



Coptic Orthodox Diocese of the Southern United States



# The Holy Book of Psalms

## Psalm 30

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# Introduction

- The title is, *A Psalm. A Song at the dedication of the house of David*
- This dedication was much disputed by commentators
- Some thought it was written for the dedication of David's house
- And some thought that it was written prophetically for the dedication of the temple – which David prepared for, but Solomon built
- Others refer it to the dedication of the second temple under Zerubbabel
- There are others who thought it was re-dedication of David's house to purify it, after it had been defiled by the wicked conduct of his own son Absalom



# Introduction

- According to Pope Athanasius the apostolic, this psalm was sung by David when he knew that God has forgiven his sin, and when by repentance, his soul which is a house of God, is renewed
- St. Gregory sees it as a prophecy about our Lord who, by the power of His resurrection, has renewed our human nature, being His own dwelling place
- According to St. Gregory, this psalm is also a prophecy about what was going to happen to king Hezekiah, whom God is going to deliver from the threat of Sennacherib (2 Kings 19), to extend his life 15 years (2 Kings 20), and to save the temple from the enemies





# Introduction

- This Psalm is an expression of thanksgiving for recovery from a dangerous and nearly fatal sickness and a reflection on the lessons which it was sent to teach
- Psalms 30 to 34 are psalms of thanksgiving
- The double use of “a psalm, a song”, implies the use of string musical instrument (a psalm) together with other instruments (a song), when sung in the temple
- The author, according to the title is David
- This Psalm is one of the Psalms of the Third Hour prayer in the Book of Agpeya



# Introduction

## Psalm Outline

- Offering Thanks to God for His Deliverance 30:1-3
- David Calls Upon the Saints to Give Thanks to God 30:4-5
- David's Testimony 30:6-7
- A Prayer for Mercy 30:8-10
- Thanksgiving for the Joyful Answer to Prayer 30:11-12

# Offering Thanks to God for His Deliverance 30:1-3



- The obvious goal of the Psalmist is to glorify the Lord who saved him from the pit and the grave
- St. Ambrose says, “The saint exalts the Lord, the sinner humbles Him”
- The Lord is high in His name, He is the most High; and in His nature, there is none besides Him, nor like Him
- He dwells in the high and holy place; he is above all
- To *extol* Him, therefore, is to declare Him to be what He is
- To exalt Him in numerous great praises which the psalmist determined to do



# Offering Thanks to God for His Deliverance 30:1-3



- According to St. Augustine it is Christ who speaks
- He says, “I will praise Thy high Majesty, O Lord, for Thou hast taken Me up ... And those, who have so often endeavored to oppress Me with various persecutions throughout the world, Thou hast not made to rejoice over Me.”
- *For You have lifted me up*, This explains the core reason for David’s praise
- He knew that his safety, well-being, and reputation were the work of God
- *And have not let my foes rejoice over me*, For David, this was a significant part of God’s victory on his behalf

# Offering Thanks to God for His Deliverance 30:1-3



- He was constantly confronted by *foes*, and God protected him and gave him victory
- There are always enemies who rejoice over the suffering of the righteous people, and who would wish them ill
- *my foes rejoice over me*, As Satan does over unyielding and unrepentant sinners, when he possesses their hearts
- David lived a prayerful dependence upon God
- David *cried out* and prayed unto God and He helped him
- *Healed* may be used metaphorically for the removal of the fears and troubles of my mind, (which are often compared to diseases)



# Offering Thanks to God for His Deliverance 30:1-3



- Or, it may mean from very dangerous illness of his body
- The original word that is used may mean either of the healing of bodily disorders, Psalm 103:3; or to imply the happy change of a person's concerns by the removal of any kind of distress, personal or national, Psalm 107:20; Isaiah 19:22
- No doubt there were many times when David received healing from God from both illness and injury
- Yet the idea of *healing* is also broad enough to include the sense of God's help and rescue from any great need
- God is the Physician of the soul and the body and has the healing of our whole being in His hand, "*For I am the Lord who heals you*" (Exodus 15:26)

# Offering Thanks to God for His Deliverance 30:1-3



- David's deliverance is a kind of resurrection from the grave
- He had been in imminent danger of death, and had been brought from the edge grave
- Under Saul he was frequently in the most imminent danger of his life, out of which God wonderfully brought him
- *You have kept me alive*, This he adds, to explain the former phrase, *O LORD, You brought my soul up from the grave*, which was ambiguous
- *that I should not go down to the pit*, That is, into the grave, which is often called the *pit*

# Offering Thanks to God for His Deliverance 30:1-3



- In its literal meaning this verse could not be written of David
- It may be applied to our Lord Jesus Christ who came down to the pit of Hades to save us from the authority of darkness, and to bring us up to the kingdom of light
- St. Augustine says, “*The pit* is the profundity of this world. What mean I by the profundity of this world? The abundance of luxury and wickedness. They therefore who immerse themselves in lusts and in carnal desires, they go down into the pit.”
- David speaks with confidence in God’s work of salvation with him based upon actual experience



# David Calls Upon the Saints to Give Thanks to God 30:4-5



- This is an invitation to the godly to join in thanksgiving, in view of those attributes of God of which the Psalmist has just had experience *“Sing praises to the Lord, who dwells in Zion! Declare His deeds among the people.”* (Psalm 9:11)
- *“You who fear the Lord, praise Him! All you descendants of Jacob, glorify Him, and fear Him, all you offspring of Israel!”* (Psalm 22:23)
- By this invitation, the psalmist does not separate his personal worship from the collective worship; and his godly life from the holy life of the church

# David Calls Upon the Saints to Give Thanks to God 30:4-5



- *Sing to the Lord*, All that are truly saints
- But how? Not with the mouth only, but with a pure heart and spirit
- *And give thanks at the remembrance of His holy name*, Through remembering God's work throughout all generations, and in their life through His works with them
- The psalmist calls the believers saints; for, although holiness concerns God alone, yet He grants it to His people to practice the holy life

# David Calls Upon the Saints to Give Thanks to God 30:4-5



- *His holy name*, Which appears in all His ways and works of deity and grace, and both in the redemption and sanctification of His people
- And besides this, there is the holiness of Christ, which is attributed to His saints, and the sanctification of the Holy Spirit, which is working in them
- And *at the remembrance* of each of these, it highly makes them give thanks to the Lord, since they will be partakers of His kingdom and glory
- After calling God's people to praise, David then gave them more reasons for it



# David Calls Upon the Saints to Give Thanks to God 30:4-5



- He rejoiced that the *anger* of God may be real but momentary and short in the case of those who repent, and confess their sin, and pray for mercy; while His *favor* (acceptance, pleasure) is lasting, even *for life*
- *His favor*, on the contrary, is enduring; it continues all their *life*
- God is so great; He cannot delight in the despair of His people
- When He afflicts, it is for our advantage, that we may be partakers of His holiness, and not to be condemned with the world

# David Calls Upon the Saints to Give Thanks to God 30:4-5



- Almost certainly, David's description of God's slowness to anger, and readiness to save, is given by a man long and deeply acquainted with God as his Judge and as his Father
- There were many tearful nights, followed by joyful mornings
- Perhaps with the recognition that the mercies of God to His people are new every morning (Lamentations 3:22-23)
- The weeping believer may be confident that as he keeps his focus on God, He will bring him once again to *joy*

# David Calls Upon the Saints to Give Thanks to God 30:4-5



- If *weeping continue for a night*, and it might be an exhausting night; yet, as sure as the light of the morning returns, after the darkness of the night, joy and comfort so sure will return in a short time, and in due time, to the people of God
- St. Gregory Nazianzen, paraphrasing Isaiah, says well, “I gave thee up to punishment and I will help thee; in a little wrath I struck thee, and in everlasting pity will I glorify thee. Far greater than the measure of My correction, is the measure of My loving-kindness.”
- This may reflect the image of the sufferings and exaltation of Christ; of the night of death, and the morning of the resurrection





# David's Testimony 30:6-7

- Now begins the description of the deliverance in respect of which the thanksgiving is offered
- But first, regarding the offence that led to the Divine rebuke; it was an offence of the lips, rising from an evil attitude in the heart
- Prosperity had wicked effect on the Psalmist and made him self-confident and proud
- His heart was lifted up, and in the spirit of self-glorification, he wished to know the strength of his kingdom; and, forgetting to depend upon God, he gave command for the numbering of the people



# David's Testimony 30:6-7

- The result was the plague, and the death of seventy thousand of them
- According to St. Basil the Great, David's fall into sin came to be the result of his pride
- Peace and prosperity had seduced the heart of David and led him to believe that his mountain, his dominion, stood so strong, that adversity could never affect him, *I shall never be moved*
- But King David found himself mistaken, and acknowledged and confessed that the strength of his life and kingdom was not due to his *prosperity*, but to the *favor* of God



# David's Testimony 30:6-7

- Without the constant sustaining work of God, David was deeply *troubled*
- David was completely dependent upon the presence of God, fellowship with Him, and His favor
- St. Ambrose says, “But, if David is to be blamed,—if, in the midst of his holiness, he was sometimes puffed up,—what is to be said of us miserable sinners, who go so far beyond him in our presumption, and fall so far short of him in our merits?”





# A Prayer for Mercy 30:8-10

- In his trouble, when the Lord hid His face from him, and he was aware that God had departed from him; David did not seek others; but he cried after God
- This showed his love to God, and some degree of faith in Him, by looking again towards His holy temple, and waiting upon Him until He returned
- *I made supplication*, In the most humble manner; entreating God's grace and mercy, and that He would again show him His face and favor



# A Prayer for Mercy 30:8-10

- *“What profit is there in my blood, When I go down to the pit?,*  
This was David’s prayer in a life-threatening situation
- He made rational arguments to God, knowing that he would *certainly* praise God if he escaped death
- But he was *uncertain* if he could praise God from the *pit* or the *dust* of the grave
- His death will not magnify God’s mercy
- He is asking God to not let the sword come against him
- If saved and forgiven, he will declare God’s truth



# A Prayer for Mercy 30:8-10

- According to Pope St. Athanasius the apostolic, “those words of verse 9 are a prophecy about the Lord Christ who went down to the grave, but not without profit, For by so doing, He gained the whole world, and restored to us the joy of salvation.”
- There is profit in no blood but in the blood of Christ, by which peace is made, forgiveness and redemption obtained
- According to St. Jerome, “it is the lamentation of Christ that His Passion had been endured in vain; that so few, bitten by the fiery serpent of temptation, would look to this the bronze serpent, and live; that so few would flee to that Cross for refuge, to lay hold on the hope then set before them.”





# A Prayer for Mercy 30:8-10

- St. Ambrose says: [Is it possible that Christ would condemn you, He who saved you from death, and delivered Himself a sacrifice for your sake, when He knew that it is your life you would acquire by His death? ... Will He not say: "What profit is there in My blood? if I condemn him, whom I save? ... Moreover, thinking of Him as a judge, and not as an Intercessor; ... Would it be possible for Him to issue a harsh verdict, when He perpetually seeks for us to have the grace of reconciliation with the Father?]



# A Prayer for Mercy 30:8-10

- Even though David prayed with rational reason, in an even greater sense he simply relied on the *mercy* of God
- He offered to God many good reasons for Him to answer his prayer
- Yet beyond all these, he simply ask for His *mercy*, and ask Him to be *my helper*
- David knew that in this time of trouble vain was the help of men
- He was entirely in the right to humble himself before the Lord, who was able to help him, when no one else could

# Thanksgiving for the Joyful Answer to Prayer 30:11-12



- In due time God delivered him out of his troubles and restored him to his former prosperity
- His prayers were answered, and his *mourning was turned into dancing*; from putting on *sackcloth* to being clothed with *gladness*; and from *silence* to *singing praise* to God
- David changed the sackcloth of repentance that clothes his body, into a festive garment, to partake of a joyful celebration and spiritual dancing (Psalm 118:27, 149:3)
- Changing the outer garments reveals an inner change in the soul of the psalmist, whose prayer was heard, and moved from repentance to thanksgiving and joy



# Thanksgiving for the Joyful Answer to Prayer 30:11-12



- This might be true of David, delivered from his adversity
- It is also true of Christ, arising from the tomb
- These words apply to the Resurrection, when the scope and horror of the tomb was turned into the joy of *"The Lord is risen indeed"* (Luke 24:34)
- It is true of the repentant, exchanging his sackcloth for the garments of salvation
- Every believer, on arriving at the heavenly kingdom from this valley of tears, can most justly exclaim, *You have turned for me my mourning into dancing; You have put off my sackcloth and clothed me with gladness*

# Thanksgiving for the Joyful Answer to Prayer 30:11-12



- As St. Augustine describe it, “Thou hast torn off the veil of my sins, the sadness of my mortality; and hast girded me with the first robe, with immortal gladness.”
- David’s complaints were turned into praises
- He regarded it that God strengthened him with gladness to the end
- King David revealed the primary reason for God’s transforming work in his life
- It was so that David could *praise* the Lord and *not be silent*
- King David closed this song for the dedication of his house with a determination to thank God *forever*

# Thanksgiving for the Joyful Answer to Prayer 30:11-12



- Because of the victory of the Cross, *every good man shall sing of His praise*
- God will rightly be thanked and praised *forever*
- St. Augustine comments on verse 12 saying, “That now, not my humiliation, but my glory should not lament, but should sing unto Thee, for that now out of humiliation Thou hast exalted me; and that I should not be pricked with the consciousness of sin, with the fear of death, with the fear of judgment. And this is my glory, O Lord, my God, that I should confess unto Thee for ever, that I have nothing of myself, but that all my good is of Thee, who art ‘God, All in all.’”





# Discussion

- What kind of Psalm is this: Praise, Lament, or Thanksgiving?  
How do you know?
- How does this Psalm fit the occasion mentioned in the title?
- What transformations do you find throughout this Psalm?
- What does it mean that God's "*anger is but for a moment, His favor is for life*"



# Discussion

- For what reason does David call the saints to praise & thanksgiving?
- Why did God hide His face from David?
- How did God answer David's prayer?
- How does this psalm characterize the typical Christian life?