

# Sudden Assault, Sudden Retribution

*Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.*

Date: 09 February 2018

Preacher: Shawn Woo

[ 0 : 00 ] Let me pray for us. Heavenly Father, we have gathered to hear from you and to cry out to you in prayer.

And we don't want this to be just a checkbox of things to do here, but we want this to be an opportunity for us to commune with you, to relate to you, to grow in our love for you, to increasingly conform all of our values, our thoughts, our attitudes to that of Christ.

And so we pray that you would do that work in our midst this evening. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen. Psalm 64, verses 1 to 10.

The title of it says, To the Choir Master, a Psalm of David. I'll read it out loud for us. It says, Hear my voice, O God, in my complaint.

Preserve my life from dread of the enemy. Hide me from the secret plots of the wicked, from the throng of evildoers, who wet their tongues like swords, who aim bitter words like arrows, shooting from ambush at the blameless, shooting at him suddenly and without fear.

[ 1 : 29 ] They hold fast to their evil purpose. They talk of laying snares secretly, thinking, Who can see them? They search out injustice, saying, We have accomplished a diligent search, for the inward mind and heart of a man are deep.

But God shoots his arrow at them. They are wounded suddenly. They are brought to ruin, with their own tongues turned against them. All who see them will wag their heads.

Then all mankind fears. They tell what God has brought about, and ponder what he has done. Let the righteous one rejoice in the Lord, and take refuge in him.

Let all the upright in heart exult. The main point of this psalm is that we can take refuge in God, who fights for us.

We can take refuge in God because he fights for us. Verses 1-6 is about the sudden assault of the wicked. And then verses 7-10 is about the sudden retribution of God.

[ 2 : 32 ] And I don't know if you guys have ever gone laser tagging or paintballing. Yeah. Right? But when you go, you kind of get paranoid and a little skittish because you're kind of getting hit or shot from places you don't expect.

It's because people are ambushed. Right? And that's, of course, just a game. But here, in Psalm 64, David's talking about how in real life, he feels like evil people, wicked people are kind of sitting in ambush, leveling their arrows at him, shooting their arrows and attacking him.

And so he cries out to God for deliverance, and he writes about that in verses 2-6. It says, Hide me from the secret plots of the wicked, from the throng of evildoers who wet their tongues like swords, weighing bitter words like arrows, shooting from ambush at the blameless, shooting at him suddenly and without fear.

They hold fast to their evil purpose. They talk of laying snares secretly, thinking, Who can see them? Right? The words used to describe their attacks, and it's like secret plots, ambush.

They snares secretly, right? So they all suggest the type of assault that cannot be anticipated, right? So it's coming from places he doesn't expect, when he's not expecting them. And these attacks, because it's a plot, it's done in secret, it's coordinated, it's not like a, it's not a mindless or reactionary, heat of the moment kind of assault, but something that has been meticulously planned, like a military operation.

[ 4 : 05 ] And their secret plots are not known to David, who is the presumed author here. And so he observes in verse 4, that the attack comes to him suddenly, because he's not anticipating.

And the mode of these wicked people's attack is verbal. So if you look at verse 3, it says, The evildoers wet their tongues like sword, and aim bitter words like arrows.

So their tongue is their sword, and their words are their arrows. And they have staged, basically then, a carefully planned smear campaign against David, and the psalmist, and then with choice gossip, whispered in strategic places, and hard-hitting slander, uttered behind his back.

And their evil plans are such that it fills the psalmist with dread. Right? So that's the situation. And that, but just as, so, and then in 7 to 10, he tells us about the sudden retribution of God.

He says, But just as they shot their arrows of bitter words to the psalmist, verse 7 tells us that now God shoots his arrows at them. Right? And then just as they attack the psalmist suddenly, in verse 4, verse 7 now tells us that they are wounded suddenly.

[ 5 : 15 ] Right? So God's justice, you can see how reciprocal it is. Right? The way they attack the psalmist, God is going to bring retribution. And so even though they use their tongues like swords in verse 8, well, verse 8 promises that they will be brought to ruin with their own tongues turned against them.

God will turn their slander and gossip against them so that all who see them will wag their heads. Right? So this image of God shooting his arrows, right, is a picture of him as a divine warrior who fights for his people.

And that's why we can take refuge in God because he fights for us. And Charles Spurgeon puts it very memorably. He says, They shoot and shall be shot.

A greater archer than they shall take sure aim at their heart. One of his arrows shall be enough for he never misses his aim. Right? So that's, that God fights for us in that way.

That he is, and that's why we can take refuge in him. Those who take aim at God's people, God himself will take aim at them. Right? This kind of reminds me of 1 Corinthians 3, 17, which we talked about recently in our church.

[ 6 : 21 ] If anyone destroys God's temple, God will destroy him. For God's temple is holy and you are that temple. And these wicked people took their shot at the psalm without fear.

It said in verse 4, but after God's judgment and retribution, it says in verse 9, all mankind fears. Right? So God's just judgment upon the wicked will instill a proper fear of God in people's lives and in the heart of man.

And that's why he says, and that's why those who have the fear of God no longer need to have the dread of the enemy that verse 1 speaks of. And this will ultimately result in rejoicing for the righteous.

Psalms 64. Yeah. And it says in verse 10, let the righteous one rejoice in the Lord and take refuge in him. Let all the upright in heart exalt.

So, I don't know if you noticed already, but there's a contrast here between the upright in heart in verse 10 and the wicked who are described as heart of a man are deep, right?

[ 7 : 26 ] In verse 6. So the wicked were described in this way in verses 5 to 6. They hold fast to their evil purpose. They talk of laying snares secretly thinking, who can see them? They search out injustice saying, we have accomplished a diligent search for the inward mind and heart of a man are deep.

So this is a description of the wicked. So that description of their heart, which is deep, right, is contrasted with the upright in heart which exalts in God. And I think Jeremiah the prophet probably had these two verses, verses 5 to 6, in mind when he wrote in chapter 17, verse 9.

It says, the heart is deceitful above all things and desperately sick. Who can understand it? Right? So it says, no one can understand, so no one, it's basically that verse that talks about how no one can understand the depth of depravity that resides within a man's heart.

But the following verse in Jeremiah 17, 10 also says, but I, the Lord, search the heart and test the mind to give every man according to his ways, according to the fruit of his deeds. So this psalm is speaking of how the wicked believe that their wicked deeds are unsearchable, right, that they will not be found out, right, their hearts are deep with wickedness.

And no one can understand the profundity of their, the depth of their complexity, the depth and complexity of the evil that resides in their heart. But God tells us in Jeremiah 17, 10 that he searches the heart and tests the mind to give every man according to his ways, according to the fruit of his deeds.

[ 9 : 02 ] So that means he will find out their wickedness and execute his justice. So this is good news, obviously, for people who are upright in heart and who take refuge in him and trust in his judgment.

But of course, that's with the condition that our hearts are indeed upright. And unfortunately, the problem is that God's people throughout history have repeatedly failed to be faithful to God and failed to keep their covenant with God.

And so their hearts, too, like these wicked people, are full of wickedness. It's deep with depravity. And so then, what recourse do we have as God's people? And that's the promise that prophesied about Jesus in Ezekiel 36, 25 to 27.

God promised, I will sprinkle clean water on you and you shall be clean from all your uncleanness. And from all your idols, I will cleanse you and I will give you a new heart and a new spirit I will put within you.

And I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. And I will put my spirit within you and cause you to walk in my statutes and be careful to obey my rules.

[ 10 : 12 ] Right? So it's only when we have a new heart that God, new heart from God that we can be upright in heart as the psalm speaks of.

And we receive that new heart only by receiving Jesus Christ into our lives and by repenting of our sins and believing in Him and so then being renewed in the Holy Spirit.

And so that's really the promise, the ultimate promise that this psalm points to. That's the promise in which this psalm is fulfilled is that so that we can be upright in heart and take refuge in Him in the God who fights for us.

So with that in mind, maybe we can sing a song to Him and let's pray.