

"But God Shall Shoot at Them"

A God That Shoots Back

Psalm 64

No occasion is given for this psalm and none can adequately be determined by its context. There are many occasions recorded in the historical books that would fit this psalm so we will make no speculation on its occasion. We know it was written to be sung in worship ("To the chief musician") and it was penned by David.

This psalm is arranged in chiasmic structure (a literary form that shows a mirror pattern) – showing how God uses the enemy's own imagery against them. The turning point is in verse 7, clearly designated by the first two words: "But God..."

Section	Verses	Action	Hebrew Key Term	Direction
A	v. 1-2	David asks God to hide (<i>sāṭar</i>) him from the secret plots of the wicked	סֵתֵר	"Hide me..."
B	v. 3-4	The wicked shoot (<i>yārāh</i>) their arrows of words in secret	יָרָה / סֵתֵר	"They shoot in secret..."
B'	v. 7	God shoots (<i>yārāh</i>) at them with His arrow	יָרָה	"But God shall shoot at them..."
A'	v. 10	The righteous are secure (implicitly "hidden" in the LORD)	סֵתֵר implied	"The righteous shall be glad in the LORD..."

In other words, what the wicked conceal, God reveals; what they shoot, God returns; and what they plan in secret,

He executes openly.

I. THE PRAYER OF THE RIGHTEOUS – VS. 1-2

A. His plea for preservation (vs. 1)

1. "Hear my voice, O God, in my prayer" – as seen so often in the psalter, the psalmist is asking to be heard in his distress.

The same applies to us today – we need to come boldly to the throne when we need help.

Hebrews 4:16

¹⁶ Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need.

2. "Preserve my life from fear of the enemy"

a) David is asking not just for escape but for preservation – to be kept under the watch of the Lord.

b) "Preserve my life" (תִּנְצֹר חַיִּי) – the word "preserve" has the idea of watching over or guarding. It conveys watchful protection.

c) "From fear of the enemy" – He wasn't praying for deliverance from the attack, but from fear itself. He was asking for protection from the fear that comes before the enemy attacks.

Psalms 34:4

⁴ I sought the LORD, and he heard me, and delivered me from all my fears.

Psalms 56:3

³ What time I am afraid, I will trust in thee.

B. His protection from those that plotted against him

(vs. 2)

“Hide me from the secret counsel of the wicked”

1. The word for “hide” (סָתַר) means to conceal, cover, or protect. David isn’t asking to become invisible, but to be shielded in God’s presence – the place where evil cannot reach.
2. The wicked also operate in “secret” (the same root as for the word “hide”): “They shoot in secret at the perfect.” The psalm deliberately sets the two “hidings” against each other:

David’s “Hiding”	Wicked’s “Hiding”
“Hide me, O God” (v. 2)	“They shoot in secret” (v. 4)
Seeking shelter in God	Concealing sin from man
Produces confidence	Leads to judgment

3. Our confidence is not in fighting back but in resting “hidden with Christ in God.”

Colossians 3:3

³ For ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God.

II. THE PLOTS OF THE WICKED – VS. 3-6

A. Their words are weapons (vs. 3)

The word “whet” (שָׁנָה) is used figuratively here to signify sharp words that a person says in order to hurt someone else.

Psalm 140:3

³ They have sharpened their tongues like a serpent; adders' poison *is* under their lips. Selah.

James 3:6

⁶ And the tongue *is* a fire, a world of iniquity; so is the tongue among our members, that it defileth the whole body, and setteth on fire the course of nature; and it is set on fire of hell [it carries the character and influence of hell itself].

B. Their attack is in secret (vs. 4)

"That they may shoot in secret at the perfect..."

1. The word "shoot" (יָרָה), as pointed out earlier, is an important word in this psalm. It's used first of the wicked, and then of God, marking a deliberate wordplay.

Verse	Subject	Phrase	Implication
v. 4	The wicked	"That they may shoot (yārāh) in secret at the perfect"	Wicked speech as weapon
v. 7	God	"But God shall shoot (yārāh) at them with an arrow"	Divine retribution with perfect aim

2. The "arrows" of the wicked are bitter words (vs. 3) – deceitful, verbal violence.

The "arrow" (singular) of the Lord is His decisive judgment – one shot is enough.

3. The parallel emphasizes that God answers the wicked (the lost) in their own "language," so to speak.
4. The final line of the verse states that "they fear

not." The enemies that the child of God has faced, then and now, don't seem to have any concern for the God they face – there is no fear of Him.

Psalm 36:1

¹ The transgression of the wicked saith within my heart, *that there is* no fear of God before his eyes.

Romans 3:18

¹⁸ There is no fear of God before their eyes.

C. Their counsel is corrupt (vs. 5)

1. Their collaboration – "They encourage themselves in an evil matter..."
 - a) Literally translated: *"they strengthen one another in a wicked plan."*
 - b) The Hebrew verb (חזק) - "to make strong" pictures mutual fortifying – sinners bolstering each other when conscience would restrain them.
 - c) The old saying, "misery loves company," can be altered to say, as found here, "evil loves company." Sin seldom stands alone and when hearts and minds agree in evil, hardness follows.
2. Their conversation – "they commune of laying snares privily"
 - a) The verb (ספר) - "to talk, to plan" shows deliberate, strategic speech.
 - b) Their discussions are planning sessions *for deceit* – literally, "they talk together to hide traps." It indicates a quiet, almost whispered tone in this context.

Proverbs 1:11

¹¹ If they say, Come with us, let us lay wait for blood, let us lurk privily for the innocent without cause:

Proverbs 1:18

¹⁸ And they lay wait for their own blood; they lurk privily for their own lives.

3. Their conceit – “they say, Who shall see them?”

- a) This demonstrates the arrogance behind their plotting, which gives them a false sense of secrecy and impunity.
- b) The same God who formed the eye and ear sees and hears their schemes.

Psalms 94:9

⁹ He that planted the ear, shall he not hear? he that formed the eye, shall he not see?

- c) Their question “Who shall see?” becomes their undoing, for in verse 8 God exposes them openly.

D. Their devices are deep (vs. 6)

1. Their calculation – “They search out iniquities; they accomplish a diligent search...”

- a) The verb “search out” (חָפַשׁ - “to search, examine, investigate”) carries the idea here of probing thoroughly. It paints a picture of leaving no stone unturned in plotting evil.
- b) “They accomplish a diligent search” (literally understood, “they complete a well-planned search”) adds the idea of persistence, demonstrating sin pursued with intelligence and energy.

- c) The repetition ("search... search") expresses intensity: they analyze how to do wrong with the same zeal that the righteous apply to understanding truth.
 - d) What men search to do in wickedness, God will expose in righteousness. As my mother would say, "God keeps the books."
2. Their corruption – "Both the inward *thought* of every one of them, and the heart, is deep."
- a) "The inward *thought*" – literally, the inside; the hidden design
 - b) "And the heart" – here, speaking of the plan formed in the heart; the secret purpose.
 - c) "Deep" (רָמָה) here doesn't speak of wisdom but of dark cunning, a mind layered in deceit.

III. THE POWER OF THE RIGHTEOUS JUDGE – VS. 7-10

After all their scheming and secrecy, verse 6 ends with the wicked congratulating themselves on the depth of their plans – "the inward *thought* of every one of *them*, and the heart, *is* deep." Verse 7, however opens with a dramatic change where the wicked meet the swift counsel of God.

A. His arrow strikes suddenly (vs. 7)

1. The contrast introduced – "But God..."

This is the turning point of the psalm. The wicked have plotted against the child of God (in this case, David) and they have spoken in hatred and evil about him and toward him, but now God speaks and does so through His action.

2. The action described – “shall shoot at them with an arrow...”

The same word for “shoot” used of the wicked in verse 4 is now used to describe God’s response. Their many arrows of deceit are met by one perfect arrow of judgment from the Lord.

3. The timing declared – “suddenly shall they be wounded.”

The adverb “suddenly” (מִיָּדָא) shows that the response of God is swift and complete. “The justice of God may seem delayed; but it is never denied.”

Habakkuk 2:3

³ For the vision *is* yet for an appointed time, but at the end it shall speak, and not lie: though it tarry, wait for it; because it will surely come, it will not tarry.

B. His justice turns the tables (vs. 8)

1. The reversal – “So they shall make their own tongue to fall upon themselves...”

Their tongues were their weapons in verse 3; now those same tongues become their downfall.

Psalms 7:15-16

¹⁵ He made a pit, and digged it, and is fallen into the ditch *which* he made.

¹⁶ His mischief shall return upon his own head, and his violent dealing shall come down upon his own pate.

2. The result – “all that see them shall flee away.”

“They shall see that God is just, and that He will punish the wicked; and they will desire to escape from a ruin so dreadful as that which comes upon the ungodly. The idea is, that when God punishes sinners, the effect on others is, and should be, to lead them to wish not to be associated with such people, but to escape from a doom so fearful” (Barnes).

C. His judgment reveals His sovereignty (vs. 9)

1. Universal recognition – “And all men shall fear”

The “fear” that was felt by David in verse 1 now falls on the wicked, and the scope widens from David’s enemies to “all men.”

2. Universal declaration – “And [all men] shall declare the work of God.”

- a) The verb in verse 5 that is translated “commune” (סִפֵּר) was a word that meant to talk or plan and was used to show the secret plots that David’s enemies were devising.

- b) The verb here (נִגַּף) is similar in meaning but is one that means to publicly herald.

- c) What was whispered in darkness is now proclaimed in the daylight.

3. Universal discernment – “for they shall wisely consider of His doing.”

- a) Literally understood as, “*They shall understand it insightfully.*”

- b) Every act of divine judgment carries a message

that God uses judgment to display His sovereign control over all mankind, both what they say and do.

D. His people rejoice in His defense (vs. 10)

1. Their gladness – “The righteous shall be glad in the LORD...”

The righteous rejoice because the judgment and justice of the Lord proves that their trust is not in vain in Him (Ps. 58:10-11).

2. Their confidence – “and shall trust in Him...”

God’s deliverance strengthens faith; His justice secures confidence.

3. Their glory – “and all the upright in heart shall glory.”

The psalm ends as it began: with the voice of the righteous. It began in fear and ends with the voice of victory.

Conclusion:

In the end, this psalm teaches that the safest place for the believer is not in hiding from men, but in being hidden in God.