

Psalm 60 • When there's nowhere else to turn

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Psalm chapter 60. This is, as I mentioned, a Psalm of David. It, he says in the kind of the prologue there, is intended for teaching, probably to instruct present and future generations about relying on the Lord. We don't have any kind of biblical event to connect this particular Psalm to, but what we can gather from what we read here is that it was a time in Israel's history when David was obviously in charge, where the armies of Israel felt like the Lord was no longer going with them into battle. And so, David used this opportunity to cry out to the Lord.

Now, you know the connection for you and I here is when we're facing challenges of many kinds but we're just not sensing the Lord's presence. In fact, we're wondering if the Lord even knows that we're going through a difficult season. What would you do at a time like that?

David uses this opportunity to come to the Lord and he says in verse 1:

*"O God, you have rejected us, broken our defenses;
you have been angry; oh, restore us.*

*² You have made the land to quake; you have torn it open;
repair its breaches, for it totters.*

*³ You have made your people see hard things;
you have given us wine to drink that made us stagger. (And that's usually referring to the wine of some kind of judgment.)*

*⁴ You have set up a banner for those who fear you,
that they may flee to it from the bow.*

*⁵ That your beloved ones may be delivered,
give salvation by your right hand and answer us!*

⁶ God has spoken in his holiness:

*"With exultation I will divide up Shechem
and portion out the Vale of Succoth.*

*⁷ Gilead is mine; Manasseh is mine;
Ephraim is my helmet;*

Judah is my scepter.

⁸Moab is my washbasin;

upon Edom I cast my shoe;

over Philistia I shout in triumph.” (ESV)

I want you to stop there for just a moment because this is interesting. As David gets into this Psalm, you can see that he begins by saying to the Lord, you've rejected us; you're not going out into battle with us.

Then he begins to speak about how God has established a banner for those who fear Him in verse 4, that all the beloved of the Lord might be delivered, and so forth. Then he begins to allow the Lord begins to speak in the first person through David, so this is obviously a prophetic speaking forth.

In verse 6, he begins to say, “*God has spoken in His holiness...*” and then he talks about the fact that all Israel and the neighboring nations belong to the Lord. Did you notice that? He begins in verse 6 by saying, “*With exultation I will divide up Shechem and portion out the Vale of Succoth...*”

What he means here is that he is reciting the heart of the Lord, saying this is the land of Israel, which was originally, before that, the land of Canaan. And he's basically being reminded by the voice of God: I'm going to divide this land for my people. The whole point of the statement is to remind us that the land of Israel belongs to Israel, okay.

That's why he goes on to say in verse 8 or actually in verse 7, “*Gilead is mine; Manasseh is mine; Ephraim is my helmet; Judah is my scepter* (or in other words, the place from which I rule). *⁸ Moab is my washbasin* (da, da, da)...”

He's talking about the land of Israel and even some of these neighboring nations, and saying, they're mine. They're mine. What is the reason for this? Why is David reciting this in his prayer through the voice of the Lord? Well, this is a reminder. This is a reminder for David, as he goes into this time, that God hasn't gone back on any of His promises—that the land still belongs to the Lord. Okay? That's the point.

Because you see, when we're going through a difficult time in our lives and we feel like the Lord isn't with us, we tend to then begin to question the promises we've received earlier, right? That's what we do. It's just human nature. I begin to question, does God really love me? Does God really hear my prayer? Is this really true? Is this the deal? And we begin to throw the whole thing up in the air as if to question it once again.

And so, in this prayer of David, which starts off on a low note—Lord, You've rejected; You're no longer with Your armies. When we go out, we can tell You're not there—they've seen hard things as a result. They probably lost men in battle. And that's one of the ways they knew the Lord was not with them: when they lost men in battle. They recognized that this isn't working.

David spends this time reminding himself that God's promises are still sure. He said, when you guys get into the land, I'm going to divide this land up. It will belong to you; that is a promise, and that promise stands (Psalm 105:8-11). David is speaking here of the fact that the land is theirs by divine right, and there's an assurance that goes with that. Then David goes on to ask in verse 9, look with me there in your Bible:

“Who will bring me to the fortified city? (In other words, who will lead me up against the enemies that we go against?)

Who will lead me to Edom?

¹⁰ *Have you not rejected us, O God? (And then he repeats again, look at this.)*

You do not go forth, O God, with our armies. (You're not; we can tell the Lord that you're not with us. You're not guiding us in battle. And so he says)

¹¹ *Oh, grant us help against the foe, (Look at this.)*

for vain is the salvation of man!”

Or if you will, again, I've told you many times: the word, salvation means deliverance. Vain is the deliverance of man.

What is David saying here? You need to go up with us, Lord, because it is—our own deliverance is an empty thing. Were we to try to deliver ourselves, it would be an empty thing.

Now, once again, we come back to our natural response when we're feeling like the Lord isn't with us and He's not standing with us in the battles of life. What do you do? How—what do I do? What is our response to that? We typically get angry, we become sullen, and we just figure, well, I got to do this myself.

I guess I just have to do this myself. God's not helping me; God's not answering me, so I guess I got to do this. I mean, what am I going to do, right? I got to do it. You know what would David say in response to that? Vain is the deliverance of man.

But see, that's something that you and I haven't necessarily learned. And so, what we do is we keep trying to affect our own deliverance. And we have to

learn systematically how vain it is. That word vain in the scripture means empty, okay.

And once we learn that, we usually come back on our knees to God and we say, Lord, forgive me for being such an idiot. Forgive me for trying to fix this thing on my own. Forgive me, Lord, for stepping out apart from Your will, apart from Your power. Forgive me, Lord, for thinking that I could do it myself.

And then we come to that statement: Vain is the deliverance of man. Vain, Lord God, is my own deliverance. We need to learn to say that: Lord, my deliverance is vain. It's empty. Oh, how we would save ourselves so much grief if we would have that in our hearts.

And then verse 12, this is very important because we really kind of get the lesson of the Psalm here in this final verse. He says:

*“With God we shall do valiantly;
it is he who will tread down our foes.”*

And that, and the point there is it's not you; it is He who will tread down your foes, okay. And with the Lord, we will do valiantly, alright.

So here we go. The lesson or the message of this Psalm is really pretty simple: David, again, was sensing the Lord's withdrawal from the armies. He was sensing the Lord's rebuke over Israel. But instead of pouting about it—which is what I'm more likely to do—instead of insisting that the armies just kind of suck it up and let's be men about this thing: Come on, guys. Alright, so God's not listening to us. Well, alright, let's just get this thing done. We just, we got to do this thing. He didn't do that.

Instead, David, first of all, begins by reminding himself of the Lord's decree, which is His promise concerning Israel, that it all belongs to the Lord. And then he concludes, after all of that, with verse 12, by saying that: *“With God, we shall do valiantly...”* In other words, there's nowhere else to turn. That was, that's the lesson. That's the lesson. It's a simple lesson. But it's hard to learn. The lesson is, there's nowhere else to turn.

So, if it's not working, if it's not happening, if your prayers aren't being answered, if you're going into battle and you're getting the snot beat out of you, let me just give you a little piece of advice: there's nowhere else to turn. You just keep coming back to God. That's what David is doing here. We don't go to plan B.

What David is saying is there's no plan B. There's no other solution. The deliverance of man is vain. It is stupid. It's empty. And I'm not going there. I refuse to go there.

There's nothing left for us to do but come back to the Lord and trust Him for the victory. Yeah, but God's not answering me. Yeah, but you know what? There's nothing left to do but to go back to the Lord and trust Him for the victory. Yeah, but, yeah, but, yeah, but, yeah but, you know what? There's nothing left to do but go back to the Lord and trust Him for the victory.

Sounds like beating your head against a rock, but it's not. Because there is no plan B. And once we come to terms with the reality of that statement, our prayer life takes on a new vitality as we press in to say, hey, Lord, you need to understand me here. I have no plan B. I have no foot in any doors. I have nothing else available to me, okay. I'm counting on You and You alone.

And this all kind of reminds me of a passage, frankly, in the New Testament. There were times that Peter said some amazing things. There were also times he said some really dumb things, but once in a while, Pete would come up with some statements that are really amazing. Usually, it was when he was speaking by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit.

There is a situation that's recorded for us in John chapter 6, where Jesus is saying some really hard things to the Israelites, to the Jews. And He knew they were hard things. And the reason He knew they were hard things is that there were a lot of people that were listening to Jesus, when they heard those hard things, they said, yeah, okay, I'm out of here. And they turned and they left. Let me show you this passage, John chapter 6:

John 6:9 (ESV)

And he said, "This is why I told you that no one can come to me unless it is granted him by my Father." After this, many of his disciples turned back and no longer walked with him. So Jesus said to the Twelve, "Do you want to go away as well?" Simon Peter answered him, "Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life, and we have believed, and have come to know, that you are the Holy One of God."

And he said (This is Jesus talking.), "This is why I told you that no one can come to me unless it is granted him by my Father." (Look at this.) After this, many of his disciples turned back and no longer walked with him. So Jesus said to the Twelve, "Do you want to go away as well?" Simon Peter answered him, "Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life, and we have believed, and have come to know, that you are the Holy One of God."

This is one of those times when Pete nailed it. Because there are situations that are very, very difficult when our natural man wants to bail, turn around, and go the other way. You know what? I think this is just too much.

But if we really investigate the situation thoroughly and understand what David and Peter both understood in this situation, we come to the simple conclusion: Lord, where are we going to go? Where am I going to go? You are the way, the truth, and the life. You're not just a way; you are the way. You're not just a truth; you are the truth. Where am I going to go? Well, what's plan B? Am I going to settle for something less than the life? Absolutely not.

I really believe that until we've adopted this attitude—that David projects in the Psalms and that Peter reiterates in that record of John chapter 6—we're going to continue to have trouble in our walk with the Lord. We're going to continue to struggle, you and I, until we get this down: until we realize there's no plan B. There's no curtain number B, C, or D, or number two; it's just Jesus.

Because here's the point, guys: when you and I get into trouble, and it doesn't look like God is responding the way our expectations think He should, our natural tendency is to default to the only other savior we've ever known, and that's me, myself, and I, right? It's the only other savior I've ever known.

And believe me, I've relied on him a lot. Although I've learned over the years that vain is the deliverance of man—my own deliverance is vain. But you know what? I keep defaulting to that same old savior, small s, because I find myself sputtering in this attitude that David has, that says, Lord, it's you and you only. And there's nowhere else for me to turn.

But when you finally get it, when you finally realize that there are no other options, no other answers, and no other solutions, then you're finally able to say with David what he said in verse 12: *"With God we shall do valiantly..."* and understand what it means: *"With God we shall do valiantly..."*