

# PSALM 60

After many psalms which David penned in a day of distress this comes which was calculated for a day of triumph; it was penned after he was settled in the throne, upon occasion of an illustrious victory which God blessed his forces with over the Syrians and Edomites; it was when David was in the zenith of his prosperity, and the affairs of his kingdom seem to have been in a better posture than ever they were either before or after. See ~~108B~~2 Samuel 8:3, 13; ~~108B~~1 Chronicles 18:3, 12. David, in prosperity, was as devout as David in adversity. In this psalm,

**I.** He reflects upon the bad state of the public interests, for many years, in which God had been contending with them (v. 1-3).

**II.** He takes notice of the happy turn lately given to their affairs (v. 4).

**III.** He prays for the deliverance of God's Israel from their enemies (v. 5).

**IV.** He triumphs in hope of their victories over their enemies, and begs of God to carry them on and complete them (v. 6-12). In singing this psalm we may have an eye both to the acts of the church and to the state of our own souls, both which have their struggles.

## ~~108B~~ PSALM 60:1-5

### COMPLAINTS AND PETITIONS

To the chief musician upon Shushan-eduth, Michtam of David, to teach, when he strove with Aram-naharaim, and with Aramzobah, when Joab returned, and smote of Edom in the valley of salt 12,000.

The title gives us an account,

**1.** Of the general design of the psalm. It is *Michtam* — *David's jewel*, and it is *to teach*. The Levites must teach it to the people, and by it teach them

both to trust in God and to triumph in him; we must, in it, teach ourselves and one another. In a day of public rejoicing we have need to be taught to direct our joy to God and to terminate it in him, to give none of that praise to the instruments of our deliverance which is due to him only, and to encourage our hopes with our joys.

**2.** Of the particular occasion of it. It was at a time,

**(1.)** When he was at war with the Syrians, and still had a conflict with them, both those of Mesopotamia and those of Zobah.

**(2.)** When he had gained a great victory over the Edomites, by his forces, under the command of Joab, who had left 12,000 of the enemy dead upon the spot. David has an eye to both these concerns in this psalm: he is in care about his strife with the Assyrians, and in reference to that he prays; he is rejoicing in his success against the Edomites, and in reference to that he triumphs with a holy confidence in God that he would complete the victory. We have our cares at the same time that we have our joys, and they may serve for a balance to each other, that neither may exceed. They may likewise furnish us with matter both for prayer and praise, for both must be laid before God with suitable affections and emotions. If one point be gained, yet in another we are still striving: the Edomites are vanquished, but the Syrians are not; therefore *let not him that girds on the harness boast as if he had put it off.*

In these verses, which begin the psalm, we have,

**I.** A melancholy memorial of the many disgraces and disappointments which God had, for some years past, put the people under. During the reign of Saul, especially in the latter end 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 neighbouring nations were vexatious to them.

**1.** He complains of *hard things* which they had seen (that is, which they had suffered), while the Philistines and other ill-disposed neighbours took all advantages against them, v. 3. God sometimes shows even his own people hard things in this world, that they may not take up their rest in it, but may dwell at ease in him only.

**2.** He owns God's displeasure to be the cause of all the hardships they had undergone: "*Thou hast been displeased by us, displeased against us* (v. 1),

and in thy displeasure hast cast us off and scattered us, hast put us out of thy protection, else our enemies could not have prevailed thus against us. They would never have picked us up and made a prey of us if thou hadst not broken *the staff of bands* (~~3814~~ Zechariah 11:14) by which we were united, and so scattered us." Whatever our trouble is, and whoever are the instruments of it, we must own the hand of God, his righteous hand, in it.

**3.** He laments the ill effects and consequences of the miscarriages of the late years. The whole nation was in a convulsion: *Thou hast made the earth (or the land) to tremble*, v. 2. The generality of the people had dreadful apprehensions of the issue of these things. The good people themselves were in a consternation: "*Thou hast made us to drink the wine of astonishment* (v. 3); we were like men intoxicated, and at our wits' end, not knowing how to reconcile these dispensations with God's promises and his relation to his people; we are amazed, can do nothing, nor know we what to do." Now this is mentioned here *to teach*, that is, for the instruction of the people. When God is turning his hand in our favour, it is good to remember our former calamities,

**(1.)** That we may retain the good impressions they made upon us, and may have them revived. Our souls must still have the affliction and the misery in remembrance, that they may be *humbled within us*, ~~2389~~ Lamentations 3:19, 20.

**(2.)** That God's goodness to us, in relieving us and raising us up, may be more magnified; for it is as life from the dead, so strange, so refreshing. Our calamities serve as foils to our joys.

**(3.)** That we may not be secure, but may always rejoice with trembling, as those that know not how soon we may be returned into the furnace again, which we were lately taken out of as the silver is when it is not thoroughly refined.

**II.** A thankful notice of the encouragement God had given them to hope that, though things had been long bad, they would now begin to mend (v. 4): "*Thou hast given a banner to those that fear thee* (for, as bad as the times are, there is a remnant among us that desire to fear thy name, for whom thou hast a tender concern), *that it may be displayed by thee, because of the truth* of thy promise which thou wilt perform, and to be displayed by them, in defense of truth and equity," ~~1984~~ Psalm 45:4. This banner was David's government, the establishment and enlargement of it

over all Israel. The pious Israelites, who feared God and had a regard to the divine designation of David to the throne, took his elevation as a token for good, and like the lifting up of a banner to them,

1. It united them, as soldiers are gathered together to their colours. Those that were *scattered* (v. 1), divided among themselves, and so weakened and exposed, coalesced in him when he was fixed upon the throne.
2. It animated them, and put life and courage into them, as the soldiers are animated by the sight of their banner.
3. It struck a terror upon their enemies, to whom they could now hang out a flag of defiance. Christ, the Son of David, is given *for an ensign of the people* (<sup>2910</sup>Isaiah 11:10), for a banner to those that fear God; in him, as the centre of their unity, they are gathered together in one; to him they seek, in him they glory and take courage. His love is the banner over them; in his name and strength they wage war with the powers of darkness, and under him the church becomes terrible as an army with banners.

### III. A humble petition for seasonable mercy.

1. That God would be reconciled to them, though he had been displeased with them. In his displeasure their calamities began, and therefore in his favour their prosperity must begin: *O turn thyself to us again!* (v. 1) smile upon us, and take part with us; be at peace with us, and in that peace we shall have peace. *Tranquillus Deus tranquillat omnia — A God at peace with us spreads peace over all the scene.*
2. That they might be reconciled to one another, though they had been broken and wretchedly divided among themselves: *“Heal the breaches of our land* (v. 2), not only the breaches made upon us by our enemies, but the breaches made among ourselves by our unhappy divisions.” Those are breaches which the folly and corruption of man makes, and which nothing but the wisdom and grace of God can make up and repair, by pouring out a spirit of love and peace, by which only a shaken shattered kingdom is set to rights and saved from ruin.
3. That thus they might be preserved out of the hands of their enemies (v. 5): *“That thy beloved may be delivered, and not made a prey of, save with thy right hand, with thy own power and by such instruments as thou art pleased to make the men of thy right hand, and hear me.”* Those that fear God are his beloved; they are dear to him as the apple of his eye. They are

often in distress, but they shall be delivered. God's own right hand shall save them; for those that have his heart have his hand. *Save them, and hear me.* Note, God's praying people may take the general deliverances of the church as answers to their prayers in particular. If we improve what interest we have at the throne of grace for blessings for the public, and those blessings be bestowed, besides the share we have with others in the benefit of them we may each of us say, with peculiar satisfaction, "God has therein heard me, and answered me."

## PSALM 60:6-12

### REJOICING IN HOPE

David is here rejoicing in hope and praying in hope; such are the triumphs of the saints, not so much upon the account of what they have in possession as of what they have in prospect (v. 6): "*God has spoken in his holiness* (that is, he has given me his word of promise, has *sworn by his holiness, and he will not lie unto David,* <sup>1805</sup> Psalm 89:35), therefore *I will rejoice,* and please myself with the hopes of the performance of the promise, which was intended for more than a pleasing promise," Note, God's word of promise, being a firm foundation of hope, is a full fountain of joy to all believers.

**I.** David here rejoices; and it is in prospect of two things: —

**1.** The perfecting of this revolution in his own kingdom. God having *spoken in his holiness* that David shall be king, he doubts not but the kingdom is all his own, as sure as if it were already in his hand: *I will divide Shechem* (a pleasant city in Mount Ephraim) *and mete out the valley of Succoth,* as my own. *Gilead is mine, and Manasseh is mine,* and both are entirely reduced, v. 7. Ephraim would furnish him with soldiers for his life-guards and his standing forces; Judah would furnish him with able judges for his courts of justice; and thus Ephraim would be *the strength of his head* and Judah *his lawgiver.* Thus may an active believer triumph in the promises, and take the comfort of all the good contained in them; for they are all yea and amen in Christ. "*God has spoken in his holiness,* and then pardon is mine, peace mine, grace mine, Christ mine, heaven mine, God himself mine." *All is yours, for you are Christ's,* <sup>1802</sup> 1 Corinthians 3:22, 23.

2. The conquering of the neighbouring nations, which had been vexatious to Israel, were still dangerous, and opposed the throne of David, v. 8. Moab shall be enslaved, and put to the meanest drudgery. *The Moabites became David's servants*, ~~1082~~ 2 Samuel 8:2. Edom shall be made a dunghill to throw old shoes upon; at least David shall take possession of it as his own, which was signified by *drawing off his shoe* over it, ~~1083~~ Ruth 4:7. As for the Philistines, let them, if they dare, triumph over him as they had done; he will soon force them to change their note. Rather let those that know their own interest triumph because of him; for it would be the greatest kindness imaginable to them to be brought into subjection to David and communion with Israel. But the war is not yet brought to an end; there is a *strong city*, Rabbah (perhaps) of the children of Ammon, which yet holds out; Edom is not yet subdued. Now,

(1.) David is here enquiring for help to carry on the ark: “*Who will bring me into the strong city?* What allies, what auxiliaries, can I depend upon, to make me master of the enemies' country and their strongholds?” Those that have begun a good work cannot but desire to make a thorough work of it, and to bring it to perfection.

(2.) He is expecting it from God only: “*Wilt not thou, O God? For thou hast spoken in thy holiness; and wilt not thou be as good as thy word?*” He takes notice of the frowns of Providence they had been under: *Thou hadst, in appearance, cast us off; thou didst not go forth with our armies*. When they were defeated and met with disappointments, they owned it was because they wanted (that is, because they had forfeited) the gracious presence of God with them; yet they do not therefore fly off from him, but rather take so much the faster hold of him; and the less he has done for them of late the more they hoped he would do. At the same time that they own God's justice in what was past they hope in his mercy for what was to come: “*Though thou hadst cast us off, yet thou wilt not contend for ever, thou wilt not always chide; though thou hadst cast us off, yet thou hast begun to show mercy; and wilt thou not perfect what thou hast begun?*” The Son of David, in his sufferings, seemed to be cast off by his Father when he cried out, *Why hast thou forsaken me?* and yet even then he obtained a glorious victory over the powers of darkness and their strong city, a victory which will undoubtedly be completed at last; for he has gone forth conquering and to conquer. The Israel of God, his spiritual Israel, are likewise, through him, more than conquerors. Though sometimes they may be tempted to think that God has cast them off, and

may be foiled in particular conflicts, yet God will bring them into the strong city at last. *Vincimur in praelio, sed non in bello* — *We are foiled in a battle, but not in the whole war.* A lively faith in the promise will assure us, not only that *the God of peace shall tread Satan under our feet shortly,* but that *it is our Father's good pleasure to give us the kingdom.*

**II.** He prays in hope. His prayer is, *Give us help from trouble*, v. 11. Even in the day of their triumph they see themselves in trouble, because still in war, which is troublesome even to the prevailing side. None therefore can delight in war but those that love to fish in troubled waters. The *help from trouble* they pray for is preservation from those they were at war with. Though now they were conquerors, yet (so uncertain are the issues of war), unless God gave them help in the next engagement, they might be defeated; therefore, *Lord, send us help from the sanctuary.* *Help from trouble* is rest from war, which they prayed for, as those that contended for equity, not for victory. *Sic quaerimus pacem* — *Thus we seek for peace.* The hope with which they support themselves in this prayer has two things in it: —

**1.** A diffidence of themselves and all their creature-confidences: *Vain is the help of man.* Then only we are 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.

**2.** A confidence in God, and in his power and promise (v. 12): “*Through God we shall do valiantly,* and so we shall do victoriously; for *he it is,* and he only, *that shall tread down our enemies,* and shall have the praise of doing it.” Note,

**(1.)** Our confidence in God must be so far from superseding that it must encourage and quicken our endeavours in the way of our duty. Though *it is God that performs all things for us,* yet there is something to be done by us.

**(2.)** Hope in God is the best principle of true courage. Those that do their duty under his conduct may afford to do it valiantly; for what need those fear who have God on their side?

**(3.)** It is only through God, and by the influence of his grace, that we do valiantly; it is he that puts strength into us, and inspires us, who of ourselves are weak and timorous, with courage and resolution.

(4.) Though we do ever so valiantly, the success must be attributed entirely to him; for *he it is that shall tread down our enemies*, and not we ourselves. All our victories, as well as our valour, are from him, and therefore at his feet all our crown must be cast.