



Coptic Orthodox Diocese of the Southern United States



The Holy Book of Psalms

Psalm 108

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Introduction

- This Psalm is titled *A Song. A Psalm of David*
- This Psalm is actually a collection from two other Psalms with slight modifications
- The first part of the Psalm, verses 1-5, is similar to Psalm 57:7-11
- The second part, verses 6-13 is taken from Psalm 60:5-12
- But it is not known at what time or under what circumstances this was done
- It may have been that what had been expressed on two different occasions might now be fulfilled or accomplished and the thoughts which had been expressed separately before might now be unitedly spoken in praise



Introduction

- However, many are of the opinion that the Psalms referred to were written by David, it is probable that the captives in Babylon composed this out of Psalms 57 and 60, and applied it to the state of their affairs
- These are David's words, by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, taken and applied to a present challenge
- Apparently, Israel was threatened by enemies, and the second part of Psalm 60 was an appropriate prayer for their needs
- But the complaint of severe disaster with which Psalm 60 opens was not appropriate, and accordingly a thanksgiving was substituted for it from Psalm 57



Introduction

- St. Augustine comments, “We are taught by this Psalm, that those titles which seem to refer to history are most rightly understood prophetically, according to the object of the composition of the Psalms....And yet this Psalm is composed of the latter portions of two, whose titles are different. Where it is signified that each concur in a common object, not in the surface of the history, but in the depth of prophecy, the objects of both being united in this one, the title of which is, ‘A Song or Psalm of David:’ resembling neither of the former titles, otherwise than in the word David.”



Introduction

Psalm Outline

- Declaration of God's Praise 108:1-5
- Declaration of God's Victory 108:7-13

Declaration of God's Praise

108:1-5



- 1-5, Steadfastness of joyous thanksgiving for past mercies, and prayer that God will manifest Himself as the supremely exalted Ruler of the world
- The psalmist's steadfast will and purpose is to sing God's praises
- His heart is prepared, willing, and ready to *sing and give praise*
- The steadfast heart leads to a singing heart
- So, in a spiritual sense, a heart fixed and established, is one that is assured of its salvation by Christ, rooted and grounded in the love of God, firmly built on the foundation which is Christ, and does not move from the hope of the Gospel by what the world offers

Declaration of God's Praise

108:1-5



- It was his *glory* - his honor - thus to be engaged in giving praise to God
- By the word *glory*, some understand the tongue; others the soul itself, as the glory of man
- David praised God with the best of his being
- Whatever *glory* belonged to David, he directed it toward God in praise
- The earnest praise offered to God was *musical* and David was a skilled musician (1 Samuel 16:18), and it could be said that this skill was part of his *glory* – so he offered it to God in praise

Declaration of God's Praise

108:1-5



- *lute* was a stringed instrument, usually with twelve strings, and played with the fingers
- *Harp*, was also a stringed instrument, usually consisting of ten strings
- Josephus, the Jewish historian, says that it was played with a key
- From 1 Samuel 16:23,18:10,19:9, it appears, however, that it was sometimes played with the fingers
- David intended to praise God at dawn before sunrise
- He offers the firstfruit of his day to praise God, and to give Him thanks

Declaration of God's Praise

108:1-5



- David was determined to give God the best in praise, so he gave unto God the best part of the day
- No time in the day is more appropriate for worship than the early morning and no object is more worthy to awaken us from our sleep than a desire to praise God
- There is no more appropriate way to begin the day than by prayer and praise
- Many fathers think that the *lute and harp*, are symbolic meaning refer to the believer's body, talents, and energies, that awake to praise and glorify God

Declaration of God's Praise

108:1-5



- St. Jerome speaking spiritually of this verse says, “As the harp has many strings, and if one of them is broken, the whole instrument would be useless; it is likewise in our works, If we disobey one commandment, our whole harp would be useless.”
- Considering this Psalm as Messianic, St. Augustine believes that the *lute and harp* are the work of the Lord Jesus Christ, whether according to His Divinity, like performing miracles, or according to His Manhood, like feeling hunger and thirst, and falling asleep, etc.
- David directed his praise to God, yet he was praising Him in the presence *the peoples* or *among the nations*

Declaration of God's Praise

108:1-5



- His praise was not secret, but open and public
- David's joy is too great to be kept within any narrower limits than those of the entire earth
- He will have his hymn of praise go forth to all *the peoples* and *the nations*
- *the peoples ... the nations* , Is a prophecy which had to be fulfilled as the Apostle Paul has reference to it in Romans 15:9, "*and that the Gentiles might glorify God for His mercy, as it is written: 'For this reason I will confess to You among the Gentiles, And sing to Your name.'*"

Declaration of God's Praise

108:1-5



- He gives the reason for why he will praise God *among people and nations*
- Mercy and truth which reach from earth to heaven need the whole world praise
- David understood that the *mercy* of God was so great that if it were to be measured, it would extend *above the heavens*, and His *truth* would reach *to the clouds*
- The heavens are great, but the mercy of God is greater and abundant
- The skies are high and bright, but the truth of God is more eminent, more glorious

Declaration of God's Praise

108:1-5



- Man cannot see further than *the heavens* and *clouds*
- Therefore, whatever man see of God's *mercy* and *truth* is limited
- There is still more to be seen
- St. Jerome says, "There is no creature who does not lean upon, and in need of, the compassion of God."
- Then verse 5 is a proper transition to the second part of the Psalm, with its prayer for deliverance and expressions of confidence in the help of God
- The God who made the heavens and the earth (Genesis 1:1) is the God who is to be exalted above the heavens and the earth

Declaration of God's Praise

108:1-5



- A God of great mercy and truth is worthy of great praise and recognition of *glory*
- If the measure of God's mercy and truth are high above the *heavens* and *the clouds*, then the honor and recognition to God should also be that great
- Several of the fathers apply verse 5 to Jesus Christ's resurrection
- They say that by the spirit of prophecy, David seeing the Lord Christ ascending to heaven, his soul exulted

Declaration of God's Victory

108:7-13



- 6–13. Prayer for help, based upon God's promise to give Israel possession of Canaan, and reign over the surrounding nations (6–9); with an expression of confidence that God, Who alone can help, will surely give His people the victory (10–13)
- David's praise transformed into a prayer, asking that he would be rescued from his present distress
- The opening of Psalm 108 is so filled with praise that we did not even know David was in trouble
- He only mentioned his distress after setting his heart and mind right with praise from his entire being

Declaration of God's Victory

108:7-13



- David understood that God loved him, and he appealed to God on that basis
- David's mind understood that there were many others that God loved, but his heart came to God as if he were the only one, not one of many
- The *right hand* is regarded as the hand of strength, and David felt that the case required and needed the *right hand* of God
- David called upon God to bring all His skill and strength into his rescue
- The Right Hand of God is the Son, by His only begotten Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, the salvation of all mankind was fulfilled

Declaration of God's Victory

108:7-13



- David was a prophet (Acts 2:30) and was about to prophesy of God's ultimate victory over all nations
- He began by noting that this proclamation came from God's *holiness* – His character of being separate and set apart from all His creation
- *in His holiness*, Is the same as promised or sworn, “*Once I have sworn by My holiness*” (Psalm 89:35); “*The Lord God has sworn by His holiness.*” (Amos 4:2)
- God's ‘holiness’ includes His whole essential nature, and that nature makes it impossible for Him to break His promise (Numbers 23:19; Titus 1:2)

Declaration of God's Victory

108:7-13



- Salvation will not only bring joy to the hearts of believers, but God Himself says: *I will rejoice*
- God is represented as a victorious warrior, conquering the land, and dividing it out to His people
- *I will divide*, Signifying unquestioned right of ownership
- God declared His sovereignty over the land; He would *divide* and *measure* it as He pleased
- God's response takes us back to the days of Joshua and the downfall of the land of Canaan
- God declares that He will triumph just as He did before

Declaration of God's Victory

108:7-13



- *Shechem*, as a central place of importance, represents the territory west of the Jordan
- *the Valley of Succoth*, (Joshua 13:27), somewhere to the south of the Jabbok, between Peniel and the Jordan, represents the territory east of the Jordan
- These two places in particular may be named, because of their connection with the history of Jacob, who stopped first at Succoth and then at Shechem, when he returned to Canaan (Genesis 33:17-18)
- God will fulfil His promise to Jacob, giving to His people the land in which their great ancestor settled

Declaration of God's Victory

108:7-13



- *God has spoken in His holiness*, May be also understood by His Son, His Holy One, by whom He has spoken in these last times unto His people, (Hebrews 1:2)
- According to St. Jerome, “Shechem means (shoulders). If the Lord Christ, by His love, has readily bowed His back to carry the cross on His shoulders for our sake; He granted us, as well, to carry the cross on our shoulders, together with Him, as a sweet and a joyful yoke.”

Declaration of God's Victory

108:7-13



- *Gilead is Mine; Manasseh* that is the land of Bashan in which half the tribe of Manasseh settled, stand for the territory east of the Jordan and the tribes settled there
- Ephraim and Judah stand for the tribes west of the Jordan
- God claims all as His own: therefore, all can claim God's protection
- The tribe of *Ephraim* descended from Joseph and was one of the prominent tribes of Israel
- Sometimes the northern tribes were collectively called *Ephraim*, after this large and influential tribe

Declaration of God's Victory

108:7-13



- *Ephraim* was like a *helmet*, expressing God's strength and security, so, it is compared to the warrior's helmet
- If Ephraim expressed God's strength, the tribe of Judah expressed His *rule* and *government*, as a *lawgiver*
- *Judah* was the tribe of King David and later of the Messiah
- The great Lawgiver is Christ Himself, who came of this tribe, Isaiah 33:22
- The repetition of *Mine* and *My* reflect that everything is His
- In striking contrast to the honor assigned to Ephraim and Judah is the disgrace of Moab and Edom

Declaration of God's Victory

108:7-13



- The neighboring nations are reduced to servitude and subjection
- Moab, known for its pride, “*We have heard of the pride of Moab—He is very proud—Of his haughtiness and his pride and his wrath.*” (Isaiah 16:6), is compared to the vessel which is brought to the victorious warrior to wash his feet in when he returns from battle
- The old enemy of God and His people is degraded to do lowly service
- In close connection with this metaphor he says next, *Over Edom I will cast My shoe*

Declaration of God's Victory

108:7-13



- Edom is like the slave to whom the warrior throws his sandals to carry or to clean
- Haughty and rebellious Edom (Obadiah 1:3-4) must perform the duty of the lowest slave (Matthew 3:11)
- God's dominion would also be expressed over these long and bitter enemies of Israel, *Over Philistia I will triumph*
- Thus, our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ is at God's right hand, in a full assurance that all His enemies shall in due time, *"have put all things in subjection under his feet."* (Hebrews 2:8)

Declaration of God's Victory

108:7-13



- Before David confronted a *strong city* of Edom, he praised God and expressed his total confidence in God's dominion over Israel and the nations
- *Who will bring me into the strong city?* As if he had said, These are difficult things indeed; and I may well ask, when I consider how strong and powerful these nations are, by what power shall I enter that strongly fenced city?
- *Who will lead me to Edom?* None can do it but God
- This is an important and eternal principle: anything that seems undefeated can be overcome by the power of God

Declaration of God's Victory

108:7-13



- David prayed this prayer in light of recent defeats, recognizing that those defeats came because God's favor did not shine upon Israel's armies
- If God *did not go out with our armies*, there was no hope for victory – *for the help of man is useless*
- Although God had seemed to reject and forsake them, they had no other resource but Him
- David relied upon God even when Israel seemed under a cloud and the Lord *cast them off*
- The psalmist trusted that God would not forsake them altogether

Declaration of God's Victory

108:7-13



- *O God, who cast us off, Although God disciplines but because He loves us, “For a mere moment I have forsaken you, But with great mercies I will gather you.”* (Isaiah 54:7)
- David had seen many brave men accomplish great things on the field of battle
- Yet for David and for Israel, the help of man was not enough; indeed, it was *useless*
- God's help would lead them to victory; *“There is no one like the God of Jeshurun, Who rides the heavens to help you, ... The eternal God is your refuge,”* (Deuteronomy 33:26-27)

Declaration of God's Victory

108:7-13



- David's formula was simple; without God, they could do nothing
- With and *through God*, they could win great victories and accomplish great things
- The victory belonged to God, *it is He who shall tread down our enemies*
- David understood that it was not for Israel to avoid fighting and passively see what God would do
- Instead, they would fight, but fight *through God*
- Their fighting through God would be brave and valiant, and in it they would see God *tread down our enemies*

Declaration of God's Victory

108:7-13



- God will not overcome Edom; the people who trust in God will themselves do the valiant deed, but that they will do it through Him
- This is ever the way of victory
- It is only through God and His grace, that we can, at any time, achieve or accomplish anything
- When praise and prayer have preceded the battle, one may expect to see valiant heroic deeds and significant victories
- Although the Psalm was made up of parts of two separate Psalms, it is complete in itself

Declaration of God's Victory

108:7-13



- There is no break or discrepancy in the flow of thought, but the unity is as perfect as though it had been an original composition
- And in spite of the fact that in the original Psalms the parts which are used here have a different connection, yet as used here, they seem to be exactly suited to the new use



Discussion

- Why is this Psalm a combination of two earlier ones? What is the occasion for its composition?
- Is there any danger here of “vain repetition”? Discuss. Read: Philippians 3 :1,4:4; Galatians 1:9.
- What commitment did David make to the Lord?
- What attribute of the Lord does the introduction celebrate? (108:1-5)

Discussion



- What main request did David present to the Lord?
- What is the condition of God's people as this Psalm is recited?
- What is the heart attitude of the psalmist?
- How did David demonstrate his confidence in the Lord?