

# Challenge

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**PRAYER LETTER OF CHALLENGE LITERATURE FELLOWSHIP (AUST.) INC.**

We live in a world that can serve up some very difficult circumstances for us to cope with. For example the death of a loved one, the loss of something precious, or a business going under after years of hard work. We can ask all sorts of questions of God and wonder why we drew the short straw. I know of one family that has gone through enormous heartache over a wayward daughter who has been on drugs, and just continued to lie and cheat her way out of all sorts of situations. Then there is the child who has gone off to university and appeared to be strong in the Lord. Suddenly out of nowhere she has met a young boy and decided to live with him. How could this happen we ask ourselves?

Psalms 6 is a Psalm of Lament over a time of deep distress in David's life. It is a psalm that speaks to us who are or have gone through difficult times. For some of us our situation seems both hopeless and helpless and we desperately look for a glimmer of light at the end of the tunnel of trial, but God does not seem to be listening and at worst seems to be indifferent to our ordeal.

One thing I have learnt in my Christian journey is that times of testing and trial are never wasted in God's divine economy of moulding and shaping us into His willing and obedient servants. One thing that comes out of verses 1-3 of this Psalm is the **pain of discipline**. However, we need to see that often our trials and struggles come out of our own disobedience. The trial is simply the result of God allowing us to experience the natural consequences of our actions.

On one occasion I had a lady come into our office and as we got talking she announced that she had just been remarried. I asked her where she and her husband were attending church, and she responded by telling me that her husband was not a Christian, but that she went to a local Christian church in her area. I expressed my concern about her action and indicated that she had clearly violated the command of scripture mentioned in 2 Corinthians 6: 11-18. She seemed not to have a great knowledge of the passage as I indicated that God was laying down clear guidelines for our happiness, not as some kill-joy.

A year later she was back in the office to tell me that her husband had left her and the marriage was over. She had obviously gone through a very tough year as she tried to make her marriage work. No doubt her situation was made all the more difficult in the knowledge that her pastor has sanctioned the marriage. Her trial came as a result of her disobeying the clear direction of scripture. This sort of thing is not only related to marriage, but also to business partnerships and the like. I have seen Christians enter into a business partnership with a non-Christian, and when things get messy and difficult the Christian has been left to pay off the debt, and often lose everything in the process.

To get us back on track God disciplines us by allowing us to experience the natural outworking of our disobedience. David does not deny that God needed to stop and discipline him, but pleads for God's mercy in the attitude and application of the discipline. What we tend to misunderstand when we are going through deep distress is God's motivation in disciplining us. Our conclusion is often that God does not love us and/or He is being unkind or vindictive in His actions. Often we think like this because that is often the way we humans respond to one another, but it is not the way God operates. In fact He operates in a completely opposite way. His overwhelming motive is His love for us. He wants us to experience all that it means to be a child of God.

In fact if He didn't discipline us we would have reason to question that He loved us at all.

Hebrews 12: 5-6 "My Son, do not despise the chastening of the Lord, nor be discouraged when you are rebuked by Him: For whom the Lord loves He chastens..."

So God's discipline is not only an expression of His love but does a number of other key things in our lives:

1. Discipline is necessary to get us back on track with God, to stop us just drifting along.
2. Discipline is necessary to brings us to a place of genuine submission to God. This is particularly relevant when we want to know God's will for our lives.
3. Discipline is necessary to cause us to be more fruitful in our walk with God. John 15 verse 2 says this: "Every branch in Me that does not bear fruit He takes away; and every branch that bears fruit He prunes that it may bear more fruit." God always wants to deepen our relationship with Him, however we may think that we are travelling well in our walk but God might think otherwise.
4. Discipline may be necessary to prepare us for future ministry. For example in 2 Corinthians 1: 3-4, Paul says this: "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort, who comforts us in our tribulations, that we may be able to comfort those who are in any trouble, with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God."

(Please turn over)

Then in verses 4-5 we see the **futility of death**. David appealed to God for His deliverance on the basis of three things. First of all he appeals to God on the basis of His **mercy**. A better rendition of the word mercy is **lovingkindness**. David knew the character of God and that He never revels in seeing His children in strife, but having said that He stills desires that we learn the lessons that we need to learn.

Secondly he appeals to God for deliverance on the basis of **testimony**. If he was to be consumed by his ordeal then he was concerned that there would be no one to testify to the goodness and provision of the Lord. This connects well with the third point that no one would be able to give **praise** to the Lord if they are in the grave. This points to David's concern that the Lord be glorified at all times.

What I love about the Psalms is their honesty, because in verses 6-7 David transparently acknowledges the **strain of despair**. Trials can take a huge toll on our spiritual walk especially if we take a wrong attitude to them. One writer puts it like this: "Trials can either make us bitter or better, fearful or faithful." Again our response to the Lord's testing or trials is critical as to what is achieved in our lives. Trials can make us ask two questions. When will I get out of this? What will I get out of this? I trust that the latter is your response.

Lastly we see **the joy of deliverance** verses 8-10. Prayer brings confidence and helps us to get our focus off our circumstances and onto the Lord. David rejoiced that God had heard his prayer and that the enemy would be dealt with. So we can have confidence that God will hear the genuine cry of His child and will teach us through our times of trial what we need to learn. As they say in Alabama: "Do I have a witness in the house?" I sure hope so.

— Carl Carmody, Editor of Challenge

## Praise

1. Praise God for our faithful volunteers who give so much to the work of Challenge.
2. Continue to praise God for the excellent response to the trip that Carl and Carolyn Carmody took to the USA to promote the work of Challenge into various churches.
3. Praise God for the excellent group of people coming on this year's Impact Africa trip. We are looking to see God do great things in the life of everyone who goes.
4. Praise God for the progress being made in negotiations with other African countries for them to receive the paper. It is a slow process but we are confident that it will all come together in the Lord's timing.
5. Praise the Lord for our partner organisations who are a critical part of getting the paper printed and effectively distributed.
6. Praise the Lord for all the folk who support our work both prayerfully and financially.

## Prayer

1. Pray for the good response to the USA trip to become a reality in terms of ongoing support for our African work in particular.
2. Pray for our Impact Africa trip as we are so conscious of how important this is from the last two trips we have taken. Pray for the orientation at the end of the month, and for all the arrangements to come together for the trip in Africa.
3. Pray for the ever present need of finances to keep the work going here in Australia. We are as dependent on the Lord as we have ever been and so appreciate those folk who give to the work on a regular basis as it is much needed.
4. Pray for the work of Multi Ministries as they have an extremely busy month with various groups from the USA visiting as well as training of pastors and crusades.
5. Pray for the negotiations and planning to place the paper into other African countries as well as into Argentina in South America.

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