

Psalms 58, 60

Psalms 60:4 You have given a banner to those who fear You, that it may be displayed because of the truth

In these two psalms, the activity of God requires that adjustments be made by man. This is a reality that we have trouble with in our culture that is that God is who He is, rather than who I imagine Him to be.

Psalms 58: The first section of this Psalm describes the problem that has come to David's attention. It is the problem of men presenting themselves as if they are righteous when they are not any such thing. David sees in these pompously self-righteous people a wickedness of heart that is demonstrated in what they do with their hands. They are as they are from birth, liars from day 1. The reference to snakes is very close to the content of what Paul quoted in Romans 3 and Paul's point in that chapter is that "all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God." Here, David directs our attention to the effect of the wicked, "Their poison is like the poison of a serpent," and to the refusal of the wicked to change in any way, or to adjust their ways to the reality of God's existence and our consequent accountability to Him,

"They are like the deaf cobra that stops its ear, which will not heed the voice of charmers..."

The second part of the Psalm describes with powerful metaphor the punishment prepared by God for these wicked men. They are like a lion with broken teeth, a river that flows into the desert and dries up into nothing, an archer whose arrows are broken and harmless, a slug that is melted as it moves by the heat of the sun, a stillborn child that that speaks to what could have been, and a pot of nourishment that is never tasted. The suggestion of the last line of verse 9 could be that these metaphors describe both this life and the one to come.

Finally, the last section of the Psalm gives the perspective of the righteous toward what is observed of the wicked. This goes to the righteousness of God. For God to be righteous then the wicked must be judged and the obedience of the believer must be rewarded. If it is right for God to execute justice then it is right for the righteous to be glad when He does so. Not all accounts are settled on this side but ultimately, every account will be settled.

Psalms 60: The setting for this psalm was a military setback followed by a recovery and victory. While he was engaged by one army, another attacked a vulnerable position that had been left poorly defended. The discovery of the defeat was a shock to David and he emotionally went from a sense of betrayal to an acknowledgement of sin and a seeking of God's favor. The experience demonstrated the human focus on positive outcomes in tension with the divine focus on a pure and undivided partnership of purpose. David and the people had slipped, their defeat was a useful means that God employed to get their attention.

David then put it together, "You have given a banner to those who fear You, that it may be displayed because of the truth." God was not committed to Israel as much as He was committed to His purpose for Israel. When Israel came into submission to that purpose then the nation became unstoppable. God is not committed to blessing you as much as He is committed to those purposes that He has that can be accomplished by blessing you. Don't miss the significance of the prayer, "Your kingdom come, Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven."