



Coptic Orthodox Diocese of the Southern United States



# The Holy Book of Psalms

Psalm 101

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# Introduction

- This Psalm is titled *A Psalm of David*
- The Hebrew and all the versions attribute this Psalm to David
- Some think it was composed when David became a king immediately after the death of Saul
- Or, when he began to reign over all Israel, and brought up the ark to the city of David
- He may have written it as he was contemplating the transfer of the Ark
- When the punishment of Uzzah's irreverence enforced the lesson of God's holiness, David exclaimed in terror, "*How can the ark of the LORD come to me?*" (2 Samuel 6:9)



# Introduction

- And then the Ark was carried aside into the house of Obed-Edom
- But terror was soon exchanged for that earnest longing for God's Presence in the city of His choice and the Ark was brought up into the city of David
- This Psalm then may be regarded as the expression of David's solemn resolution to prepare himself and his city for God's coming to dwell in their midst
- This Psalm shows us the resolutions David formed when he came to the throne; and it is a perfect model according to which a wise king should regulate his conduct and his government



# Introduction

- It instructs all that are in any sphere of power to use their power so as to make it a terror to evil-doers, but a praise to those that do well
- Some scholars called this Psalm 'The Mirror for Magistrates'
- A king needs to understand the importance of character as he picks those who will help him lead the nation
- What kind of people gather around the center of power will determine if it will be a righteous or an unrighteous power
- Psalm 101 is a great place for every Christian who wants to live a life that pleases God to start; it gives us an outline and starting point to cultivate a God-centered life



# Introduction

- David starts Psalm 101 by praising God for who He is and worshiping Him in truth
- He resolves that he will be deliberate in the way that he follows the Lord
- David was a type of Christ, he seems, throughout the whole, to represent Him; and, indeed, there are some things in it which agree with none so well as with Him; such as behaving wisely, in a perfect way, and walking in His house with a perfect heart
- Christ governs His church, the city of the Lord, by these rules; He loves righteousness and hates wickedness



# Introduction

## Psalm Outline

- David's Determination in his Personal Conduct 101:1-4
- His Determination in those He Would Appoint 101:5-8

# David's Determination in His Personal Conduct 101:1-4



- This is a sort of preface to the Psalm, in which David gives us to understand that he is about to *sing of mercy and justice* of God, for which he has many reasons
- God's providences concerning His people are commonly mixed-*mercy and justice*; God has set the one over-against the other
- The two go together; *mercy* can only be properly understood in light of *justice*
- When *justice* pronounces its righteous penalty, *mercy* may grant relief
- As king, David was concerned with *mercy and justice*; he knew these principles were not rooted in man, but in God

# David's Determination in His Personal Conduct 101:1-4



- *mercy and justice*, are characteristics of the Divine rule (Psalm 89:14), which are to be reflected in the true human ruler as we read, *“In mercy the throne will be established; And One will sit on it in truth, in the tabernacle of David, Judging and seeking justice and hastening righteousness.”* (Isaiah 16:5)
- They are the fundamental principles of right life and conduct, the bond of fellowship between man and God (Hosea 2:19), and between man and his fellowman (Hosea 12:6; Micah 6:8; Matthew 23:23)
- Before he could exercise *mercy and justice* in his kingdom, David had to understand and praise the *mercy and justice* of God



# David's Determination in His Personal Conduct 101:1-4



- David, by singing of God's *mercy and justice*, means that he will make it one of the rules of his life to do so
- It was so with David and his family
- When David numbered the people, God had mercy on him as we read in 2 Samuel 24, *“And when the angel stretched out His hand over Jerusalem to destroy it, the Lord relented from the destruction, and said to the angel who was destroying the people, ‘It is enough; now restrain your hand.’”*
- According to St. Augustine, he names mercy first, for the present life is that of mercy, the future that of judgment

# David's Determination in His Personal Conduct 101:1-4



- He says, “they are not placed in this order without a meaning, so that he said not ‘judgment and mercy,’ but ‘mercy and judgment:’ so that if we distinguish them by succession in time, perhaps we find that the present is the season for mercy, the future for judgment.”
- So that no one need to be surprised if, for the present, *“He makes His sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust.”* (Matthew 5:45)
- Singing is the movement of the heart
- This is why God described our worship to Him *as “singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord,”* (Ephesians 5:19)

# David's Determination in His Personal Conduct 101:1-4



- The heart moved by the love of God leads to a joyful song
- All men should hope in God's mercy, while they dread His judgment; but to hope, without presuming, and to fear, without despairing
- St. Augustine says, "Let no man flatter himself that he will never be punished through God's mercy; for there is judgment also; and let no man who has been changed for the better dread the Lord's judgment, seeing that mercy goes before it...God neither loses the severity of judgment in the bounty of mercy, nor in judging with severity loses the bounty of mercy..."

# David's Determination in His Personal Conduct 101:1-4



- David's longing for the Lord was connected to his desire to live a wise and holy life *perfect way*
- He was eager for closer fellowship with God
- He determined that his reign would be marked by integrity and godliness
- It recalls David's words in 2 Samuel 6:9, and may possibly be an allusion to the promise of Exodus 20:24
- Obedience to God's commandments is the condition of such a fellowship (John 14:23)
- He begins with himself by bringing his own character and conduct into conformity with the way and will of God

# David's Determination in His Personal Conduct 101:1-4



- He actually did so before he came to the throne, which made Saul fear him, and the people love him, 1 Samuel 18:14; and so, he resolved to do and did afterwards
- David seeks after perfection; then feeling his inability to walk in the perfect way by his own strength, he cries to God for help
- *Oh, when will You come to me?* To enlighten, teach, encourage, inspire and change him
- He knew he will never be able to do of himself, by his own strength, but by the help of God's grace
- Even in the privacy of his own palace, he *will walk with a perfect heart*, Psalm 18:23, 78:72; Proverbs 20:7

# David's Determination in His Personal Conduct 101:1-4



- He now begins relating his way of life, as worthy of imitation both by his successors and by his subordinates; for it is for this purpose that the king sits on an elevated seat, like a candle, *“on a lampstand, and it gives light to all who are in the house.”* (Matthew 5:15)
- So, should all good men do and be an example in the family; be a model of good works, bring up their children in the fear of the Lord, and neglect nothing that may contribute to their real good and the glory of God
- David first explains his position with himself and with God; next, with others, and in the eyes of his people

# David's Determination in His Personal Conduct 101:1-4



- David's righteous life had to be real in his conduct *within* his own *house* before it could be lived in the courts of his kingdom
- He wishes to walk the life of this world, *behave wisely in a perfect way*, thinking of nothing, seeking nothing, delighting in nothing but what was good; most careful in keeping his heart from being polluted by sinful thoughts or desires; for he knew the heart to be the source of life and of death
- He resolves not to contemplate anything worthless, not to be entertained by what is vile, and he hates the toxicities of deceit

# David's Determination in His Personal Conduct 101:1-4



- David understood the principle later stated in 1 John 1:6-7, *“If we say that we have fellowship with Him, and walk in darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth. But if we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin.”*
- What he said of his heart he now says of his eyes and of his hands, *I will set nothing wicked before my eyes; I hate the work of those who fall away*
- He turned away the eyes of his mind as well as of his body from all injustice and furthermore, from all sinful objects that could possibly defile the soul



# David's Determination in His Personal Conduct 101:1-4



- There are many *wicked* things to *set* the *eyes* upon, and the *lust of the eyes* is a significant aspect of the temptation of this world (1 John 2:16)
- Not only that, but he even hated all those guilty of it; and thus, got a thorough hatred of iniquity itself
- It is only the Lord who is Righteous, and without sin; whereas man is a sinner
- Yet, there is a difference between him who finds pleasure in sin, looks for it, seeks it, and submits himself to it; and those who resists it, and tries their best to flee from it

# David's Determination in His Personal Conduct 101:1-4



- After telling his position in regard of himself, he now tells us how he stood in regard of others; and such was his position that the wicked would not even dare to approach him
- David knew that if he wanted to live a godly life, it would be wise to keep some distance from those with *a perverse heart*
- He knew what would be later stated in 1 Corinthians 15:33: “*Evil company corrupts good habits.*”
- Great must be the virtue of anyone, when others have such an opinion of his sanctity, that the wicked shy away from even appearing in his presence

# David's Determination in His Personal Conduct 101:1-4



- All corruption, dishonesty, and *perversity* shall be banished from his heart, he will not consciously tolerate evil there
- It takes determination to pursue a righteous life
- King David did not only resolve to not practice wickedness himself and have evil people as his friends, but he also made sure neither to keep bad servants nor to employ those that are wicked
- Notice that David begins by cleaning up his own heart and then refuses to be associated with any evil person who might influence him to do evil

# David's Determination in His Personal Conduct 101:1-4



- Again, David was determined not to have evil people in his company
- According to St. Augustine, “he who talks here, talks in the name of God. As the one with a perverse heart, would be unworthy of being known by God. Saying: ‘I will not know wickedness’, means I do not want to know him, who does wickedness.”

# His Determination in Those He Would Appoint 101:5-8



- It is a significant and grievous sin to lie or speak in an evil way against another
- The worst of this slander is done *secretly*, and David was determined to oppose all who did so *Him I will destroy*
- Whether it is said in private or public, God does not approve of slander
- David knows this and he wants to pattern his life according to the life of his Lord
- So, he said he will not tolerate anyone who says bad things about their neighbor

# His Determination in Those He Would Appoint 101:5-8



- He would not have one in his house, or in his service, who did injustice to the character of others; who stabbed their reputation in the dark
- Responding to a question: “What is the sin of slander?”, Abba Isaiah said: “The sin of slander keeps man away from the presence of God; according to what is written: ‘Whoever secretly slanders his neighbor, him I will destroy’” (Paradise of the fathers)
- David listed two additional related sins: the communication of arrogance by the facial expression the *haughty look* and the *proud heart* behind the expression

# His Determination in Those He Would Appoint 101:5-8



- To all such who thought themselves better than their neighbors, David said *Him I will not endure*, he will not tolerate such a person near him
- David had a great hatred not only of those who *secretly slanders his neighbor*, but of the proud and the covetous
- For no greater hardship can befall people than to have the king's ministers proud or greedy
- They abuse their power in satisfying their greed, to the great harm of those under them
- David refused to look to or at those who thought themselves better than others

# His Determination in Those He Would Appoint 101:5-8



- Instead, he looked at *the faithful*, deciding that they would *dwell with him*
- When David looked for leaders, he looked for *the faithful of the land*
- It often happens that leaders are kept in their position regardless of their abilities or how much harm they may be doing to themselves and to others through their bad example because of their loyalty to the king
- But David's ministers should be not only faithful to him, but unstained and unblemished, and like himself in every respect



# His Determination in Those He Would Appoint 101:5-8



- He, therefore, says, *My eyes shall be on the faithful of the land*
- He looked about and sought for the faithful and would seek those who were trustworthy
- Or he looked with an eye of favor on those whom he knew to be faithful and selected them to *dwell with* him at his table
- And furthermore, if there was any other citizen however unknown to or unacquainted with him, provided he bore a good character, and led an irreproachable life, he was adopted as one of his leaders
- Perhaps David spoke this as he came to the throne, vowing to find the right people to appoint to his government

# His Determination in Those He Would Appoint 101:5-8



- As David previously reprehended those who *secretly slanders his neighbor*, he now excludes from his company all those who choose to lie, in order to deceive others
- He would reject one *who works deceit* and *he who tells lies*
- He would look for the humble, not the proud – knowing they were much better to trust with authority and responsibility
- Being a truthful man himself, David cannot tolerate people around him who are not truthful
- He would certainly reject anyone who practices deceit and tells lies

# His Determination in Those He Would Appoint 101:5-8



- *deceit* here means *wickedness* generally
- It is the duty of a king to see, not only that his own ways are blameless, but that his entire household is well ordered, and consists of righteous people
- As we read about Job, “*he would rise early in the morning and offer burnt offerings according to the number of them all. For Job said, ‘It may be that my sons have sinned and cursed God in their hearts.’ Thus Job did regularly.*” (Job 1:5)
- According to St. Augustine *my house* here means God’s heart

# His Determination in Those He Would Appoint 101:5-8



- He says, “Understand this of the heart. The proud did not dwell in my heart: no such dwelt in my heart: for he hurried away from me. None but the meek and peaceful dwelt in my heart.”
- David concludes the Psalm by showing the amount of his zeal in purifying the city of the Lord, therein dealing mercifully with the good, who had been previously crushed and oppressed by the wicked and inflicting punishment from the latter for their oppressions
- King David was so determined to rule righteously, favoring the godly and opposing the wicked, that he wanted to do it as early as possible

# His Determination in Those He Would Appoint 101:5-8



- Day after day David will make it his endeavor, not only to keep his palace free from evil doers, but to cleanse the whole land of them
- David is determined to exercise that just severity which is a part of the duty of kings (Romans 13:4), and not to be that curse to a country - a weak and over-indulgent ruler
- The godly king affirms that his loyalty is to God and not to the ways of this world
- David is especially concerned that Jerusalem, which he has made *the city of the Lord* (2 Samuel 6:12-19), shall be kept free from the pollutions of evil doers

# His Determination in Those He Would Appoint 101:5-8



- Was David successful in maintaining the high standard of his declaration?
- No, not completely; but what leader beside Jesus Christ has ever maintained an unblemished record?
- He had his weaknesses and failings, but overall, he sought to honor the Lord and be a good leader
- All the Psalm, though spoken by David, is more applicable to Christ, especially this last verse; for David did all he can to banish all evil doers from *the city of the Lord*, but he did not succeed, and never could succeed therein

# His Determination in Those He Would Appoint 101:5-8



- But Christ, in the morning of the world to come, will really and truly cut off and scatter all the workers of iniquity, and then the holy city of the heavenly Jerusalem will be what its name implies, a vision of peace
- St. Augustine says, “There are then wicked doers in the city of the Lord, and they at present, seemingly, spared. Why so? Because it is the season of mercy: but that of judgment will come; for the Psalm thus began, ‘Of mercy and judgment will I sing unto You, O Lord’ ...He at present spares, He will then judge. But when will He judge? When night shall have passed away. For this reason He has said: ‘In the morning.’”



# Discussion

- How does the Psalm describe the Lord's character?
- What does the introduction of the Psalm celebrate?
- What promises did David make to the Lord?
- How did David describe the extent of his commitment to God?
- What attitude did David have toward the wicked?



# Discussion



- What accusations did David make against the wicked?
- How could David guard against the influence of the wicked?
- Whose company did David want to keep? Why?
- What glimpse does this Psalm give into the kind of relationship David had with the Lord?
- How did David fail to behave himself in a perfect way? How does this reconcile with his commitment to do so?