

PRAYING THROUGH THE PSALMS -- WEEK 6 – PSALM 35  
HOME GROUP AND DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS

Open your Bibles to Matthew 6:9-13 and read together the Lord's Prayer.

In what way should we pray that God "deliver us from evil" (Matthew 6:13)? What kind of evil? Note that some versions say "the evil one." What evil one, and how should we be delivered from the evil one(s)?

Now read through Psalm 35. This Psalm was likely written while David was on the run from King Saul. Saul was jealous that God chose David to be Saul's successor as king of Israel. His jealousy turned into a murderous rage. Saul led an army to hunt down and kill David.

David prays for God to bring his adversaries into God's judgment hall, to find them guilty and to execute justice on behalf of David.

Ponder these focus verses and consider what David is asking.

Psalm 35:1-2 – David prays: "Contend, Lord, with those who contend with me; fight against those who fight against me. Take up shield and armor; arise and come to my aid." \* *David calls on God as his legal advocate – his defense lawyer!*

Psalm 35:4-6 -- 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." \* *Who is this "angel of the Lord" that David calls upon?*

Psalm 35:7-8 – "Since they hid their net for me without cause and without cause dug a pit for me, may ruin overtake them by surprise— may the net they hid entangle them, may they fall into the pit, to their ruin."

Explore how these prayers of David might be reconciled with Jesus' command that we love our enemies and pray for them (Matthew 5:44)?

Consider: What had been David's relationship with King Saul before Saul became jealous and decided that David must be killed? Scan through 1 Samuel 16:14 through 1 Samuel 18:5.

In that context, consider Psalm 35:11-15 – David prays: "*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.*"

Who are the "ruthless witnesses" and unfaithful friends and brothers now attacking David?

Have you ever been intentionally and repeatedly betrayed by a friend? Have you ever had someone attack you *because* you are on the Lord's side?

How should we respond when that happens? What should we ask God to do?

In Psalm 35:22-24 David then prays: *“Lord, you have seen this; do not be silent. Do not be far from me, Lord. Awake, and rise to my defense! Contend for me, my God and Lord. Vindicate me in your righteousness, Lord my God.”*

What is David asking God to do? What will his “defense” look like? What kind of “vindication” does David seek?

When you are being maliciously attacked by an enemy how should you pray for God's *mercy* for your attacker? How should you pray for God's *justice* upon your attacker? How do you pray for God's will and God's kingdom to come into that situation? Why is “vindication” important?

David did not take matters into his own hands and strike back against Saul. See for instance 1 Samuel 24:1-12. Why did David refuse to strike King Saul when he had the chance? See 1 Samuel 26:9-11.

What did King Saul deserve from God? What did David want for King Saul?

Now read how David responded when he learned that King Saul was killed (2 Samuel 1: 11-12).

We know that God called David to be the new king in Israel because David was a “man after God's own heart.” (1 Samuel 13:14). What does David's response to the death of this man who hated David and tried to kill him tell us about the heart of David, and the heart of our God?

Note these **FOUR PRINCIPLES** we see in Psalm 35. The first three speak to our BEHAVIORAL STANDING IN PRAYER. THE FOURTH SPEAKS TO OUR RELATIONAL STANDING.

- 1) **DAVID WAS INNOCENT IN THIS MATTER.** David was not sinless in ALL matters, but he was innocent in his relation with Saul. Before praying for God's vindication remember that God is an unbiased Judge. You also will appear before His judgment seat.
- 2) **DAVID PRAYED FOR HIS ENEMY BEFORE SEEKING JUSTICE FROM GOD.** Have you prayed and fasted and wept about this matter and for your enemy?
- 3) **DOES THIS CASE INVOLVE UNREPENTANT REBELLION AGAINST GOD?**
- 4) **DAVID WAS IN COVENANT RELATION WITH GOD** – David was God's anointed. Have you been born again as a child of God and accepted Jesus as your King so that you come under his special protection as your Advocate and Savior?

Close out Home Group by identifying areas where God and his church are currently under attack by evil. Discuss how the FOUR PRINCIPLES from Psalm 35 might apply to the situation.

Discuss how God's people should pray about this situation. Pray together as a group and commit to focused prayer about this matter and that God be glorified in His answer to your prayer.