

Psalm 64

Introduction – Psalm 64 is a song of engagement with our enemies. Modern worship songs and even most of the hymns of the past do not mention enemies. But as we have returned to singing the Psalms we find ourselves often singing about enemies. And it is not that there are no longer enemies of God and enemies of His Word all around. Rather, the church has retreated in compromise (joining in on the sin), in bad theology (“we aren’t supposed to change the world”), and a rejection of the antithesis (the enmity between the seed of the serpent and the seed of the woman). Singing these psalms and psalm-like hymns is a return to engagement with the world. It is a way of wrestling with principalities and powers. That is what the psalm-singer is doing here.

Overview of the Psalm – The entire psalm is about the psalm-singer’s enemies. He asks to be preserved from fear of the enemies (v1) and from their secret plots (v2). Their well-placed bitter words are like arrows, secretly and suddenly shot (vv3-4). They gain a following and grow arrogant, perfecting their wicked schemes (vv5-6). But the psalm-singer is confident and knows that vengeance belongs to the Lord who can bring forth poetic justice (vv7-8). As this happens, time and again, men will see and fear God (v9) and the righteous will glory in His victory (v10).

The Psalm is full of reversals of poetic justice. The enemies are “workers” of iniquity (v2) but in the end all will declare the “work” of God (v9). They think they shoot “in secret” (v4) but it is the psalm-singer who will be “hid” from their plots (v2). They shoot bitter words like arrows (vv3-4), but God shoots His arrows at them (v7). They think no one will “see them” (v5) but everyone will “see” their downfall (v8). They have no “fear” (v4) but in the end everyone will “fear” God (v9). They use their “tongues” as weapons (v3) but those same “tongues” will be used against them (v8). Their “heart” may be deep (v6) but it is the upright in “heart” who will glory (v10). – (Ash).

The Psalm is a petition for help, but it is a petition in confidence. Verse 10 ends with a statement of fact for the future that is applied in the present distress.

Weaponized Tongues – Words matter. The Word is God and when He spoke the Word, everything was created. Words are powerful and so the child’s poem, “sticks and stones...” is not totally correct. It has been said that “he who defines wins,” and so the cultural battle today is over the dictionary. Words can edify and words can destroy. All of us must first learn how to guard our own tongues (James 3:6-8). Words are among a child’s earliest weapons (“no,” “mine,” “ahhrrgh”).

The workers of iniquity conspire to use words to destroy the righteous (vv1-6). The enemies of Daniel set a trap, lobbying Darius to make his prayers illegal (Dan 6:1-9). The scribes and Pharisees tried to trap Jesus with the woman caught in adultery (John 8:1-6). They put out on social media that Jesus was a “*glutton and a wine-bibber, a friend of tax-collectors and sinners*” (Matt11:19). False witnesses lied about Jesus in his trial (Mark 14:55-59).

We also have reason to sing this Psalm for the secret plots, the godless rebellion, and shrewd schemes of the wicked are all around, their tongues sharpened with poison arrows. Think about the attack on the Word of God and the God of the Word. What do they say about sex, gender, creation, evolution, truth, the origin of law. They teach “gentle parenting” skills because they say corporal punishment is violence and children are good on the inside. They demand “secular” education knowing full well their worldview is their religion. Disguising their true purpose, they trap the people of Christ with words wrapped in respectable, even pious, jargon. “Love is love” and so free condoms, sex-education (i.e. maps to abortion mills, manuals for extreme perversions, and a mandate for genital mutilation). Science and modern man reject the miracles of the Bible as nothing more than ancient myths from uneducated and unenlightened morons. The government is our savior and so the welfare system (from cradle to grave) is better than individual responsibility, but of course there is a fee. Such “words of compassion” breed dependency, laziness – but the fruit is more government control.

Fear of the Enemy – Notice in verse 1 the prayer is not immediately to be preserved from the enemy but from “fear” of the enemy. This kind of fear paralyzes. If we fear the enemies of our day, if we are afraid to be known as followers of Jesus and His Word, if we are afraid of what the forces against us might do if they knew what we believed, we will simply shrink back and become impotent. We will lose our saltiness. But Jesus said not to fear them, rather to fear God (Matt 10:28). Such fear of God produces psalms of war. Such fear of God is the beginning of wisdom to stand against the darkness (Prov 9:10). Our prayer should be “*preserve my life from fear of the enemy.*” Paul writes, “*Watch, stand firm in the faith, act like men, be strong*” (1 Cor 16:13, ESV).

Utter Confidence in God – In their spiritual blindness, they think no one sees them (v5) and they boast in their “perfect” schemes. In today’s world, they hide in “anon accounts” on social media, in faceless, unelected bureaucracies, in godless schoolboards and administrations, and in shady backroom corporate deals. But psalm-singers know that God sees all and that He plans to trip them up in

their own words and plans (vv7-8). This confidence in a God of Vengeance runs through the Psalms as well. This is why we do not need to, nor are we allowed to, take personal vengeance. Not because it is wrong, but because it belongs to the Lord (Rom 12:19), and we learn it is perfectly appropriate to ask Him to take up our cause (i.e. Rev 6:10). God may use His appointed servants to administer His justice (military or police - Rom 13:1-7). But if not now, then at His appointed times, as at the fall of Jerusalem in 70AD (1 Thess 5:3, Rev 6:15-17). In David's life, we see the terror of his enemies when he came or was restored to the kingdom. In Christ's life (for certainly this psalm sings of Jesus' life), we see it on the Day of Pentecost when the Spirit convicts the people of their guilt in crucifying the Righteous One (Acts 2:37). We are to see it when God brings about His judgments in history (Acts 5:11, Amos 3:6). And finally, at the Last Judgment, our confidence in the Lord will be proven eternally true (Rom 8:31-19).

Seeing and Declaring God's Story (vv9-10) – When God gives this kind of confidence in Him to us, we realize we are in His Good Story, His Gospel (good-spell). And what is this Good Storyteller's tale? How careful, how determined, how confident they were – and how stupid: *“What stubbornness of heart this was, to seek to kill a man who was (determined) to raise the dead”* (Augustine, referring to Christ). The glory of this Story, the great reversals, the toppling of Christ's enemies with their own devices, occurs in story after story. It takes wisdom and faith to see where you are (where we are) in our part of the story. This psalm and this psalm-singer saw it, and we are invited to share in the glory of the future while in the present, while still waiting for deliverance. That kind of faith embraces the suspense and remembers that God loves cliffhangers. It became a saying in Israel: *“On the Mount of the Lord it will be provided”* because God provides the resolution at the last minute. When Abraham had the knife in the air, ready to slay Isaac, God provided on the Mount of the Lord, not only on the Mount of the Lord, but at the very last minute on the Mount of the Lord.

God is not playing games with you or with His church. His plans are perfect and only faith apprehends this, not sight. Only then, when we find ourselves in any persecution (by the hand or by the tongue), we can obey God from the heart and rejoice long before the deliverance comes (Matt 5:10-12).