

# PSALM 64

## INTRODUCTION TO PSALM 64

### *To the chief Musician, A Psalm of David*

This psalm is applied by R. 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 searched diligently for occasions against him and his people, which issued in his own destruction. The ancient Midrash<sup>f843</sup> 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. The Arabic versions call it a psalm of David, when Saul persecuted him; and the Syriac version refers it to the time when Gad said to him, abide not in the hold, (~~1~~<sup>1</sup> Samuel 22:5). He is the perfect man, who was upright and innocent as to what he was charged with in respect to Saul; who is the enemy, from the fear of whom he desires his life might be preserved; and who with his courtiers took counsel against him, and laid deep schemes to destroy him, but at last were destroyed themselves. Moreover, the psalm may very well be applied to the Messiah, the son of David, and who was his antitype, and especially in his sufferings: he is the perfect man in the highest sense; the Jews were the enemies that took counsel, and searched for occasions against him, and accomplished their designs in a good measure; for which wrath came upon them to the uttermost. The psalmist also may be very well thought to represent the church and people of God; who in all ages have had their enemies and their fears; against whom wicked men have devised mischief, and levelled their arrows of persecution; though no weapon formed against them shall prosper.

**Ver. 1.** *Hear my voice, O God, in my prayer,* etc.] The prayer of the psalmist was vocal and expressed in a mournful manner, with groans and

cries, as the word <sup>f844</sup> used signifies, and with great ardour and fervency; his condition, by reason of his enemies, being very distressing, and therefore he is very eager and earnest that he might be heard;

*preserve my life from fear of the enemy*; David had his enemies. Saul and his courtiers, and was afraid of them; Christ had his enemies the wicked Jews, who sought his life before the time, and therefore he walked no more in Judea till near the time; and whose human nature was sometimes possessed of the fears of death, though they were sinless ones: the church and people of God have their enemies; as the men of the world, who revile, reproach, and persecute them; Satan their adversary, who goes about seeking to devour them; and their own corruptions and lusts which war against their souls; and death, the last enemy, which is so to human nature, though by the grace of Christ friendly to the saints. And the people of God have their fears of these enemies; they are afraid of men, their revilings and persecutions, though they have no reason since God is on their side; and of Satan, whose fiery darts and buffetings are very distressing, though if resisted he will flee; and of their own corruptions, lest they should one day perish by them; or, at least, lest they should break out, to the wounding of their souls, and the dishonour of God: and some of them, through fear of death, are all their lifetime subject to bondage: which fears, though they are not the saints' excellencies, but their infirmities, yet are consistent with the grace of God; and under the power and influence of these fears they apprehend sometimes their life to be in danger; and therefore pray to the God of their life, who has given them it, and is the preserver of it, that he would preserve their natural life, as he does; as also their spiritual life, which is preserved by him; is bound up in the bundle of life with the Lord their God, and is hid with Christ in God.

**Ver. 2.** *Hide me from the secret counsel of the wicked*, etc.] The word used denotes both the place where wicked men meet together for consultation; (see <sup><0446></sup>Genesis 49:6 <sup><0900></sup>Psalms 1:1); and the counsel itself they there take; from the bad effects of which the psalmist desired to be hid and preserved. So Saul and his courtiers secretly took counsel against David, and the Jews against Christ, and that very privily and secretly; (see <sup><0446></sup>Matthew 26:3 27:1);

*from the insurrection of the workers of iniquity*; their noise, rage, and tumult; (see <sup><0446></sup>Psalms 2:1,2). The former phrase denotes their secret machinations and designs, and this their open violence; and the persons that

entered into such measures are no other than evildoers and workers of iniquity; though they might be under a profession of religion, as David's enemies, and the Jews, who were Christ's enemies, were, (<sup>4072</sup>Matthew 7:22,23); and who are further described in the next verses.

**Ver. 3.** *Who whet their tongue like a sword*, etc.] Use cutting, wounding, killing, and devouring words; on which they set an edge, and make them keener and keener to hurt and ruin the characters and reputations of good men, and grieve and distress their minds;

*[and] bend [their bows to shoot] their arrows, [even] bitter words*; such are the these doctrines of heretical men, which are roots of bitterness, that defile some and trouble others; such are the oaths and curses of profane sinners, whose mouths are full of cursing and bitterness; and such are the blasphemies of antichrist against God, against his tabernacle, and against them that dwell therein; and such are the hard speeches spoken by ungodly sinners against Christ and his people; these are like arrows shot from a bow, and full of deadly poison. The Targum is

“they stretch out their bows, they anoint their arrows with deadly and bitter poison.”

There seems to be an allusion to fixing letters in arrows, and so shooting or directing them where it was desired they should fall and be taken up; so Timoxenus and Artobazus sent letters to one another in this way, at the siege of Potidaea <sup>f845</sup>; and after the same manner, the Jews say <sup>f846</sup>, Shebna and Joab sent letters to Sennacherib, acquainting him that all Israel were willing to make peace with him; but Hezekiah and Isaiah would not allow them to.

**Ver. 4.** *That they may shoot in secret at the perfect*, etc.] Meaning himself, who though not without sin, and far from perfection in himself, in the sight of God and with respect to his righteous law, which was exceeding broad; and therefore he saw an end of all perfection, and desired that God would not enter into judgment with him; but yet, in the case of Saul, he was quite clear and innocent, and without fault. Likewise the Messiah, of whom David was a type, may be meant; who has all the perfections of the divine and human nature in him, and is without sin, holy, harmless, pure, and undefiled: and it may be applied to the church and people of God, who, though they are not perfect in themselves, far from it, sin being in them, and their graces weak; unless it be in a comparative sense; yet they are

perfect in Christ Jesus, their souls being clothed with his righteousness, and so are the spirits of just men made perfect. And this character may also respect the truth and sincerity of grace in them, and the uprightness of their hearts and conversation; and such as these wicked men level their arrows at, and direct their spite and venom against, and that in the most private and secret manner;

*suddenly do they shoot at him*; as unseen by him, so unawares to him;

*and fear not*; neither God nor judgment to come. Though some understand this of the perfect who, though shot at in this manner are intrepid and courageous, and have no fear of their enemies; but the former sense seems best, which describes persons that neither fear God, nor regard man.

**Ver. 5.** *They encourage themselves [in] an evil matter*, etc.] Or “strengthen him”<sup>f847</sup>; that is, Saul, by making use of arguments and reasonings to induce him to go on in his wicked persecution of David; or they strengthened and hardened themselves in their wickedness, as Saul’s courtiers and the enemies of Christ did, and as all wicked men do, when they observe the sentence against them is not speedily executed, (<sup>2081</sup>Ecclesiastes 8:11);

*they commune of laying snares privily*; that is, they conversed together, and consulted how to lay snares for the perfect man in the most private manner, that they might entrap him and destroy him;

*they say, who shall see them?* either the snares laid, or the persons that laid them? None; no, not even God himself; (see <sup>4901</sup>Psalms 10:11,14).

**Ver. 6.** *They search out iniquities*, etc.] The Targum adds,

“to destroy the just.”

Either occasions against them, by charging them with sin and hiring false witnesses against them, as did the enemies both of David and Christ; they sought for proper time and opportunity of committing the iniquities they were bent upon, and even searched for new sins, being inventors of evil things, (<sup>403</sup>Romans 1:30);

*they accomplish a diligent search*; diligently searched out the perfect man, and found him; and also false witnesses against him, and carried their point; which was especially true with respect to Christ;

*both the inward [thought] of everyone [of them], and the heart, [is] deep;* being full of cunning, craftiness and wickedness, so as not to be searched out and fully known; (see <sup><1889></sup>Psalm 5:9 <sup><2470></sup>Jeremiah 17:9).

**Ver. 7.** *But God shall shoot at them [with] an arrow,* etc.] With one or other of his four judgments; famine, pestilence, sword, and wild beasts, (<sup><3141></sup>Ezekiel 14:21); which he brings upon wicked men; and may be compared to arrows, as they are, (<sup><3656></sup>Ezekiel 5:16,17 <sup><4905></sup>Psalm 91:5,6 <sup><6524></sup>Deuteronomy 32:41,42); because they move swiftly. The judgment of wicked men lingereth not, though it may seem to do so; and because they often come suddenly and at an unawares, when men are crying Peace, peace; and because they are sharp and piercing, penetrate deep and stick fast, and wound and kill; they are not arrows of deliverance, unless to the Lord's people, who, by his judgments on the wicked, are delivered from them; but destroying ones, (<sup><12317></sup>2 Kings 13:17 <sup><1846></sup>Psalm 144:6); when God draws the bow and shoots, execution is done. This is said in opposition to what wicked men do, (<sup><3643></sup>Psalm 64:3,4); and in just retaliation; they shoot at the perfect, and God shoots at them;

*suddenly shall they be wounded;* with the wound of an enemy, with the chastisement of a cruel one, with a deadly wound that shall never be healed; not with the arrow of God's word, but with the stroke of his hand; which comes suddenly, falls heavy, and makes the wound incurable.

**Ver. 8.** *So shall they make their own tongue to fall upon themselves,* etc.] The evil things they have wished for, threatened unto, and imprecated on others, shall come upon themselves; the curses they have cursed others with shall come upon themselves; the pit they have dug for others, they fall into. So Haman, to whom some apply the psalm, was hanged on the gallows he made for Mordecai; and the accusers of Daniel, to whom others apply it, were cast into the same den of lions they procured for him; and Babylon, who has been drunk with the blood of the saints, shall have blood given her to drink.

*all that see them shall flee away;* not being able to help them, nor to bear the horrible sight, and fearing the same judgments should fall on themselves; (see <sup><0463></sup>Numbers 16:34 <sup><6680></sup>Revelation 18:10,15). Or, "they shall move themselves"<sup>f848</sup>; shake their heads in a way of derision, as Jarchi interprets it; or skip for joy, as the word is rendered in (<sup><2487></sup>Jeremiah 48:27); and then it must be understood of the righteous; who, seeing the vengeance on the wicked, rejoice, as in (<sup><4576></sup>Psalm 52:6 58:10); though, as

they are afterwards particularly mentioned, others seem to be designed. The word is used for lamenting and bemoaning one's self, in (<sup>2618</sup>Jeremiah 31:18); and so may be applied to the friends of the wicked lamenting and bemoaning their ruin, and their being bereaved of them, (<sup>6880</sup>Revelation 18:9,11).

**Ver. 9.** *And all men shall fear*, etc.] Either God himself, or his judgments: they shall be frightened at them, learn righteousness by them, worship God, and give glory to him; they shall fear him as King of saints, his judgments being made manifest; not with a slavish fear, but with reverence and godly fear; (see <sup>6113</sup>Revelation 11:13 15:4);

*and shall declare the work of God*; the punishments inflicted on wicked men; his work of justice and judgment, which is his work, his strange work; for there is no evil of punishment but the Lord has done it, (<sup>2320</sup>Isaiah 28:21 <sup>3086</sup>Amos 3:6);

*for they shall wisely consider of his doings*; consider that it is done by him, and done well and wisely, after the counsel of his own will; and so consider it as to be admonished, and take warning and caution by it. This is the use men in general should make of such dispensations of Providence; the use the righteous in particular make of them follows:

**Ver. 10.** *The righteous shall be glad in the Lord*, etc.] They rejoice at the vengeance executed on the wicked; but then their joy centres in the Lord: it is not at the ruin of the wicked, simply considered, but because of the glory of God's justice displayed therein, and of his grace and mercy to them. They rejoice in the Lord, because of what he is unto them, and because of what he has done for them; because of his righteousness they are clothed with, from whence they are denominated righteous ones; and because of the salvation he has wrought out for them; and they are the more affected with it when they see the calamities, woes, and destruction of wicked men; (see Gill on "<sup>4921</sup>Psalm 32:11");

*and shall trust in him*; who is known by his judgments he executes on the wicked; and the more he is known, be it in what way it will, the more is he trusted in, (<sup>4990</sup>Psalm 9:10,16). The Targum paraphrases it,

“and shall trust in his Word;”

either in his word of promise, or rather in his essential Word, Christ;

*and all the upright in heart shall glory*; not in men, nor in themselves, nor in any creature, or creature enjoyments; nor in their wisdom, strength, riches, nor righteousness; but in Christ, in his wisdom, righteousness, and strength; in whom all the seed of Israel are justified and glory; and in what he is to them, and has done for them; of the upright in heart, (see Gill on ~~Psalm 32:11~~ Psalm 32:11”).