

# PSALMS

## Chapter 35

<sup>1</sup> Contend, O LORD, with those who contend with me; fight against those who fight against me. <sup>2</sup> Take up shield and buckler; arise and come to my aid. <sup>3</sup> Brandish spear and javelin <sup>a</sup> against those who pursue me. Say to my soul, "I am your salvation." <sup>4</sup> May those who seek my life be disgraced and put to shame; may those who plot my ruin be turned back in dismay. <sup>5</sup> May they be like chaff before the wind, with the angel of the LORD driving them away; <sup>6</sup> may their path be dark and slippery, with the angel of the LORD pursuing them. <sup>7</sup> Since they hid their net for me without cause and without cause dug a pit for me, <sup>8</sup> may ruin overtake them by surprise— may the net they hid entangle them, may they fall into the pit, to their ruin. <sup>9</sup> Then my soul will rejoice in the LORD and delight in his salvation. <sup>10</sup> My whole being will exclaim, "Who is like you, O LORD? You rescue the poor from those too strong for them, the poor and needy from those who rob them." <sup>11</sup> Ruthless witnesses come forward; they question me on things I know nothing about. <sup>12</sup> They repay me evil for good and leave my soul forlorn. <sup>13</sup> Yet when they were ill, I put on sackcloth and humbled myself with fasting. When my prayers returned to me unanswered, <sup>14</sup> I went about mourning as though for my friend or brother. I bowed my head in grief as though weeping for my mother. <sup>15</sup> But when I stumbled, they gathered in glee; attackers gathered against me when I was unaware. They slandered me without ceasing. <sup>16</sup> Like the ungodly they maliciously mocked <sup>b</sup>; they gnashed their teeth at me. <sup>17</sup> O Lord, how long will you look on? Rescue my life from their ravages, my precious life from these lions. <sup>18</sup> I will give you thanks in the great assembly; among throngs of people I will praise you. <sup>19</sup> Let not those gloat over me who are my enemies without cause; let not those who hate me without reason maliciously wink the eye. <sup>20</sup> They do not speak peaceably, but devise false accusations against those who live quietly in the land. <sup>21</sup> They gape at me and say, "Aha! Aha! With our own eyes we have seen it." <sup>22</sup> O LORD, you have seen this; be not silent. Do not be far from me, O Lord. <sup>23</sup> Awake, and rise to my defense! Contend for me, my God and Lord. <sup>24</sup> Vindicate me in your righteousness, O LORD my God; do not let them gloat over me. <sup>25</sup> Do not let them think, "Aha, just what we wanted!" or say, "We have swallowed him up." <sup>26</sup> May all who gloat over my distress be put to shame and confusion; may all who exalt themselves over me be clothed with shame and disgrace. <sup>27</sup> May those who delight in my vindication shout for joy and gladness; may they always say, "The LORD be exalted, who delights in the well-being of his servant." <sup>28</sup> My tongue will speak of your righteousness and of your praises all day long.

**Ps 35** An appeal to the heavenly King, as divine Warrior and Judge, to come to the defense of "his servant" (v. 27) who is being maliciously slandered by those toward whom he had shown only the most tender friendship. The attack seems to

have been occasioned by some “distress” (v. 26) that had overtaken the king (see vv. 15, 19, 21, 25), perhaps an illness (see v. 13; see also introduction to Ps 6). Ps 35 exemplifies such a “cry” to the Lord in expectation of vindication as that spoken of in 34:15–22—except that here the author does not expressly identify himself as one of the “righteous” (34:21); he appeals to the Lord rather as innocent victim of an unmotivated attack. Regarding structure, after an initial appeal to the Lord as divine Warrior (vv. 1–3) there follows a threefold elaboration of David’s petition to the divine Judge, each concluding with a vow to praise (vv. 4–10, 11–18, 19–28); see note on 7:17. (CSB)

This psalm may be treated as a summary and review of the many psalms in which David prays for help against his enemies. It therefore serves as a conclusion to the many psalms in the collection of Psalms 15-35 which emphasize this theme. (PBC)

A number of psalms use curses and express themselves so violently that modern readers find them shocking and even wonder how they could appear in the Sacred Scriptures. When the psalmist’s emotions spill over into violence, it is important to understand why. (TLSB p. 879)

Christians should understand that the violent outbursts in these psalms are not prescriptions for the behavior of God’s people but illustrations of emotion that God’s people will indeed experience. Christians today who lose loved ones to war or to violent criminals will have these same feelings of anger and revenge. Praying the imprecatory psalms can help God’s people express their anguish before God rather than act out their feelings in an unjust way. Imprecatory psalms prayed with psalms of repentance and hope can guide trouble hearts through the feelings they cannot escape. (TLSB – 879)

The curses contained in these psalms are often shocking to modern readers, but such prayers are in accordance with God’s curse against sin. (PBC)

The Lutheran Study Bible lists the following psalms as imprecatory: 35; 55; 59; 79; 109; 137.

Some psalms include vivid curses which ask God to punish our enemies, as He protects and defends us from evil. In light of Jesus’ teaching to love our enemies, these prayers may seem improper and un-Christian. However, in each one the psalmist cries out for God to take revenge. The imprecatory psalms put the psalmist squarely on the side of God who hates injustice and who does indeed rescue His abused children. While we leave vengeance to the Lord, and while we yearn for the ungodly to turn from sin to the Savior, we still hate wickedness and evil. Ultimately, Satan instigates all injustice, and the imprecatory psalms find their true target as we pray them against the kingdom of darkness. (LL)

No section of the Psalter causes us greater difficulty today than the so-called imprecatory psalms. With shocking frequency their thoughts penetrate the entire Psalter (5, 7, 9, 10, 13, 16, 21, 23, 28, 31, 35, 36, 40, 41, 44, 52, 54, 55, 58, 59, 68, 69, 70, 71, 137, and others). Every attempt to pray these psalms seems doomed to failure. They seem to be an example of what people think of as the religious first stage toward the NT. Christ on the cross prays for his enemies and teaches us to do the same. How can we still, with these Psalms, call for the wrath of God against our enemies? The question is therefore: Can the imprecatory psalms be understood as God's word for us and as the prayer of Jesus Christ? Can the Christian pray these psalms? Note carefully again that we do not ask about possible motives, which we can never fathom anyway, but rather about the content of the prayer. (Psalms: The Prayer Book of the Bible – Dietrich Bonhoeffer)

The enemies referred to here are enemies of the cause of God, who lays hands on us for the sake of God. It is therefore nowhere a matter of personal conflict. Nowhere does the one who prays these psalms want to take revenge into his own hands. He calls for the wrath of God alone (cf. Romans 12:19). Therefore he must dismiss from his own mind all thought of personal revenge; he must be free from his own thirst for revenge. Otherwise, the vengeance would not be seriously commanded from God. This means that only the one who is himself innocent in relation to his enemy can leave the vengeance to God. The prayer for the vengeance of God is the prayer for the execution of his righteousness in the judgment of sin. This judgment must be made public if God is to stand by his word. It must also be promulgated among those whom it concerns. I myself, with my sin, belong under this judgment. I have no right to want to hinder this judgment. It must be fulfilled for God's sake and it has been fulfilled, certainly, in wonderful ways. (Psalms: The Prayer Book of the Bible – Dietrich Bonhoeffer)

God's vengeance did not strike the sinners, but the one sinless man who stood in the sinner's place, namely God's own Son. Jesus Christ bore the wrath of God, for the execution of which the psalm prays. He stilled God's wrath toward sin and prayed in the hour of the execution of the divine judgment: "Father forgive them, for they do not know what they do!" No other than he, who himself bore the wrath of God, could pray in this way. That was the end of all phony thoughts about the love of God which do not take sin seriously. God hates and redirects his enemies to the only righteous one, and this one asks forgiveness for them. Only in the cross of Jesus Christ is the love of God to be found. (Psalms: The Prayer Book of the Bible – Dietrich Bonhoeffer)

Thus the imprecatory psalm leads to the cross of Jesus and to the love of God which forgives enemies. I cannot forgive the enemies of God out of my own resources. Only the crucified Christ can do that, and I through him. Thus to carrying out of vengeance becomes grace for all men in Jesus Christ. (Psalms: The Prayer Book of the Bible – Dietrich Bonhoeffer)

Certainly it is important to distinguish in relation to these psalms whether I stand in the time of promise or in the time of fulfillment, but this distinction is true for all psalms. I pray the imprecatory psalms in the certainty of their marvelous fulfillment. I leave the vengeance to God and ask him to execute his righteousness to all his enemies, knowing that God has remained true to himself and has himself secured justice in his wrathful judgment on the cross, and that this wrath has become grace and joy for us. Jesus Christ himself requests the execution of the wrath of God on his body, and thus he leads me back daily to the gravity and the grace of his cross for me and all enemies of God. (Psalms: The Prayer Book of the Bible – Dietrich Bonhoeffer)

Even today I can believe the love of God and forgive my enemies only by going back to the cross of Christ, to the carrying out of the wrath of God. (*We need to remember that Bonhoeffer was being persecuted by the Nazi's.*) The cross of Jesus is valid for all men. Whoever opposes him, whoever corrupts the word of the cross of Jesus on which God's wrath must be executed, must bear the cruse of God some or another. The NT speaks with great clarity concerning this and does not distinguish itself at all in this respect from the OT, but it also speaks of the joy of the church in that day on which the God will execute his final judgment (Gal. 1:8f; 1 Cor. 16:22; Rev. 18; 19; 20:11). In this way the crucified Jesus teaches us to pray the imprecatory psalms correctly. (Psalms: The Prayer Book of the Bible – Dietrich Bonhoeffer)

Men close to David have developed a destructive disdain for him. This psalm is most likely set during Saul's time (cf 1Sm 20; 23–26). Someone sought David's life and slandered him. In 1Sm 24:12, 15, David appeals to God as the righteous judge. (TLSB)

Format: Vv 1–3, fight the enemies; vv 4–6, drive them to retreat; vv 7–8, pursuers' evil acts; vv 9–10, delivering the poor; vv 11–14, mourning the sick; vv 15–16, mockery; vv 17–18, a prayer for rescue; vv 19–21, treacherous foes; vv 22–25, a prayer for vindication; v 26, shame the foes; vv 27–28, delight in God's greatness. (TLSB)

As Psalm 35 begins, David enters "heaven's court of final appeals." He finds himself trapped in a situation in which no one else will help or listen. We don't know what this situation was. Perhaps the Holy Spirit keeps that information from us so we can "fill in the blank" with our own need or pain. (LL)

**35:1–3** Appeal to the Lord as Warrior-King (see Ex 15:1–18), David's Overlord. (CSB)

Opening Prayer to the Lord (PBC)

David begins (vv. 1-3) this psalm with a prayer for help, then moves into three cycles which each end with a vow to praise. The psalm is worded like a trial. David presents evidence against his enemies and asks God to judge and to punish them. (LL)

The psalmist opens (vv. 1-3) with six forceful statements asking that God come forward and wage war against those who seek his life – Contend with them! Fight on my side! Take up Your weapons! Come to my help! Brandish Your spear! Tell me You are my salvation! These are not words of someone praying in an east chair! David faces a terrible problem, one too big for him. He is fighting for his life and begs God to do so too. (LL)

**35:1** CONTEND – The trouble in which the writer is involved is as vexatious and disturbing as is a lawsuit. (Leupold)

Battle of actions and words (cf Ex 15:1–18, 21, the songs of Moses and Miriam). (TLSB)

**35:2** BUCKLER – Body-length shield with bowed surface, made of animal hide. God is asked to protect His faithful when the struggle against evil becomes too great. (TLSB)  
*Weapons* in a tropological sense denote strengths, gifts, and graces. Rom. 13:12: “Let us put on the armor of light”; and Eph. 6:11: “Put on the armor of God.” [2 Cor. 10:4: “The weapons of our warfare are not carnal.”] (Luther)

These are defensive weapons, while offensive weapons are the Word of God, preaching, excommunications, prayers, and spiritual bolts of lightning. Job 41:20: “He (namely the devil or a stubborn Jew) will ridicule him who shakes the spear,” that is, the threatening Word of God or the threats of the Word of God. [“Take the sword of the Spirit” (Eph. 6:17).] (Luther)

*Weapons* in a tropological sense are also evils, sins, errors, the wiles of the devil, etc. But the offensive weapons are evil doctrines, shameless words by which the pure soul is pierced, such as heresies. In a psalm we read (Ps. 57:4): “The sons of men, whose teeth are weapons and arrows,” and again, “their tongue a sharp sword.” Thus swords, that is, of heresies and of teaching that leads astray, are given into their hands. Allegorically, the weapons are the bodies or members themselves. Thus the saints of God are the weapons of God with which He has conquered the world. The apostle says, Rom. 6:13: “Do not yield your bodies as instruments of iniquity.” Habakkuk says (Hab. 3:9): “You will surely take up the bow,” that is, the church, by which beastly men are pierced. Zech. 9:13: “I will bend [stretch out] you [Judah] for Me as a bow [and I will set you as a strong sword].” Ps. 127:4 has this: “As arrows in the hands of the mighty, so are the children of those who have been shaken,” that is, the apostles. The devil’s weapons are all the evil. Job 41:6: “His body is like molten shields.” [Gen. 49:5: “Warring vessels of iniquity”]. Analogically, the weapons of God are angels and saints, or even the infinite powers of God themselves. And, on the contrary, the devils are the weapons of the prince of demons. (Luther)

In a different way God also has weapons for the severity of His vengeance, namely, when all creation fights and strikes down the ungodly. Concerning these weapons Ps. 7:13 says: “Unless you will be converted, He will brandish His sword, He has bent His bow.” (Luther)

Therefore this is the meaning of the psalm: “Take the apostles and My disciples as your weapons and by their word and example, as by thrusts, fight the ungodly and their errors.” Or, weapons, that is, the devil, the Roman army against the Jews, who are to be driven out of the church as well as their land. (Luther)

*arise*. See note on 3:7 (Hebrew idiom frequently prefaces an imperative calling for immediate action with the call to arise.). (CSB)

**35:3** *soul*. See note on 6:3 (In this verse refers to the psalmist’s entire being, equivalent to the personal pronoun “I.”). (CSB)

Equivalent here to personal pronoun “I.” (TLSB)

**SALVATION** – David calls God to block the path of his pursuers with spear and javelin (cf Gn 3:23–24). (TLSB)

Hbr *yeshu‘ah*, “deliverance.” Sometimes translated as “victory” because of military imagery. God defeated Pharaoh and his army during the exodus, and subsequently conquered all enemies that would separate His people from Him. His righteousness is victorious over wickedness, and thus salvation comes to His people solely because of Him. Chemnitz: “In the Psalms for the first time the word *yāsha*, from which is derived the name ‘Jesus’ begins to be used in reference to the matter of salvation” (*LTh* 2:458). (TLSB p. 843)

**35:4–10** Appeal to the Lord to deal with the attackers, matching judgment with their violent intent (see note on 5:10). (CSB)

**35:4-8** First Petition (PBC)

The prayer is followed by the fist cycle of requests (vv. 4-8). All of these ask that his enemies be completely defeated and discredited. (LL)

**35:4** **THOSE** – Those making plans against David. (TLSB)

*plot my ruin*. See note on 5:9 (For the plots and intrigues of enemies, usually involving lies to discredit the king and bring him down.). (CSB)

Cf messianic Ps 22:16–18. (TLSB)

Psalm 22:16-18: “<sup>16</sup> For dogs encompass me; a company of evildoers encircles me; they have pierced my hands and feet—<sup>17</sup> I can count all my bones— they stare and gloat over me; <sup>18</sup> they divide my garments among them, and for my clothing they cast lots.”

**35:5–6** *angel of the LORD*. See 34:7 and note (God’s heavenly representative, his “messenger,” sent to effect his will on earth.). (CSB)

Hbr *mal'ak yahweh*, “messenger of Yahweh.” Used 63 times. Generally, an angel is a created being who speaks for the Lord. But in many OT settings, “the angel of the LORD” and “the LORD” are used interchangeably (e.g., Gn 16:7–13; 21:17–20; 22:11–12, 15–18; 31:11–13; Ex 3:2–6). This signals an appearance of God’s Son before His incarnation (cf Jn 1:1). (TLSB p. 1227)

**35:5** *like chaff*. See note on 1:4 (A simile of the wretchedness of the wicked. Chaff is carried away by the lightest wind, and its removal brings about cleansing by extracting what is utterly useless.). (CSB)

David’s pursuers are considered oppressive, yet worthless. (TLSB)

**35:6** DARK AND SLIPPERY – Augustine: “These two ills are the great punishments of men: darkness, ignorance; a slippery way, luxury” (*NPNF* 1 8:80). (TLSB)

**35:7** HID THEIR NET – This thought is often referred to in the Psalms, for instance, Ps. 10:8: “He sits in ambush”; Ps. 140:5: “Arrogant men have hidden a net for me”; Ps. 11:2: “To shoot in the clark at the upright in heart,” and elsewhere Ps. 64:4: “To shoot in secret at the undefiled.” This means, first of all [according to Augustine], that they tried to deceive Christ and catch Him in His speech, so that they might deliver Him to death, although He knew their hearts. But He was like an ignorant person [He speaks as one who can be deceived who can be deceived, even though He could not be deceived. And it is this scheming which the psalmist here calls “destruction of the net.” For by means of such fallacious arguments they accused Him before Pilate and said, “We found this man perverting our nation and prohibiting that tribute should be given to Caesar and saying that he is a king” (Luke 23:2). But they did this to no purpose and in vain, because even Pilate found Him to be innocent in these matters. [Or if He had been purely man, as they thought, it would still be so. Therefore He speaks according to the sense of those who were acting, not according to His own, the sufferer’s, sense, for whatever pertained to them and was in them would have been hidden. And it was not in their power whether it would remain hidden, and therefore He speaks not with respect to what actually was but with respect to what they intended. It is their intention He rebukes, not their power, which they did not have. Because it could not be hidden, their wish was greater than their ability.] (Luther)

In the second place, as they conceal Christ’s death to the present day, namely, by denying that they have done evil and by not confessing their sin, so they did then also, as is clear from Acts 4 and 7, where Stephen called them murderers, which filled them with rage. (Luther)

**WITHOUT CAUSE** – Those who were once David’s compatriots (v 14) have now turned against him, plotting to take his life (10:8; 11:2; 64:4; 140:5). Cf Mt 21–27; Lk 23:2, where the plotting of the religious leaders of Jerusalem to put Jesus to death was certainly politically and religiously motivated (from the temporal standpoint). (TLSB)

**35:8 MAY RUIN OVERTAKE THEM BY SURPRISE** – According to Augustine, this snare is each one’s own iniquity, whereby he attempts to harm the other, and (because sin is darkness) it inevitably follows that by that very iniquity by which he attacks another he unknowingly harms himself. So it happened to the Jews. For the Lord overcame their iniquity, but they were overcome by their own iniquity. He rose from the death which they had prepared for Him, but they are dead in themselves and will not rise. For every iniquity first harms its originator, as a torch burns itself before it kindles something else. It can happen that your evil deed may not harm someone else, but it cannot happen that it will not harm you yourself. (Luther)

**35:9–10** First Vow (PBC)

When the Lord brings deliverance, David vows (vv. 9-10) to sing praise to God and exclaim God’s praise to others. David closes the first cycle (v. 10) with the reason for his hope: God is gracious and merciful to the weak and needy and will be their deliverer. When we encounter evil and injustice of this magnitude, we can be sure that our God has not changed. He still rescues the poor and weak, those who cannot fight for themselves. (LL)

See note on 7:17 (A vow to praise. Many prayers in the Psalter include such vows in anticipation of the expected answer to prayer. They reflect Israel’s religious consciousness that praise must follow deliverance as surely as prayer springs from need—if God is to be truly honored. Such praise was usually offered with thank offerings and involved celebrating God’s saving act in the presence of those assembled at the temple.). (CSB)

**35:9** *soul*. See note on 6:3. (CSB)

**35:10 MY WHOLE BEING** – Augustine: “In the Body of the Lord the name of bones is given to all the righteous, the firm in heart, the strong, yielding to no persecutions, no temptations” (*NPNF* 1 8:82). (TLSB)

*poor and needy*. See 34:6 and note (Here, as often in the Psalms, “poor” characterizes not necessarily one who has no possessions, but one who is (and recognizes that he is) without resources to effect his own deliverance (or secure his own life, safety or well-being)—and so is dependent on God.). (CSB)

**35:11–18** The accusation—they repaid my friendship with malicious slander—with a renewed petition (v. 17) and a vow to praise (v. 18). (CSB)

**35:11-17** Second Petition (PBC)

The second cycle (vv. 11-18) lies at the heart of David’s complaint. People who were once his friends have repaid his friendship by treating him shamefully. David lays before the Lord the evidence of their wickedness in (v. 11) words and (v. 12) actions. He charges that he has treated (vv. 13-14) these enemies well in



their time of need, but they (vv. 15-16) have gloated and mocked him in his time of troubles. David's plea (v. 17) rises once again for God not to stand by in silence. (LL)

**35:18** Second Vow (PBC)

David's vow (v. 18) crescendos as he pledges to praise God in the great assembly so that all Israel may know what God has done. We, too, can praise God even before we see the answer to our prayers. He will act in line with His character and His promises. At just the right time and in just His right way, He will deliver His own. He gave His own Son over to death for us. He will not deny us anything that would be good for us. (LL)

**35:11** RUTHLESS WITNESS – They kept raising questions as though he had done these deeds whereas they were in reality questions about things that he knew nothing. Trumped-up charges seem to have been a favorite stock in trade among the Jews then and in Christ's time. (Leupold)

They keep plying him with questions about deeds of violence he knows nothing about (cf Ex 23:1–9; Mt 26:57–68). The charges are false. Our Lord's mock trial and beatings were a result of desperate, trumped-up charges. (TLSB)

I KNOW NOTHING ABOUT – Luther: “What is foreign to the deed is foreign to the conscience.... The Lord, who does not know sin, was not aware of sin. Therefore He suffered in ignorance, that is, without knowing” (AE 10:167). (TLSB)

What is foreign to the deed is foreign to the conscience. And what is foreign to the conscience seems also to be foreign to knowledge. Therefore the Lord, who does not know sin, was not aware of sin. Therefore He suffered in ignorance, that is, without knowing. (Luther)

**35:12** *soul*. See note on 6:3. (CSB)

Luther: “They repaid Me with barrenness, though I had brought fertility.... Because they [wicked men] cut Christ in the flesh, by that very fact they were cut and scourged in their heart” (AE 10:167–68). (TLSB)

“Soul” can here be in the genitive, as explained in the gloss, or also in the dative, so that it may be construed with the word “repaid.” And this fits better. This means, then: “They repaid Me with barrenness, though I had brought fertility.” In this word there is expressed in a unique mystery, that they set up the sterile letter after they had rejected the fruitful spirit; they chose death over life, destruction over the soul, etc. (Luther)

**35:13** THEY – His current oppressors. (TLSB)

*sackcloth*. A symbol of mourning (see 30:11; Ge 37:34). (CSB)

*fasting.* An act of mourning (see 69:10). (CSB)

**35:15** *stumbled.* Not morally. He was brought low by circumstances (see 9:3; 27:2; 37:24; 56:13; 119:165). (CSB)

Any mishap (cf 9:3; 27:2; 37:24; 56:13; 119:165). (TLSB)

ATTACKERS GATHERED AGAINST ME – David’s experience makes his former friends glad. If there were once positive relationships, they are meaningless now. (TLSB)

**35:16** MOCKED – Lit, “profane men,” “mockers for cake,” or “table jesters.” Though they appear harmless and upright at the table, they are plotting destruction. (TLSB)

*To mock mockery* is to mock on the basis of sure knowledge and sheer malice, where the mockery does not come from ignorance or from being led astray by someone else, but from mockery itself. Cassiodorus says that this kind of speaking is used when something is designated as having been very bountifully fulfilled, as “blessing I will bless you,” “edifying I will edify you.” But the Hebrew is different: “Those who strike (that is, scourge) have gathered together against Me, and I did not know it (namely, in My conscience I did not know the reason), cutting (that is, tearing My flesh) and not keeping silent (that is, ridiculing and blaspheming without ceasing).” But our translation is in the passive, namely, *they were dispersed, and they were not goaded*. This can, though with more difficulty, be made to express the same meaning: Because they cut Christ in the flesh, by that very fact they were cut and scourged in their heart. For every evil man, as indicated above, afflicts himself by the very thing with which he tries to afflict someone else. They felt no remorse, namely, to stop blaspheming. Then follows *They tempted Me*. The Hebrew has: “In the pretense of reigned words,” namely, their saying, “Hail, King of the Jews” (Matt. 27:29), whereby the irony after His scourging is denoted. Our translation gives expression to it thus: *They tempted Me and mocked Me with mockery*. (Luther)

*gnashed their teeth.* In malice (see 37:12; La 2:16). (CSB)

Describes potent rage as a result of hatred (cf Mt 13:42). Like carnivores, they want to trap, tear, and devour. Augustine: “Wherever men find a Christian, they are wont to insult, to persecute, to deride him, to call him dull, senseless, of no spirit, of no knowledge” (NPNF 1 8:84). (TLSB)

**35:17** *how long ... ?* See note on 6:3 (see also Introduction: Theology). (CSB)

Such blatant injustice requires divine intervention. (TLSB)

*lions.* See note on 7:2 (As a young shepherd, David had been attacked by lions (see 1Sa 17:34–35). But it is also a convention in the Psalms to liken the attack of enemies to that of ferocious animals, especially the lion.). (CSB)

**35:18** David always thought of how his experience would be profitable for his people. (TLSB)

Here the word “strong” (*gravis*) is not taken in its proper sense, though it could be so taken, namely, as mature and without frivolity, as manly and steady. In our time jesting or witty remarks (εὐτραπελία), which the apostle in Eph. 5:4 calls “levity which is to no purpose,” are doing much to sap the spirit in the church and to pour out hearts, as Reuben was poured out like water (Gen. 49:4), so that they can make no progress (Gen. 49:4). But according to Augustine, a “strong people” are people who are in the church by a living faith, like grain on the threshing floor, where others, whose faith is empty, are like the light chaff. (Luther)

*assembly*. See note on 1:5 (The worshiping assembly at God’s sanctuary). (CSB)

**35:19–28** Renewed appeal for judgment, with a concluding vow to praise (v. 28). (CSB)

**35:19-27** Third Petition (PBC)

In the emotional conclusion of the third cycle in the psalm (vv. 19-27), David sums up his appeal. He repeats (vv. 19-20) the charges against his enemies and details their wickedness before the judge. He calls again (vv. 22-25) for God’s action with a cry that mirrors his opening prayer (vv. 1-3). (Verse 22) In Justice, God must not remain a mere spectator, but He must rise to battle (vv. 26-27) for David’s defense and as witness to those believers who have seen David struggle. (LL)

**35:28** Third Vow (PBC)

The psalm closes as (v. 28) David vows to praise God not just once, but “all day long” for the deliverance he knows he will receive. (LL)

**35:19** *enemies without cause*. See vv. 11–17; an experience frequently reflected also elsewhere in the Psalter (see 38:19; 69:4; 109:3; 119:78, 86, 161). See also La 3:52. (CSB)

*hate me without reason*. See 69:4. It is not known which of these passages is referred to in Jn 15:25. Both psalms reflect circumstances applicable also to Jesus’ experience (but see introduction to Ps 69). (CSB)

**35:20** SPEAK PEACEABLY – According to our rendering, Christ here accuses the hypocrites who have hated Him. And yet in pretense they smiled on Him with the eyes, but not with the heart, because they spoke peaceably, as in Ps. 28:3, above: “who speak

peace with their neighbor, while mischief is in their hearts,” and they say, “Teacher, we know that you are true” (Matt. 22:16). Nevertheless, *speaking in the anger of the earth* (that is, in the anger of their flesh and in accord with sensual perception, because they were all savoring the earth) *they devised deceit*. But this verse is very unclear and it is difficult to explain it properly and clearly. The Hebrew has a contrary wording: “They do not speak peace” (as if to say: “Therefore I said that they smile only with the eyes and not with the heart, because they are not out to speak peace, but they seek to catch Me, in order to stir up a quarrel and cause of death against Me in a deceitful manner”). Then follows: “But in the plunder of the earth they conceived deceitful words.” This part is quite obscure, as to what that “plunder of the earth” might be. In my mind I would take it this way: “They conceived false accusations before Pilate, as if I wished to be king of the earth. And they charged Me with wanting to snatch Caesar’s empire.” Our translation comes down to the same thing: “ ‘In the anger (that is, in the zeal) of their earth,’ which they were afraid I would take away, ‘they plotted deceits against Me,’ or because they were afraid the Romans would take place and nation, if they would set Me free” (John 11:48). All these things were deceitful, because they knew that the Romans would not do this. (Luther)

LIVE QUIETLY IN THE LAND – The meek, who live simply by God’s Word. (TLSB)

**35:21** *Aha! Aha!* See v. 25; see also note on 3:2 (The psalmists frequently quote their wicked oppressors in order to portray how they mock (see note on 1:1) God and his servants.). (CSB)

Expression of malicious joy. (TLSB)

HAVE SEEN IT – David’s imagined fault or mistake, which justifies their condemnation of him. (TLSSB)

**35:22** HAVE SEEN – The Lord sees the real fault deserving condemnation. (TLSB)

*be not silent*. Do not remain inactive (see 28:1 and note; 83:1; 109:1). (CSB)

He will testify against David’s foes. David prays with confidence that given God’s omniscience, He is the righteous and just witness (cf v 11). (TLSB)

**35:23** *Awake*. See note on 7:6 (The Lord does not sleep (see 121:4) while evil triumphs and the oppressed cry to him in vain (as they do to Baal; see 1Ki 18:27). But the psalmists’ language of urgent prayer vividly expresses their anguished impatience with God’s inaction in the face of their great need.). (CSB)

*rise*. See note on 3:7 (Hebrew idiom frequently prefaces an imperative calling for immediate action with the call to arise.). (CSB)

**35:24** VINDICATE – Justify. (TLSB)

*righteousness*. See note on 4:1 (Very often the “righteousness” of God in the Psalms (and frequently elsewhere in the OT) refers to the faithfulness with which he acts. This faithfulness is in full accordance with his commitments (both expressed and implied) to his people and with his status as the divine King—to whom the powerless may look for protection, the oppressed for redress and the needy for help.). (CSB)

**35:25** *swallowed*. See 124:3 (Like death). (CSB)

**35:26** Once again: May their judgment match their evil intent (see vv. 4–10). (CSB)

DISHONOR (ESV) – Hebrew describes blushing red. Accusers leave the scene with embarrassed red faces, burdened with the disgrace they have merited. (TLSB)

**35:27** May all who are faithful supporters of the Lord’s “servant” (here no doubt equivalent to his “anointed”; see note on 2:2) have reason to rejoice and praise the Lord. (CSB)

SERVANT – His chosen, or anointed, one. (TLSB)

**35:28** *righteousness*. See note on 4:1 (Very often the “righteousness” of God in the Psalms (and frequently elsewhere in the OT) refers to the faithfulness with which he acts. This faithfulness is in full accordance with his commitments (both expressed and implied) to his people and with his status as the divine King—to whom the powerless may look for protection, the oppressed for redress and the needy for help.). (CSB)

*righteous*. Hbr *tsadaq*, “proved right” or “in good order.” Used to describe a person in a right relationship with God, trusting God’s promised salvation and living by the covenant promise. The Psalms describe how the wicked plot against the righteous, but the Lord watches over the righteous and delivers them. God is righteous because He faithfully and justly keeps His Word. (TLSB p. 843)

David contrasts his friendship for his enemies with their shameful betrayal of him. They were enemies without a cause, and they were repaying him evil for good. In this way David’s relationship with his enemies was a type of the relationship of Christ with his enemies. He truly suffered undeserved hatred, since he had shown nothing but love for his enemies. When we suffer undeserved hatred, let us follow the example of David and Christ and entrust our case to the Lord. (PBC)

**Ps 35** David appeals to God Almighty as divine warrior and righteous judge. He prays that God will come to his defense and rescue him from those who were once close friends

but who now accuse, slander, and condemn him with malice. The Lord forbids that we accuse an innocent person (Eighth Commandment), that he or she might be wrongly punished in body, property, or reputation (cf Pr 22:1). He bids us to err on the side of the Gospel in the case of our neighbor, unless guilt is clear (cf Mt 18:15–18). As we endeavor to treat our neighbors fairly and with mercy, our merciful Lord justifies us according to His righteousness. • O Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, Savior of the world, move us, we pray, to shun lies and to speak well of our neighbor. Build a strong bulwark around our name, reputation, and integrity that we might be protected from malicious gossip and deceitful tongues; through Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen. (TLSB)