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When God's People Face Difficult Days; Psalm 60
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Introduction – Difficult days are part of this life. That is a fact. We know that's a fact. We know that no one lives a life free of difficulty. We know that even those who appear to live above the fray still secretly battle the same things the rest of us face. No one is free from trouble in this life. Trouble comes in many forms, expresses itself in many ways, and tends to do so often. I always go back to the wise, wise words of Job – Life is short and full of trouble.

Again, we know that and we believe that it is true, and yet, when difficult days come, they still send us into a tailspin, don't they? We get upset. We get frustrated. We get discouraged and depressed. We lose heart and joy. We question God. Why do bad things happen to good people? Why do bad things happen to God's people? We question, "Lord, I'm trying to do what is right. Why is this happening to me?"

Now, we also know, of course, that not only will we face difficult days but the Bible actually answers all the questions that difficult days raise. The Bible teaches us the reasons for difficult days. Sometimes difficulty comes as the result of sin, either our own sin or the sin of others. Sometimes difficulty comes because we live in a fallen world. Things do not operate as they should because creation is cloaked in a blanket of darkness. Sometimes difficulty comes because evil is present in this world. Sometimes difficulty comes because God is teaching us something that we cannot learn or will not pay attention to without the presence of difficulty. Sometimes difficulty comes to pull our hearts away from the world and draw us closer to our true joy in God. Sometimes difficulty comes so that God might strengthen our faith in Him and His promises. No matter the difficulty, God has a purpose, God has a reason, and through it all, God is working all things together for the good of those who love Him.

Psalm 60 is born out of difficult days. The enemies of God's people have attacked them at a time of weakness. Joab, the commander of Israel's forces, has gone to face another conflict, so Edom plans to move in while Joab is away and take the upper hand. That's where we land in Psalm 60. Here are 3 things for us to remember in difficult days.

- I. God Disciplines His People That They Might Return to Him (vv1-5)
 - a. First, David acknowledges that God is the one who is ultimately at work. It is the Edomites who are attacking, but David cries, “O God, you have rejected us.” Edom was a secondary means. God is the primary mover in this situation to discipline His people for their idolatry and forgetfulness of God. In other words, God sent Edom to attack Israel in Joab’s absence to get Israel’s attention!
 - i. God works the same way today. Could it be that Covid is a wake up call? Could it be that the violence and upending of morality in our day is a wake up call? Are we hearing the disciplinary hand of the Lord or are we hitting the snooze button?
 - b. David says, “You’ve made the land to quake.” In other words, God has removed all the stability that Israel once enjoyed. If 2020 has any message for the church today, is it not that God has removed the stability we have enjoyed for so long? From Covid to our election to the constant floods on the gulf coast and fires on the west coast, 2020 has seen a shake up. The Bible is always relevant, isn’t it?
 - c. David goes on to say, “You have made your people see hard things.”
 - i. You see my friends you can see events purely from the world’s perspective or you can take a step back and see that God is doing a work for the good of His people.
 - ii. David could lay the difficulty solely at the feet of Edom or he could discern that God is disciplining His people that they might return to Him.
 - iii. We can explain natural disaster by appealing to global warming. We can explain inequality and injustice in terms of power and privilege. We can come up with a worldview that is solely viewed in the world. Or we can look to God and see that sin is the root and the gospel is the cure.
 - d. In fact, that’s exactly what David does here in Psalm 60. He cries for God to be merciful – “oh, restore us,” and he sees God’s path of restoration is already there – vv4-5.
 - e. If we would simply turn to the Lord and cry for His mercy, we too would discover that He has already made provision for our restoration. He has already made provision for this world. He has

already made provision for inequality and injustice and racism. He has already set up a banner – and that banner is Christ!

- f. The banner is the rallying point, the gathering point, the place to make your stand. That place is Christ. If we would flee to Him we will find that He will deliver us, He will save us.
 - g. Difficult days are God's means of discipline. It's God's way of forcing us to take our eyes off the world, to take our eyes off of our own resources and answers and look to the banner He has set up.
 - h. A second thing to remember in difficult days.
- II. God Distinguishes Between His People and His Enemies (vv6-8)
- a. You see what God is declaring here – the land of His people and the land of His enemies – it all belongs to God. It's all His.
 - i. In v6 – Shechem and Succoth were lands promised to God's people, yet to be inhabited by God's people – but God will remain true to His promise.
 - ii. In v7 – Gilead, Manasseh, Ephraim, and Judah all refer to the land of God's people.
 - iii. In v8 – Moab, Edom, and Philistia all refer to lands of God's enemies.
 - iv. They are all under His domain.
 - b. God knows those who are His and those who are not, and He rules over every single one. Just as He did in the days of Noah, just as He did in the days of the Exodus, just as He does in Psalm 60, so He does also today.
 - c. Take heart believer while you endure difficult days – God knows His people and He rules over every people.
 - d. I sat up until 12:30 on election night and watched the results being reports and projected. The entire map of the US was divided into two colors – red and blue – showing by geography and by population just how divided we are. But as God's people, we know God reigns over red and blue. God is bigger than Democrat or Republican. We tend to divide everything and everyone – God rules over it all.
 - e. And He has His eyes on all of His people, whether they live in a red area or a blue area. It all belongs to God and He knows His people.
 - f. One more thing to remember in difficult days.

- III. God Delivers His People When They Return to Him (vv9-12)
 - a. Notice, God not only brought Edom to Israel to shake them up and wake them up and discipline them for departing from Him, but David knew it wasn't Edom alone – God was at work through Edom.
 - b. He also brought Joab back right on time to deliver His people, but David knew it wasn't Joab alone – God was at work through Joab.
 - c. Why? Because they turned to Him, acknowledged their sin, and cried out for His mercy. And Edom was defeated, not Israel.
 - d. What a lesson for us today, especially today. With God we shall do valiantly – but without Him we shall be destroyed.
 - e. God has set up a banner. No matter how dark or difficult the day may be. The banner is there, and it is Christ!

Conclusion – When God's people face difficult days, it all comes down to this: God is Sovereign and Christ is Savior.