled against you.

¹¹ But let all who take refuge in you rejoice; let them ever sing for joy, and spread your protection over them, that those who love your

¹ *Targum*: “For praise, with dancing. A hymn of David.”

Brenton LXX: “For the end, a Psalm of David, concerning her that inherits” (very different from *Lexham LXX*: “on behalf of the inheritance.” *Tes kleprnomouses* [the inheritance] is a feminine participle.

name may exult in you.

¹² For you bless the righteous, O LORD; you cover him with favor as with a shield.

Psalm 6:1 *To the choirmaster: with stringed instruments; according to The Sheminith. A Psalm of David.*²

O LORD, rebuke me not in your anger, nor discipline me in your wrath.

² Be gracious to me, O LORD, for I am languishing; heal me, O LORD, for my bones are troubled.

³ My soul also is greatly troubled. But you, O LORD-- how long?

⁴ Turn, O LORD, deliver my life; save me for the sake of your steadfast love.

⁵ For in death there is no remembrance of you; in Sheol who will give you praise?

⁶ I am weary with my moaning; every night I flood my bed with tears; I drench my couch with my weeping.

⁷ My eye wastes away because of grief; it grows weak because of all my foes.

⁸ Depart from me, all you workers of evil, for the LORD has heard the sound of my weeping.

⁹ The LORD has heard my plea; the LORD accepts my prayer.

¹⁰ All my enemies shall be ashamed and greatly troubled; they shall turn back and be put to shame in a moment."

Psalm 5:1-6:10

² *Targum*: "For praise; with melodies on the harp of eight strings. A hymn of David."
LXX: "For the End, a Psalm of David among the Hymns for the eighth."

Evening and Morning

EVENING AND MORNING

*Biorhythms. Mechanisms.
Death and life. Breath and strife.
Peace and worry. Calm and hurry.
Get up. Go to bed. Get hungry. Be fed.
A shower, get dressed. Off to work, home to rest.
Night and Day. Fight or pray.
Habit forming. Evening and morning.*

Habits are the rhythm, the cadence, and the drumbeat of our lives. We do them all the time without even realizing it. Some are mundane: Getting up. Brushing our teeth. Going to bed. Others are bad: sucking your thumb, not washing your hands, picking your nose. Some habits are sinful: worry, constant strife, outbursts of anger, fits of jealousy. [Some habits are good.](#)

I did a Google search on “good habits,” to see what would turn up. The first hit was “[203 Good Daily Habits: The Definitive List to Energize Your Day.](#)” There were a lot

of pretty good ideas in there, actually. Some, eh, not really. It was divided up into sections. Do you want to be happier? Here are 10 habits including laughing, talking to positive people, or calling an old friend. Do you want to manage stress more effectively? Here are 12 habits including stretching your body, sniffing lavender (I don't understand that one), or taking a nap (I do get that one). How about being more confident? Here are nine things including stand up straight, pay attention to other people, and list three things you like about yourself (I'm good enough, I'm smart enough, and doggone it, people like me?).

203 habits are a lot of habits to incorporate into your life, and the list included all kinds of topics: Being more mindful, making new friends, finding someone to date. A good third of them were devoted to getting sleep, losing weight, and getting in shape. That pretty much tells you where Americans are at these days. A grand total of eight dealt with what they called becoming “[more spiritually minded](#).” That would be 4%. These eight things include walking in the woods, looking up at the stars, or performing a thoughtful act of random kindness. It could be easy to make fun of those, but my main thought was, that's it? That's the best you've

got? David looked at the stars and thought of God, but those things, it seems to me, presuppose much more important things that have to be there already.

Then I read **Psalms 5-6**. Like the first four Psalms, these two have one idea front and center, and again presuppose a host of others around it. The one thing is **prayer**. Prayer is the psalmists ongoing, uninterrupted **habit**. The reason I thought of prayer as a “habit,” is not merely because psalms are prayers, but because of what Psalms 5-6, like 3-4, are said to be. These are morning and evening, morning and evening Psalms. The inspired organizer of the Psalter thought that you needed a double dose of this habit forming pattern for your life.

Prayer in the morning. “O LORD, in the morning you hear my voice; in the morning I prepare a sacrifice for you and watch” (**Ps 5:3**). Prayer in the evening. “I am weary with moaning; every night I flood my bed with tears” (**Ps 6:6**). Is prayer your morning and evening habit? People have tried all kinds of things to help us in these matters. One of the most famous is the aptly named *Morning and Evening*, the famous daily devotional written by **Charles Spurgeon**, a book which has blessed countless millions of people for a hundred and

fifty years. He is trying to create in you the same habit of being in God's word, reflecting, and praying.

Importantly, this book title follows a long history in the church of using Scripture, especially these Psalms—on set days and set hours—in the devotional life of God's people (both individually and corporately). Psalm 5 was used in many liturgical Feast Days of the early church, especially feasts of the cross and resurrection. Spurgeon uses it on the ominous date of September 11. Psalm 6 was especially popular at funerals, memorials, and on so called Ash Wednesday. Curious how both Psalms are used to think about Christ's passion.

These times set apart by the church takes its cue from the morning and evening idea of **Psalms 3-6**. We do well to remember that David prescribed set times of standing, singing, worshipping, and so forth in ancient Israel using these psalms. **Psalm 5:1** begins, "To the choirmaster: for the flutes. A Psalm of David." **Psalm 6:1**, "To the choirmaster: with stringed instruments; according to The Sheminith ("the octave" or "the eighth"). A Psalm of David." Thus, God himself gives us a **God-ordained habit forming pattern** that

we are to emulate all the days we live. Not just on certain days, but every day.

Clearly, these are corporate prayers; not just of David the individual, but songs of the Church universal. Indeed, early on, Psalm 5 was said to be about “**the Church winning the inheritance at the end**” (Jerome).³ This idea comes from the LXX’s superscription which reads instead, “**For the end, a Psalm of David, concerning her that inherits.**” “End” is a very different way to translate “choirmaster,” but the word can mean “enduring” or even “preeminent” (referring to Sovereignty). “Her that inherits” is also a different way to translate “flutes.” The LXX translators took it to come from a word meaning “to inherit.”⁴ So it is from the LXX that the Fathers saw this psalm as the Church being the end of the beginning which was Israel, and the psalm speaking about our inheritance of Christ at the end.

And so it is good for us to reflect upon these Psalms and their pattern for life together. The particulars can vary (the

³ Bruce K. Waltke, James M. Houston, and Erika Moore, *The Psalms as Christian Lament: A Historical Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI; Cambridge, U.K.: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2014), 21.

⁴ “The Flute” is *nechilab*. From a word (*chali*) meaning “to perforate,” “to bore through,” hence a flute or pipe or something, or from a word (*nachal*) meaning “to inherit,” hence it could mean the name of a well known tune, or as the LXX has it, “concerning her that inherits.”

exact times, the exact parts of Scripture or Psalms, the sound of the tunes, the instruments they being played). But the habit itself needs to exist in our lives. You need these things, I need these things, we need these things in one form or another.

The morning and evening habit of prayer. What kind of prayer? All kinds. Psalm 1 reflects upon God's law and righteousness and wickedness. Psalm 2 is a prayer of against treachery against God and Christ. Psalm 3 is a call to the LORD in great distress. Psalm 4 is a prayer for safety and rest. Psalm 5 continues this theme of Psalm 4. He asks for guidance and protection. Psalm 6 moves to a prayer of forgiveness and deliverance. This is just the beginning of the prayers of God's saints that rise up to God like sweet incense in the Tabernacle. He smells their aroma and is pleased to answer his child.

As I said a moment ago, [prayer presupposes other things](#) that go along with it. This is [the theological content](#) of the prayer. This includes [who we pray to](#). As we begin looking at our Psalms today, we notice the object of our prayers first. We do not prayer to the Higher Power of Alcoholics Anonymous. We pray to the Christian God. Psalm 5 begins

with “The LORD” (Yahweh, Jehovah, I AM; Ps 5:1), “my King,” and “my God” (Ps 5:2) within the span of two verses. Augustine noticed that by King we have to understand the Son (“I have set my King on Zion,” Psalm 2:6). But, he added that “LORD” and “God” refer to the Father and the Spirit. Three names, yet the verb “give heed” is singular, because we have only One God.⁵ Interesting, Psalm 6 ends with The LORD (6:9), the LORD, and the LORD (10). Taken together, the two Psalms begin and end with the Three and the One. David knew this God, and offers his prayers to Him.

We will think about other theological content of Psalms 5-6, which differ and yet are similar to the previous psalms as we go along. As far as similarities go, Psalms 5-6 follow 2-

⁵ Augustine on Psalm 5:2. See comments by J. M. Neale, *A Commentary on the Psalms from Primitive and Medieval Writers: Psalm 1 to Psalm 38*, Second Edition., vol. 1 (London; New York: Joseph Masters; Pott and Amery, 1869), 118. **GOING DEEPER:** Is this just making things up as you go along? No. It is the Father’s wrestling correctly with the hermeneutic Jesus himself taught them. Do they always get it right? No. Is there a plurality of Persons in this Psalm? Read in the context of Psalm 2, there has to be. Augustine thought that *Elohim* (God) after the “King” was the Father, because the Son leads us to the Father. In Psalm 2, Yahweh is the Father. Yet, surely all three Persons are I AM. I tend to think that following Psalm 2, Yahweh is the Father and Elohim would be the Spirit who always accompanies the Son. Or, the King and Elohim are the same person and Yahweh is different. Whatever the case, the Psalms are about the Christian God, not a Unitarian God. Our first impulse should not be towards rationalism and thinking that this is just clever exegesis on the part of the Fathers. Instead, it should be to boldly interpret the OT in this same basic way, realizing that what is said of the One God is most often true of all Three Persons (I don’t know if the Spirit is ever called “The King,” but surely he is Yahweh and Elohim in our Bibles).

4 as [Royal Psalms](#). They are songs of the king to The King. Therefore, one of the underlying themes is God's sovereignty. Hence the possible translation of the superscription "choirmaster" as "end" or "Supreme."

God gave Israel a king. That king experienced things that represent all of the struggles and feelings of you and I. But the Father also gave Israel's king a King, and he has given us the same King in the form of his servant, the Lord Jesus, God With Us. Our Lord also struggled with feelings and experiences that we struggle with ... except without sin. And this is the great difference, and it is the reason why the Psalms must find their fullness in him.

Other theological ideas here were made impressionable to our memories by the Fathers. They talk about things like [three kinds of sinners](#), [seven stages of true prayer](#), [five stages of spiritual progress](#), and [four \(or seven\) steps of godly repentance](#)—all found in these two psalms (*we will see still other theological themes later*). Since some of these are in some ways outlines of the psalms, let's think about them as we try to get an overview of what we are looking at today.

[Several stages or parts of true prayer](#) fit with our morning psalm—Psalm 5. When we wake up, we want to

know **how we are supposed to pray**? What does true prayer look like? How does it progress? **Albertus Magnus**, a medieval German scholar notices these seven things:⁶

First, you need to come to God with **the right intention**. The phrase that sets this off is “**you hear my voice**” (**Ps 5:3**). The intention is that you expect to be heard by God. “**For to you do I pray**” (2). Not to a stone or a piece of wood. Not to a fallen angel. Not to a saint or a demon. To the LORD, the Creator of all things. Sadly, I think too often we pray without a thought to being heard, or maybe even with a secret fear that in fact we won't be. But you must come to God with the right intention, expecting that he will hear you. Know who it is that you are praying to, and that he hears and will answer as is always perfectly good and right.

Second, you come **eagerly**. The word here is “morning.” Some translations (*Book of Common Prayer* Psalm 5:3) have the archaic word **betimes**, which means **to look early and earnestly**. That's the point of getting up in the morning. You do it because you are looking forward to something. *The Poor Man's Commentary* puts these two together saying, “**I would**

⁶ This is found in the helpful (two-volume) book, **J. M. Neale**, *A Commentary on the Psalms from Primitive and Mediæval Writers: Psalm 1 to Psalm 38*, Second Edition., vol. 1 (London; New York: Joseph Masters; Pott and Amery, 1869), 118.

now say, my voice shalt [you] hear betimes in the morning; I will look up in that dear and ever precious name, in whom I can never look up in vain. I will make mention of Jesus. I shall find boldness in his blood and righteousness; for [you], Lord, wilt bless him, and bless his people in him, and defend all his redeemed here, and crown them with endless joy hereafter, for his name and righteousness sake. Amen.”⁷

Third, you must come **constantly**. Not just one morning, but every morning and evening, morning and evening. It is repeated. It is faithful. It is dependable.

Fourth, you have to come with **a pure conscience**. David says, “**I will watch**” (5:3). The LXX has “look up.” What does looking up have to do with a clean conscience? “**Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God**” (Mt 5:8). We “**draw near to God**” through a clean conscience (Heb 10:22). How could anyone could do such a thing? This is a bold and amazing thing that a sinner could come to prayer with a pure conscience. The last three begin to tease out this theme:

Fifth, you come **via union with God through Christ**. “**I will come into your house**” (Ps 5:7). The image of coming

⁷ Robert Hawker, *Poor Man's Old Testament Commentary: Job–Psalms*, vol. 4 (Bellingham, WA: Logos Bible Software, 2013), 177.

into God's house, the place where he dwells, is an image of union with Christ. We are the stones; he is the Cornerstone. Together we are built up into one house.

Sixth, you come with **confidence** because of “**the abundance of your steadfast love**” (Ps 5:7). It is God's mercies, new every morning, that allows us to come. Not, as we will see, our own goodness, but His goodness. And because of his goodness we come confidently approaching the throne of Grace.

Seventh, you come with **reverence**. “**I will bow down**” (7). True worship is not detached emotional ecstasy, but a deliberate humbling of one's body and will before the Holy God. And true worship says, “**Whatever he requires of me, that I will do.**” For this is what it means to bow. It means to humble yourself and submit yourself to the Sovereign God.

Psalm 5 – The Good, the Bad, and The Good

In these ways, Psalm 5 can be viewed as **a perfect model of prayer**. This is seen not just in its form, but in its content. This prayer is a back and forth movement between good and evil. It starts with **the good**. David is a godly man, and he

brings a prayer to the LORD. “Give ear to my words, O LORD” (Ps 5:1). What kind of words?

“Consider my groaning” (1). “Give attention to the sound of my cry” (2). This is a desperate prayer for help from a man completely distraught. So he wakes up early, with the right intention, expectantly, boldly, in a raw, unguarded, honest way. He cries out to the Lord. When you are in great need and distress, do you hide this from God when you pray to him? How open and honest are you when you pray to him?

Why is he so distraught? **It moves to evil**. Here, the evil is his enemies. This continues the theme of the previous psalms. Perhaps David is still thinking of his days fleeing from Absalom, we don't know. But what he does here is not ask for help. Instead, he orients his mind properly, remembering who he is speaking to. He appeals to God's holiness. We need to look at something very important here.

Who is this God that we worship? This question relates to the evil. God does **not delight in wickedness** (Ps 5:4). This single statement eliminates for the Christian any and all objections that God or what he does is wicked. If evil exists, God does not delight in wickedness. But evil does exist, and

so David watches, he looks up, waiting for this God to do what is right. He remembers more about God.

“**Evil may not dwell with you**” (4). Evil is in some way dwelling with God, or at least in God’s created world. But sooner or later, there will be a separation. This idea of separation will come up again in Psalm 6 (**vs. 5**). There is more.

David gets specific about **the kind of wickedness** he is talking about. This is no philosophy students’ lunch-room discussion detached from real, tangible evil. They are the “**boastful**” person, and “**evildoers**” (5). They are “**those who speak lies,**” “**the bloodthirsty,**” the “**deceitful man**” (6). This speaks of **three kinds of sinners**, which correspond to **thoughts, words, and deeds**. The foolish man says *in his heart* there is no God. He is *deceitful* in himself. Those who *speak lies* and are *boastful* use words; their tongues to commit evil. Finally, the *bloodthirsty* and *evildoers* are workers of iniquity.⁸

We think of the Ten commandments and the Sermon on the Mount: Murderers and haters, Liars and thieves, con-artists, slanderers, arrogant, prideful, selfish, horrible people.

⁸ **Albertus Magnus**, in J. M. **Neale**, *A Commentary on the Psalms from Primitive and Medieval Writers: Psalm 1 to Psalm 38*, Second Edition., vol. 1 (London; New York: Joseph Masters; Pott and Amery, 1869), 119.

Today, many of these things are viewed as virtues in America, at least when it isn't our enemies doing them. Then, of course, they are vices. We all know these things are wrong, we just pick and choose who we will crucify for them, and we have this incredible tendency to make sure that isn't ourselves.

What's so striking here, though, is **God's stance**. He "hates" (5:5). Yes, that is what it says, and it says it in other psalms as well (cf. Ps 11:5; 26:5; 31:6; etc.). This is a word that refers to strong passions, intense hatred. This is a very difficult topic and a lot of people do not know how to handle it. Thus, we find some denying it altogether, while others end up becoming like the hateful God that they worship, if you know what I mean, having an almost Hitler like glee about people in and of themselves. Neither stance is good at all.

Many in the church have been very helpful in getting us to think properly about this. They distinguish between a **hatred of malice** and a **hatred of abomination**. These are not the same. Hatred of malice wishes ill will on a person, simply because of who they are—like Hitler who hated Jews simply for being Jews. There is hatred of malice is bubbling over the

Melting Pot of our civilization, causing mass unrest, and this from people who say we are not supposed to judge or hate anything at all. How ironic. If you can't deal properly with hatred via the Christian God, then you will find yourself dealing with it like a devil, for we just can't escape our inner feelings and the contempt that arises when others hurt us. This is why some of the most hateful people on the planet claim to be the most non-judgmental and "tolerant."

Hatred of [abomination](#), on the other hand, is a [moral disgust](#). It does not abstract sin from the sinner, as if you can just hate the sin, whatever that is, like sin is a disembodied principle out there or something. No, it is hatred of a person. But not just a person as a person. A *sinner*. This kind of hatred is never viewed apart from the sin. This is exactly what we find in this Psalm and everywhere else in the Bible.

What does he hate here? God hates "[all evildoers](#)." The parallel word to "hate" here is "abhor." This is a [disgust](#). The disgust is not of men as men, for God loves his creation. It is disgust of men as "wicked" as they do terrible, horrible things. Augustine and Calvin and many others used the verse in the Book of Wisdom to help us understand. "[For you love all things that exist and detest none of the things that you](#)

have made, for you would not have formed anything if you had hated it” (**Wis 11:24** NETS). Yet, just a handful of verses later it says, “You hated them for practicing the most detestable things-- deeds of sorcery and unholy rites, merciless slaughters of children, sacrificial feasting on human flesh and blood-- those initiates from the midst of a pagan ceremony” (**12:4-5**). To put it another way, **God loves in them that which he has made. He hates in them that which he has not made.** He has not made man evil, but upright, and we went after many schemes.⁹

So what does God do about it? He does something else that a lot of people don't want to hear. He “**destroys**” them (**6**). This word was translated as “**perish**” in **Ps 1:6** and **2:12**. Sometimes translated as annihilate or obliterate, almost all translations go with destroy here. This isn't talking about the afterlife. It is talking about this temporal existence. They will die. God hates sin and he destroys evildoers who practice it. Period. This is the Psalmist as he contemplates evil early in

⁹ On a parallel thought, we are not to take delight in God's enemies. Friendship with the world is enmity with God. That means we are not to take complacent delight in the world, that is those who practice evil. And yet, we can love them by wishing them well and not delighting in their downfall. We can be friends with sinners and tax-collectors, like Jesus was. These things are not mutually exclusive.

Psalm 5. But a serious problem arises here. Everyone dies. Remember this as we continue.

David suddenly turns again to **the good**. Always a good idea when overcome by evil. “**But I, through the abundance of your steadfast love, will enter your house**” (Ps 5:7). David is not saying that he has never been bloodthirsty or deceitful (remember Uriah?) or boastful (remember when he numbered his troops?). He is not contemplating his own sin—*here*. Instead, he is moving back to God. God has shown steadfast love to David, who needs steadfast love because he continually falls.

Because God has shown him steadfast love, he will enter God’s house. Thieves enter houses uninvited. Therefore, God has invited him into His house. But God is his King. Therefore, “**I will bow down toward your holy temple in fear of you**” (7). To enter God’s house is to remember whose house you are in. Therefore, it is to **worship in reverent fear** of a God who could destroy you, but instead has shown you immeasurable kindness and steadfast love. These are truly good things to think upon each morning.

He has confidently entered, and therefore he makes a request that he believes God will answer. David then prays,

“Lead me, O LORD, in your righteousness because of my enemies; make your way straight before me” (8). When he prays to be led, he is praying for the way to be made straight. And this in turn is a prayer that **God would make his actions righteous** in the presence of his enemies. In other words, he is praying to God—*Do not let me fall into the same sins that they are committing as they are committing them against me! It is so easy for to be full of rage and hatred and pride when they do things like seek to take my life. I’m the king! Who do they think they are? No. Lord, please lead me in righteousness.*

He moves again **to the evil**, and therefore to the evil that he prays God will keep him from. The focus is on what James calls that little rudder able to steer the whole ship. “**For there is not truth in their mouth; their inmost self is destruction; their throat is an open grave; they flatter with their tongue**” (9). Of thought, word, and deed, he singles out thoughts and words, for this is where deeds originate.

The **inmost self** and the **throat** are the things inside a person. Here, this uncleanness is itself “destruction,” the very thing God will give them in the end. Their very nature and essence is death. They want it so badly, here you go. The **tongue** is visible, but still inside. But the **mouth** is where is

all comes into the world of others. Thus, the movement from deep inside to finally making it out into the world is found here. And it summarizes [total depravity](#).

In fact, Paul cites this verse in his litany of OT verses as he describes how there is no one good, no not one. In Romans 3, he is describing not just a few people, but every single person who has ever lived who is not also himself God. It matters not if they are Jew or Gentile. All people whom God has not shown steadfast love to are here, and David knows it, which is why he is praying that God would keep him from ... himself! His enemies are not just outside; they are inside his own heart. No wonder why he is so distraught. LORD, save me from myself!

If God saves you, then you will not die the second death. If God justifies you, then he will not detest you, though you can still grieve his Holy Spirit. David knows that God has saved him, that God will hear him, that because he is a new creation, God will have mercy on him and give him the desires to obey.

His prayer therefore continues with evildoers in mind, not all people, not himself, but those who are without hope and God in this world. He does two things here. First, he

calls upon God to **do something**. This is found in three parallel phrases. “**Make them bear.**” (Ps 5:10). He is calling upon God to judge them. Declare them guilty. “**Let them fall.**” Don’t hold them up. Don’t preserve them. Finally, “**cast them out.**” Away with them! Do not allow them to be in your house, your temple, your presence any longer.

Then he **gives the reason** he is asking God to do this. Again, it is because of sin and wickedness, not because he is some irrational bigot who just hates indiscriminately. They are “**guilty.**” If they will not have you bear it for them, make them bear their guilt! They did it to themselves. This is what they deserve for their horrible crimes. “**Let them fall by their own counsels**” (10). An eye for an eye. Let their own plots be the traps in which they are snuffed out. “**Because of the abundance of their transgressions cast them out, for they have rebelled against you**” (10). Do you see how the Psalmist is calling for justice, not discrimination? Evil deserves punishment. Holiness can’t stand in the presence of evil. Something has to give. LORD, how long? Answer my prayer!

But finally he returns to **the good** one last time. “**Let all who take refuge in you rejoice**” (11). God himself embodies

The Good. This is the Gospel that can save you who are evil. Who are those who take refuge? They are “those who love your name.” Let them “exult in you.” We take refuge in the Rock, who is Christ. We love the Name Jesus Christ. This is a prayer to be hidden in Christ, safe from all outside harm. Safe even from the harm you cause yourself. Only those who pray this prayer can consider themselves saved from God’s wrath.

The result is worship. “Let them sing for joy” (11). THEM. “For you bless the righteous, O LORD; you cover him with favor as with a shield” (12). HIM. Worship is the response of what God does for us. The previous morning prayer said, “LORD you are a shield about me, my glory, and the lifter of my head” (Ps 3:3). This morning prayer ends with the same Shield. What a glorious prayer to begin the day. In honesty. Boldly. In purity. In humility. In worship. In fear, recognizing who it is that you approach, what he is like, what he has done for you. All the more so, the worse things get in our lives, when we cry out in groaning all the night long.

Psalm 6: A Prayer of Repentance¹⁰

We are not finished. Psalm 6 is meant to be read with Psalm 5. It is the evening counterpart to the morning prayer. He wakes up hopeful and expectant that God will hear him. But now, at the end of a day full of troubles, Psalm 6 is profoundly needed, for it answers important questions raised by Psalm 5 about those who are wicked.

It is a Psalm “for the choirmaster [or end, see above] on stringed instruments, according to “The Sheminith” (Ps 6:1). This untranslated word in the ESV literally means “according to the eighth.” But the eighth what? Eight strings? Maybe. More likely, it refers to an octave, and so it would be a musical notation.¹¹ In God’s ordering of the world, music and octaves have an intriguing parallel in the days of the weeks:

¹⁰ See Waltke’s fascination outline at the end of the sermon where he concludes, “If this structure is intentional, we can infer that even *in extremis*—bones trembling in fright and his consciousness slipping away—the psalmist’s triumphant faith enables him to regain his rationality.” Bruce K. Waltke, James M. Houston, and Erika Moore, *The Psalms as Christian Lament: A Historical Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI; Cambridge, U.K.: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2014), 53.

¹¹ “But Mattithiah, Eliphelehu, Mikneiah, Obed-edom, Jeiel, and Azaziah were to lead with lyres according to the Sheminith” (1Ch 15:21). See also the discussion in Peter C. Craigie, *Psalms 1–50*, vol. 19, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 1998), 32.

Do	Re	Me	Fa	So	La	Ti
Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday

The *Wiki* on “Octave (Liturgical)” is fascinating, but basically, it is summarized by the [weekly celebration of the resurrection](#) of Christ every “eighth day” or “octave,” as they referred to it. Hence, the etymology of the English word “octave” actually derives from the Latin *octava dies* (“eighth day”). Octave, though a term we are mostly familiar with because of music, literally means “eighth day.”

In this light, the Church Father’s saw Psalm 6 as a [Christological Psalm](#). We have already seen how “the end” ([Psalm 5](#)) is read with Christ as the goal in mind. Now, the eighth follows suit. For Fathers like Irenaeus, Origen, Eusebius, Athanasius, Didymus, Basil, and his brother Gregory, this Psalm foreshadows “[the new day](#)” of redemption, the “[Day of the LORD](#)” ([Mal 4:5](#)) or “[this is the day the Lord has made](#)” ([Ps 118:24](#)).¹² But how? Not in the way you might expect.

¹² See the discussion in [Waltke](#), 45–46. Waltke’s whole book, let alone this discussion is fascinating. He, however, put what everyone else has as superscriptions as postscripts to the previous Psalm. He is also harder on Gregory (the focal point of his discussion here) than he should be, based on Craigie (above)--it does seem reasonable that “octave” is exactly what Gregory thought it was.

Psalm 6 has been labeled for most of church history as **the first of Seven Penitential Psalms** (6, 32, 38, 51, 102, 130, 143) in the Psalter. It is, as we will see, a psalm of **repentance**. Repentance comes in the evening, before you go to bed, so that you do not let the sun go down on your rage (**Psalm 4:4**), so that you can sleep (**Psalm 3-4**) that when you wake, you can come expectantly into the LORD's presence (**Ps 5**). As such, it is the vital corollary to Psalm 5, and this four psalm rhythm of morning, evening, morning, evening.

As a Psalm that looks to Christ, it isn't that Christ is the one repenting (God forbid), but it shows the need for the end and the eighth in Christ who allows our repentance to be heard! The Psalm begins with David asking the LORD **not to rebuke him in his anger or discipline him in his wrath** (**6:1**). As the verses of the Psalms so often are, "rebuke" and "discipline," "anger" and "wrath" are parallel thoughts. Again, these are not arbitrary whims of a capricious God. No. David has clearly **done something wrong**, and he is calling upon his heavenly Father to treat him like his son (**Ps 2:7**), rather than as his enemy. This beginning is the key to understanding the rest of the Psalm properly, and your own proper life before God each day and night.

Next he says, “Be gracious to me, O LORD, for I am languishing; heal me, O LORD, for my bones are troubled. My soul also is greatly troubled. But you, O LORD—How long? Turn, O LORD, deliver my life; save me for the sake of your steadfast love For in death there is no remembrance of you; in Sheol who will give you praise?” (6:2-5). Many commentaries say that these first verses are about David having a **bodily illness** that is about to kill him. Something like Hezekiah had who prayed that God would extend his life and the LORD said “OK.” He may. But that doesn’t seem to be why he is troubled. As I pointed out, **vs. 1** is about God not rebuking and disciplining, not being angry and wrathful. That isn’t what we would expect him to say if he is suffering from a disease.

In this light, as soon as he says this, he returns to the now common theme of the first 5 Psalms. “**I am weary with my moaning; every night I flood my bed with tears; I drench my couch with my weeping**” (6). This is why it is an evening Psalm. “**My eye wastes away because of grief; it grows weak because of...**” (7). Because of what? Because he has a disease? No, because of “**... all my foes.**”

He still has his **enemies** in mind. He is weeping and moaning because of his enemies! “**How long**” will they be after him? But if the Psalm begins with God’s anger at David, and if his weeping and crying is related to that and not a new topic out of the blue, having said nothing more about his own sin, then who at the end of the day is David’s worst enemy? **Diogenes** told his student **Alexander the Great** just before he died of excessive drinking and sexual orgies, “**You are your own worst enemy.**”

Suddenly, his faith is aroused. He again remembers the God of the previous Psalms. He never dwells long on his sin, for that only leads to despair. He quickly turns to God. “**Depart from me, all you workers of evil, for the LORD has heard the sound of my weeping**” (6:9). I am a forgiven man! But you, my enemies who taunt me saying that there is no salvation for me in this God, “**All my enemies shall be ashamed and greatly troubled; they shall turn back and be put to shame in a moment**” (10). **Who then are the true enemies of God?** Not just the sinner. For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, the summary of Paul’s use of Psalm 5. No. His enemies are those **who do not repent of their sins.**

This, then, is a psalm of David's repentance, and it is an answer to the question raised by Psalm 5. Repentance can be explored in more detail as we look at the Psalm. It teaches the proper way to repent of sin. **Greggory of Nyssa** (Basil's brother) taught from this Psalm that there are **four things**.¹³ First, there is **a necessary awareness of your own sinfulness** and simultaneous **fear of God's good and right judgment** against it (**vs. 1**). This means you recognize that you are in need of forgiveness of your own sins, and divine mercy and grace if they are to be covered.

Second, you come to an **ever increasing awareness of how profoundly sick in sin** you actually are (**2-5**). First you recognize you are a sinner. Then you recognize what that actually means. He is "**languishing**" in weakness. He is troubled down to his bones, and in the inmost part of his soul. He is even going to die from it. It is a cry of the heart, "**How long must I endure myself.**" The point here is that if confession and contriteness is what brings restoration, why

¹³ **Going Deeper:** **Reinhard Bakius** (in Neale, p. 124), gives seven, taking one from each of the seven penitential psalms: **Fear of punishment** ("Rebuke me not"), **sorrow for sin**, ("I will confess my sins to the LORD"), **hope of pardon** ("You will answer me"), **love of a cleansed soul** ("you shall purge me with hyssop"), **longing for heavenly Jerusalem** ("When the LORD shall build up Zion and his glory will appear"), **distrust of self** ("My soul flees to the LORD"), **prayer against final doom** ("Enter not into judgment with your servant").

won't he "feel" this sooner? Must he die before he can fully praise God for experiencing the forgiveness he has promised? If that were to happen, how could God ever hear his worship in a place of the dead? Only the living can experience the grace of healing in soul.

Many Christians never get to this place. Even though they recognize that they are sinners, they do not care to actually see how horrible that actually is. True repentance goes there. Those who do not will be ever **susceptible to the the sin that still remains in their bodies**. They will not become broken people, and the pride and hardness of heart that they know they have will set upon them like an ominous storm over the Rocky Mountains. Because they are not watching themselves.

Third, there is **the act of confession itself**, confessing not that you are physically sick so much as spiritually sick (6-7). I am wasting away because of my foes David seems to be shamed in his bed at night as he exposed his darkest secret thoughts to God. True repentance searches out all the dark recesses of one's own soul, and bring them into the light of God's presence. This is necessary and difficult, but very healing.

Finally, David was **roused in faith**. God does this for him. “**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. **Three times:** Yahweh, Yahweh, Yahweh.

So what is David actually praying for here? His body to be healed? No. His soul. When we stop and remember that this is a real man going through horrible circumstances where his friends all around him are turning against him, you remember that he probably reacted far too often just like you and I would. In sin. This is why David is so troubled. This is why he can't find sleep. He is not responding the way he knows that he should. This is what is causing his body so much turmoil. How often do we get sick because we make ourselves that way with hatred and worry and fear?

If we don't understand this Psalm the way I am suggesting, then the first half of the Psalm and the second half are are inharmonious, dissonant, a cacophony of discordant notes. What is the connection between David being sick in soul and in need of God not showing him anger, if the end of only about external enemies and casting them away like the other Psalms have been? No. David has more

problems than his outside enemies. His number one problem is his own heart.

So he turns to God, and God turns to him. At the end, this is what repenting is, it is a turning. This repenting is not a one-time thing, but something that must happen every night of your life. Then, when you wake in the morning, you can come expectantly to the LORD who hears you. These are our prayers. The rhythm, the cadence, the drumbeat, the habit of the Christian.

PSALM 5

GOOD: A Plea for Help

5:1. My words = My groaning

5.2 = My cry

5.1. O LORD = 5.2. My King = My God

5.3. In the Morning you hear my voice

5.3. In the morning I prepare a sacrifice for you and watch

EVIL: Appeal to God's Holiness

5.4. You are not a God who delight // May not dwell with you

5.4. In wickedness = evil = 5.5. = The boastful = all evildoers 5.6 = Speakers of lies = bloodthirsty and deceitful men

5.5. Shall not stand = you hate = 6.1 you destroy = LORD abhors

GOOD: Confident hope of deliverance

5.7. I enter your house = blow down toward the holy temple

5.8 Lead me = make you way straight before me

5.7 Lead me // O LORD, in your righteousness

EVIL: Prayer for destruction of the wicked

5.9. mouth // tongue // throat // inmost self (see Rom 3)

5.10. Judge them = let them fall = cast them out

5.10. by their own counsels // abundant transgressions // they have rebelled

GOOD: Prayer for salvation of the righteous

5.11. All who take refuge = those who love your name

5.11. **They** sing for joy // 1. **you** spread your protection over them = 5.12. 2. bless the righteous = 3. cover him with favor as a shield.

PSALM 6

Waltke lays out his outline of this Psalm in a remarkable way, using the ancient known use of gematria, where the letters of Hebrew (and Greek) each have a numerical value, and thus can be used symbolically, as they often are. It looks like this:

Psalm 6 =	78 words. ¹⁴
First Stanza (vv. 1-5) =	39 words
First Strophe (vv. 1-3) =	24 words (ends in a question)
Second Strophe (vv. 4-5) =	15 words (ends in a question)
Second Stanza (vv. 6-10) =	39 words
First Strophe (vv. 6-7) =	15 words
Second Strophe (vv. 8-10) =	24 words

¹⁴ 78 is the numerical value of YHWH [10 + 5 + 10 + 6] x 3 [“completeness”].