

"Plead My Cause"

Psalm 35

The title is a familiar one - "A Psalm of David" - and that's all we really know about it. There are some commentators that state that the occasion was David's persecution under Saul, some say when he was running from Absalom, while others say it is a Messianic Psalm. None of those can be stated with any degree of confidence. There may be truth to all of them but, as we have seen before, the lack of evidence for occasion gives this psalm a more universal applicable nature.

As to the Messianic aspect, I don't hold to the view that it is. There may be some hints to what our Saviour went through on His way to the cross and the betrayal by Judas Iscariot, but I believe that minimizes both the historical account as well as the application for the believer today.

This is a psalm dealing with our enemies - ultimately, the primary enemy we all face: the devil. The psalm acknowledges there is an enemy, describes his tactics, and praises God for victory over the enemy.

The psalm can be divided into three sections, each one ending with a note of praise to God: vs. 9-10, 18, 27-28. Each section is mostly negative, demonstrating the situation David was in, and what we may find ourselves in today, yet for each negative section, the positive notes of praise show how we are to view those negative situations of life.

The first three words set the stage for the content of the psalm: David presenting his situation to the Lord and asking for help. He asks that his enemies be destroyed because of their hatred for him and His God, that he be delivered from their false claims and attacks, and that the Lord defend him as he strives to do right.

(Most of our attention will be on the first point.)

I. PLEA FOR DESTRUCTION OF HIS ENEMIES - VS. 1-10, ESP. VS. 8

A. Vs. 1-3 - "Say unto my soul, I am *thy* salvation" (vs. 3) - There is peace and calm in knowing that the Lord will fight for us against our enemies. It won't make the attack stop nor the battle any less severe, but it will give us confidence and hope knowing that the God of the universe fights for us.

There are several terms that David uses here to call on the LORD to help him against his enemies, and eventually to destroy them.

1. "Plead my cause" - this is in contrast to "them that strive" with him. These terms are legal terms - David is calling on the LORD to be his defense attorney against the false accusations that were being brought against him.

This is reminiscent of what is said in First John about our Saviour being our "advocate."

1 John 2:1-2

¹ My little children, these things write I unto you, that ye sin not. And if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous:

² And he is the propitiation for our sins: and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world.

2. "Fight against them that fight against me" - means what it says. David is asking the LORD to not just plead his cause with words, but go to battle for him. The battles we face will often be too hard for us and we need to turn them

over to the Lord to fight for us.

The word used here means to close quarters and to engage in battle or war.

Exodus 14:25

²⁵ And took off their chariot wheels, that they drave them heavily: so that the Egyptians said, Let us flee from the face of Israel; for the LORD fighteth for them against the Egyptians.

Joshua 10:42

⁴² And all these kings and their land did Joshua take at one time, because the LORD God of Israel fought for Israel.

Nehemiah 4:20

²⁰ In what place therefore ye hear the sound of the trumpet, resort ye thither unto us: our God shall fight for us.

3. Vs. 2 - David asks the LORD to "take hold" (קָיָם) of "shield and buckler." The word used is one that points to strength and the ability to overpower the enemy.

"And stand up for mine help" - what a wonderful thought this is!! That the God of creation will "stand up" for us when we need help. All we need to do is stand behind Him and we will be safe.

4. Vs. 3 - this is a synonymous parallelism of verse two (2). "Draw out" compares to "take hold" and "stop the way" compares to "stand up for."

B. Vs. 4-8 - These verses call for the LORD to destroy the enemies that have risen up against David.

1. The terms used all point to the same end: separation and protection from the enemy.

"Be confounded and put to shame" (the word for "confounded" means to be put to shame); "be turned back and brought to confusion [disgraced];" "be as chaff before the wind;" "let their way be dark and slippery" (speaks of not being able to see the danger ahead) - all these are to bring the same conclusion: their destruction.

"The angel of the LORD" is found in verse five and six (5 and 6) as the one doing battle: "chase them" and "persecute them." As we stated in our study of the last psalm (34:7), the majority of the time the term "the angel of the LORD" is used in the Old Testament it is a Christophany, unless the context clearly indicates otherwise. I don't think we can say definitively either way in these verses but there is nothing to prevent this from being a Christophany.

2. The destruction called for in verse eight (8) is because of what verse seven (7) relates: it was "without cause" that they attacked him and tried to entrap him.

This whole section leads up to verse eight (8) and the call for the enemy's destruction. This may have been a call for literal destruction of a literal enemy by David, but it has a more spiritual application for us today. Our call should be for the continuing destruction of the enemies we face today - the enemy of the old nature and the sin with which we are tempted and for the devil to be kept from us.

Ultimate victory will be ours in heaven and the enemy will forever be confined to the lake of fire never to bother creation again.

Revelation 20:10

¹⁰ And the devil that deceived them was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone, where the beast and the false prophet are, and shall be tormented day and night for ever and ever.

C. Vs. 9-10 - David rejoices in the LORD's "salvation" even before his enemies were ultimately destroyed because he knew they would be. He had faith in the God of his salvation (vs. 3) and that faith was turned into joy because he knew God heard him.

1. The parallelisms in these verses are "my soul" with "all my bones" - speaking of everything we are, we are to feel joy "down in our bones."

The other parallelism is "His salvation" with "which deliverest" - speaking of the complete destruction of the enemy and the complete deliverance that ensures.

2. David is referring to himself as "poor and needy" here as he does on occasion. By application, we are to consider ourselves to be that as well today. It points to the battle we face, and without the help of the LORD, we are not powerful enough to win.

Psalms 34:6

⁶ This poor man cried, and the LORD heard him, and saved him out of all his troubles.

Psalms 69:33

³³ For the LORD heareth the poor, and despiseth not his prisoners.

Psalm 102:17

¹⁷ He will regard the prayer of the destitute, and not despise their prayer.

Psalm 109:31

³¹ For he shall stand at the right hand of the poor, to save him from those that condemn his soul.

Psalm 104:12

¹² By them shall the fowls of the heaven have their habitation, which sing among the branches.

II. PLEA FOR DELIVERANCE FROM HIS ENEMIES – VS. 11-18, ESP. VS. 17

This section, for the most part, is what is viewed as Messianic by some good scholars.

A. Vs. 11-12 and 15-16 give the argument that David was making for why he needed deliverance from these enemies: because “they rewarded [him] evil for good to the spoiling of [his] soul.” It was a crushing blow to find out what was being said after all he had done for them, as outlined in vs. 13-14.

B. Those two verses (13-14) are precious verses and state as clearly as possible what we are to do in our treatment of others – even those that would be considered our enemy.

If we lived these verses out for those that aren’t like us or do things that harm us, I wonder how many more lost souls would be brought to Christ?

Matthew 5:44

⁴⁴ But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you;

Luke 6:27-28

²⁷ But I say unto you which hear, Love your enemies, do good to them which hate you,

²⁸ Bless them that curse you, and pray for them which despitefully use you.

Luke 6:34-35

³⁴ And if ye lend to them of whom ye hope to receive, what thank have ye? for sinners also lend to sinners, to receive as much again.

³⁵ But love ye your enemies, and do good, and lend, hoping for nothing again; and your reward shall be great, and ye shall be the children of the Highest: for he is kind unto the unthankful and to the evil.

Romans 12:14-15

¹⁴ Bless them which persecute you: bless, and curse not.

¹⁵ Rejoice with them that do rejoice, and weep with them that weep.

C. Vs. 17-18 - David calls for the Lord to "rescue [his] soul." The enemy was attempting to destroy his soul (vs. 12) so David pleads with the Lord to save him from that destruction - deliver him.

As we saw in verses nine and ten (9-10), David is thanking and praising God in advance of that deliverance, having confidence that his prayer would be heard, and he would be delivered.

III. PLEA FOR DEFENSE AGAINST THE ENEMY - VS. 19-28, ESP. VS. 22-23

- A. Vs. 19-21 and 25-26 - the argument David gives for needing the Lord to come to his defense are given in these verses.**
- B. Vs. 22-23 are the response of David to the attack - he pleads with the Lord to be near him and to let His voice be heard in his defense. David refers to his "judgment" and his "cause" in verse twenty-three (23). These are legal terms as used here, and points back to verse one (1) and the fact that the Lord is our defense attorney, there to defend against all the attacks of the enemy.**
- C. Vs. 24-25 finds this section ending with that same attitude we saw at the end of the first two sections: praising God for His defense in advance of it actually happening, only this time, he calls on those that serve the Lord to rejoice with him.**

Romans 12:15

¹⁵ Rejoice with them that do rejoice, and weep with them that weep.

1 Corinthians 12:25-26

²⁵ That there should be no schism in the body; but that the members should have the same care one for another.

²⁶ And whether one member suffer, all the members suffer with it; or one member be honoured, all the members rejoice with it.

Conclusion: Although there would have been a real occasion for this psalm in David's life, it still is very fitting for the believer today to understand that we have enemies, and we will battle those enemies, but we don't have to battle them alone. In fact, there will be times when we will not be able to do anything but put our faith and trust in the Lord to "fight for us." We need to remember this.