

Helmet of Salvation

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Date: 28 October 2020

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[0 : 00] Psalm 140, to the choir master, a psalm of David. Deliver me, O Lord, from evil men, preserve me from violent men, who plant evil things in their heart and stir up wars continually.

They make their tongue sharp as a serpent's, and under their lips is the venom of asps. Selah. Guard me, O Lord, from the hands of the wicked, preserve me from violent men, who have planned to trip up my feet.

The arrogant have hidden a trap for me, and with cords they have spread a net. Beside the way they have set snares for me, Selah. I say to the Lord, You are my God.

Give ear to the voice of my pleas for mercy, O Lord. O Lord, my Lord, the strength of my salvation. You have covered my head in the day of battle. Grant not, O Lord, the desires of the wicked.

Do not further their evil plot, or they will be exalted, Selah. As for the head of those who surround me, let the mischief of their lips overwhelm them. Let burning coals fall upon them.

[1 : 06] Let them be cast into fire, into miry pits, no more to rise. Let not the slanderer be established in the land. Let evil hunt down the violent man's field. I know that the Lord will maintain the cause of the afflicted, and will execute justice for the needy.

Surely the righteous shall give thanks to your name. The upright shall dwell in your presence. This is God's holy and authoritative word. As Christians, we can feel embattled at times, living in a world that's running away from God, and we're trying to follow him.

And when we're surrounded by evil, the worst we oppose God, we can feel threatened. We can be persecuted.

We can suffer. And it's for such times as that, that God gave us a passage like Psalm 140 to comfort us. And the first half of the psalm, verses 1 through 6, is about the plight of the righteous, the suffering that they're going through.

And the second half of the psalm, verses 8 to 13, is about the deliverance of the righteous. And so the whole thing is really a prayer. And at the center of the psalm, verse 7, is the high point of the entire psalm, which is a profession of faith that the Lord is our salvation, the strength of our salvation, and the helmet of salvation.

[2 : 30] And the main point of this psalm is that we should trust in the Lord and hold on to our righteousness, knowing that he will deliver us from the hands of the wicked. So let's just look at the first half to begin together.

This psalm is attributed to David in the heading. And David begins with the cry for deliverance. And each section of the first half begins with an address to the Lord.

So it says in verses 1 to 3, Deliver me, O Lord, from evil men. Preserve me from violent men, who plan evil things in their heart and stir up wars continually. They make their tongue sharp as a serpent, and under their lips is the venom of asps.

Selah. So we learn kind of the nature of David's struggle here, the trouble that he's in. Evil men who are violent are plotting evil things against him and are stirring up wars.

So this is probably a literal war. And they're not merely violent. They're also slanderous, as we see. Because he says that their tongue is as sharp as a serpent's, and under their lips is the venom of asps.

[3 : 40] So most of us, you know, I mean actually all of us, right, don't have anybody waging a literal war against us. But you may very well have people waging war against you in a figurative sense, right?

Whether it's people who are falsely accusing you at work, people who are abusing you at home, or people who are just fighting for your downfall, your failure.

And even if you don't have people who are doing this to you, we all have spiritual enemies, right? 1 Peter 2.11 tells us that the passions of the flesh wage war against our souls.

And likewise, Revelation 12 speaks of the great dragon, the ancient serpent, who is called the devil and Satan, the deceiver of the whole world, and the accuser of our brothers.

So he is the evil architect behind all the sharp serpent-like tongues of men. And we do have him as our enemy. And when we feel embattled by our enemies, we have only one source of deliverance, and that's the Lord.

[4 : 50] And he's the one that David's crying out to. Let's look at verses 45 when he cries out some more. He says, Guard me, O Lord, from the hands of the wicked.

Preserve me from violent men who have planned to trip up my feet. The arrogant have hidden a trap for me, and with cords they have spread a net. Beside the way they have set snares for me, Selah.

So here he uses the haunting imagery repeatedly. So he talks about the wicked, violent men who seek to trip up his feet and hidden a trap for him, a net and a snare.

Snares for him. So they're out to get him, and he feels like he's literally walking out into a minefield. Everywhere he turns, he feels like there's traps set for him. But though the hands of the wicked are against him, he prays to the Lord, knowing that the Lord guards him.

And then we get to the high point of the psalm, verses 68, where David's cry for deliverance turns to his assurance of God's deliverance. He says in verse 6, I say to the Lord, You are my God.

[5 : 53] Give ear to the voice of my pleas for mercy, O Lord. And that's mirrored by verse 8, which says, Grant not, O Lord, the desires of the wicked. Do not further their evil plot, or they will be exalted.

Selah. So in verse 6, David cries out to the Lord to listen to him. And in verse 8, he cries out to the Lord to not listen to the wicked. And then in the middle is the central verse of the psalm, verse 7.

O Lord, my Lord, the strength of my salvation, you have covered my head in the day of battle. So there in that central section, there's a threefold repetition of the name of God.

The Lord in all caps, which is God's proper name, Yehovah. Yehovah, to emphasize that he is the deliverer. David professes that he is his God.

The Lord is his God. The Lord is the one whom he worships. He says the Lord is his Lord, his master, the one whom he serves, who obeys, and belongs to. And he declares that the Lord is the strength of my salvation.

[6 : 52] You have covered my head in the day of battle. So he's the one who supplies the strength that David needs for victory. And then also, he's the one that protects him. Because the head is the most vital part of our body, right?

So when we bike around the city, we are required to wear a helmet, lest we get into a serious head injury. And so it's speaking of how the Lord protects the most vital part of David's body in battle.

And with the Lord, David knows that he is invincible. And then in verses 9 to 13, David prays with faith that God might avenge him.

So in contrast to David, whose head is covered by the Lord, it says the head of the enemies who surround him will be overwhelmed. They will be exposed and vulnerable. In verse 3, we saw these wicked men have the venom of asps under their lips.

And now their poisonous words will be turned against them. And they will be overtaken by the mischief of their lips. And then in verses 4 to 5, we saw how the wicked men are hunting David, setting traps for him, snares for him.

[7 : 58] But then in verses 10 to 11, we see that the burning coals will fall on them instead. And they will trip and fall into miry pits. No more to rise. And the violent men mentioned in verse 1 and 4, it says in verse 11, let evil hunt down the violent men speedily.

So the violent hunters that were hunting David are now going to be hunted by the very evil that they sought to bring upon others and to bring upon David. So it shows God's vengeance, this justice that he brings to evildoers.

And as David prays this, he has assurance that the Lord will answer. And that's what we see in verses 12 to 13. I know that the Lord will maintain the cause of the afflicted and will execute justice for the needy.

Surely the righteous shall give thanks to your name. The upright shall dwell in your presence. So God will, without fail, execute justice on our behalf, on behalf of the righteous and the upright who are afflicted and needy.

The problem, of course, as we know from the rest of Scripture, is that we are not righteous and we are not upright. And in Romans 3.13, when Paul argues that, in fact, there is not a single person that is righteous, he quotes from this psalm in verse 3.

[9 : 17] He quotes verse 3 of this psalm in chapter 3.13 of Romans. The venom of asps under their lips. And he applies that description to all of humanity. So we are actually the enemies.

We are actually opposed to him, opposed to God and to his anointed. However, praise be to God, he, instead of punishing us, he satisfies his justice not by giving us what we deserve as sinners, but by sending his only son, Jesus Christ, to save us by dying on the cross on our behalf.

And so he loves us while we are still his enemies. And after bearing our punishment for sin, Jesus was raised from the dead on the third day and triumphant over death, and guaranteeing us the victory, assuring us of the salvation that this psalm talks about.

And so that now the promises in the psalm are ours. It's by turning to Jesus and putting our faith in him that we now are saved and have God as the helmet of salvation. And of course, that helmet of salvation, that imagery recalls Ephesians 6 and the armor of God, where we're called to take up the whole armor of God, among which is the helmet of salvation in verse 17 of Ephesians 6.

And much like the way David speaks of the Lord here, as the strength of salvation, who covered his head in the day of battle. And in the way Paul speaks of this, putting the armor of Christ, in his theology, the way we put on the armor of God is by putting our faith in Jesus Christ, putting on Jesus Christ, his righteousness.

[10 : 55] So in Galatians 3.27, he says, For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ. Christ is our armor. Christ is our helmet of salvation.

And we put him on. We put on the new self created after the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness. And it's when we fortify ourselves in this way with Christ that we become invulnerable to the attacks of violent men.

Because even though we might suffer in this life, our ultimate victory is assured, our eternal salvation is assured. And when we are secure in our identity in Christ, if we have put on Christ, the helmet of salvation, then we are invulnerable to the attacks of slanderers.

Because though our reputation might suffer in this life, we know that the Lord will maintain the cause of the afflicted. And he will execute justice for the needy. And surely, as it says at the end of the song, the righteous shall give thanks to your name, the upright shall dwell in your presence.

Amen.