

Psalm 140 • Deliver me from violent men

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Psalm chapter 140. As I said, it is a psalm of David. It is a prayer that David lifts up for God's deliverance, for his protection from those who are and do evil.

It begins with a very simple prayer. He says in verse 1:

*“Deliver me, O LORD, from evil men;
preserve me from violent men,
2 who plan evil things in their heart
and stir up wars continually.” (ESV)*

So, he's talking about people who have no peace in their hearts, no desire to live in peace. They are constantly stirring up conflict. I don't know if you've ever worked with that kind of a person before, maybe to some small degree, but you know it's difficult. Some people are just like that. They're just— it's like a magnet; they're drawn to drama. Have you ever noticed? Some of us just want to get through life with the minimum amount of drama possible; and then there are others that just seem to kind of gravitate to it. If they don't find it, they'll make it. Need a little drama? Yeah, we'll stir some up; not a problem.

I mean, obviously it's turned up here for David. He's asking God to preserve him, to save him, to protect him. He says in verse 3:

*“They make their tongue sharp as a serpent's,
and under their lips is the venom of asps.”*

Asp is a particularly poisonous snake, but he's now talking about the words that they speak, and especially the harmful and damaging things that people can say.

He says in verse 4 – and this is his prayer:

“Guard me, O LORD, from the hands of the wicked; (and this is where David prays for his protection; he says:)

*preserve me from violent men,
who have planned to trip up my feet.
5 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.”*

You can see that David is feeling vulnerable here. He's feeling uneasy, wondering if there's a stumbling in his future because he knows that these individuals are laying out for him an opportunity to stumble. So, he cries to the Lord for protection. He says:

*“6 I say to the Lord, You are my God;
give ear to the voice of my pleas for mercy, O Lord!
7 O Lord, my Lord, the strength of my salvation,
you have covered my head in the day of battle.”*

As we see and have seen many times throughout the Psalms, this kind of a statement is very common to David's prayers. He usually ends them with a statement of confidence in God. He tells us here that he calls the Lord the strength of his salvation, or if you will, deliverance.

Remember, the word salvation in the Book of Psalms doesn't usually apply to eternal salvation. It, the word, salvation, means deliverance. And so, David is praying for more of a temporary deliverance, and he's saying, You are the Lord of my deliverance.

And you'll notice that he also says, *“you have covered my head in the day of battle.”* In other words, he's saying, You've given me a helmet to protect me in the day of battle.

So, he says in verse 8:

*“Grant not, O Lord, the desires of the wicked;
do not further their evil plot, or they will be exalted!”*

This is where David calls upon the Lord to intervene and to thwart the plans of the wicked, to bring them to nothing.

He says in verse 9:

*“As for the head of those who surround me,
let the mischief of their lips overwhelm them!”*

In other words, their hurtful, damaging words – may they come back upon them. He prays for those things to be turned upon his enemies.

Verse 10, he says:

*“Let burning coals fall upon them!
Let them be cast into fire,
into miry pits, no more to rise!
¹¹ Let not the slanderer be established in the land;”*

Now he's praying for the influence that these evil men would otherwise have in the whole land of Israel. And he's saying, let their slander not be established. In other words, may their influence not take hold in the land. He says:

“let evil hunt down the violent man speedily!”

And then David ends again with a word of confidence and faith in God. He says in the final two verses:

*“¹² I know that the Lord will maintain the cause of the afflicted,
and will execute justice for the needy.
¹³ Surely the righteous shall give thanks to your name;
the upright shall dwell in your presence.”*

Again, this is a common way for David to end his prayers. I've encouraged you many times in our study of the Psalms to consider ending your prayers the same way with an upbeat statement of confidence in God. End your prayer that way. So many times, we come to God, and we cry out just like, oh God, this is what's going on in my life, and it's terrible. We're just howling but we never get around to expressing any level of faith in Him.

I've always loved how David gives himself a little bit of a faith shot in the arm at the end of his prayer. He says, I know. Maybe start doing that at the end of your prayer. Start with those two words, I know, and then just say something that you know to be true about God.

Here, David says, *“I know the Lord is going to maintain the cause of the afflicted.”* I know that. I know that about the Lord. I know that about His character. I know His character is such that He will take care of those who are afflicted. I know that.

And so, he ends then, *“Surely the righteous shall give thanks to your name.”* Again, this is a word of confidence. I know that the righteous are going to end up at the very end. We're going to praise the Lord. We're going to be praising the Lord. We're going to say, thank You, Lord, for taking care of us. Thank you, Lord, for seeing us through this time.

And I have to believe that these statements that David makes at the end of his prayers are pleasing to the Lord. Pleasing to the Lord. Lord, I know that You're faithful.

Think about doing that, maybe in your prayers, just as bookends. Before you request anything, start off your prayer by saying something about your confidence about God – even if it's like, Lord, I know that when I pray, I know that You hear me. And Lord, I know that You have invited Your children to come into the place of prayer and to just pour out their hearts. I know that.

Then lay out your petition, and then end with a statement of confidence again. Lord, I know that You care. I know that You will help the needy, and I come to You today in need. I confess my need of You, and I know that You are the Lord who helps the downtrodden, and You're very near the humble, and I know, and I know.

Those are great statements of confidence. Figure out what you know, figure out what you do know about the Lord and include it in your prayer time. It's a great way to pray.