

# Psalm 35

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[0:00] We're going to be looking at Psalm 35. So if you want to grab a Bible, turn to Psalm 35. Great.

Of David. Contend, Lord, with those who contend with me. Fight against those who fight against me.

Take up shield and armour, arise and come to my aid. Brandish spear and javelin against those who pursue me. Say to me, I am your salvation.

May those who seek my life be disgraced and put to shame. May those who plot my ruin be turned back in dismay. May they be like chaff before the wind, with the angel of the Lord driving them away.

May their path be dark and slippery, with the angel of the Lord pursuing them. Since they hid their net for me without cause, and without cause dug a pit for me, may ruin overtake them by surprise.

[1:27] May the net they hid entangle them. May they fall into the pit to their ruin. Then my soul will rejoice in the Lord and delight in his salvation.

My whole being will exclaim, who is like you, Lord? You rescue the poor from those too strong for them, the poor and needy from those who rob them.

Ruthless witnesses come forward. They question me on things I know nothing about. They repay me evil for good and leave me like one bereaved.

Yet when they were ill, I put on sackcloth and humbled myself with fasting. When my prayers returned to me unanswered, I went about mourning as though for my friend or brother. I bowed my head in grief as though weeping for my mother.

But when I stumbled, they gathered in glee. Assailants gathered against me without my knowledge. They slandered me without ceasing. Like the ungodly, they maliciously mocked.

[2:26] They gnashed their teeth at me. How long, Lord, will you look on? Rescue me from their ravages. My precious life from these lions. I will give you thanks in the great assembly.

Among the throngs I will praise you. Do not let those who gloat over me, who are my enemies without cause, do not let those who hate me without reason maliciously wink the eye. They do not speak peaceably, but devise false accusations against those who live quietly in the land.

They sneer at me and say, ah, ah, with our own eyes we have seen it. Lord, you have seen this. Do not be silent. Do not be far from me, Lord.

Awake and rise to my defence. Contend for me, my God and Lord. Vindicate me in your righteousness, Lord my God. Do not let them gloat over me. Do not let them think, ah, just what we wanted.

Or say, we have swallowed him up. 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.

[3:31] 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.

My tongue will proclaim your righteousness, your praises all day long. Nathan. Great. We're going to get into Psalm 85.

Like, oh, let me introduce myself first. I'm Nathan. I'm the trainee pastor here at WKBC. And it is a delight to get to open up God's word together, to get to see what Psalm 85 has to say to us.

I think I say this before most times we preach, but the Bible commends people for looking at the word and actually discerning what it has to say.

Scrutinizing what they hear with what is in the word. So can I encourage you, keep Psalm 85 open in front of you. I'll be referring back to it. And we're going to have a great time going to see the goodness of God through this.

[4:30] But before I do that, why don't we pray? Great. Lord, we are so thankful that we are in this room together. We're so thankful that we have the freedom to open up your word, to see what you have to say to us.

And Lord, we pray that we would be left challenged and encouraged by it. And Lord, we pray that you would help us to delight in your truths. And Lord, like David, would we be left rejoicing in the Lord and delighting in your salvation.

In Jesus' name I pray. Amen. Amen. Amen. Great. I'm going to start with a question. Has anybody watched a series called The Hunted?

The Hunted. Yeah, great. Okay. One person. Is that where you have to run away from? Yes. Yes. The Hunted is the show where you have to basically run away from some...

So there are the hunters and the hunted. The hunted are two normal sort of contestants that basically are running away from these sort of ex-military people and ex-secret service that are trying to then find them.

[5:39] So they have to get from one point to another point without being caught by these detectives essentially trying to find them. And if they do, it's kind of like a reality TV game show.

They get a prize at the end of it. Okay. So that's The Hunted. It wasn't, I don't think, a great series, which is probably why everybody hasn't watched it. I thought it was quite fun.

But really, the people that were ex-military were pretty good at their job. And they found and hunted down most of the contestants. I don't know if you watch shows like that with like a confidence and self-delusion that I do, because I think I'd do great.

But I think you'd end up being found out quite quickly. They're pretty good at figuring out where you are and hunting you down. Now, here's my assessment of that.

I think David would have PTSD if he watched that with you. David spends most of his life being chased by people. At the start of his story that we see in the Bible, he is being chased down by King Saul.

[6:39] He is being pursued by King Saul. By the tail end, he is being pursued by his own son, Absalom. So if you know the story of King David, it is bookended in some ways by him being chased and pursued.

We don't know exactly which of those two stories Psalm 35 sits in. But we know, and most theologians would agree, that one of those two is the situation he is in as he writes Psalm 35.

So he is being pursued. That's what verse 3 says. Lord, brandish your spear and javelin against those who pursue me. So, I think the best way to make the most of this passage and to understand it is to first, let's break this down into three different sections.

I'll break this section down into three sections just so that we can get a better idea of what's going on. And then we will see how this applies to us and our lives out of it. So the first section, if you look down, is verses 1 through to 10.

David starts with a theme of this Psalm, which is asking the Lord to contend for him. Contend, Lord, with those who contend with me. Fight against those who fight against me.

[7:45] He is asking the Lord that he would fight his battles. That he is in a problem. He is being pursued. By verse 4, you see that he is being pursued by people that are seeking his life.

So this is not like the hunted example where it's pretty much a game show. These are very real threats for David. And so he is being pursued by people that seek his life. And he is asking and contending with the Lord that they would be put to shame.

That the plans that they bring against him, the traps they set for him, would be turned on them. That is the course of verses 1 through to 10. But he ends this first section, like with the other two sections we're going to see, praising the Lord.

Look at verse 9, which says, Then my soul will rejoice in the Lord. Lord, when you fulfill this, when you answer these prayers that you help me in this battle, and in this fight against people that are pursuing me, Lord, I will then, my soul will rejoice in the Lord.

Delight in his salvation. My whole being will exclaim, Who is like you, Lord? You rescue the poor from those who are too strong for them, and the poor and needy from those who rob them. That's our first section.

[8:56] There is a problem that David is dealing with. He asks the Lord to contend for him, to fight for him, and he ends it in praise for the Lord. That's the first section, and it continues in that pattern, but the problem changes.

So verse 11 to 18, that's our second section. Verse 11 to 18 is portrayed by this idea in verse 12 that says, They repay me evil for good.

David is saying, I'm doing good to them, I'm loving them, I'm caring for them, and they are repaying that with evil. The problem in this section is basically betrayal. He is being betrayed.

Look with me at verse 13. It says, Yet when they were ill, I put on sackcloth, and humbled myself with fasting. When my prayers returned to me unanswered, I went about mourning as though for my friend or brother.

I bowed my head in grief as though weeping for my mother. Also here, David is concerned for them like a friend and a brother and a mother. He has given them great love.

[10:02] He has prayed with them, mourned with them, fasted with them when they were doing bad. Yet, verse 15, When I stumbled, they gathered in glee. Assailants gathered around me, or against me, without my knowledge.

They slandered me without ceasing. And so here's the problem. The problem is he's been betrayed by people that he has loved, mourned for, cared for, and fasted with. And then he continues to ask God to contend for him.

And verse 17 is a very honest prayer, right? How long, Lord, will you look on? This is just this prayer of, Lord, you see what's going on. You see that they are betraying me. You see that they are pursuing me.

Lord, how long will you just look on? How long, Lord, until you act upon this situation? And so he pleads, rescue me. Need to remember that, sir. Rescue me from these ravages, he says in verse 17.

And like with the first section, by verse 18, he is saying, Lord, but when you come through on this, I will give you thanks in the assembly. I will publicly declare your greatness, says David.

[11:08] That's section one, section two, and then section three. We're in verses 19 through to 28. The third section is the problem of them gloating.

It says, do not let those gloat over me who are my enemies without courts. Do not let those who hate me without reason maliciously wink the eye. I used to know a pastor that actually thought that was a reason why he was suspicious of anybody that winked.

But I don't think that's exactly what I was talking about. I think verse 19 through to 28, the problem is that not only have they defeated him, they are now gloating over it.

I don't know how you spend a bunch of time to relax. My main guilty pleasure of sorts is video game. Daisy will know this.

But I spend a bunch of time playing games competitively online, and you end up playing against people online that you can hit, and people can talk to you. And really, if I'm honest, by like 16 to 18, that's your golden years of gaming.

[12:11] That's when your reactions are still there. By 28, you're losing a bit of an edge, and you're playing against 16-year-olds. And so what is worse than getting defeated in those games as somebody that's competitive is hearing the screech of a 16-year-old scream and tell you how much you suck, and then having to deal with that as well.

Well, it's not just the defeat that's painful in that silly little scenario. It is the gloating that is even worse. That kind of doubles the pain of the defeat. And it is similar, though a lot more serious, for David here.

They are gloating over him. He is pleading with the Lord, do not be far from me. Contend for me, Lord, again. And it says, do not let them gloat over me. Do not let them say, aha, just what we wanted.

We wanted him swallowed up, and he's been swallowed up. That's what he is contending for here. So here the problem is gloating. He contends for it again and asks God to move.

And then by the end, verse 28, he says, My tongue will proclaim your righteousness and your praises all day long. This is the pattern of the psalm that we're reading.

[13:21] There is a problem that David deals with. He says, Lord, contend for me. And then he praises the Lord, saying, I will praise you when you come through. That was the story.

Though there is something that we could miss in the fine print that has quite a big impact throughout this passage. Look with me at verse 7 of chapter 35. Verse 7 says, in the first section, they say, Since they hid their net for me without cause.

And without cause dug a pit for me. The words without cause are a theme throughout this passage. They are chasing him and pursuing him. And in this first section, verse 7 says, They hid their net for me without cause.

He is innocent of any crime against them. He has not gone against the people that he's pursued. They have no reason to chase after him. Yet they are. They hate him without cause.

Verse 14 continues that theme. Right? Verse 14 and 15, he is saying, I mourned for them like a friend or a brother or mother. I cared for them deeply. Yet they still turned their back on me.

[14 : 28] They still betrayed with me. They don't have a cause to do it there. Actually, he has been a great friend to them and companion to them. Yet they have gone against him.

And then verse 19 continues to drum that home. It says, do not let them gloat over me, who are my enemies without cause. There is, and do not let them hate me without reason.

Right? There's all throughout here, the main fine print here is that they hate him. They have pursued him without cause. I will keep the name of my family member nameless.

But I remember this story being told to me by one of my family members. They were growing up. They played rugby a bunch. And in their sort of cohort of friends at school, they were playing rugby. And there was, ideally, like there is in every school, there was this big, bad bully. That was quite a big deal. He used to hate, everybody used to hate him, but they used to kind of fear him, just like every other bully. And they were playing rugby, and this rugby ball got kicked over the fence.

[15 : 34] If you've played any games in a park, you know the cardinal rule is. You kick it over the fence. You go get it. This bully thought, I don't really want to do that. So he picked on the quiet kid in the corner, asking him, hey, why don't you go get the ball?

And surprisingly enough, this quiet kid actually spoke back and said, no, I'm not going to do that. There was some pushing and shoving. And it turns out this quiet kid just walloped this guy straight in the nose.

Broke his nose, and they ended up both in the policeman's office? The principal's office. It wasn't that serious crime. They both end up in the principal's office by the end of the day, telling each other how bad the situation was, and that my kid has a broken nose.

All of that goes on, right? So the bully in this story is a guy that you could hate with just cause, right? He's the guy that everybody in the school had a reason to hate because he had been hateful towards them.

While, I don't know about you, when I watch stories and movies about bullies, I end up feeling sorry for the bully because he's got some sort of rough life situation. But you could understand why somebody might hate the guy, right?

[16 : 46] He has done horrible things against somebody. But David is putting himself in this situation and in that story as the friend that is the best friend in the world. He's the one that celebrates everything that you do.

He is the one that feels sorry for you and is there for you in your hardest moments. All of that. And yet, the whole place and all of the people around him hate him.

It's not right, is it? Without cause, he is being hated. He is not the bully that has reason to be hated. He is the innocent one that does not have any reason to be hated. A point that out and that theme out because verse 19 is a really interesting verse in the context of the Bible story.

It's interesting because in John 15, verse 24 to 25, Jesus picks the theme back up. Jesus picks those exact verses up in John 15.

And he says, when talking about the religious leaders of the time, he says, As it is, they have seen, and yet they have hated both me and the Father. But this is to fulfill what is written in their law.

[17 : 52] And this is where he quotes Psalm 85, an amalgamation of that, and Psalm 69. And he says, they hated me without reason. They hated me without reason. What is David's situation, and he is letting you into what he is going through at the time, is also a prophetically signaling to what Jesus will do.

Jesus says that this is to fulfill what has been said in Psalm 35, that they hated him without reason. If David had no reason to be hated, Jesus certainly didn't. Jesus' ministry was that he came to this world not to condemn it, but to save it.

He came to this world to live the perfect life, to love the people and show them who God was. And he went and said, I will give up my life for you.

Ends up doing that. He goes to the cross, dies for our sin, lays his life down for us to fulfill so much of what these religious leaders would have known as Old Testament prophecy.

He dies, rises again, having forgiven all of their sin if they would just believe in him. And he has made them right with God, which they were always longing for. And yet, they hated him.

[19:05] He was perfect. There was no cause to hate him. Yet they do. That is why he quotes it, saying, they hated me without reason. And so, it's really interesting that this is the passage that he picks out to go into John 15.

Partially because earlier in John 15, he is telling the disciples, look, you will be hated like me. If they hated me, they will hate you too. If they persecute me, they will persecute you too.

And so, there's a very clear connection from this passage over to what Jesus is talking about. We are not in the situation of David. I hope nobody's pursuing you, aiming to kill you.

But there is a very real sense in which Jesus says that I have been hated without cause and you will be too. As Christians, we might not find ourselves being pursued like David.

But we will find ourselves in situations where, because of our faith and our hope in Jesus and our being disciples of Jesus, we are hated without cause. Or we are betrayed and people gloat over us as we suffer with Christ.

[20:23] Because we don't just get to share in his glory, but also we share in his sufferings. So, that promise that Jesus says, which is that they will hate you if they hated me, comes true in our lives as well.

And so, that is the light in which I would hope we would see Psalm 35. Firstly, in the light that we will face suffering and persecution without cause. But I think there's also a sense in which we can see and learn from this passage by seeing it as when we suffer through spiritual warfare and just the brokenness of this life.

Just like David is without cause, without something that he has done wrong, facing the brokenness of this life. And he reacts to it through Psalm 35 and you see that play out.

I know that wasn't very clearly explained. I will explain that a bit clearer by showing us what I mean when I say that. I think there are three things that we should learn from Psalm 35 as we face the brokenness of this life as well as the persecution that comes with being a disciple of Christ.

Here's the first thing. Look at verse 3 with me. He says, as he is talking to God, In this moment, as he is being pursued, David requests of God, Lord, would you just tell me that I am your salvation?

[21:51] Lord, would you remind me that I, and reassure me that you are my salvation, that you hold me close and you will save me? And Lord, would you remind me by your word and just tell me that I, that you are my salvation?

And so I think as we deal with all that life has for us as Christians, I think part of that is a longing for his words. A longing for the reassurance we find in his word as we look at the Bible.

There is a reason why we stand up here on Sundays and preach God's word. That it is not a new news that we have, but the same good news over and over again. Because as Christians, we need reassurance of the fact that Jesus is our salvation.

We need that over and over again. David longs that God would remind him, I am your salvation.

And it is not, I don't want this application of that to just be, now we need to read our Bibles more.

I hope that's the case. But I also want us to understand that it is beautiful that God has deliberately given us his word. It is a reason to worship him for the fact that he has gone, I'm going to continue reminding you that I am your salvation.

[22:59] That I died for you, that I rose again, that I am your salvation. And that you can find those reassuring words, the reassuring power of those words in God's word.

So that's our, first of how do we apply this in our lives? We long for his words in the way that David does. The second is trusting in God's sovereignty and yet being honest with him.

Verse 17 says this, How long, Lord, will you look on? Rescue me from their ravages, my precious life from these lions. There is something that David holds really helpfully as he prays to the Lord.

He holds in one hand the idea that the Lord does still see everything, right? When he says, how long, Lord, will you look on? There is an admittance that God is looking on, that he sees everything, that he is sovereign, that he has providence over the entire world, that he sees what David is going through.

And so he asks, how long will you look on? He is seeing it, yet he is saying, Lord, will you act on this? Will you not just see this, but also act on it? He is honest in his request that the Lord would act

quicker, but also holding in one hand that he is sovereign over everything.

[24 : 16] And so it should be with us. We should understand that God is sovereign and he cares for it, yet also long to bring honest requests to him as we struggle in life and as we delight in life.

And so that's the second one. First is longing for his words, trusting in his sovereignty and yet being honest. And the last is a desire for his presence. Verse 22 says this, Lord, you have seen this.

Do not be silent. Do not be far from me, Lord. He is not only content in God's speaking, he sees the power of God's words as he says, Lord, you have seen this, do not be silent, because he knows as the Lord speaks, things can change.

But more than that, he says, do not be far from me, Lord. Will still stay close to me as I go through this. Because we don't just need reassurance, we also need someone that is with us, that is closer than a brother.

The beautiful thing about all of these points, the longing for his words, the trusting in his sovereignty and being honest, and the desire for his presence is that Jesus fulfills all of them. Jesus has given us his words and told us that we can trust that he is our salvation, that he has finished the job on the cross.

[25 : 32] We can trust that he is sovereign over the world and we can trust and know that his presence is close to us because he has given us the Holy Spirit. And we should delight in all three of those things, says Psalm 35.

And so, as we go through our lives, I think it is important that we copy David in loads of those things.

But ultimately, we want to trust the Lord as he does and praise him at each section of our life. When he comes through and he saves us and he carries us through each and every section, the desire is that we worship him for who he is, continues to long for his words, and continue to delight in him, saying, my tongue will proclaim your righteousness and your praises all the day long.

Great. Let me pray first. Lord, we thank you for your word.

We thank you that Psalm 35 screams of a God that understands when we face suffering without cause. Yet, Lord, we thank you that you are with us, that you reassure us of you being there for us.

[26 : 46] And Lord, we pray that you continue to delight in caring for your servants like you care for David. Lord, we pray that we continue to trust you in all that we do and gain to know more of you.

In Jesus' name I pray. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

Amen.