

PSALM 35 IN 28 DAYS

For so many years, people have been singing, reading, praying, and meditating on the Psalms. Through all ages, believers have rejoiced in the Psalms, repented through them, and found immense comfort in them. In the sixth century B.C, Jews in captivity sang them tearfully in Babylon. Five hundred years later Jesus and his disciples sang them in the upper room. Christians in Rome, meeting in secret, began the day by singing Psalm 73 and closed it by singing Psalm 141.

After the persecution of Christians ceased, one church father remarked, "Of other Scripture, most men know nothing, but the Psalms are learned by heart and are repeated in homes, streets, and shops." In 1512 Martin Luther began his public career with lectures on the Psalms. In 1620 Pilgrims launched the Mayflower by singing a psalm and landed in the New World singing another one. One of the first books printed in America was The Bay Psalm Book.

The Psalms are exquisite poetry, crisp theology, and stirring history, but they are far more than all that. Most of all, they are intensely personal. The Psalms meet us where we are, and they take us to where we ought to be. You don't have to dress up for the Psalms. Come as you are. The writers were honest, sometimes embarrassingly honest, about their thoughts and feelings.

They were often baffled by what was going on, just as we are. They fell short, just as we do. They got discouraged and disheartened-so what else is new? The Psalms mirror life as it really is, presenting the whole drama of humanity in a few pages. And somehow, when you finish, you end up trusting and praising God who is your protector, your hope, and your friend.

Ps. 35 A CURSING PSALM

In this psalm David calls on God to act, to help him against his enemies. But God is silent and seems far away (vv. 22-23). What makes it even more difficult for David is that those who seek to kill him are his enemies without cause: they hate him without reason (v. 19). This was not an isolated experience (see Psalms 38:19; 69:4; 109:3; 119:78, 86, 161; and Lamentations 3:52). Jesus applied the same thought to Himself in John 15:25: "But this is to fulfil what is written in their Law: They hated me without reason." Similarly we may be in the same situation 'John 15:20 Do you remember what I told you? 'A slave is not greater than the master.' Since they persecuted me, naturally they will persecute you. And if they had listened to me, they would listen to you.'

The Psalms of Vengeance

There are seven psalms in which the psalmist hurls God's curses on his enemies, in no uncertain terms (Psalms 6; 35; 59; 69; 83; 109; 137). For example,

May his days be few;...

May his children be fatherless and his wife a widow.

*May his children be wandering beggars; may they
be driven from their ruined homes.*

*May a creditor seize all he has; may strangers plunder
the fruits of his labor.*

*May no one extend kindness to him or take pity on his
fatherless children.*

*May his descendants be cut off, their names blotted out
from the next generation.*

*May the iniquity of his fathers be remembered before
the LORD; may the sin of his mother never be
blotted out.*

—PSALM 109:8–14

These psalms are also called the imprecatory psalms because the psalmist showers imprecations (curses) on his enemies. Fourteen other psalms include an imprecatory prayer (for example, 3:7; 5:10; 7:14–16). The expression of hatred and the desire for vindication are also found in the prayers of Jeremiah (11:18–20; 15:15–18; 17:18; 18:19–23; 20:11–12) and Nehemiah (6:14; 13:29).

What are we to do with these psalms that seem to squarely contradict Jesus' command to love our enemies (Luke 6:27–28)? Some people simply write them off. They feel that the Old Testament preaches law and vengeance, whereas the New Testament teaches love for God and neighbor. Therefore these psalms have no place in the Christian life.

But they forget that Jesus took the two great commandments (“Love the Lord your God with all your heart and...soul and...mind...and...your neighbor as yourself,” Matthew 22:37–39) directly from the Old Testament (Deuteronomy 6:5; Leviticus 19:18). And His command to love our enemies is also found in the Old Testament:

“Do not gloat when your enemy falls; when he stumbles, do not let your heart rejoice...If your enemy is hungry, give him food to eat; if he is thirsty, give him water to drink” (Proverbs 24:17; 25:21).

And “an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth” (Exodus 21:24) is not, as is often assumed, a legalization of vengeance. Rather, it limits those who have been wronged to the recovery of actual damages rather than punitive damages. It is a humane law, designed to prevent an ever-escalating spiral of revenge.

The Old Testament already contains the key teachings of Jesus—and the New Testament clearly does not teach only “sweetness and light.” Jesus condemned Korazin and Capernaum (Matthew 11:21–24) and severely criticized the leaders and the unbelief of the Jews (Matthew 7:23 [compare with Psalm 6:8]; Mark 11:14; 12:9). The apostles also had very strong words for heretics and evildoers (1 Corinthians 5:5; Galatians 1:8–9; 5:12; 2 Timothy 4:14 [compare with Psalm 62:12]; 2 Peter 2; 2 John 7–11; Jude 3–16).

The fact is that in *both* the Old and the New Testament we find the requirement to love *as well as* the requirement to hate evil.

What bothers us about the imprecatory psalms is their *concreteness*. “God hates sin but loves the sinner” was as true in the Old Testament as it is now. But in the Old Testament, sin and evil are not viewed as abstractions; rather, they exist in their concrete manifestations—real actions by real people.

In the Old Testament, God’s people, the nation of Israel, is a concrete reality. The nation lives in a specific place, the Promised Land. The temple is an actual place where God is present. And above all, the God of Israel is known through His concrete acts

in history, foremost among them the Exodus from Egypt. And just as God's presence is known through His concrete acts in history, *so evil is known through its concrete manifestations.*

In the Lord's Prayer, we ask, "Deliver us from the evil one" (or, "from evil"). The psalmists make the same request, but in more concrete form: deliver us from evil by delivering us from the evil *ones*. In the New Testament, evil and sin oppose the coming of God's kingdom. In the Old Testament, evil and sin oppose the kingdom of God's people, Israel. But in both cases, sin and evil are an assault on God Himself by opposing that which is dearest to His heart.

The imprecatory psalms are a constant reminder that evil is not an abstraction but a stark, everyday reality. They remind us that God hates evil, not in the abstract, but in people's actions or failure to act— whether these are actions of unbelievers or of God's own people. (Note how often the psalmists cry out for forgiveness for their own sins!)

Petition for Protection from Persecutors | 1-8

DAY 1

Verse 1

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

So, David begins by asking the Lord to return to his enemies only what they are doing to him.

The word **plead** is the verbal form on the word translated **strive** in this verse. So, *strive or contend with those who strive or contend with me* is what David is saying.

And David's request is even clearer in the second statement that he makes in this verse. He asks God to **fight against** those who **fight against** him.

So, there's this reciprocal nature of David's request. *He's* not the aggressor here. He's only asking the Lord to return his enemies' own evil back to

themselves. To show them what it feels like to have someone contending and fighting against them – because that’s exactly what they were doing to David – contending and fighting against him.

The exact inspiration for this psalm is unknown. However, Saul and his men were major antagonists in David's early life (1 Samuel 19:1–2). David asks the Lord to act on his behalf, using the Hebrew root word *rib*. This implies conflict or opposition, but can also be used in legal settings, such as an attorney in court. Isaiah 49:25 contains a promise from God that He will "contend" with those who "contend" against Israel.

The Hebrew word "lachim" more literally refers to a physical fight, leading into the next several verses of warlike imagery. David knew the Lord had fought in the past on behalf of His people. When Gideon and his men attacked the Midianites, they cried out, "A sword for the LORD and for Gideon" (Judges 7:20). Psalm 24:8 depicts the Lord as "strong and mighty ... mighty in battle." In his song of praise for the Lord's victory over Pharaoh's cavalry, Moses depicted the Lord as "a man of war" (Exodus 15:3).

Believers today are linked by faith to the Lord Jesus Christ as their advocate (1 John 2:1) and defender (Romans 8:37). They are also equipped with the armour of God and called upon to stand firm in Him (Ephesians 6:10–18).

Prayers

Dear Lord,

We come before you in reverence and thanksgiving. Fill us with strength and courage to chant your praises and glorify your name.

Help us to learn your paths, that we may follow them throughout our lives. Lead us in the ways of righteousness, so that we may depend upon your word.

Grant us the ability to be just and truthful in all that we do. Grant us the courage to defend the oppressed and humble those who are full of pride.

Be our protector, Lord. Cover us in your love when we are in need. Surround us with righteousness and goodness, so that we may cling to it in times of regret and mourning.

We ask, Lord, that you defend us against all those who would do us harm. Silence the mocker and the troubler of our peace and let truth be the victor in every situation.

Give us the serenity to accept the things we cannot change and the courage to seek for justice.

We give you thanks for all of your blessings, Lord. Amen.

DAY 2

Verse 2

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

So, the first reference to a **shield** is that of a small shield you could hold on your arm while in combat. Then the word **buckler** is referring to a larger shield.

But already in these first two verses, it's clear that David is painting a picture of warfare. He's using military-style words to call God to action against his enemies. He's asking God to go to war – as it were – with those who are at war with David.

Interestingly, both items mentioned here are defensive, and would never be used at the same time. Continuing the image of the Lord as a warrior on his behalf (Psalm 35:1), David asks the Lord to symbolically take up tools of warfare. A "buckler" is from the Hebrew *māgēn*, referring to a small, manoeuvrable shield easily carried in one hand. The other term is *sinnā*, meaning a large "standing shield" that covers the entire body. The two are used in distinct phases of war and for different reasons. David is issuing a general plea for God to act as His warrior champion: to be his defence and strength in battle.

Isaiah 63 describes the Lord as a warrior, "marching in the greatness of his strength" in the end times (Isaiah 63:1). He treads the winepress alone and tramples His enemies in His wrath (Isaiah 63:3). He declares that the day of His vengeance was in His heart (Isaiah 63:4). In verse 6 the Lord states, "I trampled down the peoples in my anger; I made them drunk in my wrath, and I poured out their lifeblood on the earth" (Isaiah 63:6).

Although God is loving, merciful, and kind, and the Savior of those who believe in His Son, He does not tolerate sin. All who reject His offer of salvation will experience His wrath. He will defend His righteousness and judge all who oppose Him (Acts 17:31; Romans 6:23; Hebrews 9:27; Jude 1:14–15; Revelation 19:11–16; 20:10–15).

Prayers

Lord God Almighty,

We come to You in need of Your strength to protect and encourage us. We acknowledge our weakness and vulnerability and turn to You for help.

Your word tells us to plead for You to arise and come to our defence, and so we pray You would intervene on our behalf. We trust You, the Maker of heaven and earth, and turn to You for protection and justice in difficult times.

We thank You for Your faithfulness even when we don't understand why You allow us to suffer wrongs. Please enable us to wait on You for restoration and the vindication of our honor.

Grant us the courage to persevere through all adversity that we might remain steadfast in relying on You our faithful God, who will never leave us. In Jesus' precious name. Amen.

DAY 3

Verse 3

3 Draw out also the spear, and stop *the way* against them that persecute me:

say unto my soul, I *am* thy salvation.

So, the weapons mentioned back in verse 2 were more for defence than offence. Shields – large and small – are used mostly for defensive purposes. But here in verse 3, the weapons that David calls God to use against his enemies are offensive.

There's the **spear**, of course. And then the KJV and several other versions have David asking God to **stop the way** against his persecutors. Now, if you have a version of the Bible that has a different word there, it's probably **battle-axe** or **javelin**. And that's because the word *stop* and the word *javelin* are just one vowel different from each other in Hebrew. And so, some translations use one vowel and some the other vowel.

Whatever that word was as God breathed it out through David, the effect of either word is clear. David is now asking God to take the offensive against his enemies.

And David isn't simply interested in the destruction of his enemies. Now, we actually see him at the end of this verse redirecting his desires to the Lord.

He wants God to tell him "*I am your salvation.*" He wants that reassurance from God that he himself will take care of David's most troubling difficulties.

So, ultimately he wants God's salvation – not just his enemies' destruction.

David looks to the Lord for deliverance. He seeks deep, spiritual reassurance from God, specifically asking the Lord to reaffirm salvation to his very soul. David certainly had faith in God's supernatural power, but this context speaks of physical rescue in literal battle. In the prior verse, David referred to defensive tools: two distinct kinds of shields (Psalm 35:2).

Those are related, but not used at the same time. The point of the request was for God to be David's protection in war. Here, the request changes to offensive weapons, once again using more than one example.

The most common translation choice is "spear and javelin." A spear is a long-handled weapon with a sharp point meant mostly for thrusting attacks, but which can be thrown as well. A javelin is a smaller, spear-like object primarily meant to be thrown. However, the two words used in the verse are not entirely clear. One is *hanit*, usually referring to a spear. The other is *sagar*, which is less well defined. Some interpreters believe one means the metal blade of the spear, while the other refers to the handle. Others see this as "spear and battle-axe," or that the second term refers more to blocking, as if interfering with the enemy's movement.

On more than one occasion, when David was serving in Saul's court, Saul launched a spear at him (1 Samuel 18:10–11; 19:10; 20:23). If this psalm is a response to Saul's persecution (1 Samuel 19:1–2), this may be David asking God to act against Saul. Those who interpret the phrasing of this verse to mean the socket-handle of a spear perceive David asking the Lord to block the way between himself and Saul. This may be a reference to the episode at the Red Sea, when the angel of God moved behind the Hebrews. The pillar of cloud moved from in front of the Hebrews to a position behind them, cutting off the attack of pursuing Egyptian forces (Exodus 14:19–20).

Prayers

O Lord, we pray to you with confidence and humble adoration. Listen to us and show us your power.

We thank you for your loving protection and faithfulness to us despite our disobedience. We depend solely on your great strength and mercy.

We ask you to plead on our behalf against our enemies. Be their stumbling block and our shield. May their own schemes overwhelm them and lead to their undoing.

Grant us, O Lord, that we may experience peace and safety from those who threaten us. Let your justice come down upon those who seek to do us harm.

Give us the courage and wisdom to trust in you even in the midst of strenuous difficulties. So that we may never forget your faithfulness, let us continually praise your name.

We lift up all these requests and our hearts to you, O loving Father. Amen.

DAY 4

Verse 1

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. Again, it's very evident that David is taking a defensive approach here rather than aggressively seeking the destruction of these men who are persecuting him.

And the other thing to keep in mind is that he's bringing these requests to the Lord. He's not seeking his own vengeance.

Now, as we move on, I'll remind us that in the psalm previous to the one we're studying right now – Psalm 34 which we studied last time – we saw there the first reference in the Psalms to this being known as the Angel of the Lord. And interestingly enough – in verses 5 and 6 of our psalm for today – Psalm 35 – this being is mentioned two times as David calls on him to chase and pursue his enemies who are chasing and persecuting him.

Still asking the Lord to defeat his enemies (Psalm 35:1–3), David asks them to be routed, humiliated, and thwarted. Many of David's enemies sought his life (1 Samuel 19:1–2; 2 Samuel 15:13–14). Yet David was sure God could protect him and confound his enemies. In many psalms, David referred to himself as a wanted fugitive, whose enemies wanted nothing less than his death (Psalm 38:12; 40:14; 54:3; 63:9; 70:2).

Those who sought to kill David foreshadow the enemies of his most prominent descendant, Jesus the Messiah. John 7:1 says, "After this Jesus went about in Galilee. He would not go about in Judea, because the Jews were seeking to kill him." The chief priests and elders met together in the palace of Caiaphas to plan how to arrest and kill Jesus (Matthew 26:3–4). Unbelievers within Israel had a long history of killing God's prophets and messengers (Matthew 23:34–37).

This wording resembles other "imprecatory psalms"—appeals to God for retribution against enemies—many of which are ascribed to David (Psalm 69:22–25; Psalm 109:8–15).

Prayers

Almighty God, I come before You in holy reverence and awe, to thank You for Your immeasurable mercy and compassion. I humbly pray that You would protect me from insidious attacks of my enemies.

Keep my feet from slipping and remove every obstacle in my path. Grant me grace to run swiftly, and deliver me from every fear and doubt. Intervene on my behalf and rescue me from the clutches of my enemies.

Help me to endure the setback and hurt I experience and maintain my faith in You. Restore me to the joy of Your salvation and pour out Your favor on me, so that my evidence of Your goodness is made known.

Father, thank You for Your promise that You will remain by my side and grant me the victory, so that I can stand firm in my faith, and never be put to shame. In Jesus' name I pray, Amen.

DAY 5

Verse 5

⁵ Let them be as chaff before the wind: and let the angel of the LORD chase *them*. So, David asks that these people who are fighting him and striving against him and persecuting him be like **chaff before the wind**. That is, blown around. Flimsy. Weak. Powerless. Just like they're making David feel.

And then of course, there's this reference to the **Angel of the Lord**. And we know how dangerous this being is. He killed 185,000 Assyrians in one night. So, David is asking that the Angel of the Lord **chase** and **persecute** – or pursue – these people.

But, why? I mean – that doesn't sound very loving. Why is David calling for these things to be the case for his enemies? Verse 7 answers it.

David asks the Lord to drive his enemies away just as the wind drives chaff away from a threshing floor. After grain was cut down and collected, it was "threshed" to break it apart into separate components. Farmers then intentionally tossed grain into the air so the wind would blow away the inedible husks and stems—the "chaff"—and the heavier grains would remain. "Chaff" is therefore a common metaphor for something undesirable, or worthless.

Psalm 1 contrasts the righteous and the wicked, stating that the righteous are blessed and productive but the wicked "are like chaff that the wind drives away" (Psalm 1:4). John the Baptist chided the hypocritical Pharisees and Sadducees by comparing them to chaff. He proclaimed, "[Messiah's] winnowing fork is in his hand, and he will clear his threshing floor and gather his wheat into the barn, but the chaff he will burn with unquenchable fire" (Matthew 3:12). The Lord knows who belongs to Him, and someday He will gather them into heaven, but the unsaved He will drive into eternal destruction (Malachi 4:1; John 3:16–18, 36).

David sees his enemies as worthless, and he believes they are defenseless against the force of the angel of the Lord. The phrase "angel of the LORD" can refer to a specific manifestation of God, in a temporary physical form (Exodus 3:2; Judges 6:11). It can also be a general reference to one of God's spiritual messengers—angels—who enact His will (Matthew 1:24; Acts 5:19).

Prayers

Almighty and holy God, we come before you today to give thanks and praise for your might and mercy. In your Word, you proclaim that those who trust

in you will receive justice and righteousness, and that their strength will be as supple as a fresh young deer.

Today, we pray for those who are weak and oppressed, those without hope and strength. Work in their lives to bring a sure and strong justice. Help them to trust in your way, lest they be overcome by the plans of their enemies.

We commit to follow your commands and trust in you. Be with us, precious Lord, and fill us with your goodness and truth, so that our lives will bring glory to your name.

Help us to always seek your face and live out the words of Psalm 35:5: "Let them bring joy and gladness; let them say repeatedly, 'The Lord is great!'"

We pray these things in Jesus' name. Amen.

DAY 6

Verse 6

6 Let their way be dark and slippery:
and let the angel of the LORD persecute them. David asks that the path they walk on would be **dark and slippery**. He wants them to experience danger on their way. When you can't see the path you're walking on, that's dangerous. You might wander off the path or stumble over something on the path. But when that path is not only **dark** – but also **slippery** – then whatever footing you may have had on that dark path is gone. The idea is that David wants his enemies to stumble and slip and fall.

And then of course, there's this reference to the **Angel of the Lord**. And we know how dangerous this being is. He killed 185,000 Assyrians in one night. So, David is asking that the Angel of the Lord **chase** and **persecute** – or pursue – these people.

But, why? I mean – that doesn't sound very loving. Why is David calling for these things to be the case for his enemies? Verse 7 answers it.

Depending on weather and time of day, a trail might be dry and well lit. When the same path is poorly lit, muddy, or waterlogged, it becomes far more treacherous. Anyone who has hiked through natural terrain knows terms like "slippery" and "dark" are serious in those situations. They put a traveller in constant jeopardy of losing balance. This could cause a fall, an injury, or even death. In the worst scenario it could mean falling over a cliff or ledge.

This is one of the "imprecatory psalms" which include prayers for God to actively attack one's enemies. The context of this request has been David's plea for help using terms related to physical battle (Psalm 35:1–5).

Scripture often uses the metaphor of a person's path to refer to their life (Psalm 17:5) and treats "light" as the embodiment of truth and goodness (Psalm 119:105). It's no small thing for David to ask God to create a dark, slippery way for his enemies.

Further, he wants "the angel of the LORD" to pursue them. Being pursued would make the trail even more hazardous for David's enemies. The angel of the Lord is described in Psalm 34:7 as protecting those who fear the Lord (Proverbs 1:7) and delivering them from trouble. Here, this angel is depicted as chasing the wicked to judgement. It is far better to run to the Lord for salvation than to run from Him into judgement (Hebrews 10:30–31)!

Prayers

Almighty God,

You are our strength and security in difficult times. Your word in Psalm 35:6 places us in a secure place of joy and rejoicing "Let their way be dark and slippery, and let the angel of the Lord pursue them".

Remind us that Your way of justice is the only way to obtain true freedom and security. We thank You for Your mercy and for keeping us from harm and danger as we seek to honor You in all of our ways.

Help us to be confident in You and trust Your direction even when the path is dark and uncertain. Provide us with patience and courage and protection when we feel intimidated by fear.

We thank You for Your grace that guides us and reassures us when we are in times of distress. May we take refuge in Your grace and mercy and know that You will never forsake us.

In Jesus' Name, Amen.

DAY 7

Verse 7

7 For without cause have they hid for me their net *in* a pit, *which* without cause they have digged for my soul. So, it's not as if David is the one who initiated this kind of antagonism between him and his enemies. No – *they* are the aggressors. They're pictured as hiding a **net** for David in a secret place – as if he were some animal to capture and kill. They're the one who dug a **pit** for him to fall into – again as if his life is worth as little as that of a beast's. And they did this **without cause**. That's huge. David didn't do

something to provoke them to these actions. There is literally no cause whatsoever for them treating David like they're treating him.

The "imprecatory psalms" are songs including prayers for God to actively, immediately attack one's enemies. David is credited with several of these (Psalm 69:1; 109:1). Their general theme is a plea for the Lord to take vengeance against evil people who attack His servants. Here, David claims to be innocent. This is not a claim of sinlessness or moral perfection. Rather, it means David's enemies have no justification for their actions. These foes have no reason to seek his life.

"Pitfalls" are common forms of traps: narrow holes disguised with flimsy covers. Depending on their intent, the person digging the pit might add spikes or other dangerous objects so that anything falling in will be wounded or killed. Nets, as well, are useful for entangling enemies. In one variation of the pitfall, the hunter digs a deep hole and covers it loosely with a net. This is then hidden by leaves and branches. When an unwary target steps on the net, they fall into the pit and are entangled.

Some of David's imprecatory psalms were likely inspired by the persecution of Saul (1 Samuel 19:1–2). Saul had no legitimate reason to want to kill David. He was simply jealous of David's popularity. When David was returning home from a decisive battle over the Philistines, women from all over Israel celebrated David's victory by singing and dancing. They sang, "Saul has struck down his thousands, and David his ten thousands" (1 Samuel 18:7). This infuriated Saul, and he feared David would overtake him to become king (1 Samuel 18:8). This made him suspicious and antagonistic towards David from then on (1 Samuel 18:9).

Prayers

Father, we thank You for Your promises of protection. We come before You asking for You to fill us with courage and strength that we might never falter in Your truth.

We pray in the words of Psalm 35:7 that, "For without cause have they hid for me their net in a pit, which without cause they have digged for my soul." Give us the courage to stand strong in the face of any opposition. Let our feet be like hinds' feet—able to walk on difficult paths and overcome difficult obstacles.

Help us to rely on Your strength rather than our own, for without You we can do nothing. May Your justice prevail in every situation. May our enemies be confounded and their tongues cease. Let us not put our trust in man but in You, for You alone protect the upright.

Amen.

DAY 8

Verse 8

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.

So, once more we see this request for reciprocal destruction. They hid a net in verse 7. So, therefore – verse 8 – *let them be caught in that very net they laid for me!*

Now, we have in English a word that describes what happened to European Jews under the murderous reign of the German Nazi Adolf Hitler. It's actually a word from Latin that came from Greek that means "whole burnt offering." It's the word *holocaust*.

But, Jews don't usually use that word to describe that tragedy from the early 20th century. Instead, they use the word *shoah*. And interestingly, that word is found twice in this verse. It's translated as **destruction**.

David – of course – didn't know about the destruction that would come to his people in the 20th century. Nevertheless, what he's asking for his enemies is akin to what happened to the Jews under Hitler – destruction, devastation, desolation.

Why? It always come back to this in this psalm. David is not the aggressor here. His enemies are. David is simply asking that what those men have done to him and others – unjustly – God would return to them.

They're wanting to destroy and devastate and leave him desolate. And so, David asks that those actions be returned to them.

David prays that his enemy—perhaps Saul and his men (1 Samuel 19:1–2; 23:15)—will meet surprising destruction by suffering the fate they attempted to bring to David. This would be not only surprising but a complete reversal of the destruction Saul hoped to inflict. A common tactic used by hunters and soldiers is a "pitfall:" a narrow, deep hole covered by a thin disguised layer of leaves and branches. When the target steps on this, they fall into the hole and are trapped. In some variations, a net is used over top the hole so the victim is also tangled and unable to escape.

Symbolically, David asks that his enemies fall into their own trap.

Sometimes the evil which a person plans inflicts itself on them, instead. In modern English, this is described using terms such as "backfire" or "boomerang." In the book of Esther, the jealous government official Haman schemed to destroy the Jewish people. In the end, he was executed on the gallows he had built to kill his enemies (Esther 7–9). Judas betrayed Jesus for thirty pieces of silver. He was, therefore, a willing participant in Jesus' arrest, trial, and crucifixion. However, remorse overtook Judas. He tried to return the money, then committed suicide (Matthew 27:3–5). Jesus, on the other hand, arose from the dead and lives forevermore (Matthew 28:5–10).

Prayers

Heavenly father,

We thank you for your promises and the grace that you show us. We know that all things come from your hand and your timing is perfect. Teach us to trust in You and to run to you when times become difficult for us.

As Psalm 35:8 reads, 'may justice be done unto him' - we ask that you lead us toward the path of justice. We pray that all who face oppression and injustice may find justice and that those who follow You will find relief from all their problems.

We ask that the righteous will always be walking in the presence of Your peace and joy no matter what their circumstances. Guide us as we strive to do what is right and just according to Your plans and help us to turn away from unrighteousness and injustice.

Grant us wisdom and the ability to discern what is right and just so that we may be found righteous in Your sight. We ask this prayer in Your most glorious name. Amen.

Confidence in God's Deliverance | 9-10

And so, after eight verses of asking God for protection from his persecutors, David now for two verses – verses 9 and 10 – expresses confidence that God will deliver him from his enemies.

Similarly, we can put our legs in David's shoe. As we have read, and understood and prayed with it, we should also have confidence in God to deliver us also.

DAY 9

Verse 9

9 And my soul shall be joyful in the LORD:
it shall rejoice in his salvation.

So, that **soul** of David's – which the enemies were trying to capture in their pit back in verse 7 – that soul – David says – is going to rejoice in the Lord's deliverance. David is confident that God will protect him – and answer his prayers that he's already uttered in this psalm.

David concludes his request for the destruction of his enemies (Psalm 35:1–8) by celebrating his relationship with God. He plans, in advance, to acclaim God and thank Him for being rescued. This shows that David fully believed the Lord would answer his prayer. In David's mind, what he asks for was as good as done.

In part, David was relying on the Lord's promise. God vowed that David would be king over Israel (1 Samuel 16:12–13). This psalm was probably written in response to David's persecution by the former king of Israel, Saul (1 Samuel 19:1–2). Because he rejected God's will and tried to overturn His predictions, Saul's plot to destroy David was doomed from the start.

Faith which rests on God's promises is never disappointed. Paul writes in 2 Corinthians 1:20: "For all the promises of God find their Yes in him. That is why it is through him that we utter our Amen to God for his glory." Paul also writes in Titus 1:2 that God never lies. Prayer that is based on selfish motives or sinful desires does not honor God; we cannot expect Him to listen to it (James 4:3; John 9:31; Isaiah 59:2; Psalm 66:18). But prayers based on God's promises honor Him; He hears our prayers and grants our requests when they are in accordance with His will (1 John 5:14; Luke 22:42). Notice, too, that prayer builds relationship. Even as David trusts that God will grant his request, he speaks of rejoicing in God. David does not ask for things of God as a type of cosmic vending machine, but out of relationship. He entrusts his heart to God. Often times, prayer changes our hearts and conforms our minds to God's truth.

Prayers

Praise be to God Almighty.

We thank and praise you for your unending faithfulness towards us. You have been our refuge and strength and have brought us out of the darkness and into your marvelous light.

Lord, as it says in Psalm 35:9, "Then my soul will rejoice in the Lord, exulting in his salvation." Help us to trust in all of your promises and to find joy in their fulfilment. May we set our hope on you and carry the joy that comes from knowing that you are our deliverer. Let our sorrows, fears, and doubts not keep us from leaning on you.

Guide us to seek refuge in you and to allow ourselves to seek refuge in the Rock and our Stronghold. Open our hearts and ears to hear your instructive voice and follow your commands. With your grace and mercy, we can find the joy and salvation that comes with you.

We thank you for your grace and love that you give us every day.

Amen.

DAY 10

Verse 10

10 All my bones shall say, LORD, who *is* like unto thee, which deliverest the poor from him that is too strong for him, yea, the poor and the needy from him that spoiled him?

And notice the picture David paints of him and people like him – in contrast to his persecutors. Does David picture them as being on even footing? Are they both represented as being about the same level when it comes to their strength and power? No – David portrays himself and those like him as **poor** with two different Hebrew words – both indicating helplessness and being disadvantaged. On the other hand – how does he portray his enemies?... They're **too strong for him**. They **spoil** or *rob* him. It's hard to imagine a king saying these things – though it's not impossible – especially in David's life. So, perhaps this psalm was written before David was anointed King of all Israel – when he felt himself especially vulnerable and weak.

With all his might David promises to praise the Lord as unequalled. In Hebrew thinking, the bones were the essence of a person's body. In a sense, the person was their bones, so when speaking of one's bones the implication is a reference to the person's deepest self (Genesis 2:23; Psalm 6:2).

Using a poetic question which is really a statement, David exclaims, "LORD, who is like you?" When Moses sang in triumph over Israel's rescue from the Egyptian cavalry, he said of the Lord, "Who is like you, O LORD, among the gods? Who is like you, majestic in holiness, awesome in glorious deeds, doing wonders?" (Exodus 15:11).

This also describes the Lord as being a defender of the destitute, rescuing them from a stronger adversary. Perhaps David perceived himself as poor and needy, incapable of delivering himself from the formidable force of Saul and his men. He realized that only his incomparable Lord could deliver him. His personal strength was not a guarantee of success (Psalm 33:16).

Like David, Paul ascribes deliverance to the Lord. He writes: "persecutions I endured; yet from them all the Lord rescued me" (2 Timothy 3:11). If a believer is self-reliant, he will fall under the weight of persecution (Proverbs 3:5; 1 Corinthians 10:12), but if he relies on the Lord, he will stand (Jude 1:24–25; Ephesians 6:10–18).

Prayers

Our Gracious and Loving God,

We humbly come to You, recognizing Your unending mercy, grace, and compassion. With thankful hearts, we offer up this prayer, and we ask that You protect us as we face difficulties and struggles, and be our strength in times of confusion.

Help us to take refuge in Your everlasting arms, and to trust in Your word which reminds us that You are a faithful God who will never forsake us. Your love is unending and unfailing Lord, therefore we ask that You give us courage and hope in our times of distress, and a sense of peace in our troubled hearts, as we reflect on the words of Psalm 35:10, which reminds us that Your unfailing love and faithfulness shall watch over us all the days of our lives.

We ask all these things in the precious name of Your Son Jesus, Amen.

Lament for Being Repaid Evil for Good | 11-16

Well, so far we've seen David's petition for help and protection against his abusers. Then we've seen him express confidence in the Lord's ability and willingness to protect him.

And that leads us to the next major part of this psalm. It's the lament – where David really identifies in greater detail the nature of his problem that he's struggling through with God's help.

And when it comes down to it, David struggles most with this fact – that he's being repaid by his enemies with *evil*... for his doing *good* to them. There's that contrast that seems to push David beyond the limit. He's done them *good*. And they turn around... and repay him with *abuse*?!

Enemies' Abuse | 11-12

DAY 11

Verse 11

11 False witnesses did rise up; they laid to my charge *things* that I knew not. They're **false witnesses** – or literally *witnesses of violence* – witnesses of *chamas*. They're lying about David and their lies – if believed – will result in violence done to him.

No exact event in David's life is connected to this psalm. However, part of the persecution he faced was the use of malicious witnesses (Psalm 27:12; Exodus 20:16). Whether this involved an actual court case, or simply people attacking his reputation, we are not told. Both Saul (1 Samuel 19:1–2) and Absalom (2 Samuel 15:13–14) likely spread propaganda and falsehoods about David as they tried to win people over to their side. Wherever the lies were being spread, they were a farce. David was not sinlessly perfect, but he was certainly innocent of the charges brought against him. In fact, David isn't even aware of the issues they raise.

Again, what happened to David foreshadows what happened to Jesus. We read in Matthew 26 that after Jesus' arrest the entire council, the Sanhedrin, tried to coordinate false testimony against Jesus. Their goal was not truth, but to put Him to death. Despite many lying witnesses, they couldn't arrange a coherent accusation. Finally, two came forward and reported that Jesus had said, "I am able to destroy the temple of God, and to rebuild it in three days." When Jesus said the high priest would see the Son of Man seated at God's right hand and coming in the clouds, the high priest accused him of blasphemy. He and the council concluded that Jesus deserved death (Matthew 26:57–66).

Prayers

Almighty God, our Heavenly Father, we come before you with humble hearts. As we read Your Word, we ask that You would fill us with Your love, peace and joy, reminding us that You are our refuge and strength.

In Psalm 35:11, You say, "They like lions roaring, they shall render their talk as a devouring flame."

We are humbled and reminded that You alone have the power to bring judgement and justice. Help us to remember that only You have the final say. Show us how to live justly and to protect those who are vulnerable and in need of Your mercy.

We pray that You would provide us with fearlessness to stand courageously against the injustices of this world. May we have resolution to follow Your will and to speak truth in love.

In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

DAY 12

Verse 12

12 They rewarded me evil for good *to* the spoiling of my soul.

Their treatment of him will result – if unchecked – in the **spoiling** of his **soul**. That is, in the *bereavement* of his soul – as in his very life is in jeopardy because of their lies and unjust treatment of David.

And then David mentions that they take his good that he's done for them and they pay him back – not in kind. Not with good – but with **evil**.

David had been good to those who now sought to kill him. Twice, David could have killed Saul (1 Samuel 24; 26). On one occasion Saul even admitted that David was a better man than he (1 Samuel 24:17). Yet he continued to oppose David, as did his men. Instead of responding to his kindness with good, David's enemies did him wrong. Such ungrateful treatment saddened David deeply.

Essentially, all humanity has repaid God's goodness with evil. God created a beautiful world for mankind to enjoy. He faithfully causes the seasons to come and go in turn. His faithfulness is renewed every morning. He provides harvests and shelter for all. He demonstrated love toward everyone by giving His Son while everyone was lost in sin (Romans 5:8). Nevertheless, mankind has spurned the Lord's love and goodness. Isaiah 53:6 portrays all mankind as turning away from God and going astray. When in His goodness and grace Jesus came to earth to seek and to save sinners, the world rejected Him and ultimately nailed Him to a cross (Matthew 16:21).

Prayers

Gracious Lord,

We bless You for Your mercy and loving kindness shown in Your word.

We are grateful for Your promise in Psalm 35:12 that You will strengthen us and help us in our darkest days. We come to You, with humble hearts, asking You to guide us and protect us from all dangers.

Help us to rely on You in times of distress, and may we find courage and endurance in You, O Lord. Give us the wisdom to discern good from evil, and the willingness to take on the struggles of life in submission to You.

Bless us with peace and assurance, that we may live in joy and gratitude.
May Your presence with us in every situation bring us joy.

We thank You, Lord, for the privilege to come to You in prayer and to share our sorrows and joys with You. In Jesus' name we pray, Amen.

David's Seeing Their Good | 13-14

So, there's the sharp contrast – **but as for me**. In contrast to what his enemies are doing – he would treat their loss as if it were his own.

DAY 13

Verse 13

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.

So, there's the sharp contrast – **but as for me**. In contrast to what his enemies are doing – he would treat their loss as if it were his own.

Sackcloth was the garment worn by mourners. He mourned their sickness. He refrained from food when this would happen to show the seriousness of the situation in his own heart.

The part about his **prayer** returning to his **own bosom** might be him saying something like *"if what I'm saying here is not the truth, let God not listen to my prayers."* Or maybe it's emphasizing how much David was praying for his enemies.

In sadness (Psalm 35:11–12), David reflects on the compassionate treatment he showed his foes before they turned against him. He does not identify them, but it's likely these were people aligned with either Saul (1 Samuel 19:1–2) or Absalom (2 Samuel 15:13–14). They may have been

members of the court or soldiers in the army. David had served in both, prior to becoming king. Whoever they were, David had shown personal concern for them. He followed the typical process of mourning; he fasted and prayed for them. He was a devoted friend to those individuals. Yet they turned on him and even sought his death.

Again, David's actions prefigure those of Jesus. Jesus "went about doing good and healing all who were oppressed by the devil, for God was with him" (Acts 10:38). Jesus opened His arms to the children, healed the deaf and the blind, cleansed lepers, and raised the dead, never doing harm to anyone. Yet His lifestyle of consistent kindness was met with clamors for His death (Mark 15:13). At Pentecost, Peter told the crowd of Jews that Jesus was crucified and killed by the hands of lawless men (Acts 2:23).

Prayers

Heavenly Father,

I come to you with a heart of thanks for the peace that you provide even in difficult times.

In Psalm 35:13, you encourage us to put our trust in you, and I want to thank you for giving me the courage to do just that, no matter the situation.

Thank you, Lord, for making a path out of seemingly impossible circumstances. Thank you for your faithfulness in strengthening me, inspiring me and guiding my heart when I lean on you and trust.

I pray that you will remind me to turn to you not to myself as I face challenging times. Help me to trust and depend on you in the process.

In Jesus' name I pray. Amen.

DAY 14

Verse 14

14 I behaved myself as though *he had been* my friend or brother:
I bowed down heavily, as one that mourneth *for his* mother.

And there is no greater loss in life than to lose one's family. And it's that kind of reaction that David would have for the misfortune of these people. He treated and thought of these people like his own family.

David continues his description of how he showed compassion on those who have now turned against him. He grieved for them in their struggles, as he would for an intimate family member. Yet now, they repay his good with evil and seek to kill him (Psalm 35:11–13).

Such compassion mirrors the concern Jesus showed for Jerusalem. He lamented: "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the city that kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to it! How often would I have gathered your children together as a hen gathers her brood under her wings, and you were not willing!" (Matthew 23:37). The apostle Paul, too, showed compassion. He writes in Romans 10:1: "Brothers, my heart's desire and prayer to God for [the Jews] is that they may be saved." In Jude 1:23 the apostle Jude urges Christians to "save others by snatching them out of the fire; to others show mercy [kindness, compassion] with fear, hating even the garment stained by the flesh."

Prayers

Dear Lord,

We offer our praises to you, our gracious God. We thank you for the mercy and tenderness that you have provided to us throughout our lives.

We come to you today humbly asking for your help and guidance. Allow us to stand up for the righteous and come to their aid in their quest for justice.

Teach us to be brave in the face of opposition and allow us to persevere without worry. Grant us the wisdom and strength to defend the weak and vulnerable against injustices.

As we pray to you, give us the courage to fight against the wicked and to execute your judgement. May our words be righteous and our actions be full of justice and fairness.

We know that with your guidance, we will be able to stand up and speak for the oppressed and allow them to have victory. Help us to demonstrate your love for all your people and to bring comfort to those in need.

We ask all of this in your holy name. Amen.

Enemies' Abuse | 15-16

And so, given David's real heartfelt sorrow at every loss these people may experience in times past, it's awful to see how they are now treating him in verses 15 and 16.

DAY 15

Verse 15

15 But in mine adversity they rejoiced, and gathered themselves together:
yea, the abjects [*i.e., stricken/smitten*] gathered themselves together
against me, and I knew *it* not;
they did tear *me*, and ceased not:

So, when the enemies were sorrowful, David was sorrowful. But now, when David was sorrowful, the enemies... **rejoiced!** They got together as a pack of lions to **tear** at their prey.

The former friends who turned against David (Psalm 35:11–14) are celebrating as David has trouble. "Stumbling" in this verse suggests calamity, as in Job 18:12 and Jeremiah 20:10. David also refers to a group of strangers, calling them "wretches," which may also be translated as "those crippled" or "ruffians." The main implication is that of coarse, immoral men. This mob is constantly harassing David, including insults intended to tear him apart (Psalm 35:16). Yet, David did not know why they were behaving in such an evil way. He had done nothing to hurt them. Indeed, he had prayed for them. When he was expelled from Saul's court and branded as a criminal (1 Samuel 19:1–2), these former allies were happy and gleefully persecuted him.

Persecuted believers may identify with David. Although they share the gospel because God's love compels them to do so, they encounter hostility. The apostle Peter tells his readers not to be surprised at the fiery trial when it comes upon them. In that specific context, this might have included the threat of being burned at the stake. He tells them to rejoice if they are insulted for the name of Christ, they are blessed (1 Peter 4:12–14).

Prayers

Heavenly Father,

We thank you for your strength and your power. You are mighty and we place our hope in you.

As we read Psalm 35:15, we see the beauty in your faithfulness and protection. You save us from our trials and tribulations and guard us from all iniquity.

Help us to be thankful for all that you do for us, Lord. Let us pray to you boldly, without fear of not being heard. We pray that you teach us to trust in you more than in our own devices.

Help us to seek you and your promises when our confidence flags. Guide us back to the truth of your Word – that if we trust in you, we will not be shaken.

We search for understanding and seek shelter in the knowledge of your protection. May we revel in your grace when we think our ability isn't enough.

We offer up to you our thanks and praise - and demonstrate our devotion with our actions.

In Jesus name,

Amen.

DAY 16

Verse 16

¹⁶ With hypocritical mockers in feasts, they gnashed upon me with their teeth.

David was at their mercy. In verse 15 he's being torn at like prey by a predator. But in verse 16 he's like the food at a **feast** being **gnashed upon** by the teeth of these godless **mockers**

David describes his foes like drunken, out-of-control fools completely lost in idiocy during some wild party. The Hebrew words used here imply godlessness and senseless babbling. These men made David the object of their cruel jokes. Symbolically, like wild animals, they snapped at him with their teeth.

Jesus, too, underwent cruel jesting. Mark 15:16–20 reports the profane treatment He received from the soldiers after His arrest. They clothed Him in a purple cloak, put a makeshift crown of thorns on His head, and laughingly called Him King of the Jews. They struck Him on the head with a reed, spat on Him, knelt in sarcastic homage, mocked Him, then crucified Him (Matthew 27:27–31). Stephen also experienced the kind of animal-like treatment David received. When Stephen testified about Jesus, those who were eager to murder him "ground their teeth at him" (Acts 7:54). Christians should not be surprised when antichristian people ridicule or even attack.

Prayers

Heavenly Father,

We come before you today in gratitude for the blessings you provide. Thank you for always being near. We pray that we may rest in the refreshing shade of your protection, and not be dismayed by the difficulties of this world.

Bless us with the courage to trust in your faithfulness even in times of doubt. Grant us the strength to accept the struggles that come our way, trusting that our journey with you will bring greater freedom and joy in the end.

Enable us to share the light of your hope with those who are walking through dark and despairing times. Help us to reach out in compassion to those who are hurting and give us the words to encourage them on their paths.

We praise you for your unwavering love, expressed in actions like those stated in Psalm 35:16: "Let my vindicators be strong. Let them come forward and speak for me." May we never forget your presence in our lives, and follow you with love in all we do. In Jesus' name we pray, Amen.

Petition | 17

DAY 17

Verse 17

And so, David moves on to verse 17 where he continues speaking of predator vs. prey. But now he's moved from his lament to another petition.

17 Lord, how long wilt thou look on? rescue my soul from their destructions, my darling from the lions.

How long is God going to watch as David is – as it were – torn and gnashed upon by these enemies of his?

And again he brings in the concept of ferocious beasts when he mentions that he needs to be rescued from **lions**. And of course, he's not speaking of literal physical lions – he's speaking of his enemies – which are acting like lions.

And David's **darling** there means "only." He's speaking of his life as it truly is – his only one on this earth. He has no other.

This type of question is not really a question, but an appeal for God's quick intervention (Psalm 13:1; 79:5; 90:13). David pleads with the Lord for rescue from destruction at the hand of his enemies. While David's prayer is a request, it also implies a level of certainty. David does not ask "if" God will save, rather he wonders when the rescue will come. His faith was strong, but his patience was weakening.

Psalm 22:20 makes a similar statement using much of the same imagery. David knows his life is "precious," both to himself and to God. He compares his enemies to wild animals tearing and attacking. In David's own life, he'd seen the dangers posed by predators such as lions (1 Samuel 17:36) but was able to overcome them with God's help.

Often, when a trial strikes a believer, it is hard to wait on the Lord (Psalm 33:20). But the Lord's timing often differs from that of His children. What we think of as delays are opportunities to draw closer to Him, to trust Him to fulfil His will, and to develop character and hope. The apostle Paul writes: "We rejoice in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, and endurance produces character, and character produces hope, and hope does not put us to shame, because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us" (Romans 5:3–5).

Prayers

Heavenly Father, bring us into your loving arms and renew to us the joy of Your salvation.

Let us stand firm and have faith in Your good timing in our lives. Help us not to worry or stress over our situations, but rather trust that You are always there and that You are working all things together for our good.

Inspire us, Lord, to give of ourselves for the good of our neighbors. May we approach them with an open heart and the abundant grace of our Savior Jesus Christ. Open Your eyes of blessing upon us, so that all of our endeavors may bear much fruit for Your kingdom.

As we fervently seek You, Lord, may You provide us with a deep sense of security and faith that everything is in Your powerful and perfect hands. Fill us with your peace so that we can take all of our worries and anxieties to You.

Protect us and illumine our paths so that we may know and love You more and more. Quiet our spirits before You, O Lord, and let us be filled with the joy of Your song for us: "Those who honor me I will honor" (Psalm 35:17).

Praise | 18

DAY 18

Verse 18

But just when it seems that things are as dark as they can be, David breaks into praise in verse 18.

¹⁸ I will give thee thanks in the great congregation:

I will praise thee among much people.

So, David is confident in God's help and so, he takes the time to **praise** God for future help that he believes will come.

David promises to thank the Lord publicly for delivering him from his enemies. The "great congregation" and "the mighty throng" seem to refer to the assembly of worshipers in the tabernacle. David's first act of praising the Lord would be private (Psalm 35:9–10). Proper worship naturally begins in a person's innermost thoughts and motivations, then expresses itself

outwardly. So, David's second act of praise would be public; in fact, he would make a point of celebrating God's goodness among others.

Praise ought to be both private and public. A believer should thank the Lord daily for His many blessings. Also, if opportunity presents itself, he should praise God when his fellow Christians gather for worship. In 1 Thessalonians 5:18 Paul admonishes the believers at Thessalonica to "give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus." A Christian often seeks to know God's will for his life, and one aspect of the Lord's will is clear in 1 Thessalonians 5:18. He wants every believer to give thanks.

Prayers

Dear Lord,

Thank You for being with us in the troubles that come our way. As trouble comes, please help us find strength and courage in You so that we can stand firm and steadfast.

We come to You now with Psalm 35:18 on our lips, asking You to "plead our cause and redeem us." Be our advocate and defender, as we cannot do it on our own. You have promised to be a just and righteous judge, and we ask You to prove it in our circumstances, showing us Your faithfulness.

We trust in You to turn our mourning into songs of joy. Help us to remember the joy comes in the morning after the storm of trials. With You we will always find a way to move forward and shine Your light in the darkness.

We commit our lives to You, knowing that all things work for good eventually. We look to You and Your will, and we join our voices with the Psalmist to declare that You are "our Rock of refuge."

In Jesus' name, Amen.

Petition | 19

DAY 19

Verse 19

I think we all know what it's like to find some real grace to believe God for protection or whatever else... only lapse into fear and doubt.

And when that happens, it's completely appropriate to once again petition the Lord – which is exactly what we see happening in verse 19.

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.

Again, **without a cause**. That seems to be what is bothering David so much about this. There's no cause for his enemies' abuse. In fact, just the opposite is the case – *they* have reason to *thank* him for the good he's done to them.

Those who hated David often worked against him, plotting for his death (1 Samuel 19:1–2; 2 Samuel 15:13–14). He prays the Lord would deny them an opportunity to celebrate his demise. In earlier verses, David pointed out that his enemies had no valid reason to oppose him (Psalm 35:11–16). He had been kind to them, and they repaid his goodness with betrayal and evil.

In the context of David's culture, "to wink the eye" meant signals between criminals up to no good. This imagery is used several times in the book of Proverbs (Proverbs 6:13; 10:10; 16:30). This is a figure of speech implying people using secretive methods to plot another person's misery. Apparently, David's enemies were confident he would fall to their slander and attacks

(Psalm 35:4, 7). These enemies failed to see that the Lord was on David's side and would not let him suffer defeat or disgrace.

Jesus predicted undeserved persecution for His followers. He said, "If you were of the world, the world would love you as its own; but because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hates you" (John 15:19). Furthermore, He said, "But the word that is written in their Law must be fulfilled: 'They hated me without a cause'" (John 15:25). Most interpreters believe Jesus was citing this very verse when making His remarks.

Prayers

Almighty and Everlasting Father,

We come before you in heartfelt prayer, humbly asking for your protection and strength in times of difficulty.

As David wrote in Psalm 35:19, we humbly ask that you "Let not them that are mine enemies wrongfully rejoice over me: neither let them wink with the eye that hate me without a cause."

We know, Lord, that our enemies seek to hurt us and to take away the joy and peace you have so mercifully granted us. Guard our hearts from discouragement and worry in the midst of these attacks. Strengthen us Lord to keep us from sinning out of our own hurt or anger.

Help us to demonstrate your love and grace even to our enemies, Lord, so that they may see your power and come to share in your glorious love.

We trust in your faithfulness, Lord, and are thankful for all that you provide.

In Jesus's name we pray,

Amen.

Lament | 20-21

DAY 20

Verse 20

And so this renewed petition concerning deliverance from these men seems to launch David back into bringing these men back into focus with another section of lament in verses 20 and 21.

²⁰ For they speak not peace:
but they devise deceitful matters against *them that are* quiet in the land. Once more the language of complaint. David's enemies, though they have driven him from the court, and made him a fugitive and a wanderer, were not yet satisfied. They did not speak him peace. They continued to scheme against him. But they devise deceitful matters against *them that are* quiet in the land. David, if let alone, was willing enough to have remained "quiet in the land." He was a fugitive and an outlaw; but, could he have obtained a safe refuge - the cave of Adullam, or any other - would gladly have remained peacefully within it. But his enemies would not allow him to remain quiet. They stirred up the jealousy and hatred of Saul by false tales, and caused him to be "hunted upon the mountains"

Earlier verses noted the idea of enemies using lies and invented accusations (Psalm 35:11). That was in the context of attacks on David, himself (Psalm 35:12–16). Here, David describes the same foes as raising false charges against peaceful people. Though many enemies persecuted

David, others in Israel supported him. Here, these are portrayed as quiet people, who honored the Lord and led righteous lives.

In times where many ignored God's will and followed evil leaders (2 Samuel 15:13–14), those who lived in peace and followed God (Lamentations 3:26; Romans 12:18) were a righteous remnant of what Israel was meant to be. Throughout Israel's long history the Lord always preserved at least a handful of those who truly honored Him. Elijah thought he was the only one left, telling God, "I have been very jealous for the LORD, the God of hosts. For the people of Israel have forsaken your covenant, thrown down your altars, and killed your prophets with the sword, and I, even I only, am left, and they seek my life, to take it away" (1 Kings 19:10). However, the Lord responded: "Yet I will leave seven thousand in Israel [a remnant], all the knees that have not bowed to Baal, and every mouth that has not kissed him" (1 Kings 19:18).

Prayers

Heavenly Father,

You are the God of justice and we thank You for defending us and providing us with help in our time of need. Teach us to rely on You and shine Your light upon us so we know when Your protection is near.

Thank You for being our Refuge and our Strength as You have promised us in Psalm 35:20. Remind us to seek Your help in all difficulties and to trust in Your faithfulness as we strive for holiness in our lives.

Help us to take every opportunity to give you thanks and praise for Your guidance and faithfulness. Even when we face difficulties we know that our hope and protection comes from You.

Strengthen us with Your Spirit to stay true to our beliefs and help us to glorify and honor You with our lives.

We pray this in the Name of Jesus, Amen.

DAY 21

Verse 21

21 Yea, they opened their mouth wide against me,
and said, Aha, aha, our eye hath seen *it*.

Our eye hath seen it - We are not dependent on the reports of others. We have seen it with our own eyes. We have found you out. We cannot be mistaken in regard to it. The reference is to some supposed "detection" of misconduct on the part of David, and the joy and triumph of such a supposed detection.

David's enemies lied and invented false accusations (Psalm 35:11–16). They claimed to have seen him commit a crime or moral failure. The word translated "aha!" is he'āh' and is used for emphasis (Psalm 35:25), much like a modern person making a sarcastic laughing sound. In this case, the liars who attack David say something to the effect of "Hah! We saw him do it!" Of course, they saw no such thing.

These wicked slanderers resemble the false witnesses who testified against Jesus. They, too, were deceitful and depraved (Proverbs 6:16–19). Those who make up lies to harm others follow the lead of the Devil (Exodus 20:16). The religious leaders who plotted to kill Jesus thought of themselves as children of Abraham, founder of the Hebrew people. Jesus corrected them, saying, "You are of your father the devil, and your will is to do your father's desires. He was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he lies, he

speaks out of his own character, for he is a liar and the father of lies" (John 8:44).

Revelation 21:8 places "liar" in the category of sins which marks an unbeliever. A person whose life is characterized by dishonesty or deception—and especially with slander of others—proves they live in opposition to God and His will. The same fate is ascribed to those defined as cowardly, the faithless, the detestable, murderers, the sexually immoral, sorcerers, and idolaters; all of whom will be in the lake of fire.

Prayers

God of justice,

We thank you for your gift of life and for your hand of protection over us. We ask that you surround us with your grace and mercy, and guide our hearts to do your will.

Show us how to be wise and prudent when it comes to our judgements, and help us to always remember that your justice is perfect and subject to no one.

As we remember and humbly recite the words of Psalm 35:21, "O Lord, let your hand be against the one who wrongs me", may you bring restoration and peace to those who have been wronged.

May we never forget that you are the ultimate source of justice, as that is the mission of Your holy name.

Amen.

Petition | 22-27

DAY 22

Verse 22

22 *This* thou hast seen, O LORD:
keep not silence: O Lord, be not far from me.

This thou hast seen. They had falsely accused him, but God, who knows all things, knew that he did not falsely accuse them, nor make them worse than really they were. They had carried on their plots against him with a great degree of secrecy

When the unbelieving world invents lies and slander, it's comforting to know that God is not fooled (Hebrews 4:13). David rested assured that the Lord has seen the evil actions and words which unrighteous people wielded against him (Psalm 35:19–21). Every believer can rest in that same comfort: God sees what is happening. No one lifts a finger against a believer without the Lord's awareness of it (Matthew 10:29–31). God's "closeness" in these moments implies His presence and assurance.

Early in Israel's history, God saw their suffering in Egypt. He said, "I have surely seen the affliction of my people who are in Egypt and have heard their cry because of their taskmasters. I know their sufferings" (Exodus 3:7). He also planned to act. "I have come down to deliver them out of the hand of the Egyptians," He said (Exodus 3:8).

As in earlier verses, David asks the Lord to work against his enemies and not be silent. When Stephen was being martyred, he looked up and saw "the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God" (Acts 7:56). Obviously, the Lord was watching what was unfolding. He was ready to receive Stephen

into His presence. The Lord's all-seeing eyes should be dreaded by the wicked but treasured by the righteous.

Prayers

Almighty and everlasting God,

We praise you for your faithfulness and mercy upon us all. We thank you for your loving-kindness that has surrounded us each day.

Grant us the courage to stand firm in our faith, trusting in your promises to bring us victory over the enemy. Bless us with the spirit of fearlessness and hope and may our eyes be opened to the joys of the day, free from worry and trust in you.

We are grateful, Lord, for the joys your Word in Psalm 35:22 brings us,

"You will save me, Lord, from those who attack me; you will rescue me from the oppressor."

In your love and power, bind us to your care. Let your name be glorified in our lives and our hearts so that we can remain firm in our faith and stand victorious against any adversary.

All honor and glory be to your holy name, Amen.

DAY 23

Verse 23

23 Stir up thyself, and awake to my judgement,

even unto my cause, my God and my Lord.

David call on God to awake, not as though he were really asleep, but as a sort of stirring appeal to him to arise and manifest himself. *Even unto my cause, my God and my Lord. "Awake," i.e., "to judge my cause - to acquit me, and condemn my enemies"*

David calls upon the Lord to take swift action and vindicate him. David's enemies had been gloating over their presumed victory. They thought they could damage his reputation by accusing him of false crimes. But David knew he was innocent, and he trusted the Lord to clear his name (Psalm 35:19–21). Here, David calls on God, in personal terms. His perception of the Lord was not distant, but intimate. David knew the Lord saw both his enemies' wicked deeds and his own innocence. This made him confident that God would ultimately prove him correct: to "vindicate" David (Psalm 35:24).

The request for God to "awake" is not meant as a literal reference to sleep (Judges 5:12; Joel 1:5). The imagery is part of a figure of speech asking someone to move from inaction to action (Psalm 44:23; 108:2; Matthew 24:42).

A believer's prayer should always be like that of a child who is intimately connected to their father. Paul tells the Galatian believers that they received the Spirit of His Son into their hearts, crying, "Abba! Father!" (Galatians 4:6). The name "Abba" reflects the simple cry of a young child, and it could be translated "Dad!" or "Daddy!" Believers can address God as their Father and believe that as a loving Father He will always hear their prayers and do what is best for them (Romans 8:15).

Prayers

Dear Lord of Heaven and Earth,

We come before you with thanks and awe, thanking you for your eternal promises revealed through psalm 35:23.

We thank you that you fight on our behalf, for you alone have the power to vindicate and save us. You guard us and protect us in times of trouble and are our divine defender.

We humbly ask that you would continue to fight for us and be a shield of divine protection. Grant us the wisdom needed to make decisions in life, and keep us strong in all the battles that we face.

We trust in your protection, earnestly praying that we may live our lives in accordance to your will.

In Jesus' Name,

Amen.

DAY 24

Verse 24

24 Judge me, O LORD my God, according to thy righteousness;
and let them not rejoice over me.

We know that the soul's advocate God will plead its cause with the eloquence of love. His interposition and vindication will clear us. God has seen! God will not keep silent! He is not far away!

David is keenly aware that his enemies would celebrate if he were disgraced (Psalm 35:11–16). Therefore, he prays again, asking his Lord and God (Psalm 35:23) to "vindicate" him. The Hebrew word here simply refers to judgement. It is clear, though, that David is asking God to judge in his favour. To vindicate is "to justify, prove correct, absolve from blame." David is praying that the Lord would make it clear, to all, that these accusations

are false. Earlier references in the same psalm referred to literal battle (Psalm 35:1–10). Part of the "vindication" David seeks is worldly victory, as a sign that God is with him.

The context for this intervention is God's righteous character. Because the Lord is righteous—true, moral, and good—He will not allow the wicked to go unpunished (Proverbs 11:21; Numbers 14:18). Nor will he let His people suffer disgrace without it being avenged (Deuteronomy 32:35). One day, the Lord will descend from heaven with His mighty angels and execute eternal destruction on the wicked. At that time, He will be glorified in His people (2 Thessalonians 1:5–10).

Unbelievers nailed Jesus to a cross, but God vindicated Him by raising Him from the dead to sit at His right hand in glory (Acts 5:30–31). When He comes to earth again, Christ will wear a crown and brandish a sword used to utterly defeat His enemies (Revelation 19:11–16). God is too righteous to allow the wicked to rejoice over His wrongfully maligned people—they may think they are "getting away with it," for now, but their fate is only delayed (2 Peter 3:4, 10).

Prayers

Help me Lord, to always turn to you in times of need. Maybe when I feel alone, afraid, uncertain or discouraged, give me the strength to confidently put my trust in you that everything will be ok.

May I feel your protection as I cry out to you and hear your kind voice reassuring me that I am never alone.

Uphold me according to your promises, Lord, and allow me to experience your unfailing love even in the darkest of times. Show me your faithfulness and help me rely on your love.

Help me to stand and declare, as Psalm 35:24 commands, that I will praise you, Lord, as you have rescued me. May your power and presence fill me with courage as I proclaim and affirm your goodness.

In your strength and grace, may I be inspired to walk in faith every day of my life. Amen.

DAY 25

Verse 25

25 Let them not say in their hearts, Ah, so would we have it: let them not say, We have swallowed him up.

much more that he might not be reduced to such extremity that they should say, We have swallowed him up; for then they will reflect upon God himself. But, on the contrary, that they might be ashamed and brought to confusion together

As he continues his prayer, David again asks the Lord to prevent his enemies from obtaining their wicked desire. In this case, that quest is to see David destroyed by lies (Psalm 35:11–24) and even to be killed (Psalm 35:1–10).

The word "Aha!" comes from the Hebrew he'āh' and is used as a cry of emphasis (Psalm 35:21). The celebration David imagines from his enemies is much like saying "Hah! We got what we wanted!" These foes were consumed with a desire to ruin David, but he believed God would thwart that effort.

The phrase "swallowed up" implies something being totally overwhelmed and covered (Numbers 16:32; Isaiah 25:8; 2 Corinthians 5:4). David's enemies may think they can overwhelm him like a predator gulping down a

tiny animal. Yet David knows it is God who can "swallow up" these wicked people. David's foes were fighting a losing battle. God had chosen David to be king over all Israel (1 Samuel 16:13).

The wicked men who crucified Jesus must have thought they had seen the last of Him. But three days later, God raised Jesus from the dead (Galatians 1:1; 1 Peter 1:21). Jesus lives forever, and someday He will rule the nations from the throne of His father David. The enemies of God and His people may gloat for a moment, but ultimately every knee will bow and "every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father" (Philippians 2:11).

Prayers

Heavenly Father,

We humbly come to you this day in prayer. We thank you for the many blessings that You have given us and for Your love and mercy. We praise You for all You have done and for guiding us in our daily lives.

As we read Psalm 35:25, we find great encouragement in knowing that You are a Protector and Guardian of all who wait upon You. You protect us in times of distress and hear our every prayer, even when we cannot find the words to express our needs.

We recognize that our hope is in You and ask that You strengthen us with Your Spirit and guide our path. May we continue to seek Your will and place our trust in You.

Help us to remain focused on You, remaining thankful for all You are and all You have done. We ask for Your peace and comfort in all our suffering.

In Jesus' name,

Amen.

DAY 26

Verse 26

26 Let them be ashamed and brought to confusion together that rejoice at mine hurt: let them be clothed with shame and dishonour that magnify *themselves* against me.

as before, Psa 35:4); he desires that his innocency might be so cleared that they might be ashamed of the lies with which they had loaded him, that his interest might be so confirmed that they might be ashamed of their designs against him and their expectations of his ruin, that they might either be brought to that shame which would be a step towards their reformation or that, that might be their portion which would be their everlasting misery.,

But, that's not what David wants to be focusing on – the protection of his own life and the prevention of his enemies winning. No, he wants to get to the joy that God's people should have in God delivering David from trouble in verse

Again, David asks the Lord to put his enemies to shame (Psalm 35:4) and completely disappoint them. They want David to be killed and disgraced (Psalm 35:11–16). David longs to be vindicated so clearly that his enemies will be humiliated for what they have attempted to do. They have been hoping for David's reputation to be shattered and his life to end; David prays these foes will be disappointed and unable to celebrate his downfall.

This is one of the "imprecatory psalms," or "imprecatory prayers," which call for God's active, immediate judgement on wicked people. While it's tempting to claim that David is merely looking forward to God's eternal

judgement, or merely stating God's distaste for sin, there's no question his songs are active requests that God act against his enemies. It should also be noted that Paul considered false preaching about salvation so offensive that he announced: "If anyone is preaching to you a gospel contrary to the one you received, let him be accursed" (Galatians 1:8, 9).

In David's spiritual context, and his era, use of imprecatory prayer made sense. God was using the earthly nation of Israel as His means to bring about salvation. But for Christians who are saved by grace, this is not an approach we are meant to take. Now that Christ's sacrifice is accomplished, we should not pray for judgement on the wicked, but pray for their salvation (Matthew 5:44–48; Luke 6:27–38). Vengeance belongs to the Lord (Romans 12:17–21), and He will execute judgement in due time (John 3:36).

Prayers

Oh Lord, thank You for holding us up in our time of trouble. May we put our trust and hope in You, knowing that our situation is not too difficult for You to work out.

We know that we are blessed under Your loving hand. You bring justice to the righteous and peace to those who seek it.

We praise You for Your faithfulness, that You are ever present with us for our healing, both spiritually and physically.

Help us to overcome our fear and put our faith in You. Help us to turn away from worry and focus solely on You and Your promises.

Fill us with Your spirit of peace so that we may remain steadfast, comforted by the truth that You will never abandon us. Let us proclaim that in You we are saved, freed from our sin and all that troubles us.

Amen.

DAY 27

Verse 27

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

When David's enemies are "ashamed and put to confusion" (ver. 26), his friends will naturally "shout for joy, and be glad." This they will do, partly, out of sympathy; partly because their own interests are bound up with those of their leader. Had Saul captured David when he "hunted him upon the mountains," the fate of David's followers would have been death or exile.

Yea, let them say continually, Let the Lord be magnified, which hath pleasure in the prosperity of his servant; literally, **in the peace of his servant**. God desires that David's present troubles should cease, and that he should enjoy a time of rest and tranquillity. This was granted him, to some extent, at Ziklag (1 Samuel 27:4-7), but more fully when he came into his kingdom (2 Samuel 5:1-16).

Prior verses included some of David's "imprecatory prayers:" requests for God to actively, immediately judge his enemies. For the man anointed to lead God's chosen people, in an earthly nation meant to produce the Messiah, these types of prayers made a certain amount of sense. That does not mean that Christians, today, are expected to pray for their enemies' immediate destruction (John 18:36; Matthew 5:44-48). Instead, we're to note that God will enact vengeance in His own time and leave it at that (Romans 12:17-21).

After those harsh words, David's psalm ends on a positive note. David has recently asked God to prevent his enemies from celebrating his demise; in contrast, he asks the Lord to cause those who love David to "shout for joy and be glad." Not everyone in Israel opposed David; many hoped he would be vindicated. Trusting in the Lord to prove him blameless (Psalm 35:23–24), David anticipates a great swell of joy in the hearts of those who sided with him.

However, David is not asking for his allies to glory in him. He wants them to ascribe glory to God, praising Him for what His deliverance of David implies. Although the Lord appointed David to rule as king over all Israel (1 Samuel 16:13), David perceived himself as the Lord's servant. Such humility characterized the apostle Paul. In his letter to the Philippians, he identified himself and Timothy as "servants of Christ Jesus" (Philippians 1:1). The temptation exists today among believers to think of themselves as "important figures" in the spiritual world, or even to see God as their servant. Instead, believers should all humbly see ourselves as God's servants and endeavor to glorify Him.

Prayers

O Lord, Ruler of the universe,

You alone are our protector and support.

We turn to You in times of distress and in times of joy alike.

We seek that perfect peace that only You can bring.

We thank You for Your mercy and for Your steadfast love.

We praise You for Your faithfulness and Your justice as written in Psalm 35:27.

Help us to follow Your commands and to keep our spirits high in these trying times.

Let us turn away from our misgivings and temptations, and instead focus on You and Your will for us.

We know that in You alone can we find help and restoration.

We pledge to remain faithful and devoted to You as You show us Your love and mercy in all circumstances.

May Your presence bless us with peace and joy, no matter what obstacles stand in our way.

Guide our hearts and actions, Lord, that we may live in holiness and righteousness.

We thank You, Almighty Father, for all You have done in our lives.

Amen.

Praise | 28

DAY 28

Verse 28

And so, with that, David can end this psalm with praise on his lips.

²⁸ And my tongue shall speak of thy righteousness *and* of thy praise all the day long.

David means to premise perpetual gratitude and thankfulness. He will not merely return thanks publicly, once for all, in the great congregation (ver. 18), but will continue to praise God always.

Believing the Lord would vindicate him and put his enemies to shame, David resolves to broadcast the Lord's righteousness and to praise Him continually. David does not respond to suffering and persecution with complaint or regret; he anticipates that the Lord will make all things right.

Before the matter is settled, David already has it in his mind to tell others how the Lord acted righteously on his behalf, and that he would praise God continually.

The apostle Peter encourages persecuted Hebrew Christians to look beyond their suffering and joyfully anticipate the victorious conclusion. He writes: "in this you rejoice, though now for a little while, if necessary, you have grieved by various trials, so that the tested genuineness of your faith—more precious than gold that perishes though it is tested by fire—may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ" (1 Peter 1:6–7). No wonder Paul exhorts believers to "rejoice always, pray without ceasing, and give thanks in all circumstances" (1 Thessalonians 5:16–18)!

Prayers

Oh Lord,

We implore you to give us the strength to bring glory to your name.

In Psalm 35:28 we read your words - "My tongue shall speak of thy righteousness and of thy praise all the day long."

Help us to live each day as a song of praise to you.

Keep us ever mindful of your presence and show us the way to bring glory to your name.

Give us the perseverance and faith to remain steadfast in our words and deeds, always extolling your name, in righteousness and in joy.

Let us seek to glorify your name in our every action, word, and thought, and let us devote ourselves wholeheartedly to your will.

We thank you, Lord, for inspiring us to strive for righteousness and to bring honor to your name.

Amen.

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