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*“Contend, O LORD, with those who contend with me; fight against those who fight against me!”*

Psalm 35:1

**Main Idea:** Lord, I ask you to fight on my behalf and go after my enemies, those who fight against you and your faithful. Be my shield and weapon, be my salvation and hope. And put all those who are evil to fall onto their own folly and disgrace. Turn their plans into hurt, allow the uprightness of your faithful to be their ruin and confusion and worthlessness. Let them slip and fall on their own evil plans. So, they are entangled by their own work and plan. Protect your faithful and allow us to prosper and give you glory. My hope and joy is in you Lord, I praise and exalt you all of the time no matter what! You are what life and purpose is all about, let me not be distracted by a fool's folly; rather trust in you wholeheartedly. All those who give false witness against your faithful be trapped by their own words and fail hard. Let those who seek to rob us be ruined by their efforts. When false accusers come after us, let their own words entrap them so they can't harm us. Help us stand strong on the onslaught of assaults, allow us to prevail and honor you. Lord, when evil doers and talkers come help us, please do not forget about us. Help us all stay strong and encourage one another and rejoice in you and praise your Name Most High!

### Contexts and Background:

The background story to this Psalm of lament and hope, is set in the war found in 1 Samuel 24, where David is on the run from Saul. There are several Psalms that draw from this experience. Many cries of anguish, as this was David's big trauma that he had to learn on and trust God harder than he ever had before and this prepared him to be a great King; while Saul's physical and social status gave him privilege but not a real cemented faith like David. Imagine David's frustration upon his experiences living in a cave being the most wanted person in the nation; yet, he kept his faith. Then, David sees Saul asleep at the entrance of his cave. He could easily have taken him out and claimed the throne, but he trusted in God's timing. David spared Saul and humiliated him in the process. So, he just cut off a piece of his robe. Saul realized his folly and David's uprightness; David was the right anointed king. This is more than just a tale of what to do in dark times and desiring revenge. It shows us God's mercy's and how we can fully trust him no matter what. This Psalm has been used over the millennia for Jews seeking revenge and what to do and not to do.

### Commentary—Word and Phrase Meanings:

**Verses 1-10:** David is enduring attacks from evil people with bad motives attacking Him by gossip and seeking to attack him with the sword. David expresses his anguish, impatience, and frustration. David feels God needs to be provoked to act, like a more passionate cry, so he turns His attention to his plight.

- *Contend.* A legal term meaning, to bring a case before a magistrate against someone. David is making his case to God the Judge.
- *Fight against.* An appeal to God for Him to fight on his behalf.
- *Shield and armor / buckler.* A defensive weapon, a small round shield used in battle to block blows from the opponent's weapons. There is the large full body length shield, usually carried by the shield bearer until needed in front line attacks.
- *Arise / rise.* A request to act. This is a Jewish battle cry and an expression of a call to action that means to urgently engage, to "get up now!". Grammatically, it is an imperative, seeking quick and decisive action. It is OK to ask God to help you--He wants that. Just make sure your call is just and right, and not out of petty retribution or for selfish gain (Ex. 12:31, Num. 10:35; Duet. 2:13; Judg. 7:9; Psalm 3:7; 7:6; 12:5; 68:1; 80:2; 78:65; Isa. 51:9).

- *Brandish spear and javelin.* An offensive weapon, a large thrown spear and sometimes referred to as a battle ax. Here it is a verb, not a literal weapon.
- *I am your salvation.* Here, meaning achieving a victory in a battle or war and the outpouring of God's power and a symbol of victory. Christ is our Salvation now, not in any belief or religious system. God's nature and will is to save what is lost: us. Thus, our Salvation is personal, but we serve Him as a collective. (1 Kings 1:50 -53; 2:28; Amos 3:14; Psalm 18:47, 25:5; Rev. 9:12-21).
- *Shame / confounded.* To take a desperate situation being twisted by evil people and turn it into victory and goodness. (1 Sam. 12; 25; Ecc. 2:14; Psalm 4:1-4; 10:4; 18: 1-7; 31:1-8; 73:11; Rom. 1:22; 3:10).
- *Chaff.* Meaning what is easily blown away. The husks from the wheat that turn to dust as the wheat kernels are shaken from it. It is worthless and is easily blown away by a small breeze. Likewise, we will fail and even perish when we do not trust and heed God's principles. Chaff is extremely annoying and gets in all orifices of the body. When the wind removes it, it brings cleansing and happiness (Ruth 1:22; Psalm 1:4-6).
- *Path be dark and slippery.* This means to fall to reckless folly or a kind of fool who does immoral actions and does not feel anything they did was wrong, even contempt for God.
- *Angel of the LORD pursuing.* God Himself involving Himself into our lives or sending one of His heavenly messengers (Gen 16:7-13; Jos. 5:14; 2 Kings 6:15-f; Zech. 1:9-19; 9:8).
- *Without cause.* A legal argument to mean one is innocent and the opponent has no just cause. Referring to the hurt caused by injustice. David has done no evil, deserving Saul's and evil people's opposition.
- *Ruin overtake / destruction come.* When one's evil actions to another comeback to hurt them instead, poetic justice (Psalm 7:14-16; 34:21).
- *Soul.* A people's consciences sometimes referred to as their spirit and their real self, created by God and bears His image, whereas our physical body is a temporary holding shell. The soul is metaphysical and not seen in the material world, which is what is in need of redemption (Gen. 2: 17-23; Psalm 31:9; Rom. 5:12; 1 Cor. 15:35-49; Phil. 3:20; Col. 3:4).
- *Who is like you, LORD?* Meaning, because God is on our side, we are certain to win, or trust in God and anticipate victory (Ex. 15:11).
- *Ruthless / malicious witnesses.* Meaning being cruel and careless of what is true or right. David's accusers were in the wrong and they did not care. Lies or gossiping is forbidden in Scripture (Ex. 23:1).

**Verses 11-28:** Like the first section, we have seen not just war language, but also legal argument, like a lawyer in front of a judge (Job 18:12; Jer. 20:10).

- *Evil for good.* Meaning extreme injustice and callousness, and in context, hatred without cause (Gen. 44:4; 1 Sam. 25:21; Psalm 38:20; 109:5; Prov. 17:13).
- *Sackcloth.* A coarse cloth similar to burlap, dark in color, and usually made of goat's hair--a very cheap and itchy material. *Sackcloth and ashes* meant intense mourning and/or repentance. Here David is explaining, that he sacrificially helped those who fight against him, and he is innocent.

- *Prayers returned to me unanswered.* Waiting for God can be frustrating, but this is where our faith is built and honed.
- *Stumbled.* Referring to sinful lapse (Psalm 27:2).
- *Gnashed their teeth.* The intense anger at someone who is being good and you are being evil and you take your hate onto them (Psalm 37:12; Acts 7:54).
- *Rescue me.* This is a statement of faith in the assurance of what God can do, and that He hears us (Psalm 3:4; 28:6; 34:4-6; 38:15; 118:5,21).
- *Save and deliver me.* A cry of anguish to God for deliverance of one's situation (1 Sam. 23:28; 24:14; 25:29; 26:18; Psalm 7:2).
- Give you thanks in the great assembly. A resolution to give God appreciation in the most public place (Psalm 22:22).
- *Gloat / wink the eye.* Meaning to taunt or be happy for someone's fall from their high position.
- *Peaceably / do not speak peace.* Meaning to break a treaty or an agreement.
- *Pursue me.* Innocence will not protect a goodly person from an accuser who is malevolent and does not care for truth or real justice.
- *Aha! Aha!* Meaning triumph and expressive joy (Psalm 10:13; 28:3).
- *Do not be silent / my tongue shall tell.* Even though David's deliverance had not come yet, he gives God praise and glory.
- *Vindicate.* To judge and find someone innocent. God seeks those who are loyal with an upright heart and judges the wicked (Psalm 5:4-6; 7:8; 17:15; 135:14; Isa. 50:8; Jer. 51:10).
- *Righteousness.* This means the seeking of God's presence, compassion, and understanding. Because of the relationship of grace, we have and that David had with God, we can go into His presence. It is the Lord's presence that guides us in our healthy relationship with Him. The more we know of Him and His principles, the better decisions and discernment we will make and have (Psalm 4:1; 5:8-12; 31:1; 1 Cor. 1:30).
- *The LORD be exalted.* To praise God in the midst of one's tribulation and expecting a breakthrough. To praise God no matter what. God, is majestic and glorious and excellent throughout the universe. He alone deserves the right to be honored!
- *I will praise you.* It is a call to worship God "Praise the Lord," (Praise Yahweh) is found in the Psalms, chapters 104-106, 111-113, 117, 135, 146-150, and many more. This is a Liturgical expletive a priest uses called a "piel," as in a command to call the people to praise and worship Yahweh (Jer. 51:48; Psalm 18:46; 104:34; Rom. 15:8-12).

### **Devotional Thoughts and Applications:**

In this Psalm, David shows a remarkable lasting faith in the midst of darkness and distress. He makes his case before God with passion and conviction; yet, never wavers on his trust and confidence. We all will face challenges and unwanted circumstances. We make choices and deal with the benefits and

consequences thereof. Sometimes, we have no control; sometimes, we do. But our goal is to do God's Will. If you are centered on God's will, if you are doing as you are called, if you are following God's precepts, then, you will also face critics. Some will give you the hard advice we need to stay on track; most will just be jealous. Those are the ones who build nothing, do nothing and only say something. What are we to do? Keep our eyes on the goal. Not the boos of the opposing fans, this is what a true sports champion does. What a true person of faith and character does. We can either fight with the critics or keep our eye on the Goal, to please Christ as LORD! What does an immature person do? They argue, they fight, they fuss, they complain and then the eyes are off the goal and the goal is empty.

**Christian Life Principle:** To grow in the faith is to listen and obey the timing of God. We are to seek Him, place Him first, think through your situation, and plan accordingly to do what is best and what honors God.

**The Essential Inductive Questions** (for more Inductive questions, see Inductive Bible Study):

1. What does this passage say?
2. What does this passage mean?
3. What is God telling me?
4. How am I encouraged and strengthened?
5. Is there sin in my life for which confession and repentance is needed?
6. How can I be changed, so I can learn and grow?
7. What is in the way of these precepts affecting me? What is in the way of my listening to God?
8. How does this apply to me? What will I do about it?
9. What can I model and teach?
10. What does God want me to share with someone?

**Additional Questions:**

1. What have you done in dark times to remain trusting in God?
2. Why do people with bad motives attack God's faithful with gossip?
3. How have you seen God fight on your behalf?
4. How is Christ is your salvation and hope?
5. What does this Psalm tell us about waiting on God's timing?
6. How does this psalm help those experiencing anguish and anguish?
7. How have you seen Christ turn evil plans to come back on those who laid them?
8. What gets in the way of trusting Christ wholeheartedly?
9. Why is it that waiting for God can be frustrating? How can this be a time to build our faith?
10. What are some ways of seeking God's presence, compassion, and understanding?
11. What is a remarkable lasting faith? How can you develop one? How can the church help you?
12. How can your church help protect God's faithful?