

The Gospel According to the Psalms

Psalm 64 – The Arrows of the Wicked and the Arrow of God

Faith Church of Linden

By Daniel Patz on August 23, 2026

Introduction

Do you feel the sharp arrows of people's words? They might be complaints that go on and on — not even about you — but they wear you out. They might be the whisperings of others about you, without cause. Maybe it's the lies swirling around, ready to drive you mad — either lies about you, or just lies that fly in the face of truth and make you sick. Maybe it's slander, exaggeration, or gossip that has really strangled you. Maybe it's words spoken by someone who means a great deal to you — your spouse, your kids, your parents, or a friend — words so cruel and unfair that they still sting. Maybe the words for bullying from so called “friends.”

Psalm 52 speaks of a tongue sharp as a razor, and we've felt that. Sticks and stones break bones, but so do words — the bones of our hearts, our courage, our spirit.

We come now to Psalm 64, a psalm that isn't naturally as warm and encouraging as some of the others we've walked through — and yet its truth is essential to our lives — its message driven down to our hearts brings joy.

The old war against God's people rages on through the Wicked's tongue, but the war was already won at the cross — so we hide in Christ and wait to rejoice in his victory.

Let's walk through this song in **four movements**: the cry, the arrows of the wicked, the arrow of God, and the response of the righteous.

1. The Cry (vv. 1–2)

- 1 *Hear my voice, O God, in my complaint;
preserve my life from dread of the enemy.*
- 2 *Hide me from the secret plots of the wicked,
from the throng of evildoers,*

This is a lament from David. He cries out for God to hear his voice — and Psalm 65:2 tells us this is who God is: “O you who hear prayer, to you shall all flesh come.”

He offers up his complaint to God — the stirrings of his heart. This is not a negative word, not the same thing as our complaining about a boss, or even complaining about God. He is complaining to God, bringing his troubles to Him. This is what we must do. *Lament – the believer’s cry of dependence in pain and a pathway to hope-filled joy.*

He asks God to preserve him. This is a protection song. The dread of the enemy is truly upon him. If there is such a thing as a good fear — one that makes us careful and watchful — dread, in this context, is the kind of fear that paralyzes. And so he asks God to preserve him.

Then he says, “Hide me” (v. 2) — from the secret plots of the wicked, from the throng of evildoers. Hide me, O my Savior God, hide me.

The Lord God is the hiding place of His people. We will see this theme throughout the psalms. None of us is strong enough on our own; we must find our refuge in God. Psalms 61-63 has sung this theme.

The voices of our conscience, of Satan, and of evil men give us great cause to wake up and realize that, left to ourselves, we are in trouble. We need a God who preserves and hides us in Himself. We need a God who hears us. Let's look more closely now at the threat.

2. The Arrows of the Wicked (vv. 3–6)

- 3 *who whet their tongues like swords,
who aim bitter words like arrows,*
- 4 *shooting from ambush at the blameless,
shooting at him suddenly and without fear.*
- 5 *They hold fast to their evil purpose;
they talk of laying snares secretly,
thinking, “Who can see them?”*
- 6 *They search out injustice,
saying, “We have accomplished a diligent search.”
For the inward mind and heart of a man are deep.*

In these verses the arrows are aimed at the blameless. And what are these arrows but words? The tongues of the wicked are bitter words, sharp like swords. These arrows and swords shoot from ambush — suddenly, fearlessly, and with evil intent. (Satan’s Devices are great).

Poetically, this passage describes the scheming and evil ways of the wicked, whether Satan himself or Satan's minions — which includes all who have not been captured by Christ. David experienced this often. From Doeg, Saul and Absalom – 2 Sam. 15:4 – “O that I were the judge in the land”...he stole the hearts of the men of Israel. And so did our Lord Jesus Christ. Jesus faced the onslaught of scheming men who wanted to put Him to death. He heard flatterers who only wanted to trap Him. He had people come and whisper doubts against Him. False accusations came at His trial, and mockery followed continually. This perfect man, who never uttered a word of sin, was assaulted fiercely by the words of wicked men.

3. The Arrow of God (vv. 7–9)

- 7 *But God shoots his arrow at them;
they are wounded suddenly.*
- 8 *They are brought to ruin, with their own tongue turned against them;*

all who see them will wag their heads.

*9 Then all mankind fears;
they tell what God has brought about
and ponder what he has done.*

What a contrast — what a reversal of fortunes. The blameless were under the assault of the arrows of the wicked, and now, in verse 7, we read: “**But God.**” But God is an important hinge in our lives. Joseph to his brothers – “it was not you who sent me, BUT GOD” (Gen 45). Psalm 73:26 – “my flesh and my heart may fail, BUT GOD is the strength of my heart...” Ephesians 2:4 – dead in trespasses – BUT GOD, being rich in mercy, because of the great love...

But God shoots His arrow at them. All their arrows were aimed at the blameless — and God has an arrow too. He destroys, and He disables.

It says here that it is sudden. Someday God will bring perfect justice. We see this in Psalm 58 as well: the evil person schemes evil and deals out violence on the earth, seeking to destroy the righteous — but God will bring vengeance. “The righteous will rejoice when he sees the vengeance; he will bathe his feet in the blood of the wicked. Mankind will say, ‘Surely there is a reward for the righteous; surely there is a God who judges on earth’” (Psalm 58:10–11).

This passage tells us that God's justice will be public, and mankind will take notice. And this justice — because that is what this passage shows us — will be so fitting, and in some ways so ironic.

4. The Response (v. 10)

*10 Let the righteous one rejoice in the LORD and take refuge in him!
Let all the upright in heart exult!*

The righteous one rejoices, and takes notice. In verse 10, “the righteous one” is a singular figure — the king. He rejoices in the LORD, just as we saw at the end of Psalm 63: the king shall rejoice in God. And just as all who swear by God shall exult there, so here the righteous one rejoices, and all who take refuge in him. We take refuge in a God who shoots His arrow in His timing, and who destroys the enemies of those He loves.

Exulting is what we do.

To exalt is to lift something up — to lift up praise and honor. To exult is to rejoice over, or because of, something. I exalt my wife for her beauty, her virtue, her giftedness — I declare her praises to others. I exult in her as well, in that I rejoice in and delight in her and those virtues. The upright praise and exalt the Lord, and they exult in their hearts for His salvation — for He brings victory to His people.

Part Two — How We Live It: 3 Truths for a War Already Won

The old war against God's people rages on through the Wicked's tongue, but the war was already won at the cross — so we hide in Christ and wait to rejoice in his victory.

Let us apply this song with these truths ringing in our hearts.

1. The Old War Continues — and It's Already Won

This is an old war. It has raged since the garden and the fall, and it continues today. But it was won in Jesus Christ. Colossians 2:15 says He disarmed the rulers and authorities and put them to open shame, triumphing over them on the cross.

1 John 3:8 – The reason the Son of man appeared was to destroy the works of the devil.

Revelation 12:9–11 — the dragon, "that ancient serpent, who is called the devil and Satan," thrown down, and the saints "have conquered him by the blood of the Lamb."

He also wins this victory in our lives — and we will see it come true with great wisdom and timing, just as we see in the victories of the Old Testament, where the outcome was won, but in such a way that God got the glory, and His wisdom — even His irony — was on display. Think of Daniel in the lion's den. Think of Mordecai and the gallows built for him. Think of Joseph's brothers, who meant their evil for harm, but God meant it for good (Genesis 50:20). Think of Pharaoh's army, drowned in the very sea they meant to trap Israel against. Think of Goliath, killed with his own sword. Think of Ahithophel, whose counsel turned to his own ruin and death (2 Samuel 17).

2. The Arrows of the Tongue Are Dangerous

James speaks of the tongue as "a world of unrighteousness" (James 3:6), and history has shown this to be true in the great warfare of this world. This psalm, along with many others — including Psalm 52 — brings out this great source of evil, this weapon. The tongue is a gift, meant for worship, and yet it is used by evil men to hurt and destroy, including the righteous.

The enemy used the tongue in the garden — deception, flattery, blasphemy. David was struck by the tongues of Doeg, Absalom, Saul, and many others who sought to destroy him with lies, slander, boasting, and manipulation. Satan lies to us, and he accuses us with his words.

This should remind us that we, too, as sinners, are susceptible to letting our words become a source of evil. We must look in the mirror and ask where we stand with our own words. Am I one who shoots those arrows at others? Oh Lord, help me!

3. The Believer Hides and Rejoices in Christ

The David of this psalm points us to the greater David — Jesus — who is our King and our victory. His arrow overpowers all the arrows of the wicked. David hides himself in God through petition and lament, asking Him to protect and preserve; so we, too, take refuge in the Lord Jesus Christ, and hide ourselves in Him (Colossians 3:3).

Colossians 3:1-4 ESV If then you have been raised with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. (2) Set your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on earth. (3) For you have died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. (4) When Christ who is your life appears, then you also will appear with him in glory.

Because of this, we rejoice — for the victory of our King is the victory of His people. All the earth will tremble and see the King and His glory.

Conclusion

Let us take heart that we are not the first, and we are not the last, engaged in a great war that has already been won by our mighty warrior and King, Jesus Christ. He has given us the honor to contend in this battle, and we do so not with our own weapons or wit, but with God's help and strength. He is our hiding place, our strong tower.

Let us take courage when words like arrows come piercing our armorless spirits, and look to our Lord Jesus Christ, who won the victory for us and showed us the way. We will see more of this in the Sermon on the Mount — how important it is to respond to wickedness, including words, as we follow the Lord Jesus Christ, who has given us a righteousness and works that righteousness out in us.

If you are here today and you are part of that problem — your words express the evil of the wicked, and your conscience tells you that you are

guilty and in need of cleansing — hide in Christ. Come to Him, sinner, and plead with Him to hear your cry, and He will. He never turns away a sinner who comes repentant, seeking to hide his sin. We don't hide from our sin; we hide in Christ, who takes away our sin. What He did on the cross declares that our sin was worse than we ever thought, and that His mercy is better than we could imagine. He is rescuing those who once shot arrows at the righteous — He laid down His life for so many of them, and they surrender and become those who will rejoice with the King, as we see in this passage.

Someday there will be rejoicing at the vengeance God will pour out, striking down the wicked.

"God considers it just to repay with affliction those who afflict you, and to grant relief to you who are afflicted... when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven with his mighty angels in flaming fire, inflicting vengeance on those who do not know God and on those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus. They will suffer the punishment of eternal destruction, away from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of his might, when he comes to be glorified in his saints, and to be marveled at among all who have believed." (2 Thess. 1:5-10)

Let us be assured of that now. Let us live in that reality, knowing that people need to be warned, and that we can hope in God when everything seems to be falling apart. It isn't falling apart — God is doing a great work — but in our lives, sometimes it will feel that way, and appear as though the wicked has won.

Let all the upright in heart — who hold on to Christ and find Him as their refuge — may they exult.