

After the Defeat

By Don Green

sermonaudio.com

Bible Text: Psalm 60
Preached on: Tuesday, March 14, 2017

Truth Community Church
4183 Mt. Carmel Tobasco Road
Cincinnati, OH 45255

Website: truthcommunitychurch.org
Online Sermons: www.sermonaudio.com/tcomm

It's a pleasure to welcome you to our Tuesday evening study as we open God's word to Psalm 60 this evening. Perhaps for those of you watching over the live stream, maybe seeing us for the first time, or if you're a visitor here for the first time, we are a church that believes in the absolute authority of God's word. We believe that the Bible is the very word of God, that he has revealed himself to us in the 66 books of the Bible, and that he saves people from their sins through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. And as he gathers people into his family, into his spiritual family, he calls them into a local body called the church where we are to teach the word of God and sing his praises and that's a little bit of an overview of why we do what we do. We believe that God saves sinners through faith in Christ, freely and completely forgiving all of their sins in a moment when that person recognizes that Christ is the only Savior and that he made a sacrifice for sin to atone for sin on the cross.

So we gather together to study God's word and on Tuesday nights we've been going through the book of Psalms one by one and this evening we come to Psalm 60 and I'm going to read that to begin with. I'll start in verse 1 and we'll pick up the inscription in just a moment. Psalm 60:1 says,

1 O God, You have rejected us. You have broken us; You have been angry; O, restore us. 2 You have made the land quake, You have split it open; Heal its breaches, for it totters. 3 You have made Your people experience hardship; You have given us wine to drink that makes us stagger. 4 You have given a banner to those who fear You, That it may be displayed because of the truth. Selah. 5 That Your beloved may be delivered, Save with Your right hand, and answer us! 6 God has spoken in His holiness: "I will exult, I will portion out Shechem and measure out the valley of Succoth. 7 Gilead is Mine, and Manasseh is Mine; Ephraim also is the helmet of My head; Judah is My scepter. 8 Moab is My washbowl; Over Edom I shall throw My shoe; Shout loud, O Philistia, because of Me!" 9 Who will bring me into the besieged city? Who will lead me to Edom? 10 Have not You Yourself, O God, rejected us? And will You not go forth with our armies, O God? 11 O give us help against the adversary, For deliverance by man is in vain. 12 Through God we shall do valiantly, And it is He who will tread down our adversaries.

There are some contrasts in this Psalm that on a first read make it a little bit difficult to understand perhaps because it seems so incongruous. On the one hand as you start the Psalm, David is saying, "God, you have rejected us. You have broken us. You have been angry with us." And yet when you get to the end of the Psalm he is saying, "Through God we shall do valiantly and it is He who will tread down our adversaries." That's quite the change, quite the distinction in tone. And as you continue reading on through it, you find that there is this community prayer that is being made and yet God speaks in the middle of the Psalm and asserts his sovereignty over different regions of the land. So there is some back and forth in this Psalm that we want to account for and we'll do that as we go through the Psalm in a moment together.

But one of the things that might help us kind of prepare our minds as we enter into this Psalm this evening is to recognize something that we all know by experience, especially as Christians. You enter into a season of life where things are going well and you find that God is blessing the things that you are doing, you are encouraged, maybe you're reading Scripture and you're finding that your times with the Lord are sweet and especially vibrant, and there is just this general sense of well-being and prosperity that comes upon you and you are encouraged in life. Then suddenly out of seemingly nowhere, a setback comes, a problem comes into your life that seems to overwhelm the prior enjoyment of life that you seemed to be knowing and you say, "Where did this come from?" and that suddenly becomes the focus of all of your thoughts and intentions and the high that you were living on now has become a low. You all know something about that by personal experience, don't you?

Well, it was no different for King David. King David as he took his throne, began his reign with a great bit of prosperity. In 2 Samuel as you read about the life of King David, you'll find that in 2 Samuel 5, he became king and in 2 Samuel 6 he brought the ark of God back to Jerusalem to great fanfare. Victory after victory. Then in 2 Samuel 7, God established a covenant with David. That's one of the most critical passages in all of Scripture. God promises David a throne forever, a throne on which the Messiah himself would one day sit. So there is this great prosperity, there is this great success that is going on in David's life and after these things in 2 Samuel, you'll find that David has a string of impressive military victories as well.

Turn over to 2 Samuel 8 as we're just setting the context for this Psalm. 2 Samuel 8:1 it says, "Now after this it came about that David defeated the Philistines and subdued them; and David took control of the chief city from the hand of the Philistines. He defeated Moab, and measured them with the line, making them lie down on the ground; and he measured two lines to put to death and one full line to keep alive. And the Moabites became servants to David, bringing tribute. Then David defeated Hadadezer, the son of Rehob king of Zobah, as he went to restore his rule at the River. David captured from him 1,700 horsemen and 20,000 foot soldiers; and David hamstringed the chariot horses, but reserved enough of them for 100 chariots. When the Arameans of Damascus came to help Hadadezer, king of Zobah, David killed 22,000 Arameans. Then David put garrisons among the Arameans of Damascus, and the Arameans became servants to David,

bringing tribute. And the LORD helped David wherever he went." So you get this picture of these great military conquests that David was engaged in after God had established him as king, made a covenant with him that secured his posterity long into the future that would sit on his throne, and so David is at the top of his game, so to speak. He is having great success and yet as you come to Psalm 60, you find from the inscription that even at that time of success, there was a big defeat that came into his life.

Look at the inscription of Psalm 60 with me now. It says, "For the choir director; according to Shushan Eduth," which is simply a musical tune translated "the lily of testimony," "A Mikhtam of David, to teach," this is a Psalm that is designed to be instructive to people in their situations, "when he struggled with Aram-naharaim and with Aram-zobah," this is what we were reading about in 2 Samuel 8. While David is having these battles and these are northern areas north of Israel. If you picture the Mediterranean Sea, that kind of oblong sea between Europe and northern Africa, over at the northeast corner on the right hand corner up at the top, there is the area of which is being spoken of here with these geographic references, and you would wonder how could there ever be any problems in light of what David is going through with what he sees there, with what's happening. He's winning victories, he's the new king, the ark of God is established in Jerusalem, he has this covenant. Everything is going right and yet in this inscription we find that there were problems down to the south. "Joab returned," it says there in the inscription, "and smote twelve thousand of Edom in the Valley of Salt." Edom was a southern nation down to the south of Israel and while David is having these major conquests up north, the exposed southern area was attacked by Edom and there were some military defeats going on. Word got to David about those things and he had to send one of his commanders, Joab, down there to bring things into control. So apparently the defeat was quite serious down to the south and in the midst of his conquests, David finds that he's got problems in the midst of his triumph. Psalm 60 is David's prayer after he received the bad report about what was going on in the south but before Joab went and took control of the situation.

That's the historical context for this Psalm and it tells us something that's very instructive and helpful. As we anticipate going forward in life, as we walk with Christ, what can we expect? What sometimes happens to us? Well, we find that we can have setbacks even in the midst of our greatest triumphs; that as you are on the top of the world in life, that it should not surprise you or stun you to realize that something goes wrong in the midst of it. We remember that we live in the midst of a fallen world where things do not always go our way and we learn that even in the midst of success, that we not take it for granted because defeat comes even to the best of God's servants in the best of their times and what Psalm 60 does is it gives us a pattern, it gives us a model to respond when those things happen. The Psalm gives us a pattern in which to pray and to deal with these things from an earnest perspective that leads us out to trust and faith on the other side.

In the first five verses you could say that you see the agony of defeat. If you are taking notes, that would be our first point for the Psalm this evening. You see the description of the agony of defeat. Psalm 60 is what you could call a community lament by which we mean it is a prayer of sorrow given by multiple people in the midst of their defeated

situation. It mainly addresses, Psalm 60 mainly addresses God in the first person plural throughout.

Look at verses 1 and 2 with me and notice the plural pronouns in this as David writes on behalf of the people,

1 O God, You have rejected us. You have broken us; You have been angry; O, restore us. 2 You have made the land quake, You have split it open; Heal its breaches, for it totters.

There is something very remarkable in this opening two verses that in areas where the complete sovereignty of God is not taught would make absolutely no sense, in areas where it is promised that God only wants to bless you, that God only wants you to be prosperous and happy and anything bad happens must be from Satan because it couldn't come from God, Psalm 60:1-2 set all of that false teaching into its proper perspective. Notice what David is doing here. David is directly attributing the setback to the hand of God. He says, "God, our losses and our reversals are something that you have done."

Look at the language with me again. He addresses God in verse 1, he says, "O God, You have rejected us. You have broken us; You have been angry; You have made the land quake, You have split it open." Again and again and again using various pictures to describe the loss that they have had and said, "God, you have done this. You have brought this to pass in our lives and we are laid low before you as a result." And David uses two images to describe the devastating power and the devastating effect of the defeat.

Look at it there in verse 2, he describes it like an earthquake. He says, "You have made the land quake, You have split it open." He says, "This is like the shaking of a violent earthquake that has come upon us and things are now unstable, things are shaken, things are broken. God, in the situation that you have brought to pass, we find ourselves shattered."

Then he compares it also to the effect of being intoxicated. He says in verse 3, again, attributing the outcome to God, he says,

3 You have made Your people experience hardship; You have given us wine to drink that makes us stagger.

So he says, "God, this unexpected defeat has left us confused. It has left us staggered. We did not see this coming, O God. We have been knocked down. We have been brought low. We are broken. We are shaken and it's like we are a drunk man who is so confused that he can't even think rightly about it." You know things like that in your own life, don't you, when relational conflict comes or when circumstances suddenly conspire against you and you don't even have the mental clarity to think about it properly, to think about it clearly? Well, this is the very thing that is being described by the people of Israel as they make this prayer to God.

Taking all of these things together, the images of an earthquake and a drunken man, is a way of saying that the people are dazed. They are knocked back by what has happened and this is not what you would expect when God had just installed a man after his own heart to be king and there was so much triumph all about them. Where did this come from?

And what can we say about this? How should we understand spiritual life in light of Psalm 60? Beloved, recognize that even in your highest times of triumph, God may bring you low through a reversal in another area of life. Maybe relationships are great but a financial reversal comes. Maybe your career is going well but suddenly there is an injury or sickness to someone close to you that brings this all to light and brings things into a new perspective and suddenly you have something that is heavy on your heart when before you were simply full of joy and not facing any difficulties when they came. This can happen in the life of a church also. A church is enjoying the prosperity that comes under the preaching of the word of God and the good fellowship of people with one another, but then something happens, something comes into the life of the church from outside or from inside and all of a sudden you're preoccupied with a problem that's going on. Well, we shouldn't think about that as though there is suddenly a sudden change in God's view of us. Look, once you're in the family of God, God's favor is always upon you. When God accepts us through faith in Christ, when you put your faith in Christ and God receives you into his family, he receives you as his child, as his family, as one who belongs to him. Scripture describes the people of God as those who are the apple of his eye, dear and precious in his sight, accepted in the Beloved. But Scripture also teaches us something else and says that whom the Lord loves, he reproves, he disciplines. He brings difficulties into life in order to teach us and to shape us so that unbroken success wouldn't become that which would cause us to be proud and to forget our God. Scripture speaks of that. It speaks of a prayer that says, "God, don't let me be so full that I forget who my God is."

So the question becomes then: what do you do after the defeat? What do you do when a sudden reversal has come upon you and you're dazed, you're confused, you're broken and how can I respond? How can I restore my spiritual equilibrium? How can I get my feet back on the ground after this? Well, in verse 4 of Psalm 60, you get a sense of what God would have you to do and where God would have your mind go. It says in verse 4,

4 You have given a banner to those who fear You, That it may be displayed because of the truth. Selah.

Selah, meaning stop and think about what has just been said. The banner being like a flag and what does a flag represent? What does a nation's flag represent? Well, it's a symbol, isn't it? It's a symbol of a country's values, its people, its commitments. If you've ever traveled overseas and perhaps been in a dark difficult country where things are very foreign to you and you see an American flag, those of you that are Americans, some maybe it takes an Australian flag to rally you around like that, either way, the flag of your homeland. And you see the flag of your homeland and it stirs you and you say, "That's an

identification with my people. This is where I live. This is the land that I love." And it stirs hope within you even when you are on foreign territory. Well, what David is saying here is that God has given a banner to his people that they can rally around; that can stir hope within them.

And what is the banner of God to his people? The banner of God is his truth. The banner of God is his character. As we go through these setbacks, we look for the banner, the flag, so to speak, that is waving that reminds us that God has revealed his truth in his word, and that God is a faithful God to his people. As we remember the word of God now on the other side of the cross, we remember the cross of Christ. We remember that he loved us and gave himself up for us. We remember the sovereign work of God and that he is always faithful to his people. And what does that do in the midst of the defeat? It rallies hope. It rallies encouragement. You rally around these things that are the central core commitments of faith, the central core truths that animate the very reason that we exist spiritually and say, "Oh, yes, I remember who God is in the midst of this and that gives me hope."

And beloved, just going back for a moment to recognize and to go back to verses 1 and 2 as we talk about these things, look back at those verses with me as David says, "God, You have rejected us. You have broken us; You have been angry; You have made the land quake, You have made your people experience hardship." You know, the tendency is to want to minimize in sorrow and difficulty, to minimize the sovereignty of God as if to excuse him from responsibility for the hardship that you're going through. Beloved, don't make that mistake. Don't make that mistake. That is a wrong way to think. God is sovereign over everything in your life, isn't he? God has numbered the hairs on your head. God knows when a sparrow falls to the ground. God has appointed the length of your days. And God is at work in absolutely everything that happens. And even though you may struggle to understand why God has brought a particular hardship into your life at a given time, what you must understand is the fact that God has brought it into your life is an indication that there is a good purpose in it even if you can't perceive it right now. Even in that which brings you low, which brings you discouragement, which brings you to the end of your rope where you say, "I don't know if I can get out of bed this morning in light of what's going on," you don't sacrifice the sovereignty of God to that because the sovereignty of God in your hardship is the certainty that you have that there is a hand leading you and there is a good purpose in it even if it's painful at the moment. Never ever sacrifice the sovereignty of God for the sake of excusing him from your hardship. It is the very sovereignty of God that gives you a hope and a certainty that there is a purpose for your hardship, and that there is also a way out of your hardship ahead. We must cling to that. We must know that to be true. That is the banner that you can rally around as you walk through your trials and fear God in the process.

Look at what David says in verse 5 as he turns the corner, so to speak, in the agony of his defeat. He says, "You have given a banner to those who fear You." In verse 5 he says,

5 That Your beloved may be delivered, Save with Your right hand, and answer us!

Oh, beloved, look at that verse and let that elevate off of the page, so to speak. I'm speaking metaphorically. It better not elevate off your page literally. But let that highlight in your mind, let your mind go to that verse and rest in it and see what it has to say to you, that even in your sorrow and defeat, you are the beloved of God for those of you that know Christ; that God has his affection on you. And therefore because he has his compassion on you, you can have certainty that he cares about the situation that you find yourself in no matter how dark and difficult it might be; that his care is certain and that he has a plan and an ability to deliver you from it in his good time.

Look at verse 5 with me again, "That Your beloved may be delivered." O God, in the midst of this defeat as I am brought low in the midst of this, O God, the prayer becomes, because you are who you are, because you are God over this, because you are God over my soul and that you care for your people, O God, now I have a basis upon which to make this request, "Save with Your right hand, and answer us!" God's right hand being a metaphor for his power. "God, exercise your power, motivated by your love, in order to deliver us from the present setback that we find ourselves in." That is what the banner of God leads you to do. "God, help us win a victory that we cannot attain on our own." And there in verse 5, you see a good measure of the spiritual result that God is trying to bring to pass when he brings hardship into your life.

Look at it there, "That Your beloved may be delivered, Save with Your right hand, and answer us!" What is the spirit of that prayer except this: it is a spirit of prayer that is marked by humility and dependence on God. Beloved, when God brings you low, as I know he has done for some of you here tonight in some of the most painful ways possible, and I say this to help you and strengthen you, not to be critical, when God brings us into those low times of defeat, he is doing a spiritual work in your heart that is of great value. He is teaching you humility. He is teaching you dependence. He is reducing the level of pride in your heart so that you would turn to him and depend upon him in humility. You learn that this world is fallen. Oh, beloved, stay with me. The lessons that we learn in the valley are so profound and so significant and so necessary. You learn that this world is fallen in your trials and in your defeats, and therefore – watch this – you learn not to love it. You learn not to cling to it. You learn not to make this world and what happens in this life the object of your highest affections and highest aspirations, right? Michael is nodding his head. He knows. When these things happen, you learn something really significant that is really difficult to come to grips with at one level, that is painful but yet is utterly liberating in the end. You start to cultivate a mindset that says, "Do you know what? As I look about what's happening to me here and I see what's happened in the lives of others, I can only say this as a child of God: this world is not my home. This is not where I find my satisfaction. Oh, this world bring sorrow, it brings trial, it bring setback, and ultimately from a physical sense, this world is simply a path to the grave for me." What's to love, what's to like about that?

And where do you pivot from that? You pivot toward a greater affection, a greater appeal, a greater love, greater aspirations and motivations and say, "God, you are my hope. You are my joy. You are the strength of my life. You are what I love, not this

world because this world brings these kinds of defeats. This world is the occasion for all kinds of sorrow. So, God, I turn away from placing my hope in circumstances and wanting things to go a separate way because I realize how vulnerable and passing it is." And God brings that into your life so that you would learn to treasure him above all else and find the greatest satisfaction of your heart in him. In a New Testament sense, in Christ alone. That you would treasure more than anything on earth the one who shed his blood for the salvation of your soul, the one who came from heaven in order to give his life on Calvary as sacrifice for your sins. The one who raised his Son from the dead is the same one who will raise you from the dead and all of a sudden the things of this world, you just realize they are so transient, they are so temporary. Let my heart find something where it can rest that is stable and unchanging and the only place that you find that is in the Lord Jesus Christ. And if your defeats, your sorrows, your trials, would wean your affections off of this world and teach you to love Christ more exclusively and more highly and more preeminently, then, beloved, your trials are a good gift from God to you because he is using them to bring you to himself. You say, "God, you are my banner and, God, based on that, I appeal to you for deliverance in the midst of these times."

Beloved, it's such a simple thing to say. I'm almost embarrassed to say it because it's such a truism, it's such an axiom, it's so obvious, but we need to factor this into the way that we approach spiritual life: things will not always go our way. Things will not always go your way and sometimes the reversal will be very sharp and very painful. It will be the phone call in the middle of the night that tells you there has been an accident and you need to come quickly. It will be the sickness that is going to be a long time in recovery. And on it goes. I don't need to illustrate it for you. Realize that when that comes, that God is bidding you to turn to him for help and to learn in a humble sense of dependence a fresh measure of what it means to walk with him.

And when that happens, what do you find? When you turn to God, when you turn to him in his word, when you turn to him for who he really is, what do you find in the midst of the agony of defeat? Point 2: you find the assurance of his sovereignty. The assurance of his sovereignty. Sovereignty, a word meaning that God is in control; that God runs the universe; that he is in charge and nothing knocks him off of his throne, even the worst of our trials. And in response to that prayer for deliverance in verse 5, God responds in verse 6.

Look at it there with me. There is a lot of geographic references in the verses that follow that we will summarize very quickly here to show what is being said. Verse 6,

6 God has spoken in His holiness: "I will exult, I will portion out Shechem and measure out the valley of Succoth. 7 Gilead is Mine, and Manasseh is Mine; Ephraim also is the helmet of My head; Judah is My scepter.

Now, if you're reading the Bible for the first time without a Bible atlas or some sense of geography, that verse makes no sense whatsoever, does it? How in the world can you make any sense out of that? Well, this is why we value the tools that God has provided for his people to be able to look and to study and to understand things that, you know,

you could pray over this verse for days and days and days and if you never look at a map, you're not going to have any idea what it means. Well, what's going on here is this: God is mentioning various regions of the land of Israel to show that he is sovereign over what happens there. He says he will portion them out and give the land to his own. Notice how he says, "Gilead is Mine, and Manasseh is Mine; Ephraim also is the helmet of My head; Judah is My scepter." It's mine. It's mine. It's mine. It's mine. God says, "It all belongs to me." It's an assertion of his dominion, his power and his authority. And here's the key, beloved. As God is saying this in response to his people in the context as their land has been the subject of an attack that they have lost momentarily. What's God saying here except this, he's saying, "Because this land belongs to me, it is my prerogative to dispense it as I see fit." And all of a sudden as God speaks and asserts his authority over the land, you realize that the appeal to him must meet with success because God determines what happens in his land.

In Genesis, Shechem and Succoth were the first two places that Jacob settled in after he had met his brother, Esau. Look back at Genesis 33 for just a moment. The first book in the Bible, Genesis 33:17-18. This historical allusion is referring back to the time that Jacob began to settle into the land in Genesis 33:17, "Jacob journeyed to Succoth, and built for himself a house and made booths for his livestock; therefore the place is named Succoth. Now Jacob came safely to the city of Shechem, which is in the land of Canaan, when he came from Paddan-aram, and camped before the city." Jacob is starting to settle into the land and God was with him at that time and gave him that land as the foothold of his possession. These places, these areas were on opposite sides of the Jordan River. The point for Psalm 60 being this: God gave that land to Jacob from the very start of the beginning of the people of Israel. God was with Jacob then. Now in this time of military setback when the land is being attacked by foreign hostile powers, God is saying in effect, "I'm still in charge here. This land still belongs to me and I have the power, dispossessing those who have attacked, turning back attacks, it's not a problem for me because this land is mine. I determine what's there. My people first settled there back in Genesis and today David in the midst of your reign, I am still in charge there. Fear not." The point in Psalm 60 is God is still with the descendants of Jacob in the land. He's saying, he's asserting his sovereignty. He's showing his faithful love in what he says here.

Beloved, as a true child of God through faith in Christ, as those who walk with Christ through this life and taste sorrows in the salt of tears, beloved, hear the word of God here this evening: God can deliver his people and God will deliver his people. We can say that with utter certainty because God is sovereign and he loves his people and he is faithful to them so that even though we go through the valley from time to time, even though the valley is deep and nighttime comes and there is no moon in the sky and you say, "Where am I going? Where do I turn? I can't see my next step from where I'm standing here," you remember your sovereign, faithful, loving God and say, "Ah, yes, he can deliver me. He will deliver me." You remember the words of Scripture that says, "no temptation has overtaken you but such as is common to man. And God is," what? "He is faithful and he will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able but with the temptation will provide the way of escape that you may be able to endure it." This is the way of God with his people.

Beloved, we have to humble ourselves in the midst of our trials and recognize that God has brought something into your life, first of all, that is painful and sorrowful. We sympathize with that but you can't collapse under the weight of the trial. You must teach yourself to think biblically, to think theologically, to consciously pull yourself out of that mental realm of discouragement and say, "Let me remember right now who my God is and that God is in control of my situation. God is faithful to me. The final chapter has not been written yet. The outcome of this story isn't known. I must trust God for what lies ahead and realize that even in the midst of this sorrow he will provide a way forward even if I don't see it right now." And you say to yourself, especially as we listen to the word preached together here this evening, as we sit under the word of God, under the influence of his word, you realize it has to be that way because this is who God is and it can be no other way and therefore, that's always the key word, therefore because God is who he is, this sorrow isn't the end of me. There is a turning to this yet to come where God will show his faithfulness and I will rejoice in his goodness when he does. And sometimes that's the only sliver of light that you have going forward is the bare promise of God to be faithful to you.

Now listen, listen: you won't know that that promise is all you need until God has removed every other prop that supports you in life. It's only when you come to the darkest spot in the darkest road in the darkest night and you see one star in the sky that gives light. There is one place in the sky that is giving light to draw your eye and to give you direction. Well, beloved, it's when everything that would otherwise give you hope in this life for the way that things would go, when all of that is wiped away, then you learn the great exceeding infinite value of the bare promise of God that he'll be faithful to you, that he will never leave you nor forsake you. And in that time, beloved, you are growing spiritually. In that time, God is maturing your soul so that in the loneliness, in the reversals, in the painful bad health, in the conflict of family and in the sorrows of other manner of life, you learn that that promise is enough for me. You learn experientially that the promise of God is enough to satisfy my soul. And you never learn the great value until everything else is taken away and all of a sudden you look at your defeats from a completely different perspective and you say, "The whole point of this is to teach me about the greatness of my God and the sufficiency of who he is and that I can trust him going forward."

Look back at Psalm 60. Verse 7 says, "Gilead is Mine, and Manasseh is Mine." Gilead was an Israelite territory to the east of the Jordan River. Manasseh straddled the river. On the west side, Ephraim and Judah were the primary tribes of Israel. Ephraim, a strong tribe that provided military protection, protecting the nation like a helmet on the head. The scepter, Judah being the scepter, a symbol of the rule. David came from the tribe of Judah and now was the king, symbolizing God's rule. Judah symbolizing the rule of God, Ephraim symbolizing the protection of God. God is saying, "I have established protection and rule in the midst of my people." And we are meant to rely on that. In other words, this is a resounding statement that God is the God of Israel and today, 2,000 years later, we still say God is the God of his people; that he hasn't changed in the intervening 2,000 years; that nothing of the rise of foreign nations or corruption in the political system or

anything, none of that has knocked God off his throne. None of your sorrows have diminished his sovereignty in any way whatsoever. None of the family trials. None of the broken marriage. None of that has diminished the rule of God. And as we embrace that, as we think on that, as we accept it, as we believe it, all of a sudden we have a position of strength with which to live our lives going forward.

Now in verse 8, God he turns his attention to the enemies of Israel and he speaks in metaphors of the most derisive kind. He says,

8 "Moab is My washbowl; Over Edom I shall throw My shoe; Shout loud,
O Philistia, because of Me!"

What is he saying when he says Moab is his washbowl? Well, in those days, a servant would bring a basin or a pot to be used for bathing purposes to his master or even to be used as a toilet. It was the most menial, low position. When he speaks of throwing the shoe, a master would come into the room and toss his shoes over toward his slave to take care of. A menial task, a menial incident indicating that, "I'm in charge here. You do what I say." And God is saying, "These enemies of my people are like my servants. I view them with disdain." And though they had momentary ascendancy as they attacked the people of God and God allowed them time to prevail over his people so that his people would learn to trust him and would be disciplined to be more faithful to him, God here speaks of their enemies and says, "In the big picture of things, I am going to humble them. I rule over your enemies." And he speaks in a way that is utterly denigrating, utterly humbling to them saying, "There is no future for them other than to be a slave of mine." And a slave not in a positive sense in which we are slaves of Christ, but they are servants that God will deal with in judgment. So those who are hostile should simply shout and ascribe praise to him, shout in fear.

The whole picture here in verses 6 and 7 and verse 8 is this, oh, we just love the way principles come out of the pictures that Scripture gives us: God rules over his people in love and faithfulness and God rules over his enemies in justice. Those who rise up against God and against his purposes will ultimately find that he judges them and casts them away. He can do that because he's sovereign. It doesn't matter how strong they appear to human eyes, God laughs at those who oppose him. For his people, we find comfort in the protection and the rule and the love and the mercy of our God. And that power with which he defeats his enemies is the same power by which he protects his own, and we live under the benefit of that sovereign rule.

So you see the description of the agony of defeat in the first five verses, and then you see this assurance of sovereignty in verses 6 through 8, and then you turn to verse 9 and you see the final section of the Psalm which is the appeal for help. The appeal for help. We saw the agony of defeat, the assurance of sovereignty, and now the appeal for help. And beloved, this brings out the humility that this is designed to bring to us. Think with me here about the big sections of this Psalm. In the midst of defeat, we remember that God is sovereign and what does that do? That gives us the basis to appeal to him to help us. In

light of God's sovereign power over his people and their enemies, it is clear that God must go forth or the battle is in vain.

Look at verse 9 and 10. David says,

9 Who will bring me into the besieged city? Who will lead me to Edom?
10 Have not You Yourself, O God, rejected us? And will You not go forth with our armies, O God?

What is he doing here? He's pleading with God in humility. He's humbling himself saying, "God, you must lead us into battle or the battle will be lost yet again. O God, you rejected us in the past. We've seen what it's like when somehow you choose not to protect us, when you expose us to our enemies for a time. God, you must go with us or we will lose yet again." He says, "You are God but we are here in our defeat." And what that teaches you to pray in the midst of your sorrows is this, "God, if you truly reign and you truly are sovereign, then you were reigning, you were ruling in the midst of our defeats and that teaches us not to presume on your grace." That teaches us, – watch this, my friends, my brothers and sisters in Christ, watch this – this teaches us to actually ask God for the help that we need and not simply go forward presuming on it. To humble yourself to the point where you actually stop what you're doing, you open your Bible, you read the word of God and you humbly come before him and with your mind engaged say, "God, I am in a position of sorrow and defeat here. Please help me. You who reign over all, you who have set your love on your people, God, please help me." And all of that brings greater urgency to the request for help.

Look at verse 11 where David says,

11 O give us help against the adversary, For deliverance by man is in vain.

As you walk out of here tonight to reengage the problems that are bigger than you are, let this verse be the encouragement with which you approach God. "God, help me because, God, this is too big for me to handle. I can't solve this, God, therefore help me because if I come up with the solution on my own, it's just going to be vanity, emptiness, and I'm going to be back and lost yet again. God, I depend not on my own strength, I appeal to you for yours." And having made that request, "O give us help, O God," you end on the note of triumph that Psalm 60 is designed to bring you to after the defeat. Having made that request, faith sees the answer before it manifests itself in time.

Through God, look at verse 12,

12 Through God we shall do valiantly, And it is He who will tread down our adversaries.

God gave them the victory. The inscription says that Joab went down to Edom and slew 12,000 men in response. You can read more about that further on in 2 Samuel 8. We're out of time or we would turn there.

But beloved, let me just give you four very simple principles to help frame your thinking when a defeat comes into your Christian life. I'm just going to say these real quick. And it's hard to believe when I preach as long as I do so routinely, that I really like to just reduce things to the simplest of principles because I think that gives clarity to your thinking, and the simplest principles meditated on faithfully over time will give strength to your soul and give you a way forward when you are under the pressure of sorrow and trial.

1. What should you do when a feat comes into your life in light of Psalm 60? 1. See the hand of God. He still rules over you. Remember that God is in charge even when it seems like circumstances are out of control. See the hand of God.

Secondly, let the love of Christ encourage you to pray. Beloved, in the midst of the hardship, remember that Christ gave himself voluntarily on a cross to save you from your sin. Remember that he is a willing Savior, not a reluctant one. And let that love encourage you to pray, to come to him for help.

So you see the hand of God, let the love of Christ encourage you to pray, thirdly, humble yourself to the point that you actually ask for help. Humble yourself to actually ask for help. We talk all around prayer, don't we? We talk about prayer, we magnify how wonderful it is, but sometimes we just don't get down to praying and actually asking in humility for the help that we need. So when those serious trials come into your life, humble yourself enough to actually ask for help, to verbalize it.

And then fourthly, trust God for the final outcome. If you have placed yourself under the hand and protection and care of God in prayer as a believing Christian, beloved, it comes out well for you in the end. It could be no other way. Let that settle and pacify your heart.

In Hebrews 13:5-6, we find the text that we'll close with this evening. Hebrews 13:5-6 where it says that, "He Himself has said, 'I will never desert you, nor will I ever forsake you,' so that we confidently say, 'The Lord is my helper, I will not be afraid. What will man do to me?'" He will never leave you nor forsake you, beloved, therefore you can walk out tonight in peace.

Let's pray together.

Our Father, we do affirm before you that your hand is in everything that happens to us. Whether it seems outwardly good or bad, you rule over our lives. Certainly if you number the hairs that are on our head, O God, you oversee the more important and lasting things of life and so we recognize your sovereign rule and we recognize your sovereign care as we look at the cross of Christ where that blessed Redeemer shed his blood for the salvation of our souls. Of course you rule and of course you love us.

And Father, as we gather tonight as the people of God, those who know each other and we know a little bit of the circumstances of one another's lives, Father, we pause and we

take an extra moment here just now to ask you to help each one in the midst of the sorrow, some where sin has broken into their home and they feel the weight of that sin in the life of a loved one that suddenly has come to light and now where do we go from here, and realizing that life isn't what we thought it was, and they need your help in dealing with sin, O God. Others in the midst of discouragement of reversal, physical difficulty, conflict in relationships. Father, in the best way that we know how and the simplest way that we can, remembering your sovereign love for us, we ask you to help. God, help these beloved brothers and sisters in Christ in their sorrows, in their difficulties and what they're going through. God, your word calls us to this again and again and again, to call out to you in the times of our sorrow and distress. O God, we do that just now. We actually ask you to help us and we confess our weakness and inability to help ourselves as we do.

We appeal to you and to you alone. We have no wisdom of our own but you are a wise God. You know the way forward. You haven't brought us into something that is unique to mankind. You haven't left us without a way forward. Help us, O God, and as you do, Father, as we end our time together this evening, we simply want to affirm that we trust you. You are a good God and you are a great God and you saved us to bring about the ultimate blessing in our lives forever and ever. So, Lord, we do trust you. We are confident as we look to the future, even if we can't see the outcome of the circumstances from where we stand. We don't need to see the outcome of circumstances, Father, we see our God high and exalted on the throne of heaven, ruling over all and loving us in the process and we know that it comes out well for us in the end. So from that position of strength and trust that is borne out by your revealed character and your revealed word, O God, we close our time in the name of Christ. Amen.

Thanks for listening to Pastor Don Green from Truth Community Church in Cincinnati, Ohio. You can find church information, Don's complete sermon library and other helpful materials at thetruthpulpit.com. This message is copyrighted by Don Green. All rights reserved.