

When Enemies Surround

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[0:00] Psalm 35, let's read it together. Of David, Contend, O Lord, with those who contend with me. Fight against those who fight against me.

Take hold of shield and buckler and rise for my help. Draw the spear and javelin against my pursuers. Say to my soul, I am your salvation.

Let them be put to shame and dishonor who seek after my life. Let them be turned back and disappointed who devise evil against me.

Let them be like chaff before the wind, with the angel of the Lord driving them away. Let their way be dark and slippery with the angel of the Lord pursuing them.

For without cause, they hid their net for me. Without cause, they dug a pit for my life. Let destruction come upon him when he does not know it.

[1:02] And let the net that he hid ensnare him, let him fall into it to his destruction. Then my soul will rejoice in the Lord, exulting in his salvation.

All 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.

Malicious witnesses rise up. They ask me of things I do not know. They repay me evil for good. My soul is bereft.

But I, when they were sick, I wore sackcloth. I afflicted myself with fasting. I prayed with head bowed on my chest.

I went about as though I grieved for my friend or my brother. As one who laments his mother, I bowed down in mourning. But at my stumbling, they rejoiced and gathered.

[2:03] They gathered together against me. Wretches whom I did not know tore at me without ceasing. Like profane mockers at a feast, they gnash at me with their teeth.

How long, O Lord, will you look on? Rescue me from their destruction. My precious life from the lions. And I will thank you in the great congregation.

In the mighty throng, I will praise you. Let not those rejoice over me who are wrongfully my foes. Let not those wink the eye who hate me without cause.

For they do not speak peace. But against those who are quiet in the land, they devise words of deceit. They open wide their mouths against me.

They say, aha, aha, our eyes have seen it. You have seen, O Lord. Be not silent. O Lord, be not far from me.

[3:08] Awake and rouse yourself for my vindication. For my cause, my God and my Lord. Vindicate me, O Lord, my God. According to your righteousness.

And let them not rejoice over me. Let them not say in their hearts, aha, our heart's desire. Let them not say we have swallowed him up.

Let 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.

Let 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.

Then my tongue shall tell of your righteousness and of your praise all the day long. Amen. Well, I want to begin with a statement that may very well blow your mind.

[4:13] You ready? Here it is. Life is hard. You didn't know that, did you? It's hard, isn't it?

Of course, not all of it is hard. Despite what the Eeyores in your life may suggest, God actually does great good for us. He gives us tremendous joy and opportunities for rejoicing even in the midst of difficult times.

But our time in this world is routinely plagued by difficulties of all sorts. One kind of hardship is especially difficult, however.

And that's when other people are actively against you. Sometimes we bring that upon ourselves. It's the result of our own sin or our own misgivings or our own treatment of others. And as the science has taught us, with every action, there's an equal and opposite reaction.

[5 : 19] And when we treat others poorly, we should expect to be treated poorly in return. And that certainly happens. But it's not always that way, is it? There may also be moments when enemies seek your demise without a just cause.

Not because you've done something wrong, not because you're deserving, but perhaps simply because they don't like you. They don't like what you've done.

They don't appreciate your righteousness. They don't appreciate your decisions. They are intent on seeking your destruction.

The scriptures warn us that this could actually be a regular experience, regular occurrence in the lives of believers. And it's hard.

It's devastating in many cases. In Psalm 35, David is writing from that kind of circumstance.

Enemies are pursuing him.

[6 : 25] Companions have betrayed him. Rivals are conspiring against him. And none of it, in this case, is for just cause.

In Psalm 35, David represents God's righteous king who unjustly suffers at the hands of those who do not truly fear the Lord.

And typologically, the psalm points us to Jesus, of course, who in John chapter 15 claims explicitly to be the true fulfillment of Psalm 35.

So again, we find that David writes the psalm. Jesus fulfills the psalm so that the church may truly sing or pray the psalm.

But the nature of this one and others like it, it's actually, believe it or not, it's a little bit controversial among some Christians. David here doesn't simply pray for defense.

[7 : 31] He prays for destruction. Some may group this in what they call imprecatory psalms. I don't know if that's the best way for us to understand it.

An imprecation is to pronounce a curse. I don't know that David himself is intending to pronounce curses here as much as he's asking God to take on that role here in his life.

But in either case, he's at least asking that God would destroy someone else. And others look at this psalm and other psalms like it, and they say that David is just acting vindictively.

This is vengeful on his part. This cannot square with other scriptures that teach us that we are to love our enemies and pray for them and seek to do good to them.

Which brings a point of wrestling for us, doesn't it? That criticism calls us to question whether or not Christians should employ such psalms as this one in their own worship and prayer.

[8 : 37] To say it simply, is it right for us to actually sing this song? Maybe even especially in light of the New Testament, New Covenant gospel of Jesus that has been revealed in a way that was not revealed to David.

Does that mean that it would be inappropriate actually for us to sing this one? Can we actually pray for God to judge our enemies without simultaneously violating Jesus' commands to love our enemies?

And we need to wrestle with that. Now I want to suggest a few things in relation to that question. One is this. Nothing here suggests that David would be upset or discouraged if his enemies repented and received God's mercy instead of God's judgment.

And we need to notice that. In David's mind, what is being assumed here is that these are active enemies against God and against God's people. And they continue in that state of being actively against the Lord and his purposes in the world.

Which means that it's very right for him to pray for God's justice. To do what God must do. And that is to deal with sin.

[10 : 04] If God doesn't deal with sin, then God isn't truly righteous. Which means that we need to pay attention to what exactly is David referring to.

Is this a penitent people and he just refuses to accept that the Lord would forgive them? Or are these enemies of God and he's crying out for God to act in judgment against his own enemies in order that he might fulfill his covenant?

And I think that's what he's doing. I think that's what all the Psalms like this are doing. James Johnson is helpful on this. He gives a few reasons why we don't need to quickly dismiss Psalms like this one.

First, he says, we know that David was not a vindictive man. If you've read anything of David's life in the scriptures, you know that over and over and over and over again, people who were actively seeking to take his life, he showed tremendous mercy.

On multiple occasions, he refused to take Saul's life. He wept at the death of his own son who was pursuing him and trying to kill him.

[11 : 12] Others who had betrayed him and turned to follow Absalom and his betrayal who lived. First, David allowed them to continue to live and even be in Jerusalem.

He extended tremendous mercy. It is not in general right for us to look at David's life and say that he was a vengeful man or a vindictive man. Therefore, we shouldn't look at his Psalms and say, well, this is just evidence of a vindictive heart.

That just doesn't match up with what we know to be true of his life. Second, David always asked for God to avenge him.

He never asked for God to strengthen him to take vengeance for himself. And I think that's an important note for us to consider.

David prays again and again that God in his divine righteousness and holiness would look on his situation and that he would do what is right according to his righteousness, according to what he knows is true.

[12 : 19] He asked for God to judge his enemies, but he asked for God to do that according to his own wisdom. He entrusts that role to the Lord. He doesn't take it upon himself.

Which means there's a huge difference between being vindictive and asking for vindication. Third thing James Johnston points out that I think is helpful is that David was writing here under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit.

This is God's word. And we need to accept it as God's word. Which means we cannot dismiss it. It cannot be wrong.

It cannot be misleading in any way. We must stay faithful to it because it is what God has given to us. And then there's a final note. And this one is really important.

We may not always think about this one, but this one is really important. And that is that David wrote as God's chosen king. He prayed as God's chosen servant.

[13 : 22] And that means that the circumstances that David was in and how they would turn out reflect on God's covenant faithfulness. In other words, if David's enemies overcome him, it's not just an indictment on David as being weak or a failure or sinful in some way.

It's an indictment on the God who chose him and made a covenant with him for not being faithful to that covenant. There is far more at stake in David's life than what we often imagine.

It's not ultimately about David. It's about the Lord and whether or not he's truly faithful. Says Christopher Ashe in relationship to this, He must pray against them because if they succeed, God's king will be defeated.

And all God's purposes of grace and kindness in a broken world will be frustrated. This is not a desire for personal revenge. It is a yearning that justice will prevail in the universe.

And of course, when Christopher Ashe writes that, he's got one hand holding on to David, looking at David's specific circumstance. And he's got the other hand and he's looking at Jesus and he's looking at the cross, the greater David who ultimately prays this prayer.

[14 : 47] God must come to his aid or else God is not faithful and we have no hope. Now, with all of that in mind, I want to show you how Psalm 35 actually teaches us to pray when enemies surround us.

I want to say that not only are we to look at David and say this was right for David to pray. I want to suggest to you today that it is right and it is good for you to pray for justice in your own life.

So long as the justice you pray for is colored by and influenced by your understanding of the gospel. That is that God must judge sin and I want God to be just either by judging my enemies who refuse to repent or by judging Christ in their place when they do repent.

Okay. Okay. It's right for you always to pray for God's justice. And this Psalm helps us know how to do that well. It actually contains three different prayers.

And through the three prayers, we see a threefold pattern for prayer that emerges. If you like to keep notes, you'll probably want to write this down. Here's the pattern. We always see a protest. [16:08] That is, David pours out his heart to the Lord in complaint. He underscores what the specifics of the situation are. And he gives his protest to the Lord.

He issues his complaint to the Lord, which is to say that when you're in such circumstances and you are coming to the Lord in prayer, it is okay to protest, not protest God, not to complain against him as if he's unjust, but it's okay to say, Lord, I've been wronged.

It's okay. Do that. David shows us how. Second, there's always a plea, right? A plea. That is, David prays for God to intervene, to not be silent, to arouse himself from sleep and act on his behalf, which means that in such circumstances, not only are we to bring our complaints to the Lord, but we are to lean on him for help.

We are to beg him for his own intervention according to his own will and wisdom. But then there's a third piece. You may not think about this, but it's important.

The third piece of the pattern is that there's always a praise. Always. It's always at the end. Before there's a deliverance, before we know the end, there is always a praise.

[17:31] That is, David promises to worship the Lord in his life and with his life. And this is how we should pray, and we should do so in faith because God has faithfully delivered our king.

Let's just work through the prayers one by one. Prayer number one is in the first ten verses. Let's just read it again. Contend, O Lord, with those who contend with me. Fight against those who fight against me.

Take hold of shield and buckler. Rise for my help. This is a battle scene. Draw the spear and javelin against my pursuers. This is interesting.

Say to my soul, Lord, I am your salvation. Let them be put to shame and dishonor who seek after my life. Let them be turned back and disappointed who devise evil against me.

That is, frustrate their plans. Let them be like chaff before the wind with the angel of the Lord driving them away. I love the picture there.

[18:33] We're in the dry season, aren't we? And whenever the one neighbor gets out and he's barely got any grass but he mows it anyways, what is it that constantly is flying up in the air?

It's all of the debris from the dead grass, the dirt. It's all mingled together, right? And where does it go? Everywhere, right? It picks up on the wind. It's blown everywhere. That's what David is praying for here essentially.

That the chaff, the wheat, that dead part, that worthless shale, that God would drive his enemies out like the wind drives away that dust and debris in the dryness.

Let their way be dark and slippery with the angel of the Lord pursuing them. For without cause they hid their net from me. Without cause they dug a pit for my life. Let destruction come upon him when he does not know it.

Let the net that he hid ensnare him. Let him fall into it to his destruction. And then my soul will rejoice in the Lord exulting in his salvation. All my bones shall say, O Lord, who is like you?

[19:41] Delivering the poor who in this case is not poor as in they have nothing. David considers himself to be the poor in this situation. That is poor in spirit.

He is a victim in this case. God delivers the victim from him who is too strong. The poor and needy from him who robs him.

In this case, attempts to rob him of his life. I think we can summarize this prayer this way. Lord, defend me from pursuing enemies so that my soul will rejoice in you.

Defend me from enemies that pursue me so that my soul might rejoice in you. This situation is clear from the start. Enemies are pursuing David.

They're fighting against him as if in battle. That's the picture. It's an army that's come against him. They're actively trying to kill him.

[20:41] They're devising evil against him in order that they may take his life. But the complaint isn't justified plainly until verse 7. Where David finally protests that the enemy is scheming against him and they have no reason to.

He's done nothing to them. He's done no wrong to deserve it. He is absolutely righteous in this case. It would be one thing if David had broken covenant with God.

It would be one thing if David had sinned in such a way as to demand his death. But no such thing has occurred in this instance. The enemy pursues him despite his righteousness.

The enemy pursues him maybe because of his righteousness. And I want you to notice that in this prayer and through the whole psalm, David never asked God for mercy.

We see that routinely in David's prayers. He does not ask for mercy anywhere in this psalm. He asks for justice in this psalm.

[21:43] Showing that he understands himself, at least in this case, to be truly righteous. That's really important that we notice that. He doesn't pray as a guilty one.

He prays as God's righteous one. He doesn't ask for God to forgive him. He asks for God to avenge him, to vindicate him, to defend him.

And of course, we understand that at the end of the day, David wasn't truly righteous. He had all kinds of sin in his life. But the prayer makes us think that if God is concerned to give justice to a sinner like David when he acts righteously, what would God do if there was one who is not actually a sinner in any way?

What does justice look like for that one? What must it mean if there is a truly righteous one who is being threatened?

What does it look like for God to be just then? Now, if you're living faithfully before God, you're going to have to be prepared for enemies who will seek your hurt in spite of your righteousness.

[23:09] And as we understand the scriptures and what even Jesus has warned us about himself, we understand that we should expect that there will be enemies who seek our destruction because of our righteousness.

And I just want you to see here that God invites you to make your complaint known to him in those situations.

That it's okay to pray for justice. That it's okay to pray that God would defend you. That's what David does. His plea is that God would defend him from such enemies.

But strikingly, he doesn't ask God to strengthen him for the fight. He asks that God would fight in his place.

Do you see that? Look at the beginning. You contend, O Lord, with them. You fight against them, Lord. You take hold of your armor, shield, and buckler.

[24:15] You draw the spear and javelin. You let them be put to shame. You turn them back. He's seeking the angel of the Lord to drive them away.

The angel of the Lord to pursue them. He doesn't ask for God to give him superhuman strength. He asks for God to do all the fighting for him. Oh, what faith is that?

And then he asks for comfort. Isn't that what we need in such situations? We need someone who will fight for us.

And we need someone who will comfort us in that. Someone who will say, I am your salvation. I'll take care of it. David seeks for the Lord to give him such assurance.

And this is the plea of the righteous who set all their hope on God's faithfulness. And then the promise of praise. It comes in verses 9 and 10, which isn't a bribe.

[25:20] It's not that David is saying, if you will do this for me, then I will do this for you. No, it's a commitment. He's consecrating himself to worship. He won't grow haughty in any success.

He will rejoice in God alone. He will give praise to the one who defends the poor and needy from their abusers. This is the unabashed praise of anyone who has found salvation in God's faithfulness.

This is indicative of the praise we should give day by day, Sunday by Sunday when we gather together, recognizing that God alone is our salvation. That's prayer number one.

We get to prayer number two in verses 11 to 18. And it takes on a little bit of a different shape now. The circumstance changes somewhat. Verse 11, malicious witnesses rise up.

They ask me of things I don't know about. They repay me evil for good. My soul is bereft. It's grieved. Because when they were sick, I wore sackcloth.

[26:24] I grieved for them. I afflicted myself with fasting and prayer. I prayed with my head bowed on my chest. I went about as though I grieved for a friend or brother or one who laments his own mother.

I bowed down in mourning for them. But now at my stumbling, they rejoice. They gather together against me wretches that I don't even know have been brought together.

They're tearing at me without ceasing. As profane mockers at a feast, there's a public gnashing at me with their teeth. How long, O Lord, will you look on?

Rescue me, David prays. And I will thank you in the great congregation. If we summarize the first prayer as, Defend me against pursuing enemies that my soul may rejoice in you.

We might summarize this prayer as, Rescue me from the betrayal of friends so that I might thank you before all your people.

[27 : 29] Rescue me from the betrayal of friends so that I might thank you before all of your people. I'm currently reading through Ron Chernow's prize-winning biography on George Washington.

I don't know why, but the girls don't understand it. Maybe it's just that I'm feeling patriotic at 250 years. But if you haven't read it, it's so good and I would recommend it to you. It might take you about three years to get through it, but it's very good.

And of course, as you know, Washington was assigned the duty to lead the Continental Armies, which were full of amateur soldiers, militiamen, farmers, teenagers, as young as 14 years old, against the formidable armies, professional armies of Britain and the Hessians.

He was given an impossible task. In fact, if you look back and you consider the circumstances and you even read through the way that the circumstances unfolded, it's kind of amazing to think that the United States of America even exists today, that it was even possible for them to win.

He fought an amazing army. Britain was fierce and they were good. And he led through significant defeats.

[28 : 53] He was actually quite a poor tactician and he didn't have many victories as far as the battlefield was concerned. But even more than that, he fought a different kind of enemy. There was the enemies that he understood to be the armies that were against him.

There was a different kind of enemy and that was starvation, cold. Spending summers with his army in Valley Forge in Morristown, New Jersey, they had no clothes.

They had no food. Many of them were dying from disease. They were dying from starvation because the people that they were given to defend refused to actually support them with the provisions necessary to have a healthy army.

So he's got Britain on one hand. He's got just the elements on the other hand. But I was somewhat surprised to learn that he had a completely different army or enemy that he was constantly fighting against.

And that was traitors within his own ranks. Of course, we understand the extreme versions of this. Men like Benedict Arnold, we all are familiar with that.

[29 : 57] Washington had something completely different than that that was taking place around him. In his inner circle of generals, they were constantly, throughout the war, constantly conspiring against him in order that they might oust him from the Continental Army, not because he was a poor leader, but because they wanted the glory for themselves.

Over and over again, he intercepted correspondences between his own closest generals who were conspiring to find a way to disregard his commands and make him look bad so the Continental Congress would actually dismiss him and they could take his place.

And the whole episode just reminds us that you can always know who your enemy is on the outside, but you can't always know who is really your friend on the inside. And that's where David is here.

We learn in this second prayer that David's enemy wasn't actually a distant army. It was a dear friend. Those he treated as his own family rose up against him to repay the good he had done for them with evil.

Those he thought were companions rejoiced when he failed, when he was down, and even recruited others to turn against him.

[31 : 20] Malicious in spirit, they tried to trap him. They set traps. They tried to confuse him. They asked him about things that he doesn't even know about in order that they might make him look bad.

And what surely began as secret whispers in dark corners ended in public mockery and dissent by mobs of people that he didn't even know.

It's hard to have an enemy. It's devastating to experience betrayal. And you know that.

Because every one of us have probably experienced that in some way. Those who are supposed to be our friends. Closest family members. Those in our inner circle, we discover, are actually against us and they're working against us and they're trying to recruit others to work against us.

Such was the experience of our Savior. How can we not read this particular prayer and see all that happened leading up to the crucifixion of the Lord Jesus?

[32 : 36] Who came into his own and his own would not receive him. The ones who should have led the people to Jesus were actually envious of him.

They attempted to trap him in his words. You read through the Gospels, you see all those times that the Pharisees and the Sadducees and the others, they came and they tried to trick him with questions.

They tried to catch him in some kind of thing so that they could turn to the people and point and say, see, he's not who you think he is. Constantly trying to trap him. They should have been leading others to him, but they wouldn't.

They sought to destroy him eventually. Why? Because they were envious of him. Fundamentally, it was envy. One of his closest companions betrayed him to the murderous mob for some money. Jesus knew what this was. Jesus fulfills this in its ultimate sense. He hangs on a cross while people who do not even know him walk by and they wag their heads and they gnash at him with their teeth, the Gospels say.

[33 : 51] David's plea is that God would rescue him from such betrayal that he would no longer look silently on as the schemers plot their treachery. And his promise is to give thanks to God not in the privacy of his heart, notice, but actually amid the gathered congregation of true worshipers showing us that our salvation is always personal.

It should never be private. He says, Lord, rescue me and among all your people I will give you thanks and glory. Well, then we get to prayer number three and it changes slightly again.

Verse 19, let not those rejoice over me who are wrongfully my foes. Let not those wink the eye who hate me without cause. For they do not speak peace, but against those who are quiet in the land they devise words of deceit.

They open wide their mouths against me. They say, aha, aha, our eyes have seen it. You have seen, oh Lord. Do not be silent. Oh Lord, do not be far from me.

Awake and rouse yourself for my vindication. For my cause, my God and my Lord. Vindicate me, oh Lord, my God, according to your righteousness. Let them not rejoice over me.

[35 : 13] Let them not say in their hearts, aha, our heart's desire. Let them not say, we have swallowed him up, as in death. But let 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. This final prayer, we might summarize it this way. Vindicate me from conspiring rivals so that all of your people may tell of your righteousness.

Vindicate me from those who conspire against me so that everyone may then see that you are righteous, God. We find here that more than David's life is at stake.

Truth itself is at stake here. More profound than a prayer for deliverance. This is a plea for vindication. Rivals have misrepresented him.

They've lied about the king so that his life may be taken without cause. They're accusing him, saying, hey, we've seen him do this and we've heard him say this. He's worthy of this death.

[36 : 27] All of it lies. All of it misconstrued. And God is here called upon to expose the liars, to make the truth known by supernatural vindication.

A kind of divine vindication that cannot be confused. It cannot be ignored and it cannot be denied. He's asking for an ultimate vindication, a revealing of truth that has been so marred by his enemies. And the truth that is at stake here is twofold. On one hand, it's the truth of his own innocence. That he has not actually done anything that was worthy of death.

But the second thing that is at stake is the truth of God's faithfulness. That God will actually fulfill his covenant to his chosen king. If God's righteous one succumbs to his enemies, then God cannot be faithful.

He must intervene for his own glory and for the good of his chosen one. And of course, this vindication that hints at resurrection, doesn't it?

[37 : 35] Only through resurrection can this true form of vindication take place and God's faithfulness truly be known.

And that's for everyone. David cannot truly be vindicated in the way that he's asking unless he's raised. Jesus is not vindicated unless he's raised.

You and I are not vindicated in the righteousness that has been imputed to us unless we are raised. What's at stake here is far more than a protection of an earthly life.

When we pray for vindication, yes, we're praying that God would expose the liars who have come against us, but we're praying more for that as Christians. When we pray for vindication, we're praying with hearts that are set on a future reality, something that we may not actually experience in this life that kind of vindication, but we know we will experience in time.

And through that resurrection, the truth will no longer be able to be denied by anyone. It will be clear. Now, what's interesting about the final praise is that it includes all of God's people who trust in the king's righteousness.

[38 : 58] Look at verses 27 and 28. In this vindication, David says, let those who delight in my righteousness, this is the king speaking, they delight in my innocence, my righteousness, let them shout for joy, let them be glad, let them say, great is the Lord.

And why is he great? Because he delights in the welfare of his chosen one, of his servant, of his Messiah, of his Christ.

Oh, this is so good. David says, vindicate your servant so that all of those who know I'm righteous and who are trusting in my righteousness may then turn and say, God, you are great because you love your Messiah, because you love your king, because you have been faithful to your promise. It's amazing. We sing great is the Lord not only because God is powerful to rescue his servant, but because he is faithful to rescue his servant.

And we all thus praise God for his righteousness, the righteousness of our king and the righteousness of the father to vindicate him.

[40 : 22] because his vindication means ours. Again, says Christopher Ashe, what God does for his Messiah, he now does through his Messiah for all who will come to him for salvation.

Every man or woman in Christ here in this psalm echoes Christ's joy of resurrection and deliverance and salvation.

It's amazing. So should we pray Psalm 35? Absolutely we should pray Psalm 35.

We sing at first to rejoice in Christ, but I think we can also follow its pattern when we're treated with contempt like our king.

God invites us to protest the injustices. He invites us to plead for his intervention. He wants us to praise him for the salvation that he provides.

[41 : 35] And ultimately to pray the prayer here is to express faith in God's faithfulness and in his justice so that when enemies surround, we can obey Christ's commands to love them while also praying for God to act against those who are finally impenitent and continue as his enemy.

And this is how the Bible teaches us to pray in such circumstances. God's people can rejoice in his mercy and in his justice. But Psalm 35 obviously is more than a model prayer.

If all we take out of this is a pattern to pray ourselves when people are mistreating us, then we've missed the most important thing here.

Psalm 35 is ultimately about Jesus. And we know it because Jesus said so. I want to close by asking you to turn to John 15. The Gospel of John chapter 15.

In verses 22 to 25, Jesus speaks of himself as the truly righteous king and then claims explicitly to be the fulfillment of Psalm 35.

[43 : 04] Look at verse 22. Verse 22. If I had not come and spoken to them, that is those who hate me and are trying to take my life, they would not have been guilty of sin.

But now they have no excuse for their sin. Why? Because he hasn't done anything. Whoever hates me hates my father also. If I had not done among them the works that no one else did, they would not be guilty of sin.

But now they have seen and hated both me and my father. So Jesus is building a case there for being the righteous king sent by the father and has proven that in mighty works and deeds as he's lived out before these enemies.

And then verse 25, he quotes Psalm 35. But the word that is written in their law must be fulfilled. They hated me without a cause.

And that's a direct quote from Psalm 35. Jesus here is saying, I'm that righteous king, I've come to fulfill what David was on about way back then.

[44 : 11] But I want you to notice the context of this. This is helpful for us. Look back at verse 18. Why is Jesus even saying this? Look. If the world hates you, know that it hated me before it hated

you.

If you were of the world, the world would love you as its own, but because you're not of the world, but I choose you out of the world, therefore the world hates you. Remember the word I said to you, a servant is not greater than his master.

And if they persecuted me, they will also persecute you. If they kept my word, they will also keep yours. But all these things they will do to you on account of my name, because they do not know him who sent me.

Okay, why is that important? Because we can look at Psalm 35 and understand that Jesus is ultimately the fulfillment of what's happening there. But then we can also look and see, but that was actually David's true experience as well.

And then we get here when Jesus is quoting it and he's quoting it in the context of telling his disciples that what they're going to do to him, they should also expect to be done to them.

[45 : 22] Which means that yes, Jesus is the fulfillment, but even he says that my enemies are going to hate you too. And they're going to conspire against you too.

And they're going to seek your destruction too. And some of them may even come from within your own family or your church or your friends or those who you think now are your companions.

You can go to Matthew 10 to see Jesus flesh that out in greater detail. So we look at this and we say, okay, because our king experienced this, we should expect the same kind of treatment from his enemies.

which helps us have context for why we would even need to pray Psalm 35 ourselves. But that's not the end. There's something else. Look at verse 26 instead of 27.

But when the helper comes, that's the Holy Spirit, whom I will send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth who proceeds from the Father, he will bear witness about me and you will also bear witness about me because you've been with me from the beginning.

[46 : 33] Now I want you to think of this promise in relationship to what David is describing in Psalm 35. In each case, the judgment of his enemies is without cause.

They are bearing a false witness against the king. Here Jesus says, I've come to fulfill that and there is one who will give a true witness in this vindication.

Begins with resurrection. But then he promises that just as we will receive the same treatment from the world, we will receive the same deliverance and he will use us to then be his witnesses of his own vindication.

So we can look at what Jesus says here in John 15 and say, okay, we will experience the hardships that Jesus experienced but we'll also receive the promises that Jesus received.

And we go back to that statement Christopher Ash made. What the Father did for his Messiah, he now does through his Messiah. God sends us his Spirit. You're reading through Acts right now, aren't you?

[47 : 44] What are you seeing in Acts? What is their witnesses? What does their witness look like? The power of the Spirit at work in their lives as they hope for the resurrection and they preach the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.

So they say all that to say that because the Father did this for Jesus, we can trust that he will do it for us. So don't be discouraged when enemies surround. Your vindication has already been secured in Christ.

And you are a witness of that. And we want to be faithful of that witness. Let's pray together. .