

Psalm 35 is an impassioned plea for divine intervention from a man surrounded by enemies. David, falsely accused, persecuted without cause, and repaid evil for his kindness, cries out to God as his defender. This psalm is deeply personal and emotionally raw, expressing the anguish of betrayal but also the assurance that God sees, hears, and will act justly.

1. God as Defender and Warrior (vv. 1–4)

“Plead my cause, O Lord, with those who strive with me; fight against those who fight against me. Take hold of shield and buckler, and stand up for my help. Also draw out the spear, and stop those who pursue me. Say to my soul, ‘I am your salvation.’ Let those be put to shame and brought to dishonor who seek after my life; let those be turned back and brought to confusion who plot my hurt.” (Psalm 35:1–4, NKJV)

David isn’t seeking revenge—he’s asking the Lord to *intervene*. He casts himself entirely upon God’s justice. The imagery here is that of a divine warrior: shield, buckler, spear. David doesn’t arm himself—he calls on God to rise in his defense.

Application:

When falsely accused or attacked, our refuge is not retaliation but appeal to the righteous Judge. Romans 12:19 reminds us, *“Vengeance is Mine, I will repay,” says the Lord.*

2. Let the Wicked Fall into Their Own Traps (vv. 5–8)

“Let them be like chaff before the wind, and let the angel of the Lord chase them. Let their way be dark and slippery, and let the angel of the Lord pursue them.” (vv. 5–6)

David prays that those who hunt him would be blown away like chaff, helpless and directionless. He invokes the “angel of the Lord”—a title often used in Scripture for God’s immediate, powerful intervention. He asks God not just to defend him, but to actively pursue those who seek to destroy him.

“For without cause they have hidden their net for me in a pit, which they have dug without cause for my life. Let destruction come upon him unexpectedly, and let his net that he has hidden catch himself; into that very destruction let him fall.” (vv. 7–8)

This is poetic justice. The very traps the wicked laid for David, he asks God to turn back on their heads. This isn’t vindictive—it’s a plea for God’s moral order to prevail.

3. Rejoicing in God’s Salvation (vv. 9–10)

“And my soul shall be joyful in the Lord; it shall rejoice in His salvation. All my bones shall say, ‘Lord, who is like You, delivering the poor from him who is too strong for him, yes, the poor and the needy from him who plunders him?’” (vv. 9–10)

David sees his rescue not just as personal relief but as a revelation of God’s character: a champion for the defenseless, a deliverer of the poor. His response is worship. All his being—*“all my bones”*—proclaims God’s uniqueness and righteousness.

4. Suffering at the Hands of the Ungrateful (vv. 11–16)

“Fierce witnesses rise up; they ask me things that I do not know. They reward me evil for good, to the sorrow of my soul.” (vv. 11–12)

David laments betrayal. He was slandered and repaid with evil when he had done good. He highlights the injustice not only of accusation but of false intimacy betrayed.

“But as for me, when they were sick, my clothing was sackcloth; I humbled myself with fasting; and my prayer would return to my own heart.” (v. 13)

David interceded for them when they were in need. He mourned over them as if they were his own family.

“I paced about as though he were my friend or brother; I bowed down heavily, as one who mourns for his mother. But in my adversity they rejoiced and gathered together... they tore at me and did not cease.” (vv. 14–15)

What pain it is to be scorned by those for whom you once wept. These verses echo the kind of betrayal Jesus experienced—rewarded evil for good (see John 15:25), mocked while suffering, hated without cause.

5. Mockery and Misrepresentation (vv. 17–21)

“Lord, how long will You look on? Rescue me from their destructions, my precious life from the lions. I will give You thanks in the great assembly; I will praise You among many people.” (vv. 17–18)

David questions God's delay—not in doubt, but in desperation. He pledges public praise once deliverance comes. His commitment to thank God isn't private—it's corporate and vocal.

“Let them not rejoice over me who are wrongfully my enemies... For they do not speak peace, but they devise deceitful matters against the quiet ones in the land.” (vv. 19–20)

David's enemies are not simply loud—they are *deceitful*, targeting the innocent and “quiet in the land.” They masquerade as peaceful while plotting harm.

“They also opened their mouth wide against me, and said, ‘Aha, aha! Our eyes have seen it.’” (v. 21)

“Aha, aha” was a derisive, contemptuous expression—mocking and accusing without foundation. David again is a type of Christ here, as the Gospels record similar taunts hurled at Jesus during His trial and crucifixion.

6. Appeal for Vindication (vv. 22–26)

“This You have seen, O Lord; do not keep silence. O Lord, do not be far from me. Stir up Yourself, and awake to my vindication, to my cause, my God and my Lord.” (vv. 22–23)

David longs for God's nearness. He does not take justice into his own hands but pleads for *divine vindication*. He knows the Lord sees everything.

“Let them not say in their hearts, ‘Ah, so we would have it!’ Let them not say, ‘We have swallowed him up.’ Let them be ashamed and brought to mutual confusion who rejoice at my hurt; let them be clothed with shame and dishonor who exalt themselves against me.” (vv. 25–26)

David’s prayer is not driven by pride but by a desire that justice be done. He wants evil silenced—not simply because he’s hurt, but because he knows it opposes the righteous purposes of God.

7. The Final Contrast: Shame for the Proud, Joy for the Righteous (vv. 27–28)

“Let them shout for joy and be glad, who favor my righteous cause; and let them say continually, ‘Let the Lord be magnified, who has pleasure in the prosperity of His servant.’” (v. 27)

David wants others to share in the joy of God’s justice. Those who support what is righteous should rejoice when God is glorified through deliverance. Notice again: David doesn’t want the spotlight—he wants the Lord to be magnified.

“And my tongue shall speak of Your righteousness and of Your praise all the day long.” (v. 28)

David ends where he began—with praise. Despite injustice, betrayal, and affliction, his confidence in God’s righteous character and ultimate justice remains unshaken.

Personal Application

1. Run to God as your advocate.

When you are falsely accused or opposed, resist the urge to retaliate. Take your case to the only One who judges righteously.

2. Remember, God sees and will act in time.

The delay of justice is not the absence of justice. The Lord is never unaware. His timing is perfect, even when we cry, *“How long?”*

3. Model Christ in suffering.

David’s experience foreshadows Jesus—hated without cause, falsely accused, repaying evil with good. Let our response to mistreatment be patterned after His.

4. Praise even before the answer comes.

David vows to worship God publicly, not only after victory but even in anticipation of it. Faith praises while waiting.

“Let the Lord be magnified, who has pleasure in the prosperity of His servant.” (Psalm 35:27, NKJV)

Let this be the desire of our hearts: not the defeat of our enemies, but the magnifying of the Lord through every trial. In the end, the righteous will rejoice, and the mouth of the upright will declare His praise all the day long.