



**History meets Reality
God is Faithful even when We Are Not
Psalm 60**

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Psalm 60

“For the music director; according to Shushan Eduth. A Mikhtam of David, to teach; when he fought with Aram-naharaim and Aram-zobah, and Joab returned, and killed twelve thousand of Edom in the Valley of Salt. God, You have rejected us. You have broken us; You have been angry; restore us! You have made the land quake, You have split it open; Heal its cracks, for it sways. You have made Your people experience hardship; You have given us wine to drink that makes us stagger. You have given a banner to



those who fear You, That it may be displayed because of the truth. Selah That Your beloved may be rescued, Save us with Your right hand, and answer us! God has spoken in His holiness: "I will triumph, I will divide up Shechem, and measure out the Valley of Succoth. "Gilead is Mine, and Manasseh is Mine; Ephraim also is the helmet of My head; Judah is My scepter. "Moab is My washbowl; I will throw My sandal over Edom; Shout loud, Philistia, because of Me!" Who will bring me into the besieged city? Who will lead me to Edom? Have You Yourself not rejected us, God? And will You not go out with our armies, God? Oh give us help against the enemy, For rescue by man is worthless. Through God we will do valiantly, And it is He who will trample down our enemies." (NASB 2020)

Back at the beginning of this psalm, we get a picture of when it was written, during the battles outlined in 2 Samuel 8:1-14.

2 Samuel 8:1-14

"Now it happened afterward that David defeated the Philistines and subdued them; and David took control of the chief city from the hand of the Philistines. And He defeated Moab, and measured them with the line, making them lie down on the ground; and he measured two lines to put to death, and a full line to keep alive. And the Moabites became servants to David, bringing tribute. Then David defeated Hadadezer, the son of Rehob king of Zobah, as he went to restore his power at the Euphrates River. And David captured from him 1,700 horsemen and twenty thousand foot soldiers; and David hamstringed almost all the chariot horses, but left enough of them for a hundred chariots. When the Arameans of Damascus came to help Hadadezer, king of Zobah, David killed twenty-two thousand men among the Arameans. Then David put garrisons among the Arameans of Damascus, and the Arameans became servants to David, bringing tribute. And the LORD helped David wherever he went. David took the shields of gold which were carried by the servants of Hadadezer, and brought them to Jerusalem. And from Betah and Berothai, cities of Hadadezer, King David took a very large amount of bronze. Now when Toi king of Hamath heard that David had defeated the whole army of Hadadezer, Toi sent his son Joram to King David to greet him and bless him, because he had fought Hadadezer and defeated him; for Hadadezer had been at war with Toi. And Joram brought with him articles of silver, gold, and bronze. King David also consecrated these gifts to the LORD, with the silver and gold that he had consecrated from all the nations which he had subdued: from Aram, Moab, the sons of Ammon, the Philistines, Amalek, and from the spoils of Hadadezer, son of Rehob, king of Zobah. So David made a name for himself when he returned from killing eighteen thousand Arameans in the Valley of Salt. He also put garrisons in Edom. In all Edom he put garrisons, and all the Edomites became servants to David. And the LORD helped David wherever he went." (NASB 2020)

As we read through the events that are specifically referred to here in this psalm, we struggle to see anything close to the type of reversal that David addresses in the beginning of the psalm. We see references to victory prior to verse 1 in the superscription, but where is the failure? The progression of the battles, also seen in 1 Chronicles 18:1-13 begins in the area of Gath and then moving north towards the Euphrates and finally towards the south near the Dead Sea.

We do not see it in the records of the events, but psalm 60 has a lament up front that makes one wonder if in the midst of the battles taking place, was there a reversal that was in effect for a short time.

Or is the Lord using David, as he writes from all the great victory the Lord is providing under His blessing and leadership and looking back to the days in the past under King Saul when the nation was defeated by the Philistines.

When Saul became King, Israel had been under the judges and suffered time and time again due to their sin. God would raise up a judge to save them but then they would go down even further than before. The singular point of defeat being the capture of the Ark of the Covenant while Samuel was still a young man. I think that what David is doing here is he is beginning with a history lesson.



This is important for us even today. One of the things we tend to do as a culture is forget our own history. We make assumptions based on the current environment and forget that there are also long running themes in history. The Bible addresses them but we forget them.

There is intelligent evil in the universe that wants all of us dead and is in active warfare against their own creator. And there is a God, our creator, who loves us and is preparing a place for those who follow Him, to be with Him for all eternity.

What we see in human history is that warfare played out in the lives of humans who either follow the Lord, or don't follow the Lord.

Many commentaries make assumptions here that there was some kind of reversal in the near term that led David to write this. I do not see any of that in the text or even in the extant history of that time period. This leads me back to David taking the longer view and applying the current blessing and victories being provided by the Lord against the recent rather dismal history of the people in order to show how God has and is delivering them.

I also believe part of this is to put everyone's eyes on the Lord and get them off David.

This is also not only a history lesson but is a prophetic picture of Israel at the end of the Great Tribulation. David begins his history lesson knowing where the nation is coming from. The time that Saul spent chasing after David when he was supposed to be taking care of the nation, was a trying time for the nation. "During his government it had suffered from internal strife, and his reign was closed by an overwhelming disaster at Gilboa. David found himself the possessor of a tottering throne, troubled with the double evil of faction at home, and invasion from abroad." (Spurgeon n.d., 27)

David knew why there were various issues with the nation and the government, the Lord had been displeased with the people.

Psalm 60:1–2

"God, You have rejected us. You have broken us; You have been angry; restore us! You have made the land quake, You have split it open; Heal its cracks, for it sways." (NASB 2020)

David begins by outlining the status of the nation as he came to power. A very different picture than what he sees after the triumph of the latest battles. As David begins, he reflects what it was he prayed in the early days, it appeared as if God had rejected them, so David asked for restoration.

Why is it that God, after protecting David and growing him in his faith for almost 10 years, would choose the near downfall of the nation as the point to give him the crown? David had learned during that time to rely wholly and completely on the Lord and as he began combat operations on behalf of the nation, he is seen asking for guidance and direction from the Lord.

And as he moves forward the Lord gives him victory. But he started from a very humble place, being on the lam and running from a King who was ignoring his primary job allowing the enemy to come up against him eventually losing the battle at Gilboa, a pivotal time for Israel. And yes, there was also a threat of civil war as David consolidated power.

The Lord does a similar work in and through us as well. As we begin to step out in faith for the Lord, we would love to see the magnificent victories like the ones David is seeing here leading to this psalm. But for David, the background was one of being made humble and a nation that had all but completely rejected their Lord. He is now bringing them back into His presence while also turning towards completing what Joshua started as well.



For some of us, as we step out in faith, if we achieve a huge victory with the Lord on day one, many of us would have a tendency to let it go to our heads. Paul warned about what some of our churches do today with “celebrity” converts.

1 Timothy 3:1–7

“The saying is trustworthy: If anyone aspires to the office of overseer, he desires a noble task. Therefore an overseer must be above reproach, the husband of one wife, sober-minded, self-controlled, respectable, hospitable, able to teach, not a drunkard, not violent but gentle, not quarrelsome, not a lover of money. He must manage his own household well, with all dignity keeping his children submissive, for if someone does not know how to manage his own household, how will he care for God’s church? **He must not be a recent convert, or he may become puffed up with conceit and fall into the condemnation of the devil. Moreover, he must be well thought of by outsiders, so that he may not fall into disgrace, into a snare of the devil.**” (ESV)

Embedded in his instructions regarding those who go into pastoral ministry, is a warning. The warning is not about the relative age of an individual, but it is about how long they have known the Lord and their spiritual maturity. Not to thrust baby believers into the spotlight before they are ready to deal with it.

David had over a decade of things he needed to learn. Paramount to that, was knowing what do when someone really did want to kill you. He kept staying even when Saul had thrown a spear at him. The first time was in 1 Samuel 18:11 and then again in 1 Samuel 19:10. That time his wife told him to run which he finally did.

Later in his life, David would know when it was time to go, he had learned that lesson. When he received the message about Absalom in 2 Samuel 15:13 & 14, he evacuated from Jerusalem immediately with what he had. Lesson learned. Spiritual maturity achieved.

Sometimes you stay and pray, and then sometimes, the Lord has you leave. Even for those who are spiritually mature, a victory in the Lord can still be a moment of danger. Many times, we are attacked in our strength, not our weakness. Satan knows where we are vulnerable and has a history of actions observing us to back up when he finally attacks.

1 Corinthians 10:12–13

“Therefore let anyone who thinks that he stands take heed lest he fall. No temptation has overtaken you that is not common to man. God is faithful, and he will not let you be tempted beyond your ability, but with the temptation he will also provide the way of escape, that you may be able to endure it.” (ESV)

Getting back to our text, David reflects that the nation was beginning to see the beginnings of the curses that Moses had warned the people of back in Leviticus 26.

Leviticus 26:14–17

“But if you will not listen to me and will not do all these commandments, if you spurn my statutes, and if your soul abhors my rules, so that you will not do all my commandments, but break my covenant, then I will do this to you: I will visit you with panic, with wasting disease and fever that consume the eyes and make the heart ache. And you shall sow your seed in vain, for your enemies shall eat it. I will set my face against you, and you shall be struck down before your enemies. Those who hate you shall rule over you, and you shall flee when none pursues you.” (ESV)

This is clearly stated discipline that the Lord warned about in advance.



For us as followers of Jesus, there are those tough times where we are going through a trial as He grows to become more like the Lord. He is molding us and shaping us into who He wants us to be. He did that with David. But since we are His kids, there are also those times where He disciplines us.

Proverbs 3:12

“For whom the LORD loves He disciplines, Just as a father disciplines the son in whom he delights.” (NASB 2020)

David is referring to that discipline here as he begins by asking for restoration. The nation placed themselves into this position willingly and due to sin. He knows about that kind of discipline as well as the pain of growing in the Lord kind as well.

Hebrews 12:7–11

“It is for discipline that you endure; God deals with you as with sons; for what son is there whom his father does not discipline? But if you are without discipline, of which all have become partakers, then you are illegitimate children and not sons. Furthermore, we had earthly fathers to discipline us, and we respected them; shall we not much more be subject to the Father of spirits, and live? For they disciplined us for a short time as seemed best to them, but **He disciplines us for our good, so that we may share His holiness.** For the moment, all discipline seems not to be pleasant, but painful; yet to those who have been trained by it, afterward it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness.” (NASB 2020)

God often gives sorrow before success. This principle is true for individuals and is also true for churches. It was even true for our Lord Jesus Christ—the cross came before the crown. It was true for David and all Israel in Psalm 60. God gave painful defeats to David and the nation before he gave them great victory. (Johnston 2025, 174)

The history lesson is painful but required. Just as God gave David tears first, He has done the same with the nation.

Psalm 60:1–4

“God, You have rejected us. You have broken us; You have been angry; restore us! You have made the land quake, You have split it open; Heal its cracks, for it sways. You have made Your people experience hardship; You have given us wine to drink that makes us stagger. You have given a banner to those who fear You, That it may be displayed because of the truth. Selah” (NASB 2020)

In the midst of the apostasy and faithlessness of the nation during the time of the judges as well as under Saul, there has always been those who have remained faithful. God was always fully in control of the victories as well as the defeats to discipline His own.

Isaiah 45:7

“I am the one who forms light and creates darkness; the one who brings about peace and creates calamity. I am the LORD, who accomplishes all these things.” (NET 2nd ed.)

As the nation goes through this, there are those who remain faithful and the language David uses shows us that everyone around them knows it. It is like a banner over them.

During the Tribulation, the nation will also go through discipline as well as judgment but once again, there are those who remain faithful to the Lord and will emerge into the Kingdom at the end of the Tribulation.

Charles Spurgeon says the following: “Their afflictions had led them to exhibit holy fear, and then being fitted for the Lord’s favour, he gave them an ensign, which would be both a rallying point for their hosts, a proof that he had sent them to fight, and a guarantee of victory. The bravest men are usually intrusted



with the banner, and it is certain that those who fear God most have less fear of man than any others. The Lord has given us the standard of the gospel, let us live to uphold it, and if needful die to defend it.” (Spurgeon n.d., 29)

The temptation for us these days is to give into the world and allow the world to dictate how we live. Again, how did the nation live during the time of the judges?

Judges 21:25

“In those days there was no king in Israel. Everyone did what was right in his own eyes.” (ESV)

Living in the flesh and for the flesh rather than for the Lord is what produced the defeats in battle and the hardships. All were promised by the Lord through Moses and they all did indeed take place. David, as a type of Christ is leading his people out of the darkness of those days but, as we learn from our study of scripture, they would go back to the darkness.

Being faithful then is the same as being faithful now, it is a decision you make.

Romans 8:6–9

“So letting your sinful nature control your mind leads to death. **But letting the Spirit control your mind leads to life and peace.** For the sinful nature is always hostile to God. It never did obey God’s laws, and it never will. That’s why those who are still under the control of their sinful nature can never please God. But you are not controlled by your sinful nature. You are controlled by the Spirit if you have the Spirit of God living in you. (And remember that those who do not have the Spirit of Christ living in them do not belong to him at all.)” (NLT)

The rally point for the nation was to be those who were still fearing and following the Lord while others all around them were not. The rally point for us today as followers of Jesus Christ is His Holy Spirit and His word. As we allow His word and the Spirit to change us and as we rely on Him to keep us in the Spirit and away from the flesh, we to reflect to the world who we follow.

Psalms 60:4–5

“You have given a banner to those who fear You, That it may be displayed because of the truth. Selah **That Your beloved may be rescued, Save us with Your right hand, and answer us!**” (NASB 2020)

God raises His banner over the faithful, He is the one marking those to be rescued. We see a similar thought in Ezekiel as the Lord prepares Jerusalem for conquest by Babylon.

Ezekiel 9:4–6

“He said to him, “Walk through the streets of Jerusalem and put a mark on the foreheads of all who weep and sigh because of the detestable sins being committed in their city.” Then I heard the LORD say to the other men, “Follow him through the city and kill everyone whose forehead is not marked. Show no mercy; have no pity! Kill them all—old and young, girls and women and little children. But do not touch anyone with the mark. Begin right here at the Temple.” So they began by killing the seventy leaders.” (NLT)

God put His mark, His banner on those who are faithful to Him. This reflects faith in the Lord to rescue and save those who are His. “Biblical faith is not optimism, as some think. Nor is it a positive mental attitude worked up to help us through tough times. According to the Bible, faith is believing the Word of God and acting on it, which is what David expresses in this psalm and what he apparently did in actuality.” (Boice 2005, 499)

David believed fully what God had promised to him earlier.



2 Samuel 7:8–11

“Now go and say to my servant David, ‘This is what the LORD of Heaven’s Armies has declared: I took you from tending sheep in the pasture and selected you to be the leader of my people Israel. I have been with you wherever you have gone, and I have destroyed all your enemies before your eyes. **Now I will make your name as famous as anyone who has ever lived on the earth! And I will provide a homeland for my people Israel, planting them in a secure place where they will never be disturbed. Evil nations won’t oppress them as they’ve done in the past, starting from the time I appointed judges to rule my people Israel. And I will give you rest from all your enemies. “Furthermore, the LORD declares that he will make a house for you—a dynasty of kings!”** (NLT)

David was acting on that promise as he pressed the battles that lead to the writing of this psalm. He sees how the Lord has moved and take care of His people and David is part of that. He is being used to rescue the Lord’s beloved.

Psalms 60:6–8

“God has spoken in His holiness: “I will triumph, I will divide up Shechem, and measure out the Valley of Succoth. Gilead is Mine, and Manasseh is Mine; Ephraim also is the helmet of My head; Judah is My scepter. Moab is My washbowl; I will throw My sandal over Edom; Shout loud, Philistia, because of Me!”” (NASB 2020)

This is God saying what He will do on behalf of His people. What David is in the process of doing with the Lord’s help. David knows that the victory is from the Lord and not from his own skills. He also knows that even though it has been promised, he will still ask for it as well which we will see in verse 11.

This is the Lord restating what He has previously said would be the possession of Israel, and David is picking up where Joshua left off.

Genesis 15:18–21

“On that day the LORD made a covenant with Abram, saying, “To your descendants I have given this land, From the river of Egypt as far as the great river, the river Euphrates: the land of the Kenite, the Kenizzite, the Kadmonite, the Hittite, the Perizzite, the Rephaim, the Amorite, the Canaanite, the Girgashite, and the Jebusite.”” (NASB 2020)

This is what Saul was supposed to do but failed very early in his reign when he failed to follow the instructions of the Lord (1 Samuel 15:9-11).

Speaking more accurately, the substance of these promises is that the whole land east and west of the Jordan as well as the surrounding territory from the river of Egypt to the great river, the Euphrates, was to be Israel’s possession. That pronouncement of God stands secure; no one can invalidate it. Therefore by way of exemplification the nation confidently asserts its possession of the various parts of the country. (Leupold 1959, 450)

We read this and see a bunch of place names, but these are also representative of the history of the nation.

Shechem is where Jacob stopped upon his return to the land after meeting with Esau even buying a plot of land there. It was also where Dinah was raped and after convincing all the men of Shechem to be circumcised leaving them thinking the family would now become part of the community, that Levi and Simeon, her brothers, went in and killed every single male in the city (Genesis 34).

Succoth was Jacob’s preliminary stopping point prior to Shechem. In other words, territory east and west of the Jordan.



That is also represented by God's assertion that Gilead and Manasseh is mine. Indicating an even larger claimed per the promise in Genesis 15.

Ephraim was the most powerful tribe west of the Jordan and Judah became the ruling tribe of the nation as well as the tribe Messiah would come from. The language is reflective of full control of the area west of the Jordan.

Leupold tells us that "Moab, the frequent ally of Edom, is given a very inferior position by being described as Israel's "washbasin." This becomes all the more humiliating when it is recalled that a vessel for the ablution of the feet is very likely being referred to. There is no reference to the Dead Sea, in which, since it is adjacent to Moab, the giant, God, washes His feet.

"On Edom I throw my shoes" implies: I consider Edom as very menial, perhaps like a slave to whom one tosses dusty shoes for cleaning, or like a mean piece of furniture on which dusty shoes are thrown after they are removed." (Leupold 1959, 451)

As for Philistia, they will be conquered because of the Lord.

What this is here is a restatement of God telling His people that He will fulfill His promises for the land. This also is inclusive for the remnant after the end of the Tribulation.

God has promised the land to Israel and the intent shown here is that they will indeed have it.

How confident is David in this promise? He has already been operating in it as exemplified by his military victories and as he is involved in mopping up Edom.

Psalm 60:9–12

"Who will bring me into the besieged city? Who will lead me to Edom? Have You Yourself not rejected us, God? And will You not go out with our armies, God? Oh give us help against the enemy, For rescue by man is worthless. Through God we will do valiantly, And it is He who will trample down our enemies." (NASB 2020)

Even though the nation had experienced reversals in the past due to unbelief, David continues to be confident in the promises of God.

For you and me today, we have all the promises of God as well. Our task is not to take the land, but to take the world. Our orders from the King are clear and He promises help against the enemy as well.

Matthew 28:19–20

"Go, therefore, and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to follow all that I commanded you; and behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age." (NASB 2020)

We too are in a consistently hostile environment, just as David and the nation was and we too must rely on the Lord for protection, as well as for the armor we are provided and the weapons we are privileged to use on His behalf.

Ephesians 6:10–17

"Finally, be strengthened in the Lord and in the strength of his power. Clothe yourselves with the full armor of God so that you will be able to stand against the schemes of the devil. For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the powers, against the world rulers of this darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavens. For this reason,



take up the full armor of God, so that you may be able to stand your ground on the evil day, and having done everything, to stand. **Stand firm therefore, by fastening the belt of truth around your waist, by putting on the breastplate of righteousness, by fitting your feet with the preparation that comes from the good news of peace, and in all of this, by taking up the shield of faith with which you can extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one. And take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit (which is the word of God).**" (NET 2nd ed.)

We have the privilege of being allowed to use the full armor of God, His armor. And as we engage in combat with the enemy every single day, there is something else we must remember, we are fighting from the side of a victory that has already been achieved on our behalf by Jesus Christ.

John 16:33

"I have told you these things so that in me you may have peace. In the world you have trouble and suffering, but take courage—I **have conquered the world.**" (NET 2nd ed.)

Jesus conquered the world, and even better than that, because we have placed our faith in Jesus Christ, we have joined with Him as overcomers.

1 John 5:4–5

"For everyone who has been born of God overcomes the world. And this is the victory that has overcome the world—our faith. Who is it that overcomes the world except the one who believes that Jesus is the Son of God?" (ESV)

Colossians 2:13–15

"And you, who were dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, God made alive together with him, having forgiven us all our trespasses, by canceling the record of debt that stood against us with its legal demands. This he set aside, nailing it to the cross. He disarmed the rulers and authorities and put them to open shame, by triumphing over them in him." (ESV)

Our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ has already achieved the victory, provided us the necessary armor and tools for the continuing mopping up operations, as well as provided us all that we need to have to continue to assault the gates of hell itself and take more for the King.

Matthew 16:18

"And I tell you, you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it." (ESV)

This is not Jesus making Peter the first Pope. The site that Jesus choose to make this pronouncement, Caesarea Philippi also known as Panias, was a world famous location for the worship of Pan and home to a temple of Zeus. Twenty other temples have been found in the immediate area. This area was considered by many Jews of the day to be the gates of hell and it is here that Peter makes his confession of who Jesus is when Jesus asked in verse 15 "who do you say I am?" Peter responded with the truth, He is the Christ, and then the follow-up.

Jesus says he will build his church—and the "gates of hell" will not prevail against it. We often think of this phrase as though God's people are in a posture of having to bravely fend off Satan and his demons. This simply isn't correct. Gates are defensive structures, not offensive weapons. The kingdom of God is the aggressor. Jesus begins at ground zero in the cosmic geography of both testaments to announce the great reversal. It is the gates of hell that are under assault—and they will not hold up against the Church. Hell will one day be Satan's tomb. (Heiser 2025)



Psalm 60:11–12

“Oh give us help against the enemy, For rescue by man is worthless. Through God we will do valiantly, And it is He who will trample down our enemies.” (NASB 2020)

David asked for help against the enemy even though he knew God’s promises. We do too. When you and I step out in faith, following the Lord where He is leading us, many times we say the same thing, “if God doesn’t show up, I’m cooked.” This is what David is saying. This is also what the remnant will be saying as they gather together to pray and ask Messiah to save them.

Hosea 5:15

“I will go and return to my place, till they admit their guilt and search for me, seeking me eagerly in their distress.” (CJB)

Zechariah 12:9–10

““When that day comes, I will seek to destroy all nations attacking Yerushalayim; and I will pour out on the house of David and on those living in Yerushalayim a spirit of grace and prayer; and they will look to me, whom they pierced.” They will mourn for him as one mourns for an only son; they will be in bitterness on his behalf like the bitterness for a firstborn son.” (CJB)

Our Lord promises to show up. David knew this as well and reflected it in Psalm 33.

Psalm 33:16–20

“No king is saved by the multitude of an army; A mighty man is not delivered by great strength. A horse is a vain hope for safety; Neither shall it deliver any by its great strength. Behold, the eye of the LORD is on those who fear Him, On those who hope in His mercy, To deliver their soul from death, And to keep them alive in famine. Our soul waits for the LORD; He is our help and our shield.” (NKJV)

Let’s pray.

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