

Psalm 60

To the chief Musician upon Shushan-eduth, Michtam of David, to teach;
when he strove with Aram-naharaim and with Aram-zobah, when Joab
returned, and smote of Edom in the valley of salt twelve thousand.

Verses 1-12:

This psalm is a national lament written after the unexpected military setback alluded to in (2 Sam. 8:13 and 1 Chron. 18:12).

While David and the main part of his army were fighting in the northern part of the country, one of Israel's other neighboring enemies, Edom, successfully attacked the southern part of Judah.

David ultimately prevailed in victory. The psalm expresses the feelings of a people shocked and confused by a tragedy which suggested that God had abandoned them. (Verses 5-12 are essentially repeated in Psalm 108:6-13).

- I. The People's Contemplation of Abandonment (60:1-5).
- II. The LORD's Control over the Nations (60:6-8).
- III. The People's Confidence in God (60:9-12).

Title: "Joab ... smote twelve thousand".

The LORD soon rewarded their confidence in Him, and thus enabling the armies of Israel to slaughter the Edomites.

Psalm 60: The superscription of this psalm is lengthy (only Psalm 18 has a longer one), and contains a list of three of David's enemies: "Aram-naharaim", or Mesopotamia, "Aram-zobah", or central Syria, and "Edom".

After piecing (2 Sam. 8:3-6), and other passages together with this superscription, we may conclude that, while David was waging war against the Arameans in the north, the Edomites (and Moabites), invaded from the south, thus forcing David to dispatch Joab to deal with the latter force.

This turn of events constituted an unexpected military reversal which the psalm laments.

It thus contains the lament (verses 1-5), an expression of the certainty of being heard (verses 6-8), and a final petition (verses 9-12).

Psalm 60:1 "O God, thou hast cast us off, thou hast scattered us, thou hast been displeased; O turn thyself to us again."

So highly had our sins provoked thy divine majesty, that thou did reject or forsake us.

So as to withdraw thy gracious and powerful presence from us, and no longer to go forth with our armies.

Thus the Psalm begins with a melancholy memorial of the many disgraces and disappointments.

With which God had, for some years past, chastised the people.

For, during the reign of Saul, and especially in the latter part of it.

And during David's struggle with the house of Saul, while he reigned over Judah only.

The affairs of the kingdom were much perplexed, and the neighboring nations were very vexatious to them.

"Thou hast scattered us":

Hebrew, peratztanu, thou hast broken us.

Partly by that dreadful overthrow by the Philistines (1 Sam. chapter 31), and partly by the civil war in our own country between Judah and Israel.

"Thou hast been displeased":

And thy displeasure, caused by our sins, has been the source of all our sufferings.

Whatever our trouble may be, and whoever may be the instruments of it, we must own the righteous hand of God in it.

"O turn thyself to us again":

Be at peace with us; smile upon and take part with us, and we shall again have prosperity.

Even though this battle has been a victorious one and 12,000 of the enemy have fallen, David still is praying that God will come back to them with His blessings.

It seems that when Saul took over the land as their king, God was displeased with them.

He remained displeased with them and had scattered them.

We do know that God did not want Israel to have an earthly king.

He wanted to be their only King.

The people sinned greatly, when they insisted on being like all the other countries around them, and insisted on having an earthly king.

God did not want them to be like other countries, He wanted them to be a peculiar people, worshipping only Him.

This is exactly what God expects from His people today.

He wants us to be a peculiar people, separated from the world.

He wants our worship all focused on Him.

One of the troubles in the church today, is that you can hardly tell any difference in them and those in the world.

Worldliness has crept into the church.

Desiring to be like the rest of the world caused God to be displeased with His chosen family then, and also wanting to be like the world around us can cause God to be displeased with the church today.

Psalm 60:2 "Thou hast made the earth to tremble; thou hast broken it: heal the breaches thereof; for it shaketh."

As is frequently done by an earthquake.

Earthquake imagery is used to illustrate that what appears secure sometimes is not.

Which, whatever natural causes there may be of it, is always to be ascribed to God.

The ancient Heathens were of opinion that all earthquakes were of God.

This respects not the whole earth, but the land of Israel only.

And so the Targum, "thou hast moved the land of Israel, thou hast shaken and rent it;"

And it does not design a natural earthquake in it, but a figurative one.

A shaking and rending of their civil and church state (see Heb. 12:26).

"Heal the breaches thereof, for it shaketh":

Which will be done in the latter day, when they shall return into their own land, and be restored as at the beginning (Isa. 30:30).

When God shakes the earth, anything that can be shaken will be shaken.

In David's time here, the priests had been murdered.

The church and in fact, the very foundation of their belief had been shaken as well.

It seemed as if everything was crumbling around them.

Even though, God had been with them and they had won this battle, there was unrest in the land.

David felt as if God had turned away.

It is very much like that now in our land.

Those who are sold out to God are truly concerned about the condition of our land, and more than that, they are concerned by what they see and hear the church as a whole doing.

The uncertainties in our world today have many thinking that the end of the world is very near.

Perhaps the return of the Lord is near.

David is asking God to heal the wounds.

I truly believe that it is necessary for our people to do what the following Scripture says.

2 Chronicles 7:14 "If my people, which are called by my name, shall humble themselves, and pray, and seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways; then will I hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin, and will heal their land."

The shaking has begun.

It is time for all of us to repent and turn from our wicked ways.

Psalm 60:3 "Thou hast showed thy people hard things: thou hast made us to drink the wine of astonishment."

As to have their city and temple buried, multitudes of them slain, and the rest carried captive, and put into the hands of cruel lords and hard masters.

And made a proverb, a taunt, and a curse, in all places.

And all this done to a people that were the Lord's by profession.

Who called themselves so, though now a "loammi" (not my people, Hosea 1:9).

And these were hard things to flesh and blood, yet no other than what they deserved.

"Thou hast made us to drink the wine of astonishment": Or, of trembling (as in Isa. 51:17, 22).

The outpouring of Divine vengeance is represented under the figure of presenting a cup, which the doomed man is forced to drink.

“Wine of astonishment”:

This metaphor compares the impact of wine on the mind with the confusion which comes from a bewildering event in life.

Hard times come to cause people to repent and come to God.

Even believers are astonished at the happenings around us.

Psalm 60:4 "Thou hast given a banner to them that fear thee, that it may be displayed because of the truth. Selah."

The word is, by Jarchi, taken to signify "temptation" or "trial".

And he interprets it of many troubles which they had.

That they might be tried by them, whether they would stand in the fear of God.

And so, considers these words as a continuation of the account of the distresses of all the people of Israel.

But they are rather to be considered as declaring a peculiar blessing and favor bestowed upon some among them, who are here described.

When the rest were involved in the greatest calamities, signified by a "banner" or "ensign" given to them.

God and His truth serve as a rallying point for the perplexed people.

By which is meant, not so much David literally, and the victory he obtained over the Syrians and Edomites, of which the banner displayed might be a token.

But the Messiah, who is said to be given for a banner, or set up as an ensign for the people (Isaiah 11:10).

For the gathering of them to him, to prepare them for war, and animate them to fight the good fight of faith, and oppose every enemy.

To direct where they should stand to be on duty, just where they should go, and whom they should follow.

And is expressive of the victory over sin, Satan, and the world, they have through him: and this is given;

"To them that fear thee":

Who have the grace of fear put into their hearts.

Who fear the Lord and his goodness, and serve him with reverence and godly fear.

Who worship him both inwardly and outwardly, both in spirit and in truth, whether among Jews or the Gentiles.

Though the former may be chiefly intended.

Such as old Simeon, Anna the prophetess, and others, to whom Christ was made known.

And especially the apostles of Christ, and those to whom their ministry became useful.

Whose business it was to display this banner, set up this ensign, and hold out this flag.

As it follows:

"That it may be displayed because of the truth":

Not because of the truth of Abraham, as the Targum; nor because of the truth, sincerity, and uprightness, of those that fear the Lord.

But because of his own truth and faithfulness in the performance of his promises made concerning the displaying of this banner.

Or the sending of his son into the world, and the preaching of his Gospel in it (see Rom. 15:8).

The banner that those who fear God have been given, is the banner of righteousness.

We should go forth with this banner proclaiming truth to all who will listen.

This banner should be red, white, and blue.

The red symbolizes the life that Jesus' precious blood has purchased for us.

The white should proclaim righteousness throughout the land.

The blue is for the heavenly calling.

Do you fear the Lord?

If you do, start waving your banner and bring the truth.

We are in a war for the souls of the people. Selah, means pause and think on these things.

Psalm 60:5 "That thy beloved may be delivered; save [with] thy right hand, and hear me."

“Beloved”:

Probably a reference to David.

There may be a play on words here in that the Hebrew root for “David” and “beloved” are both the same.

“And hear me”:

Rather, hear us. From complaint (verses 1-4), the psalmist abruptly turns to prayer, thus closing the first strophe with a gleam of hope.

The Right hand here, is prophetically speaking of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, who is the Right Hand of God.

David means beloved of God, so perhaps the beloved here is him.

Just as Moses delivered the children of Israel from Egypt (type of the world), Jesus is the great Deliverer, who saves us from this world.

Psalm 60:6 "God hath spoken in his holiness; I will rejoice, I will divide Shechem, and mete out the valley of Succoth."

“Shechem ... Succoth”:

These are two territories on opposite sides of the Jordan, occupied by Israel.

Jacob had settled in Succoth (east of the Jordan), when he returned from his sojourn with Laban (compare Gen. 33:17).

The fact that God spoke in His holiness means that He who cannot lie, spoke the truth.

Since David has won this battle, it would be up to him to divide the land into whatever parcels he desired.

I am sure that David's division would be based upon the original division of the land when God gave it to the Israelites.

God set the boundaries, and I am sure He wanted the boundaries to stay the way He set them.

Some of the people trying to change the boundaries today, need to go back and look at the boundaries that God set.

Psalm 60:7 Gilead [is] mine, and Manasseh [is] mine; Ephraim also [is] the strength of mine head; Judah [is] my lawgiver;

“Gilead ... Ephraim”:

All of these key geographical locations in Israel ultimately belonged to God, who was more interested in their welfare than anyone else.

“Strength”:

Ephraim was the primary source of defense to the north of Israel.

“Lawgiver”:

Judah was the tribe which was to govern Israel, from which David and his descendants came.

This is speaking of the different separations.

All belongs to God and whoever He desires to give it to.

“Judah is my lawgiver”.

We know that Jesus was the Lion of the tribe of Judah.

The King of kings and Lord of lords will reign from the city of Jerusalem.

Psalm 60:8 "Moab [is] my washpot; over Edom will I cast out my shoe: Philistia, triumph thou because of me."

“Moab ... Edom ... Philistia”:

The 3 principal enemies surrounding Israel to the northeast, southeast and west respectively.

“Moab is my washpot”:

The psalmist pictures Moab as a humble menial servant to God, either being or bringing a washbasin for His use.

“Over Edom ... shoe”:

The picture is that of a man entering his house and throwing his shoes to his servant.

Edom, like Moab, was a servant under God’s sovereign control.

“Philistia, triumph thou”:

Here is a victorious battle shout from the pagans, who must realize God's power is behind Israel's victory.

Moab was the land of the Gentiles depended in, before she came and married Boaz.

Edom had been a reproach.

God has no difficulty in subduing all nations, and Edom is no exception.

He thought so little of it, that He threw His shoe.

David had defeated Philistia so utterly that they deemed no problem to him.

Psalm 60:9 "Who will bring me [into] the strong city? who will lead me into Edom?"

Which some understand of Rabbah of the Ammonites, which Joab besieged, and sent to David to come and take it in person (2 Sam. 12:26).

The Targum interprets it of Tyre, which was a strong fortified city (Ezek. 26:4).

It rather seems to be the same with Edom, or the metropolis of the Edomites.

Since it follows:

"Who will lead me into Edom?"

Which was situated in the clefts of the rock, and on the height of the hill (Jer. 49:16).

But is mystically to be understood of the city of Rome, the great and mighty city, as it is often called in the book of the Revelation (Rev. 11:8).

Whose destruction is certain, being predicted.

And after which there have been desires raised in the hearts of God's people in all ages.

And particularly just before the time God will put it into the hearts of the kings of the earth to burn it with fire.

Who are here represented by David, as desirous of entering into it in triumph to destroy it (Revelation 17:16).

This strong city in Edom was a stronghold and had not been defeated, even though David had defeated their army in the battle.

David would have to go into the center of the land to defeat this city.

The only answer to David's question here, is God Almighty.

Psalm 60:10 "[Wilt] not thou, O God, [which] hadst cast us off? and [thou], O God, [which] didst not go out with our armies?"

(See the notes at Psalm 60:1).

The meaning is, that although God had seemed to reject and forsake them, they had no other resource, and the appeal might be still made to him.

The psalmist had hoped that he would again be favorable to his people, and would not forsake them altogether.

It is still true that although God may seem to forsake us, that although he may leave us for a time to discouragement and darkness, yet we have no other resource but himself.

It is still true that we may hope in his mercy, and plead for his return.

"And thou, O God, which didst not go out with our armies?"

Who didst suffer us to be defeated (see the notes at Psalm 60:2-3).

David was fully aware that when God went with them into battle, there was always victory.

He, also knows that God had been displeased with this people when they wanted an earthly king to rule over them.

He was not sure that God had forgotten and forgiven them.

He wanted to be certain God was the One sending him into this battle, before he went.

In God's anger, God had not gone into battle with them, and David wanted to take no chance that that would be the case now.

He would go in only if God sends him.

Psalm 60:11 "Give us help from trouble: for vain [is] the help of man."

Do not frustrate these hopes but afford us thy help against the Syrians also (2 Sam. 8:5).

Who now distress us.

"For vain is the help of man":

No human force is able to deliver us.

Nor have we any confidence in it, but in thee alone.

Observe well, reader, then only are we qualified to receive help from God, when we are brought to own the insufficiency of all creatures to do that for us which we expect him to do.

David knows that no mere man can go into the city of Petra (which is the city of the rock) and come out a winner.

He will go on one condition; that God sends him and leads the way.

David asks God to help him.

Psalm 60:12 "Through God we shall do valiantly: for he [it is that] shall tread down our enemies."

"Through God ... valiantly":

The nation relearned the truth that only God gives victory.

Through his help we shall behave ourselves courageously and do valiant acts.

For he it is that shall tread down our enemies":

And not we ourselves only, though we do ever so valiantly, the success must be attributed entirely to him.

All our victories, as well as our valor, are from him.

And therefore, at his feet all our crowns must be laid.

Observe again, reader, as it is only through God, and by the influence of his grace, that we can, at any time, do valiantly.

As it is He that puts strength into us, and inspires us.

Who of ourselves are weak and timorous.

With true courage and resolution.

So, confidence in him is the best principle, and chief means of this courage and fortitude.

But we must remember this confidence must be so far from superseding, that it must encourage and quicken our endeavors in the way of duty.

For though it is God that performeth all things for us, and worketh in us to will and to do, yet we must be workers together with him.

Notice that David is not saying to stand back and let God do it.

David is not jumping headlong into the battle on his own either.

David will go into the battle doing what he can, if God leads the way.

The only time victory is assured is when God sends the person to the battlefield.

Just as David had killed Goliath in the name of the LORD, He will fight this battle in the name of the LORD.

What lesson can we Christians get from this?

We must not sit back and do nothing and expect God to do all of the work for us.

We better not get out on a limb trying to do a task that God has not sent us to do either.

The only way for it to work is to do the task that the LORD has set before you, knowing that He is leading the way.

Psalm 60 Questions

1. How many of Edom were killed in the valley of salt?
2. O God, thou hast _____ _____ _____.
3. Why was God displeased with these Israelites?
4. What was the great sin that these people had sinned against God?
5. What does God want from His people today?
6. Who made the earth to tremble?
7. What terrible thing had been done, in the time of David, that shook the foundation of their belief?
8. Who is really concerned about the condition of our land today?
9. What does the author believe is necessary to do in our land today to get right with God?
10. Why does God allow hard times to come?
11. What is the banner that has been given to those who fear God?
12. What color should this banner be?

13. Tell me what the different colors of the banner symbolize.
14. Who is the Right Hand of God?
15. What does the name David mean?
16. What is Egypt a type of?
17. Who is the great Deliverer, who saves us from the world?
18. What does it mean, God hath spoken in His holiness?
19. In verse 7, _____ is my lawgiver.
20. Where had Ruth lived before she met and married Boaz?
21. Where was the strong city in Edom?
22. Who was David dependent on for victory?
23. What opinion did David have of man's help?
24. What was the city of the rock?
25. Who shall tread down their enemies?