

PSALMS 35

This Psalm was likely written by David when he was being pursued by Saul. It comes across with a character of a bold heart that is associated with a clear conscious. This psalm can be divided into three sections each of which have nearly the same three themes: Recognition of the situation, Request for salvation, and Rejoicing in the strength of God.

SECTION 1 (1-10)

THE BATTLE BELONGS TO THE LORD (1-3)

{35:1} Contend, O LORD, with those who contend with me; fight against those who fight against me. {2} Take up shield and buckler; arise and come to my aid. {3} Brandish (unsheath) spear and javelin against those who pursue me. Say to my soul, "I am your salvation."

In the battle of the Kingdom of God versus the world system, we can see the battle lines drawn around such issues as abortion, pornography, homosexuality, gambling, drugs, and many other practices that destroy individual lives and rot the very fabric of our society. We can see that we are delivered from these things because of God's salvation. However, we may tend to become satisfied with our situation for the moment and not be concerned with the ruin that is happening to others and to society in general. Sometimes the battle is defending the present situation and at other we must take the battle to the very gates of hell and cast down strongholds of the evil one. Whatever the battle we cannot do this in our own strength but our prayers release the power of the armies of heaven against all foes.

The shield is a small protective armament worn on the left arm and is used to fend off the attacks of the enemy when it is "up close and personal." A buckler is a larger (body sized) armament that give protection from the general random missiles that come from an attack. We need both of these pieces of armor which we would generally classify as shields. We learn from Paul's letter to the church at Ephesus in chapter 6 that the shield in the spiritual battles is "faith." A legitimate prayer for the believer is "Lord, increase my faith," or as the father of the child that was healed by Jesus (see Mark 9) said, "Lord I believe, help my unbelief."

The spear was used to hold the enemy at bay and could be used to stop their advance in a defensive situation when the enemy was in pursuit. David was definitely in a defensive stance when it came to the situation with Saul. David was not trying to overthrow Saul but to stay alive until such time as God would remove Saul and David would be vindicated.

Notice that one of David's request was to be constantly reminded that God is our salvation. This is not to shore up any doubt our eternal security but such reminders are needed in the heat of the battles lest we try to fight in our own strength and become either proud (because of successes) or discouraged (because of failures). The phrase "I am your salvation" is one word in the Hebrew and that word is *yesh-oo-aw*. This is very similar to the Hebrew word for Joshua (or what is called Jesus in the New Testament).

PRAYER: THE UNDOING OF THE WICKED (4-7)

{4} May those who seek my life be disgraced and put to shame; may those who plot my ruin be turned back in dismay. {5} May they be like chaff before the wind, with the angel of the LORD driving them away; {6} may their path be dark and slippery, with the angel of the LORD pursuing them.

In the relative safety most of us have in this country, we may have trouble relating to David's plea regarding someone who seeks to take his life. However, we must remember that the enemy of our souls seeks to destroy us and our influence for God in everything we do. We must be vigilant and pray for help in dealing with such matters as they impact the world in which we live. In our own personal lives, we are told to rebuke the devil and he will flee from us.

{7} Since they hid their net for me without cause and without cause dug a pit for me, {8} may ruin overtake them by surprise-- may the net they hid entangle them, may they fall into the pit, to their ruin.

David saw himself as one who was innocent, yet he was being persecuted. He had not put himself forward to be king, he was not trying to overthrow Saul, he passed up opportunities to kill Saul and yet he was the object of the schemes and traps of those working at the direction of Saul. This is Messianic in that Jesus was also the object of unjustified persecution and was even put to death unjustly.

The very evil the wicked plan for others becomes their own undoing. An excellent example is in the case of Christ. The Jews made a deal with the Romans to have Jesus executed for sedition and it was sedition of the Jewish leaders that was Rome's justification for destroying Jerusalem in AD 70.

PRAISE: REJOICING OF THE RIGHTEOUS (9-10)

{9} Then my soul will rejoice in the LORD and delight in his salvation. {10} My whole being will exclaim, "Who is like you, O LORD? You rescue the poor from those too strong for them, the poor and needy from those who rob them."

Our confidence and faith grows as we see evidence of God intervening on our behalf. Praise is a natural response from the child of God as we experience His provision in our world of need. We realize there is no one like God.

SECTION 2 (11-18)

COMPLAINT: CONTRAST OF EVIL AND GOOD (11-16)

{11} Ruthless witnesses come forward; they question me on things I know nothing about. {12} They repay me evil for good and leave my soul forlorn.

The Christian should not be surprised to find the “good” they do being interpreted as “evil” by the world. David experienced this, Jesus saw the same thing and if we are making an impact for the Kingdom of God, then it will happen to us.

{13} Yet when they were ill, I put on sackcloth and humbled myself with fasting. When my prayers returned to me unanswered, {14} I went about mourning as though for my friend or brother. I bowed my head in grief as though weeping for my mother. {15} But when I stumbled, they gathered in glee; attackers gathered against me when I was unaware. They slandered me without ceasing. {16} Like the ungodly they maliciously mocked; they gnashed their teeth at me.

We should not expect those who have not experienced God’s saving grace to be anything but selfish and self centered. We can expect them to care only for their own interest and be envious of any success anyone else has. To love your neighbor as yourself, to put others first and to love as Christ loved is a revolutionary idea that most of the world does not understand. However, unless we demonstrate this to them, then they will not even realize there is a better way and they will remain in their lost condition.

PRAYER: APPEAL FOR MERCY (17)

{17} O Lord, how long will you look on? Rescue my life from their ravages, my precious life from these lions.

We read the words of Paul in Roman 8:28 and realize God uses all things for our good. Objectively, we understand this but when we are in the midst of problems we become impatient, weary and frustrated and hope for relief from the troubles we encounter. When God does act to bring relief, then we should be thankful.

PROMISE OF PRAISE (18)

{18} I will give you thanks in the great assembly; among throngs of people I will praise you.

We should also have such an attitude of praise and gratitude even when we are in the midst of the problems of life. “In everything give thanks: for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you.”

SECTION 3 (19-28)

COMPLAINT (19-21)

{19} Let not those gloat over me who are my enemies without cause; let not those who hate me without reason maliciously wink the eye.

{20} They do not speak peaceably, but devise false accusations against those who live quietly in the land. {21} They gape at me and say, “Aha! Aha! With our own eyes we have seen it.”

In this life, we may never totally understand the purpose to which God is working in our lives. If we trust Him, then we can (by faith) know that God will use even the unfair situations in our lives for our good and even the good of the world. We may be hurt by the actions of others; however, if we suffer for the cause of Christ, then God can use such sacrifice for good.

PRAYER (22-27)

{22} O LORD, you have seen this; be not silent. Do not be far from me, O Lord. {23} Awake, and rise to my defense! Contend for me, my God and Lord. {24} Vindicate me in your righteousness, O LORD my God; do not let them gloat over me. {25} Do not let them think, “Aha, just what we wanted!” or say, “We have swallowed him up.” {26} May all who gloat over my distress be put to shame and confusion; may all who exalt themselves over me be clothed with shame and disgrace.

Our victory and cause for exultation should be in seeing salvation come from the suffering and persecution we endure. We tend to be hostile toward those through whom the problems come. We may even imagine the pleasure of seeing these fail and “get what’s coming to them.” Many times, such people are caught in the snare of the devil and they need salvation. If we attack those who persecute us, then we will never be able to win them to the Lord. The only loser should be the devil.

CAUSE FOR PRAISE (27-28)

{27} May those who delight in my vindication shout for joy and gladness; may they always say, “The LORD be exalted, who delights in the well-being of his servant.” {28} My tongue will speak of your righteousness and of your praises all day long.

When we endure and see victory come from the trials of life, then our testimony becomes cause for the righteous to rejoice with us in what God has done.