

# **“A SETBACK WHEN ALL SEEMS WELL”**

## **PSALM 60**

**Pastor Keith E. Gephart**

### **INTRODUCTION**

Two campaigns against Syrians:

- 1) The one described in II Sam. 10 in combination with the Ammonites that eventuated in a larger battle at Helam beyond the Jordan where the Syrians were largely defeated. That campaign led to the unfortunate events described in chapters 11-12 with Bathsheba.
- 2) The one described in II Sam. 8:3-8 that took place in Syria and led to the complete subjection of Syria to Israel.
- 3) Evidently, while David was engaged in this far-away campaign, Edom revolted and made a large incursion into the land of Israel and caused serious havoc—not described anywhere in II Samuel. This psalm preserves the account of terrible defeat and calamity and David’s heartbreak over it.
- 4) It is very likely that the incident with Bathsheba occurred before this campaign in Syria and may help to explain why God had allowed such a devastating defeat to Israel.
- 5) After defeating the Syrians, Joab returned to defeat the Edomites in the valley of Salt, South of Dead Sea, killing initially 12, 000 with a later total of 18, 000.

When we read II Samuel 8, we get the impression of many decisive victories and get no inkling of any setbacks. So many times in the Christian life and in ministry we see blessing after blessing and then all of a sudden we experience a sharp setback! What happened? Where is God? How could He allow this to happen? David’s shock and dismay is all too typical of what happens to us.

### **THE GOD WHO GIVES US SUCCESS IS ALSO THE GOD WHO BRINGS US DISCIPLINE AND SETBACKS!**

- I. **GOD—WHAT ARE YOU DOING? (1-3)**
  - A. Four sharp verbs of rejection, brokenness, anger—and a plea for restoration.
  - B. Four verbs showing the devastating consequences like an earthquake—quake, split open, tottering—and a plea for “healing” (2).
  - C. Two descriptions of hard experiences: “see/experience hardship”; given us “wine of staggering”
  - D. The last statement implies that David and his people have been complicit in behavior that led to such disciplinary punishment: This kind of punishment “comes of men’s own desperate indulgence of their pride, folly, passions. When men *will* drink presumptuously of the cup of their own wickedness, God forces it as it were into their hands till they have drained the very dregs as the cup of His wrath. Thus God punishes evil with greater evil, pride with presumptuous pride, folly with more desperate folly.”
- II. **YOU ARE OUR BANNER AND OUR DELIVERANCE (4-5).**
  - A. A Banner for those who fear God. (4)
  - B. A banner lifted up from before the bow of the enemy [“bow” here a better rendering than “truth”]
  - C. God’s “beloved” need deliverance (5).
  - D. “Save” with your hand of power—right hand. “Answer us.”
- III. **GOD REVEALS HIMSELF TO HIS SERVANT (6-8)**

This is a powerful anthropomorphic statement of God Himself, assuring his servant of His presence and power. Some think that David speaks here on the basis of God’s promises such as II Sam. 7.

  - A. He speaks on the basis of His holiness—he will punish the wicked and bless His people.
  - B. He is the victorious warrior who portions out His rightful possession (6-7)

1. Portion and measure out both Shechem and the valley of Succoth—two early stopping places of Jacob when returning from Paddan-Aram (same area which David had just defeated!—Gen. 33)
  2. Possessor of the entire land:
    - a. Gilead and Manasseh—territory of Reuben and Gad east of Jordan; Bashan E. of Jordan
    - b. Ephraim—main tribe in central Israel—powerful warriors and thus “strength/helmet” of My head.
    - c. Judah—main tribe in southern Israel—the tribe from which rulers/scepter came.
  - C. The Enemies of Israel are degraded (8)
    1. Moab is only good to be a washbasin for dirty feet.
    2. Edom is like a servant to whom one tosses his dirty shoe.
    3. Philistia cries out forced allegiance to God (or cries out in dismay).
- So then, God, if all this is true, why are we currently in defeat; who will give us victory?

#### IV. GOD IS THE ANSWER (9-12)

- A. Man is not able to help us—human confederacies have just proven unsuccessful with Aram being defeated and unable to help Ammon (11b—man’s deliverance is **vain**).
- B. God has not been helping us
  1. Who will bring us into the fortified/besieged city/Petra? That is into Edom (9)?
  2. Has not God rejected us up to this point? (10)
  3. Will He not go forth with David’s/Israel’s armies?
- C. God, please help us against our adversary (11a).
- D. Through God we will gather strength and “do valiantly.” (12a)
- E. God will tread down/subdue our enemies—especially Edom (12b).

#### CONCLUSION

Just when David needed the Lord most, He spoke to him in the majestic words of vv. 6-8. David was at a low point in his life and felt rejected by the Lord. At the end of the Psalm he basically asks, “Lord, if you don’t help me/us, who will? There is nowhere else for us to turn. Man’s help is vain. I need You, O Lord!

Indeed, God gave a “banner” to be displayed by His people so that they could have victory.

He allows us at times to experience hardship and to feel rejected. He does discipline us in His righteous anger. Our lives may seem in total disarray like after an earthquake. We stagger as though in a drunken state. But, **God does deliver His beloved (v. 5)**. His right hand is powerful enough for any problem.

In His holiness He claims His people—His possession.

In His holiness He punishes and judges the wicked who harass and harm His people.

Through God we will do valiantly!

**THE GOD WHO GIVES US SUCCESS IS ALSO THE GOD WHO BRINGS US DISCIPLINE AND SETBACKS!**