

PSALM 35:1-28

CHAPTER STUDIES ON THE PSALTER

"The Psalm is the appeal to heaven of a bold heart and a clear conscience that is irritated beyond measure by oppression and malice."

A Psalm of David. This is all we know concerning this Psalm. Internal evidence, however, seems to fix the date of its composition as the troubled times when Saul hunted David, while those who fawned on the cruel king slandered the innocent object of his wrath. Or it may be the days of frequent insurrections in David's old age. The Psalm is the appeal to heaven of a bold heart and a clear conscience that is irritated beyond measure by oppression and malice. Beyond a doubt, David's Lord may be seen with the spiritual eye.

(Ps. 35:1) Plead my cause, O LORD, with them that strive with me. Plead against those who plead against me. Strive with my strivers; contend with my contenders. If they urge their suit in the law court, Lord, meet them there and beat them with their own weapons. Every saint of God will have this privilege; the Advocate of the saints will meet the believer's accuser (1 John 2:1).

Fight against them that fight against me. If my adversaries try force and fraud, be a match for them, oppose Your strength to their strength. Jesus does this for all His beloved; He is both intercessor and champion! Whatever aid they need,

they will receive from Him. Whatever way they are assaulted, they will be effectively defended. Let us leave our case in the Lord's hand. Vain is man's help, but ever effectual is heaven's interposition. What we ask for as a favor may be regarded as a promise. In judgment we will have a divine advocate, in warfare a divine protection.

(Ps. 35:2) Take hold of shield and buckler, and stand up for mine help. In vivid metaphor, the Lord is pictured armed for battle and interposing Himself between His servant and the enemy. The two defensive weapons show the greater and lesser protections of Providence, and by the Lord's standing up is meant His active and zealous preservation of His servant in peril. This poetic imagery shows how the psalmist realized God's existence and power, and that he thought of Him as a real and actual person working for His afflicted.

(Ps. 35:3) Draw out also the spear, and stop the way against them that persecute me. . Before the enemy comes close, the Lord can push them off, as with a long spear. To stave off trouble is no small act of lovingkindness; it is like a valiant warrior who, with his lance, blocks the passage

and keeps the enemy back until the weaker soldiers escape. The Lord often holds the believer's foes at bay until we get our breath or flee. He often gives the foes of Zion some other work to do, and so gives rest to His church. What a glorious idea! Jehovah blocks the way of persecutors, holds them at the spear's end, and gives the hunted saint time to elude the pursuit.

Say unto my soul, I am thy salvation.

Besides holding off the enemy, the Lord calms His servant with the assurance that he is, and will be, safe under the Almighty wing. An inner persuasion of security in God is precious in the furnace of persecution. One word from the Lord quiets our fears.

(Ps. 35:4) 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. He wants nothing malicious; the slandered psalmist simply craves justice. The petition is natural and justified. Guided by God's good spirit, the psalmist foretells the everlasting confusion of the haters of the righteous. Shameful disappointment will be the portion of those who are enemies of the gospel. The most tenderhearted Christian would not have it otherwise. Viewing sinners as people, we love them and seek their good, but regarding them as God's enemies, we only think of them with detestation and a loyal desire for their confusion. No loyal subject can wish rebels

well. Squeamish sentimentality may object to the strong language, but in their hearts, all the saints wish confusion to mischief makers.

(Ps. 35:5) Let them be as chaff before the wind. They were swift enough to attack, let them be as swift to flee. Let their fears so disturb them that the least breeze of trouble will carry them hither and thither. The ungodly are worthless in character, light in behavior, and destitute of firmness and stability. They act like chaff and should be treated as such. When this curse is fulfilled, the graceless will find it an awful thing to be forever without rest, without peace of mind, hurried from fear to fear, and from misery to misery.

And let the angel of the LORD chase them. Fallen angels will haunt them; good angels will afflict them. To be pursued by avenging spirits will be the lot of those who delight in persecution. Observe the scene as the psalmist sketches it. The furious foe is first held at bay, then turned back, then driven to flight and chased by fiery messengers from whom there is no escape. Their pathway becomes dark and dangerous, and their destruction overwhelming.

(Ps. 35:6) Let their way be dark and slippery. What terrors! They have no light and no foothold, and a fierce avenger is at their heels! What doom! They may rage and rave today, but their plight will soon be altered.

And let the angel of the LORD persecute them. He will follow them, hotfoot, as we say, never turning aside, like a trusty sheriff serving the writ of vengeance and arresting them in the name of unflinching justice. Woe, woe, woe to those who touch the people of God; their destruction is both swift and sure.

(Ps. 35:22) This Thou has seen, O LORD. Keep not silence. Our heavenly Father knows all our sorrow. Omniscience is the candle of the saint that never goes out. Parents will not endure to see their children abused. Will not God avenge His elect?

Keep not silence. Rebuke your enemies and mine, Oh Lord. A word will do it. Clear my character, and so comfort my heart.

O Lord, be not far from me. Stand in the pillory at my side. God's sweet presence is the divine cordial of the persecuted. His painful absence would be their deepest misery.

(Ps. 35:23) Stir up Thyself. Prove that You are not an indifferent witness to all this infamy. **Awake to my judgment.** Take the scepter and summon the great assize (inquest). Vindicate justice. Avenge oppression. Do not tarry as those who sleep.

Even unto my cause, my God and my Lord. David claims a nearness to God and holds Him with both hands. He leaves his case with the righteous Judge, begging for the trial to be heard, the verdict given. Well is it when our conscience

is so clear that we dare make such an appeal.

(Ps. 35:24) The appeal is repeated. The plaintiff feels that the joy of his accusers will be short-lived when impartial justice rules. The oppressor's wrong, the proud's rudeness, the fool's grimace—all; all will cease when the righteous Lord sits on the judgment seat.

(Ps. 35:25) Let them not say in their hearts, Ah, so would we have it: let them not say, We have swallowed him up. Disappoint them when their mouths are ready to swallow their prey. Saints are too precious a morsel for the powers of evil. God will not give His sheep to the wolfish jaws of the persecutor. Just when they are tuning their pipes to celebrate victory, they will be made to laugh on the other side of their mouths. They are too sure, too boastful. Little do they dream of the end. Their bird will have flown, and they will be in the trap. The prayer of this text is a promise. Before the lips of the wicked can frame a speech of exultation, they will be disappointed. The heart-speech of the evil will be forestalled, their wishes frustrated, their knavish tricks exposed.

(Ps. 35:26) This is the eternal result of all the labor and craft of the Lord's enemies. God will make little of them, though they **magnify themselves.** He will shame them for shaming His people. God will bring them confusion for making confusion. He will pull off their fine apparel and give them a suit of dishonor. He will turn all

their rejoicing into weeping, wailing, and gnashing of teeth (Matt. 8:12). Truly, the saints can afford to wait. (*The Treasury of David*, Charles Haddon Spurgeon, updated by Mark Wash)

What was David's reaction to those who rewarded him evil for good (Ps. 38:12)?