

When the Arrow Turns

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Welcome. I love that hymn. I know that many of you do also, and what a sweet consolation it is to remember the sweet love of God on our lives and to know that in the midst of all of our tribulations, a loving ear in heaven waits to receive us, one whose eye is on the sparrow and therefore his eyes is on us as well. Surely the one who chose us before the foundation of the world would be glad to hear our prayers. Surely the one who suffered for us on the cross would be glad to have us bear our hearts before him. Surely the Holy Spirit who indwells us and sealed us for the day of our redemption looks at us with favor and is more than glad to bear our petitions to the throne of heaven. Surely the Triune God who appointed us for eternal glory has our best welfare in mind. So I'm so grateful for that hymn. Thank you musicians and Larry for leading us in that.

It does give us a good frame of reference as we begin Psalm 64 as we turn to that text for our study here this evening. The longer I serve in pastoral ministry, the more I believe that one of my primary responsibilities is to assure you and to persuade you that God is good and that he intends your best, that you would not lose heart in the midst of your sorrows and your tribulations. Of course the Lord is good. Of course he intends your well-being. Of course the Lord is going to bless you in the end. It could be no other way because your outcome is guaranteed, not by your faithfulness to God but by God's faithfulness to you. And though we stumble and fail many times, he never once has stumbled in keeping any of his children. He never once has failed to bless them. He never once has saved someone and lost them along the way to heaven and he will not lose you either.

So let us take heart as we turn to God's word as we look at a Psalm where David is surrounded by enemies who design destruction and design to hurt him and he finds comfort in the presence of this God of whom we have been singing and speaking here already this evening. Psalm 64. Let's look at that together.

1 For the choir director. A Psalm of David. Hear my voice, O God, in my complaint; Preserve my life from dread of the enemy. 2 Hide me from the secret counsel of evildoers, From the tumult of those who do iniquity, 3 Who have sharpened their tongue like a sword. They aimed bitter speech as their arrow, 4 To shoot from concealment at the blameless; Suddenly they shoot at him, and do not fear. 5 They hold fast to themselves an evil

purpose; They talk of laying snares secretly; They say, "Who can see them?" 6 They devise injustices, saying, "We are ready with a well-conceived plot"; For the inward thought and the heart of a man are deep. 7 But God will shoot at them with an arrow; Suddenly they will be wounded. 8 So they will make him stumble; Their own speech is against them; All who see them will shake the head. 9 Then all men will fear, And they will declare the work of God, And will consider what He has done. 10 The righteous man will be glad in the LORD and will take refuge in Him; And all the upright in heart will glory.

Notice that closing clause one more time: all the upright in heart will glory. That's the outcome.

We come to Psalm 64 after having looked at Psalm 63 a couple of weeks ago. Of course, Pastor Jim Stewart was with us last week and we were very grateful for his fine ministry of the word. In Psalm 63, just by way of the briefest of reminders, it was a Psalm of trust that had the enemies well-receded into the background. There was a complete preoccupation with God and only the most faintest hints of enemies to cloud the picture as David wrote Psalm 63. Psalm 64 is different. Psalm 64 takes another approach. The enemies here receive far more attention than they did in the prior Psalm but the outcome is the same. The outcome is identical. David ends up trusting God.

So he works through his problem as he lays out his complaint and his concern before the Lord, he lays it all out and he comes to the place where the redeemed can always come out, a place of secure serenity, a place of trusting confidence that the Lord has me in his hand and I can trust him and all will be well with me in the end. Regardless of the enemies that shoot arrows at me, regardless of the circumstances expanding the application of the Psalm out just a bit, regardless of the discouraging circumstances which aim their arrow at me, I am in the hand of God and therefore I can trust and therefore I can know that it will be well.

And beloved, I lay these things out to you today in the natural course of going through the Psalms, this is just the next Psalm that we've come to, that's one of the things that we like about expository preaching is you don't have to unnaturally force an issue, you just let the text that is at hand speak to the day. But Psalm 64 comes to us to remind us once again that God is good, he is always with his people, and therefore in the words of Psalm 23:4, "I fear no evil, for You are with me." And notice that as the Psalmist says that, as David says things like that, he says, "I fear no evil," that this is not grounded in some humanistic wish that things will be fine by and by and, you know, we just grit our teeth and get through it and we just grind our way through our trials. That's not the spirit of Christianity at all. That's not the spirit of biblical faith. We are confident like that, that we fear no evil. We can smile at the future not because of our strength or what we do, but because of who our God is. He is great and he is good and he is always that way with his people and if you belong to him, if Christ has saved you, if you've been born again, then all of those blessings are yours forever and they never diminish with time. They don't ebb as circumstances mount and suddenly the power of God recedes. No, the truth of the

matter is this, beloved, is that the more the circumstances seem to cloud your vision of these things, the more the power of God and the goodness of God and the greatness of God is actually rising to the occasion. And you may not see it, you very well may not feel it because our emotions come and go, don't they? And even things like physical fatigue and discouragement can affect that, but just understand that the faithfulness of God is a constant in your life. It does not ebb and flow like your circumstances do, like your emotions do, like your faithfulness does to him. No, your life and the well-being of your soul and the well-being of your circumstances rest in the hands of an unchanging God. And it's as we remind ourselves that and appropriate that, that we find the ultimate outcome of peace and serenity even though we may struggle to find it sometimes along the way.

David opens this Psalm with, point 1 here, David opens this Psalm with a prayer for protection. A prayer for protection. And those of you that live in the midst of hostile people whether it be at work or within your family or perhaps some other setting, can find comfort in what David opens this Psalm with as he prays for protection beginning in verse 1. He says, "Hear my voice, O God." Look at it with me there in Psalm 64:1. He says,

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

So David invokes God in his prayer. He asks God to hear him. He addresses his prayer to God and he humbly asks him to listen to what he has to say. Now, this is more than David simply asking God for an audience. He's asking God to respond to the request that he is about to make, that God would intervene and that God would act and alleviate the threat that he is about to describe. So as he says, "God, hear my voice," he's not only asking for a listening ear, he's asking God to act and to respond to his prayer.

And when he says, look at it there in the first part of verse 1 with me, when he says, "Hear my voice, O God, in my complaint," and this could be a great encouragement to many of you here this evening, just that very word. That word "complaint" indicates that David is praying to God with troubled thoughts; that there is turmoil in his heart; that his mind is stirred up; that his emotions are waving and bouncing in concern. So David comes to the Lord with a troubled heart as he's praying here.

Now, isn't that alone an encouragement to us here this evening? Isn't it an encouragement to know that we have the pattern of Scripture? We have an inspired word from God showing how godly people respond to life and that there is room in the plan of God, there is room in the way that he deals with his people for us to approach him with our troubled thoughts? How often have saints felt the need to try to sort out their heart and then come to God in prayer? Well, that's the exact reverse of what God would have us to do. Yes, we need to contemplate who he is, we need to contemplate his greatness and his goodness as we come to him in prayer, as we spoke about on Sunday, but the whole point of having a God who hears our prayer is that we can come to him in our times of distress, in our

times of dependence and know that we are not going to face his chastisement because of that, but rather he receives us graciously.

Beloved, think about it, it could be no other way if Christian salvation is true, if biblical salvation is true. The whole point of salvation is that a guilty sinner who is conscious of his guilt comes to Christ based on the promise of Christ that he will receive anyone who comes to him. And never has anyone ever come more unworthily to God than the sinner who is crying out for mercy, who realizes that he has nothing of his own to commend himself to God. Look, that's the way you came to Christ or you haven't come to Christ at all. Let's put it that way. You know, we all come to Christ knowing that we are spiritually bankrupt and that we have nothing to offer to him and in that initial moment of salvation when you received Christ, when God worked in your heart and you received Christ, what was it except for an act of God, of unbounded and undeserved mercy and grace upon your life? And that he received you and that he forgave you and, as it were, he embraced you with his love based on the work of Christ on your behalf?

Well, think about it, beloved. If he received you in your worst moment as a sinner separated from him when you were crying out from the depths of spiritual bankruptcy and he received you then and made you his child and brought you into his family, my brothers and sisters in Christ, is it possible that he changed somewhere in between and now he's resistant to your prayers when you cry out to him in complaint and trouble and distress as one of his children? It could never be. God didn't change after you became a Christian and suddenly deals with you on stricter terms than he did when he received you in grace.

So of course, we come to Christ as beggars. We come to him spiritual bankrupt, mourning over sin and saying, "O Lord, have mercy on my uncovered and unsaved soul!" And he welcomes you into his family and showers blessing on you as the father of the prodigal son did and brought out the best robe, the robe of his own righteousness and clothed you in that righteousness of Christ and embraced you and kissed you and gave you the ring, the signet seal that you belong to him forever. That's what God does with every sinner who comes to Christ for salvation. Could it be that now he's turned against you as you come to him in complaint and you're troubled in heart? Perish the thought. He receives you with the same unchanging grace and mercy now as a troubled believer as he did when you came to him as a sinner full of guilt and filthy rags.

Don't you see that you can trust your God? Don't you see that he receives you well? Don't you see that he is a God of mercy, of unchanging mercy and grace? And why do we emphasize that? So that you would be strengthened in faith to approach him in your sorrow, in your weakness, and to know that he receives you well rather than chastising you for falling short. That's who our God is.

Now, with all of that established, let's perhaps move a little more quickly through the text now. Look at the end of verse 1. What is David's prayer? What is the petition that he brings? He says,

Preserve my life from dread of the enemy.

It's not just that he wants to be delivered from the external human threat, he wants to be delivered from that dread, that paralyzing inner fear that his circumstances and his enemies are provoking in him. He says, "God, my thoughts are captive by this fear and this agitating trouble in my mind. God, won't you deliver me from that as well?" In other words, he wants to be rescued from that distorted perspective that he has on God and life. He's aware of enemies that are plotting against him and he's fearful about the way that they could bring harm into his life and he says, "God, deliver me from that fear."

If you're like me, you know something about that. You know what it's like to have somebody after your noggin, somebody that's trying to threaten you and slander you with their words and to cast you down and to harm your reputation and what you're trying to do. You know about that, don't you? And if you're like me, you also know that that has a way of captivating and controlling your thoughts when you're right in the midst of the battle. Well, what David is saying is, "Lord, I don't want to be held captive by those thoughts. I don't want to give my enemies that kind of power over my inner mind, over my inner man, and so I ask you to deliver me from that." And what's the deliverance that brings us away from that? It's returning to a remembrance of who our God is. That's why these things are so important.

You know, that is why it is so important for you to and I'm so grateful because you guys are here, that's why it is so important and so beneficial for you to be faithful to be under the teaching of the word of God. That's why this is so important. It's not that we want you to be faithful just for the sake of having the room more filled than empty, it's that the consistent exposure to God's word brings you to a knowledge of God that will be your bulwark and your fortress in the midst of those times in life. Otherwise you are vulnerable. I can't tell you how much I worry over those who are just so inconsistent and in and out, because I know that they're vulnerable. They're vulnerable because other things are controlling their life and thoughts. Well, that's why there is so much blessing for us to be under the word of God consistently. To know God is to be in a position to be delivered from those inner fears. And notice what God says here in his word, what David says. Rather than caving into that fear, he turns to his God in petition.

Look at verse 2. This is the prayer for protection. He says,

2 Hide me from the secret counsel of evildoers, From the tumult of those who do iniquity,

There are multiple men that are involved in this plot against him. Notice the plural "evildoers," the plural pronoun, "those who do iniquity." And David says, "God, they're operating in secret. They're plotting against me behind closed doors. They're like so many people, they don't have the courage to come out and face you openly, to deal with things openly. They speak behind closed doors," David says, "and I can't do anything about it. I can't stop it. I can't prevent it. I'm powerless in this situation, O God." So when he says, "hide me," he's asking for God to protect him in that place of vulnerability where he

cannot protect himself and he says, "Many are trying to cast me down in this private conspiracy. O God, I'm asking you to preserve me from the fear of that and to hide me, to protect me from the wicked harm that they are plotting to bring against me."

So he gets right to the point. He comes right to the point in prayer here, and that kind of echoes some of what we were talking about on this past Sunday as we've been teaching on prayer, just the simplicity and the directness of the request. "God, I have people that are after me. Hide me. Protect me." And if God will hide him and protect him, doesn't that kind of cover all of the other details that could be included in it? There you go.

Well, David goes on here in Psalm 64 to describe in the second point that we have here this evening, he describes his need for protection. His need for protection and here he expands out and he talks about the enemies that are after him and he describes what they are doing.

Now, let me give you a little preface here that will come out later in the text. As David is describing his enemies here in these next four verses, verses 3 through 6, he is setting up a contrast with the deliverance of God and so he's not dwelling on his enemies for his enemies' sake and just because he's totally preoccupied with them and he's lost sight of God in this section of Scripture. No, that's not his point. He's building up what they're doing in order to set a contrast for the kind of deliverance that he seeks. Keep that in mind. We'll see that both in the text and in the general flavor of the Psalm in what is to come.

David says his enemies are secretly trying to hurt him and how is it, what is it that they are threatening him with? Look at verse 3. He says deliver me at the end of verse 2, "From the tumult of those who do iniquity." Verse 3, "Who," now he's going to describe those evil workers. He says,

3 Who have sharpened their tongue like a sword. They aimed bitter speech as their arrow,

So he's saying that, "These men are speaking wickedly against me. They are wagging their tongues. They are trying to undermine me before the people who follow me. They are trying to assault and tear down my reputation by the things, O God, that they are saying to me." It was with their tongue and with their speech that they would undermine him with their criticism and with their false accusations against his character.

Now, let's just take a moment to remember that Scripture speaks often about the destructive power of the tongue. Look at Proverbs 25:18, if you would, and keep your finger there and thumb back to James 3 at the same time. We'll see if we can get through these texts efficiently here this evening. In Proverbs 25:18, it uses this similar imagery from Psalm 64 when Solomon said, "Like a club and a sword and a sharp arrow Is a man who bears false witness against his neighbor." And so it describes it as that which would beat a man down, that which would cut him, that which would destroy him all bound up in the power of the tongue.

Then if you look over at James 3, we'll start at verse 4. I had planned not that, but we'll go a little further back. James says from the New Testament perspective, "Look at the ships also, though they are so great and are driven by strong winds, are still directed by a very small rudder wherever the inclination of the pilot desires. So also the tongue is a small part of the body, and yet it boasts of great things. See how great a forest is set aflame by such a small fire! And the tongue is a fire, the very world of iniquity; the tongue is set among our members as that which defiles the entire body, and sets on fire the course of our life, and is set on fire by hell. For every species of beasts and birds, of reptiles and creatures of the sea, is tamed and has been tamed by the human race. But no one can tame the tongue; it is a restless evil and full of deadly poison."

So Scripture recognizes these destructive words and so it shouldn't surprise us when we find ourselves on the receiving end of people wagging their tongues and bringing harm to us by the things that they say with these arrows that cut, that pierce, that destroy, that kill a man and his reputation. So David knows what that is like and I know from conversations with many of you, that you have experienced that at one time or another.

Now, as David is contemplating that in verse 3, he's dreading the implications of it. Remember he's writing as king and the leadership to which God had appointed him would be compromised if the people did not trust him. So when people attack a leader in his integrity and in his character, what they are actually doing is they are cutting down the trust and they are undermining the confidence that people would have when they would follow him. That's what David is concerned about. He doesn't want people to lose their trust in him when he is blameless, when he is the appointed man of God to lead the nation. So he says, "God, in light of my position and in light of the total falsehood with which they speak, I'm asking you to hide me and protect me because I can't defend myself in this situation."

Now, there is something immensely helpful in this, I think. This is what wicked people do against the righteous and, beloved, mark this when you find yourself under those kinds of attacks. Mark this: we don't need to be surprised when people lie against us, we don't need to be surprised when they spread false rumors about us, we don't need to be surprised when we see gossip and innuendo come about and here's part of the reason why, they have no inner constraint that would restrain them from doing that. The heart of man is wicked and is desperately sick and so the considerations of truth and integrity are not a restraint on them and therefore that means that our understanding of the doctrine of sin means that we can understand and have a perspective by which these things happen. When wicked people give into the sin in their heart, the consequences of that could go anywhere and there is no way that we can restrain it. It's like trying to stop a waterfall from going down by sticking your hand under it, it just keeps coming and coming and you lack the human power to stop it. You can't put a cork in a waterfall, you can't put a cork in the mouth of wicked people who set their mouths against you. That means that you need to look for help beyond your own ability, beyond your own resources, and where better to go than the Father who elected you, redeemed you, and sealed you for glory and to know that you will find a favorable audience with him?

Now, David is aware of their plots. He knows that they could strike at any time. Look at verse 4. He says,

They aimed bitter speech as their arrow, 4 To shoot from concealment at the blameless; Suddenly they shoot at him, and do not fear.

And he's just describing their methods. He says, "They shoot from concealment." In other words, they do it in the shadows. They do it from hiding. They won't engage in open conflict, rather they're just waiting for the right moment of vulnerability to execute the plots that they've been working on in order to bring a man down. And Charles Spurgeon said in this regard, talking about the blameless he says, and I quote, he says, "Sincere and upright conduct will not secure us from the assaults of slander." And so you say, "But I haven't done anything. I did nothing to offend this person." Well, you see, that's the whole point. You don't have to do anything. They're prompted by the wickedness of their heart and so many times, you know, you learn over the course of time when a Christian is under assault not to automatically assume that they did something to deserve it. It is the nature of wicked people to assault Christians without warning or without any provocation whatsoever. The agitation of their own sinful heart is what the source of the conflict is, is what the source of the attack is, rather than anything that was done against them by a person walking with Christ.

So we take comfort in that when we're on the receiving end and, beloved, within the body of Christ it also gives us a reason to receive ill reports about others in the body with caution, especially if they're coming from outside of the church, to receive those things with caution and not to simply believe the first bit of slander and gossip that is laid at your feet about someone that you've known for years, right? Right? That's the way that we should think about each other here within this body, that when it comes to within the body of Christ, especially within the membership of our church, that we give the benefit of the doubt to the person that is being criticized and slandered rather than receiving that slander and giving it immediate credence just because someone said it. Well, we realize that people will lie and they don't need to be taught to lie, their own heart teaches them to lie, and we realize that David was a man who was blameless and he was under attack like this. So we sympathize with one another. We protect one another in these things.

So David says, notice in verse 4 because there is a key word here, he says, "Suddenly they shoot at him, and they do not fear." And mark that word "suddenly" because it's going to become important just a little bit later. The idea being is that this attack comes out of nowhere, seemingly out of nowhere. There was nothing about the circumstances that would have suggested that this attack was coming. It just happened and there was no expectation about it being there. David says they shoot without fear; they're not afraid that anything is going to come back on them. They shoot without any fear of God, even. They think they have planned the perfect crime.

Look at verse 5. David says,

5 They hold fast to themselves an evil purpose; They talk of laying snares secretly; They say, "Who can see them?"

David just lays it out. They have an evil purpose. They're not afraid. They're laying snares in secret and they think no one is ever going to find them out and the final clause of verse 6 gives us the explanation that we need to understand this.

Look at verse 6 with me. He says,

6 They devise injustices, saying,

They devise them. They make them up. They manufacture them. They create them. And they say,

"We are ready with a well-conceived plot"; For [here's the clause I want you to see now] the inward thought and the heart of a man are deep.

There you just got a theological explanation for why these things happen. This is an indication, it is an allusion to the depravity of the human heart. Jeremiah 17:9 says that, "The heart is more deceitful than all else And is desperately sick." Among other things, that teaches us that these attacks are not going to be rational. There is not going to be truth in them. What prompts them is not, as I said, external circumstances or as if there were some kind of catalyst to it. The source of these things come from the depraved heart of the wicked. They do not fear man. They are arrogant in their boasting and therefore they delight in the wickedness of it.

Notice a couple of things, beloved, about this. Because the attack is rooted in the sinful heart of the enemy, David cannot reach it to defend himself against it, he cannot respond to it, he cannot repel the attack. It comes from inside a man and therefore it is outside of the reach of David to accomplish and defend himself by human means.

Why, then, do wicked people attack the righteous people of God? Why did Judas betray Jesus? There is your perfect example. There was no provocation from Christ that justified Judas in betraying him and handing him over to those who would crucify him. There was nothing in Christ that provoked that at all. Judas was not retaliating against a wrong that had been done to him because Christ had done no one wrong anywhere at any time. Christ had never lied to him. In fact, at the Last Supper, Christ handed him the sop, handed him the privileged position and said, "Here it is, Judas," extending a final act of kindness before Judas would walk out and betray him and have Satan enter him. Why did Judas do that? Don't you see, beloved, men are capable of deep and profound and completely unprovoked treachery.

Look at Romans 1 for a passage that expands on the teaching of Jeremiah 17:9. This is a good text to wed together in your mind with Jeremiah 17:9. We see what the depraved mind is capable of in verse 28 of Romans 1. Romans 1:28, "just as they did not see fit to acknowledge God any longer, God gave them over to a depraved mind, to do those things

which are not proper, being filled with all unrighteousness, wickedness, greed, evil; full of envy, murder, strife, deceit, malice; they are gossips, slanderers, haters of God, insolent, arrogant, boastful, inventors of evil, disobedient to parents, without understanding, untrustworthy, unloving, unmerciful; and although they know the ordinance of God, that those who practice such things are worthy of death, they not only do the same, but also give hearty approval to those who practice them." There you see, you look into the black oily well of what the human heart is capable of producing, endless slander, endless gossip, endless wickedness.

Well, if this is the picture of the human heart as Scripture gives it to us, then it shouldn't surprise us. We understand that when things like that come at us from people who oppose us, then we recognize, "Oh, I know where this is coming from." You're able to look past the face of the problem, you're able to look past the circumstances and understand what the root of it is. The root of all of these things is ultimately the sinfulness of the human heart and that's what David is saying in Psalm 64:6 when he says that the inward thought in the heart of a man are deep. There is all kinds of wickedness that the human heart can invent. That's how dark the human condition is.

So once again we're reminded, beloved, contrary to the false teaching of men like Joel Osteen, man is not basically good. Men have evil hearts and their wicked words, their wicked plots, their wicked actions flow from that which dominates their inner man, flows from that kind of darkness. That is why there is so much sin and bloodshed in our world and has been throughout the course of history going back to Genesis 4 when Cain killed Abel. Who taught Cain to kill Abel? Who instructed him in that except that it was his own dark and sinful heart that taught him to do that? Who taught your children when they were young to lie and disobey and throw tantrums? Did you teach them that? Did you sit them down and say, "Here, let me show you how to lie. Let me show you what to do when I tell you to do something and you don't want to do it, fall down on your stomach and kick your hands and beat the floor with your fists. You do that." You didn't teach them that, did you? You didn't teach them to scream and cry when they didn't get their way. Do you know how they know to do that? Their own sinful heart teaches them. They don't need a course. They already have it by nature inside them. So when we see this as adults, we understand, "Oh yeah, I'm just seeing a more sophisticated version of a child throwing a temper tantrum. I'm seeing the same thing come out. I'm seeing an individual, I'm seeing a human heart leads someone in evil."

Now, from a human perspective, that's a little bit disturbing and distressing because when you realize that you're up against a spiritual force like that, you realize that you cannot defend yourself from it. You're not able to stop that flow. But beloved, here's the key word in the sermon, but we are not defenseless when this happens. We know the one true God. We know the God who is sovereign over human hearts. We know the God who is omnipotent, omniscient and omnipresent. We know the great God who in his goodness has brought us into the sphere and the realm of his loyal love. And because our God loves us, because our God is faithful, we can go to him and find a refuge in the one who is a fortress against those things, whose mighty hand can stop a waterfall and can also intervene and stop the actions and motions of a wicked human heart, and that's what

David goes to in the final section of this Psalm. He goes to the certainty of protection. The certainty of protection.

Having described his enemies and their plots, he now turns to God in trust and look at verse 7 with me. These are two words that are pivot points in great passages of Scripture. We won't take the time to look at them, just file this away for future reference, for example in Ephesians 2:4, "But God." But God. David has done this, he has laid out the case, he has laid out the problem in exquisite detail. He has laid out and described exactly what's going on and the threat that it poses to him and to his well-being and he answers all of it with two simple words: but God. "All of these things are true and all of these things are beyond my control, but God. But my great God. But my good God. But I can appeal to God and know that he will hear me."

Look at verse 7. He says,

7 But God will shoot at them with an arrow; Suddenly they will be wounded.

Remember how I told you to mark the word "suddenly"? Here David is bringing up, it's like a mirror almost. They were preparing to shoot arrows at him and do it in a sudden way, but he's saying, "But it's the exact reverse. God will actually shoot them with an arrow. What they had plotted against me is going to come back on their own heads because of the power of God to intervene and turn the plots of men against them."

He says, "But God will shoot at them with an arrow; Suddenly they will be wounded." So think about it this way, beloved, what David is saying is this, this is just really sweet stuff. David says, "My enemies have been planning this sudden attack on me. Do you know what's going to happen is they planned an unexpected attack and what they are going to receive is an unexpected judgment from the hand of God. They think they're going to get away with it. They have failed to calculate the work of God, the hand of God and the protection of God on his servants." He says, "This can only have one effect." It is the idea of a boomerang which we've seen so often in the Psalms. He says, "They are throwing the boomerang trying to decapitate me, what going to happen, it will miss its mark and it will come back and it will hit them instead. The plots that they devise against others will fall on their own head." Galatians 6:7 says, "Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, this he will also reap." And in God's time, he will quickly and swiftly act to bring ruin upon them and their own speech will be their own downfall.

There's something poetic even in the way that David has structured this. Verse 3, 4, 5, 6, he has this long description, comparatively speaking, of his enemies and what he's doing. Then in verse 7 and just the beginning of verse 8, it snaps to an end with much greater brevity. He says, "God will shoot at them with an arrow; Suddenly they will be wounded.

8 So they will make him stumble;

The acts of God will make them stumble. So while there's this long description, there is this brief, concise, quick response indicating how quickly and how suddenly God will do it. Even the literary structure emphasizes the suddenness with which God will act and what they did in secret will become public for all to see.

Look at verses 8 and 9.

Their own tongue is against them; All who see them will shake the head. 9
Then all men will fear, And they will declare the work of God, And will consider what He has done.

In other words, this will be a public display of God's judgment on them in such a way that will be undeniable. The turn of events will be so sudden and swift that it will be a testimony to the ability of God to protect his people. If you remember the story of Absalom, David's son, how was it that he died? He was riding off and his head got caught in the branches of an oak tree and he hung there until he was dead. He was struck down, as I recall. An ignoble end for this man who had devised such well-conceived plots against the king and there is only one conclusion that you can draw from that: God judged him for the way that he was acting against his father. And when that is put on public display, men fear. They see the greatness of God, the wicked are scorned for their lies and what's the consequence for the believer? Where is the outcome for David in verse 10? Remember that his opening prayer was, "God, preserve my life from dread of the enemy." Do you know what? In the course of this Psalm, God answered his prayer. David opened with complaint, he ends in trust in verse 10. He says,

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

The righteous man is the one who is like David who is trusting in the Lord and what he's saying here is that, "God's protection upon me, even against determined, wicked foes, his protection is great. It is vast. I won't be lost in the process. I will see that outcome and it will make me glad."

Now, beloved, let's just step back and just try to keep the big picture of everything in mind here. The general principles from these things are what are so important and what are so life-changing. Here's what you should think about life in response to this Psalm. We've said that you're not surprised when wicked people come against you, when people close to you betray you. We're not surprised by that because we understand theologically the depravity of the human heart and that their own heart teaches them to do evil and wicked things. So we understand the context of how these things happen. But beyond that, my Christian friend, beyond that, my brother and sister in Christ, beyond that, my beleaguered friend maybe watching over the internet and feeling like you're clinging to God by a thread, understand this: this is how God deals with his people. This is the kindness and protection that he shows to us. We can look to him in our distress. He will protect us and he will protect us in a way that will give him the glory. He will protect us

in a way that will give him the glory and this trusting conclusion in verse 10 is the answer to the prayer.

Now, let's bring this into the New Testament era as we close. David wrote 1,000 years before the time of Christ. We have a whole lot more revelation in between. Let's draw out some applications as we think about our blessed Lord Jesus as we conclude our thinking about this Psalm. We remember something especially sweet here. Who is it that is the ultimate enemy of our souls? Satan himself, right? It's the devil who prowls about like a roaring lion seeking someone to devour. He's the father of lies. He's the accuser of the brethren. And do you know what? He's invisible. We cannot see him. We have no idea what he and demonic forces are trying to do in order to harm the work of God or to work against us as we go through life trying in our feeble ways to walk with Christ. Don't you know, don't you realize that our Lord Jesus has answered all of his accusations? That our Lord Jesus defends us against the demonic realm? That he holds us in the palm of his hands and that there are not angels or demons that are capable of removing us? That there are not angels or demons that are capable, though they are invisible to us? That there is no demon capable of separating us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord? Invisible liars. Powerful spiritual enemies. And what do we have except the protection of Christ holding us and keeping us safe in the midst of it?

Think about it from another way. Turn in the New Testament to the book of Colossians. I want you to just see this as well. Colossians 2, just after Ephesians and Philippians. Colossians 2. There is a sense in which the guilt of our violations of the law of God are something that are unseen, that the guilt of our sin is something that's not tangible, that we can't see, it's borne testimony by the word of God and made accusation against us when we were unsaved. Well, look at verse 9. Let's start there. Speaking of Christ it says in Christ, "all the fullness of Deity dwells in bodily form, and in Him you have been made complete, and He is the head over all rule and authority." And what did he do for us? Verse 13, "When you were dead in your transgressions and the uncircumcision of your flesh, He made you alive together with Him, having forgiven us all our transgressions, having canceled out the certificate of debt consisting of decrees against us, which was hostile to us; and He has taken it out of the way, having nailed it to the cross. When He had disarmed the rulers and authorities, He made a public display of them, having triumphed over them through Him." What is this saying and how does it relate to what we're talking about tonight? There was a weight of guilt on your soul, the condemnation of God rightly upon you for your sin. You were dead in trespasses and sins and there was nothing that you could do about it. There was the ultimate enemy of your soul was the justice of God and the judgment that your sins deserved. And what did your gracious Christ do? He goes to the cross. He takes the penalty of your guilt upon him. He suffers and bears the wrath of God that should have been on your head. He takes it on himself. As his hands and feet were nailed to the cross, Scripture says as he bore your punishment, that punishment was being nailed to that cross never to be raised against you again in Christ. He intervened against a hidden enemy. He intervened against your own guilt. And just as he protected you from the accusations of Satan and continues to do so, so also he protected you against the righteous judgment of God.

This is who our God is. This is who our Christ is. We come to him and find a perfect refuge, a refuge from Satan, a refuge from human enemies, a refuge from our own guilt and shame. I think he's worthy of praise, don't you? I think that we will glorify him forever and ever. Our refuge protects us from Satan and from our own guilt and it all brings us back to one of the guiding interpretive principles of the entire Psalter found in Psalm 1:6. You don't need to turn there. I've alluded to this many times, "the LORD knows the way of the righteous, But the way of the wicked will perish."

Are you under attack? Take courage, my friend. Take heart in Christ. He knows. He knows your way. He knows the wicked and in time he will deliver you. If he's delivered you from sin, he'll deliver you from lesser enemies as well. If you are under the weight of hostile circumstances, he knows. He cares. He'll carry you through. He'll bring you out safe on the other side. Let's trust him. Let's turn to him rather than give into the fear.

Let's bow together in prayer.

Father, the words of the hymn come to our mind and with this we would close. "You are our great Jehovah and when we are stayed upon Jehovah, hearts are fully blessed. Finding as you promised, perfect peace and rest." That's who you are. We believe that. We commit ourselves to that. We trust in that, Father. Father, look upon our imperfect faithfulness, our failing ways, the numerous ways that we've stumbled, even in the past day or two or three and have mercy on us. Lord, we are so often miserably quick to doubt and miserably slow to trust. We thank you that our well-being depends not on our ability to have faith but on the faithfulness that you show to those that you've set your love upon. Father, may each one here under the sound of my voice here this evening find that perfect rest. Father, may your grace, may your mercy, may your loyal love be that which refreshes hearts as we go tonight. We thank you for how you've protected us from our own sin, how you have protected us from Satan. We ask you to continue to do that and we thank you for those multiplied times, Father, many of which we no doubt do not even realize and recognize, how you have protected us when men designed harm against us and you just turned it away in the silent work of your providence and we went blissfully unaware. Thank you for that and thank you for the times which we were aware of and you brought us safe through. Father, certainly then in light of all that you are, in light of the whole history of the course of the redemption of God's people and in light of the work that you have shown to us in your faithfulness in our individual lives, surely you will continue to show us goodness and mercy all the days of our lives and then we will enter into the house of the Lord where we will abide with you forever and ever. We praise our Christ who purchased all of these things for us with his righteousness and shed blood and it's in his name we pray. Amen.

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