

### David's Prayer for Deliverance and Vindication

#### Psalm 35

Psalm 35:1-8 – *“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. 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. For without cause they have hidden their net for me in a pit that 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.”*

#### Background Notes

In Psalm 35 David prays for deliverance from the unjustified opposition of his enemies, and praises God for personal vindication and divine justice.

Most likely this psalm was written when David was escaping from King Saul. Saul's insane jealousy caused him to wrongfully attempt to kill David. So David called on the Lord to fight for him - to take up His divine spear and battle-axe to defeat and humiliate the opposition (v1-4)!

David prayed that the Lord Himself (the angel of the Lord) would drive away the enemy like chaff before the wind. *“Let them be like chaff before the wind, and let the angel of the Lord chase them”* (v5). In Psalm 34:7, the angel of the Lord was seen protecting the saints. Now here in Psalm 35:5-6 the angel of the Lord is seen pursuing the sinners.

David desired that his enemies would slip and fall, that they would lose their way, and be caught and destroyed in the net of their own making: *“Let their way be dark and slippery, and let the angel of the LORD pursue them, 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”* (v6-8).

Did you ever pray a prayer like that? Should believers ever pray a prayer like that?

Psalms. Psalm 35 is known as one of the “Imprecatory Psalms.” To imprecate means to curse. When we studied Psalm 7, we mentioned that it was the first of about ten imprecatory psalms. Psalm 35 is the second imprecatory psalm in the book of Psalms.

When believers read the imprecatory psalms, generally our first impression is that somehow it isn’t “Christian” to pray like this, because it seems that the psalmist is calling for God’s judgment on his personal enemies. For this reason, many students of the Word have concluded that, from the divine perspective, the psalmist was wrong to write this way. But they would add that he is to be forgiven because he wrote during Old Testament times, before the teaching of our Lord and the New Testament.

Well, I personally don’t think that this is the right interpretation and explanation of the imprecatory psalms. Keep in mind that **the imprecatory psalms emphasize the holy and righteous side of God’s character**. They clearly show God’s authority over the wicked. **They are not prayers for personal revenge** because of a personal vendetta. No, **they are calls for God’s judgment on the wicked** so that **God’s holy standards and divine justice will be maintained**.

## Doctrinal / Teaching Points

### 1. Prayer for vindication is based on righteous living, and not on personal revenge.

*Psalm 35:9-16 – “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?” 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. 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. 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. Attackers gathered against me, and I did not know it. They tore at me and did not cease. With ungodly mockers at feasts they gnashed at me with their teeth.”*

In verses 9-10 we see that David is confident that the Lord will deliver him from the opposition, and that he will rejoice and exalt in God’s salvation as a result. It’s important to notice throughout this psalm that David’s desire for vindication is not based on a desire for personal revenge, or because he has a grudge against someone. No, his desire for vindication is **based on divine justice** (as we’ll see under our second doctrinal point). In addition, his desire for vindication is based on David’s own **personal integrity** and **righteous living**.

David knew that he was in the right, and he knew that Saul and his thugs were in the wrong. They had drummed up false charges against David for things he knew nothing about. *“Fierce witnesses rise up; they ask me things that I do not know”*

(v11). They repaid David with evil, when he had done nothing but good: *"They reward me evil for good, to the sorrow of my soul"* (v12).

David knew many of these men personally from his days in Saul's royal court. When they were sick he had prayed for them. He had visited them and sorrowed for them (v13-14), but now they had turned against David, and joined others who slandered and mocked him (v15-16). David was not seeking personal revenge, but he did want the truth to be known because he knew he had done what was right. When David met King Saul at En Gedi he said to Saul, *"Therefore let the LORD be judge, and judge between you and me, and see and plead my case, and deliver me out of your hand"* (1 Samuel 24:15).

We too can pray for vindication when we know that we are in the right - but never for the purpose of personal revenge! Romans 12:19 says, *"Beloved, do not avenge yourselves, but rather give place to wrath; for it is written, 'Vengeance is Mine; I will repay,' says the Lord."*

Prayer for vindication should be based on righteous living, and not on personal revenge.

## **2. Prayer for vindication is based on divine justice, and not on personal truth.**

Psalms 35:17-26 – *"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. Let them not rejoice over me who are wrongfully my enemies, nor let them wink with the eye who hate me without a cause, for they do not speak peace, but they devise deceitful matters against the quiet ones in the land. They also opened their mouth wide against me, and said, 'Aha, aha! Our eyes have seen it.'"*

*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. Vindicate me, O LORD my God, according to Your righteousness, and let them not rejoice over me. 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."*

Once again in these verses we see that David is not looking for personal revenge and personal triumph. He desires that the opposition be silenced, and be ashamed and humiliated (v25-26) - not so that David could gloat, but so that **God's standards of righteousness and divine justice** would be maintained. *"Vindicate me, O Lord my God, according to Your righteousness"* (v24).

David knew that he was right, and he knew that his enemies were wrongfully rejoicing over him. He knew that they were maliciously lying about him and planning to trap him (v19-21). But David also knew that no matter how long it would take, the Lord would rescue him! He knew the Lord would vindicate him, and then he would publicly praise the Lord and thank

the Lord. *“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” (v17-18).*

Verses 17-18 remind us of Psalm 22, where similar expressions apply to our Lord: *“But You, O Lord, do not be far from Me. O My Strength, hasten to help Me! Deliver Me from the sword, my precious life from the power of the dog. Save Me from the lion’s mouth and from the horns of the wild oxen! You have answered Me. I will declare Your name to My brethren. In the midst of the assembly I will praise You.” (Psalm 22:19-22).*

In addition, Psalm 35 has a prophetic application for the persecuted godly remnant of Jewish believers during the future Tribulation period. They will cry out for vindication based on divine justice - and God will answer!

Prayer for vindication should be based on divine justice - not on personal triumph.

## **Practical Application**

### **Let the Lord be magnified when we’re vindicated!**

Psalm 35:27-28 – *“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.” And my tongue shall speak of Your righteousness and of Your praise all the day long.”*

Are you facing opposition from other people - maybe even from people you thought were your friends? Are you praying for vindication - not on the basis of personal revenge or personal triumph, but on the basis that you know you’re doing what is right? In this situation, is your desire to see God’s standards of righteousness and justice maintained?

Are you willing to wait on God for your vindication as David did? And when God answers (and He will!), who will get the praise? Will you magnify the Lord? Or will you gloat over and be bitter against those who opposed you?

A Christian leader I know was wrongly accused of mishandling church funds. Fellow believers told all kinds of lies about him! One day I had lunch with him, and I expected to hear a lot of vengeful talk. But there was none! In fact, the man realized that God was using the unfair and unjust treatment to move him and his family to a different church, and he is faithfully and joyfully serving the Lord in that new church today. Eventually this brother was fully vindicated, and he has continued to magnify the Lord, with no hard feelings or demands for vengeance.

Could this be said of us?

Let the Lord be magnified when we’re vindicated!