

A Prayer for Revival

Psalm 60

Studies in the Psalms #61

THE church in our nation needs revival. By revival I *don't* mean the revivalism that your imagination conjures up. I mean what the Bible means: God breathing new life again into our souls. Ordinarily, of course, we trust God's promises to give us life by means of Word, sacrament, and prayer. But there are times when the church by its own sins is brought low by the Lord; in response we are to cry out for mercy and help. When God extraordinarily blesses his means of Word, sacraments, and prayer we call that "revival." Psalm 60 is A PRAYER FOR REVIVAL. Notice the plural language of **us**, **our**, and **we** in verses 1, 3, 5, and 10–12. We'll hear God as well as David, too, but most is from the church itself.

IT'S PROBLEM (vv. 1–3)

O God (v. 1). As one writer said, "The problem is not the Edomites but God!"¹ David's attacks on Ammon to the north and Moab to the south "were out of bounds, and the invasion of Zobah was naked aggression – doing what the kings of the world did."² In other words, to put it in our terms, the church had become like the world, more interested in wealth than the wealth of God's Word; more interested in power than people. The problem that illustrates the need for revival today is the worldliness of the church.

In response look at all the verbs that describe *God's* action: ***you have rejected us, [you have] broken our defenses, you have been angry*** (v. 1).

Listen to the cataclysmic language of verse 2: ***you have made the land to quake, you have torn it open*** (v. 2). Listen to the symbolic language of the cup of *God's* wrath in verse 3: ***you have made your people see hard things, you have given us wine to drink that made us stagger.***

I've mentioned recently how much we're worldly by adopting worldly political ideology as gospel truth. I've mentioned recently how worldly we are in our lack of biblical understanding citing Ligonier's "State of Theology" survey. Let me mention another area. I read an article this week entitled, "Why the Church Doesn't Need Any More Starbucks."³ It's the story of a young widow whose husband died after a two-year battle with cancer. Here's what she said her husband talked about:

...he never said how much he wished our church would incorporate coffee bars like many others were. Never once did he say he wished the lighting in our sanctuary resembled the lighting he saw other churches boasting of on social media. He never told me how cool it was that churches were putting couches on the platform. He didn't boast of the graphics and props on the platform that some churches were incorporating. He talked about Jesus. He quoted scriptures. He reminded me of sermons we had heard...nothing a church does to strategize to bring in members helps you in the time of the storm. It is only Jesus.

Here's what she says now that he's gone:

When church leaders sit around and discuss how they can reach people, I don't think they have the widow in mind...the cancer patient in mind...I am not paying attention to the church décor when I walk through the doors. I don't want to smell fresh brewed coffee in the lobby. I don't want to see a trendy pastor on the platform. I don't care about the graphics or the props on the platform...when I go to church I desperately want to hear the Word of God.

IT'S PLEA (vv. 1, 2, 4–5)

The plea is stated in this situation: **oh, restore us...repair its breaches**

(vv. 1, 2). What's so fascinating is that in faith we cry out to the same God who rejects because he alone can receive; we cry out to the one who tears down because he alone can rebuild. In verse 4 there's also a plea. The ESV translates it as **you have set up**. It's a perfect tense verb of a past action, but, commentators have shown that it's being used in a context of imperatives (vv. 1, 2, 5). The idea, then, is this: **raise up!**⁴ **Raise up** what? **A banner for those who fear you, that they may flee to it from the bow** (v. 4). This is warfare imagery, but later in Isaiah 11:10 this language gets adapted as an image of the Messiah: "In that day the root of Jesse, who shall stand as a *signal* (or *banner*) for the peoples—of him shall the nations inquire, and his resting place shall be glorious." Our plea is that God would make his Son Jesus once again the banner around whom his people rally! Why? **That your beloved ones may be delivered, give salvation by your right hand and answer us!** (v. 5)

IT'S PROMISE (vv. 6–8)

This plea is made on the basis of its promise in verses 6–8. Notice how the speaker changes to God himself, who speaks in the first person: **I, my, mine**. We plead with God for revival because of what God has promised: **God has spoken in his holiness** (v. 6). What has he spoken? **“With exultation I will divide up Shechem and portion out the Vale of Succoth. Gilead is mine; Manasseh is mine; Ephraim is my helmet; Judah is my scepter.”** (vv. 6–7)

Shechem straddled the western side of the Jordan River. **Succoth** straddled the eastern side of the Jordan River. **Gilead** and **Manasseh** were to the far north on both the east and west sides of the Jordan. **Ephraim** was the traditional term for the northern tribes while **Judah** was the traditional term for the southern tribes. In other words, all the Promised Land belonged to God! Even more, God had promised from his Promised Land through his promised people he would conquer all the nations through his King (Ps. 2): **“Moab is my washbasin; upon Edom I cast my shoe; over Philistia I shout in triumph.”** (v. 8). Everything belonged to the Lord! Why this list? One writer said, “These are important...we Bible believers do not worship some general, all-purpose divinity. On the contrary, we worship a very specific God who has revealed Himself in certain historical events.”⁵

Yet nothing could be further from the truth to the eyes. The church is struggling we hear day after day. The lands of the Bible worship false gods. The lands from which the Gospel was revived are in darkness. Yet Jesus says, “*All* authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me.” Do you believe this? In his authority he commands us to conquer the world through Word and sacrament making disciples. We see unbelief; but he’s promised his presence! “The body they may kill, God’s truth abideth still; his kingdom is forever!”

OUR PATIENCE (vv. 9–10)

The problem is great. We are to plead with God on the basis of his own promises for his extraordinary outpouring of his grace upon his ordinary means of Word, sacraments, and prayer. Until then, notice our patience at the end of the Psalm. The speaker now is in the first person, David the king: **Who will bring *me* to the fortified city? Who will lead *me* to Edom?** (v. 9) He’s still struggling with faith: **have you not rejected us? You do not go forth, O God, with our armies** (v. 10). Yet, in patience he and we wait and continue to plead: **Oh, grant us help against the foe, for vain is the salvation of man!** (v. 11) And in confidence we wait patiently: **With God we shall do valiantly; it is he who will tread down our foes** (v. 12).

Notes

¹ Motyer, 159 n28.

² Motyer, 159 n28.

³ <https://kimberlilira.blogspot.com/2017/03/why-church-doesnt-need-anymore-coffee.html>

⁴ Futato, 206.

⁵ Reardon, 117.