

LESSON 21

CONFIDENCE IN OUR GREAT LORD

Psalm 35

Of David.

- ¹Contend, O Lord, with those who contend with me;
fight against those who fight against me!
- ²Take hold of shield and buckler
and rise for my help!
- ³Draw the spear and javelin against my pursuers!
Say to my soul, “I am your salvation!”
- ⁴Let them be put to shame and dishonor
who seek after my life!
Let them be turned back and disappointed
who devise evil against me!
- ⁵Let them be like chaff before the wind,
with the angel of the Lord driving them away!
- ⁶Let their way be dark and slippery,
with the angel of the Lord pursuing them!
- ⁷For without cause they hid their net for me;
without cause they dug a pit for my life.
- ⁸Let 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!
- ⁹Then my soul will rejoice in the Lord,
exulting in his salvation.
- ¹⁰All 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?”

WELCOME: *Fixing Our Focus*

Share with the group an experience when you faced a serious threat or opposition. How did you respond to it? Based on your response, where did you place your confidence or trust?

WORSHIP: *Adoring Our God*

Suggested songs:

The Lord is My Salvation by Keith and Kristyn Getty, et al.
You are My Hiding Place by Michael Ledner

WORD: *Understanding the Word*

Lesson Aim: Members will choose to relate to their enemies in a manner that glorifies God.

Introduction

When facing threats and opposition, it is so easy to take matters into our own hands. It is normal to retaliate and act to avenge ourselves. To pray might not be our knee-jerk response, but it should be. We must be in prayer all the time—in good times and in bad. And while we can be totally honest before God in prayer, like what David did in this psalm, let us remember that after all is said and done, we must focus on the glory of God.

Leader: Lead in reading Psalm 35:1-10 aloud together. Then read the paragraph on the “Key Verse.”

Key Verse: David had the full arsenal of his mighty army at his disposal. When people falsely accused him, he could have easily used all his weapons to crush his enemies. Instead, he runs to the most powerful Being in the universe and prayed, “Content, O Lord, with those who contend with me; fight against those who fight against me!” (*v. 1*).

Psalm 35:1-10. Theme: _____

1. The word “contend” (*v. 1*) literally means “to litigate.” Based on this, what was David asking God to do against his enemies?

2. In Psalm 23, David knew the Lord is his Shepherd. In verses 2-3 he had a different understanding of who God is. What was it? What was he expecting God to do?

3. What did David's soul need to hear over and over again? Why? (*v. 3b*)

4. List the things that David prayed with regard to his enemies. (*vv. 4-8*)

5. In your opinion, what drove David to pray this way against his enemies? How do you feel about this kind of prayer?

6. In verses 9-10, David talks to himself again. Summarize what he said.

**“Imprecatory”
prayers in the
Psalms are
associated with
David. These are
prayers for God’s
judgment against
his enemies—
not because of
vengeance rather
to call on God to
act on the basis of
his sovereignty and
hatred for sin.**

In the space above, write what you think is the theme of verses 1-10.

Psalm 35:11-18. Theme: _____

Read verses 11-18 together.

- ¹¹Malicious witnesses rise up;
they ask me of things that I do not know.
- ¹²They repay me evil for good;
my soul is bereft.
- ¹³But 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.
- ¹⁵But at my stumbling they rejoiced and gathered;
they gathered together against me;
wretches whom I did not know
tore at me without ceasing;
- ¹⁶Like profane mockers at a feast,
they gnash at me with their teeth.
- ¹⁷How long, O Lord, will you look on?
Rescue me from their destruction,
my precious life from the lions!
- ¹⁸I will thank you in the great congregation;
in the mighty throng I will praise you.

7. Describe how David treated these people when they experienced crisis in the past (*vv. 11-14*).

8. Describe how these people treated David when he was the one in crisis (*vv. 15-16*).

9. Examine David's prayer in verses 17-18. He seemed frustrated that God was indifferent toward his situation but he was also ready to praise God. Why do you think David prayed this way.

In the space above, write what you think is the theme of verses 11-18.

Psalm 35:19-28. Theme: _____

Read verses 19-28 together.

- ¹⁹Let not those rejoice over me
 who are wrongfully my foes,
 and let not those wink the eye
 who hate me without cause.
- ²⁰For they do not speak peace,
 but against those who are quiet in the land
 they devise words of deceit.
- ²¹They open wide their mouths against me;
 they say, “Aha, Aha!
 Our eyes have seen it!”
- ²²You have seen, O Lord; be not silent!
 O Lord, be not far from me!
- ²³Awake and rouse yourself for my vindication,
 for my cause, my God and my Lord!
- ²⁴Vindicate me, O Lord, my God,
 according to your righteousness,
 and let them not rejoice over me!
- ²⁵Let them not say in their hearts,
 “Aha, our heart’s desire!”
 Let them not say, “We have swallowed him up.”
- ²⁶Let 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!
- ²⁷Let 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!”
- ²⁸Then my tongue shall tell of your righteousness
 and of your praise all the day long.

10. What are the reasons why David felt that he was justified in praying this way against his enemies (*vv. 19-21, 25-26*)?

11. In verses 22-24, David pleaded for the Lord's vindication. But he had to say, "Awake and rouse yourself for my vindication!" Why do you think God seemed distant or silent during this critical period in the life of David?
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**"Wink the eye"
means to mock or
insult.**

12. What results did David anticipate when he would be finally vindicated by the Lord (*vv. 27-28*)?

In the space above, write what you think is the theme of verses 19-28.

WALK: *Applying the Word*

Questions for Adults

1. Is this psalm a justification for Christians to pray imprecatory prayers against others? What, if any, are situations where praying imprecatory prayers would be appropriate?
2. Were you ever in a situation where you suffered, were falsely accused or persecuted because of your faith in Christ? Share your experience. How did you respond?
3. Read Matthew 5:43-44. How does Jesus Christ want us to respond to our enemies? Why?
4. Individually and as a group, pray back this psalm to God. You could start by saying something like:

O Lord, you are great. You delight in the welfare of your servants...

5. Pray for GCF (Prayer requests supplied by the Leader).

Questions for the Youth

1. It's during our teens where we start finding our "tribe" or circle of friends. As we begin to discover our circles, we also begin to discover that certain personalities are difficult to deal with. Can you think of people whose personalities clash with yours?
2. In David's circle, he loved each as his family. However, true colors

came out when they started talking behind his back and ridiculed him in his defeats. Have you been subject to this kind of treatment? Or perhaps you're the one who subjected others to envy, gossip, and fake friendship? Share your experience with the group.

3. David simply surrendered his enemies to God. All that mattered to him was his relationship with the Lord and that the Lord is the one who fights for him. Who are those that we need to surrender to the Lord's sovereignty?
4. Just because you hate someone doesn't mean you should pray an imprecatory prayer. David knew that the motives of these people were up to no good. So he asked God to preserve him from their evil schemes and teach them a lesson so that they won't do it to others as well. Do you have someone in mind? Are you that someone? Isn't it tempting to just hate against someone who has crossed you? How can you pray, then, for people you're at odds with?

Questions for Children

1. What does the Lord do in this psalm? Verse 9 speaks of God's salvation; this means that God takes care of us and keeps us safe from harm and danger caused by other people. Write down one way God saved you from danger or evil this week.
2. After reading Psalm 35, do you think that evil people will get away with the wrong they do? Why? Remember the character of God in this psalm.
3. In Psalm 35, we see God as our strength: someone who defends us or fights for us. There will be people who may hurt or bully us but we can put our confidence in Him. Is there anyone who is hurting you or saying mean things to you? If there is, pray for them right now and ask the Lord to change their heart. If not, pray for those who are being mistreated or bullied instead.