

Psalm 35 – Plead My Cause! (Part 3 of 3)

V. The Plea for JUSTICE (vs. 18-21) –David said to the LORD that he wanted to give thanks to Him for the deliverance from his enemies who wanted to kill him. David bore them no animosity. If they are sick, he will fast and pray for them. Based on this heart and mind that David possessed, he said to the LORD that he would give thanks to Him in the great congregation. David passed the test thus far by not allowing his heart to sin against God. Had he been angry and bitter against his enemies, and had he rejoiced in their sickness, he would have sinned. Had he not prayed and fasted for them the way he did, and not love them unconditionally the way he experienced God’s unconditional love for him through Christ, he would have sinned. Giving thanks is the hallmark of a grateful heart. The person who gives thanks feels that he does not deserve what has been done in his life or has been given to him. This was how David felt regarding his relationship with his LORD. He wanted the people of Israel to know how grateful he was to the LORD for all that He had done for him, including the trials and persecution he experienced and also the deliverance.

Using synonymous parallelism, David repeated what he said, that he wanted to praise the LORD among much people. Praise and thanksgiving are twin truths that always go together. It is not possible to thank the LORD without also praising the LORD! Both were publicly acknowledged by David.

Verse 19 (synthetic parallelism) – To this end, David pleaded with his LORD to not let his enemies who wrongfully accused him to wrongfully rejoice over him. The three types of persecution faced by believers were stated by Christ in Matthew 5—persecution (physical harm); revile (scolding and threats); and saying all kinds of things falsely. Of the three, it seems that the third was the one that David struggled with the most. It is one thing to suffer physical hurt or receive threats, but lies and character assassination are the hardest to endure. The reason is that true believers have the best sense of justice (right and wrong because of God's infallible and inerrant word). They also know that based upon God’s Word, all they do and continue to do is to obey the will and Word of God. The deep sense of injustice hurts deep into the bowels. David experienced this often in his life, before as well as after he became king. He cried to the LORD to not let his enemies rejoice because of this! These evil men who lie to destroy God’s children who serve Him faithfully on earth will rejoice in their downfall. However, God’s people will weep even when the enemies of God fall and face the judgement of God. The contrast is clear. This will be seen in the last days when evil men will rejoice and celebrate when the Antichrist kills the two witnesses whom God will send to tell them about Christ and the deception of the Antichrist. Revelation 11:7-10, “And when they shall have finished their testimony, the beast that ascendeth out of the bottomless pit shall make war against them, and shall overcome them, and kill them. 8 And their dead bodies shall lie in the street of the great city, which spiritually is called Sodom and Egypt, where also our Lord was crucified. 9 And they of the people and kindreds and tongues and nations shall see their dead bodies three days and an half, and shall not suffer their dead bodies to be put in graves. 10 And they that dwell upon the earth shall rejoice over them, and make merry, and shall send gifts one to another; because these two prophets tormented them that dwelt on the earth.” Truth to them is tormenting. These evil men in David’s time were just the same. They rejoiced when they saw David’s persecution. David cried to the LORD to stop them from their wicked rejoicing!

These enemies of David also compounded his inward turmoil! They winked their eye! What is the meaning of this phrase? This phrase appears in other OT passages. Proverbs 6:12-14, "A naughty person, a wicked man, walketh with a froward mouth. 13 He winketh with his eyes, he speaketh with his feet, he teacheth with his fingers; 14 Frowardness is in his heart, he deviseth mischief continually; he soweth discord." Proverbs 10:10, "He that winketh with the eye causeth sorrow: but a prating fool shall fall." Based upon these other usages and the context of verse 19, the meaning would be the same. This was an act of wicked persons. Their intent was to do mischief and malice. They hated David. His enemies were filled with venom. They knew there was no justification against David so they had to manufacture it, mixing lies with a sprinkling of truth to make their lies more acceptable to the undiscerning. Their purpose was to destroy David so that Israel would not have him as their godly king! In attacking David, they were in reality attacking Israel. If David was killed by King Saul, Israel would never have experienced the wonderful reign of David. If David gave up Christ or stopped obeying God's will in his life because it was too difficult, then these evil men would have succeeded in thwarting the work of God in Israel's life. David was not saying to his God that these enemies who hated him could not "wink at him" if he had done wrong! But David knew in his heart, based upon God's truth, that he had not done anything wrong! All he wanted to do was to obey the will and Word of God in his life!

Verse 20 (synthetic parallelism) – All David wanted was peace and to obey the Word of God. But these enemies of David did not want peace. They were consumed by their hatred for David! They wanted trouble. They did not care for right or wrong because they were consumed by their hatred for and obsession to kill David! They spoke words that would sow seeds of discord. They spread falsehood like the enemies of a farmer spreading tares to ruin his crops. David's enemies wanted to destroy his peace of mind, which every child of God has when he obeys the LORD. This is the blessing of obedience that every child of God clings to, and that helps him to keep on obeying God's Word more. This is priceless and money cannot buy it. It is a deep assurance in the soul knowing that your life is right with your LORD. David had this when he looked after his father's flock, trusting in his LORD to keep him and his father's flock safe from the ferocious bears and lions. This is the same priceless trust David enjoyed, that gave him the courage he needed to defeat Goliath with the swing of his sling. David's enemies wanted to take this peace away from him. One of the most effective ways is through fear. Fear will cast doubt. Doubt leads to faithlessness. Doubt leads to sin, for whatsoever that is not done in faith is sin (cf. Romans 14:23). In today's world of the internet, the tool of spreading lies is even more potent than before. It spreads like an out of control radioactive cloud that poisons the minds of many who care not for the truth but only delight in the fall of others like David, a man after God's own heart. It's all about causing the children of God to not trust in their heavenly Father. The way to overcome is to cry to the LORD for intervention like what David did here, and hold on to the LORD and keep on trusting in Him no matter what the enemies are doing.

Not only did they want to kill David and destroy his faith and trust in the LORD, they wanted to turn David's friends against him as well. They spread rumours and manufactured lies to accomplish this. Those who were David's "friends" would quickly turn on him. They would believe the lies and rumours. To lose one's freedom is one thing but to lose all his friends was a direct assault on his soul and mind.

Sowing discord deliberately to destroy friendships is one of the sins most hated by God. Proverbs 6:16-19, "These six things doth the LORD hate: yea, seven are an abomination unto him: 17 A proud look, a lying tongue, and hands that shed innocent blood, 18 An heart that deviseth wicked imaginations, feet that be swift in running to mischief, 19 A false witness that speaketh lies, and he that soweth discord among brethren." Loneliness is part of the trials of every believer's life. To live a life whereby friends have turned into enemies is worse than having no friends at all. To taste the joy and blessing of friendship and then to have it taken away because of lies is a wound to the innermost part of a person's soul. When friends believe in lies and turn into one's enemies, life becomes tasteless and the joy of living and serving can become too heavy a burden to bear. David's enemies devised deceitful matters against him so that those who were not against David became turned enemies of David! When David hid in a city, they were forced to choose – to help King Saul capture David or to hide David from King Saul. If King Saul had not wanted David killed, the land would have had peace. David would have peace. But when the king stirred up the hearts of the people of Israel who wanted peace but were forced to choose, peace was taken from them.

Verse 21 (synthetic parallelism) – David testified of the audacity and great deception of his enemies against him. They opened their mouth wide against him. This means that they spoke loud words against David. Writing was not as common as today in terms of the ease and cost effectiveness. However, that did not stop David's enemies from spreading all sorts of lies against him. The phrase also means they were very bold in their attacks. They slandered him. They distorted the truth. When there was no wrong to be found against God's servant, they manufactured lies. Their duplicity knew no bounds! Their obsession against David was like a blind and mad man swinging and flaying both his arms wildly trying to hit and destroy everything that is in front of him. He will not stop until everything is destroyed, by hook or by crook. These same attacks are used today against God's servants. Spiritually blind and mad men do the same through the internet and use whatever ways and means available to hurt and destroy. However, we know from the Bible that their obsession will boomerang back on them, as it did on Haman who built a gallows to hang Mordecai but he was hanged on it instead.

What will come out of the mouths, or, as in our context today, the pens of these evil men? David said that these men would claim, "Aha, aha, our eye hath seen it." They claimed that they knew the truth when all they knew were lies. They deluded themselves into thinking that they had the truth. They even dared to claim that they were eye witnesses of what David had done. The reality is that their conscience had been seared. They convinced their blind eyes that they had seen the sin and evil of David! With such a warped stony heart they spoke with conviction and all sincerity. This made their evil and lies against David more convincing and deadly. Sadly and tragically, there were some who believed and went against David. One might think and ask how such a thing could happen? The Bible teaches that the heart of sinful man is deceitful! Jeremiah 17:9 affirms, "The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it?" When the hearts of these evil men were obsessed with David's death, they would not stop until they self destructed. King Saul did not stop until he died in battle. When God's servants serve the Lord faithfully according to Holy Scriptures, they will be able to endure as David endured. The Lord warns in passages like Philippians 1:27-29, "Only let your conversation be as it

becometh the gospel of Christ: that whether I come and see you, or else be absent, I may hear of your affairs, that ye stand fast in one spirit, with one mind striving together for the faith of the gospel; 28 And in nothing terrified by your adversaries: which is to them an evident token of perdition, but to you of salvation, and that of God. 29 For unto you it is given in the behalf of Christ, not only to believe on him, but also to suffer for his sake.” Do not be despondent. Do not stop serving. Keep on walking righteously and stay on the path of holiness. Trust in the ever present Lord to hold and keep you all the way from earth to heaven!

God’s servants must make sure that they are doing the will and work of God according to God’s holy and perfect Word. The attacks of the evil one will come soon enough. Know that when the attacks come, your heavenly father is in total and absolute control. He knows the strength of your faith. The trials He allows into your life will be according to the measure of the strength of your faith. He will not allow a temptation greater than your faith to crush you. He has promised all His children this assurance. 1 Corinthians 10:13, “There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it.” Keep on believing.

VI. The Plea for VINDICATION (vs. 22-28) – David acknowledged that the LORD had seen all that he endured from his enemies. The knowledge of the sovereignty of God in David’s life did not turn David into a robot. His heart felt all the bombardment of the unceasing harsh words and his soul turned from calmness to a boiling froth when his enemies assassinated his character and turned a nation that once adored David against him. The trials and persecution David endured drove him nearer and closer to his LORD. This literally fulfilled what the apostle Paul revealed when he said that all things work together for good to those who love the LORD and are called according to His purpose (cf. Romans 8:28). This is the truth that transcends time and location. The God who called David to be the best king Israel ever had allowed him to endure immeasurable persecution that drove him to his knees and to Christ in order that self confidence and pride might be put aside when David reigned over God’s people. This has been how God prepared his servants in times past and is the same in the present. How many of us can testify of the trials God sent our way to prepare us for future service? When His servants think that they are ready for service, then they are not. When His servants realize that they are not ready because they are void of self confidence, then the LORD says to them “you are ready!” This was true of Moses, David, etc. There are no exceptions.

Those who serve the LORD in their own strength and confidence will fail and fall. God wants His servants to serve Him in His confidence and not theirs. These are the kinds of servants who will pray without ceasing and serve Him faithfully to the end. The only way to strip the servant of God of his pride and self-confidence before service is through trials and great humiliation and difficulties. They learn the priceless lesson of no confidence, no leaning on man or the arm of the flesh. These will all fail in time but not the arm of God. God’s servants cannot partially lean on God and the arm of the flesh. They must lean only on God and God alone to succeed when they do His spiritual work! Thus David declared that

the LORD has seen. The LORD knows exactly what David was going through. It was a matter of when the LORD would intervene.

David implored the LORD not to be far from him. The LORD had never been far from David, His beloved servant. However, sometimes it feels as if the LORD is far from His servants especially when the persecution does not seem to stop. It is one of perspective. The mind believes that the LORD is never far from His servants. He never has and He never will. Knowing is one thing but experience is another. When trials seem to go on forever, one's faith in the presence of the LORD can be affected. It does not turn the servant of God into an unfeeling robot. The feelings of hurt and pain and loneliness that the believer feels when all human relationships turn to ice are real. The mind pushes the truth of God to the background. When that happens faith is weakened. This feeling of the absence of the LORD comes to the fore and faith recedes. The LORD does not seem to be present when the persecution intensifies and seems to go on for a long time, hence, the cry from David for his LORD not to be far from him.

Verse 23 (synthetic parallelism) – David followed up with pleading. He pleaded with his LORD to stir up Himself like a man who slumbered. He added the verb “awake” for good measure. Of course David knew that the LORD neither slumbers nor sleeps. The LORD is all powerful. He never and can never get tired or sleepy. He is always alert and mindful of all His children who serve Him on earth. David was very specific in His cry to his LORD to awake. He asked for his LORD's judgement. David was being unjustly hounded and persecuted by his enemies. They were attacking him from all directions. David felt lost and alone. David felt as if the LORD had gone to sleep because his trials did not seem to end but kept on increasing in number as well as in intensity. The life of a believer on this earth is to live for Christ which will definitely include persecution. Christ warned His disciples before His ascension that the world will hate all born again obedient believers who faithfully serve Him in holiness. Mark 13:12-13 “Now the brother shall betray the brother to death, and the father the son; and children shall rise up against their parents, and shall cause them to be put to death. 13 And ye shall be hated of all men for my name's sake: but he that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved.” All believers must endure to the end. David understood this too. This can be seen in David's many psalms. He did not have as clear a picture as the New Testament saints because of progressive revelation. Believers today have the entire completed Bible to assure them of the abiding presence of God in times of persecution. Such elongated persecution will tend to cause God's children to feel that perhaps the LORD has gone to sleep. Many of us who endure such evil unjust attacks can feel with and appreciate David's cry and feeling.

Notice that in the use of synthetic parallelism, David did not use the term “LORD”, i.e. Jehovah which is a covenantal term. He used the words “God” and “Lord.” The word “God” is “elohiyim” which emphasizes the almighty power of God, whereas “Lord” (i.e. “adonay”) is used here to emphasize the master servant relationship. Appealing to the power of God means that David was crying to God for intervention based upon His attribute of omnipotence. His enemies might escape the justice of man especially when they are kings themselves. They will not escape the judgement of God! David's appeal for help was to the “Lord” because David was on earth doing God's will and not his own will. He was to be the next king of Israel not by his own personal design or desire but by God's sovereign appointment. His cause was God's ordained cause. David did not ask to be king of Israel. God made him. Now the

enemies were trying to destroy his ministry by their slanders and lies. “God must awake, and rise and stop them!” was David’s cry.

Verse 24 (synthetic parallelism) –More often than not, fathers on earth will help their children regardless of whether their children are right or wrong! The reason is simply that they are their children! This is wrong. David did not ask God to help him because of the relationship he had with his Lord. He asked God for help because he knew he was right and the enemies were wrong. They lied and accused him falsely. They slandered him and wanted him dead because he was called by the Lord to be the next king of Israel. David did nothing wrong. Hence, he asked the LORD to judge him! If David had done wrong and his enemies wanted him dead so be it. David wanted God’s help based upon justice and righteousness, not favouritism. He cried to the “LORD” (His covenantal Name) and also “God” (elohiyim) to judge him, acknowledging that they are one and the same. The basis for the judgement is God’s righteousness. God's righteousness is always based upon truth and holiness. In short, judge David according to the standard revealed in the perfect Word of God! David knew that he would come out stronger; he knew in his heart that he was innocent. This means that when the LORD’s deliverance finally comes, David will not only experience deliverance but also vindication, as he was persecuted for righteousness’ sake and the enemies were all liars.

David added “let them not rejoice over me” in his cry. Using synthetic parallelism, he said to the LORD that his enemies’ joy over his persecution by way of their lies and deception hurt him tremendously. They were mocking and laughing at him; no one came to his aid to deliver! David’s loneliness and helplessness in the face of all these enemies and their incessant attacks turned his eyes upward to his LORD for intervention. Evil men like to rejoice at the calamities of others especially the ones they mock and hate. The LORD has warned His children never to rejoice even when the enemies of God are punished. There is no joy in seeing sinful men being punished for their lies and their deception. Sadness in the heart is the only genuine heartfelt experience. Therefore when David’s enemies rejoiced at his calamity, he cried only to the LORD to help and deliver him based upon what is right and according to God's attribute.

Verse 25 (synonymous parallelism) – David said, “Let them not say in their hearts, Ah, so would we have it: let them not say, We have swallowed him up.” It seems that David’s appeal here was based upon knowing the intent of the heart of his enemies. However, on closer examination we see that this is not the case. David was merely appealing to God to not even allow his enemies to say in their hearts. All words usually stem from the heart. Before they are uttered, the heart and mind would frame the words. David asked the LORD to deal with the source of their evil words. The LORD ought not to just shut the mouths of the evil men but also to deal with the source of their evil words, their heart! Do not even let them say quietly within them that they have succeeded in destroying David. David would keep on trusting in his LORD. He would not allow these evil men with their lies to get David to sin through not trusting in his LORD to keep His promise in his life. God said that David would be king and even though his enemies’ attacks seem to bring about a destruction of God’s will in his life, David will cling on to his faith and trust in the LORD. David wanted the LORD to stop his enemies at the source because that is where their perseverance in their attacks lies. The LORD stopped King Saul who died in battle. The LORD

stopped Absalom who also died in battle. When the enemies are obsessed with destruction, the only way they will stop is to stop them at the source!

Using synonymous parallelism, David pressed home his request to his LORD, God! Do not let them say that they have swallowed David up, which means to have captured and destroyed him. David would not stop trusting but his enemies believed that they had won when he had to hide in Philistine territory to find refuge from King Saul's wrath. If David is ousted from Israel, he can no longer be the next king of Israel, so they surmised. These evil and faithless men who resort to lies and deception to destroy God's servants think that kings are made by men. They do not see or understand the sovereignty of God. They take matters into their own wicked hands. They stoop to worldly ways in their sneak attacks and by threats. They hide behind biblical jargons to give their diabolical attacks some semblance of Christian spirituality. But all they have is a disguised devilish attack on the servants of God to destroy the work of God! That is why David cried to the LORD to stop them at the source – their heart! In other words, David asked the LORD to not just neutralize their wicked methods but deal with the wicked men.

Verse 26 (synonymous parallelism) – David continued, “Let them be ashamed and brought to confusion together that rejoice at mine hurt: let them be clothed with shame and dishonour that magnify themselves against me.” This imprecation from David for the LORD to shame his enemies and bring them to confusion is a biblical concept. There was no vindictiveness on David's part, neither was there any desire for vengeance. David was crying to the LORD for justice. Divine justice from God is always sure and just. All true believers have the best sense of justice because they have the mind of Christ. Their sense of justice is based upon the Bible. David knew that he had not done anything wrong. All he did was to obey the will of God according to the Word of God. The enemies tried to kill him and hunted him like an animal. He called to God to shame them for what they were doing to him. These evil men who rejoiced in David's calamities must be brought to confusion, i.e. be confounded by God. They must not be allowed to succeed in thwarting the will of God in David's life. These evil men were actually attacking God! They were not destroying the will of David but the will of God. These evil men were not stopping the work of David in becoming king but the work of God. It is of utmost importance that God's obedient servants remain faithful to the will of God in their lives, for when they come under attack, and it will happen, they must remain strong and stay the course! They must not doubt the will of God in their lives and His protection and care.

Using synonymous parallelism, David restated what his heart desired. He wanted God to put these evil men to shame for what they had done against the will of God in his life. These evil men would receive their just reward from the just God.

Verse 27 (synonymous parallelism) On the other hand, there were those who stood with David, albeit very few. David asked the LORD to let them “shout for joy, and be glad.” These were the born again ones like David. They were able to see the truth. They could see the spiritual beyond the carnal. The unbelievers were blind and they followed King Saul or other enemies of David for fear of their lives or for carnal rewards. They would betray David for filthy lucre or for the praises of the king. They cared not for the will of God, for they did not know God. David cried to the LORD to protect these who were on David's righteous side. When they are protected then only can they shout for joy and be glad openly in

praise of David's God. David was not interested in the praises of man. All he wanted was to exalt the name of Christ and not his name. When David wanted to promote his own name by numbering the people of Israel, he committed a grievous sin and seventy thousand men died (cf. 2Samuel 24:15). Therefore when David cried to the LORD to let those who favoured his righteous cause to shout for joy and be glad, it was to honour God and not himself. This is clearly affirmed in the second half of this verse! Such a wonderful Christ-honouring request will definitely be answered by God.

The synonymous parallelism emphasizes the strong desire in David's heart to praise the LORD. He asked the LORD to let these who had pleasure in David's prosperity be magnified by the LORD. Let the LORD enlarge their shout for joy and gladness in praising the LORD. Do not let them praise the LORD in hiding but in the open and from the house tops for all to hear of His goodness and greatness! The hearts of believers will be strengthened and encouraged to also keep on trusting in the LORD when they also face evil men who desire to destroy and stop the will and work of God in the lives of His servants. They must be strong in faith and keep on trusting regardless of how hopeless the outward circumstances might appear. When the enemies laugh and mock in victory the LORD will bring them down!

Verse 28 (synthetic parallelism) – The experiential knowledge that a child of God has with his heavenly Father is the catalyst that propels him to the heavenly realm as he serves God on earth. Praising the LORD is not an academic exercise. It is not ritualistic where the worshipper goes through the motion of praising and feels nothing about the words he sings. When children of God endure a similar trial like David, the praises will definitely be personal and heartfelt. This is what the LORD wants. That is why the LORD allowed the painful trials to come upon David. David had to be driven to the point of near breaking before he could learn and experience the deepest praise from his lips and heart. Psalm 35 could have been written in any other way than the way of intense suffering for Christ. All David wanted was to speak of the LORD's righteousness. David experienced all the unrighteous deeds from his enemies, allowed by God, and he did not curse or complain. Evil men could do all they wanted to David and all of God's servants but God's servants desired to only praise the LORD in the process. What an amazing response from persecuted believers. This is spiritual victory in action!

David said that he wanted to do this all the day long. He did not want to stop praising the LORD regardless of the suffering. He knew that the deliverance would come in time, God's time. When it came, he would praise the LORD even louder. He would not be defeated by the evil men. He knew that their attacks were to make him sin. David refused to sin but praised the LORD instead. All faithful believers must follow David's example, especially in times of trials and persecution! Amen.