
By David.

PSALM 35: 1 Contend, LORD, with those who contend with me. Fight against those who fight against me.

The psalmist, in great straits, prays for his personal safety, Psa 35:1-3; and for the confusion of his enemies, Psa 35:4-8; expresses his confidence in God, Psa 35:9, Psa 35:10; mentions his kindness to those who had rewarded him evil for his good, Psa 35:11-16; appeals to God against them, Psa 35:17-26; prays for those who befriended him; and praises God for his goodness, Psa 35:27, Psa 35:28.

There is nothing in the title worthy of remark. The Psalm is simply attributed to David, and was most probably of his composing; and refers to the time of his persecution by Sauri and his courtiers. The Syriac says it was composed when the Idumeans attacked David. The Arabic says it is a prophecy concerning the incarnation, and concerning the things practiced against Jeremiah by the people. Some think that our Lord's sufferings are particularly pointed out here; and Bishop Horsley thinks that Psa 35:11-16 apply more literally and exactly to Christ than to any other whomsoever.

Verse 1

Plead my cause, O Lord - Literally, Contend, Lord, with them that contend with me. The word is often used in a forensic or law sense.

PSALM 35: 2 Take hold of shield and buckler, and stand up for my help.

Verse 2

Take hold of shield and buckler - Let them be discomfited in battle who are striving to destroy my life. It is by the shield and buckler of others, not any of his own that God overthrows the enemies of his people. This is spoken merely after the manner of men.

PSALM 35: 3 Brandish the spear and block those who pursue me. Tell my soul, "I am your salvation."

Verse 3

Say unto my soul, I am thy salvation - Give me an assurance that thou wilt defend both body and soul against my adversaries.

PSALM 35: 4 Let those who seek after my soul be disappointed and brought to dishonour. Let those who plot my ruin be turned back and confounded.

Verse 4

Let then be confounded - Let none of their projects or devices against me succeed. Blast all their designs.

The imprecations in these verses against enemies are all legitimate. They are not against the souls or eternal welfare of those sinners, but against their schemes and plans for destroying the life of an innocent man; and the holiest Christian may offer up such prayers against his adversaries. If a man aim a blow at another with a design to take away his life, and the blow would infallibly be mortal if it took place, and the person about to be slain see that by breaking the arm of his adversary he may prevent his own death, and thus save his enemy from actual murder; it is his duty to prevent this double evil by breaking the arm of the blood-thirsty man. It is on this principle that David prays against his adversaries in the first eight verses of this Psalm.

PSALM 35: 5 Let them be as chaff before the wind, The LORD's angel driving them on.

Verse 5

Let the angel of the Lord chase them - By angel we may either understand one of those spirits, whether good or bad, commonly thus denominated, or any thing used by God himself as the instrument of their confusion.

PSALM 35: 6 Let their way be dark and slippery, The LORD's angel pursuing them.

Verse 6

Let their way be dark - Let them lose their way, be entangled in morasses and thickets, and be confounded in all their attempts to injure me. All these phrases are military; and relate to ambushes, hidden snares, forced marches in order to surprise, and stratagems of different kinds.

PSALM 35: 7 For without cause they have hidden their net in a pit for me. Without cause they have dug a pit for my soul.

Verse 7

For without cause have they hid for me their net in a pit - The word תַּחַשׁ shachath, a pit, belongs to the second member of this verse, and the whole should be read thus: For without a cause they have hidden for me their net, without a cause they have digged a pit for my life. They have used every degree and species of cunning and deceit to ruin me.

PSALM 35: 8 Let destruction come on him unawares. Let his net that he has hidden catch himself. Let him fall into that destruction.

Verse 8

Let his net that he hath hid - See the notes on Psa 7:15, Psa 7:16.

PSALM 35: 9 My soul shall be joyful in the LORD. It shall rejoice in his salvation.

Verse 9

My soul - My life, thus saved: -

Shall be joyful in the Lord - I am so circumstanced at present as to be in the utmost danger of being destroyed by my foes; if I escape, it must be by the strong arm of the Lord; and to him shall the glory be given.

PSALM 35: 10 All my bones shall say, "LORD, who is like you, who delivers the poor from him who is too strong for him; yes, the poor and the needy from him who robs him?"

Verse 10

All my bones shall say - My life being preserved, all the members of my body shall magnify thy saving mercy.

Deliverest the poor - This is a general maxim: God is peculiarly mindful of the poor. Where secular advantages are withheld, there is the more need for spiritual help. God considers this, and his kind providence works accordingly.

PSALM 35: 11 Unrighteous witnesses rise up. They ask me about things that I don't know about.

Verse 11

False witnesses did rise up - There is no doubt that several of this kind were found to depose against the life of David; and we know that the wicked Jews employed such against the life of Christ. See Mat 26:59, Mat 26:60.

They laid to my charge things that I knew not - They produced the most unfounded charges; things of which I had never before heard.

PSALM 35: 12 They reward me evil for good, to the bereaving of my soul.

Verse 12

To the spoiling of my soul - To destroy my life; so נפש nephesh should be translated in a multitude of places, where our translators have used the word soul.

PSALM 35: 13 But as for me, when they were sick, my clothing was sackcloth. I afflicted my soul with fasting. My prayer returned into my own bosom.

Verse 13

When they were sick - This might refer to the case of Absalom, who was much beloved of his father, and for whose life and prosperity he no doubt often prayed, wept, and fasted.

My prayer returned into mine own bosom - Though from the wayward and profligate life they led, they did not profit by my prayers, yet God did not permit me to pray in vain. They were like alms given to the miserable for God's sake, who takes care to return to the merciful man tenfold into his bosom. The bosom is not only the place where the Asiatics carry their purses, but also where they carry any thing that is given to them.

PSALM 35: 14 I behaved myself as though it had been my friend or my brother. I bowed down mourning, as one who mourns his mother.

Verse 14

Mourneth for his mother - כאבל אם caabel em, as a mourning mother. How expressive is this word!

PSALM 35: 15 But in my adversity, they rejoiced, and gathered themselves together. The attackers gathered themselves together against me, and I didn't know it. They tore at me, and didn't cease.

Verse 15

But in mine adversity they rejoiced - How David was mocked and insulted in the case of Absalom's rebellion by Shimei and others, is well known.

The abjects - נכים nechim, the smiters, probably hired assassins. They were everywhere lying in wait, to take away my life.

PSALM 35: 16 Like the profane mockers in feasts, they gnashed their teeth at me.

Verse 16

With hypocritical mockers in feasts - These verses seem to be prophetic of the treatment of Christ. They did tear me, and I knew it not. They blindfolded and buffeted him; they placed him in such circumstances as not to be able to discern who insulted him, except by a supernatural knowledge.

With hypocritical mockers in feasts may also relate prophetically to our Lord's sufferings. Herod clothed him in a purple robe, put a reed in his hand for a scepter, bowed the knee before him, and set him at naught. Here their hypocritical conduct (pretending one thing while they meant another) was manifest, and possibly; this occurred at one of Herod's feasts.

PSALM 35: 17 Lord, how long will you look on? Rescue my soul from their destruction, my precious life from the lions.

Verse 17

My darling - יְחִידָתִי yechidathi, my only one, Psa 22:20. My united one, or He that is alone. Perhaps this may relate to Christ. See the note on Psa 22:20.

PSALM 35: 18 I will give you thanks in the great assembly. I will praise you among many people.

Verse 18

I will give thee thanks in the great congregation - I hope to be able to attend at the tabernacle with thy followers, and there publicly express my gratitude for the deliverance thou hast given me.

PSALM 35: 19 Don't let those who are my enemies wrongfully rejoice over me; neither let those who hate me without a cause wink their eyes.

Verse 19

That are mine enemies - Saul and his courtiers.

PSALM 35: 20 For they don't speak peace, but they devise deceitful words against those who are quiet in the land.

PSALM 35: 21 Yes, they opened their mouth wide against me. They said, "Aha! Aha! Our eye has seen it!"

Verse 21

They opened their mouth wide - Gaped upon me to express their contempt.

And said, Aha, aha, our eye hath seen it - They said, הֶאֱחָ הֶאֱחָ heach, heach, the last syllable in each word being a protracted strongly guttural sound, marking insult and triumph at the same time. It is the word which we translate Ah, Psa 35:25.

PSALM 35: 22 You have seen it, LORD. Don't keep silent. Lord, don't be far from me.

Verse 22

This thou hast seen - I have no need to adduce evidences of these wrongs; thou, to whom I appeal, hast seen them. Therefore,

PSALM 35: 23 Wake up! Rise up to defend me, my God! My Lord, contend for me!

Verse 23

Stir up thyself, and awake to my judgment - I have delivered my cause into thy hand, and appeal to thee as my Judge; and by thy decision I am most willing to abide.

PSALM 35: 24 Vindicate me, LORD my God, according to your righteousness. Don't let them gloat over me.

Verse 24

Judge me, O Lord my God - The manner of his appeal shows the strong confidence he had in his own innocence.

PSALM 35: 25 Don't let them say in their heart, "Aha! That's the way we want it!" Don't let them say, "We have swallowed him up!"

Verse 25

Swallowed him up - בלענוהו billaanuhu, we have gulped him down.

PSALM 35: 26 Let them be disappointed and confounded together who rejoice at my calamity. Let them be clothed with shame and dishonour who magnify themselves against me.

Verse 26

Let them be ashamed - This may be a prophetic declaration against Saul and his courtiers. They were ashamed, confounded, clothed with shame, and dishonored. All these took place in Saul's last battle with the Philistines, where he lost his crown and his life, and came to a most dishonorable end.

PSALM 35: 27 Let them shout for joy and be glad, who favour my righteous cause. Yes, let them say continually, "The LORD be magnified, who has pleasure in the prosperity of his servant!"

Verse 27

Let them shout for joy and be glad - While my enemies are confounded, let my friends exult in the Lord; and let them all praise him for his marvellous kindness to me.

PSALM 35: 28 My tongue shall talk about your righteousness and about your praise all day long.

Verse 28

And my tongue shall speak - I, who am chiefly concerned, and who have received most, am under the greatest obligation; and it will require the constant gratitude and obedience of my whole life to discharge the mighty debt I owe.