

PSALMS

Chapter 64

¹ Hear me, O God, as I voice my complaint; protect my life from the threat of the enemy. ² Hide me from the conspiracy of the wicked, from that noisy crowd of evildoers. 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^a?” ⁶ They plot injustice and say, “We have devised a perfect plan!” Surely the mind and heart of man are cunning. ⁷ But God will shoot them with arrows; suddenly they will be struck down. ⁸ He will turn their own tongues against them and bring them to ruin; all who see them will shake their heads in scorn. ⁹ All mankind will fear; they will proclaim the works of God and ponder what he has done. ¹⁰ Let the righteous rejoice in the LORD and take refuge in him; let all the upright in heart praise him!

Ps 64 Prayer to God for protection when threatened by a conspiracy. The circumstances may be similar to those reflected in Ps 62 (see introduction to that psalm), but here there is no allusion to the king’s weakened condition, and it is not clear whether the conspirators come from within or outside Israel (see note on v. 2). As so often in the prayers of the Psalter, the enemy’s tongue is his main weapon (see note on 5:9). The prayer is framed by a plea for protection (vv. 1–2) and a confident word concerning the effects of God’s saving action (vv. 9–10). At the center, vv. 5–6 describe the disdainful confidence of the conspirators. Verses 3–4 relate how the enemies attack with their tongues, while vv. 7–8 proclaim how God will turn their tongues against them. (CSB)

This psalm, which has no specific historical setting, can serve as a summary or review of the many psalms of David we have studied which are prayers against his enemies. All the familiar elements of David’s prayers against his enemies are here: an opening plea, a description of the treachery, viciousness and arrogance of the enemy, the innocence of the persecuted, an assurance of God’s victory, and the thankfulness of the righteous. (PBC)

Format: Vv 1–6, the enemies’ plots; vv 7–9, God defeats the enemies; v 10, rejoice in the Lord. (TLSB)

64 title See note on Ps 4 title. (CSB)

64:1–2 The prayer for protection. (CSB)

enemy ... wicked ... evildoers. Psalmist’s unnamed enemies, who plot against him. (TLSB)

64:1 *Hear*. In Hebrew a wordplay on the word for “rejoice” in v. 10 (see note there). (CSB)

64:2 *noisy crowd*. The Hebrew root underlying this expression is the same as that for “conspire” in 2:1. (CSB)

64:3–4 The enemy attacks. (CSB)

64:3 *whet*. To sharpen a sword or knife by drawing its edge along a fine-grained stone. (TLSB)

tongues. See note on 5:9. (CSB)

The Hbr expression for *blade* is “mouth”; the tongue is the blade of the mouth. *bitter words*. Accusations. Luth: “Christian suffering ... requires not merely all sorts of tortures and troubles, but more; their good name must be spit upon and slandered, and the world must boast loudly that in murdering the Christians it has executed the worst kind of criminal, whom the earth could no longer carry, and that it has done God the greatest and most acceptable service, as Christ says (John 16:2). Thus no name has ever appeared on earth so slanderous and disreputable as the name ‘Christian.’ No nation has ever experienced so much bitter opposition and attack by wicked and poisonous tongues as have the Christians” (AE 21:49). (TLSB)

swords ... deadly arrows. See 59:7. (CSB)

64:4 *blameless*. Innocent of any action that would justify the hostility of his enemies. (TLSB)

without fear. They feel themselves secure from exposure and retaliation, but see vv. 7–8. (CSB)

64:5–6 The enemies’ contemptuous self-confidence. (CSB)

64:5 *they say*. See notes on 3:2; 10:11. (CSB)

snares. Traps for small animals. People think they won’t get caught in their lies and conspiracy (cf Jer 20:10). (TLSB)

64:6 *heart*. See note on 4:7. (CSB)

People’s motives and secret thoughts cannot be easily fathomed (cf Pr 20:5). People’s capacity for evil is great, but God’s capacity for love and mercy is greater (cf Ps 92:5; Is 55:6–9). (TLSB)

cunning. Lit. “deep” (see Pr 18:4; 20:5). (CSB)

64:7–8 Confidence in God’s righteous judgment: He will do to them what they had intended to do to David (see 63:9–10 and note). (CSB)

shoot ... arrows; suddenly ... tongues. See vv. 3–4. (CSB)

A surprise attack. Like a distant archer, God will suddenly act to rescue. (TLSB)

64:8 *shake their heads.* See 44:14. (CSB)

Near Eastern gesture of contempt and derision (prophesied also of the Messiah at His crucifixion; cf 22:7). (TLSB)

64:9–10 The happy effects of God’s judgment: All mankind will fear, proclaim, ponder (see note on 46:10); the righteous will rejoice, take refuge, praise. (CSB)

64:9 See 58:11; see also 40:3; 52:6; 65:8. (CSB)

64:10 *righteous.* See note on 1:5. (CSB)

rejoice. In Hebrew this is the first word of the line, and it is a wordplay on the Hebrew for “Hear,” which is the first word of the first line. (CSB)

Ps 64 The psalmist’s enemies conspire against him and seek his destruction, but he turns to the Lord in prayer and receives deliverance. When false rumors fly and your reputation suffers, seek divine justice. Turn to the Lord and put the situation in His hands. Do not try to “get even,” but leave the outcome to God. Jesus also endured all kinds of plots against His life and slander during His ministry (Mk 15, especially vv 29–32). He knows how to justify you. • Lord, I exalt in You, my refuge. Amen. (TLSB)