



Coptic Orthodox Diocese of the Southern United States



The Holy Book of Psalms

Psalm 28

Bishop Youssef



Introduction

- This psalm is titled *A Psalm of David*
- It shows David crying out to God and praising Him for the hearing and answering of his prayer
- In this psalm we see the heart in a few different aspects: the evil heart, the trusting heart, and the rejoicing heart
- As in some of the previous Psalms, neither the title nor the contents contain any indication as to the time or the circumstances of its composition
- It is however commonly thought to have been written by David during his flight from Absalom, verse 3



Introduction

- Then refers to the character of the deceitful conspirators and their adamant refusal to recognize the hand of God in David's elevation to the throne
- It has, in some respects, a strong resemblance to Psalm 26:1-12
- The reason in this is the strong affection of the author for those who revered and loved God and his strong desire to be associated with them in character and destiny
- Also, his earnest wish that he might not be drawn away from them, and that his fate might not be with the wicked
- The Psalm is especially appropriate to those who are in danger of being led away by the acts of the ungodly



Introduction

- According to St. Augustine this Psalm expresses the events of Christ's passion
- He says, "It is the Voice of the Mediator Himself, strong of hand in the conflict of the Passion. Now what He seems to wish for against His enemies, is not the wish of malevolence, but the declaration of their punishment; as in the Gospel, with the cities, in which though He had performed miracles, yet they had not believed on Him, He does not wish in any evil will what He says, but predicts what is impending over them."



Introduction

Psalm Outline:

- The Prayer of Petition 28:1-2
- Asking to be Spared the Fate of the Wicked 28:3-5
- A Thanksgiving and Praise 28: 6-7
- An Intercession and Love 28:8-9



The Prayer of Petition 28:1-2

- *To You I will cry*, This denotes the distress the psalmist was in, eager and passionate in prayer, determining to cry to the Lord only
- *O LORD my Rock*, Implying his belief of God's power and his dependence upon that power
- In faith he gave God the title he longed for Him to fulfill: to be David's *Rock* in the present season of difficulty
- If God is not his friend, and does not appear for him, his help and hope are perished
- In his trouble, David felt the danger was near – and if God did not intervene, he would not live long



The Prayer of Petition 28:1-2

- Nothing can be so distressing to a gracious soul as the need and desire of God's favor and the sense of His displeasure
- If You do not hear me, I will be like the dead; for, as the dead can do nothing whatsoever, so man, without God's assistance, can do nothing
- According to St. Augustine, the words of the psalmist are the words said by the Lord Christ on the cross; when the non-believers thought that He was forsaken by God, and that He was going down into the pit forever



The Prayer of Petition 28:1-2

- In verse 2 David used the poetic techniques of repetition and parallelism to say essentially the same thing in two ways
- His prayer was a cry to God, and his body was set in the traditional posture of prayer *I lift up my hands*
- The use of the words *voice* and *cry* marks his sincerity and seriousness of the prayers he offered
- Some commentators think that, as the Hebrew translation implies, when he did pray, he had his hands stretched out
- And, in using this expression, the prophet had before him the hands of our Lord extended on the cross and raised to heaven



The Prayer of Petition 28:1-2

- The psalmist lifts up his hands toward the holy temple of God, which although not yet built, but, by the holy sanctuary, he meant the Ark of the testimony, and the seat of mercy, being the throne of God who resides between the two cherubs, from where He used to address His people
- As it came in the book of Exodus 25:22, *“And there I will meet with you, and I will speak with you from above the mercy seat, from between the two cherubim which are on the ark of the Testimony”*

Asking to be Spared the Fate of the Wicked 28:3-5



- He condemns the destiny of wicked people, as before, Psalm 26:9
- The psalmist prays that he may not share the fate of the workers of iniquity, over whom he seems to see some terrible judgment coming
- The sense is, that God would not let him suffer and be drawn away by wicked men, but that He would deliver him from temptation
- It may also mean that He would not give him up into their hands, to be at their mercy; who He knew would not spare him, if they had him in their power

Asking to be Spared the Fate of the Wicked 28:3-5



- Or, that he might not die the death of the wicked, and perish with them
- He is asking God to save him from being entangled in the traps they have laid for him
- They are hypocrites, double minded men, who have a form of godliness, but deny the power of it; pretend to be godly, and they are not; and *speak peace* to the face, but they aim to disturb him; as Saul and his servants did to David, 1 Samuel 18:17
- He is asking God to also save him from being infected with their sins and from doing as they do

Asking to be Spared the Fate of the Wicked 28:3-5



- Some apply this verse to Christ, who was numbered with the transgressors” (Isaiah 53:12), carried the sins of the whole world (1 John 2:2); and, for our sake, went down to Hades, yet His portion was not together with the wicked being the only person in whom sin could find no place
- He has never done evil, nor had iniquity in His mouth, 1 Peter 2:22
- Verse 4 is not a resentful desire for personal revenge nor is it inconsistent with the duty of praying for our enemies but a prophecy that God will, sooner or later, render to all unrepentant sinners according to their deeds

Asking to be Spared the Fate of the Wicked 28:3-5



- The wicked will have a dreadful end as a result of their deeds
- It is an earnest prayer that God will openly convict false and wicked men by manifesting His righteous judgements upon them, and punishing them as they deserve
- It is fit that they should suffer as they have acted, and reap the fruit of their many wickedness
- From verse 5 it is clear that verse 4 was a prophecy, and not a desire for personal revenge
- Because he does not say destroy them, but *He shall destroy them*, in the future tense

Asking to be Spared the Fate of the Wicked 28:3-5



- Here the root of all evil is declared, that root being a refusal to understand the works of the Lord
- They do not note God's providential workings
- If they did, they would see that judgment falls upon the wicked, and, seeing this, they would fear and abstain from evil
- But they take no notice - God is not in all their thoughts
- For, anyone reflecting on the wonderful things God was pleased to do in the creation, redemption, and government of the human race could not fail to be wonderfully kindled with the love of God

Asking to be Spared the Fate of the Wicked 28:3-5



- Hence, St. Paul in 1 Corinthians 2:8, says, *“for had they known, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory.”*
- Atheists deny that God governs the world, and refuse to discern His working in creation, in providence, and in judgement
- Unbelief lies at the root of all their sin
- *And not build them up*, They shall be eternally lost and shall be punished with everlasting destruction
- Non-believers would reap the fruit of their malice, their evil, and spiritual blindness; being deceived by their own deception, they will perish

A Thanksgiving and Praise

28: 6-7



- In his trouble, David cried out to God
- Now he praises the God who heard and answered his prayer, becoming David's strength and shield
- Suddenly the tone changed, and the prayer becomes a song of praise
- David had confident assurance, arising out of the very act of prayer, that his prayer is heard and granted, so that the happy results prayed for are certain to follow
- Through faith, the psalmist will live his life as though God has already intervened

A Thanksgiving and Praise

28: 6-7



- David is already *helped*
- He feels himself delivered out of his danger
- *my shield*, God is the protector and defender
- He is ready to offer thanksgiving for a mercy not yet received
- St. Isaac the Syrian says, “The soul that loves God has its rest in God and in God alone. In all the paths that men walk in in the world, they do not attain peace until they draw nigh to hope in God.”
- The word *my heart* was repeated twice to indicate and reflect the truth of David’s faith and his joy

An Intercession and Love 28:8-9



- This is the blessing given to the hearts that trust God; God *becomes* their strength
- He does not merely *give* strength; He *is their strength*
- *His anointed*, The welfare of David and that of the people are one and are attached to each other
- God strengthens him for their sakes, that he may guide them fittingly, fight their battles, and give them dominion over their enemies
- God has chosen him out of all Israel, and took him from the sheepfolds, and had him anointed king - that he might “*shepherd Jacob His people, and Israel His inheritance*“, Psalm 78:71

An Intercession and Love 28:8-9



- It implies the people of God
- Perhaps, the psalmist, having obtained assistance from God, or having found God a strength to him, his mind turns from this fact to the general idea that God was the strength of "all" who were in similar circumstances; or that all His people might trust in Him as he had done
- *His anointed*, Here David as the type of Christ our only Anointed One, through Whom all blessings come to us
- He saved us and we became partakers of His salvation
- *His anointed* ones are secure in the Messiah, and therefore strong, protected, and safe

An Intercession and Love 28:8-9



- The Psalm started with a plea for *personal* help and rescue, but by the end of the psalm, David's concern is for the LORD's *people* as a whole
- David concludes this psalm with a series of short prayers asking God to bring His people what they need and long for
- David asked God to *Save His people* from their enemies
- They cannot enjoy fellowship with Him, unless He grants them victory over sins and Satan
- He asked that God *bless His inheritance* with all spiritual blessings, with grace here, and glory hereafter

An Intercession and Love 28:8-9



- *Shepherd them*, As the shepherd does his flock, by leading them into green pastures, by giving them the bread of life, the Eucharist, by nourishing them with the word and the gift of the Holy Spirit
- *And bear them up forever*, Maintain Your true Church; let no enemy prevail against it
- And raise them out of their danger and give them victory in the day of the resurrection
- St. Augustine says, “And rule them in this temporal life, and raise them from hence into life eternal.”



Discussion

- What did David believe would happen if the Lord did not answer his prayer?
- What physical act of worship did David combine with his prayers?
- How does David describe the wicked in this Psalm?
- What are the ways in which we can be drawn away into the path of the wicked?



Discussion

- How did David want the Lord to deal with the wicked?
- What is the main focus of David's prayer in this Psalm?
- What motivated David to praise the Lord?
- What kind of relationship does God desire to have with His people?