

# Psalm 35

**Introduction** – One of the reasons the church has abandoned the singing of the Psalms is because, lost in our sentimentalism, our “all we need is love” Christianity, we have found that we do not know what to do with prayers like Psalm 35. Welcome to a psalm of imprecation and welcome to a world that will hate you because they do not know your Father, just as Jesus explained, quoting Psalm 35:19 (and 69:4, 109:3 – see John 15:18-25). Let the Great Psalm-singer teach us how to sing these psalms and pray these prayers as well.

**Shield and Spear in the Hand of Yahweh** (vv1-10) – The Psalm-singer calls on God to defend and fight for him and to declare that He is his salvation (vv1-3). He wants God to confuse them (v4), rout them (v5), cause them to slip (v6) and fall into the very trap they set (vv7-8, think “Wile E. Coyote”). He wants Haman to hang on his own gallows, something he knows the Lord is often pleased to do. When this deliverance happens, the Psalm-singer will rejoice in what God has done, boasting “who is like the LORD,” and “who delivers the poor and downtrodden like this?”

**Hear Christ Singing** – Of course, this was the situation Jesus found Himself in. His enemies sought after His life (Matt 27:1), and crucified Jesus, not knowing they were doing whatever God had purposed beforehand (Acts 4:28) for had they known, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory (1 Cor 2:8). Their humiliation of Christ was a net in which they fell and brought forth His exaltation and the fulfillment of God’s plan to bring salvation to the world.

**The Defense of Yahweh against Liars** (vv11-18) – False witnesses have risen up, accusations out of nowhere, and twisting the good David had done as though it were evil (vv11-12). David had treated them with extraordinary kindnesses, but they rejoiced over his adversities and tore at him with their teeth (vv13-16). The Psalm-singer cries out with holy impatience (v17) and promises again to bring public praise to his Deliverer’s name (v18).

**Christ and His Followers** – There were false witnesses accusing Jesus (Matt 26:59-60), Stephen (Acts 6:13), and Paul (Acts 24). Christ prayed for His enemies while they spit upon Him, beat Him and mocked Him (Mark 14:65). They gnashed their teeth at Stephen (Acts 7:54) and sought to kill Paul repeatedly. In the midst of the rejection of the gospel by the Jews, Paul rejoiced in God’s deliverance and bringing in of the Gentiles (Rom 15:9). Our enemy is the father of lies and Satan’s name means “Accuser.” His ways will always include lies and false accusations, “without a cause” against the Lord’s disciples.

**Stir Yourself up to My Vindication** (vv19-28) – The Psalm-singer is living a quiet life and yet “without a cause” he continues to be attacked (vv19-21). He cries out that God would wake up and judge according to His righteousness and calls for his own vindication (vv22-25). In verse 26 he sings for their shame to bring them down – and such humility can occur by their submission to the Lord or through the Lord destroying them. The Psalm-singer ends again with a cry that he and all who stand with him be strengthened as they sing together the praise of Yahweh (vv27-28).

**Applying Imprecations** – Imprecatory psalms are not like magic voodoo dolls for us to stick in our pins and watch our enemies flail around while we “bwah-hah-hah.” Remember Jesus’ warning to His disciples desire to call down fire (Luke 9:51-56). Jesus prayed that God would forgive those who were crucifying Him, “for they do not know what they are doing.” But He also prophesied, promised and then brought destruction upon Jerusalem for their attacks and rejection of Him and the Holy Spirit. Paul called down the curses of God upon any who would declare a false gospel (Gal 1:8-9).

**A Balanced Approach** – Our prayers should be that God would destroy our enemies who are seeking our destruction from doing His will. We should want them to have shame of face so that they would see His face and be granted repentance in God’s mercy. We are to bless our enemies as well (Matt 5:43-48). If God determines to simply bring justice, we say “Amen” (Rev 19:1-5), and if He determines to bring mercy, we say “Amen” as well. We are not to have the heart of Jonah who did not want God to be merciful to Nineveh.

**When to Imprecate and When to Not** – We are not to give a maledictory oath to the one who just cut in front of us on the highway. We are not to curse our spouse, returning evil for evil. These prayers are not to come out rashly from our lips and we must never let the sun go down on our anger (notice how three times the Psalm-singer moves to praise). But there is a time for a thoughtful, even if desperate, cry to be made to God to break the arms of enemies (Psalm 10:15).

**Vengeance is Good and Vengeance is God’s** – One of the best tests of being spiritual is whether you are returning good for evil and waiting upon the Lord for His vengeance in His time and in His way (Rom 12:17-21).

**When Surrounded by Enemies, It is Time to Sing** – What are we to do with psalms of imprecation? We are supposed to sing them! When we are afraid, when we are in trouble, when we are tempted to doubt God is listening or coming soon to deliver, people should hear us singing. “Pray without ceasing” means, among other things, “Sing a lot!”