

My God and My Lord!

Sermon Text: Psalm 35

Study Texts: Romans 12:14-21

Sermon Recap: The main idea of this week's sermon is this: The servants of the LORD look to the Divine Warrior for vindication and deliverance. Take time before your growth group to review the key points you noted from today's sermon.

Sermon Connection: Psalm 35 teaches us to seek the help and protection of God in the midst of hardship and persecution. More than this, the Psalm instructs us to trust God's wrath against sin and not to take vengeance into our own hands. Paul takes up this idea in Romans 12 and explains how such an attitude is a mark of a true Christian. In this text, Paul not only calls us to leave vengeance to God but calls us to radically rethink how we perceive and deal with those who would do us harm. He writes, "*Bless those who persecute you...*" Such an attitude is not possible without the divine help of God, and it is certainly impossible without having an unshakable hope in the eternal justice of God against sin.

Lesson Plan

Lesson Goal: To see that God calls His people to faithfully trust Him in the midst of persecution while doing good.

Lesson Points:

Point 1: The Marks of Christian Living in the Face of Hardship (vv. 14-18)

Point 2: The Hope of Christian Living in the Face of Hardship (vv. 19-21)

The Context: The letter to the Romans is a fantastic book of the Bible, a favorite to many Christians. As some have noted, Romans is Paul's "Handbook on Christianity" in many ways. He lays out humanities' problem of sin, how God deals with our sin through the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus, and in the portion which we are studying here, Paul explains how the gospel calls Christians to a new way of life.

Point 1- The Marks of Christian Living in the Face of Hardship (vv. 14-18)

- What does Paul mean in saying, "*Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse them*"? Why is this so hard for us? See also Mt. 5:44; Lk. 6:27; 1 Cor. 4:12.

- In verses that follow, Paul returns to how Christians are to relate in community. Read over the next few verses, 15-17, and think through how the gospel influences and shapes each of these commands...
 - *Rejoice with those who rejoice:*
 - *Weep with those who weep:*
 - *Live in harmony with one another:*
 - *Do not be haughty/arrogant, but associate with the lowly:*
 - *Never be wise in your own sight:*
 - *Repay no one evil for evil:*
 - *Give thought to do what is honorable in the sight of all:*
 - *So far as it depends on you, live peaceably with all:*

Point 2 - The Hope of Christian Living in the Face of Hardship (vv. 19-21)

- According to v. 19, why is the Christian never to take wrath and revenge into his/her own hands? How does this accord with Psalm 35?
- How does such a truth/mindset translate into daily living and our response to evil? See v. 20.
- Paul writes that we are to overcome evil with good as we resist evil in our own lives. In light of the entire passage, how are we to do this?

The Big Picture - “Vengeance is Mine...says the Lord.”

Evil and wickedness exist in our world and in our own lives. Often times, it can seem as though evil and wickedness are prevailing. Times arise in each of our lives where we suffer from various forms of evil, and during such times, we may find ourselves seeking vengeance and planning ways to retaliate. But the gospel speaks a different word to us in such moments...a better word. While the desire for righteous justice is not evil in itself, the gospel shows us that God is not mocked by evil (Gal. 6:7), and that He will have ultimate justice. God is aware of every evil deed committed, especially against His people, and He will repay evil with eternal righteous judgment. We cannot deliver such judgment. In fact, through the gospel, we have been delivered from such judgment. So, when we find ourselves facing evil of one kind or another, we turn our anger over to God knowing that He possesses all righteous anger, and that He will repay us for any injustice committed against us. At the same time, the gospel so radically transforms our hearts and minds that we actually seek to pray for and serve those who do us wrong, and this flows from how God has served us in Christ.

Application Questions

- In what ways are you facing evil or hardship currently? Are you turning it over to God or trying to handle it yourself?
- Does your growth group know about your struggle(s)? Why or why not?
- How are you seeking to do good to opponents in your life?
- How are you teaching your children to trust God’s justice?
- How might your growth group embrace and exercise these truths in community?