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## Psalm 140: To the leader. A Psalm of David

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**Psalm 140**  
**To the leader. A Psalm of David**  
(NRSV)

<sup>1</sup> Deliver me, O LORD, from evildoers;  
protect me from those who are violent,  
<sup>2</sup> who plan evil things in their minds  
and stir up wars continually.  
<sup>3</sup> They make their tongue sharp as a snake's,  
and under their lips is the venom of vipers.

*Selah*

<sup>4</sup> Guard me, O LORD, from the hands of the wicked;  
protect me from the violent  
who have planned my downfall.  
<sup>5</sup> The arrogant have hidden a trap for me,  
and with cords they have spread a net,<sup>(a)</sup>  
along the road they have set snares for me.

*Selah*

<sup>6</sup> I say to the LORD, "You are my God;  
give ear, O LORD, to the voice of my supplications."  
<sup>7</sup> O LORD, my Lord, my strong deliverer,  
you have covered my head in the day of battle.  
<sup>8</sup> Do not grant, O LORD, the desires of the wicked;  
do not further their evil plot.<sup>(b)</sup>

*Selah*

<p><sup>9</sup> Those who surround me lift up their heads;<sup>(c)</sup> let the mischief of their lips overwhelm them! <sup>10</sup> Let burning coals fall on them! Let them be flung into pits, no more to rise! <sup>11</sup> Do not let the slanderer be established in the land; let evil speedily hunt down the violent!</p>
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<sup>12</sup> I know that the LORD maintains the cause of the needy,  
and executes justice for the poor.  
<sup>13</sup> Surely the righteous shall give thanks to your name;  
the upright shall live in your presence.

**Footnotes:**

- a. (v.5) Or *they have spread cords as a net*
- b. (v.8) Hebrew adds *they are exalted*
- c. (v.9) Cn Compare Gk: Heb *those who surround me are uplifted in head*  
(Heb divides verses 8 and 9 differently)

**Psalm 140** is traditionally ascribed to King David, who here prays to God for protection and victory against his enemies. For Christians, Jesus is great David's greater Son, and Jesus too is engaged in mortal combat with enemies both physical and spiritual. We can see Jesus praying to his heavenly Father that his enemies might not prove victorious in their designs to thwart the coming of the Kingdom of God-in-Christ. So the Church, the Body of Christ, also prays that we may not be defeated by the enemies of God and Christ in our struggle against those who wish us ill. We ask that God will preserve and protect us in our warfare against the enemies of Christ.

But we Christians may not pray for the hurt of our enemies. We must regulate our prayer life by the command of Christ in Matthew 5:43-45: "You have heard that it was said to the men of old (as, for example, in Psalm 137 and 140), 'You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.' But I say unto you, Love your enemy and pray for those who persecute you, so that you may be sons of your Father who is in heaven." For that reason we should omit verses 9-11 from our praying of the Psalm. While these verses show us how our forebears in the faith once prayed, they are inappropriate as New Testament Christian prayer.

**Prayer to accompany Psalm 140:**

Lord, you keep constant guard over your faithful people. Protect us from hidden snares, deliver us from those who would seek to do us harm, and make us holy; that we may praise and bless your name and live in righteousness before you now and forever. Amen.