

PSALMS 139 AND 140

- ording to some statistics—is this an attempt to escape God in the darkness? Discuss other forms of darkness. *Most of all*; discuss not only the futility of this effort but the needlessness of it.
7. What a tremendous thought! Not only did God create man, but He took a personal interest in creating each one. Discuss how very complete is the interest of our Creator in each one of us.
 8. What is involved in the expression the “underparts of the earth”?
 9. God has a plan and purpose for every life, is this taught in this psalm? Discuss.
 10. How do the first and second births relate?
 11. How is the word “precious” used in this psalm?
 12. How is the word “awake” here used?
 13. The multiplicity of the purposes of God is a strong argument for immortality. How so?
 14. Rotherham has an interesting thought about the writing of the fourth stanza. Discuss.
 15. Who was the “lawless one”? Why to be slain? Was this merciful?
 16. What protection did the psalmist seek against the lawless one?

PSALM 140

DESCRIPTIVE TITLE

Deliverance from Slandorous and Violent Enemies
Implored and Expected.




ANALYSIS

Stanza I., vers. 1-3, Rescue from Violent Slanderers Besought. Stanza II., vers. 4, 5, The Plottings of the Slanderers Indicated. Stanza III., vers. 6-8, Personal Relation to Jehovah and His Past Mercies Pleaded. Stanza IV., vers. 9-11, Prayer becomes Impassioned Imprecation. Stanza V., vers. 12, 13, Calm Assurance at length comes of Complete Vindication.

(Lm.) A Psalm—By David.

- 1 Rescue me Jehovah from evil men,
from the man of violent deeds wilt thou preserve me:

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- 2 Who have devised evil things in [their] heart,
every day they stir up wars:
- 3 They have sharpened their tongue like a serpent,
the venom of the viper¹ is under their lips. 
- 4 Keep me Jehovah from the hands of the lawless one,
from the man of violent deeds. wilt thou preserve me,—
who have devised to give a thrust unto my footsteps.
- 5 Proud men have hid a trap for me and nooses,
they have spread a net by the side of the track,—
lures have they set for me. 
- 6 I have said unto Jehovah—"My GOD art thou!
oh give ear, Jehovah to the voice of my supplications.
- 7 Jehovah Sovereign Lord my stronghold of salvation,
thou hast been a screen to my head in the day of arms.
- 8 Do not grant Jehovah the desires of the lawless one,
his device do not promote." 
- 9 If they who encompass me lift up their head⁸
let the mischief of their own lips cover them:
- 10 Let him rain upon them⁴ live coals,
into the fire let him cast them—
into the place of flowing waters that they rise not again.
- 11 The slanderer⁵ shall not be established in the land,
the man of violence let calamity hunt him in great haste.⁶
- 12 I know that Jehovah will execute the right of the humbled,
the vindication of the needy.
- 13 Surely righteous ones shall give thanks unto thy name,
upright ones shall dwell in thy presence.

(Nm.)

PARAPHRASE

PSALM 140

O Lord, deliver me from evil men. Preserve me from the violent,

2 Who plot and stir up trouble all day long.

3 Their words sting like poisonous snakes.

1. Or? "spider"—O.G. "The meaning of the Heb. word is uncertain"—Dr.

2. Cp. Intro., Chap. III., "Selah."

3. So Del. divides the verses.

4. So *Gt.*, cp. 11:7.

5. *ML.*: "man of tongue."

6. So Del., "With thrust upon thrust."—O.G., Dr.

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4 Keep me out of their power. Preserve me from their violence, for they are plotting against me.

5 These proud men have set a trap to catch me, a noose to yank me up and leave me dangling in the air; they wait in ambush with a net to throw over and hold me helpless in its meshes.

6, 7, 8 O Jehovah, my Lord and Savior, my God and my shield—hear me as I pray! Don't let these wicked men succeed; don't let them prosper and be proud.

9 Let their plots boomerang! Let them be destroyed by the very evil they have planned for me.

10 Let burning coals fall down upon their heads, or throw them into the fire, or into deep pits from which they can't escape.

11 Don't let liars prosper here in our land; quickly punish them.

12 But the Lord will surely help those they persecute; He will maintain the rights of the poor.

13 Surely the godly are thanking You, for they shall live in Your presence.

EXPOSITION

The situation indicated by this psalm is clearly Davidic. The very fact that *slander* is the primary weapon relied upon by the writer's enemies is enough to make us suspect who the writer is; and when *violence* is seen waiting on slander, ready to strike as soon as slander has succeeded in doing its poisonous work, we have instantly all the conditions required by the psalm vividly brought before our minds: that is, as soon as we think of *David at Saul's court* as the sufferer and Petitioner of the psalm. There is no need to risk a universal negative, by denying that any other man ever lived in whose history these peculiar conditions met; but the doubt may be confidently expressed, that it would be extremely difficult to imagine a second hero able to meet the requirements here indicated. He must be a believer in Jehovah—a man of prayer—a man who has been under arms—a man who can point to past divine deliverances—a man whose life is at the mercy of a slanderous tongue—and, to forbear further specification, a man whose rescue from present peril will cause righteous men to thank Jehovah and dwell securely in his presence. David fulfils all these conditions; and, not knowing where to find another who does this, we may well

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hold ourselves justified in accepting the traditional ascription of authorship to be well sustained.

The reader who pleases to turn to our exposition of Ps. 69 will see how far we are from offering an unqualified defence of the imprecations which several of the psalms contain; but the above considerations respecting the peculiar conditions which met in David, may suggest in great strength the plea that it is no wonder that, *in his circumstances*, he did call to Jehovah for heavy judgments on his enemies. David—notwithstanding his reverent and tender scruples against lifting up a finger to injure his tyrannical master, Saul—was, after all, looking forward to the personal occupancy of the throne of the kingdom, and where, then, could he naturally desire these turbulent enemies to be, if not swept away by the judicial visitations of Jehovah? How else could he look forward to a kingdom in which the *humbled* and *needy* should be *vindicated*, and men be free to *dwell* in safety and *thankfulness* in Jehovah's *presence*? In those circumstances probably no man living is now placed.

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. This is described as an "imprecatory psalm"; what is meant by this expression? How is it to be understood?
2. Show how appropriate this psalm is to David's experience.
3. In David's circumstance we can understand his desire, as here expressed. Discuss.

PSALM 141

DESCRIPTIVE TITLE

A Temptation to Conspiracy Shunned.

ANALYSIS

Stanza I., vers. 1-3, Prayer for Guarded Speech. Stanza II., vers. 4, 5, Danger from Proffered Hospitalities. Stanza III., vers. 6, 7, Guarded Admissions. Stanza IV., vers. 8-10, Prayer for Personal Preservation.

(Lm.) Psalm—By David.

- 1 Jehovah I have called upon thee, oh haste thou unto me:
oh give ear to my voice when I call unto thee.