

Psalm Sundays

Text
Psalm 35

Topic
**David believes that the Lord will be
a shield and buckler against those
who hate him**

Title
"Hatred Alert! Raise Shields"

Who would be your pick for the greatest bodyguard in film history?

- 👤 Frank Farmer? Kevin Costner saves Whitney Houston in the film appropriately titled, *The Bodyguard*.
- 👤 Frank Horrigan? Clint Eastwood is the Secret Service agent who redeems himself by saving POTUS in *The Line of Fire*.
- 👤 Don't forget Doug Chesnic. Nicholas Cage rises to the occasion protecting a former president's widow in *Guarding Tess*.

Can we think of the Lord as a bodyguard? Or, maybe, as a body-and-soul guard?

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In verses two & three, David says to the Lord, "Take hold of shield and buckler, And stand up for my help. Also draw out the spear, And stop those who pursue me. Say to my soul, "I *am* your salvation."

David needed protecting from many enemies who sought his destruction and death. He appealed to the Lord to protect him, employing the analogy of an armed bodyguard.

David's song gives us an opportunity to better understand the Lord as the Protector of His people; and of His unique style of protection.

I'll organize my comments around two points: **#1 What You Can Expect From The Lord's Protection**, and **#2 What You Can Expect The Lord's Protection From**.

#1 - What You Can Expect From The Lord's Protection (v1-10)

"... What I do have are a very particular set of skills. Skills I have acquired over a very long career..." It comes from the speech that launched the *Taken* movie franchise.

We are introduced to the Lord's "particular set of skills" in these opening verses.

Psa 35:1 A Psalm of David. Plead *my cause*, O LORD, with those who strive with me; Fight against those who fight against me.

Notice this immediately: David understands that the Lord will first "plead" with his enemies.

It is an important reminder to us that the spiritual well-being, the salvation, of our enemies must always be a factor. God remains longsuffering towards them

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- even though it often means that our troubles, and trouble in the world, will continue.

When necessary, the Lord *will* "fight" against enemies. His fighting is described for us.

Psa 35:2 Take hold of shield and buckler, And stand up for my help.

Psa 35:3 Also draw out the spear, And stop those who pursue me. Say to my soul, "I am your salvation."

There is always that scene where the hero is choosing his weapons. Here are the Lord's weapons according to David:

- 👤 The Lord can choose defensive weapons, "shield and buckler," and "stand" to protect us.
- 👤 He has offensive weapons - like "the spear" that He can wield to "stop" any enemy to protect us.

In one case, we remain untouched, unscathed. In the other, we're being fired upon. I'd rather the Lord go on offense. I don't like the fiery darts of the enemy hitting the shield.

With all this weaponry, why does it seem that the enemy advances against us, and even wounds us?

As I alluded to earlier, the Lord is not just a bodyguard. He is a body-**and**-soul guard. "Say to my soul, I am your salvation." Simply put - certain attacks are not repelled in order that you may experience the Lord's spiritual protection of more than your body. In your vulnerability God can reveal, to both you and onlookers, "I am your salvation."

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Jesus once pointed out, "... do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. But rather fear Him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell" (Matthew 10:28). Your enemies cannot "kill the soul." When the Lord allows them to trouble you physically, it is so you can clearly see your soul's safety.

A quick doctrinal note: Mankind was created a trichotomy of spirit, soul, and body. When we say "soul" today, we're talking about the spirit and the soul of a believer.

In the movies, the gangs or gangsters offer protection - usually from themselves.

Nonbelievers think the Lord is running some sort of protection racket.

They accuse Him of not doing anything about evil, or being indifferent at best. It is short-sighted on their part. He *has* done something; He *is* moving on the earth; He *will* end evil. But His longsuffering waits. Maybe for you - if you are a nonbeliever.

Psa 35:4 Let those be put to shame and brought to dishonor Who seek after my life; Let those be turned back and brought to confusion Who plot my hurt.

Psa 35:5 Let them be like chaff before the wind, And let the angel of the LORD chase *them*.

Psa 35:6 Let their way be dark and slippery, And let the angel of the LORD pursue them.

The "angel of the Lord" is an Old Testament appearance of Jesus. He commands the heavenly hosts of angels. David sees this angelic host causing his enemies to retreat - confused, in the dark, along a slippery path.

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Psa 35:7 For without cause they have hidden their net for me *in* a pit, *Which* they have dug without cause for my life.

Psa 35:8 Let destruction come upon him unexpectedly, And let his net that he has hidden catch himself; Into that very destruction let him fall.

Sounds a little harsh. Was it? If you do any of your own study of the Psalms, you won't get far before you hear the term, "imprecatory." Imprecatory Psalms are "those that invoke judgment, calamity, or curses, upon one's enemies or those perceived as the enemies of God."

The question always comes up, "Can Christians pray imprecatory prayers?" Sure we can; in fact, *we do it all the time*. Let me elaborate before you call curses down upon someone.

The last book of the Bible ends, "Even so, Come Lord Jesus" (22:20). Have you ever prayed that prayer? **It is imprecatory.** The chapters preceding it, beginning with chapter six, delineate the awesome wrath of God that is coming upon the whole world. They delineate the final judgment of men and supernatural beings, who will be thrown alive into the Lake of Fire to suffer eternal, conscious torment.

To pray for the Lord to "come" is, therefore, imprecatory. But notice that imprecatory prayers acknowledge that the Lord has been reaching out to the lost, seeking to save them. He takes no delight in the death of the wicked.

Most (if not all) imprecatory prayers we encounter in the Bible are against the wicked in general, and not against an individual.

This is true in our psalm. David does not specify a particular person. He speaks of the wicked generally.

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In the Revelation, the apostle John wrote, "I saw under the altar the souls of those who had been slain for the word of God and for the testimony which they held. And they cried with a loud voice, saying, "How long, O Lord, holy and true, until You judge and avenge our blood on those who dwell on the earth?" (6:9-10).

The imprecatory prayer is answered, "It was said to them that they should rest a little while longer, until both *the number of* their fellow servants and their brethren, who would be killed as they *were*, was completed" (v11).

Notice that their bodies were not protected, but their souls were (and are) safe, as they witness the grace of God's wrath during the Great tribulation.

Psa 35:9 And my soul shall be joyful in the LORD; It shall rejoice in His salvation.

Psa 35:10 All my bones shall say, "LORD, who *is* like You, Delivering the poor from him who is too strong for him, Yes, the poor and the needy from him who plunders him?"

"Soul" was now prominent in David's mind. He understood he could always be "joyful." He rejoiced in the safety of his soul.

As to physical help, the Lord could deliver "from him who is too strong for him," for sure. But the saint might suffer being plundered - yet still be considered delivered.

Daniel's three friends are my go-to example. When King Nebuchadnezzar threatened to burn them alive, they replied, "Our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace, and He will deliver *us* from your hand, O king. But if not, let it be known to you, O king, that we do not serve

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your gods, nor will we worship the gold image which you have set up" (3:17-18). They'd be delivered one way or the other.

The Lord isn't the Punisher. He isn't like the Terminator who had to do whatever young John Connor told him to do.

He is your body-and-soul guard - with a particular emphasis on your soul.

We say that "experience is the best teacher." Well, you will sometimes need to have your physical protection removed in order to experience, and therefore appreciate, the Lord's protection of your soul.

#2 - What You Can Expect The Lord's Protection From (v11-28)

I've been noticing people asking the question, "What was your *Aha* moment?" It's a favorite on *Shark Tank*, when one of the potential investors wants to know when the idea first 'hit' the entrepreneur.

There is an *Aha* moment in Psalm 35:21, but it isn't a good one. In fact, most of the *Aha* moments in the Bible are attributed to wicked people doing or saying bad things. The worst of them is recorded in the Gospel of Mark, where we read, at the Cross of Jesus, "And those who passed by blasphemed Him, wagging their heads and saying, "Aha! *You* who destroy the temple and build *it* in three days..." (15:29).

As we read on, I won't spend too much time discussing the particular actions of the wicked. Their description is self-explanatory. Rather, we will look at David's experience of his protection from them.

Psa 35:11 Fierce witnesses rise up; They ask me *things* that I do not know.

Psa 35:12 They reward me evil for good, *To* the sorrow of my soul.

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The “soul” that the Lord was protecting nevertheless experienced “sorrow.” You are going to be hurt - emotionally - passing through this world on your way homeward to Heaven. When you do, the Lord will be your Comforter. **He can't be your Comforter if you never need to be comforted.**

Psa 35:13 But as for me, when they were sick, My clothing was sackcloth; I humbled myself with fasting; And my prayer would return to my own heart.
Psa 35:14 I paced about as though *he were* my friend or brother; I bowed down heavily, as one who mourns *for his* mother.

There must have been a huge sackcloth industry in Israel; maybe a *Sacks-cloth 5th Avenue*.

Prayer “returning to [his] own heart” was a way of saying he prayed with head bowed so low it was as if he was talking to his chest.

It's obviously worse when people you love and have ministered to are the ones against you.

Psa 35:15 But in my adversity they rejoiced And gathered together; Attackers gathered against me, And I did not know *it*; They tore *at me* and did not cease;
Psa 35:16 With ungodly mockers at feasts They gnashed at me with their teeth.

David pictured them as celebrating his troubles over a feast - as if it were a holiday.

Psa 35:17 Lord, how long will You look on? Rescue me from their destructions, My precious *life* from the lions.

“How long” indicates David thought it was taking too long. Even to him, the Lord seemed to be an onlooker, doing nothing. He believed, however, that he

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was “precious” to the Lord. We might here recall the analogy of gold being purified by fire.

Psa 35:18 I will give You thanks in the great assembly; I will praise You among many people.

David did this *during* his trouble and not just after. He refused to isolate himself. He knew the fellowship of the saints needed him; and he needed them.

Psa 35:19 Let them not rejoice over me who are wrongfully my enemies; Nor let them wink with the eye who hate me without a cause.

Psa 35:20 For they do not speak peace, But they devise deceitful matters Against *the* quiet ones in the land.

Psa 35:21 They also opened their mouth wide against me, *And* said, "Aha, aha! Our eyes have seen *it*."

David was blameless. Not sinless; *blameless*. In this case he had done nothing to deserve the treatment he was receiving.

There are times when someone IS in the wrong. They are offending a blameless individual. You can't always take a neutral position. Sin must be called-out.

Psa 35:22 *This* You have seen, O LORD; Do not keep silence. O Lord, do not be far from me.

Psa 35:23 Stir up Yourself, and awake to my vindication, To my cause, my God and my Lord.

This was David's "How long?" speech. He knew his troubles would come to an end, but not how long.

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All our troubles will one day be ended. Some in this life, on earth, as new creatures in Jesus. Some in Heaven, as new creations in forever bodies fit for eternity.

David could pray for deliverance without cursing his enemies. He did so by leaving "vindication" to the Lord.

Psa 35:24 Vindicate me, O LORD my God, according to Your righteousness;
And let them not rejoice over me.

He repeated, for emphasis, that vindication must be the Lord's doing. It almost always fails when you try to vindicate - to clear - yourself. Satan is too good an accuser, with too much experience, to be overcome by your own protestations. His strategies cannot be met with the energy of the flesh.

Psa 35:25 Let them not say in their hearts, "Ah [or, *Aha*], so we would have it!"
Let them not say, "We have swallowed him up."

Psa 35:26 Let them be ashamed and brought to mutual confusion Who rejoice at my hurt;
Let them be clothed with shame and dishonor Who exalt themselves against me.

Heaven sees us clothed very differently than we appear on earth. David was held in "shame and dishonor" when it was really his enemies that were wearing the garments of "shame and dishonor."

How are *you* dressed - with Heaven looking on? As I've explained many times, everyone of us starts as if clothed in filthy rags. When you believe God, He justifies you, declaring you righteous. It is illustrated by Him giving you a pure, white robe of righteousness.

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Psa 35:27 Let them shout for joy and be glad, Who favor my righteous cause;
And let them say continually, "Let the LORD be magnified, Who has pleasure in
the prosperity of His servant."

Psa 35:28 And my tongue shall speak of Your righteousness *And* of Your praise
all the day long.

He mentioned "righteous," and "righteousness." By "righteous," it seems he
meant that others, if they wanted to, could see he was in the right by how he
was responding.

Think of it this way. If someone comes to you with gossip and slander and
backbiting of someone else, accusing them, *then who is the one that is
righteous?*

If the accused can say, "My tongue shall speak of Your righteousness," not
retaliating, *etc., etc.*, it speaks volumes.

David certainly hoped for "prosperity" to return. He vey much wanted the Lord
to act on his behalf. While he waited, he remained convinced of the Lord's
soul-care.

Psalm 35 portrays the Lord in the role of body-and-soul guard. Keep in mind
that there are many other analogies to fully describe the Lord in relationship
with us.

- 👤 He's the Potter, working with us as clay. As Potter, He sometimes applies
more pressure, sometimes less, to mold and shape us.
- 👤 He's the Refiner, turning up the heat to remove impurities, all the while
treating us as precious. *He won't overheat us!*
- 👤 He is a Shepherd, always leading us as His sheep, but sometimes through
the Valley of the Shadow of Death.

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👤 He is a Vinedresser, lifting us up to produce fruit.

In my research, I came across a song by Blind Willie Johnson, *Trouble Will Soon Be Over*. Here are the lyrics:

*Oh, trouble'll soon be over, sorrow will have an end
Oh, trouble'll soon be over, sorrow will have an end*

*Well, Christ is my burden bearer, He's my only friend
Till the end of my sorrow and tells me to lean on Him*

*Oh, trouble'll soon be over, sorrow will have an end
Oh, trouble'll soon be over, sorrow will have an end*

*God is my strong protection, He's my bosom friend
Trouble arose all around me, I know who will take me in*

*Oh, trouble'll soon be over, sorrow will have an end
Oh, trouble'll soon be over, sorrow will have an end*

*He proved a friend to David, and hid him in a cage
The same God that David served, will give me a rest someday*

*Oh, trouble'll soon be over, sorrow will have an end
Oh, trouble'll soon be over, sorrow will have an end*

*Well, though my burden may be heavy, my enemies crush me down
Someday I'll rest with Jesus and wear a starry crown*

*Oh, trouble'll soon be over, sorrow will have an end
Oh, trouble'll soon be over, sorrow will have an end*

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*I'll take this yoke upon me and live a Christian life
Take Jesus for my Savior, my burden will be light*

*Oh, trouble'll soon be over, sorrow will have an end
Oh, trouble'll soon be over, sorrow will have an end*

*He proved a friend to David, and hid him in a cage
The same God that David served, will give me a rest someday*

*Oh, trouble'll soon be over, sorrow will have an end
Oh, trouble'll soon be over, sorrow will have an end*

