



Coptic Orthodox Diocese of the Southern United States



The Holy Book of Psalms

Psalm 41

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Introduction

- The title of this psalm is *To the Chief Musician. A Psalm of David.*
- And according to the Syrian version, "*A Psalm of David, when he appointed overseers to take care of the poor.*"
- And according to the Arabic version, "*It is a prophecy concerning the incarnation; and also of the salutation of Judas.*"
- The occasion on which it was composed is not certainly known; but it seems to have been the ill treatment David had from his enemies during his afflictions



Introduction

- Some suggest that since David was the author of the Psalm, so, the false friend can be Ahithophel, and the Psalm must have been written shortly before the outbreak of Absalom's rebellion
- This psalm speaks of the mercy that God shows for His suffering children, as compared to the treatment they receive from those of the world
- This Psalm is included in Third Hour prayer of the Agpeya
- The Jews divided the book of psalms into 5 sections and the first one includes psalms 1 to 41
- There are some similarities between Psalms 1 and 41



Introduction

- Both begin with the word *Blessed*
- And they are prophetic, addressing the evil behavior of the wicked towards our Lord and His children
- Also, this Psalm is a prophetic about the suffering of our Lord Jesus Christ, His passion, and His death and His resurrection
- Jesus Christ betrayed by Judas Iscariot is evidently the great theme of this Psalm
- Our Lord applies the ninth verse to the betrayal of Judas, John 13:18



Introduction

Psalm Outline

- God Blesses Those Who Have Mercy on the Poor 41:1-3
- The Betrayal of the Hypocrites 41:4-9
- God Gives Victory to His Children 41:10-13

God Blesses Those Who Have Mercy on the Poor 41:1-3



- David had concluded psalm 40 by calling himself *poor and needy*
- He starts this Psalm by proclaiming a blessing on all those who *consider*, or tenderly regard, and assist *the poor* and afflicted
- The meaning of the word *poor* is way broader than actual poverty
- It has the idea of sick, weak, helpless, and those who are in affliction
- *Considers*, Means to attend to; to show an interest in; to care for
- *Blessed is he*, Those who do not neglect; do not overlook; those who are not indifferent and uncaring; those who are not hard-hearted and uncharitable

God Blesses Those Who Have Mercy on the Poor 41:1-3



- Those who consider the poor are those who are willing to give from their own resources; have generous hearts, and help those who likely will not help them in return
- *The Lord will deliver him in time of trouble*, This begins a list of several blessings that come to the generous person
- And it is a statement of the general principle that the Lord will deal with us as we do with others
- Caring for others is not only a command we have to obey, it is also a wise thing to do, for it leads to special blessings by God
- In the same way, selfishness, malice, unkindness, etc., are not only sinful, but foolish, because God would not bless such actions

God Blesses Those Who Have Mercy on the Poor 41:1-3



- St. John Chrysostom says, “How great is the rank of the poor, to be considered as brethren of the Lord. The poor may stretch his hand begging; but it is the Lord who receives your gift.”
- *the poor*, also a prophecy and refer to Christ, “*He was rich, yet for your sakes He became poor, that you through His poverty might become rich.*” (2 Corinthians 8:9)
- *The Lord will preserve him*, Revive and restore him
- Either he will preserve him from trouble; or if God see that trouble is necessary or fit for him, He may allow man to suffer and fall into it, but will raise him out of it

God Blesses Those Who Have Mercy on the Poor 41:1-3



- *keep him alive*, His spiritual life is safe and secure because Christ lives he shall live also, and shall never die the second death, nor be hurt by it, but shall have everlasting life
- *And he will be blessed on the earth*, With temporal blessings
- Because whatever he has, either much or little, he has it with the blessing of God
- And with spiritual blessings; with peace, forgiveness, and a right to eternal glory and happiness
- He will be blessed in the new earth, in which righteousness will dwell, and where he will dwell and live with Christ

God Blesses Those Who Have Mercy on the Poor 41:1-3



- *You will not deliver him to the will of his enemies*, Not into the will of Satan
- St. Augustine comments on the word *his enemies* and says, “The enemy is the devil. Let none think of a man his enemy, when he hears these words.”
- According to St. Augustine, *the bed* here, refers to the spiritual weakness; for the soul, troubled by sin, finds pleasure in the pleasures of the body, as though on a comfortable bed; yet it is a bed of illness

God Blesses Those Who Have Mercy on the Poor 41:1-3



- *The Lord will strengthen, And the Lord, in His compassion asks him to “arise, take up your bed, and go to your house” (Mark 2:11)*
- So, the blessings of *who considers the poor* include the deliverance in time of trouble; specifically, in the day of judgment, and will be preserved from tribulations, and be granted the new life in Christ
- Those who help others, will themselves be helped when they need help
- Those who show mercy to others will themselves be shown mercy when they need it, *“A man reaps what he sows” (Galatians 6:7-8)*

The Betrayal of the Hypocrites

41:4-9



- The psalmist turns here from considering the blessedness of the compassionate man to contemplation on his own afflictions and sufferings
- His own sinfulness is the worst of all his woes and the root and origin of them all
- Unless that is cured, all other help is vain
- The psalmist does not appear here to refer to any particular major act of sin, but to his sins in general
- He appeals to mercy, as one that knew he could not stand the test of true justice

The Betrayal of the Hypocrites

41:4-9



- The bodily sickness is the sign and symptom of spiritual disease so he pleads to be healed of both
- *I have sinned against You*, He understood that his sins were directed *against* God
- David made a plain and honest confession of his sins without excuse and with honesty and earnestness
- The discipline comes from God; and He alone can heal, *“Come, and let us return to the LORD; For He has torn, but He will heal us; He has stricken, but He will bind us up.”* (Hosea 6:1)
- We ought to seek this spiritual healing more earnest than for bodily health

The Betrayal of the Hypocrites

41:4-9



- David knew the hurt and difficulty of *evil* and the lies spread about him
- Like believers of all ages
- The *enemies* of early Christianity and of all ages spoke *evil* of the followers of Jesus, *and they spoke lies*
- It was their nature to do and speak evil
- Speaking of David, Absalom had stolen away the hearts of the children of Israel from David by misrepresenting him (2 Samuel 15:3-4)
- Shimei had followed the same example, adding cursing to his misrepresentation (2 Samuel 16:5-8)

The Betrayal of the Hypocrites

41:4-9



- Absalom's partners and assistants generally, no doubt, joined in
- David's enemies spoke evil of him and farther, they desired and anticipated his death
- While he suffered, they rejoiced, expecting his death, and intended that his name should *perish*
- One test of true friendship is their reaction when one is afflicted
- Likewise, a true sign of an enemy, and of hatred, is when one takes delight in the sickness of others
- Satan wishes to destroy and wipe out the children of God

The Betrayal of the Hypocrites

41:4-9



- According to some, this is the voice of the Lord Christ, falsely accused by His enemies, who plotted to kill Him, and wished His *name perish*
- The Jews were His enemies and His people's, doctrines and teaching, and would not have Him to reign over them
- They spoke evil of Him, charged Him with being a *glutton and a winebibber* (Luke 7:34)
- They said He had a devil, and was a Samaritan; attributed His miracles to diabolical influence
- They labelled His doctrine with blasphemy and wished Him ill saying, *When will he die*

The Betrayal of the Hypocrites

41:4-9



- They had tried to kill Him privately, but then decided to deliver Him up to the Roman governor
- And Jesus Christ died, and His name did not perish; the martyrs died, but the church grew
- His disciples prayed, *“grant to Your servants that with all boldness they may speak Your word.”* (Acts 4:29)
- And *“their sound has gone out to all the earth, and their words to the end of the world.”* (Romans 10:18)

The Betrayal of the Hypocrites

41:4-9



- David knew of – or at least could sense – the whispered conspiracies set in motion against him, meant to *devise* his *hurt*
- *Against me they devise my hurt*, They put their heads together to plan and conspire
- So did Ahithophel and the rest of Absalom's counsellors, so also did the chief priests and Pharisees
- Evil men are good at devising; they are deep thinkers, but their aim and goal is the hurt of the faithful
- *An evil disease*, This may have been true of David
- He described such a time of illness in Psalm 38:3 and 38:6-8

The Betrayal of the Hypocrites

41:4-9



- David's enemies were happy at the thought that he might die and *rise up no more*
- This prophecy was realized in the Person of the Lord Christ when the high priests, the priests, the scribes, the Pharisees, Pilate, and Herod, gathered together against Christ
- They whispered among themselves, had counsel in secret, and condemned Him against the law; with the assumption that when He dies and buried, *he will rise up no more*
- All those who attended His trial, His scourging, and His crucifixion, spoke vain words against Him

The Betrayal of the Hypocrites

41:4-9



- *Even my own familiar friend in whom I trusted*, David singles out one particular enemy – who used to be his friend!
- Here Ahithophel is almost certainly intended
- He was David's official counsellors (2 Samuel 15:12)
- These words were literally fulfilled in David, and yet the Holy Spirit, which inspired them, looked further in them, to Christ and Judas, in whom they received a further and fuller accomplishment
- Jesus, who was tested in all manner of testing that we are, experienced the betrayal of His friends

The Betrayal of the Hypocrites

41:4-9



- In fact, He cited verse 9 of this psalm when referring to Judas, who would betray Him *"that the Scripture may be fulfilled, 'He who eats bread with Me has lifted up his heel against Me'"* (John 13:18)
- Jesus knew who would betray Him
- And by betraying the Son of God, Judas lifted his heel against Him
- Jesus treated him as His friend, as the rest of the apostles and called him to ministry as an apostle and one of the twelve

The Betrayal of the Hypocrites

41:4-9



- And as this verse was fulfilled in David's life, and in the life of Jesus, so it has been fulfilled in the lives of countless saints throughout the ages
- As John told us, "*Do not marvel, my brethren, if the world hates you*" (I John 3:13)
- We should not be surprised by the world's hatred, for the world does not know how to love; the world does not have the love of God
- The love of the world is self-centered

God Gives Victory to His Children 41:10-13



- The psalmist passes from complaint to prayer, and once more calls on God to deliver him
- *But You, O Lord, In contrast to their animosity be merciful to me, and raise me up*
- David prayed not only for forgiveness and deliverance, but also for triumph over his enemies
- *That I may repay them,* It is not necessary to understand this as indicating an unforgiving spirit, but it he is asking that God “give them what they deserve.”
- And also we must remember that David was the king of the land

God Gives Victory to His Children 41:10-13



- As the king, it was David's God-given duty to *"to governors, as to those who are sent by him for the punishment of evildoers and for the praise of those who do good."* (I Peter 2:14)
- Applying this to Jesus, the Jews assumed that He died, was buried, *to rise no more*
- But, having died for our sake and in our name, He is risen as well in our name, to cry out, saying, *be merciful to me, and raise me up*
- Being our representative; in obedience, He died, and in obedience, He rose, for us to become in Him children of obedience, and the object of pleasure to God the Father

God Gives Victory to His Children 41:10-13



- Although *“He has the power to lay his life down, and the power to take it again”* (John 10:18); as He Himself proclaimed
- St. Augustine comments, “Yet lest ye think that God the Father of Christ could raise up Christ, that is, the Flesh of His Son, and that Christ Himself, though He be the Word equal with the Father, could not raise up His own Flesh; hear out of the Gospel, ‘Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up.’ ‘But,’ said the Evangelist (lest even after this we should doubt), ‘He spoke of the temple of His Body. Raise Me up again, and I will requite them.’”

God Gives Victory to His Children 41:10-13



- His restoration would be a sign of the Divine favor, and a pledge of his victory over his enemies
- After all that David had been through, the Lord had still not allowed his enemies to ultimately triumph over him
- So, David is confident that the Lord was favoring him as he reviews that amazing fact
- So many against him and yet, David was still standing
- Speaking of Christ, Judas could not triumph, he was quickly taken away, and all the woes fall upon him
- Nor did Satan, the enemy of Christ, could ever triumph over Him

God Gives Victory to His Children 41:10-13



- Nor the Jews; for though they were highly delighted when they crucified Him, when He was dead, and laid in the grave; yet they knew He should rise again on the third day; on which day He did rise, and His apostles preached that He was alive
- St. Augustine describe how Jesus responded to the Jews insult and says, “For if, on their saying these things, He had come down from the Cross, He would have seemed as it were to yield to them insulting, and not being able to endure reproach, would have been believed conquered ... He taught us plainly patience. For mightier is that which He did, who would not do what the Jews challenged. For much mightier is it to rise from the sepulcher, than to come down from the Cross.”

God Gives Victory to His Children 41:10-13



- David felt that in contrast to his enemies, he was a man of *integrity*
- Still, he needed God to *uphold* him in his integrity – recognizing that it was God’s work in him
- David’s integrity came from his being upheld by the Lord
- This was the most important thing to David, more important than triumph over his enemies
- To be *set...before* the *face* of God meant to enjoy His favor and fellowship
- Notice that all the benefits of verses 11&12 are in the present tense

God Gives Victory to His Children 41:10-13



- David did not believe that God *would* bring them to him; he believed that *he had them* already
- *my integrity*, Christ was without sin
- He was perfect before God and men; and perfect in His obedience and sacrifice
- He brought in a perfect righteousness, made complete atonement, and obtained full salvation and redemption for His people
- As we read in 1 Timothy 3:16, “*God was manifested in the flesh, Justified in the Spirit, Seen by angels, Preached among the Gentiles, Believed on in the world, Received up in glory.*”

God Gives Victory to His Children 41:10-13



- And then David ends this psalm with a doxology and praise
- This is the end of “Book 1” of the Psalms and each book of the Psalms end with praise
- *Blessed be the Lord God of Israel*, Let the Lord God of Israel be praised, honored, and worshiped
- The Lord is to be praised as the eternal God, *“I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End, the First and the Last”* (Revelation 22:13)
- It was fitting for David to end the song with his eyes on the Lord, not upon himself or his enemies
- *Amen and Amen*, Signifies confirmation

Discussion



- According to the Psalm, in what ways are those who consider the poor blessed? Are they getting something in return for helping the needy?
- What is significant about David's heart attitude in verse 4?
- How do the wicked treat the afflicted saint? How do the righteous treat the afflicted?
- How do you read this Psalm knowing David is speaking for Jesus?

Discussion



- How is it Jesus repays his betrayers?
- In what ways are the enemies of Jesus (sin, death & the devil) defeated by God the Father?
- Have you ever been betrayed by a close friend, that you really trusted? How does knowing that both Jesus and David experienced betrayal comfort you? And how does knowing that God will never betray you, encourage you?