

June 7, 2026

Psalm 35

Contend, O Lord, with those who contend with me; fight against those who fight against me! ² Take hold of shield and buckler and rise for my help! ³ Draw the spear and javelin against my pursuers! Say to my soul, "I am your salvation!" ⁴ Let them be put to shame and dishonor who seek after my life! Let them be turned back and disappointed who devise evil against me! ⁵ Let them be like chaff before the wind, with the angel of the Lord driving them away! ⁶ Let their way be dark and slippery, with the angel of the Lord pursuing them! ⁷ For without cause they hid their net for me; without cause they dug a pit for my life. ⁸ Let destruction come upon him when he does not know it! And let the net that he hid ensnare him; let him fall into it—to his destruction! ⁹ Then my soul will rejoice in the Lord, exulting in his salvation. ¹⁰ All my bones shall say, "O Lord, who is like you, delivering the poor from him who is too strong for him, the poor and needy from him who robs him?" ¹¹ Malicious witnesses rise up; they ask me of things that I do not know. ¹² They repay me evil for good; my soul is bereft. ¹³ But I, when they were sick— I wore sackcloth; I afflicted myself with fasting; I prayed with head bowed on my chest. ¹⁴ I went about as though I grieved for my friend or my brother; as one who laments his mother, I bowed down in mourning. ¹⁵ But at my stumbling they rejoiced and gathered; they gathered together against me; wretches whom I did not know tore at me without ceasing; ¹⁶ like profane mockers at a feast, they gnash at me with their teeth. ¹⁷ How long, O Lord, will you look on? Rescue me from their destruction, my precious life from the lions! ¹⁸ I will thank you in the great congregation; in the mighty throng I will praise you. ¹⁹ Let not those rejoice over me who are wrongfully my foes, and let not those wink the eye who hate me without cause. ²⁰ For they do not speak peace, but against those who are quiet in the land they devise words of deceit. ²¹ They open wide their mouths against me; they say, "Aha, Aha! Our eyes have seen it!" ²² You have seen, O Lord; be not silent! O Lord, be not far from me! ²³ Awake and rouse yourself for my vindication, for my cause, my God and my Lord! ²⁴ Vindicate me, O Lord, my God according to your righteousness, and let them not rejoice over me! ²⁵ Let them not say in their hearts, "Aha, our heart's desire!" Let them not say, "We have swallowed him up." ²⁶ Let them be put to shame and disappointed altogether who rejoice at my calamity! Let them be clothed with shame and dishonor who magnify themselves against me! ²⁷ Let those who delight in my righteousness shout for joy and be glad and say evermore, "Great is the Lord, who delights in the welfare of his servant!" ²⁸ Then my tongue shall tell of your righteousness and of your praise all the day long.



Unjust Suffering, Certain Salvation
Psalm 35

BIG IDEA: When we suffer without cause, we can cry out boldly to the God who has rescued us through the unjust suffering of his anointed king, Jesus.

OUTLINE

1. The Plotting (vv. 1–10)
2. The Pile On (vv. 11–18)
3. The Taunting (vv. 19–28)

DISCIPLESHIP DURING THE WEEK

These “Sermon Discussion Questions” are designed for study during the week for believers in a wide variety of ages & stages in their walk with Christ.

1. Have you ever prayed for something you weren't sure God would approve of? What did you do with that prayer?
2. Refer to verses 1-10. Have you ever had a time when you felt like David did in this psalm—a time when you were falsely accused or treated unjustly? If so, how did you deal with that? How could Romans 12:19 help you with that?
3. Refer to verses 11-18. What does it do to your prayers when you realize David's experience — and the global church's experience — mirrors your own?
4. Refer to verses 19-28. What is the difference between wanting God to vindicate your name and wanting him to vindicate his name? Why does that distinction matter? Look at Ezekiel 36: 22-32 to see how God vindicates his holy name.

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

David, the anointed king of Israel, is enduring life-threatening, unjust attacks and persecution. His enemies are hateful, angry, aggressive, and violent. They are doing all they can to destroy him. In the midst of it all, David feels as if God has forgotten him. He feels alone in his suffering. Most people have trouble with psalms like this. It is not only an individual lament (Ross, Psalms 1–41, 763), but it is also an imprecatory psalm. An imprecatory psalm is one in which the author curses his enemies (Johnston, Psalms, 357). It is a call for God to bring down his righteous judgment against those who have come against him. The fact that many believers have problems with psalms like these is understandable. These psalms seem to contradict the teaching of Jesus to bless those who curse us (Luke 6:28). They seem contrary to the goodness and kindness of God just spoken of in the previous psalm. But the primary reason people have problems with these psalms is because so many have never been in a situation like David's.

- Adapted from *Exalting Jesus in Psalms 1-50* (Christ-centered Exposition Commentary. Smith, J. Josh; Akin, and Daniel L.)

Praise to Jesus – Praise the Father for the gift of his Son, Jesus Christ, the ultimate anointed King who was ultimately hated without cause, falsely accused, mocked, and ridiculed. Our mighty warrior, whom David longed to see, conquered death. One day, he will return in response to the prayers of the persecuted and make all things right. Praise Jesus for his love and mercy. He waits only because he desires to see all his enemies saved. When he returns as the just warrior, he will display the glory due his name.

Repent through Jesus – Confess the times when you were falsely accused or treated unjustly; instead of praying about it and trusting the Lord, you took matters into your own hands and responded with anger, vengeance, or hatred.

Consecration for Jesus – We long for God's justice because we love God's glory. Let us pray for God's kingdom to come, both his reign in the hearts of all people now and his return to reign on earth. When we pray for God's kingdom, we pray Psalm 35. We pray that all of God's people might be saved. And we pray that God would execute justice and make all things right. "Then my tongue shall tell of your righteousness and of your praise all day long."

FOR FAMILIES AND YOUNG CHILDREN

These questions are written to aid parents in leading family devotions with their children.

1. This Psalm deals with the enemies of King David. Who are the enemies for us as Christians today? (One of our enemies is our sinful hearts that lead us to sin and not follow Jesus. Another is our sinful world that tempts us to worship and serve things of creation instead of our Creator. A final enemy is the devil, who speaks lies to us and tries to get us to doubt God's faithfulness and goodness. We need to remind each other of verse 3 that we need to say to ourselves that God is our salvation.)

2. What does this Psalm teach us about how we are to pray when we are struggling? (We can pray like David in verse 17 for God to act to save His people and not simply look on. We also learn to pray for the plans of God's enemies not to succeed and for them to be defeated. Make sure to tell your children that David is teaching us to pray for God's justice against our enemies and not for personal revenge.)

3. What does verse 26 teach us about God's enemies? (This verse teaches us that those who battle against God and disobey Him will seek to magnify or glorify themselves instead of glorifying God and making sure He gets all the credit due to Him.)

4. What do verses 9, 27, and 28 teach us about God's saving us from our enemies? (These verses teach us that when we see God's saving work in our lives and in the world, we will be led to worship God.)

Scriptures for further study:

Exodus 15:11

Romans 12:9-21

Ephesians 6:10-20

John 10:10

FOR STUDENTS

Scriptures for further study:

Romans 12:14-21

John 15:25

Ezekiel 36:22-32

Luke 6:27-28

Hebrews 4:15-16

1. Have you ever prayed something raw and honest - something you were not sure God could handle? What did you do with that prayer? What does it tell you that David prays like this, and it ends up in Scripture?

2. In verses 1-10, David calls on God to fight for him against people who are plotting his destruction. Have you ever been in a situation where someone came after you, falsely accused you, turned others against you, and treated you as an enemy for no good reason? What was your first instinct? How does Romans 12:19 reframe what you do with that instinct?

3. David's suffering is not only physical, but it is also relational betrayal. People he helped, mourned for, and called friends are now the ones piling on. Think about a time someone you trusted let you down or turned on you. How did that affect your ability to trust people or God? What does it mean that Jesus himself experienced this same kind of betrayal?

4. Jesus quotes Psalm 35:19 directly (John 15:25). Jesus was hated without cause. He walked through the exact kind of unjust suffering David is describing here. How does knowing that Jesus did not just sympathize with this psalm from a distance but actually lived it change the way you bring your own injustices to God?

5. In verses 19-28, David is not asking for personal revenge. He is asking God to vindicate his name and his cause. What is the difference between wanting people to know you were right and wanting God's name to be honored in a situation? Why does that distinction matter for how you pray about the hard things in your own life?

FOR NON-BELIEVERS OR NEW BELIEVERS

1. In this Psalm, David describes his great agony in experiencing being falsely accused and betrayed. His approach is to call upon the Lord as Divine Warrior to do battle on his behalf.

Question: Why is giving things over to the Lord a much better approach than taking personal vengeance against others?

2. David asks (verse 17), “O Lord, how long will you look on?”

Question: Have you ever felt like the Lord was silent or that he was taking a long time to address your concerns?

3. Jesus was betrayed and falsely accused, and John 15:25 tells us that he was “hated without cause,” which is a direct quote from Psalm 35:19.

Question: How does it help us to know that Jesus went through the same trials we are facing in our lives?

4. Instead of asking God to destroy our enemies, what if we instead prayed that God would “conquer” our enemies by means of conversion?

5. We should keep in mind that David’s curses against his enemies really should have fallen on us, but instead they fell on our Savior Jesus, who substituted himself in our place. Thus, he can truly say to our soul, “I am your salvation.” (v.3)

Question: Do you believe in Jesus Christ as your Savior, and have you trusted in what he has done for you as your substitute on the cross?

6. Take some time to read Romans 12:14-21.

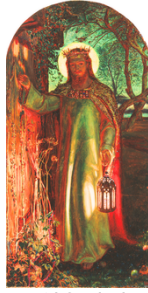
Question: Though much grace is required to live this out, why is this a much better and more mature way to respond to the difficult people and circumstances we may be facing right now?

Scriptures for further study:

John 15:25

Romans 12:14-21

The Blessed Life: A Study of the Psalms



"The Light of the World" (1851-1853) by William Holman Hunt

Psalms Introduction

The Book of Psalms is the sacred place where the living God meets His people in the most intimate and personal of ways. He invites them to know Him not merely as an idea, but as their refuge, portion, shepherd, and King. From the opening doorway of blessedness in Psalm 1 to the climactic Hallelujahs of Psalm 150, the Psalter reveals that the truly happy life is one rooted in the person and work of Almighty God, whose steadfast love holds His people through every season of the soul. As the Psalter moves from anguish to adoration, from darkness to dawn, it becomes a mirror of the Christian life itself. It teaches us to pray honestly, to hope stubbornly, and to sing faithfully, even when night seems long. In the deepest valleys, the Psalms give voice to the church's groan; on the highest heights, they train the church's doxology. And in every line, every cry, and every hallelujah, Christ Himself comes near, revealing the light of the world in the dark night of the soul and leading His people into the blessedness that only His grace can give.

– Pastor Bill

About the artwork and artist.

The Light of the World, 1851-1853, is an iconic allegorical painting by William Holman Hunt. The painting depicts Jesus Christ as a regal figure in flowing robes, wearing a crown of thorns, holding a glowing lantern, and preparing to knock on a weed-overgrown wooden door with no external handle. This illustrates Revelation 3:20 from the Bible: "Behold, I stand at the door and knock; if any man hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him..." The artist William Holman Hunt is showing us that Jesus is the divine door to the living God who meets His people in the most intimate and personal ways. The closed, overgrown door → representing the human soul or "obstinately shut mind" that has long ignored spiritual calling. There is no handle on the outside → the door can only be opened from within, emphasizing free will and personal invitation to faith. The lantern → Christ as the light of the world (John 8:12), illuminating darkness and offering salvation. The work marked Hunt's deepening Christian faith (from earlier agnosticism) and became one of the most reproduced and devotional images of the Victorian era, inspiring oratorios, hymns, and widespread popular piety. It's often called a visual sermon on personal salvation.