

# PSALM 140

This and the four following psalms are much of a piece, and the scope of them the same with many that we met with in the beginning and middle of the book of Psalms, though with but few of late. They were penned by David (as it should seem) when he was persecuted by Saul; one of them is said to be his “prayer when he was in the cave,” and it is probable that all the rest were penned about the same time. In this psalm,

**I.** David complains of the malice of his enemies, and prays to God to preserve him from them (v. 1-5).

**II.** He encourages himself in God as his God (v. 6, 7).

**III.** He prays for, and prophesies, the destruction of his persecutors (v. 8-11).

**IV.** He assures all God's afflicted people that their troubles would in due time end well (v. 12, 13), with which assurance we must comfort ourselves, and one another, in singing this psalm.

## ~~THE~~ PSALM 140:1-7

### COMPLAINTS AND PETITIONS

*To the chief musician. A psalm of David.*

In *this*, as in other things, David was a type of Christ, that he suffered before he reigned, was humbled before he was exalted, and that as there were many who loved and valued him, and sought to do him honour, so there were many who hated and envied him, and sought to do him mischief, as appears by these verses, where,

**I.** He gives a character of his enemies, and paints them out in their own colours, as dangerous men, whom he had reason to be afraid of, but wicked men, whom he had no reason to think the righteous God would countenance. There was one that seems to have been the ring-leader of them, whom he calls *the evil man* and *the man of violences* (v. 1, 4), probably he means Saul. The Chaldee paraphrast (v. 9) names both Doeg

and Ahithophel; but between them there was a great distance of time. Violent men are evil men. But there were many besides this one who were confederate against David, who are here represented as the genuine offspring and seed of the serpent. For,

**1.** They are very subtle, crafty to do mischief; they have imagined it (v. 2), have laid the scheme with all the art and cunning imaginable. They *have purposed* and plotted *to overthrow the goings* of a good man (v. 4), to draw him into sin and trouble, to ruin him by blasting his reputation, crushing his interest, and taking away his life. For this purpose *they have*, like mighty hunters, *hidden a snare*, and *spread a net*, and *set gins* (v. 5), that their designs against him, being kept undiscovered, might be the more likely to take effect, and he might fall into their hands ere he was aware. Great persecutors have often been great politicians, which has indeed made them the more formidable; but *the Lord preserves the simple* without all those arts.

**2.** They are very spiteful, as full of malice as Satan himself: *They have sharpened their tongues like a serpent*, that infuses his venom with his tongue; and there is so much malignity in all they say that one would think there was nothing *under their lips* but *adders' poison*, v. 3. With their calumnies, and with their counsels, they aimed to destroy David, but secretly, as a man is stung with a serpent, or a snake in the grass. And they endeavoured likewise to infuse their malice into others, and to make them seven times more the children of hell than themselves. A malignant tongue makes men like the old serpent; and poison in the lips is a certain sign of poison in the heart.

**3.** They are confederate; they are many of them; but they are all *gathered together* against me *for war*, v. 2. Those who can agree in nothing else can agree to persecute a good man. Herod and Pilate will unite in this, and in this they resemble Satan, who is not divided against himself, all the devils agreeing in Beelzebub.

**4.** They are *proud* (v. 5), conceited of themselves and confident of their success; and herein also they resemble Satan, whose reigning ruining sin was pride. The pride of persecutors, though at present it be the terror, yet may be the encouragement, of the persecuted, for the more haughty they are the faster are they ripening for ruin. *Pride goes before destruction.*

**II.** He prays to God to keep him from them and from being swallowed up by them: “Lord, *deliver me, preserve me, keep me* (v. 1, 4); let them not prevail to take away my life, my reputation, my interest, my comfort, and to prevent my coming to the throne. *Keep me* from doing as they do, or as they would have me do, or as they promise themselves I shall do.” Note, The more malice appears in our enemies against us the more earnest we should be in prayer to God to take us under his protection. In him believers may count upon a security, and may enjoy it and themselves with a holy serenity. Those are safe whom God preserves. If he be for us, who can be against us?

**III.** He triumphs in God, and thereby, in effect, he triumphs over his persecutors, v. 6, 7. When his enemies sharpened their tongues against him, did he sharpen his against them? No; *adders' poison was under their lips*, but grace was poured into his lips, witness what he here said unto the Lord, for to him he looked, to him he directed himself, when he saw himself in so much danger, through the malice of his enemies: and it is well for us that we have a God to go to. He comforted himself,

- 1.** In his interest in God: “*I said, Thou art my God*; and, if my God, then my shield and mighty protector.” In troublous dangerous times it is good to claim relation to God, and by faith to keep hold of him.
- 2.** In his access to God. This comforted him, that he was not only taken into covenant with God, but into communion with him, that he had leave to speak to him, and might expect an answer of peace from him, and could say, with a humble confidence, *Hear the voice of my supplications, O Lord!*
- 3.** In the assurance he had of help from God and happiness in him: “*O God the Lord — Jehovah Adonai!* as *Jehovah* thou art self-existent and self-sufficient, an infinitely perfect being; as *Adonai* thou art my stay and support, my ruler and governor, and therefore *the strength of my salvation*, my strong Saviour; nay, not only my Saviour, but my salvation itself, from whom, in whom, my salvation is; not only a strong Saviour, but the very strength of my salvation, on whom the stress of my hope is laid; all in all, to make me happy, and to preserve me to my happiness.”
- 4.** In the experience he had had formerly of God's care of him: *Thou hast covered my head in the day of battle*. As he pleaded with Saul, that, for the service of his country, he many a time jeopardated his life in the high places

of the field, so he pleads with God that, in those services, he had wonderfully protected him, and provided him a better helmet for the securing of his head than Goliath's was: "Lord, thou hast kept me *in the day of battle* with the Philistines, suffer me not to fall by the treacherous intrigues of false-hearted Israelites." God is as able to preserve his people from secret fraud as from open force; and the experience we have had of his power and care, in dangers of one kind, may encourage us to trust in him and depend upon him in dangers of another nature; for nothing can shorten the Lord's right hand.

## PSALM 140:8-13

### SHAME AND CONFUSION OF PERSECUTORS

Here is the believing foresight David had,

**I.** Of the shame and confusion of persecutors.

**1.** Their disappointment. This he prays for (v. 8), that their lusts might not be gratified, their lust of ambition, envy, and revenge: "*Grant not, O Lord! the desires of the wicked*, but frustrate them; let them not see the ruin of my interest, which they so earnestly wish to see; but *hear the voice of my supplications*." He prays that their projects might not take effect, but be blasted: "*O further not his wicked device*; let not Providence favour any of his designs, but cross them; suffer *not his wicked device* to proceed, but chain his wheels, and stop him in the career of his pursuits." Thus we are to pray against the enemies of God's people, that they may not succeed in any of their enterprises. Such was David's prayer against Ahithophel, that God would turn his counsels into foolishness. The plea is, *lest they exalt themselves*, value themselves upon their success as if it were an evidence that God favoured them. Proud men, when they prosper, are made prouder, grow more impudent against God and insolent against his people, and *therefore*, "Lord, do not prosper them."

**2.** Their destruction. This he prays for (as we read it); but some choose to read it rather as a prophecy, and the original will bear it. If we take it as a prayer, that proceeds from a spirit of prophecy, which comes all to one. He foretels the ruin,

(1.) Of his own enemies: “As for those that compass me about, and seek my ruin,”

[1.] “The mischief of their own lips shall cover their heads (v. 9); the evil they have wished to me shall come upon themselves, their curses shall be blown back into their own faces, and the very designs which they have laid against me shall turn to their own ruin,” <sup><1075></sup>Psalm 7:15, 16. Let those that make mischief, by slandering, tale-bearing, misrepresenting their neighbours, and spreading ill-natured characters and stories, dread the consequence of it, and think how sad their condition will be when all the mischief they have been accessory to shall be made to return upon themselves.

[2.] The judgments of God shall *fall upon them*, compared here to *burning coals*, in allusion to the destruction of Sodom; nay, as in the deluge the waters from above, and those from beneath, met for the drowning of the world, both the windows of heaven were opened and the fountains of the great deep were broken up, so here, to complete the ruin of the enemies of Christ and his kingdom, they shall not only have *burning coals* cast upon them from above (<sup><1085></sup>Job 20:23; 27:22), but they themselves shall *be cast into the fire* beneath; both heaven and hell, the wrath of God the Judge and the rage of Satan the tormentor, shall concur to make them miserable. And the fire they shall be cast into is not a furnace of fire, out of which perhaps they might escape, but a *deep pit*, out of which they cannot rise. Tophet is said to be *deep and large*, <sup><2333></sup>Isaiah 30:33.

(2.) Of all others that are like them, v. 11.

[1.] Evil speakers must expect to be shaken, for they shall never *be established in the earth*. What is got by fraud and falsehood, by calumny and unjust accusation, will not prosper, will not last. Wealth gotten by vanity will be diminished. Let not such men as Doeg think to reign long, for his doom will be theirs, <sup><1085></sup>Psalm 2:5. A lying tongue is but for a moment, but the *lip of truth shall be established for ever*.

[2.] Evil doers must expect to be destroyed: *Evil shall hunt the violent man*, as the blood-hound hunts the murderer to discover him, as the lion hunts his prey to tear it to pieces. Mischievous men will be brought to light, and brought to ruin; the destruction appointed shall run them down and overthrow them. *Evil pursues sinners*.

**II.** Here is his foresight of the deliverance and comfort of the persecuted, v. 12, 13.

**1.** God will do those justice, in delivering them, who, being wronged, commit themselves to him: “*I know that the Lord will maintain the just and injured cause of his afflicted people, and will not suffer might always to prevail against right, though it be but the right of the poor, who have but little that they can pretend a right to.*” God is, and will be, the patron of oppressed innocence, much more of persecuted piety; those that know him cannot but know this.

**2.** They will do him justice (if I may so speak), in ascribing the glory of their deliverance to him: “*Surely the righteous (who make conscience of rendering to God his due, as well as to men theirs) shall give thanks unto thy name* when they find their cause pleaded with jealousy and prosecuted with effect.” The closing words, *The upright shall dwell in thy presence*, denote both God's favour to them (“Thou shalt admit them to dwell in thy presence in grace here, in glory hereafter, and it shall be their safety and happiness”) and their duty to God: “They shall attend upon thee as servants that keep in the presence of their masters, both to do them honour and to receive their commands.” This is true thanksgiving, even thanksgiving; and this use we should make of all our deliverance, we should serve God the more closely and cheerfully.