



Coptic Orthodox Diocese of the Southern United States



The Holy Book of Psalms

Psalm 75

Bishop Youssef



Introduction

- The title of this Psalm is *To the Chief Musician. Set to "Do Not Destroy."* *A Psalm of Asaph. A Song*
- Some suppose *the Chief Musician* to be the Lord God Himself, and others suppose the reference to be a leader of choirs or musicians, such as Heman the singer (1 Chronicles 6:33 and 25:6)
- The tune *Do Not Destroy* was also used in Psalms 57-59
- Some of the scholars suppose that *Do Not Destroy* is the beginning of a Psalm, to the tune of which this Psalm was to be set and sung



Introduction

- *Do Not Destroy*, may also refer to David's determination to not destroy Saul
- Or to David's plea that God would not allow him to be destroyed
- St. Jerome says, "The word 'destroy' or (corrupt), has shadows of several meanings, used by David as 'Do not destroy', meaning (do not kill) (1 Samuel 26:9), namely (do not kill Saul); And in another location (1 Samuel 26:11,23-24,25:32-34,24:11-13), David blesses the Lord who did not let him stretch his hand to kill Saul, the Lord's anointed."
- According to the title the author is *Asaph*



Introduction

- He was the great singer and musician of David and Solomon's era (1 Chronicles 15:17-19,16:5-7; 2 Chronicles 29:13)
- 1 Chronicles 25:1 and 2 Chronicles 29:30 add that Asaph was a prophet in his musical compositions
- Some believe that the Psalm was written by David, and delivered to Asaph to sing it
- The message of despair in Psalm 74 is followed here by a Psalm of exultation
- In some ways this Psalm may be regarded as God's answer to the questions presented in Psalm 74



Introduction

- In Psalm 74, Asaph had asked: *"O God, how long will the adversary reproach? Will the enemy blaspheme Your name forever? Why do You withdraw Your hand, even Your right hand?"* (Psalm 74:10-11)
- Here God says: *"When I choose the proper time, I will judge uprightly."* (Psalm 75:2)
- It is a Psalm of thanksgiving to God for His righteous judgment
- This Psalm has some similarities to the song of Hannah (1 Samuel 2)
- Psalms 75 and 76 are both songs of reassurance of God's justice when things seem to be going so well for the wicked



Introduction

Psalm Outline

- Praising God for His Present Mercies 75:1
- God's Response 75:2-3
- Warnings to the Wicked 75:4-8
- God Promises to Raise up the Righteous 75:9-10

Praising God for His Present Mercies 75:1



- Asaph wrote on behalf of the congregation
- They together say *we give thanks* unto God, and the thought is repeated for emphasis
- The people of God gladly *give thanks* unto their God
- Thanksgiving to God should be a constant offering of His people
- This Psalm is, as the title implies, a *song* for the congregation of His people, to give thanks collectively
- The psalmist specifically cites the *near* of God, and His past *wondrous deeds* as reasons for thanksgiving

Praising God for His Present Mercies, 75:1



- They gave thanks to God not only for His *wondrous works*, but for what those works proclaimed: that God, in all His character and attributes (*Your name*), was *near* to His people
- God is known by *name* to His people
- One's "*name*" in the Hebrew culture represent his entire character
- So, the psalmist is giving thanks that God Himself is "*near*", as well as His attributes of providence, care, wisdom, righteousness and love

Praising God for His Present Mercies, 75:1



- The righteous delights, and gives thanks, that God is *near*
- The nearness of God is a comfort to His people
- Only His enemies flee God
- It is a good thing to reflect and recount how God has worked in our lives
- Such reflection will lead to thanksgiving
- Giving thanks in the Holy Bible is not simply saying 'thank you' but rather proclaiming publicly what God has done so others may know and acknowledge Him too for His *wondrous works*



God's Response 75:2-3

- In these two verses God speaks, as in Psalm 46:10, and His words are, in fact, an answer to men's thoughts
- Men may have thought that He had ceased to Judge the earth
- Not so, He was only waiting for the appropriate time for action
- God declares that He *will judge*, and that He will *judge uprightly*
- As Abraham understood, the Judge of all the earth will do right (Genesis 18:25)
- In His judgments God reserves the right to *choose the proper time*



God's Response 75:2-3

- We often feel that we know the proper time for God's judgments, and we are often troubled because God does not seem to share our perspective
- We want to see consequences for those who commit evil acts against us
- Justice will come, but it will come on God's timing
- In all of this, God is in charge
- He completes His judgement, not according to man's impatient expectations, but at the exact instant which He has Himself chosen



God's Response 75:2-3

- The believer should have a humble trust in the uprightness of God's judgments and the *proper time* for them
- *judge uprightly*, In equity, in the most righteous manner, *giving each one according to his deeds*, (St. Basil Liturgy)
- No injustice will be done to men, but pronouncing the several sentences on the righteous and on the wicked will be done with the sincerest integrity, uprightness, and impartiality
- It is God who is ultimately the judge of all; and it is God who *set up pillars* of the earth's foundations *firmly*
- *are dissolved*, When confusion reigns, God re-establishes order



God's Response 75:2-3

- Though the crisis be such that all is confusion and chaos (Isaiah 24:19-20), there is no cause for fear
- God upholds, and will uphold, both the moral and physical order of things, as Hannah prayed, *“He raises the poor from the dust And lifts the beggar from the ash heap, To set them among princes And make them inherit the throne of glory. “For the pillars of the earth are the LORD’s,”* (1 Samuel 2:8)
- *Selah*, We should reflect on these words of God
- The rightness, the timing, and the power of God’s judgments are all worthy of our deep consideration



God's Response 75:2-3

- It is as though God, rebuking us on our haste to judge the wicked; or to be rescued from them, says: "Why are you in such a hurry? The earth on which you and the wicked live is the work of My hand; and if I take My care or My power away from it, it would dissolve like wax
- Nothing, or any being on earth, can live without Me. ... Do not get disturbed, even by those who oppose Me, My church and My people; For I set the pillars of the earth, grant it its balance, knows exactly how much it weighs, and when will be the appointed time for it to dissolve, for the divine justice to be fulfilled, and the oppressed to enjoy their reward



Warnings to the Wicked 75:4-8

- Some commentators believe that God is still speaking while others feel that the psalmist is recording God's words from His perspective, saying that *Selah* marks the end of the Divine speech, and *I said* naturally introduces a different speaker
- Here in these verses, is a warning to all arrogant braggers, based on the Divine utterances of verse 2-3
- In light of His great judgments, God warned the proud, *the boastful*, to no longer boast and exalt their own strength, *lift up the horn*
- Lifting its horn is the means by which an animal expresses its will and its power



Warnings to the Wicked 75:4-8

- To exalt oneself is to totally deny God the credit He deserves for His great work
- As St. Peter tells us, *“be clothed with humility, for ‘God resists the proud, But gives grace to the humble.’ Therefore, humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you in due time.”* (1 Peter 5:5-6)
- The figure of the *stiff neck* was taken from the world of agriculture, where ox or cattle might resist the yoke for plowing and other work
- God cautioned the proud and wicked not to resist Him in the same way

Warnings to the Wicked 75:4-8



- Then the psalmist gives the reason that we have no right to exalt ourselves, *For exaltation comes neither from the east Nor from the west nor from the south. But God is the Judge*
- Asaph hoped to teach the proud ones whom he warned in the previous lines
- They should first know that their *exaltation*, their success and standing did not come from earth and human creativity
- They should stop their proud confidence in self
- We may get help from others; we may find allies in looking to *the east* and to *the west*, but ultimately, it is God who delivers us, whether directly, or using other means

Warnings to the Wicked 75:4-8



- The word *exaltation* means the *desire of self-advancement* and would teach us that all our inward and outward plans, cannot advance us, unless they are based upon the fear and love of God
- *God is the Judge*, All depends on Him, not on human strength, human skill, or human expertise
- This is another reason why fools should not deal foolishly, nor wicked men *lift up the horn*, and speak with a *stiff neck*, because there is a Judge to whom they are accountable for their words and actions
- This Judge is God omniscient, knows all people and things, searches the heart and will bring every secret thing into judgment



Warnings to the Wicked 75:4-8

- It is God who *puts down one, and exalts another*
- He humbles and *puts down* such as are proud, haughty, and arrogant; and He *exalts another*, such as are lowly and humble
- He is the mighty Judge; *“The Most High rules in the kingdom of men, gives it to whomever He will, and sets over it the lowest of men”* (Daniel 4:17,32,35)
- This is not to say that hard work and other human aspects do not contribute to success – they clearly do
- Yet even those things are gifts and abilities from God and should be regarded with humility and gratitude toward Him

Warnings to the Wicked 75:4-8



- *There is a cup, And the wine is red, It is the cup of God's wrath*
- This is a metaphor that is commonly used in the Holy Bible (Isaiah 51:17,22; Jeremiah 25:15,49:12,51:7; Habakkuk 2:15-16; Ezekiel 23:31-33; Zechariah 12:2; Revelation 14:10,16:19,17:4,18:6)
- When God speaks about drinking the cup of wine that is in His hand, it always speaks of severe judgment
- This *cup of wrath* is prepared beforehand by God
- Asaph is realizing that though he wants judgment to come now, judgment will eventually come and it will bring adversity upon the wicked



Warnings to the Wicked 75:4-8

- The wrath of God is well mixed and is poured out on all the wicked, until the very last drop has been swallowed
- There will be no mercy for the wicked
- The Lord will not hold back in His judgment against them
- *It is fully mixed*, Has many ingredients in it, herbs and spices to make it stronger and more effective and intoxicating
- *all the wicked of the earth*, The wrath of God would not be confined to one nation, or one people; but wherever wicked people are found, He will punish them
- He will be just in His dealings with all people

God Promises to Raise up the Righteous 75:9-10



- The psalmist responds to God's coming righteous judgment, *I will declare forever, I will sing praises to the God of Jacob*
- In contrast to *the wicked of the earth*, Asaph spoke for the people of God who *declare* and *rejoice* in the judgments of God
- While the wicked are drunk with the wrath-wine, the righteous will rejoice and praise God
- *All the horns of the wicked I will also cut off*, If the psalmist is the speaker, he speaks in the name of Israel, confident that in God's strength they will be able to complete the humiliation of their proud enemies

God Promises to Raise up the Righteous 75:9-10



- But the speaker may be God, answering the vow of praise with an additional promise
- We often think of God's righteous judgment negatively
- But there is a positive aspect of God's righteous judgment: *the horns of the righteous shall be exalted*
- As surely as He will *cut off* the arrogant pride of the wicked, He will also *exalt* the strength of the righteous
- St. Augustine says, "The horns of sinners are the dignities of proud men: the horns of the Just are the gifts of Christ."



Discussion

- What does Asaph mean when he writes, Your name is near, and why is this a reason for thanksgiving?
- What does the phrase “Lifting up the horn” mean?
- How does this Psalm define a proud man?
- What do you learn about God in verses 2-5?



Discussion

- What will God do to the proud man who refuses to repent and humble himself before the Lord?
- What is the point of Asaph's geographical description in verse 6?
- In what sense will God's judgment entail Him "putting down one and lifting up another?"
- What elements of true worship does this Psalm reveal?