

Psalm 60

With God We Shall Do Valiantly

Intro: The title of my message is taken from the last verse of our Psalm. It's quite a statement: "With God we shall do valiantly."

Valiant isn't a word that we tend to associate with ourselves. It's a lofty word. Let me give you some synonyms: brave, heroic, noble, gallant. Is that how you tend to think of yourself? Yeah, me too.

Actually, the antonym of valiant seems to be more appropriate. Timid. Anxious. Nervous. That sounds more like us, doesn't it? We are afraid of being mocked so we don't talk to unbelievers about Christ. We are fearful of the future. Anxious about the present. Nervous about our health, our finances, our children, etc. But here we have a promise, a confident assertion that we, you and I and all of God's children, shall do valiantly. That valor will be the epitaph written over our life.

It sounds good! But how can that be?

Psalm 60 is a Psalm written when David was King over Israel, engaged in battle with the enemies of God's people. We need to remember that the nation of Israel was surrounded on every side by those who fervently desired their destruction. Here in the United States we are surrounded by Canada and Mexico – generally considered friends and allies – or, at the very least not a threat. We don't really have a sense of what it would be like to live surrounded by nations who hated your existence and sought every opportunity to accomplish your demise. But that was the case with Israel.

From the title of the Psalm we know that this was written on the occasion of one particular military campaign. David was fighting the Assyrians all the way up by the Euphrates River, which is in Iraq, over 600 miles from home. The Edomites, a country on the eastern border of Israel, decided to take advantage of David's absence and mounted an attack.

The attack was, at least initially, successful. Israel was in real jeopardy. There were tragic casualties. David sent Joab back with a portion of his army, and Joab eventually won a great victory over the Edomites in the Valley of Salt. But this Psalm seems to have been

written in the context of the setback. This is what David prayed when he heard the news of the Edomite attack.

The Christian life is very much like the experience of David we read about here. We are surrounded by spiritual adversaries on every side. The world, the flesh and the Devil are sworn enemies and they constantly seek to do us harm. We are commanded by God to fight this spiritual battle. And in our conflict with the principalities and powers in the heavenly realms, we are going to experience devastating, heart-breaking set-backs. We are going to experience the shameful weakness of our own flesh, the tremendous power of evil in the world, and the devastating impact of sin in the lives of those we love.

Psalm 60 has great lessons for us in this battle of faith. The key points are "Look, Listen, Lean".

I. David Looks to the Lord

David looks to the Lord both to interpret his circumstance and to find help.

A. To Interpret His Circumstance

David is battling with the Assyrians, the Edomites, and the Moabites and whoever else wants to pile on, but the horizon of his mind is not filled with the reality of his enemies, but with the reality of God. As David surveyed his trial, he focused his mind not on the enemies facing him but the God who ruled over him. Note the repeated use of "you".

- God, you have rejected us, (vs 1)
- You have been angry, (vs 1)
- You have made the land to quake, (vs 2)
- You have torn it open. (vs 2)
- You have made your people see hard things (vs 3)
- You have given us wine to drink that made us stagger. (vs 3)

Where most people would look at the trouble and see only armies and battles, David looks and sees the handiwork of God.

David is just applying his theology. He truly believes that God foreordains and superintends all that comes to pass. He believes the Heidelberg Catechism which says that nothing happens to us by chance but by the hand of our Heavenly Father. That's the doctrine of God's providence. We don't live in a world of accidental forces and random events. We don't live in a world where evil is on the loose. All things are ruled by the sovereign hand of God – even the hard things.

Kidner: "David sees the chaotic picture as, in principle, intelligible and under a single ultimate control."

I find that to be extremely helpful in our current social and political moment. As we see mass confusion and chaos let loose in our cities, as we see intentional deception and irrationality controlling our national conversation – it all looks so bewildering, so unbelievably and irremediably messed up that it’s hard to know where to begin. Well, we should begin where David does – with God. Instead of focusing on what people are doing we need to step back and ask the question: What is God doing? Every event taking place today is ruled and governed and ordained by the hand of our Sovereign God. God is up to something. God is on the move. What is God doing?

That’s the question on David’s mind. And so, rather than trying to puzzle out the impenetrable mystery of evil, David sets himself to consider the purposes of God.

From verse 1 it seems clear that David understands Israel’s military defeats to be God at work chastening his people. He is convinced that God is angry with them because of some sin. Now, as we saw in the book of Job, hard things are not always God’s chastening because of sin. Job suffered though he was innocent. But God does chasten and discipline his children for their sin. The classic example would be Israel’s defeat, under Joshua, at Ai. After a great triumph at Jericho, the Israelites were confident that they would make short work of little Ai, but they were routed on the battlefield and thousands died. Why? Well because someone had violated God’s explicit command. Achan had stolen things from Jericho that belonged to God. And God would not give his blessing to the people until this sin was rooted out.

Well, David is convinced that is what is taking place here. And he was probably correct. Israel, under the leadership of Saul, had fallen into spiritual disrepair. Sin and wickedness abounded. And the results were dire. The land was quaking. Society was breaking down. And God is doing this!

“You have made your people see hard things,

You have given us wine to drink that made us stagger”

God was judging Israel with spiritual drunkenness. People were not in their right mind! They were being given over to their sin. David looks to God to interpret his context.

B. To Find Help

As Israel suffers the discipline of God – David prays “O restore us”! The God who sovereignly chastens his children is the same God who will lovingly restore. And David begins to lay hold of the goodness of God in verse 4-5.

⁴You have set up a banner for those who fear you, that they may flee to it from the bow. ⁵That your beloved ones may be delivered, give salvation by your right hand and answer us!

The glorious thing about God's discipline is that it is always for our good and there is always a place of safety in it. David says, "you have set up a banner for those who fear you." On the battlefield, a banner would be raised up, in the midst of the conflict, calling the soldiers to gather together there. It would be a place of military advantage or a place of shelter. Here, it is a place of shelter! It is a place to flee from the bow. A place where Gods' beloved ones may be delivered! That's good news in the midst of a battle!

What is this banner?? The banner is the infinite and steadfast love of God. Notice, it is a banner for "your beloved ones". Kidner points out that the Hebrew word used here "belongs to the language of love poetry. It appeals to the strongest of bond, the most ardent relationship." This is precisely what we read in Song of Solomon 2:4 where the bride, speaking of her beloved says,

"He took me to the banqueting house and his banner over me was love."

David is confident that the thought the Lord disciplines, he does not cast off. He is a God of steadfast love. He is convinced that God has raised the banner of his love over Israel so that they might run and find safety there – even though they have sinned. That conviction emboldens David to pray with expectancy:

"Give salvation by your right hand and answer us."

That's a bold prayer for a sinful people! But sinners have a warrant for boldness in the love of our saving God!

II. David Listens to the Lord

In verses 6-8 David listens as the Lord responds. God describes his sovereign rule first over Israel itself. Shechem, and Succoth, Gilead, Manasseh, Ephraim and Judah are all places and tribes of Israel. And God says – "It's all mine". He is the God of Israel!

And then God names David's enemies – Moab and Edom and Philistia. They also belong to God – as lowly servants accomplishing God's sovereign will and under his Moab is like a washbasin - meant for washing feet. "Upon Edom I cast my shoe" means that Edom is a lowly servant tasked with taking care of shoes. These great enemies of David are lowly servants of God.

What a great word of encouragement to David! Though Israel is in disrepair, God still claims her as his precious and beloved bride! Though Edom and Moab are rising up mightily against him, they are God's lowly servants accomplishing his will.

The very same things are true concerning the church in the world today. The great enemies of our soul are all under the feet of our mighty God and serve his saving purposes. The great necessity in our time of temptation, the critical need in our moments of doubt and despair is to listen to our God. When the enemies of our soul seem too strong for us and the weakness of our flesh too great for God's grace – we need to listen to the Lord.

Isaiah 43:1–4 But now thus says the LORD, he who created you, O Jacob, he who formed you, O Israel: "Fear not, for I have redeemed you; I have called you by name, you are mine. ²When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and through the rivers, they shall not overwhelm you; when you walk through fire you shall not be burned, and the flame shall not consume you. ³For I am the LORD your God, the Holy One of Israel, your Savior. I give Egypt as your ransom, Cush and Seba in exchange for you. ⁴Because you are precious in my eyes, and honored, and I love you."

Did you hear what God says to you?? "I will help you. I have redeemed you. You are mine, you are precious in my eyes and I love you. "

God means us to hear what he says and to believe what he says! And then to fight on in that confidence. Yes, we still must fight. That's what we see in verse 9. But we fight leaning on the Lord!

III. David Leans upon the Lord

⁹Who will bring me to the fortified city? Who will lead me to Edom?

The forces of Edom still needed to be faced. The "fortified city" is almost certainly a reference to Petra – the capital city of the Edomites, carved into the rock and seemingly impervious to assault. As David thought about attacking Petra, he had to confess his inability. He simply didn't have the military ability to overthrow it. Only God would be able to accomplish a victory like this. The question is - Would he?

¹⁰Have you not rejected us, O God? You do not go forth, O God, with our armies.

Do you see the struggle of faith here?? It's the conflict between what we know to be true concerning God's holiness and God's love. David believes that God is a God of steadfast love – and yet Israel's sin is real, and Israel's God is holy. But under the banner of Sovereign love David is able to boldly pray.

¹¹ Oh, grant us help against the foe, for vain is the salvation of man!

Isn't that the believer's prayer?? Oh, God grant me help against my foes. Grant me help against the weakness of my flesh. Grant me help against the temptations that I face. Grant me help in my time of trouble and fear and doubt. Vain is the salvation of man. There is no help for my soul in the world of men. Thou must save, and thou alone!

This is our prayer! And that prayer rests on the assurance of victory!

¹² With God we shall do valiantly; it is he who will tread down our foes.

David leans upon his God. If God is for us – who can be against us? If God, the Living, Almighty God of heaven and earth is with us - well then there is nothing to fear and everything to hope! If God is with us – our foes don't stand a chance. He, our God, will tread them down! All we need to know for confidence and joy even in times of loving discipline is that God is truly with us!

How could we know that to be true? How could we be utterly certain of this one fact? Have you ever heard of Immanuel? Isaiah prophesied it.

“Behold the virgin shall conceive and bear a son and they shall call his name Immanuel which means” – what? “God with us”.

That's what His name means! Jesus is defined as “God with us”. In other words, Jesus is God with us and God for us. He is the banner lifted over the battlefield of our lives. All we need to do is run to him. And He calls you to come – “Come to me, all you who are weary and heavy laden, and I will give you rest.”

With Jesus we shall do valiantly! He has already tread down our foes. The Devil is already a beaten enemy. The world is already a conquered foe. The flesh is already nailed to the cross in the flesh of Christ and we are not under its bondage anymore! And because of His great victory over our enemies – we shall do valiantly. We shall overcome the enemies of our soul by the blood of the Lamb and the Word of our testimony. We shall fight, with tears, with wounds, but with success - even heroic success as we fight looking to Jesus, listening to his voice and leaning on his power.

God wants you to have a vision in your mind of your destiny in Christ. God wants you to see yourself robed with valor and honor in the presence of God. That is your destiny in Jesus Christ. And the way we get there is by looking and listening and leaning. In whatever trial you are in today, in whatever temptation or fear you face today – look,

listen and lean. Look to Jesus – the author and perfecter of our faith. “Listen to Him” – that’s what the voice thundered from heaven on the Mount of Transfiguration. Lean on his strength. His grace is sufficient for you. And, in Jesus, you shall do valiantly. Amen.