

## STUDIES IN PSALMS

### PSALM 64

#### DESCRIPTIVE TITLE

A Prayer against the Evil Tongues of Conspirators,  
who are Destroyed by Their Own Weapon.

#### ANALYSIS

Stanza I., vers. 1-4a, Prayer for Deliverance from Enemies, whose Chief Weapon is described. Stanza II., vers. 4b-6a, Plotting to Employ the Weapon with Crushing Effect. Stanza III., vers. 6b-9, Sudden Overthrow of the Enemies by their Own Instrument to the Astonishment of Onlookers and the Glory of God. *Refrain*, calling for Joy and Praise.

(Lm.) A Psalm—By David.

- 1 Hear O God my voice in my complaining,<sup>1</sup>  
from dread peril by the foe shalt thou guard my life:
- 2 Thou shalt hide me from the council of evil-doers,  
from the conspiracy<sup>2</sup> of the workers of iniquity:<sup>3</sup>
- 3 Who have sharpened like a sword their tongue,  
have made ready their arrow—a bitter word:
- 4 to shoot in secret places at the blameless.  
Suddenly they shoot at him without fear:
- 5 They strengthen for themselves a wicked thing,  
they recount the hiding of snares:<sup>4</sup>  
they say—"Who will look at them?"<sup>5</sup>
- 6 They devise acts of injustice—have hidden<sup>6</sup> a plot.  
It is plotted—each one draweth near with deep mind;
- 7 And God shooteth at them—suddenly have appeared their  
wounds,
- 8 yea he maketh stumble each one—against themselves is their  
tongue!

1. Or: "soliloquy."

2. Cp.=Br. on 2:1.

3. Or: "mischief" ("naughtiness"—Dr.).

4. Or: "lures."

5. That is: the snares, well-concealed as they are. Some transpose the Heb. words, and render: "They say to themselves—Who will see?"

6. So some cod. Others: "completed"—Gn.

## PSALM SIXTY-FOUR

- 9 All looking on them wag the head<sup>1</sup> and all men fear,  
and declare the doing of God his work<sup>2</sup> they ponder.
- 10 Glad be the righteous man in Jehovah when he hath taken  
refuge in him,  
Now may glory all the upright in heart.
- (Lm.) To the Chief Musician.

### PARAPHRASE

#### PSALM 64

Lord, listen to my complaint: Oh, preserve my life from the conspiracy of these wicked men, these gangs of criminals.

3 They cut me down with sharpened tongues; they aim their bitter words like arrows straight at my heart.

4 They shoot from ambush at the innocent. They meet in secret to set their traps. "He will never notice them here," they say.

6 They keep a sharp lookout for opportunities of crime. They spend long hours with all their endless evil thoughts and plans.<sup>3</sup>

7 But God Himself will shoot them down. Suddenly His arrow will pierce them.

8 They will stagger backward, destroyed by those they spoke against. All who see it happen will scoff at them.

9 Then everyone shall stand in awe and confess the greatness of the miracles of God; at last they will realize what amazing things He does!

10 And the godly shall rejoice in the Lord, and trust and praise Him.

### EXPOSITION

It is easy to see that at times David suffered severely from false and venomous tongues. This method of assailing him was naturally most employed before the power of suppression came into his hands; also when for the time he had lost it, or it was already slipping from him. Doeg (52) represents the former period of exposure to this weapon, and Ahithophel (55, 62) the latter. Probably the former period was the more extended,

1. Or: "take flight"—O.G.

2. Some cod. (w. Sep., Vul.): "works." (pl.)—Gn.

3. Literally, "And the inward thought and the heart of everyone is deep."

## STUDIES IN PSALMS

and offered the more numerous occasions of defamation to David's detractors. It is possible to say how soon the earlier crusade of the tongue against David began: probably as soon as Saul showed himself ready to listen to evil reports concerning him, and therefore while yet Jonathan stood between his father and the young Bethlehemite; and therefore Jonathan may naturally have been an unknown and unsuspected instrument Divinely made ready for putting evil tongues to shame. We cannot, of course, dogmatise, where we are without detailed information; but it is, to say the least, quite conceivable, that when the detractors had succeeded in gaining Saul's ear, and had been pouring into it carefully and maliciously concocted stories to David's hurt, the appearance of his son on the scene, with newer and more authentic information, might have served to blow to the winds the cobwebs of venomous slander, and for the time being at least bring down on the slanderers' heads the wrath of the monarch thus baulked of his prey. Some such climax as this seems to be required to give a realistic verisimilitude to this remarkable psalm. One can almost see the conspirators *drawing near* to Saul with *plots hidden* in their *inscrutable minds*, suddenly dismayed as by an *arrow from God*, by the unexpected appearance and report of a man whom with all their cunning, they had left out of their account. Their surprise and confusion would naturally *turn their tongues against themselves*, and complete the failure of their *deep-laid plots*. Coming to the young harpist's knowledge, what more natural than that he should embalm the memory of these early God-given triumphs in song! The difficulty perhaps is, to people those early days with the needful factors of such experiences. And yet, human nature must then have been very different from what it is now, if there were not several Doegs among Saul's retainers; and if, under every appearance to the contrary, David had not several rivals at heart. There were probably several aspirants for Merab's hand and for Michal's; and, young as he was, the son of Jesse was probably well advised by his native good sense and caution when he suspected foul play, as he appears to have done, in being incited to aspire to wed one of the king's daughters (1 Sam. 18:23).

From some such point of view as that suggested by these reminiscences, we can reperuse this psalm with added interest. Unused to the wicked ways of the world, the youthful courtier may well have felt keenly those early slanders as so many

## PSALM SIXTY-FOUR AND SIXTY-FIVE

*sharpened swords*—as envenomed *arrows*. But even slanders must be made colourable; and so, to give effect to the *bitter word*, there must be invented a *wicked thing*. A plausible story must be worked out of incidents false and true: the unsuspecting object of envy must be entrapped unawares into sayings and doings which can easily be made to appear suspicious; and so the *bitter word* is let fly as part of a *plot*. Sayings and doings are interwoven with sufficient cunning to fit the story to do fatal damage; until, by God, they are suddenly exploded, and the slanderers are held up to infamy. Such decisive victories of truth have many a time—in David's history, in Israel's history, and in our own—made *righteous men glad in Jehovah*, and sustained in just *glorying the upright in heart*.

### QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. Rotherham offers a reasonable supposition for the time and place of the writing of this psalm. Discuss his position.
2. This is a psalm about the power of the tongue. Please notice the graphic descriptions of David's evil speaking enemies. Do we have such today?
3. What is the difference between slander and gossip? Discuss.
4. What specific requests to God does David make concerning these evil talkers? Are we justified in asking the same for those who speak against us?
5. David has not only a complaint but a confidence. Can we always be confident that the innocent or the righteous will not be slain with the tongue of the wicked? Discuss.

## PSALM 65

### DESCRIPTIVE TITLE

Israel's Temple-Song of Praise, on behalf of Herself and all Nations, chiefly in Grateful Acknowledgment of Seedtime and Harvest.

### ANALYSIS

Stanza I., vers. 1-4, Preparations for Worship. Stanza II., vers. 5-8, The God of Israel is the God of All the Earth. Stanza III., vers. 9, 10, Praise for Seedtime. Stanza IV., vers 11-13, Praise for Harvest.