



Psalm 70 - Prayer for Deliverance from Enemies

To the leader. Of David, for the memorial offering.

Introduction

This short psalm is an individual lament, an urgent prayer for rescue from gloating enemies. The whole psalm is very close to Psalm 40:14-16. The title specifies the psalm as 'for the memorial offering'.

Psalm 70:1-3 - Deliver Me from Those Who Seek My Life

The first stanza sounds the note of desperation and danger. The threat comes from those who seek David's life, who would delight in hurting him, and who say, 'Aha, Aha!' These are people who are eager to hurt and gloat over the faithful. The enemies could be powerful Israelites, unfaithful to the covenant and therefore hostile to true piety or they could be foreigners who seek to impose other gods upon God's people. The song prays urgently that God would make haste to deliver and help David; the specific kind of help is the thwarting of the enemies' schemes, i.e. that they would be put to shame and confusion, and that they would be turned back and brought to dishonour.

- ¹ Be pleased, O God, to deliver me.
O Lord, make haste to help me!

Psalm 70:1

Be pleased, O God, to deliver me. 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, as he does in the following psalm: <<**O God, do not be far from me; O my God, make haste to help me!**>> (Psalm 71:12). Many prayers would prevail more with God if they were offered with more urgency.

O Lord, make haste to help me! David repeated the request for emphasis, but slightly changed his address to deity. In the repetition he used the name *Yahweh* or Lord, the covenant name of God. By the additional name he hoped to secure additional speed in the reply.

- ² Let those be put to shame and confusion
who seek my life.
Let those be turned back and brought to dishonour
who desire to hurt me.
- ³ Let those who say, ‘Aha, Aha!’
turn back because of their shame.

Psalm 70:2-3

Let those be put to shame and confusion who seek my life. This was the help that David sought. David prayed that God would turn back his enemies and cause them to be confused: <<*Let them be put to shame and dishonour who seek after my life. Let them be turned back and confounded who devise evil against me*>> (Psalm 35:4).

Let those be turned back and brought to dishonour, turn back because of their shame. This was a bold request, because many times enemies seem to have no sense of shame as they attack and oppose believers.

Let those who say, ‘Aha, Aha!’ This has the sense of scornful mocking. It was bad enough that David’s enemies wanted him dead; they also poured ridicule on him. Even on the Cross Jesus faced this same type of taunting and mockery: <<*In the same way the chief priests, along with the scribes, were also mocking him among themselves and saying, ‘He saved others; he cannot save himself. Let the Messiah, the King of Israel, come down from the cross now, so that we may see and believe.’ Those who were crucified with him also taunted him*>> (Mark 15:31-32).

Psalm 70:4-5 - May Those Who Seek You Rejoice at My Deliverance

This stanza echoes the first stanza in several ways. First, ‘who seek you’ (v.4) contrasts with ‘who seek my life’ (v.2); clearly these are two contrasting groups of people. Then ‘hasten’ (v.5) echoes ‘make haste’ (v.1), while ‘help’ and ‘deliverer’ (v.5) look back to ‘deliver’ and ‘help’ (v.1), in reverse order; the Hebrew uses two synonyms for deliver. In this stanza each person in the singing congregation identifies himself with the faithful in Israel, i.e. those who seek God and love his salvation, and prays that the whole company of the faithful might rejoice in God when they see the rescue of the person in trouble. The person in trouble is poor

and needy, and thus socially powerless; therefore his deliverance will be striking evidence that God keeps his promises.

- 4 Let all who seek you
rejoice and be glad in you.
Let those who love your salvation
say evermore, 'God is great!'

Psalm 70:4

Let all who seek you rejoice and be glad in you. David called the people of God, those who seek him and love his salvation, to be happy in him: <<***And those who know your name put their trust in you, for you, O Lord, have not forsaken those who seek you***>> (Psalm 9:10). It can be sensed that it would be impossible for David to do this unless he also found some measure of joy and gladness in God, despite his urgent problem.

Let those who love your salvation say evermore, 'God is great!' David thought that to praise God was to magnify him; that is, to make him larger in one's perception. Magnification does not actually make an object bigger, and God cannot be made any bigger by human will or power. Still, to magnify something or someone is to perceive it as bigger, and that should be done regarding God: <<***Surely God is great, and we do not know him; the number of his years is unsearchable***>> (Job 36:26).

- 5 But I am poor and needy;
hasten to me, O God!
You are my help and my deliverer;
O Lord, do not delay!

Psalm 70:5

But I am poor and needy. David could combine his sense of great joy in God with a realistic appraisal 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. In return, David promises to do God's will without delay: <<***I hurry and do not delay to keep your commandments***>> (Psalm 119:60).

You are my help and my deliverer. 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.