



Coptic Orthodox Diocese of the Southern United States



The Holy Book of Psalms

Psalm 59

Bishop Youssef



Introduction

- The title of this Psalm is *To the Chief Musician. Set to "Do Not Destroy."* *A Michtam of David when Saul sent men, and they watched the house in order to kill him*
- The title indicates, as it was mentioned in previous Psalms, that it was directed toward the *Chief Musician*, whom some suppose to be the Lord God Himself, and others suppose to be a leader of choirs or musicians in David's time, such as Heman the singer or Asaph
- *Do Not Destroy* may refer to the tune, or a musical expression
- Or to David's plea that God would not allow him to be destroyed



Introduction

- Some regard it as the first words of some well-known hymn, in order to show that this Psalm was to be set to the music which was applied in using that hymn
- *Michtam* indicates golden and that they are golden Psalms, and this is the fifth of the golden secrets of David
- According to the title the Psalm refers to the occasion in David's life *when Saul sent men, and they watched the house in order to kill him*



Introduction

- This refers to the incident in 1 Samuel 19:11-12, which was when the murderous intent of King Saul against David was openly revealed, and David began his long season of living as a fugitive
- Michal, David's wife, spared David's life and gave him time by pretending that he is sleeping in his bed and is sick
- Saul did not care that David was sick and commands the men to get him up out of the bed so he can kill him
- David writes this Psalm under the stress of this life-threatening circumstance



Introduction

- There is much in the Psalm which suits David's situation not on that particular night only but for some time previously his life had been in danger
- This Psalm is another prayer for deliverance from malicious enemies who are threatening the psalmist's life
- Some commentators are of opinion that the whole Psalm is to be understood of Christ, of whom David was a type, especially in His sufferings; and there are some things in it which better agree with Him than with David, as particularly He is without sin, Psalm 59:3



Introduction

- Some believe that the Psalm was written by Josiah when Jerusalem was threatened by the invading troops of the Scythians
- Others have attributed it to Nehemiah, when he was hindered in his work of rebuilding the walls by the Samaritans and their allies (Nehemiah 4:1,7,6:1)
- But neither of these assumptions is acceptable
- The enemies appear to be personal; it is the psalmist's life which is in danger, rather than the city, or the cause which he represents



Introduction

- Some, St. Augustine is one of them, see in that event a prophecy about what was going to happen to the Lord Christ, when the guards were all around His tomb, which was sealed shut, and at the dawn of Sunday, they found the tomb empty, for Jesus was risen from the dead, as though from sleep, by the power of His divinity



Introduction

Psalm Outline

- A Prayer for Deliverance from the Enemies 59:1-7
- Confidence in God 59:8-10
- The Destruction of the Wicked 59:11-15
- Singing Praise Despite the Danger 59:16-17

A Prayer for Deliverance from the Enemies 59:1-7



- The first two verses describes David's plea for deliverance
- In the first two verses David asks for help with three different words in four places, *Deliver me*, *Defend me*, *Deliver me*, *save me* which show the distress the Psalmist was in
- *Deliver me*, This is David's almost constant cry (Psalm 7:1,17:13,22:20,25:20,31:1-2,15,35:17,40:13,43:1,69:18,70:1,109:21, etc.)
- He had many enemies, both internal from among his people and external, foreign enemies

A Prayer for Deliverance from the Enemies 59:1-7



- In his early youth Saul becomes his enemy out of jealousy
- Then he has enemies in his family, even among his sons, as Absalom, and enemies among his counsellors, as Ahithophel
- Foreign enemies on all sides - Philistines, Edomites, Moabites, Ammonites, Amalekites, Syrians, Mesopotamians, etc.
- Against all of them he appeals God's help and support, and by God's help he triumphed over all
- One may think it strange that the man after God's heart, Israel's greatest earthly king, had so many enemies

A Prayer for Deliverance from the Enemies 59:1-7



- However, one may wonder even more of how many enemies the Son of David had
- St. Augustine says, “There has been done this thing in the flesh of Christ, it is being done in us also. For our enemies, to wit the devil and his angels, cease not to rise up upon us every day, and to wish to make sport of our weakness and our frailness, by deceptions, by suggestions, by temptations, and by snares of whatsoever sort to entangle us, while on earth we are still living. But let our voice watch unto God, and cry out in the members of Christ, under the Head that is in heaven, ‘Deliver me from mine enemies, my God, and from men rising up upon me, redeem Thou me.’”

A Prayer for Deliverance from the Enemies 59:1-7



- Saul's guards were all round David's house with an order to have David taken dead or alive, well or ill
- Yet, he cries for deliverance and leaves ways and means to God
- He asks to be lifted up beyond the reach of his adversary
- *who rise up against me*, This is repeated three more times in this Psalm (9,16-17)
- *bloodthirsty men*, David was the target of an assassination plot
- Many felt they could have King Saul's approval by shedding David's blood

A Prayer for Deliverance from the Enemies 59:1-7



- Knowing the danger, David looked to God for rescue and defense
- St. Augustine says, “They indeed were men of bloods, who slew the Just One, in whom no guilt they found: they were men of bloods, because when the foreigner washed his hands, and would have let go Christ, they cried, ‘Crucify, Crucify:’ they were men of bloods, on whom when there was being charged the crime of the blood of Christ, they made answer, giving it to their posterity to drink, ‘His blood be upon us and upon our sons.’”

A Prayer for Deliverance from the Enemies 59:1-7



- They set an ambush; fierce men conspire against David and powerful men are attacking him
- Seeing the troubling circumstances he is in, David cries out to God
- They lie in wait as wild beasts do for their prey, ready to leap upon it
- The word used here is often employed to denote the act of lying-in-ambush; of watching in secret places to jump upon a victim, Judges 9:32,21:20; Psalm 10:9

A Prayer for Deliverance from the Enemies 59:1-7



- As the men did, watching his house, when Saul sent to kill him; so, the Jews sought and lay in wait to take away the life of Christ
- *The mighty gather*, The soldiers that Saul sent, strong, hostile, and cruel men
- And such were the enemies of Christ; the chief priests, Scribes, and elders, men of great authority and influence among the people
- *nor for my sin*, Not in consequence of any wrong that he has done
- David didn't make a claim to sinless perfection

A Prayer for Deliverance from the Enemies 59:1-7



- He simply understood and said to God that there was no justified reason for Saul to send the bloodthirsty killers against him
- He has not violated the law that would cause Saul to send men after him
- It is noted, as characteristic of David's early Psalms, that he protests his absolute innocence in them
- Christ was entirely without sin, without original or actual transgression; He had no sin in His nature, nor committed any in His life
- He had none inherent in Him, and therefore the treatment He met with from men was very cruel and unjust

A Prayer for Deliverance from the Enemies 59:1-7



- *They run and prepare themselves*, They hasten to accomplish their plan
- This may imply their readiness and swiftness to shed blood
- They are quick to obey the command of Saul
- The word *prepare* refers to whatever was regarded necessary to enable them to accomplish what they had been commanded to do
- David feared he would die if God were asleep to his need
- He asked God to be *awake* for him and to look *behold* upon his crisis; the distress he was in, and the wickedness and malice of his enemies against him

A Prayer for Deliverance from the Enemies 59:1-7



- If the wicked thought they are *mighty*; and in his weakness, the righteous counts them as such; yet, looking up to his God, he perceives that no creation could stand before Him; For He is *the Lord of hosts*, and at the same time *God of Israel*; namely, God who loves His people and believers; *The Almighty*, who protect His beloved children from all the wicked nations
- David appealed to God with a variety of His names and titles
- *O LORD God of hosts*, implies that He has the power (Psalm 46:7)
- *Hosts*, The word means literally armies or military hosts
- It is applied, however, to the angels which surround the throne of God; 1 Kings 22:19; 2 Chronicles 18:18; Psalm 103:21

A Prayer for Deliverance from the Enemies 59:1-7



- He is asking God to command all the armies of heaven who are all under Him, at His order, and can do with them whatsoever He pleases, to visit all the nations with punishment or chastisement, probably counting his wicked opponents, full of violence, like the heathen nations
- *the God of Israel*, a God in covenant with all true Israelites, whom He promised to protect and bless
- David calls for the Lord to awake, arise, and punish
- He is the Protector of His people and under the obligation to intervene and to punish them for their offences

A Prayer for Deliverance from the Enemies 59:1-7



- David looked to the God of angelic armies (*LORD God of hosts*) to judge the nations and all *wicked transgressors*
- Some fathers believe that the verse here does not imply avenging all the nations, as much as calling upon the nations to the faith, rejected by Israel, or the Jews in the day of Christ
- St. Augustine explains that God is merciful, however, there is a kind of iniquity that God will never have mercy on its doer (which is the kind of iniquity done by intention, with knowledge, and without repentance)
- *Selah*, As if David is assuring himself saying, “Assuredly God will have them in contempt and will protect me.”

A Prayer for Deliverance from the Enemies 59:1-7



- The *enemies* of verse 1 and the *workers of iniquity* of verse 2 are more greatly and abundantly portrayed
- David points out that his enemies are acting like a troop of vicious and hungry *dogs*
- They are like dogs seeking their prey; fierce loud and violent and ready to leap upon him
- In many occasion in Scripture, wicked men are compared to dogs, Matthew 7:6, Revelation 22:15; and particularly the enemies of Christ, Psalm 22:16
- It was at evening Saul sent messengers to watch David's house, that they might take him in the morning

A Prayer for Deliverance from the Enemies 59:1-7



- But missing him, perhaps after a fruitless search for him all the day, they returned at evening to watch his house again
- So, it was night when Judas set out from Bethany, to go to the chief priests at Jerusalem, to bargain with them, and betray his Master; and it was in the night he did betray Him
- *go all around the city*, Saul's messengers, very probably, when they found David had made his escape from his house, searched the city round in quest of him
- There was much going about the city of Jerusalem at the time of our Lord's apprehension, trial, and condemnation, after He was taken in the garden

A Prayer for Deliverance from the Enemies 59:1-7



- They went with Him first to Annas' house, then to Caiaphas's, then to Pilate's, and then to Herod's, and back again to Pilate's, and then out of the city to Golgotha
- The nature of the attack is not only physically threatening, but also verbal, all night long they keep speaking abuse and insults and threats, *they belch with their mouth*
- The phrase denotes the abundance of evil things and wicked speeches that came out of their mouths, which showed the malice of their hearts

A Prayer for Deliverance from the Enemies 59:1-7



- Christ's enemies poured out their wicked charges of blasphemy against Him, in abundance and without proof
- The pain inflicted from sharp words can be so severe that it seems more painful than dying, *Swords are in their lips*
- They are so arrogant thinking *Who hears?*
- These people think they can say whatever they like, believing they will get away with their verbal attacks
- The mouths of the wicked are filled with oppression, vain accusations, threats, and blasphemies, thinking that God does not care for His believers; saying; “Who hears?”

Confidence in God 59:8-10



- The psalmist turn his eyes away from the wicked, their meetings, and their evil possibilities, to concentrate on God, against whom no might can stand
- David's danger from the killers was real and fearful
- Yet he understood that they were nothing against God
- The LORD could simply *laugh* at them and their arrogant claim that God did not hear or care about their evil
- All who opposed God would be held *in derision*
- This verse expresses the strong conviction of David, that all the efforts of his enemies would be vain; that God would Be his Protector; and that he would save him from their evil plans



Confidence in God 59:8-10

- His enemies are 'strong' (verse 3); but God is his strength
- They watch his house (title), but he will 'watch unto God,' waiting in faith for His help
- He has prayed that God will 'set him up on high,' and he is confident of an answer, for God Himself is his 'high tower' of refuge
- It is a beautiful description of what God is to His tried people
- This image portrays strength and peace
- David did not only believe that the LORD was the *God of mercy* in a distant, theoretical sense



Confidence in God 59:8-10

- He could confidently say, *My God of mercy*
- He knew that God would be merciful to him and that God would *meet* him, even lead him, in his need
- *shall come to meet me*, In answer to the prayer of verse 4, *Awake to help me, and behold!*
- *shall let me see my desire on my enemies*, He will not let them have victory over David
- God will let him see his enemies in confusion and all their plans falling apart



The Destruction of the Wicked

59:11-15

- David wants the punishment of his enemies to be a long-term reminder to the people
- The psalmist desires that they may not be destroyed once and for all by some devastations, but visibly punished as a living example, until at last their own wickedness proves their destruction
- Let them live, and let them wander about that they may be permanent and enduring proofs of the justice of God
- When Cain murdered Abel, God did not punish him by killing him right away, but let him live a fugitive, and a wanderer on earth (Genesis 4:12-14); as a testimony to the fruit of sin, and a fulfillment of the divine justice



The Destruction of the Wicked

59:11-15

- *Lest my people forget* reminds us that whenever David prayed for the destruction of his enemies, he had in mind not only his personal deliverance but also what the display of Divine justice would teach God's *people*
- The Fathers applied the words to the Jews in their dispersion, scattered but not consumed, an ever visible memorial of divine judgement
- David seemed especially offended at the proud words he overheard from the men who hoped to ambush him
- They speak nothing but evil; whatever they say is sin; out of the abundance of their evil hearts their mouths speak



The Destruction of the Wicked

59:11-15

- With *cursing and lying* they boasted of David's death and their own advancement through it
- The allusion is to the accusations brought against David, and which were believed by Saul, and which were the foundation of the efforts made by Saul to take his life
- *cursing* As they did to the Messiah, declaring Him accursed, and treating Him as such, by hanging Him on a tree
- And for lying against Him, saying that he was a Samaritan, and had a devil, and cast out devils by Beelzebub
- And that He was a deceiver of the people, and a wicked Man



The Destruction of the Wicked

59:11-15

- The meaning of the word "*consume*" here is to finish; to complete; to bring to an end
- It does not mean to *burn* them as our word might seem to imply, nor is there any reference to the manner in which their power was to be brought to an end
- It is merely a prayer that all their plans might be stopped; that they might be in no sense successful
- The psalmist asks God to consume the wicked by His divine wrath, to perceive that God is the Almighty One



The Destruction of the Wicked

59:11-15

- He asked before, not to kill them once and for all, but here, prophesying about the destiny of Saul's household, through the divine justice
- It carries, as well, a prophecy about the 'anti-Christ and his followers in the end of days
- The expression is repeated for the sake of emphasis, implying a desire that the work might be complete
- *That they may not be*, Let them know that God rules over and above them and it may mean they are not to be any more in the land of the living; to be totally destroyed and nonexistent



The Destruction of the Wicked

59:11-15

- Or that they might not be in the glory, the honor, dignity, and joy, they once were in
- It may also mean that though Saul is a king, yet God is his superior in power and authority, and all things among us shall be disposed, not as it pleases Saul, but as God will, and therefore David will be preserved, and in appropriate time crowned, in spite of all that Saul or his forces can do against him
- *God rules in Jacob*, What David did care about was God's honor and glory
- Let them know that God rules among His people, protecting them and guarding them from the attacks of their enemies

The Destruction of the Wicked

59:11-15



- David prayed that the way God deal with them would tell *the ends of the earth* something about God's righteous rule in the world
- The hindrance of their plans, and their punishment, will cause the God of Israel to be recognized widely as the King of the whole earth
- The sense is that by those great discoveries of God's power, wisdom, and justice it may be evident, both to them and to all that hear of it, that God is no inadequate, or inferior god, like the gods of heathens, but the High and Mighty God, and the great Ruler of the whole world



The Destruction of the Wicked

59:11-15

- *To the ends of the earth*; This is to be understood also of Christ, who is God over all and is the ruler in Israel, King of believers
- He reigns over the house of Jacob, in His church, and among His people, wherever they are; even *to the ends of the earth*
- His dominion will be from sea to sea, and from the river to the ends of the earth, Psalm 72:8; and His government is known to men good and bad
- *Selah* It is a pause to contemplate on God's power, wisdom, and justice



The Destruction of the Wicked

59:11-15

- David here in verse 14 turns back from the future fate of his enemies to their present condition, and repeats verse 6 for emphasis
- But here he added the word 'and', showing that, having lost their peace, once they know that God the Almighty is the king of the church, and its Protector; they, like unclean animals, will go all around the city, seeking to devour it, and thirsty for shedding blood
- He thus reminds himself of his existing danger; he is still being sought - they are still in quest of their prey, and will continue so till morning comes



The Destruction of the Wicked

59:11-15

- David's enemies do not stumble into evil; rather they crave evil like hungry beasts crave food
- They came around the city to take David; they shouted as dogs bark and howl when they come upon their prey
- Some think that *And at evening they return* may refer to the conversion and return of the Jews in the evening of the world, and to their humiliation and mourning for piercing Christ, and to their very distressed and uncomfortable condition they will be in, until they have satisfaction that their sins are forgiven them
- In verse 15 David says that they vainly labor all night long and would not fulfill or reach their goal



The Destruction of the Wicked

59:11-15

- They will be like dogs that wander about for food, and find none
- The idea is, that they would not find him, and would be then as dogs that had sought in vain for food; they can do no harm
- They will meet with disappointment; and such disappointment will be a proper punishment for their sins
- Similarly, the sins of the wicked, deprive them of inner peace
- St. Augustine think that *at evening they return* is a symbol of sinners who return to the truth, confessing their sins, even though late in their life



The Destruction of the Wicked

59:11-15

- He wonder, “What kind of food do they seek?...They seek the return of the sinners to the truth. He says: [“They wander about for food”; namely, they seek to gain the others to become believers]. So, it will be when man discovers his sins; and with humility, he enjoys returning to the truth; he longs for the whole world to partake of the same joyful experience he passed through.”

Singing Praise Despite the Danger 59:16-17



- Though the evildoers continue to *growl* like dogs, David will sing of God's strength and proclaim God's faithful love
- This is an impressive display of confidence because, based upon what we have read, David's circumstances have not changed
- How can David have this confidence?
- Their craving for evil is contrasted by David's craving to worship the Lord, as he anticipates his deliverance
- He will praise God for the manifestation of His power in rescuing him from danger
- God has always been there for him before and will continue to be with him

Singing Praise Despite the Danger 59:16-17



- The morning would come; morning after such a night of sorrow and trouble; a morning of joy and gladness, when he would feel that he had complete deliverance
- God is faithful, meaning that during this time of trouble David knows that God is still with him
- St. Augustine says, “In the morning when temptations have been overcome, in the morning when the night of this world shall have passed away; in the morning when no longer the lyings in wait of robbers and of the devil and of his angels we dread, in the morning when no longer by the lamp of prophecy we walk, but Himself the Word of God as it were a Sun we contemplate.”

Singing Praise Despite the Danger 59:16-17



- He continues and says, “The Lord Himself the Resurrection was at dawn, that there should be fulfilled that which has been said in another Psalm, “In the evening shall tarry weeping and in the morning exultation.” For at even the disciples mourned our Lord Jesus Christ as dead, at dawn at Him rising again they exulted. “For Thou hast become my taker up, and my refuge in the day of my tribulation.”
- Though a conspiracy to kill him still existed in the highest places of the kingdom, David’s heart was filled with songs of praise instead of dark fears

Singing Praise Despite the Danger 59:16-17



- He started the psalm asking God for His defense; at the end of the Psalm he was so confident that *God is my defense* that he could sing about it
- David will praise God for His strength and love
- For the believers, both attributes are valuable for without one or the other He would not be God or Savior
- The experience of David in the case referred to in this Psalm should be an encouragement to all who are in danger to put their trust in God
- Whatever may have been the means of our rescue, it is to be traced to the intervention and involvement of God

Singing Praise Despite the Danger 59:16-17



- David's feelings of gratitude, and his purpose to praise God when he should be delivered, should stir in us the determination to attribute to God all the praise when we are delivered from imminent troubles
- When King Saul sent people to David's house, he openly revealed his desire to kill David
- From then on David had to live as a fugitive, constantly in danger of his life
- But David entered that period singing praises and was still able to pour out his heart to God in song at the end of that period (2 Samuel 1:17-27)



Discussion

- What request introduces this Psalm?
- How did David plead his innocence before the Lord?
- How did the psalmist expect God to treat his enemies?
- How did David voice his confidence in God?
- What attitude do the wicked have toward their sin?



Discussion

- Of what sins were David's enemies guilty?
- Why did David ask the Lord to spare the lives of his enemies?
- What will be the result of God's judgment of the wicked?
- How were David's actions different from the people he condemned?
- What promise concludes this Psalm?