



Coptic Orthodox Diocese of the Southern United States



The Holy Book of Psalms

Psalm 70

Bishop Youssef



Introduction

- The title of this Psalm is: *To the Chief Musician. A Psalm of David. To bring to remembrance.*
- Some believe that *the Chief Musician* is the Lord God Himself, and others suppose him to be a leader of choirs or musicians in David's time, such as Heman the singer or Asaph (1 Chronicles 6:33, 16:5-7, and 25:6)
- According to the title, David is the author of this Psalm
- *To bring to remembrance*: Some say it is composed by David beseeching the Lord to remember his afflictions, and to remember His promises of help and deliverance



Introduction

- Others say that it should be changed into, *to make memorial*, or, *for making the memorial*, as a note of the liturgical use of the Psalm in connection with the offering of incense, as in Leviticus 24:7, “*And you shall put pure frankincense on each row, that it may be on the bread for a memorial, an offering made by fire to the Lord*”
- And as in Numbers 10:10, “*Also in the day of your gladness, in your appointed feasts, and at the beginning of your months, you shall blow the trumpets over your burnt offerings and over the sacrifices of your peace offerings; and they shall be a memorial for you before your God: I am the Lord your God.*”



Introduction

- The phrase to make a memorial of incense occurs in Isaiah 66:3; and for the connection of prayer with offering of incense in Numbers 16:46; Luke 1:9-10
- This Psalm is a prayer from an individual, almost a kind of sigh from this person of faith who seeks divine protection
- It is a call to God for deliverance and help to come quickly
- It is almost word for word the same with the last five verses of Psalm 40 with some slight variations
- Some believe it to be an extension of the last Psalm (69), and an introduction of the next one (71)



Introduction

- In a sermon by St. Augustine on a feast of the martyrs, he interpreted this Psalm, counting it as a poem presented to God the Father, by His Son the Lord Christ, in the name of the suffering members of His body -- the martyrs in particular
- He considered it as a church song concerning the martyrs, who followed the lead of their Head, the Lord Christ, who, through His own free will, chose to be buried as a grain of wheat, to produce much grain (John 12:24)
- It is a prayer for times of struggle, temptation and desperation
- This Psalm is one of the First Hour (Prime) Psalms of the Book of Agpeya



Introduction

Psalm Outline

- A Prayer for Speedy Deliverance, 70:1
- A Prayer Against his Adversaries, 70:2-3
- Calling God's People to Praise, 70:4
- David Urges God's Speedy Deliverance, 70:5

A Prayer for Speedy Deliverance 70:1



- David asked God to bring help with *haste*, knowing that if deliverance was too long delayed, it was of no help at all
- Therefore, he asked with a sense of urgency
- *Make haste to help me, O LORD*: David repeated the request for emphasis, but slightly changed his address to Deity
- In the repetition he used the name *Yahweh* (LORD), the covenant name of God
- God is always near and with us, never far away
- He hears our prayers immediately, and acts on them at the best possible time, according to His will

A Prayer for Speedy Deliverance 70:1



- St. Augustine says, “Now however being in tribulation, let us especially say, ‘O God, to my aid make speed.’ ‘Let them be confounded and fear that seek my soul.’ Christ is speaking: whether Head speak or whether Body speak; He is speaking that has said ... “Inasmuch as you have done it to one of the least of Mine, to Me you have done it.””

A Prayer Against his Adversaries 70:2-3



- In the next few verses, David prays for contrasting results for the ungodly and godly
- Concerning the ungodly: David prayed that God would turn back his enemies and cause them to be *confused*
- Not only does he want God to come quickly, he knows what he wants God to do when He arrives
- He wants Him to *shame and confound* the adversaries of his soul
- It implies the certainty that they would not be successful, or would be hindered in their purposes

A Prayer Against his Adversaries 70:2-3



- Those who desire his hurt he wants to be turned all around and put to confusion
- David is essentially praying here that the consciences of his persecutors would make them regret what they had been doing
- He prays that they feel “*shame*”, and that they “*turn back in disgrace*”
- This request against those who seek his life is a prophecy of what will dwell upon them, rather than a curse from him against them
- The prayer is for a divine act of justice, a reversal of fates in which the enemies’ evil intent will rebound upon their own heads

A Prayer Against his Adversaries 70:2-3



- Spoken by Christ, it was an appropriate prayer that the purposes of those who would defeat His plan in coming into the world might be let down
- *Who desire my hurt*, As understood of Jesus, this would refer to the times when His life was in danger, as it often was, before His time has come, John 7:6; Matthew 26:18
- Those who mock the godly, saying *aha, aha*, need to be turned around as recompense
- These words refer to enemies who take great delight and joy in the suffering of the innocent

A Prayer Against his Adversaries 70:2-3



- This has the sense of scornful mocking
- *“Aha, aha!”* Words expressive of joy, Psalm 35:21
- It was bad enough that David’s enemies wanted him dead; they also poured ridicule on him
- Many exulted at Jesus sufferings on the cross, Matthew 27:39
- Those who gloried in having triumphed over Christ and congratulated each other on it



Calling God's People to Praise

70:4

- The psalmist can no longer be satisfied with mere prayer for self
- He extended his supplication, and made it cover the whole body of the faithful, *all those that seek You*
- And as he prophesied confusion to his persecutors, so he now predicts joy to God's followers in the same form
- So, in verse 3 those who seek the psalmist's life say, "*Aha! Aha!*"
- In verse 4 those who seek the Lord always say, *Let God be magnified!*
- By way of contrast, those who seek God should be blessed—let them *rejoice and be glad in You*



Calling God's People to Praise

70:4

- All those who seek the glory of God, who love Him and put their trust in Him, *rejoice and be glad*, divine and unspeakable joy
- The confusion and humiliation of the wicked gives opportunity for the righteous to rejoice in God
- Not only because they are set free from persecution, but because they see in it the proof of God's righteous sovereignty and the unfolding of His purposes of salvation
- It would be impossible for David to say this unless he also found some measure of joy and gladness in God, despite his urgent problem



Calling God's People to Praise

70:4

- He defines the righteous as those that seek God
- On one side, there are those in our world who ignore God and live as if He does not exist
- Instead of worshiping and fearing God as they should, they take His name in vain
- Then there are also those who care about what God thinks: they read what God says in His Word
- They cry out to God for His mercy and seek to live according to God's revealed will in the Holy Bible
- These are the ones that seek after God



Calling God's People to Praise 70:4

- In the second half of verse 4, David draws another distinction between the wicked and the righteous
- The wicked could not care less for God's salvation
- They do not even want to be saved!
- But on the other hand, the righteous love the salvation of God, and if one loves the salvation of God, he will have more reason to praise and worship God and magnify His Holy Name

David Urges God's Speedy Deliverance 70:5



- The psalmist is poor and needy, and this is the argument he uses to plead for God's need to make haste
- David could combine his sense of great joy in God with a realistic fact of his present need
- Secure in the truth that God cared for and thought about him, David again appealed to God to be his *help* and *deliverer*, and he needed God to do this without *delay*
- *poor and needy*, In the Hebrew, the first conveys the idea of poverty; the second of affliction; quite applicable to Christ

David Urges God's Speedy Deliverance 70:5



- David appealed to God on the grounds that he had *no other help or deliverer*
- He would not look to self or the gods of the nations
- God would answer this complete dependence upon Him
- The psalmist urges divine haste four times in this Psalm
- He begins with it, repeating himself, and he repeats this twice at the end as well
- But he knows his condition—he is *poor and needy*—and that is the basis for the urgent plea
- Praying this way magnifies the Lord

David Urges God's Speedy Deliverance 70:5



- Even as he draws the distinction between the wicked and himself, he humbles himself and acknowledges that without God's salvation, he is nothing
- Therefore, as we condemn the wicked, we are at the same time humbled, for we would be lost in our wickedness if it were not for the salvation of God
- Poverty for the sake of the Lord will make Him haste to save, and not to delay
- Poverty in spirit, and the optional poverty in the body for the sake of the Lord, are the two wings of prayer

David Urges God's Speedy Deliverance 70:5



- St. Augustine says, “What are you to do then, poor and needy one? Beg before the gate of GOD, knock, and it shall be opened to you. And what are the alms? Let the Beatitude answer, “Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven” (Mt 5:3)”

Discussion



- How does the psalmist describe the differences between the righteous and the wicked?
- What does David ask God to do with the enemy?
- What does David ask God to do for the righteous?
- According to the psalmist, what separates God from all others?



Discussion

- Is what David prays in verses 2-3 actually okay to pray? Do you ever think this way? Would you dare to pray this way?
- After praying the way he did in verse 1-3, why is it important that David includes the prayers of verse 4?