

## **BATTLING BITTERNESS**

Wednesday, March 14

Reading: Psalm 35:1-18

**Psalm 35:4** *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. 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. 9 Then my soul will rejoice in the LORD and delight in his salvation.*

Have you ever been stabbed in the back? That is how David feels as he writes this psalm. Though we don't know exactly when it was written, it seems probable that it was during those early days when he was being hunted by King Saul. He had won many victories for Saul, but the king was jealous of his popularity and viewed him as a threat to his throne. For years, Saul would send his army on "search and destroy" missions against David. Many of these soldiers had fought beside David as comrades and friends, but they were now seeking to capture or kill him.

You can hear the bitterness in David's voice in this psalm. He prays that they be scattered as chaff and fall into their own pits and traps that they have set for him (35:4-8). He laments how they repay him evil for good. He had treated them like family, praying for them when they were sick. But now that he is in trouble they have turned on him and gleefully slander him (35:11-16).

What do you do when bitterness overtakes you? One wrong way to handle bitterness is to lash out in vengeance against the person who hurt you. This David does not do! He does not take matters into his own hands but laid his complaint before the Lord and pleaded for His justice. He knew that no matter what, "I am your salvation" says the Lord (35:1-3). Taking revenge may feel good at the moment, but in the long term it causes only more grief and anguish. Take it to the Lord and leave it there.

Another wrong approach people take to bitterness is to keep it locked up inside. When we do this it will eat away and consume us. We end up in a worse condition than the person who hurt us left us. Once again the answer is to take your bitterness to the Lord. It is useless to present an "everything's ok" attitude with the Lord because He already knows what we are feeling. Like many of the psalms, this prayer of David is full of his emotional anguish and bitterness that he pours out to the Lord. It is also filled with words of praise. He will "rejoice in the Lord and delight in His salvation" (35:9). Even as he asks God "how long" David looks forward to giving thanks and praising in the assembly of God's people (35:17-18).

Has bitterness gotten hold of your heart? Release it to God. Pour out your heart to Him and allow His power to change your heart. The battle over bitterness can only be won in God's strength.