



Coptic Orthodox Diocese of the Southern United States



The Holy Book of Psalms

Psalm 4

Bishop Youssef



Introduction

- This psalm is titled 'To the Chief Musician. With stringed instruments. A Psalm of David.'
- The title of the psalm indicates that it was directed toward the Chief Musician, whom some suppose to be a leader of choirs or musicians in David's time, such as Heman the singer or Asaph (1 Chronicles 6:33, 16:5-7, 25:6)
- Some suppose that, the Chief Musician, refers to the Lord Jesus, who is the Victorious Person; the Giver of victory



Introduction

- The title also tells us that the song was deliberately written to be accompanied with stringed instruments
- The title, according to the Septuagint, states "Unto the end, a psalm of David."
- According to St. Augustine Unto the End refers to Christ
- He says, "Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone that believes, Romans 10:4. For this "end" signifies perfection, not consumption."
- *Unto the end*, means also to some, to sing it to the end of our life
- The end is also the victory of David over all his enemy and he is the type of Jesus who will defeat Satan and all his followers



Introduction

- Some scholars see that the phrase "Unto the end" means that this psalm is to be sung always and constantly, because of its value and importance
- Many scholars consider this psalm a continuation to psalm 3 and is about the same event but was sung in an hour of still greater trial
- Psalms 4 was one of those repeated by St. Augustine at his conversion
- It appears to have been an evening hymn, sung by David
- In this psalm David poured out his complaint against malicious enemies and found peace and refuge in God



Introduction

Psalm outline:

- David Beseeches God for Help 4:1
- David Reasons with His Enemies 4:2-5
- Joy and Peace 4:6-8

David Beseeches God for Help

4:1



- David begins with a short passionate powerful and fervent prayer
- No man has a right to expect God to hear him if he does not call
- David did not want to just say some nice words toward heaven
- He needed God's attention to his present problem
- The prophet Isaiah spoke with sorrow about the lack of passion in Israel, "*And there is no one who calls on Your name, who stirs himself up to take hold of You*" (Isaiah 64:7)
- This is a good example of David *stirring himself up to take hold of God*
- David knew that his righteousness came from God

David Beseeches God for Help

4:1



- He calls upon the God who makes him righteous
- Only God is righteous in His nature, ways, and works, the just Judge of all
- David used past mercy as a ground for future help, “God, I know You have not blessed me to this point to abandon me, so please *have mercy on me*”
- St. John Chrysostom *says, “In your prayer you need to have confidence, and the object of your petition will be fully granted.”*
- He continues and say, “*David did not say, He hearkened to me, but of my righteousness, revealing his confidence in God and the fact that he habitually approaches Him with this attitude.*”

David Reasons with His Enemies 4:2-5



- *How long*, David asked a valid question
- Just *how long* will the ungodly keep their way?
- They cannot keep it forever, so they may as well abandon it *now* and be blessed
- *Will you turn my glory to shame*, Jesus experienced what David experienced
- Wicked men tried to turn almost every glorious thing in His ministry into *shame*
- *you sons of men*, They are worldly men who have their thoughts on things of this world

David Reasons with His Enemies 4:2-5



- They have not been grafted into the family of God and become sons of God
- He tells them that they *love worthlessness and seek after falsehood*, that is, lying, empty desires and hopes, vain pride, wicked deceptions
- He asks them *how long*; why do they need to continue to be satisfied in *turn my glory to shame*?
- *worthlessness*, Such as the placing of Absalom upon the throne, on which their hearts were set

David Reasons with His Enemies 4:2-5



- And such was the vain imagination of the Jews, with which they pleased themselves, that Jesus should die, and His name perish
- And such are all the attempts of wicked men to ruin and destroy the people of Christ; for *no weapon formed against them shall prosper*, (Isaiah 54:17)
- *seek falsehood*, Such were all the counsels and aims of the great men of Israel against David
- And so the Jews when they seek after another Messiah besides Jesus of Nazareth
- Now the psalmist suggests that these men were determined and continued in these sinful practices

David Reasons with His Enemies 4:2-5



- All their efforts would be in vain and fruitless
- What David reminds these men of is *that the LORD has set apart for Himself him who is godly*
- David knew that he and other godly people were set apart for God
- The Lord has a special place in His heart for the man who is godly
- The Lord will hear when I call unto him Although I am disgraced (verse 2), resisted, in many ways brought to shame, by you, yet still I am God's servant, set apart to his service, and therefore, He will heed, attend to and grant my prayer

David Reasons with His Enemies 4:2-5



- David here give the reason why they should not oppose or persecute him who is godly
- It is at their risk if they *offend one of these little ones*, whom God has *set apart for Himself*, Matthew 18:6
- God consider that those who touch them touch the apple of His eye
- And He will make their persecutors to know it, sooner or later
- They have an interest in heaven, God will hear them, and therefore let none dare to do them any harm, for God will hear their cry, Exodus 22:23

David Reasons with His Enemies 4:2-5



- This verse, 4, is quoted by St. Paul In (Ephesians 4:26)
- St. John Chrysostom says that the psalmist here does not dismiss anger, for it is useful, nor does he eliminate wrath, it is helpful too in dealing with wrongdoers and negligent
- But he says that the psalmist here speaks of wrongful anger and irrational wrath
- He says that it is alright to be angry for good reason as St. Peter with Sapphira
- Anger has been instilled in us for a reason not for sinning
- St. Augustine says that this verse can be interpreted in two ways

David Reasons with His Enemies 4:2-5



- Either be angry at ourselves because of our sins, so we have to offer true repentance and stop sinning
- Or, even if there arise an emotion in the soul which is not in our power, or if there is a reason to get angry, there is no reason for us to sin
- Consider the subject deeply before you attempt to act
- Do nothing rashly; do not justify one evil act by another
- With the mind we should serve the law of God, although with the flesh we as yet serve the law of sin, we must repent
- Perhaps David was telling himself to *Be angry, and do not sin*

David Reasons with His Enemies 4:2-5



- With the ungodliness around him, he had reason to *be angry*, but he had no reason to *sin*
- He reminded himself to not sin in his anger, and to find consolation in meditation before the Lord
- One good means of preventing sin is to be frequent and serious in *Meditate within your heart*
- Examine your thoughts by serious self-reflection
- Examine your consciences with respect to what you have done that day and if you have sinned, offer repentance
- We may need to differentiate between two kinds of meditation

David Reasons with His Enemies 4:2-5



- David here spoke of the biblical practice of meditation, not the Eastern practice of meditation
- In biblical meditation, we *fill* our heart and mind with God's word
- In eastern meditation, the idea is to *empty* the heart and mind, leaving it open potentially for deceiving spirits
- Selah - This, as explained before marks a musical pause
- The pause here would well accord with the message of meditation and the advice to *be still*

David Reasons with His Enemies 4:2-5



- Do not attempt to offer a sacrifice to God in your present rebellious and disobedient conduct
- Such a sacrifice would be a sin
- Turn to God from whom you have rebelled; and offer to Him a righteous sacrifice which is offered through repentance
- We must not only cease to do evil, but learn to do well
- St. John Chrysostom says, “refraining from evil alone is not sufficient, instead, the practice of good must be there as well... Along with righteousness God also asks us to put our trust in Him, to hope in Him, to place no confidence in things of this world but rather detach ourselves from everything and fix our minds on Him.”



Joy and Peace 4:6-8

- *There are many* Multitude of people
- St. John Chrysostom's comments on this verse is that those who were asking, "*Who will show us any good?*" are the confused multitude who lack judgement, locked in mindless thought
- They ask, "where is God's providence? Our lives are in such a mess, most of us are in need and poverty. What evidence is there of loving care?"
- All they desired was plenty of the wealth of this world, that they might enjoy abundance of the pleasures of senses
- They enquire, "Who will make us happy?" but do not apply themselves to God who alone can



Joy and Peace 4:6-8

- *Many*, Might be of David's followers, who are weary of waiting upon God, and ready to despair
- Or rather, of his enemies, and of the body of the people, who were either engaged against him, or at least unconcerned for him, and sought only their own survival and advantage
- They were hoping that Absalom's rebellion might prosper; that David might die and his son reign in his place, so the evil they wished to him was good to them
- Or they may be the words of the same men, expressing the desperate condition that David and his friends were in, which the psalmist represents in this manner, "who will show us any good?" none, they say will show them any good, neither God nor men



Joy and Peace 4:6-8

- They say, there is no help for him in God; he and his friends must inevitably perish
- David, and the few godly that followed him, held a different view from that wish, and joined in this prayer, *LORD, lift up the light of Your countenance upon us*
- Despite what his enemies said or thought, David trusted that the Lord would show him good
- *upon us*, He speaks, in this prayer, for others also
- David was seeking God's gracious presence, His love, communion with Him, and the comforts of His Spirit



Joy and Peace 4:6-8

- In the enjoyment of these things lay their good and happiness, and their safety also
- When we know that the face of God shines favorably on us, it puts *gladness* in the heart
- Though David was in distress, troubled by ungodly men all around, he could still have *gladness* in his *heart* because the Lord put it there
- God has looked on him, and so "*put gladness in his heart*" - a gladness which far exceeds that of his adversaries
- This *gladness* is, more than what they have when their corn and their wine are increased



Joy and Peace 4:6-8

- St. Augustine emphasizes that Gladness then is from inside where the light of God's face engraved and not to be sought outside
- For Christ dwells in the inner man
- So David was in outward safety and in inward tranquility of mind resting securely upon God's promises, and the care of His wise and gracious providence
- But those who are ungodly search for good that may be seen, outward good and they show no concern for the good things that are out of sight and are the objects of faith only



Joy and Peace 4:6-8

- St. John Chrysostom comments on verse 7 and writes that as if David was saying, “You have taught me to love wisdom, to overlook the things of this life, to know the things that are true and lasting, You have lifted my expectation upwards to sound hope, You have led me forward to the life to come, You have raised me from the enjoyment of present goods to the prospect of future goods.”
- Joy is not in external things
- David could sleep well at night, even in distressing times and surrounded by the ungodly



Joy and Peace 4:6-8

- He slept well because his safety was from the Lord, not from circumstances or even feelings
- David has a satisfaction in thinking that it is God only who watches over him
- All other help would be vain, unneeded
- Many lie down, and most sleep, daily, but how few lie down in peace with themselves and peace with God
- David had then two great blessings, rest and peace
- And the blessing of the confidence that he was safe, *O LORD, make me dwell in safety*



Joy and Peace 4:6-8

- *For You alone, O LORD*, This amazing expression of absolute confidence gives an excellent sense in connection with the context
- 'Many' had declared that he was abandoned by God as well as man, but in unshaken faith he claims God as his sole protector, beside whom he needs no other



Discussion

- Who was psalm 4 addressed to?
- What does verse 1 reveal about David's relationship with God?
- What does verse 2 reveal about David's relationship with some men?
- What have the sons of men done to David?



Discussion

- To whom does the godly man belong?
- Who are the many?
- Can you explain the comparison that David is making in verse 7?
- In what way will this Psalm help you to face life challenges?