



Coptic Orthodox Diocese of the Southern United States



The Holy Book of Psalms

Psalm 94

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Introduction

- This Psalm has no title in Hebrew
- Therefore, there is no any indication to date or authorship
- Some think this Psalm was written by Moses
- However, in the Septuagint the Psalm bears the title *A Psalm of David, for the fourth day of the week*, and it was the special Psalm for that day in the services of the Temple
- And according to this title, the author is David
- According to St. Gregory of Nyssa, *the fourth day of the week*, it concerns what the traitor Judas did on Wednesday (of the Passion week)



Introduction

- This Psalm contains a description of a wicked and oppressive government, such as that under which the Israelites lived in Babylon
- Therefore, some think that it may belong to the closing years of the Exile, and refer to harsh treatment which the Israelites had to suffer in Babylon
- And some think it is about the oppression of the Israelites in Egypt
- This Psalm is a prayer for the revelation of the righteous judgement of God, and an expression of confidence in the ultimate triumph of right



Introduction

- It was written by and for a suffering community
- God's people were assaulted by the wicked, and then watching their attackers seem to get away with it
- Prophetically, some think this Psalm was written about the oppressed and persecuted church; and it is an appeal to God, as the Judge of heaven and earth, and an address to Him, to appear for His people against His and their enemies
- St. Augustine says, "This Psalm is about to teach patience in the sufferings of the righteous: it commands patience against the prosperity of the wicked and builds up patience. This is the point of the whole of it, from beginning to end."



Introduction

Psalm Outline

- An Appeal to God Against Oppressors 94:1-7
- Rebuking the Senseless Rebels 94:8-11
- God's Merciful Dealings with His Followers 94:12-15
- God's People Confidence in Him 94:16-19
- Foreseeing the Punishment of the Wicked 94:20-23

An Appeal to God Against Oppressors 94:1-7



- The psalmist begins with the simple and profound recognition that *vengeance belongs* to God
- God sees and judges righteously among mankind and will bring *vengeance* as appropriate
- The psalmist appeals to God, Who has the power and the right to punish, “*Vengeance is Mine, and recompense;*” (Deuteronomy 32:35); (Nahum 1:2; Romans 12:19), to manifest Himself in all the splendor of His Presence, “*Out of Zion, the perfection of beauty, God will shine forth.*” (Psalm 50:2) and also, (Deuteronomy 33:2; Psalm 80:1)

An Appeal to God Against Oppressors 94:1-7



- The word *vengeance* in many modern languages, may refer to unhealthy feelings of hatred, anger, and resentment
- But here, it bears the meaning of simple act of justice which gives to all what they deserve
- It means giving justice to the oppressed and bringing punishment upon those who persist on oppressing others
- This gives assurance to people, that recompense is in the hand of the Almighty God alone, Who is aware of the inner secrets and intentions of His creatures
- *Vengeance* belongs to One who sees more than we see and knows more than we know

An Appeal to God Against Oppressors 94:1-7



- This ought to alarm those who sin and do wrong
- There is a God to whom *vengeance* belongs, who will certainly call them to an account
- It is an encouragement for those who suffer wrong to bear it patiently, committing themselves to God who judges righteously
- The appeal here is made to God in view of the crimes committed by others and is repeated for emphasis and to denote sincerity and intensity in the petition
- And in addition, the repetition connects God's *vengeance* with His glory, His *shining forth*; make Your justice to appear; show Yourself in as a God who will by no means free the guilty

An Appeal to God Against Oppressors 94:1-7



- In the end, *vengeance* upon sin and sinners is part of God's own glory
- The psalmist has committed the work of *vengeance* to God but will still pray that God fulfills His promise and *render punishment to the proud*
- God protects and defends His people and for this purpose, He is requested to *Rise up*
- He seems as One laid down and asleep, quite negligent and careless of them, and therefore, they desire that He would awake and arise, and use His power, and show Himself higher than their enemies

An Appeal to God Against Oppressors 94:1-7



- *Render punishment to the proud*, A just recompence to the people who are confident in their own strength, and who are manifesting their pride in depriving others of their rights
- The question is then brought in prayer: how long will the wicked and the proud be allowed to glory in their evil?
- How long will they be allowed to maintain their arrogance?
- How long will evil people continue to boast?
- This adds a note of urgency to the psalmist's prayer
- So, the only question about the power of evil is *how long?*
- There is no room for doubting the power of God or His love

An Appeal to God Against Oppressors 94:1-7



- It is a cry of weakness and impatience, but has an element of faith in it
- With a combination of boldness and humility, the psalmist asks God to account for the time until this righteous vengeance will be accomplished
- Like the souls under the altar, the psalmist cries out, *how long?* (Revelation 6:9-10)
- The triumphing of the wicked may seem long, but it is but short, *“the triumphing of the wicked is short, And the joy of the hypocrite is but for a moment?”* (Job 20:5)

An Appeal to God Against Oppressors 94:1-7



- After asking how long will the wicked and the proud be allowed to glory in their evil; the psalmist goes on to describe their evil actions
- They are haughty, arrogant and speak defiant, *insolent things* and they *boast in themselves*
- They are *insolent* and take a pleasure in magnifying themselves
- The psalmist is asking: How long shall they be permitted to have such success as may seem to justify them in their exultation?
- But there will come a day of giving an account for all their hard speeches which ungodly sinners have spoken against God, His truths, and ways, and people, Jude 1:15

An Appeal to God Against Oppressors 94:1-7



- They are crushing God's people
- They destroy them *break in pieces* and *afflict* them
- They hurt the righteous; but on the contrary, a mark of the righteous is their love for God's people
- God's people are His *heritage* and there are those that, for His sake, hate them, and seek their destruction
- *They slay the widow and the stranger*, Who are weak and feeble, helpless and friendless
- Another thing noted about the wicked is their attack against the weak and disadvantaged, extending even to *murder*

An Appeal to God Against Oppressors 94:1-7



- Some evildoers even kill widows and orphans
- They are merciless, and take a pleasure in harming those that are least able to help themselves
- They not only oppress, but *they slay the widow and the stranger*; not only neglect the fatherless, but murder them, because they are weak and unprotected, and sometimes lie at their mercy
- Nebuchadnezzar carried on his wars with great cruelty; he did not spare neither age, sex, nor condition
- The psalmist continue to wonder *How long?* When shall this wickedness of the wicked come to an end?

An Appeal to God Against Oppressors 94:1-7



- St. Jerome says, “The widow is the soul of the sinner who lost God, as her Groom; The stranger, being the homeless, who lacks a permanent residence, is the new believer who quickly falls with the first offence he encounters; And the fatherless is he, who loses God as his Father ... Those are the victims of the wicked heretics.”
- The wicked are ignorant and arrogant toward God
- They deny that He exists in the manner that He is revealed in the Holy Bible
- This ignorance of God leads to a deceived misled arrogance toward Him

An Appeal to God Against Oppressors 94:1-7



- *Nor does the God of Jacob understand*; Implying that God was indifferent to the conduct of people
- That He would not punish the wicked; that sinners have nothing to fear at His hand
- *the God of Jacob* may be considered either as put in by the Psalmist, as an argument strengthening the faith of God's people to assure them that He is their covenant God, He would take notice and care of them, and avenge them
- Or, it may have been mentioned by their enemies, mocking their confidence in God, whom they called their covenant God that He would not take any notice of what was done unto them

An Appeal to God Against Oppressors 94:1-7



- When men believe that God *does not see*, there is no reason to wonder that they give full freedom to their harsh terrible passions
- St. Jerome says, “They consider the longsuffering of God as a lack of understanding.”
- And St. Augustine says, “Nobody can escape the eye of God, who sees, not only the secret places, but even the depths of the heart.”

Rebuking the Senseless Rebels

94:8-11



- Verses 8-11, the psalmist turns from pleading with God, to argue with those of his people who are tempted to agree with their oppressors, and to think that God is imperfect either in power or in will to defend them
- Or, he may specifically speak to those mentioned in the previous verse, who believed God did not see or understand their wickedness
- His address can be applied to anyone who lack the spiritual discernment to realize that in spite of the temporary triumph of the wicked God still rules (Psalm 92:6,73:22)

Rebuking the Senseless Rebels

94:8-11



- *senseless* is the same as in Psalm 92:6, looks like a man but does not have the understanding of a man
- *when will you be wise?* When will you understand? When will you attend to the truth?
- *wise* To know that God sees and regards all you say and do
- He is asking them to speak and act accordingly, as those that must give account
- It implies that these *fools* had been like this for a long period, and that it was time they should arouse from this condition, and act like people

Rebuking the Senseless Rebels

94:8-11



- The psalmist's question is as powerful against modern atheism, as against that of his day
- You who think that God does not care, and God does not notice, think again!
- Is the one who made our ears not hearing the things we say?
- The logic is simple firm and strong
- The God who created the *ear* can hear, and the God who created the *eye* can see
- If God does not leave even the heathen without rebukes and chastisements, shall He not much more punish those among His own people who do wrong?

Rebuking the Senseless Rebels

94:8-11



- God has authority over the nations of the earth; He has them under His control; and He brings heavy judgments on them; as He did in the old times, by bringing a flood upon it, and sweeping away its inhabitants at once; and Sodom and Gomorrah, by raining fire and brimstone upon them, and consuming them from off the earth
- God thus conveys great lessons to man; shall not such a Being, in individual cases, reprove and correct for sin?
- God not only has given the light of reason, but He has shown man what is true wisdom and understanding; and He that does this, shall He not know? Job 28:23,28

Rebuking the Senseless Rebels

94:8-11



- The answer to the illusion of the wicked and the doubts of the faithless, God not only sees their works, but knows their very thoughts
- God's wisdom is so great that He even knows the *thoughts* of men
- This great God must be appropriately feared, respected, and obeyed
- It was important for the *senseless* and *fools* to hear and understand
- The Apostle Paul quoted verse 11 in 1 Corinthians 3:20 speaking of God's triumph over the exaltation of defiant human wisdom, and in Romans 1:21 speaking of the futility of man's intellect against God

Rebuking the Senseless Rebels

94:8-11



- How can man, the feeble creature of a day think about plans he cannot comprehend or fathom?
- God knows that our thoughts are worthless and simply a vapor
- Anyone who thinks they are getting away with anything just because judgment is not immediate is a *senseless fool*
- Only a *fool* thinks that the all-seeing God does not see or that the judge of all the earth will not bring justice at the proper time
- God not only knows our thoughts, He knows that our thoughts are futile, vain, and foolish

God's Merciful Dealings with His Followers 94:12-15



- In this passage, verse 12-15, the psalmist consoles himself and his fellow-sufferers with the thought that they are being taught by God, and that, sooner or later, Right must have its rights
- The psalmist comforts himself by considering in how many ways the righteous man is blessed
- Those who are taught by God are blessed because this will give them such an insight into the ways of God's Providence, as will enable them to endure calmly, without murmuring or losing heart, until the day of retribution overtakes the wicked
- He will *instruct* and *teach* them from His word *out of Your law*
- *Instruct*, in another version is chastise

God's Merciful Dealings with His Followers 94:12-15



- He is chastened not in wrath, but in love; not with the chastisement of a cruel one, but of a tenderhearted father, who always does it for his profit and advantage, and therefore he is *blessed*
- The blessedness of chastening appears in 2 Samuel 7:14-15; Job 5:17; Psalm 89:32-33; Proverbs 3:12; and is the main point of Elihu's teaching in Job 33:15-30
- This is a wonderful promise to those who receive the teaching from God's word
- They have *rest* when the inevitable *days of adversity* come

God's Merciful Dealings with His Followers 94:12-15



- This *rest* is theirs *until the pit is dug for the wicked*, until God sets all things right in His judgment
- St. Augustine says, “Have patience therefore everyone, if you are a Christian, in time of malice. Days of malice are those in which the ungodly appear to flourish, and the righteous to suffer; but the suffering of the righteous is the rod of the Father, and the prosperity of the ungodly is their own snare.”
- In the midst of the afflictions and chastisements, the children of God will enjoy divine comforts, namely peace of heart
- Whereas the wicked, in the midst of their prosperity, will feel a kind of emptiness, of deprivation, and lack of peace

God's Merciful Dealings with His Followers 94:12-15



- *the pit is dug for the wicked*, May mean here hell, the pit of destruction, the lake which burns with fire and brimstone, the everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels
- This pit and lake is dug and prepared by the sovereign will and unchangeable purpose and decree of God for all wicked
- *For the Lord will not cast off His people*, This is beautiful and powerful assurance, given to all God's people
- With repetition and emphasis, God insists: *Nor will He forsake His inheritance*
- Allowing for the chastisements of His people, does not mean that God casts them off, nor forsakes them

God's Merciful Dealings with His Followers 94:12-15



- St. Augustine comments on this verse and says, “He chastens for a season, He condemns not for ever: the others He spares for a season and will condemn them for evermore. Make your choice: do you wish temporary suffering, or eternal punishment? temporal happiness, or eternal life? What does God threaten? Eternal punishment. What does He promise? Eternal rest. His scourging the good, is temporary: His sparing the wicked, is also temporary.”
- *judgment will return to righteousness*, Ultimately, righteousness and justice will triumph

God's Merciful Dealings with His Followers 94:12-15



- In due time, whether in this life or in the eternal one, divine justice will prevail; when all will perceive the wisdom of God, and the reason of His longsuffering on the wicked; something that will fill the upright in heart with peace and joy
- God promises to bring His righteous reign and judgment to all things, bringing satisfaction to *the upright in heart*
- The exercise of judgment shall be so manifest to the world, as to show that there is a righteous God
- All who are *upright in heart* - all who are truly righteous - will follow on in the path of justice; they will regard what God does as right, and will walk in that path

God's People Confidence in Him

94:16-19



- But meanwhile, until this happy time come, what is the condition of the godly?
- Are they not left a prey to the evil doers, at their mercy, without a deliverer?
- Who is going to protect them from the wicked?
- It is not a question of doubt or unbelief, but a form of assertion that God's people have no helper but Him
- These are the words of the psalmist, representing the church of God, under persecutions
- The answer is absolute undisputable: no one

God's People Confidence in Him

94:16-19



- There is no one to deliver except God
- They are not without a deliverer; God is their Help
- It is a part of their blessedness (v. 12), that they are preserved and protected from the wicked, by God Himself
- Otherwise, they *would soon have settled in silence*
- By *silence*, he most probably means the grave
- In the interpretation by St. Augustine, it came as *Hades*
- He says, "I had almost plunged into that pit which is preparing for sinners: that is, my soul had dwelt in hell."

God's People Confidence in Him

94:16-19



- Their soul had gone down to the pit, the silent land, *"The dead do not praise the Lord, Nor any who go down into silence."* (Psalm 115:17)
- The psalmist declares that without God's help, he should have died, and gone into the silent land
- Unless the Lord helps, we would be nothing
- God gives us comfort; He is there with His unfailing love
- It is His unfailing love that can support us through the difficulties and trials of life
- In Jesus' hour of crisis, all of the disciples deserted Him

God's People Confidence in Him

94:16-19



- St. Paul shared that while he was in prison, all had abandoned him, no one came to his defense and no one stood by his side
- But God the Father was with Jesus on the cross and was St. Paul in prison
- Another respect in which the godly, even though suffering affliction, are blessed
- God upholds their unsteady shaking feet, and, when they are in danger, keeps them from falling
- God's mercy would sustain him in the difficult day; even when it seemed that his *foot* slipped, he would not fall

God's People Confidence in Him

94:16-19



- St. Augustine says, “See how God loves confession. Your foot has slipped, and you say not, my foot has slipped; but you say you are firm, when you are slipping. The moment you begin to slip or waver, confess you that slip, that you may not lament your total fall; that He may help, so that your soul be not in hell. God loves confession, loves humility.”
- With enemies and difficulties about him, the psalmist needed help and comfort from God
- The Lord answered with many *comforts* that brought *delight* to his *soul*
- This rescued him from the *multitude of anxieties within*

God's People Confidence in Him

94:16-19



- Internal comfort is given by God Himself to the perplexed and troubled in spirit, whereby they are *delighted*, or, rather, calmed and comforted
- However much he might be disturbed by other thoughts, yet here he found rest and peace
- God has an unfailing source of consolation
- Whatever trouble one might have from the cares of life, and from the evil imaginings in his own mind, yet here his soul found repose



Foreseeing the Punishment of the Wicked 94:20-23

- The psalmist knew that wickedness is sometimes found in high places
- Some thrones are marked by *iniquity* and some laws are devised by *evil*
- Such will never fellowship with God
- There can be no fellowship between light and darkness - between God and evildoers, especially those who carry out their wicked purposes under the forms of law
- Though God may tolerate them for a time, it is inconceivable that He should let these cruel judges shelter themselves under His authority



Foreseeing the Punishment of the Wicked 94:20-23

- *the throne of iniquity*, This is a fit expression for an oppressive and unjust government
- It means iniquity in high places, wickedness enthroned upon the judgment seat, and thence delivering its unjust sentences
- The allusion is probably to what was referred to in the former part of the Psalm - the powers that were spreading desolation through the land - wicked princes or rulers, verses 3-7
- *Which devises evil by law*, The worst crime is reached when rulers use the forms of justice as masks for injustice
- This kind of wickedness was described previously in verses 4-6 condemning *innocent blood*



Foreseeing the Punishment of the Wicked 94:20-23

- St. John described the same wicked heart: *Do not marvel, my brethren, if the world hates you* (1 John 3:13)
- Unjust leaders can claim that God is on their side, but it is not true because their actions do not reflect the character of God
- The wicked gather together and plot against the righteous, and seek shedding his blood
- That was a prophecy of what would happen in the future, when they tried and crucified the Lord Jesus Christ, when the devil and his hosts gathered together against Him, and when the hosts of darkness sought His blood



Foreseeing the Punishment of the Wicked 94:20-23

- *gather together*, The devil, his angels, and his children are in unity in everything that is *evil*
- Though the wicked who were set against the psalmist were in high places, he had an even greater *defense*
- God Himself was *the rock of my refuge*
- In all these purposes of the wicked; in all that they do - whether under the form and sanction of law Psalm 94:20, or by any other means, his trust is still in God
- *He has brought on them their own iniquity*, The consequences of their sin
- He shall punish them as they deserve



Foreseeing the Punishment of the Wicked 94:20-23

- Their doom would be connected to *their own iniquity* and *in their own wickedness*
- The punishment would fit the crime and those who had cut off others would themselves be *cut off*
- This was his confidence and defense
- The repetition of *cut them off* gives great emphasis to the idea
- It also matches the repetition of *vengeance* in the first verse of this Psalm
- The Psalm begins with trusting God to set things right and ends with the same confidence



Discussion

- What is the difference between God's vengeance and our vengeance?
- What is the focus of the Psalm's introduction? (94:1-3)
- What can we learn about the mindset of the wicked from this Psalm?
- According to the psalmist what do the wicked need to understand?



Discussion

- In what is the psalmist confidence placed in verses 14 & 15?
- What does it mean to take refuge in the Lord?
- What does verse 20 imply about some of man's laws?
- What universal law does verse 23 illustrate?