

PSALM 35

Theme: A prayer to God for help against those who try to inflict injury for know reason.

[hater's hate]!!!

When our enemies are unjust and lie about us, even when we do good to them, we can appeal to God who is always just.

This theme will be a thread throughout this chapter.

Author: David, probably when he was being hunted by Saul (1 Samuel 24).

Contend, Lord, With Those Who Contend with Me

David pleads with God to fight for him, to vindicate him against vicious attacks by those who return evil for good. (protagonist & antagonist) approach.

This is the most intense psalm yet encountered in the psalms in which David rails against his enemies, and encountered more than his share of enemies as he was fleeing Saul; in psalm 34 he praises God for delivering him from the Philistine opposition, but in psalm 35 he unleashes passionate prayers for God to take vengeance against such enemies.

Screen play perspective:

Antagonist = A person who actively opposes or is hostile to someone or something; an adversary; The principle character in opposition to the protagonist or hero of a narrative or play.

Protagonist = is synonymous with "the good guy".

The word "protagonist" is simply from an ancient Greek word meaning "one who plays the first part; chief factor"

Some personality characteristic would be altruistic caring, and loyal.

After an initial call to God to arise as the Divine Warrior on David's behalf (vv.1-3), David launches into a series of wishes for his enemies to be utterly defeated (vv.4-8), culminating with a **vow** to praise God when this has been accomplished (vv.9-10). David recounts the viciousness of his enemies' attack, (vv.11-16) and again calls on God to intervene (vv.17-25). He ends with a final imprecation (v.26) and a final voice of praise (vv.27-28).

What is the biblical definition of **vow**?

The **practice of making vows or solemn promises to God deliberately and freely to perform some good work was ancient among the Israelites**. Ordinarily a vow consisted in a promise to offer a sacrifice, if God would give some assistance in a difficulty; hence, the Hebrew word *neder* means both vow and votive (consecrated) offering,

Imprecatory Psalm:

Because of the type of prayer in this psalm, it is classified as one of the "imprecatory psalms" along with: (12; 37; 58-59; 69; 79; 83; 109; 137-140).

In these psalms the writers also seem to picture themselves as people seeking terrible revenge against these enemies.

But several facts must be considered before we write off the psalmist as pagan brutes who cannot forgive or God as "a dirty bully."

To begin with the enemies are rebels against the Lord and, in some instances, against the Lord's king.

In some ways, David may have felt that those opposing and hunting him, should give him the same realm of respect and honor which he showed toward King Saul, particularly when David had a chance to take Saul's life.

The Jews were a "covenant people" whom God promised to protect as long as they obeyed Him (Lev.26; Deut. 27-29). In His covenant with Abraham, God promised to bless those who bless Israel and to curse those who curse them (Ge. 12:1-3).

When the Jews asked God to deal justly with their wicked enemies, they were only asking Him to fulfill His covenant promises.

"God is love" (1 John 4:16), but God is also "light" (1 John 1:5), and in His holiness, he must deal with sin.

C.S. Lewis wrote in *Reflection on the Psalms*, “this was, I think, at least in part because they (Jews) took right and wrong more seriously (than the Pagans). For if we look at their railings, we find that they are usually angry not simply because these things have been done to them but because these things are manifestly wrong, are hateful to God as well as to the victims.”

Psalm 35:1 KJV “Plead *my cause*, O LORD, with them that strive with me: fight against them that fight against me.

Once again this is one of the “imprecatory” (cursing) psalms that call upon God to deal with enemies. These Psalms sound extremely harsh but we must remember the following.

1. David was fleeing from men who were unjustly seeking to kill him. As God’s anointed king over a nation called to annihilate the evil people of the land, this was difficult for David to understand.
2. David’s call for justice was sincere; it was not a cover for vengeance. He truly wanted to seek God’s perfect idea for his nation.
3. David did not say that he would take vengeance, but gave the matter to God. These are merely suggestions.
4. These psalms use hyperbole (or over statement). They were meant to motivate others to take a strong stand against sin and evil.

Continuously, David was being hounded by Saul and slandered by Saul’s men, many of who had been David’s friends. David was championing the right cause, for he was God’s “chosen” king, while Saul was trying to destroy him so that one of his own sons would become king.

Instead of managing the affairs of the kingdom, Saul was driven by his paranoia to pursue David and to kill him, and his zeal was fueled by the lies of his officers (1 Sam. 19:5; 20:1).

David made three request of God:

1. Protect Me (vv.1-10)

David merged two images in verse 1... the court (“plead my cause”; 43:; 74:22; Jer. 2:9; Mic. 6:1-2), and “the battle field”.

Saul chose the battlefield, but David turned to the Lord and asked him to be Advocate and judge in the dispute.

“The LORD is a man of war” [against sin & the father of sin]; (24:8; Ex.15:3; Jos. 5:13-15;), so if Saul wanted a fight, God would except the challenge (18:25-27).

V. 2 Take hold of shield and buckler, And stand up for mine help.

A soldier himself, David envisioned the Lord dressed in armor and wielding His weapons. The buckler was a large shield that covered most of the body. The enemy hated David (v.19), lied about him (v.11), persecuted him (v.2), and wanted to hurt him and kill him (vv. 4, 26), so the conflict was a matter of life and death; but there was no just cause for this opposition (vv 7, 9, 38:19; 109:3;119:78, 86, 161).

V. 3 Draw out also the spear, and stop the way against them that persecute me: Say unto my soul, I am thy salvation.

We do not know the precise occasion for this psalm, but David appeals in a more extended way than in any pervious psalm for God to arise and fight on his behalf, mentioning several implements of war: sheild, armor, spear, and javelin.

Salvation meaning: Preservation or deliverance from harm.

V.4 Let them be confounded and put to shame that seek after my soul: Let them be turned back and brought to confusion that devise my hurt.

Humiliation, shame, dishonor, confusion: David prayed for specifics!

V.5 Let them be a chaff before the wind; and let the Angel of the LORD chase them. V. 6 Let their way be dark and slippery: And let the Angel of the LORD persecute them.

“The Angel of the LORD”: God’s representative or messenger, appearing to individuals such as Hagar, Abraham, Jacob, Moses, Balaam, Gideon, Samson’s parents, Elijah, and Daniel. In all of these cases, the angel spoke authoritatively with words of instruction or encouragement.

7. For without cause have they hid for me their net in a pit, which without cause they have digged for my soul. V. 8 Let destruction come upon him at unawares; and let his net that he hath hid catch himself: Into that very destruction let him fall.

V.9 And my soul shall be joyful in th LORD: It shall rejoice in his salvation. V.10 All my bones shall say, LORD, who is like unto thee, which delivereth the poor from him that is to strong for him, Yea, the poor and the needy from him that spoileth him?

David knew that God had chosen him to be king of Israel and that his greatest task would be to unite and strengthen the kingdom and lead the people back to God. Israel had an important work to do in the world, and David’s leadership was essential.

2. REWARD ME (VV.11-18)

V.11 False witnesses did rise up; They laid to my charge things that I knew not.

David stated the evidence that proved he was innocent. The enemy depended on lies, false (“malicious”) witnesses accused him of being a traitor (Deut.19:15-21). Quite the contrary, it was Saul and his officers who were the traitors, for they returned evil for the good David did to them.

V. 12 They reward me evil for good to the spoiling of my soul. V. 13 But as for me, when they were sick, my clothing was sackcloth: I humbled my soul with fasting; And my prayer returned into mine own bosom.

It pained David deeply that the men he had served with in Saul’s army had betrayed him. He had prayed for them when they were in need .

David received a blessing because he prayed, but God couldn’t send a blessing to such evil people.

When our deliverance is delayed, we may assume God hasn’t answered our prayer.

God hears every prayer, but he answers according to his wisdom. Don’t let the absence of an immediate answer cause you to doubt or resent God. Instead let it be an occasion to deepen your faith.

V. 14 I behaved myself as though he had been my friend or brother: I bowed down heavily, as one that mourneth for his mother. V. 15 But in mine adversity they rejoiced, and gathered themselves together: Yea, the abjects gathered themselves together against me, and I knew it not; they did tear me, and ceased not: V. 16 With hypocritical mockers in feast, They gnashed upon me with their teeth.

In the O.T., gnashing ones teeth was a sign of malice against another (Job 16:19; Lam. 2:16). In the N.T. it most often refers to the hopelessness of those who have been cast into outer darkness and the blazing furnace at the end of the age (Mt. 8;12; Lk. 13:28).

V. 17 Lord, how long wilt thou look on? Rescue my soul from their destructions, my darling from the lions. V. 18 I will give thee thanks in the great congregation: I will praise thee among much people.

David knew that God would eventually **REWARD** him for his faithfulness, but he didn't know when.

His first praise to God (vv9-10) was personal, but the second expression of praise (v 18) is in the congregation with the saints.

3. VINDICATE ME (vv. 19-28)

V.19 Let not them that are mine enemies wrongfully rejoice over me: Neither let them wink with the eye that hate me without a cause. V. 20 For they speak not peace: But they devise deceitful matters against them that are quiet in the land.

Unlike Elijah, who felt like he was fighting alone (1 Kg. 19:10-18), David knew that many people in Israel supported him, those who were living "quietly in the land". Even in the darkest days of Israel's history, there has always been a faithful remnant that stayed true to the Lord and prayed for his will to be done

V. 21 Yea, they open their mouth wide against me, And said, Aha, Aha, our eye hath seen it. V.22 This thou hast seen, O LORD: keep not silence: O Lord, be not far from me. V. 23 Stir up thyself, and awake to my judgment, Even unto my cause, my God, and my Lord. V. 24 Judge me, O LORD my God, according to thy righteousness; And let them not rejoice over me. V. 25 Let them not say in their hearts, Ah, so would we have it: Let them not say, We have swallowed him up. V. 26 Let them be ashamed and brought to confusion together that rejoice at my hurt: Let them be clothed with shame and dishonor that magnify themselves

against me. V. 27 Let them shout for joy, and be glad, that favor my righteous cause: Yea, let them say continually, Let the LORD be magnified, which hath pleasure in the prosperity of his servant.

David closes the psalm with a song of confidence and joy, witnessing to God's righteousness and power. The word translated "prosperity" is the familiar Hebrew word *shalom* ("peace"), which means much more than a mere cessation of hostilities. It carries the idea of well-being in every aspect of life, including peace with God, with others, with yourself, and with the circumstances of life.

V. 28 And my tongue shall speak of thy righteousness And of thy praise all day long.

David's experience reminds us of Jesus Christ, the son of David, who was also hated without a cause (Jn. 15:25) and falsely accused and attacked by those for whom He had shown nothing but kindness and love. God delivered David from his enemies, but the Father "spared not his own Son" (Rom. 8:32) but willing gave Him to die for the sins of the world.

Resources:

C.S.Lewis, Reflection on the psalms
BE Worshipful PSALM 1-89, Warren Wiersbe
NIV ZONDERVAN Study Bible
KJV Life Application Study Bible
James T. Bartsch, Expanded analysis of Psalm 35