

Psalm 64 • Dealing with Verbal Assaults

Introduction

David is God's measuring stick by which men are compared in the Old Testament. It's not unusual to find references such as this one referring to King Jeroboam: "He walked in all the sins of his father which he had committed before him and his heart was not wholly devoted to the LORD his God, like the heart of his father David." (1 Kings 15:3) The Psalms of David are a kind of "journal" that gives us insight into how he dealt with life within God's terms, a sort of "diary" into which we can peek and know the thoughts and workings of a model Believer that we can apply to our own behavior and attitudes.

In western society, persecution most often takes verbal form, men attacking us with their words. It may be comforting for us to know that even to a Believer as strong as David, words hurt. How did he deal with the personal and verbal assaults of man?

¹Hear my voice, O God, in my complaint;
Preserve my life from dread of the
enemy.

²Hide me from the secret counsel of
evildoers,

From the tumult of those who do iniquity,

³Who have sharpened their tongue like a
sword.

They aimed bitter speech as their arrow,

⁴To shoot from concealment at the
blameless;

Suddenly they shoot at him, and do not
fear.

⁵They hold fast to themselves an evil
purpose;

They talk of laying snares secretly;

They say, "Who can see them?"

⁶They devise injustices, saying,

"We are ready with a well-conceived
plot";

For the inward thought and the heart of a
man are deep.

[Read v.1-6]

Q: How does David openly and honestly describe his point of view?

A: He clearly labels what he is bringing before God as "my complaint". In biblical terms, a "complaint" is actually a legal term that describes something brought before a judge that needs to be legally mediated, something that needs to be decided by a higher authority between the parties involved.

Q: What does this tell us about David's character?

A: When an issue is brought before the court, it's very possible that the judge will find fault with the person bringing the complaint. In other words, just bringing it before the court does not in and of itself guarantee that the outcome will be favorable to the one bringing it. If the judge is impartial, **everyone** will be judged as to whether they have acted appropriately or not. David is placing his own actions and behavior before God to be judged alongside the offenders'.

Application: Is our first inclination to bring these things before God or to respond and seek justice for our self? Do we place our own behavior in these situations under God's scrutiny as well? Are we confident—without first inquiring—that we don't bear even a small part of the blame? Shouldn't we make sure we're not bringing a "useless lawsuit" before God that will be thrown out as having no merit?

Q: What are the 2 outcomes that David is hoping for? What does this further reveal about David's character?

A: "Preserve me" (v.1) and "hide me" (v.2). His instinct is to ask for protection, **NOT** revenge or divine justice. David is more concerned about preserving a right heart for the Lord than for the temporary satisfaction of retribution. He knows God will deal with them in the right way at the right time, so his overriding concern is that his own spiritual relationship remains intact.

Q: As a legal complaint brought before God, what are the "charges" that he is leveling at his attackers? What does he call them?

A: "The enemy" (v.1), "evildoers" (v.2), and "those who do iniquity" (v.2). David accuses them according to their sin, not their opinions.

Application: Is someone actually being "mean" or even "sinful" if their words are true or at best just opinion? Do we understand that what we are to be most concerned with is sin and its work in both ourselves as well as our attackers?

³Who have sharpened their tongue like a sword.

They aimed bitter speech as their arrow,

⁴To shoot from concealment at the blameless;

Suddenly they shoot at him, and do not fear.

[Re-Read v.3-4]

Q: List the specific actions taken against David. How would you characterize them?

1. "...sharpened their tongue like a sword..."
2. "...aimed bitter speech as their arrow..."
3. "...shoot from concealment..."

All of these things are premeditated and take conscious planning to execute. The case is being made that, based on their actions, they are not just acting out of sin impulsively, but deliberately. It's not a "heat of the moment" issue but wrong, pre-planned behavior.

Q: Why is it important for David to note that they "do not fear" what they do?

A: It's a way of saying that they have no respect for God's eventual repayment for their sin. If they were really worried about the presence of sin in their life, they would know and fear God's eventual judgment for same and withhold their fire, so to speak.

Q: How does David describe himself?

A: "...the blameless". He is clearly setting before God his own actions and behavior that they may be judged to determine whether or not David himself is free of sin.

Application: Do we sufficiently stop to examine the motives and behavior of both our attackers and self? Do we operate from the premise of whether or not sin is present and whether or not we're truly blameless?

⁵They hold fast to themselves an evil purpose;

They talk of laying snares secretly; They say, "Who can see them?"

⁶They devise injustices, saying,

"We are ready with a well-conceived plot";

For the inward thought and the heart of a man are deep.

[Re-Read v.5-6]

Q: Having begun his case by describing their actions, David now provides the motives for their sinful behavior. What is their agenda? What drives them to do these things?

A: "They hold fast to themselves an evil purpose". (v.5) In other words, they are not just temporarily mean or experiencing a one-time flare-up of their emotions; they are acting on a decision to pursue his destruction.

Point: David is not teaching us about how to deal with emotional outbursts or moods, but specifically with those that plan to do evil against us. This is why such cases need to be made and presented to God, because only **HE** can judge and address hearts, whereas we can probably address temporary hurts and feelings ourselves.

Q: How does David indicate that these actions have to be premeditated in nature?

A: He describes their activities as "laying snares secretly" and "a well-conceived plot".

Q: How does David indicate that it's impossible for him to act, that it requires divine intervention?

A: "For the inward thought and the heart of a man are deep." Only God can judge and reach such areas—we can't know for sure.

⁷But God will shoot at them with an arrow;
Suddenly they will be wounded.
⁸So they will make him stumble;
Their own tongue is against them;
All who see them will shake the head.
⁹Then all men will fear,
And they will declare the work of God,
And will consider what He has done.

¹⁰The righteous man will be glad in the LORD and will take refuge in Him;
And all the upright in heart will glory.

[Read v.7-9]

Q: What is different in the way that God handles such situations as opposed to man's natural inclination?

A: God first works on them spiritually in an attempt to change them, but if resisted, to make them into a demonstration to others of God's character and work.

If possible, so far as it depends on you, be at peace with all men. Never take your own revenge, beloved, but leave room for the wrath of God, for it is written, "VENGEANCE IS MINE, I WILL REPAY," says the Lord. "BUT IF YOUR ENEMY IS HUNGRY, FEED HIM, AND IF HE IS THIRSTY, GIVE HIM A DRINK; FOR IN SO DOING YOU WILL HEAP BURNING COALS ON HIS HEAD." Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.

—Romans 12:18-21

[Read v.10]

Q: What happens to Believers while all this is going on?

A: They "take refuge in Him" and relish in the joy of knowing it's entirely in HIS hands.

Point: Remember that David is here talking about verbal persecution, not physical. It may be unpleasant and lead to something greater, but it's easier to bear and forgive harsh words from a heart that may still turn back to following God than their following through with physical actions from which there may be no return.

Overall Application

- Do you realize your responsibility to discern the difference between relationship issues as opposed to the pursuit of evil against you? Do you go through sufficient self-examination before bringing your case to the Lord?
- Do you acknowledge that even in the midst of the most personal attacks that God will use the opportunity to reach their hearts or to use them as an example of His work and power? In other words, do you see the "ministry opportunities" that are possible even in the midst of conflict?
- Have you noticed that God does not guarantee that you will see justice or your enemy get their "just deserts" in this life, only that **YOU** will be afforded His protection? Do you realize that His protection is the very answer to your prayers when faced with evil?