



Coptic Orthodox Diocese of the Southern United States



The Holy Book of Psalms

Psalm 64

Bishop Youssef



Introduction

- This Psalm is titled *To the Chief Musician. A Psalm of David*
- Some think it was composed by David when he was persecuted by Saul; or during the rebellion of Absalom
- As with many of David's Psalms, it concerns a crisis that made him cry out to God
- The theme of this Psalm is God's judgement upon the enemies of the righteous
- This Psalm may very well be applied to the Messiah, especially in His sufferings
- He is the perfect man in the highest sense



Introduction

- And the Jews were the enemies that took counsel, and looked for opportunities and excuses to oppose Him, and accomplished their plans
- The psalmist may also represent the church and God's people; who in all ages have had their enemies and against whom wicked men have devised harm and persecution; though no weapon formed against them shall prosper



Introduction

Psalm Outline

- The Cruelty of the Enemies 64:1-6
- David Prophecies Their Overthrow 64:7-10

The Cruelty Of The Enemies

64:1-6



- The psalmist begins this Psalm as just about every other Psalm begins—with a cry to God for help and salvation
- The use of the word *voice* here would seem to imply that this was audible prayer
- The use of this word often in the Psalms, means that even private prayers were uttered in an audible manner
- But audible or silent, prayer has a voice with God which He will hear
- David's prayer was vocal and expressed in a mournful manner, with groans and cries and with great eagerness

The Cruelty Of The Enemies

64:1-6



- His condition was very distressing, and therefore he is very eager and earnest that he might be heard
- According to St. Augustine, it is the cry of our Lord Jesus, suffering during the events of His crucifixion; and suffering, as well, through His body – the church in all ages
- The word *fear* is commonly translated *dread* and speaks of something greater than the normal fear of battle
- David knew how unbearable this kind of *dread* could be and prayed to be kept from it
- David's enemies were Saul and his followers, and was afraid of them

The Cruelty Of The Enemies

64:1-6



- Christ had His enemies the wicked Jews, who sought His life
- The church and people of God have their enemies; the men of the world, who revile, reproach, and persecute them; Satan their adversary, who goes about seeking to devour them
- The people of God have their fears of these enemies
- According to St. Augustine, this cry is presented by the martyrs when persecuted; as it came in Sirach 2:11, *“consider the nations of men, and know that not one of them hoped in the Lord and was confounded.”*
- This cry does not mean to ask God to be saved from martyrdom, but to be saved from fearing it

The Cruelty Of The Enemies

64:1-6



- St. Augustine says, “Therefore for this prayer the voice of the Martyrs, ‘From fear of the enemy deliver my soul’ not so that the enemy may not slay me, but that I may not fear an enemy slaying.”
- David knew there were dangerous enemies plotting his destruction
- He felt powerless to make them stop, so he prayed, *Hide me from the secret plots of the wicked*
- Protect me; guard me; make me safe - as one is who is hidden or concealed so that his enemies cannot find him

The Cruelty Of The Enemies

64:1-6



- *the wicked*, Not the wicked in general, but his particular enemies who were endeavoring to destroy him
- David was in danger not only *from the secret plots* against him but *From the rebellion of the workers of iniquity* and thus his life was in double danger
- If he escaped the one, he had no security that he would escape the other
- So was Jesus Christ exposed to a double danger
- There was the danger arising *from the secret plots* of the Scribes and Pharisees assembled to lay a plan for putting Him to death by a judicial trial

The Cruelty Of The Enemies

64:1-6



- And there was also the danger arising from the anger and rage of the multitude who cried, "Crucify Him, crucify Him!"
- The *secret plots* against David consisted in words and lies against him, *Who sharpen their tongue like a sword*, they utter words that will cut deep, or penetrate the soul
- This was not a case of words merely hurting; this was deliberate, or was the result of counsel and purpose
- The tongue can be a devastating weapon, and it is all the most dangerous because all evildoers have easy access to it

The Cruelty Of The Enemies

64:1-6



- *And bend their bows to shoot their arrows*, Such are the doctrines of heretical men, which are roots of bitterness, that harm some and trouble others
- David knew that his enemies fired their *bitter words* as arrows against him, and when they did, it didn't bother them in the least
- They did not fear either David or God
- The Psalm emphasizes the tricky nature of David's enemies
- They use *secret plots*; they *shoot in secret*; they attack *suddenly*
- It was not an open fight, where he could see his enemy, but it was a warfare with a concealed enemy

The Cruelty Of The Enemies

64:1-6



- *in secret at the blameless*, Meaning himself, who though not without sin, and far from perfection in himself, in the sight of God, but yet, in the case of Saul, he was quite innocent, and without fault
- Likewise, the Messiah, of whom David was a type, may be meant; who has all the perfections of the divine and human nature in Him, and is without sin, holy, harmless, pure, and undefiled
- St. Augustine says, “They intend to kill Him who raised the dead! ... “suddenly”, namely craftily, as though it is something unexpected and in secret; as though the Lord is not aware of what they were doing.”

The Cruelty Of The Enemies

64:1-6



- *They encourage themselves*, They take counsel; they encourage each other; they urge one another
- *an evil matte*, They strengthen themselves for doing what they know to be a wrong or wicked thing
- They know the benefit of cooperation; they share their experiences and teach each other new and different ways and approaches
- They sought to make the plan so secret that no one could discover it, or even suspect it
- They have made up their minds that there is no retributive Providence in the world

The Cruelty Of The Enemies

64:1-6



- This is the reason of their unrestrained wickedness
- They have persuaded themselves that there is no God who will take any account of their actions
- So atheists or anyone who apposes God and His Gospel message might have the false assumption that because they encourage each other in their evil plans they will be successful
- *We have perfected a shrewd scheme*, They were proud in their evil plotting
- They boasted of their sins, showing the dark depth of their *thought and heart*

The Cruelty Of The Enemies

64:1-6



- *They devise*, They search deep; they examined every plan, or every way which was suggested to them, by which they could hope to accomplish their purpose
- They study diligently and constantly to find out new ways and means of harming him
- St. Augustine says this reflect the thoughts of the Pharisees and Scribes, “deadly and acute designs. Let Him not be betrayed by us, but by His disciple: let Him not be killed by us, but by the judge: let us do all, and let us seem to have done nothing.”
- *the heart of man are deep*, David admitted that there had been great talent and skill in the formation of the plan

David Prophecies Their Overthrow 64:7-10



- In the moment of their imagined success, their deeply-laid plans just on the point of becoming fully complete, a sudden Divine retribution overtakes the wicked, and all their lies and evil, invented with such craftiness, fall back on their own heads
- As they have shot with their arrows at the righteous (ver. 3), so with His arrow shall God shoot at them
- They shot their poisonous words at David unexpectedly, without warning verse 4, God would shoot back at them unexpectedly, without warning – *suddenly*

David Prophecies Their Overthrow 64:7-10



- *Suddenly they shall be wounded*, Reminds us that often the judgment of God comes upon the wicked unexpectedly, without any warning
- They think everything is fine until they are *wounded*
- *He will make them stumble over their own tongue*, They used their lies and slanders to attack David, but God would find a way to make their own words their ruin
- They would trip in the very way they hoped to trap David
- Their tongue, the weapon with which they sought to destroy others, is turned against themselves
- Ahithophel's fate may serve for illustration

David Prophecies Their Overthrow 64:7-10



- So Haman was hanged on the gallows he made for Mordecai; and the accusers of Daniel were cast into the same den of lions they got for him
- David often prays for God's judgment to come on his enemies and does not seek to perform or carry out this judgment
- He had many opportunities to kill King Saul when he was on the run from him but always refrained from doing so for he respected two facts which were that Saul was king appointed by God and that judgment belonged to God alone
- *shall flee away*, When God punishes sinners, the effect on others is to lead them to escape from a fate so fearful and repent

David Prophecies Their Overthrow 64:7-10



- David's words on God's judgment like many in the Holy Bible have a dual application
- It can be applied to judgments of God during the time of human history before the final judgment and of course it has application for that final judgment as well
- The fate of David's enemies shall cause widespread fear and alarm
- Men shall perceive God's hand in it, and in consequence, *shall declare the work of God*
- People, in view of the just punishment of the wicked, would learn to reverence God, and to stand in awe of One so Powerful Just

David Prophecies Their Overthrow 64:7-10



- The death of Absalom would have put in the minds of even the followers who survived of his army great alarm or fear
- *For they shall wisely consider His doing,* They shall attentively and carefully consider it done by Him, and done well and wisely
- An attentive consideration of God's work will contribute to maintain a just knowledge of world in subjection to Him
- God is thus always speaking to human beings; and nothing is more proper for human beings than to give their minds to a careful consideration of what is really intended to be learned by the events which are occurring in His providential dealings

David Prophecies Their Overthrow 64:7-10



- *The righteous shall be glad in the LORD*, They rejoice at the retaliation executed on the wicked; but their joy centers on the Lord; it is not at the ruin of the wicked, but because of the glory of God's justice displayed therein, and of His grace and mercy to them
- They had special reason to *be glad* that God was justified and His servant was protected
- They rejoice in the Lord, because of what He is unto them, and because of what He has done for them
- It would not only bring joy, but also increase faith

David Prophecies Their Overthrow 64:7-10



- God's faithful answer to prayer would demonstrate that He is worthy of *trust*, and build the faith of the *righteous*
- St. Augustine says, "Therefore let us all rejoice in the Lord, let us all after the faith be One Just Man, and let us all in one Body hold One Head, and let us rejoice in the Lord, not in ourselves: because our Good is not ourselves to ourselves, but He that hath made us. Himself is our good to make us glad. And let no one rejoice in himself, no one rely on himself, no one despair of himself: let no one rely on any man, whom he ought to bring in to be the partner of his own hope, not the giver of the hope."

David Prophecies Their Overthrow 64:7-10



- St. Augustine comments on *And all the upright in heart shall glory* and says, “What follows? If ‘there shall be praised all men right in heart,’ there shall be condemned the crooked in heart. Two things are set before thee now, choose while there is time....If of crooked heart thou has become, there will come that Judgment, there will appear all the reasons on account of which God does all these things: and thou that would not in this life correct your heart by the rectitude of God, and prepare yourself for the right hand, where “there shall be praised all men right in heart,” wilt be on the left, where at that time thou shall hear, “Go ye into fire everlasting, that hath been prepared for the devil and his angels.”



Discussion

- With what request did David open this Psalm?
- How are the wicked described in verses 2-6?
- How do the wicked behave when they are in groups?
- What action will God take against the wicked?
- Where do the righteous find “refuge” from the “war” of the wicked?



Discussion

- How will the wicked be viewed by others after God's judgment?
- In what ways will God's action against the wicked affect all of humankind?
- How are the last two verses a fitting conclusion to this Psalm?
- What can we learn from the negative example of the wicked in this Psalm?