

“God With Us in Defeat”  
Psalm 60  
(Preached at Trinity, February 27, 2011)

I’m supplying these notes for the benefit of busy pastors who may be engaged in bi-vocational work, feeling the pressure of preparing to preach twice on the Lord’s Day while trying to balance full-time secular work as well as caring for their families. While the notes of another man are no substitute for personal study, I pray that these may aid in the process of preparing to preach.

**Disclaimer:** These are the actual notes I bring with me to the pulpit, which I follow loosely. They are not designed for publication. While I try to make every effort to give proper credit to my sources from the pulpit, adequate citations will sometimes be absent from my notes. If anyone feels their intellectual material has been used without adequate citation, please contact me and I’ll make immediate correction giving credit.

1. The superscription gives us much information in **Psalm 60**.
  - A. Like many of the other psalms, it was to be delivered to the chief musician – it was to be sung in Israel’s worship.
  - B. It was designated “upon Shushaneduth” – It is actually two words in the Hebrew. It literally means, “lilies.” It is also found in Psalm 80. Like so many of these words found in the superscriptions of the psalms, the precise meaning of this word is unknown. Perhaps it pointed to the music or the musical instruments. Or perhaps something else.
  - C. The term “Michtam” is used in the 56-60<sup>th</sup> psalms. No one knows for certain the meaning of this word. Some believe it comes from a word that expresses something hidden.  
These psalms contain hidden truths that only God’s people can know and experience.
  - D. It had the purpose of instruction, of informing the generations to come of God’s mighty acts.  
David Dickson – “The children of God must not think it strange to be put to wrestling, striving, and fighting for a promised kingdom, before they be settled in possession, as David was; yea, the church of Christ must expect such like exercises; for this psalm is given to the public ministers of the church for use in all ages.”
2. David gives the context of the psalm.  
**Psalm 60:1** – “when he strove with Aramnaharaim and with Aramzobah, when Joab returned, and smote of Edom in the valley of salt twelve thousand.”
  - A. Psalm 60 is the last of the psalms of David with a historic setting from the life of David.  
David tells us that this psalm are about the time he fought Aram Naharaim and Aram Zobah. This refers to the Arameans of the Mesopotamian River valley. He also writes of the time when Joab struck down twelve thousand Edomites in the Valley of Salt.
  - B. The time frame was after David had been king for a number of years. He writes about a victory—Joab’s victory over the Edomites, but also defeat.
    1. The context takes us to 2 Samuel 8:1-14 which describes David’s great military victories over the Philistines and then the Moabites. He then fought Hadadrezer, king of Zobah.  
**2 Samuel 8:4** – “And David took from him a thousand *chariots*, and seven hundred horsemen, and twenty thousand footmen: and David houghed all the chariot *horses*, but reserved of them *for* an hundred chariots.”  
This is the situation described here in Psalm 60.

2. When the Syrians of Damascus came to help Hadadezer David struck down 22,000 of them
  3. Then David became famous when he struck down 18,000 Edomites in the Valley of Salt.
3. As we consider the details of Psalm 60, apparently while David was away from Jerusalem fighting along the Euphrates River, the Edomites staged an uprising. According to this psalm they must have succeeded. As a result, David dispatched Joab to subdue them and he succeeded, killing 12,000 of them as we read here.
  4. This psalm teaches us even in times of unprecedented blessings and victories there are also also times of defeat. Israelite cities were still coming under attack and people were still being killed.  
Should we expect anything differently in our own warfare of Christianity? We face many wonderful victories and experience many tokens of God's grace in our lives, but we also face times of defeat; times of great struggle and hardship.
  5. We can divide this psalm into three parts:
    - I. David's cry of sorrow over Israel's defeat – **Verses 1-4**
    - II. David's fervent prayer for God's deliverance – **Verses 5-8**
    - III. David's great expectation of God's victory – **Verses 9-12**
- I. David's cry of sorrow over Israel's defeat – **Verses 1-4**
    - A. David begins with a prayer, "O God"  
His prayer contains two declarations:
      1. One is an acknowledgment that their defeat was from the hand of God "thou hast cast us off, thou hast scattered us, thou hast been displeased"
      2. The second is a plea for a return of God's favor "O turn thyself to us again"
      3. As we've seen often in the psalms of David, he was always sensitive to the chastening of God. The indication in this psalm is that Israel was suffering under God's displeasure. Their defeat was the result of their unfaithfulness.
      4. We don't like to think of this today. Ours is a generation that only sees God's favor in every circumstance. We must never presume that there are no consequences to our actions.
        - a. Spurgeon: "To be cast off by God is the worst calamity that can befall a man or a people; but the worst form of it is when the person is not aware of it and is indifferent to it."
        - b. Listen to the words of Paul  
**1 Corinthians 11:29-30** – "For he that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh damnation to himself, not discerning the Lord's body. <sup>30</sup> For this cause many are weak and sickly among you, and many sleep."
      5. David Dickson – "Terrible evils may befall the Lord's people, or the visible church, when they, by their sin, provoke him to wrath, as was seen in the time of the Judges and in Saul's time."
      6. Even during times of struggle or defeat God has a design in it our greatest good. God's chastisements are tokens of His love upon His people.

- B. David describes this token of God's displeasure using great language
1. It was earth shaking  
**Psalm 60:2** – “Thou hast made the earth to tremble”  
We know how devastating earthquakes can be. A year after the earthquake in Haiti much of the nation is still in rubble.
  2. **Psalm 60:3** – “Thou hast shewed thy people hard things: thou hast made us to drink the wine of astonishment.”
    - a. The defeat left the people reeling – as those intoxicated with wine
    - b. Again, David knew this was from the hand of God – “Thou hast”
    - c. Yet, David was confident of God's covenant faithfulness  
“Thy people”
    - d. See **Verse 5** – “That thy beloved may be delivered”
- C. In this confidence David describes the people of God marching forth displaying the banner of God
- Psalm 60:4** – “You have given a banner to those who fear You”
1. The Hebrew word translated “**banner**” refers to something lifted up as a representation of something much greater. It is the same word translated “pole” in **Numbers 21**  
**Numbers 21:8-9** – “And the LORD said unto Moses, Make thee a fiery serpent, and set it upon a pole: and it shall come to pass, that every one that is bitten, when he looketh upon it, shall live. <sup>9</sup> And Moses made a serpent of brass, and put it upon a pole, and it came to pass, that if a serpent had bitten any man, when he beheld the serpent of brass, he lived.”  
And, of course, that pole upon which the brazen serpent was placed represented Christ.
  2. People look to their flag with a sense of pride – patriotism
    - a. This is based upon their sense of identity
    - b. This is also based upon their sense of pride, of belonging
    - c. During this time of defeat it was essential that they turn their eyes once more to their great Commander: The LORD of hosts
  3. We look to Jesus in this way – a sense of identity and pride
    - a. We are His particular people  
**Isaiah 40:1** – “Comfort ye, comfort ye **my people**, saith **your God.**”  
**Leviticus 26:12** – “And I will walk among you, and will be your God, and ye shall be my people.”  
**Jeremiah 31:33** – “But this *shall be* the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel; After those days, saith the LORD, I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and will be their God, and they shall be my people.”
    - b. As we go to war we boldly and confidently fly the banner of Christ  
Whether in victory or defeat we must never take our eyes off of Christ

II. David's fervent prayer for God's deliverance – **Verses 5-8**

- A. David always had but one confidence  
**Psalm 60:5** save *with* thy right hand, and hear me.  
**Psalm 18:2-3** – “The LORD *is* my rock, and my fortress, and my deliverer; my God, my strength, in whom I will trust; my buckler, and the horn of my salvation, *and* my high tower. <sup>3</sup> I will call upon the LORD, *who is worthy* to be praised: so shall I be saved from mine enemies.”
1. Defeat should never lead us to despair but to greater dependence  
David reminded God and himself who he was
  2. We must never forget who we are –  
“That Your beloved may be delivered”
- B. David repeated God's promises back to Him – he rested upon God's Word  
**Psalm 60:6** – “God hath spoken in his holiness”
1. “God hath spoken” – faith is believing the Word of God
  2. David was assured of victory  
**Psalm 60:6** I will rejoice – literally: “I will triumph”
  3. David reminded God of what was promised to him
    - a. **Psalm 60:6** – “I will divide Shechem, and mete out the valley of Succoth” –  
Shechem and Succoth were two territories east and west of the Jordan River that God would distribute among Israel as promised to Abraham. God would surely give them to His people.
    - b. All of the subjects of David would come under his reign – he would rule over them forever  
**Psalm 60:7** – “Gilead *is* mine, and Manasseh *is* mine; Ephraim also *is* the strength of mine head; Judah *is* my lawgiver”
  4. David rested assured that in spite of temporary setbacks God would put his enemies beneath him  
**Psalm 60:8** – “Moab *is* my washpot; over Edom will I cast out my shoe: Philistia, triumph thou because of me.”
- C. David was able to pray these words with confidence
1. We can pray before God with assurance of His mighty power  
Christ is ours, the Kingdom is ours, the hope of glory is ours
  2. We can pray with confidence that He will come to our defense.

III. David's great expectation of God's victory – **Verses 9-12**

- A. David, once again, expresses his confidence upon God. He asks three rhetorical questions:
1. Who will bring me to the fortified city? – **Verse 9**
    - a. In other words, who would lead David into battle?
    - b. In every holy battle that we fight the battle is not ultimately ours but God's
    - c. This was David's confidence his entire life – listen to his words to Goliath

**1 Samuel 17:46-47** – “This day will the LORD deliver thee into mine hand; and I will smite thee, and take thine head from thee; and I will give the carcasses of the host of the Philistines this day unto the fowls of the air, and to the wild beasts of the earth; that all the earth may know that there is a God in Israel. <sup>47</sup> And all this assembly shall know that the LORD saveth not with sword and spear: for the battle is the LORD'S, and he will give you into our hands.”

2. Who will lead me to Edom?  
Again, who would go before David in battle?
  3. “Will not Thou, O God?” David answers his questions
- B. It is all of God  
**Psalm 60:12** – “Through God we shall do valiantly, And it is He who will tread down our adversaries.”  
This is still the hope and confidence of God’s people  
**Romans 8:31** – “What shall we then say to these things? If God *be* for us, who *can be* against us?”

#### Conclusion:

1. How are we to face the disappointments and defeats of life? We may not fight military conflicts like David, but still we face many times of difficulty.  
Things are going so well, and then you lose your job  
A loved one is smitten with an illness or death  
Or the lesser frustrations: the car breaks down, the toilet overflows, you burn the meal you are preparing for guests or forget one of the ingredients
2. There are many times of persecution for the Christian. We live in a God hating world.
3. What about the endless struggles against sin?  
Listen to Paul:  
<sup>ESV</sup> **Romans 7:18** – “For I know that nothing good dwells in me, that is, in my flesh. For I have the desire to do what is right, but not the ability to carry it out. For I do not do the good I want, but the evil I do not want is what I keep on doing.”
4. We must never forget that the Christian life is a great spiritual conflict. It is warfare like the mightiest war David fought. Paul said, “I have fought a good fight.”
5. What do we do?
  - A. We continue to look to Christ. God and God alone is the source of our confidence. Jesus Christ is our great Banner – we must not cease to look to Him.  
Listen again to Paul as he faced his continued war against sin:  
**Romans 7:24-25** – “Wretched man that I am! Who will set me free from the body of this death? <sup>25</sup> Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord!”
  - B. We continue to ask for victory  
**Psalm 60:11** – “Give us help from trouble: for vain *is* the help of man.”