

DELIVER ME FROM EVIL PLOTS

Psalm 140: 1-13 --- Pastor Richard P. Carlson

Psalm 140 is the cry of a hunted soul. The faithful man or woman of God who is true to God's Word and God's will, will always be hunted and it will always be open season on him or her. We as believers who become the hunted and the victims of evil plans and plots that come against us, realize these plots and plans aren't usually from the world, but amazingly, they can come from other professing believers. The apostle Paul spoke in Philippians 1: 17 about some of his Christian brothers who proclaimed Christ, it sounds like they were even fellow-pastors. Paul said they proclaimed Christ out of envy and rivalry, not sincerely, but thinking to afflict Paul in a greater way while he was in prison. Isn't it hard to conceive of God's people having evil plots against each other? But in this psalm of David, in this cry of this hunted man, who were the people after him, wanting to kill him?

First there was King Saul, the man who once prophesied as the Spirit of God fell on him—I Samuel 10: 7-13. Then there was David's own son, again, a fellow Jew as Saul was, a man who believed in God—David's own precious son Absalom. Both King Saul and King Absalom, who stole the throne temporarily from his father—both these men hunted David down to kill him like hunters after a bull elk. David was often in the cross-hairs of King Saul and then of his own son, Absalom. In the New Testament, John the beloved disciple speaks of a man in his own church, apparently, a man with much spiritual clout in the church, Diotrephes, who talked wicked nonsense against John and refused to accept God's authority in him—III John 9-11. For different reasons, the Word of God makes it clear in the life of Moses, in the life of Samuel, in the life of David, in the life of Jeremiah, and in the lives of Peter, Paul, Timothy, and John, and many others, there are people who profess to know and love the Lord who scheme and plan and plot harm against us—and often it causes church splits. What's the reason?

It's usually envy and jealousy and rivalry. People are willing to take up an offense against God's servants. They scheme, design and desire to remove a servant from their calling from God. Today, we are studying the life of David. For ten years, King Saul, the man whom David loved and played music for on his harp, when King Saul was depressed and oppressed by the devil, this fellow Jew, a believer in the Lord, King Saul was out to kill David. Why? It was envy and jealousy and rivalry. We read in I Samuel 18: 7, after Israel won her battles, the women sang and danced after their victories over the Philistines. King Saul heard the songs these women were singing—"Saul has struck down and killed his thousands, and David his ten thousands." It is a fact! Servants of the Lord often find other servants of the Lord and choose to become their greatest critics, out to hurt or destroy them.

Colonel George Washington Goethals, the man responsible for the completion of the Panama Canal, had big problems with the climate and the geography. But his biggest challenge was the growing criticism back home from those who once spoke highly of him, but now predicted he'd never finish the project. Finally, a colleague asked Goethals, "Aren't you going to answer your critics?" "In time," answered the Colonel. "When?" his partner asked. "When the canal is finished." We must not become sidetracked by fighting our critics. I know this and I want you all to know it well. We must be focused on fighting the good fight of faith no matter how ruthless the plans or how deceitful the plots that come against us.

Sometimes the issues that divide believers are different ideas on how money should be used in the kingdom of God. A rich man of God once came to minister and asked him, "Why am I always so miserable?" The man of God said, "Come with me to the window of my office and look out and tell me what you see." The rich man looked out and said, "I see the park with children playing and families are picnicking." Then the man of God said, "Come over here and look in this mirror and tell me what you see." The rich man said, "All I see is myself now!" The man of God said, "Both the window and the mirror are made of the same thing, glass, but as soon as you add a little silver to the glass, all you can see is yourself. That's why you are so miserable and alone with all your treasures." Beloved, that's why churches sometimes have members plotting against each other during building programs. They quit seeing people as people for whom Christ died. All some can see is themselves and their silver and gold and money invested. Soon, in building programs, building chairmen, pastors and other church leaders join David's rank of being the hunted—with cross-hairs now on them, as people wish to do them harm.

In church battles, and during church splits, and many times, just during normal life in the church, many a pastor acquires a bumper bulls-eye target on himself as people plot and plan to ruin him, to end or to cut short his ministry. It was 1987, when Ray Donovan, the former Secretary of Labor under President Ronald Reagan, was accused of felony wrongdoing in a construction case in the state of New York. It was a totally false fraudulent charge. He was promptly acquitted by the court of all charges. After he walked out of court, he very famously asked some news reporters, "What office do I go to next, to get back my reputation?" David is acknowledging here in Psalm 140 that there is no office he could go to, to get back his reputation. Where can we go but to the Lord? Only God could answer his prayers and silence the evil slander spoken against him. Only God can fulfill our need when we join David crying out as "a hunted soul." In Psalm 140, David teaches us to honestly confess our circumstances before God and to come and plead to the Lord regarding our needs. God is the only One who can answer us.

In Psalm 140, David's cry of the hunted, gives us his cry for deliverance from God, describing the tongues of his evil plotters, the hands of his evil plotters, the desires of his evil plotters, the future of his evil plotters, and the victory over his evil plotters. Let's examine these five honest prayers, praying down victory over the plans and plots of whose out to hurt us, out to remove us, and out to destroy us. What are these five honest prayers for those plotting against us?

PRESERVE ME FROM THE TONGUES OF EVIL PLOTTERS. (I.) Notice Psalm 140: 1-3. "Deliver me, O LORD, from evil men; preserve me from violent men, who plan evil things in their heart and stir up wars continually. They make their tongue sharp as a serpent's, and under their lips is the venom of asps. Selah." The Hebrew word for deliver is **chalats**. It means to strip or pull off—so a man is ready for action—such as running or fighting. It's a prayer for God to strip from us the effects of the tongues of evil plotters. This person bent on harming David was almost doubtless King Saul. Charles Spurgeon said, "There is no doubt that this psalm expresses the feelings of David on his first learning that Saul had set out to pursue and kill him." I agree. The Hebrew word for preserve is **natsar**. Natsar means to guard and protect us from hidden things. What people say behind our backs we have no power to protect ourselves from. But God can natsar us, guard and protect us and strip us free of the shackles of people's lies about us.

David calls Saul and his soldiers who were out hunting for him, evil and violent men. The picture is of people without a conscience who does evil and violence without feeling remorse. David says they plan evil in their hearts and stir up wars continually. John Calvin says this word **guwr**—translated "stir up" is a word means to gather means "to stir up general enmity by false information which acts as a trumpet sounding to battle." Evil plotters learn to gather dirt on us as we serve the Lord. Like a hunter tracking blood, these evil plotters seek any trace of information on us they can use to bring us down. They gather it all up and call for war. The evil things they plot in their hearts, v. 2 show up on their tongues, v. 3 and they sharpen their tongues as a serpent's fangs and under their lips is the venom, the poison of asps or serpents. What a picture! A serpent flicks out its tongue before he strikes and inflicts his wound. See him coiled up. His head is erect, and his piercing eye is wildly and fiercely fixed on its prey. The tongue rapidly appears and disappears as if it is sharpening its tongue for the contest. This is the truth of what happens to us as the devil plots our demise. He is licking his chops and he has deceived people into a lying, slandering contest to destroy us as God's servants. Slander and malice are twins. Evil, malicious plots and plans will rarely sell themselves without slanderous lies. A man of God is misrepresented as a bad man. The bag of poison unleashed by the tongue is bent on bringing instant

death to the reputation of a man or woman of God. God, preserve us. David was hunted as a rebel and Jesus was crucified as a blasphemer. Selah! Secondly,

GUARD ME FROM THE HANDS OF EVIL PLOTTERS. (II.) Notice Psalm 140: 4-5. “Guard me, O LORD, from the hands of the wicked; preserve me from violent men, who have planned to trip up my feet. 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. Selah.” Do you get this picture of ambush? Their evil plans—v. 2 now go from words and ideas to action. The plan is to throw David down, or me or you as we go about our normal business in life—to defeat us so that they can destroy us. The plan is to endeavor to prevent us from accomplishing our call and God’s purpose. Notice this picture. They used cords, strings, twine, and lay down a net to catch us as a bird catcher catches a bird. The snare is set to spring upon us unawares. The evil plotters have spread their net and snare by the wayside, along the road where they know we walk, where they are sure their snare will suddenly spring on us. All this work with their hands is as a trapper setting traps to catch a fox or coyote or wolf. It is a proud arrogant plot of proud enemies of ours—notice -v. 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—to trip up my feet. Selah.

See the smiles as these evil plotters go after us as God’s servants, as a hunter might try to snare a white wolf. See the hunters laughing. They take a sharp knife and put animals blood on it, let it freeze, dip the knife in blood again, over and over until the exceedingly sharp knife blade is rounded with blood. Then they bury the knife blade, in the snow with water that freezes it standing up. Then they use the cry of a dying rabbit or an injured deer to call in the wolf. When the wolf arrives, they watch with eager joy as the wolf licks the blood until the blade is exposed and the licking starts the wolf’s tongue to bleed until soon the wolf is dead. Be sure, as we read in Psalm 139. God is watching and He sees the hands out to shed innocent blood. He sees the plots, plans and ingenious hands of those who plan wickedness. God doesn’t need hidden cameras taking pictures. He sees it all and it is forever captured by Him, the words and the hands that seek to destroy us. Selah! 3rdly,

COVER ME FROM THE DESIRES OF EVIL PLOTTERS. (III.) Notice Psalm 140: 6-8. “I say to the LORD, You are my God; give ear to the voice of my pleas for mercy, O LORD! my Lord, the strength of my salvation, You have covered my head in the day of battle. Grant not, O LORD, the desires of the wicked; do not further their-evil plot, or they will be exalted! Selah.” David is pouring out his heart. We can know there are hidden meetings and counsels held against us. David was not born yesterday. He knew he was hated, and that his enemy, King Saul and his soldiers, almost all hated him, and they wanted to see him go down—that is, all but the king’s son Jonathan loved David as his own soul.

God raised up a defense for David right under Saul's nose, as Jonathan sometimes prevented his father's plots from being completed. Notice the words, "You have covered my head in the day of battle." The Hebrew word for cover is **sawkak**. It means to entwine as a screen, to shield our head, and to defend us by covering us up. God can make seeing eyes blind. He can make us invisible to our enemies. How often God has covered my head in the day of battle.

This battle against David had become open war. Sometimes what goes on behind our backs is done in broad daylight. That's called open war. The enemy is always seeking to bring us into an ambush, to rush upon us suddenly when we are not armed, not on guard, and when we have no idea that danger is near. In all these perils from our crafty enemy lying in ambush, our only refuge is God. Not even our most faithful friends, our Jonathans can save us. Our only hope is in the Lord. This is when we pray—v. 6-8 saying, "You are my God, O Lord. Hear my cry for mercy. You are the strength of my salvation. You are my shield and You have covered my head in the day of battle." God puts His helmet of salvation on our heads. He protects us from deception and danger. With the helmet of salvation, we like David can pray that God will cause the counsel of Ahithophel to fail. Even the wisest counselors are no match for the defense of God for us. God knows how **not** to grant the desires of the wicked. I love this prayer in v. 8—Grant not, O Lord, the desires of the wicked; do not further their evil plot, or they will be exalted." Selah. Think about this honest prayer—don't let them puff up with pride thinking they have me dead to rights. Humble them, block their plots, grant them no success in ruining my life and my call to serve You, Lord. Fourthly,

KEEP ME FROM THE FUTURE OF EVIL PLOTTERS. (IV.) Notice Psalm 140: 9-11. "As for the head of those who surround me, let the mischief of their lips overwhelm them! Let burning coals fall upon them! Let them be cast into fire, into miry pits, no more to rise! Let not the slanderer be established in the land; let evil hunt down the violent man speedily!" All-of-a-sudden, David, in this cry of the hunted, this man who twice refused to kill King Saul, because he was the Lord's anointed, this man began to pray about what sin does to sinners. David got it. He knew that our enemies think they are hurting us, while they are really, hurting themselves. The trouble they plan for us, as evil Haman planned in a 75-foot high gallows to hang Mordecai, all that hard carpentry work was soon used to have him and his many sons flying high above the city for all to see, hanging on the gallows they made for their enemy. It is the inexorable law of the harvest Paul speaks about in Galatians 6:7. "Whatever one sows, that he also must reap." Or as Jesus said, in Matthew 7: 2, "For with the judgment you pronounce, you will be judged. This evil plotter, King Saul and his army of soldiers dropped burning coals on David's head, but God was soon to return this on Saul and his army up on Mt. Gilboa. The destructive fires they lit with their tongues would soon be burning them. The pits

and snares they set for David, they were going to fall in themselves. They hunted David like a partridge in the wilderness. Soon they would be the hunted. As God said it well in Numbers 32: 23, “Be sure your sin will find you out.” The mischief Saul and his men planned for David was soon to be their demise. The tail-bearer, the gossip, and the slanderer will not be established in the land. The planned evil plots of our enemies will speedily hunt them down. There will be no escape. So I cry out, “Lord, keep us all from the future of evil plotters. Don’t let our plans against one of Your anointed servants come to pass. Rebuke us, discipline us, and may we repent in time before our evil plots fall back upon us.” Fifthly, and lastly,

MAINTAIN ME FROM THE AFFLICTION OF EVIL PLOTTERS. (V.)

Notice Psalm 140: 12-13. “I know that the LORD will maintain the cause of the afflicted, and will execute justice for the needy, Surely the righteous shall give thanks to Your name; the upright shall dwell in Your presence.” David may easily be criticized for his bold cry in v. 9-11. But remember, “honest prayer is far better than dishonest piety.” David’s prayer reached heaven. God maintained him and his cause. God defeated all his enemies. David never raised a hand for ten years against the Lord’s anointed. Yet Saul ended up being forsaken by the Lord for Saul forsook the Lord. Saul went to seek counsel from the witch of Endor. Rather than face the enemy in battle, wounded Saul fell on his own sword to die. What he had tried to do to David, God brought down his sword on his own head, on Mt. Gilboa.

David mourned long for King Saul. Jonathan loved God so much, and loved David, but he was caught in the cross-fire of his father’s sin. God brought down King Saul, but Jonathan fell that day too. We will meet Jonathan in Glory. He was valiant in battle. In life and in death, Jonathan and his father were not divided. They died together. Jonathan’s loyal bow never turned back. He died trusting God. His dad, Saul, sought counsel from a witch. The last time David and Jonathan were together, Jonathan urged David to run for his life, because his father had disgraced him. They kissed each other and wept in one another’s embrace. Then Jonathan said to David, (I Samuel 20: 42) “Go in peace, because we have sworn both of us in the name of the Lord, saying, “The Lord shall be between me and you, and between my offspring and your offspring forever.” Beloved, never think that your evil plots will succeed against the Lord or His anointed. Never believe your schemes will not affect your precious children. Dads and Moms, our example and our heritage we pass on. Our children may denounce evil they see in us and turn away, but it will affect them. Sin in our lives breaks our children’s hearts, even as sin in our children’s lives will break our hearts as parents. We belong to each other. I say with David, “I know that the Lord will maintain the cause of the afflicted. He will execute justice for the needy. Surely the righteous will give thanks to the Name of the Lord. The upright will dwell in His presence forever. Amen.