

Fight For Me, O Lord!

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Date: 19 July 2026

Preacher: Jonathan Chancey

[0:00] Please take your Bibles and open them up to Psalm chapter 35 this morning! Psalm chapter 35. We're continuing on with our series this summer, walking our way through the Psalms.

And we found our way to Psalm 35. And so when you found that, if you would, let's please stand in honor of the reading of God's Word this morning. David writes, 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 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.

[1:09] Let destruction come upon him when he does not know it. And let the net that he has hid ensnare him. Let him fall into it to his destruction. Then my soul will rejoice in the Lord, exalting 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 that 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 my 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.

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?

[2:16] Rescue me from their destruction. My precious life from the lions. I will thank you and the great congregation. And the mighty throng, I will praise you. Let not those who rejoice over me, who are wrongfully my foes.

And let not those who 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 and they say, Aha! Aha! Our eyes have seen it.

You have seen, O Lord. Be not silent. O Lord, be not far from me. Awake. Rouse yourself for my vindication, for my cause, my Lord, my God.

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 hearts desire.

Let them not say we have swallowed them 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.

[3:24] 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. The grass withers, the flower fades, but the word of our God endures forever.

Would you pray with me once more? Our Father, as we prepare to hear from you, from your word this morning, we ask, would you empower the preaching of your word by your spirit?

And would it bear much fruit in the hearts of all who hear this morning? We pray in Jesus' name.

Amen. You may be seated. Twelve years ago in Brooklyn, New York, Larry Thompson was at his

home when he heard a knock on his door.

And to his surprise, when he opened it up, he saw police officers and emergency workers. They were there to inspect and also to provide medical care for his one-week-old daughter, who, according to their sources, had been severely abused.

[4:34] What Larry didn't know was that a mentally ill relative had mistaken diaper rash for abuse and had alerted the authorities. To make matters worse, when he opened the door and simply asked what was going on and whether or not they had a warrant to enter his home, the officers then aggressively forced their way in.

They tackled him to the ground. They handcuffed him. They arrested him. And they threw him into jail. Now, of course, the medical exams very quickly, immediately proved that Larry was innocent. No abuse had taken place. But to cover their own tracks, the officers then charged Larry with obstructing governmental administration as well as resisting arrest.

Larry spent three days in jail. And then it took three months for the case to reach the courts, by which time the prosecution dropped the case because they had no case to make. Everyone knew that Larry was innocent.

But even so, in cases like this, the social impact remains. His name had been smeared. His reputation was ruined. So what did Larry do? Well, he decided to turn around and instead sue the officers for malicious prosecution.

[5:48] He appealed to the Court of Justice to right this wrong and bring consequences on those who had borne false witness against him. And now this process lasted eight years. As court after court after court rejected Larry's case until finally in 2022, Larry Thompson stood before the Supreme Court of the United States and in a landmark decision, the Supreme Court ruled in Larry's favor, clearing the legal hurdles so that he could finally receive justice.

I wonder, have you ever been wrongfully accused? Have you ever had someone speak lies about you? Have you ever been betrayed by someone that you trusted?

Have you ever needed justice and not been sure how to get it or even where to turn to find it?

Where should God's people seek justice?

In our passage this morning, Psalm 35, King David is dealing with a similar situation. Here in Psalm 35, King David is dealing with false accusations. He is dealing with betrayal of loved ones.

He is dealing with gross injustice. And in light of his suffering, he bypasses all human courts and he takes his case all the way up to the top.

[7:13] He brings his case and makes his plea before the judge of all the universe. And in doing so, he shows us how we can respond to injustice that we face as well.

The comfort that we share with David is that because our God is just and he cares deeply about justice, we can call on him to act justly.

Let's take a look. And we'll see the psalm this morning in three parts. This will be our outline. If you're taking notes, this will help you to follow along. We see the plea of the accused king in verses 1 through 10.

We see the problem of the accused king in verses 11 through 18. And we see the praise of the accused king in verses 19 through 28.

First, let's take a look at verses 1 through 10. Here we see the plea of the accused king. Look, they're starting in verse 1. Now, we don't know the exact circumstances here. We don't know exactly what's going on, but it must be fairly intense.

[8:15] You notice David frames this whole situation with wartime language. In verse 1, he calls upon the Lord to contend with those who contend against me, fight against those who fight against me.

Now, you know, David is a warrior himself. He's strong. He's experienced in battle. He's capable of handling these sort of violent interactions in his own strength.

But you notice he doesn't take matters into his own hands here. Rather, he calls upon the Lord to go to war against his enemies. He wants God to be his defense.

In verse 2, he says, take hold of shield and buckler and rise for my help. This is David asking God to protect him on all sides from all types of attacks.

In the ancient world, a warrior would use different types of shields for different purposes. In the sanah, that's the shield here in verse 2, that's for long-range defense.

[9:17] This type of shield is a full body, a massive shield is made of wood and is covered up in leather. And a warrior would anchor this shield down to the ground and then hide behind it so that he would be totally protected head to toe from flaming arrows that the enemy would shoot from a distance.

This is long-range defense. The buckler, on the other hand, that's probably what you think of when you think of a shield. It's a smaller shield. It's rounded. It's more mobile.

You strap it on your arm. You carry it with you into battle. And you use the buckler to keep you safe from close-range attacks like the dagger or like the sword.

David's using this military language here to call upon the Lord to be his total defense from attacks from afar as well as attacks at close range.

Be my defense. But it's not only a defensive prayer, is it? He also prays that God would go on the attack. Verse 3.

[10:22] God, draw the spear and the javelin against my pursuers. Say to my soul, I'm your salvation. Tell me you've got my back. Tell me that you're going to defend me and destroy my enemies.

Assure me that you're going to take care of this for me. He wants his enemies to be shamed and dishonored. He wants those who devise evil against him to be turned back and disappointed.

Let them blow away like dust, like chaff in the wind. In fact, God, let the angel of the Lord chase them away down a dark and a slippery path.

David prays that his enemy would be held back in verse 2, turned back in verse 4, and driven back in verses 5 and 6. And he calls upon God to do it.

In fact, he calls for a sort of cosmic justice here. Some people call it karma, right? We know better.

He calls on God to bring their own schemes back onto their own head.

[11:22] He doesn't just want relief. He wants a full reversal here. He wants their sin to find them out. Verse 7. He says, Isn't it interesting?

Goliath was beheaded by his own sword. Haman was hung in the gallows that he had prepared for Mordecai. Pharaoh, after he orders the Hebrews to be drowned in the Nile, well, guess what?

Now his entire army is eventually drowned in the Red Sea. The officials who came up with the law to have Daniel thrown into the lion's den, guess what? They are eventually thrown in themselves and consumed by the lions.

The destruction of the Son of God is at the same time the destruction of the great enemy, Satan. God often works in this way.

David prays, God, would you bring the schemes of the wicked right back on their own head? And the natural question is, can we pray like this?

[12:37] Right? When we face enemies, can we pray like this? When we face injustice, can we pray like this? Didn't Jesus tell us to love our enemies? Didn't he tell us to pray for those who persecute us?

Is there any place for God's people to pray that God would take up a spear and chase our enemies down a dark and slippery path? Apparently David thinks so.

But we have to realize, for one thing, that this isn't just anyone praying this. This is the anointed king. This is the one, King David, to whom God had promised that the forever king, King Jesus, the Messiah, would come from his line.

And so in one sense, we need to understand that these attacks against David were not just attacks against David. These are satanic attacks against the Messiah who will come from David's line.

But even so, we also face the same great enemy. We also live in a world where the dark kingdom would seek to destroy us and deceive us and separate us from the love of God if that were possible.

[13:48] So what about us? Is there a place for God's people to pray like this? I think the answer is yes. We should pray that God would both deliver and destroy.

That God would both save us from the schemes of our enemy and bring his schemes back on his own head. That God would destroy and deliver God's people.

But if, if and only if, we share David's perspective. Look at what he says in verses 9 and 10. See, David is not praying ultimately for his own sake, is he?

Although he certainly gains from God acting on his behalf. David's not praying vengeance on his enemies for his own pleasure and his own benefit. Why does David pray the way that he does?

He prays this way because his heart is consumed with zeal for the glory of God. He's not praying to destroy his enemies for his sake and his kingdom.

[14:52] He's praying for God's kingdom to be established for God's sake and God's glory. So Christian, can we pray like this? Yes, we can. We ought to pray for God to act and to chase back and even to destroy every enemy that stands in the way of God's kingdom here on earth.

whether that be sin in our own lives or even against false teaching as Paul does in Galatians. You remember what he says? If anyone preaches another gospel, may they be accursed.

That's an imprecatory prayer. Or against obvious acts of wickedness and injustice in the world around us. I mean, how should God's people pray about the abortion industry that kills millions of unborn children every year?

How should God's people pray against militant Muslims who want to wipe off Christianity from the face of the planet? It is not wrong for us to pray, God, protect your church.

Draw them into your church if at all possible. Please, God, would you save your enemies? But God, would you bring justice swiftly? Would you put an end to their wickedness? And in fact, do you realize every time we pray come quickly, Lord Jesus, we pray an imprecatory prayer against the wicked?

[16:16] Do you realize every time we pray for the Lord to come back, we are praying for a moment that will bring swift judgment? It's okay to pray as David prays here, but only if at the center of it all.

It's not our own selfish desire for vengeance. Rather, it is a desire for God to be glorified in bringing justice. This is what he says in verse 9. He says, Then my soul will rejoice in the Lord, exalting 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 the needy from him who robs him.

God is pleased to answer prayers like this. Christian, when we face injustice and when we see injustice in the world, we are invited on the basis of God's own desire for his glory to ask him to take up arms and act.

This is what David does. This is the plea of the accused king. Second, we see the problem of the accused king. We see this in verses 11 through 18. Do you wonder, what in the world has David so upset?

[17:30] What could be going on in his life that's causing him to use such harsh and severe language here? What is the injustice that he's facing? Well, we see it here in this second section.

Verse 11, he says, malicious witnesses rise up. They ask me of things that I do not know. In other words, they are saying such ridiculous things about David that he's got no answer to give.

He's at a loss for words. He doesn't even know what to say. He doesn't even know what they're talking about. Have you ever had that happen to you? Or someone's just saying something so ridiculous about you that you're just stunned?

You don't even know how to give a response? I have. In fact, I'll tell you a quick story. Shortly after we were married, we arrived in Charlotte, Amanda and I, and we lived in this apartment complex. I haven't thought about this in years. We had a neighbor named Rodney who knew that I was preparing for ministry and so Rodney liked to try and talk about spiritual things.

[18:31] But at the same time, Rodney liked to drink and so that made for some interesting interactions that we would have and one day I was coming to our apartment and Rodney met me at the stairs and he told me that he was a prophet and I thought, okay, Jesus Christ is the last prophet but I'll humor you.

You can share with me what's on your mind and so he looked me in the eye and said, the woman that you're living with is not your wife. I didn't know what to say and so I just pointed at my wedding ring and I said, I'm sorry, try again but I wondered, who else is he sharing that prophecy with?

It wasn't true but sometimes it doesn't even matter whether it's true or not. Could you imagine the damage that would do if other people in that apartment complex thought, hey man, this guy who's training to be a pastor, he's living with somebody that's not even his wife.

What's going on here? These accusers are just making things up about David. He doesn't even know what to say and these little accusations and rumors, these are like flaming arrows that are shot from a distance.

They're these little whispers of false accusation that have caught David completely off guard and so David asks God to be his shield because these arrows are flying all around and he has no clue how to even answer them.

[19:58] But it's not just the flaming arrows you remember. It's also the close strike of the dagger. Look there at verse 12. He says, 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 my head bound down on my chest. I went about as though I was grieving for my friend or my brother and my mother.

I bowed down in mourning. When these people were down and out and when they were sick, David poured out his heart for them. He fasted. He prayed.

He mourned. He grieved. He genuinely cared about them. We don't know the exact scenario here again but it's hard not to think of how David and Saul interacted. When Saul was sick, what did David do for him?

He played his instrument. He soothed him with music. When Saul needed a warrior to go and fight his battles, David was there ready to go to war. He loved God's anointed king and yet, when the tables turn, what happens?

[21:06] Verse 15. At my stumbling, they rejoiced and gathered. 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. David has been betrayed by those he loves. He's been stabbed in the back with a dagger. This is heartbreaking.

David asks God to take up his buckler because he's been stabbed in the back. So he prays, God, I know you see this. Would you betray me too? How long will you see this happening and not do anything about it?

Would you rescue me from destruction? Rescue me from the mouth of the lions. Would you bring me justice and bring it quick?

Y'all, a miracle happened the other day. I don't say that lightly, but this never happens. I was driving down Highway 17 right down here and right as I got to where the 7-Eleven is, someone pulled out right in front of me coming from that street, side street on the right, just right out in front.

[22:18] They didn't even bother to realize that I was coming in about to smash into their car and if I wasn't paying attention, that's exactly what would have happened and so I did what you do in that situation. I pressed my palm firmly into the horn of my vehicle and then a few more times as I passed by just to let them know you almost died today if I wasn't attentive, but then I couldn't believe it as I laid on the horn.

I passed by, I looked and there were two cop cars sitting right there in the median and I was so riled up, honking on my horn, that as I drove by, I actually made eye contact with one of the officers and threw up my hands to say, will you please do something about this?

I know you saw it. Go get them! And the guy turned on his lights and I worried that he was coming after me, but instead, both cop cars zipped out of there and went after that guy.

They saw what happened and they went to bring justice. It was an immediate response to my plea. You and I both know that it usually doesn't work out that way, does it?

And more often than not, we have to wait for justice to come. Larry Thompson waited eight years for his case to even make it to the Supreme Court before he finally got the justice he deserved.

[23:42] Sometimes justice comes slowly and the hard truth is that sometimes on this side of eternity, justice never comes at all. And there are Christians all over the world in hard places that are being persecuted for professing the name of Christ.

There are people that are being slaughtered for worshiping Jesus Christ and we cry out for justice. Lord, Lord, when will it come? I know you see this.

I know you see what's going on. Will you please bring justice quickly? The hard truth is here on this side of eternity, justice often comes slowly, often comes partially, and sometimes it comes not at all. But even so, the comfort that we share with David is we can pray with confidence knowing our God is just and He will bring justice.

Maybe not now, but soon and very soon at the return of Christ. God is just. Everything He does is just.

[24:57] And so we can pray with David, God, I know you see this. Would you please act in accordance with who you are? David believes this with all his heart.

He believes that this God cares about my affliction. He sees this wrongdoing. He does know what's happening to me. He does see the wrong that I'm enduring.

And David believes that one day, and we pray one day soon, one day this God will bring justice.

And in that day, I will give you thanks in the midst of the great congregation of the righteous.

And in that day, I will praise you in the mighty throng with this chorus of voices from every corner of the world of those who sing, this God has delivered me.

This is exactly what we see in the final part of the psalm. Third, here in verses 19 through 28. Third, we see the praise of the accused king. David has stood before the supreme court of courts.

[26:01] He has presented his case before the highest judge of all the earth. He's made his plea.

And now, David calls for a final verdict. He says in 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, minding their own business, they devise words of deceit and they open wide their mouths against me.

They say, aha, aha, our eyes have seen it, but you have seen, O Lord. Be not silent. O Lord, be not far from me. Awake and rouse yourself for my vindication, for my cause, my Lord, my God.

Vindicate me, O Lord, my God, according to your righteousness and let them not rejoice over me.

Now, stop right there. Here's David before the judge.

He's making his closing argument. He's calling for a decision in his favor against his enemies. And again, we should ask, on what basis, what confidence does David have to pray such things?

[27:17] How can he be so bold as to pray God's judgment on these wicked people? people? He's prayed in light of God's power and his strength. He's prayed in light of God's desire for his praise and his glory.

He's made it clear that he's acted in righteousness towards these wicked men, but now as he calls for the judge to give his final verdict, on what basis does he ask God to act?

Look there again to verse 24. He says, Vindicate me, O Lord, my God, according to what? Your righteousness.

Now, he could have said, according to my righteousness. And no one is fully righteous. No, not one, not even David, but in this situation, in this instance, he has done no wrong.

He's innocent. He doesn't say, Vindicate me according to my righteousness. What does he say? Vindicate me according to your righteousness.

[28:27] David knows that our holy, righteous God will act in righteousness. If it is right to judge wickedness, and it is right to defend the helpless, and it is right to set right what's been made wrong, then David believes that this just and powerful holy God will do it, and for his name's sake.

The Puritan George Swinock, he says, people might do justly, but God must do justly, because his will is his law.

God will will exact rule of all justice and righteousness. Whatever he does is just, because he is the great supreme and sovereign of all the world.

God's actions are occasionally mysterious, but they are always righteous. In light of the great righteousness of God, David prays, God, would you look at this injustice and act.

Render a public verdict. Don't let the wicked rejoice. Let them not say in their hearts, aha, our hearts desire. Let them not say we've swallowed them up.

[29:47] 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. But on the other hand, render this verdict in my favor so that those who delight in my righteousness would shout for joy and be glad and say great evermore great is the Lord who delights in the welfare of his servant.

And then my tongue shall tell of your righteousness and of your praise all the day long. Can you imagine that courtroom scene when Larry Thompson finally gets justice and his family after eight long years finally gets justice.

The gavel comes down. The false accusers are condemned while the falsely accused is set free.

Now that whole burden shifts from off of Larry's back and firmly onto those who acted in the wrong.

There is rejoicing for the righteous when justice comes, but there is grieving for the guilty when justice comes. This is what David prays God will do.

In his suffering, he appeals to the great judge of all the earth and says, God, would you be my defense? Would you act for your glory?

[31:06] Would you act according to your righteousness? Would you crush the powers of sin and darkness? Would you defend the cause of the helpless? Would you be my shield and my defense?

Christian, do you realize we can join David in this prayer? And we can pray it with confidence, confidence, even more confidence than David?

Because the gospel of Jesus Christ teaches us that our God is just and he will bring justice. We may get it here and now and we pray to that end, but we know with confidence we will get it soon and very soon at the return of our Lord Jesus Christ.

The gospel teaches us that our God is powerful to save and to defend his people. And the gospel teaches us that our God loves to do so for his glory, for our good and on the basis of his own righteousness.

But should we ever doubt that God cares about injustice? Look to the cross of Christ. Our God has crushed the powers of sin and darkness at the cross.

[32:22] If anyone has ever faced injustice, it was Jesus Christ. Jesus was the only one who was truly completely righteous, not just in one scenario, but inside and out for an entire life.

And yet, false witnesses rose up against him. Wicked men spread lies about him. In fact, he quotes this psalm in John chapter 15 when he tells his disciples, the world hated me.

You should expect that they'll hate you too. If they persecuted me, they will also persecute you. Why? He says it must fulfill their word. They hated me without a cause. Jesus Christ was hated, reviled, cursed, beaten, and betrayed even by his own disciples.

Judas kissed him on the cheek as he handed him over for arrest. Jesus knew what it was like to face the arrows of accusation and the dagger of betrayal. And yet, like David, Jesus entrusted himself completely to the righteousness and the sovereign justice of his God, the Father.

Jesus knew that true justice must be purchased at the cross for the good of his people and the glory of God. But because he was totally righteous, and praise God, the perfect Son of God, could not remain in the grave.

[33:50] He rose from the dead as the first fruits of those who would believe in him for eternal life. And as the assurance that the enemy, in the end, does not win, praise God.

That sin does not have the final word. That we face evil and darkness and accusations and all sorts of mess in this sinful world, but Jesus at the cross and the empty tomb says, all of that has been conquered.

And one day soon and very soon, he will come and bring us justice. Friend, I ask you again, where do God's people look for justice?

Look to Jesus. Christ, our substitute, has suffered in our place. Christ, our advocate, stands to plead our cause before the Father and to defend us from all accusations of the enemy.

Christ, our warrior, our defender, our conquering king, has conquered all our enemies and stands to defend us. And one day soon and very soon, Christ, the righteous judge, will come again to put an end to all sin, all evil, and all wickedness.

[35:12] If you're his enemy now, the invitation is come to this king now in faith and you'll find that Christ, the Savior, stands ready to receive you and to forgive you and to show you mercy.

And until then, until that day, Christian, Christ, the friend of sinners, listens to your cries, hears your prayers, cares about your distress, and promises justice will come soon.

Charles Spurgeon commenting on this passage, he says that all that David prays God will do for him here in Psalm 35, Jesus does all this for his beloved, for them, for us.

He is both intercessor and champion. Whatever aid they need, they shall receive from him. And in whatever manner they are assaulted, they shall be effectually defended.

Let us not fail to leave our case into the Lord's hand. Vain is the help of man, but ever effectual is the interposition of heaven. What is here asked for as a boon may be regarded as a promise to all the saints.

[36:26] In judgment they shall have a divine advocate, and in warfare a divine protection. Let's pray. Father, we thank you, God, that you care about our distress, so much so that you've sent Jesus to enter into our distress, and enter into our weakness, and to endure the effects of living in a sinful world, that Christ himself was betrayed, and suffered from the false witness of sinful man, and yet did so willingly for us, that he might bring justice, and might bring relief, and might reconcile sinners to a holy God.

And we pray, Lord, would you come quickly, Lord Jesus, and bring justice in a final way here on earth, we pray in Jesus' name. Amen. Amen.