

PSALM 64

This whole psalm has reference to David's enemies, persecutors, and slanderers; many such there were, and a great deal of trouble they gave him, almost all his days, so that we need not guess at any particular occasion of penning this psalm.

I. He prays to God to preserve him from their malicious designs against him (v. 1, 2).

II. He gives a very bad character of them, as men marked for ruin by their own wickedness (v. 3-6).

III. By the spirit of prophecy he foretels their destruction, which would redound to the glory of God and the encouragement of his people (v. 7-10). In singing this psalm we must observe the effect of the old enmity that is in the seed of the woman against the seed of the serpent, and assure ourselves that the serpent's head will be broken, at last, to the honour and joy of the holy seed.

~~361~~ PSALM 64:1-6

MALICE OF DAVID'S ENEMIES

To the chief musician. A psalm of David.

David, in these verses, puts in before God a representation of his own danger and of his enemies' character, to enforce his petition that God would protect him and punish them.

I. He earnestly begs of God to preserve him (v. 1, 2): *Hear my voice, O God! in my prayer*; that is, grant me the thing I pray for, and this is it, *Lord, preserve my life from fear of the enemy*, that is, fro the enemy that I am in fear of. He makes request for his life, which is, in a particular manner, dear to him, because he knows it is designed to be very serviceable to God and his generation. When his life is struck at it cannot be thought he should altogether hold his peace, ~~400~~ Esther 7:2, 4. And, if he plead his fear of the enemy, it is no disparagement to his courage; his father Jacob, that prince with God, did so before him. ~~4321~~ Genesis 32:11,

Deliver me from the hand of Esau, for I fear him. Preserve my life from fear, not only from the thing itself which I fear, but from the disquieting fear of it; this is, in effect, the preservation of the life, for fear has torment, particularly the fear of death, by reason of which some are all their life-time subject to bondage. He prays, "Hide me from the secret counsel of the wicked, from the mischief which they secretly consult among themselves to do against me, and from the insurrection of the workers of iniquity, who join forces, as they join counsels, to do me a mischief." Observe, The secret counsel ends in an insurrection; treasonable practices begin in treasonable confederacies and conspiracies. "Hide me from them, that they may not find me, that they may not reach me. Let me be safe under thy protection."

II. He complains of the great malice and wickedness of his enemies: "Lord, hide me from them, for they are the worst of men, not fit to be connived at; they are dangerous men, that will stick at nothing; so that I am undone if thou do not take my part."

1. They are very spiteful in their calumnies and reproaches, v. 3, 4. They are described as military men, with their sword and bow, archers that take aim exactly, secretly, and suddenly, and shoot at the harmless bird that apprehends not herself in any danger. But,

(1.) Their tongues are their swords, flaming swords, two-edged swords, drawn swords, drawn in anger, with which they cut, and wound, and kill, the good name of their neighbours. The tongue is a little member, but, like the sword, it *boasts great things*, ^{<5085>}James 3:5. It is a dangerous weapon.

(2.) *Bitter words* are *their arrows* — scurrilous reflections, opprobrious nicknames, false representations, slanders, and calumnies, the fiery darts of the wicked one, set on fire to hell. For these their malice *bends their bows*, to send out these arrows with so much the more force.

(3.) The upright man is their mark; against him their spleen is, and they cannot speak peaceably either of him or to him. The better any man is the more he is envied by those that are themselves bad, and the more ill is said of him.

(4.) They manage it with a great deal of art and subtlety. They *shoot in secret*, that those they shoot at may not discover them and avoid the danger, for *in vain is the net spread in the sight of any bird*. And *suddenly*

do they shoot, without giving a man lawful warning or any opportunity to defend himself. *Cursed be he that thus smites his neighbour secretly* in his reputation, ⁽⁶⁷²⁾Deuteronomy 27:24. There is no guard against a pass made by a false tongue.

(5.) Herein *they fear not*, that is, they are confident of their success, and doubt not but by these methods they shall gain the point which their malice aims at. Or, rather, they fear not the wrath of God, which they will be the portion of a false tongue. They are impudent and daring in the mischief they do to good people, as if they must never be called to an account for it.

2. They are very close and very resolute in their malicious projects, v. 5.

(1.) They strengthen and corroborate themselves and one another in this evil matter, and by joining together in it they make one another the more bitter and the more bold. *Fortiter calumniari, aliquid adhaerebit* — *Lay on an abundance of reproach; part will be sure to stick*. It is bad to do a wrong thing, but worse to encourage ourselves and one another in doing it; this is doing the devil's work for him. It is a sign that the heart is hardened to the highest degree when it is thus fully set to do evil and fears no colours. It is the office of conscience to discourage men in an evil matter, but, when that is baffled, the case is desperate.

(2.) They consult with themselves and one another how to do the most mischief and most effectually: *They commune of laying snares privily*. All their communion is in sin and all their communication is how to sin securely. They hold councils of war for finding out the most effectual expedients to do mischief; every snare they lay was talked of before, and was laid with all the contrivance of their wicked wits combined.

(3.) They please themselves with an atheistical conceit that God himself takes no notice of their wicked practices: *They say, Who shall see them?* A practical disbelief of God's omniscience is at the bottom of all the wickedness of the wicked.

3. They are very industrious in putting their projects in execution (v. 6): *"They search out iniquity; they take a great deal of pains to find out some iniquity or other to lay to my charge; they dig deep, and look far back, and put things to the utmost stretch, that they may have something to accuse me of;"* or, "They are industrious to find out new arts of doing mischief to

me; in this they accomplish a diligent search; they go through with it, and spare neither cost nor labour.” *Evil men dig up mischief*. Half the pains that many take to damn their souls would serve to save them. They are masters of all the arts of mischief and destruction, for *the inward thought of every one of them, and the heart, are kept*, deep as hell, desperately wicked, who can know it? By the unaccountable wickedness of their wit and of their will, they show themselves to be, both in subtlety and malignity, the genuine offspring of the old serpent.

PSALM 64:7-10

GOD'S JUDGMENTS ON PERSECUTORS

We may observe here,

I. The judgments of God which should certainly come upon these malicious persecutors of David. Though they encouraged themselves in their wickedness, here is that which, if they would believe and consider it, was enough to discourage them. And it is observable how the punishment answers the sin.

1. They shot at David secretly and suddenly, to wound him; but God shall shoot at them, for the *ordains his arrows against the persecutors* (~~Psalm~~ Psalm 7:13), *against the face of them*, ~~Psalm~~ Psalm 21:12. And God's arrows will hit surer, and fly swifter, and pierce deeper, than theirs do or can. They have many arrows, but they are only bitter words, and words are but wind: the curse causeless shall not come. But God has one arrow that will be their death, his curse which is never causeless, and therefore shall come; with it they shall be suddenly wounded, that is, their wound by it will be a surprise upon them, because they were secure and not apprehensive of any danger.

2. Their tongues fell upon him, but God shall *make their tongues to fall upon themselves*. They do it by the desert of their sin; God does it by the justice of his wrath, v. 8. When God deals with men according to the desert of their tongue-sins, and brings those mischiefs upon them which they have passionately and maliciously imprecated upon others, then he makes their own tongues to fall upon them; and it is weight enough to sink a man to the lowest hell, like a talent of lead. Many have cut their own

throats, and many more have damned their own souls, with their tongues, and it will be an aggravation of their condemnation. *O Israel! thou hast destroyed thyself, art snared in the words of thy mouth. If thou scornest, thou alone shalt bear it.* Those that love cursing, it shall come unto them. Sometimes men's secret wickedness is brought to light by their own confession, and then their own tongue falls upon them.

II. The influence which these judgments should have upon others; for it is done *in the open sight of all*, ^{<3926>}Job 34:26.

1. Their neighbours shall shun them and shift for their own safety. They *shall flee away*, as the men of Israel did from the tents of Korah, Dathan, and Abiram, ^{<4162>}Numbers 16:27. Some think this was fulfilled in the death of Saul, when not only his army was dispersed, but the inhabitants of the neighbouring country were so terrified with the fall, not only of their king but of his three sons, that they quitted their cities and fled, ^{<3807>}1 Samuel 31:7.

2. Spectators shall reverence the providence of God therein, v. 9.

(1.) They shall understand and observe God's hand in all (and, unless we do so, we are not likely to profit by the dispensations of Providence, ^{<3449>}Hosea 14:9): *They shall wisely consider his doing.* There is need of consideration and serious thought rightly to apprehend the matter of fact, and need of wisdom to put a true interpretation upon it. God's doing is well worth our considering (^{<2073>}Ecclesiastes 7:13), but it must be considered wisely, that we put not a corrupt gloss upon a pure text.

(2.) They shall be affected with a holy awe of God upon the consideration of it. All men (all that have any thing of the reason of a man in them) shall fear and tremble because of God's judgments, ^{<1370>}Psalm 119:120. They shall fear to do the like, fear being found persecutors of God's people. *Smite the scorner and the simple shall beware.*

(3.) They shall declare the work of God. They shall speak to one another and to all about them of the justice of God in punishing persecutors. What we wisely consider ourselves we should wisely declare to others, for their edification and the glory of God. *This is the finger of God.*

3. Good people shall in a special manner take notice of it, and it shall affect them with a holy pleasure, v. 10.

(1.) It shall increase their joy: *The righteous shall be glad in the Lord*, not glad of the misery and ruin of their fellow-creatures, but glad that God is glorified, and his word fulfilled, and the cause of injured innocence pleaded effectually.

(2.) It shall encourage their faith. They shall commit themselves to him in the way of duty and be willing to venture for him with an entire confidence in him.

(3.) Their joy and faith shall both express themselves in a holy boasting: *All the upright in heart*, that keep a good conscience and approve themselves to God, *shall glory*, not in themselves, but in the favour of God, in his righteousness and goodness, their relation to him and interest in him. *Let him that glories glory in the Lord.*