

Intro:

Derek Kidner's title for this psalm is *Poison*. He says, "The single theme of malicious intrigue dominates this psalm, as it has dominated many others, especially those of David. The New Testament treats the Psalter as a major witness to human depravity (most of Rm 3.10-18 is from the Psalms), largely because it exposes this element in us of sheer malice, a poison which can be secreted and employed not only without provocation (69.4) but even in the face of generosity and love (*cf.* especially 35.12-16; 55.12-14)."¹

I. Prayer for preservation (1-5)

What kind of opposition is David describing in vv. 1-5?

The opposition of evil men – men who seem to love evil for its own sake.

What words are used to describe the inner life of David's enemies in these verses?

Evil, violent (1)

Imagine mischiefs/devise evil in hearts (2)

Sharpen tongues/poison lips (3)

Purposed (4)

Proud (5)

What two images are used to describe the activities of these men?

The poisonous bite of serpents – the vicious speech of enemies

The traps of hunters – both physical assaults and political machinations

Kidner: 'this pattern of hurting, slandering, and deceiving has its gentler manifestations, and is no rarity' ²

II. Pleas for protection (6-11)

What change of direction to we see in vv. 6-11?

Instead of mere preservation, David is asking God to be pro-active, to take the initiative against his enemies and to frustrate their designs.

What is the basis of David's prayer? (6-7)

David's relationship with God and God's past preservation in battle.

¹ Derek Kidner, *Psalms 73-150* (Leicester, England; Downers Grove, Ill.: Inter-Varsity Press, 1973), 468.

² *Ibid.*

John Newton:

*His love in time past
Forbids me to think
He'll leave me at last
In trouble to sink.³*

What is the difference between the 'day of battle' and the present distress? (8)

The day of battle was straightforward conflict, this trouble is from those who plot and scheme and use evil devices.

What is the second basis of David's prayer? (9-11)

Simple justice – David wants these men to receive their just desserts

How is the justice of David's request demonstrated? [Hint: see parallelism with complaints of first section.] (9-11)

Burning coals cover the 'mischief of their lip'; instead of trapping the saint, the sinner falls into the pit

III. Confidence in justice (12-13)

Note: 'cause' v. 12 a legal term, see also 'justice' in v. 12 – what is the primary duty of kings (and all governments)? (12)

Security/justice for their own people

Compare the duties of a King to the duties of the Lord: how does this bolster David's confidence in prayer?

He knows that the Lord will maintain his cause and bring justice for him.

What kind of spirit does David display in v. 13?

David is at rest – he can leave his distresses with the Lord. Thus should it be with all our prayers, no matter how troubled and anguished we might be.

³ John Newton, "Begone, unbelief" quoted by Ibid., 469.