

## Psalm 35 When Friends Become Foes

By Pastor Roy Hogan

The word *friend* is one of the most misused words in the English language. We walk down the street and encounter someone for the first time. We introduce ourselves to each other. We go our separate ways. Five years later, that person's name comes up in conversation, and as if we were programmed, we say "oh yes, we're friends." I am exaggerating, but not by much. "Bill is my friend." "Wonderful," someone replies. "What is Bill's last name?" "Oh, actually, I don't know his last name." "Is Bill from this area?" "You know, I actually don't know where he lives." No, Bill is not your friend, and all those names of people you have stored on useless Facebook are not your friends. This complex of "everyone is my friend" is a result of insecurity that haunts many folks in this age. *Insecurity* results from *immaturity*. Having Jesus in one's heart is just not enough in this day and time. We need to attach ourselves to others, even if it is through the vain cord of social media. Jesus is tiny in the heart of most believers. Many immature believers feel Jesus alone is just not enough.

If you have even one *friend*, you are blessed. If the truth were known, we all probably have one, maybe two, friends in life. King David knew a lot of people. He became famous almost overnight by slaying an enemy giant named Goliath. Being young and lacking knowledge that only life can teach, David probably thought King Saul was his friend. He was King Saul's harp player and also served as his armor-bearer. Oh, thought David, King Saul loves me dearly and is my friend for life.

I am made to wonder how David felt when Jonathan visited him in I Samuel 23:16. David was in the wilderness fleeing King Saul and others. Jonathan came to David that day to "strengthen his (David's) hand in God." The Bible does not give the details of their meeting. I wish it did. It is possible that on this occasion Jonathan confirmed to David that King Saul was, in fact, his bitter enemy. A friend became a foe. There were others, such as Doeg the Edomite who served in the court of Saul, that also were enemies of David's.

Sometime, friends turn to foes. Have you witnessed this in your life? Friends becoming foes seems to be the setting of Psalm 34. What was David to do? Being human, he was crushed in his soul. How would he fight back? What was David's strategy? Let us take a look.

35:1-3

*Plead my cause, O LORD, with them that strive with me: fight against them that fight against me. 2 Take hold of shield and buckler, and stand up for*

*mine help. 3 Draw out also the spear, and stop the way against them that persecute me: say unto my soul, I am thy salvation.*

David turned to the Lord. Remember, David was a champion warrior. He had more than one opportunity to take the life of King Saul. Yet, David had a heart that desired to be like God. In the flesh, the right thing seems to be to take up the battle against the adversary. The best policy, which is not of human reasoning, is to turn the enemy over to God. David calls on God to take out his shield, his buckler, and his spear. Save your bullets. Let God use his. His aim is better than man's aim. He can hit where it hurts. If you avenge the enemy, you are on your own. The best policy is to place them in the hands of God.

*Say unto my soul, I am thy salvation.* David wants assurance from God that he is on his side. Sometimes we can be beat so low we wonder if God is for us or against us.

35:4-8

*Let them be confounded and put to shame that seek after my soul: let them be turned back and brought to confusion that devise my hurt. 5 Let them be as chaff before the wind: and let the angel of the LORD chase them. 6 Let their way be dark and slippery: and let the angel of the LORD persecute them. 7 For without cause have they hid for me their net in a pit, which without cause they have digged for my soul. 8 Let destruction come upon him at unawares; and let his net that he hath hid catch himself: into that very destruction let him fall.*

David ask God to deal with his enemies harshly. He asks that his enemies be *confounded*, that is, brought to shame by failure of their own plot against him. In the book of Esther, Haman must have been confounded when he built gallows for his enemy, and he himself hanged on it. David asked God to allow his enemies to be brought to *confusion* and find their own plot mystifying and hard to comprehend. In verse 5, David wished his enemy become as chaff before the wind. To become chaff is to become useless and blown away by the wind. Chaff is also burned in the fire.

In verse 5 and 6, we once again meet the *angel of the Lord* that we met in Psalm 34:7. This angel is sometimes called Jehovah angel. Angels have boundless power. Imagine an angel embodied with the very power of God Almighty.

These things David wishes upon his enemies seem harsh. Much is said in the Old and New Testament about being kind toward the enemy. David had shown unbelievable kindness to King Saul. The kindness was rewarded with hatred. David could have taken Saul's life countless times, but as an act of kindness, he spared him. At some point, kindness does not seem to be the answer. David gives his reasoning for God to flail the enemy in verse 7. He states that the enemy is *without cause* to torment him. If your enemy unjustly digs a pit for you, are you supposed to go to the pit and jump in it?

35:9-10

*And my soul shall be joyful in the LORD: it shall rejoice in his salvation. 10 All my bones shall say, LORD, who is like unto thee, which deliverest the poor from him that is too strong for him, yea, the poor and the needy from him that spoileth him?*

God bless David. In these two verses he does something that is very difficult for a human being to do. Amidst the attack by his enemies, he praises God. This seems far from the norm in such a time as David faced. Often, folk get mad at God in time of trouble. Folk tend to forget God in time of trouble. David remained steadfast knowing God would see him through this difficult time.

35:11-12

*False witnesses did rise up; they laid to my charge things that I knew not. 12 They rewarded me evil for good to the spoiling of my soul.*

May God judge quickly and harshly folk who fabricate disparaging lies toward others. History has recorded many attacks on folk of fine character by those with lying lips. Just because words come out of a person's mouth does not mean the words are true. It is amazing how falsehoods spread. There is a saying goes like this: *a lie can travel around the world before truth can get its' boots laced up*. The false witnesses in David's life uttered things he could not conceive of. He must have said to himself "where did that come from?" *They laid to my charge things that I knew not.*

"Sticks and stones may break my bones, but words will never hurt me" is one of the biggest lies ever told. Verse 12 records that the evil done toward David *spoiled* his soul. We put a band-aid on a cut. We place an ice-pack on a sprain. Does anyone know what can be used to soothe a hurting soul?

35:13-17

*But as for me, when they were sick, my clothing was sackcloth: I humbled my soul with fasting; and my prayer returned into mine own bosom. 14 I behaved*

*myself as though he had been my friend or brother: I bowed down heavily, as one that mourneth for his mother. 15 But in mine adversity they rejoiced, and gathered themselves together: yea, the abjects gathered themselves together against me, and I knew it not; they did tear me, and ceased not: 16 With hypocritical mockers in feasts, they gnashed upon me with their teeth. 17 Lord, how long wilt thou look on? rescue my soul from their destructions, my darling from the lions.*

David says in verse 13, *when they were sick, my clothing was sackcloth*. How much kindness does one owe his enemy? We know from the Word of God that sackcloth indicates the deepest of mourning. Job was well acquainted with sackcloth. When David heard one of these enemies was sick, he fell to the ground and covered himself with his cloak and went into intense mourning for them. Now, they are well and recovered and are sitting up at night concocting lies to spread against David. People can be so mean, hardhearted, and ruthless. One can feed people when they are hungry, pray for them when they are sick, and help them pay the rent when they can't pay only to have them ignore you when they get on their feet. One had better have their trust in Jesus. People will forget you like last week's nightmare. The next time you are in need, call on one of your "Facebook friends." I am sure they will come running.

David cried for his persecutors as if they were family. I prayed for them as if they were my *friend* or *brother*. But, David goes further. He wept for them as he would weep for his own sick mother! However, take a look at verse 15. When David had adversity, they had a party to celebrate. This can't be real! *Abject* are hired hitmen. Evil people will not stop short of murder.

We see the word *feast* in verse 16. A *feast* is a time of celebration. It is a time of happiness. A feast is not a feast unless there is food. Well, there was no need for food at this feast to celebrate David's destruction - they ate David!

35:18

*I will give thee thanks in the great congregation: I will praise thee among much people.*

How many times have we promised God that if he would rescue us from the lions, we would *give thee thanks and praise thee*. However, when deliverance came, we forgot God. I do not think David forgot God. He was a champion at worship and praise unto God.

35:19-28 *Let not them that are mine enemies wrongfully rejoice over me: neither let them wink with the eye that hate me without a cause. 20 For they*

*speaking not peace: but they devise deceitful matters against them that are quiet in the land. 21 Yea, they opened their mouth wide against me, and said, Aha, aha, our eye hath seen it. 22 This thou hast seen, O LORD: keep not silence: O Lord, be not far from me. 23 Stir up thyself, and awake to my judgment, even unto my cause, my God and my Lord. 24 Judge me, O LORD my God, according to thy righteousness; and let them not rejoice over me. 25 Let them not say in their hearts, Ah, so would we have it: let them not say, We have swallowed him up. 26 Let them be ashamed and brought to confusion together that rejoice at mine hurt: let them be clothed with shame and dishonour that magnify themselves against me. 27 Let them shout for joy, and be glad, that favour my righteous cause: yea, let them say continually, Let the LORD be magnified, which hath pleasure in the prosperity of his servant. 28 And my tongue shall speak of thy righteousness and of thy praise all the day long.*

These ten verses are essentially a repeat of David's request unto God that he spare him in this time of great distress.