

When you face the scheming attack of the tongue, Psalm 64

When you face the scheming, unprincipled attack of the tongue...

2/13/2007

INTRODUCTION

Me

Psalm 64:1-2	A prayer to adjust attitude
Psalm 64:3	The weapons chosen
Psalm 64:4	The vantage point, war tactics,
Psalm 64: 5-6	The planning, scheming
Psalm 64: 7-9	The certain victory of God over enemies
Psalm 64:9-10	The results of God's judgments.

It is like snipers shooting at you from the dark bushes. It hurts, it is clever, it is concealed.

Leupold

A man in distress cries to the Lord for deliverance from his foes who work insidiously. It may be in effect, a general prayer that was prepared for the use of individuals who encounter unprincipled foes. One principle distinctive in this psalm is that the overthrow of the ungodly opposition is exclusively the operation of God and not the ingenuity of man. Character assassination is the issue with this.

Kidner

Psalm 63 focused on God, the enemy here is focus but the outcome is the same. Both end with deceptive liars being silenced. These liars probably have convinced themselves that they are honest. Both think they will ultimately get away with it. Everything in these verses emphasizes the cunning and perfidy of the opposition, who fight from concealment, not of necessity like an outnumbered army, but of choice, as those whose cause is shameful and their tactics indefensible.

Whole Psalm.—This Psalm is applied by B. Obadiah to Haman and Mordecai. The enemy is Haman, the perfect man shot at is Mordecai; about whom Haman communed with his friends to lay snares for him, and search diligently for occasions against him and his people, which issued in his own destruction. The ancient Midrash of the Jews applies it to Daniel, when cast into the den of lions; and Jarchi supposes that David, by a spirit of prophecy, foresaw it, and prayed for him who was of his seed; and that everything in the Psalm beautifully falls in with that account. Daniel is the perfect man aimed at; the enemy are the princes of Darius's court, who consulted against him, communed of laying snares for him, and gained their point, which proved their own ruin. But the Psalm literally belongs to David, by whom it was composed.—John Gill¹

64:1

¹ C.H. Spurgeon, *The Treasury of David*, vol 2, p. 85.

Kidner

Complaint is a word of somewhat querulous tone... Basically it is man's musing on his situation whether good (104:34) or bad (Job 10:1). Here troubled thoughts is closer to the mark. Weisner remarks on the good sense of the author in asking for deliverance from the state of mind that would put an end to clear thought and firm resistance.

Keil-Delitzsch

Word for complaint, *jyc*, signifies a complaint not expressed in tones of pain, but in words.

Spurgeon

Prayer is a duty to which David often turns. "It is his battleaxe and weapon of war: he uses it under every pressure, whether of inward sin or outward wrath, foreign invasion or domestic rebellion. We shall act wisely if we make prayer our first and best trusted resource in every hour of need.

64:2

Spurgeon

Hide me from the secret counsel of the wicked." From their hidden snares hide me. Circumvent their counsels; let their secrets be met by thy secret providence, their counsels of malice by thy counsels of love. "*From the insurrection of the workers of iniquity.*" When their secret counsels break forth into clamorous tumults, be thou still my preserver.²

64:3

Spurgeon

Slander has ever been the master weapon of the good man's enemies, and great is the care of the malicious to use it effectively. As warriors grind their swords, to give them an edge which will cut deep and wound desperately, so do the unscrupulous invent falsehoods which shall be calculated to inflict pain, to stab the reputation, to kill the honor of the righteous. What is there which an evil tongue will not say? What misery will it not labor to inflict? "*And bend their bows to shoot their arrows, even bitter words.*" Far off they dart their calumnies, as archers shoot their poisoned arrows. They studiously and with force prepare their speech as bended bows, and then with cool, deliberate aim, they let fly the shaft which they have dipped in bitterness. To sting, to inflict anguish, to destroy, is their one design. Insult, sarcasm, taunting defiance, nicknaming, all these were practiced among Orientals as a kind of art; and if in these Western regions, with more refined manners, we are less addicted to the use of rough abuse, it is yet to be feared that the less apparent venom of the tongue inflicts none the less poignant pain.³

64:4

Spurgeon

"*Suddenly do they shoot at him, and fear not.*" To secrecy they add suddenness. They give their unsuspecting victim no chance of defending himself; they pounce on him like a wild beast leaping on its prey. They lay their plans so warily that they fear no detection. We have seen in daily life the arrow of calumny wounding its victim sorely; and yet we have not been able to discover the quarter from which the weapon was shot, nor to detect the hand which forged the arrowhead, or tinged it with the poison. Is it possible for justice to invent a punishment sufficiently severe to meet

² Spurgeon, p. 82.

³ Spurgeon, p. 82,83.

the case of the dastard who defiles my good name, and remains himself in concealment? An open liar is an angel compared with this demon. Vipers and cobras are harmless and amiable creatures compared with such a reptile. The devil himself might blush at being the father so base an offspring.⁴

Keil-Delitzsch

The perfects after the *rva* (*who*, who sharpen their swords) affirm that which they do now they have always done. *rm*, *bitter*, a harsh astringent taste, used tropically of speech that wounds or inflicts pain. *without fear*, they do it without any fear whatsoever, and without any fear of God (Psalm 60:20 Deut 25:18)

Kidner

Now their methods, which cannot afford to be those of honest opposition (2 Cor 4:2; Gal 2:11) In the context of their war of lies and innuendo the *ambush* will be either the prepared situation which frames an innocent man, or the shelter of anonymity which rumor can be launched *without fear*.

64:5

Kidner

Their delight in having covered their tracks sets the scene perfectly for what follows; the movement of the psalm sets the scene perfectly for what follows, a pointed comment on human nature

Keil-Delitzsch

“who will see...” who will influence, who will care?

Spurgeon

“*They encourage themselves in an evil matter.*”. Good men are frequently discouraged, and not infrequently discourage one another, but the children of darkness are ‘wise in their generation and keep their spirits up, and each one has a cheering word to say to his fellow villain. Anything by which they can strengthen each other’s hands in their one common design they resort to; their hearts are thoroughly in their black work.’⁵

64:6

Keil-Delitzsch

rendered either: •they excogitate knavish tricks or villainies, we are ready, a clever stroke is concocted, and the inward part of man and the heart is deep!” or, which we prefer, since there is nothing to indicate the introduction of any soliloquy: they excogitate knavish tricks, they are ready—a delicately devised, clever stroke (nominative of the result), and (as the poet ironically adds) the inward part of man and the heart is (verily) deep.⁶

Spurgeon

“*They accomplish a diligent search.*” Their design is perfected, consummated, and brought into working order. They cry “Eureka;” they have sought and found the sure method of vengeance. Exquisite are the refinements of malice! Hell’s craft furnishes inspiration to the *artistes* who fashion

⁴ Spurgeon, p. 83.

⁵ Spurgeon, p. 83.

⁶ Keil-Delitzsch, *Psalms*, p. 222.

deceit. Earth and the places under it are ransacked for the *materiel* of war, and profound skill turns all to account.⁷

64:7

Kidner

Everything speaks of the swiftness and aptness of the future judgment, it takes all this time to plan and then it is done quickly, and by their own words, no less.

Keil-Delitzsch

Deep is man's heart and inward part, but not too deep for God, who knoweth the heart (Jer. xvii. 9 sq.). And He will just as suddenly surprise the enemies of ill-anoointed with their death-blow, as they had plotted it for him. The *futt. consec.* that follow represent that which is future, with all the certainty of an historical fact as a retribution springing from the malicious craftiness of the enemies. According to the accentuation, ver. 8 is to be rendered: "then will Elohim shoot them, a sudden arrow become their wounds." Thus at length Hupfeld renders it; but how extremely puzzling is the meaning hidden behind this sentence! The Targum and the Jewish expositors have construed it differently: "Then will Elohim shoot them with arrows suddenly;" in this case, however, because ver. 8b then becomes too blunt and bald, $\mu\alpha\tau\phi$ has to be repeated in thought with this member of the verse, and this is in itself an objection to it. We interpunctuate with Ewald and Hitzig thus: then does Elohim shoot them with an arrow, suddenly arise (become a reality) their wounds (cf. Mic. vii. 4), namely, of those who had on their part aimed the murderous weapon against the upright for a sudden and sure shot.⁸

64:8

Leupold

Quotes Leslie "The boomerang of malicious speech." They had aimed to shoot (v4), but God shot first. They had decided to work suddenly, so did God (With what you measure, it will be measured to you).

Spurgeon

"*So they shall make their own tongue to fall upon themselves.*" Their slander shall recoil. Their curses shall come home to roost. Their tongue shall cut their throats. It was both sword, and bow and arrow; it shall be turned against them, and bring home to them full punishment. "*All that see them shall flee away.*" Afraid, both of them and their overthrow, their former friends shall give them wide space, lest they .perish with them. Who cares to go near to Herod when the worms are eating him? Or to be in the same chariot with Pharaoh when the waves roar round him? those who crowded around a powerful persecutor, and cringed at his feet, are among the first to desert him in the day of wrath. Woe unto you, ye liars! Who will desire fellowship with you in your seething lake of fire?

Keil-Delitzsch

"and one overthrows him, inasmuch as their tongue, the sin of their tongue with which they sought to destroy others, comes upon themselves."

me

Why is this so? Because people ultimately reap what they sow.

⁷ Spurgeon, p. 84.

⁸ Keil-Delitzsch, *Psalms*, p. 222.

Kidner

The theme is summed up with Isaiah 26:9, When God judges, the world learns

64:9meSpurgeon

“*And all men shall fear.*” They shall be filled with awe by the just judgments of God, as the Canaanites were by the overthrow of Pharaoh at the Red Sea. Those who might have been bold in sin shall be made to tremble and to stand in awe of the righteous Judge. “*And shall declare the work of God.*” It shall become the subject of general conversation. So strange, so pointed, so terrible shall be the Lord’s overthrow of the malicious, that it shall be spoken of in all companies. They sinned secretly, but their punishment shall be wrought before the face of the sun. “*For they shall wisely consider of his doing.*” The judgments of God are frequently so clear and manifest that men cannot mis-read them, and if they have any thought at all, they must extract the true teaching from them. Some of the divine judgments are a great deep, but in the case ‘of malicious persecutors the matter is plain enough, and the most illiterate can understand.’⁹

64:10Kidner

The prayer of verse 1 is more than amply answered. The judgment is still future, but the answer is secure. David would have to deal with this yet, but he knew he would be protected and delivered. He rejoiced. Psalm 37.

⁹ Spurgeon, p. 84.

When you face the scheming attack of the tongue, Psalm 64

The background to Psalm 64.

A man in distress cries to the Lord for deliverance from his foes who work insidiously. It may be in effect, a general prayer that was prepared for the use of individuals who encounter unprincipled foes. One principle distinctive in this psalm is that the overthrow of the ungodly opposition is exclusively the operation of God and not the ingenuity of man. Character assassination is the issue with this.¹⁰ It is like snipers shooting at you from the dark bushes. It hurts, it is clever, it is concealed. Psalm 63:11 ends with "liars," and Psalm 64 discusses them more fully.

The weapons chosen, 3,4

Verse 3, Slander has ever been the master weapon of the good man's enemies, and great is the care of the malicious to use it effectively. As warriors grind their swords, to give them an edge which will cut deep and wound desperately, so do the unscrupulous invent falsehoods which shall be calculated to inflict pain, to stab the reputation, to kill the honor of the righteous. What is there which an evil tongue will not say?¹¹

A well-conceived attack...

- ³ **They sharpen** their tongues like swords
and aim their words like deadly arrows.
- ⁴ **They shoot** from ambush at the innocent man;
they shoot at him suddenly, without fear.
- ⁵ **They encourage** each other in evil plans,
they talk about hiding their snares;
they say, "Who will see them?"
- ⁶ **They plot** injustice and say,
"We have devised a perfect plan!"
Surely the mind and heart of man are cunning.¹²

You'll see depravity at its best with the tongue (James 3:2).

From the abundance of the heart, the mouth speaks, 64:5-6.

Good men are frequently discouraged, and not infrequently discourage one another, but the children of darkness are 'wise in their generation and keep their spirits up, and each one has a

¹⁰ Leupold, *Psalms*, p. 468, 69.

¹¹ Spurgeon, *Treasury of David*, p. 82, 83.

¹² *The New International Version*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House) 1984.

cheering word to say to his fellow villain. Anything by which they can strengthen each other's hands in their one common design they resort to; their hearts are thoroughly in their black work.¹³

God protects from enemies tongues, 7-8

God wants you to not be bitter.

God wants you to wait for him to deal with this.

God wants you to see that bad tongues come back to discredit the user.

“The boomerang of malicious speech.” They had aimed to shoot (v4), but God shot first. They had decided to work suddenly (v4), so did God (v 7), (With what you measure, it will be measured to you).

Evil tongues thrive best in an incubator of others. There are some “wicked one-anothers” in Scripture.

God doesn't want you to be like this... he judges people who cut, plan and scheme against others.

To the best of your ability seek to set the record straight, but ultimately, it is in God's hands. We assume this person isn't another church member. It is a Psalm 37 matter.

So what?

God, help me to trust you in times like this. They will come.

Trust and prayer, vv. 1, 2, 10.

Help me not to take vengeance into my own hands.

God vindicates the righteous; Psalm 37:5, 6.

Ephesians 4:29 is always in order!

God, help me to be patient for the day when you will vindicate the righteous, 9, 10.

Meditate on Psalm 37: 1-8

¹³ Spurgeon, p. 83.