

SBC – Feb 25, 2024

Psalm 17 (NKJV)

“A Prayer for Protection”

Psalm 17 (NKJV)

A Prayer of David.

This is yet another Psalm of David. It is simply called “A Prayer of David”. This is one of 5 Psalms identified in this way (Ps. 17; 86; 90; 102; 142). Apart from the one Psalm written by Moses (Ps. 90), the other 4 all are written in a context of danger where the person is crying out for deliverance. When you are in life-threatening trouble it is definitely time to pray.

Psalm 17 is full of petitions. Some count as many as 17 specific petitions. And in doing so David utilizes phrases and figurative language from the Exodus which was a highlighted time of God’s deliverance for His people Israel (cf. Ex. 15; Deut. 32).

We are not certain of the occasion in Psalm 17 when David was in life-threatening danger but some think possibly it was when he was in the wilderness on the run from Saul.

Whatever the exact situation David comes to God with a clear conscience and appeals to God in the language of the court as if appearing before God as the chief justice Who will decide his case.

When we do wrong and suffer for it we know that the punishment is just. We have it coming. However, sometimes God’s people suffer unrelated to anything wrong they have done. That can really be challenging. What should we do about it? Well, David took His case to the righteous Judge of the universe – the Lord God Almighty.

Slide # 1

OUTLINE – Psalm 17

- A. vv. 1-2 - A Plea for God to Hear
- B. vv. 3-4 - A Plea from a Tested Heart
- C. v. 5 - A Plea for God to Uphold Him
- D. vv. 6-9 – A Plea for God’s Protection
- E. vv. 10-14 A Pleas for Divine Intervention
- F. v. 15 – The Settled Confidence of Prayer

1 Hear a just cause, O LORD, Attend to my cry; Give ear to my prayer which is not from deceitful lips.

David's cry to the LORD comes from a heart of integrity. He is not playing games with God. He is not playing the part of a liar and yet coming to God for help. No, he is very confident that his cause is just.

Slide # 2

Psalms 66:18 (NKJV)

18 If I regard iniquity in my heart, The Lord will not hear.

2 Let my vindication come from Your presence; Let Your eyes look on the things that are upright.

David did not seek to take matters into his own hands, but rather sought for God to vindicate him in accordance with what was right. It is always the right thing to do – to let God deal with people instead of trying to vindicate yourself.

Blessed are those who wait on the Lord to right things for them instead of trying to make it happen in the flesh!

3 You have tested my heart; You have visited me in the night; You have tried me and have found nothing; I have purposed that my mouth shall not transgress.

Things happen in the night. Things happen when all is quiet in the dark hours of the night.

David wrestled this through in the night. He says to the LORD, "You have tested my heart; You have visited me in the night". Only God can really test the heart because only He ultimately knows the heart.

Slide # 3

Jeremiah 17:10 (NKJV)

10 I, the LORD, search the heart, I test the mind, Even to give every man according to his ways, According to the fruit of his doings.

When a person, honest to God, opens themselves up to the testing of God, we can trust that God will reveal whatever we need to see.

Have you ever gone through something traumatic, and knowing we all have the flesh, diligently sought God to see if there was something wrong in your own heart. I have been there. And I have come to the conclusion that if we honestly do this God is faithful to show us what we need to see.

God tested David's heart in a nighttime visitation and David's conscience came through clear and clean. David is not speaking generally, as if he never had any sin, but he is speaking in reference to the specific situation he is now in regarding the specific people who are out to harm him. In this situation his conscience was clear. He had done nothing wrong to bring this situation about.

Sometimes personal difficulties are the result of personal sin, but not always. Take Job for example.

Slide # 4

1 Peter 1:6–7 (NKJV)

6 In this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while, **if need be**, you have been grieved by various trials,

7 that the genuineness of your faith, being much more precious than gold that perishes, though it is tested by fire, may be found to praise, honor, and glory at the revelation of Jesus Christ,

1 Peter 4:19 (NKJV)

19 Therefore let those who **suffer according to the will of God** commit their souls to Him in doing good, as to a faithful Creator.

As in the case of Job we don't always know the WHY of what is happening. But this is where trust comes in. And the great issue – is what are we going to do about it?

Wisdom takes it to God in prayer as David did.

4 Concerning the works of men, By the word of Your lips, I have kept away from the paths of the destroyer.

Note, this verse indicates the basis of the testing – namely the Word of God. It is by this we test everything including our own hearts. David had not followed the destructive paths of men as were indicative of those pursuing

him. He had not become like them, but rather he followed the principles of God's Word. But then he has a prayer...

5 Uphold my steps in Your paths, That my footsteps may not slip.

As David is walking in God's way he asks that God uphold him in this that he not slip and fall. Thus, David recognizes his dependence upon God.

"What! Slip in God's ways? Yes, the road is good, but our feet are evil, and therefore slip, even on the King's highway." (Spurgeon)

6 I have called upon You, for You will hear me, O God; Incline Your ear to me, and hear my speech.

David is confident that God will answer his prayer for HELP and yet he continues to pray for God to respond.

7 Show Your marvelous lovingkindness by Your right hand, O You who save those who trust in You From those who rise up against them.

David here appeals to God's "lovingkindness". Lovingkindness is the rich Hebrew word "hesed". It refers to God's faithfulness – God's covenant faithfulness. It is sometimes translated "steadfast love". David qualifies it as being marvelous – God's "marvelous lovingkindness".

David is asking for God to demonstrate His loving faithfulness by His right hand which is to say in a powerful way.

And he specifically asks that God "save those who trust in You from those who rise up against them." David is asking for divine intervention that delivers him and thus demonstrates His marvelous faithfulness.

TRUST in the OT is often translated as "take refuge in". To trust in God is to take refuge in Him. He is the believers SAFE PLACE.

8 Keep me as the apple of Your eye; Hide me under the shadow of Your wings,

David in this verse uses two figures to depict PROTECTION. The apple of the eye refers to the pupil. People naturally protect their eye from harm.

The “apple” (lit., “gate or opening”) probably referring to the pupil of the eye, that part of the eye most easily injured, the most demanding of protection. – ***The Bible Knowledge Commentary***

David asks God to protect him intensely like one protects their eye from harm. This figure was first applied to Israel in relation to God protecting them as they came out of Egypt.

Slide # 5

Deuteronomy 32:10 (NKJV)

10 “He found him in a desert land And in the wasteland, a howling wilderness; He encircled him, He instructed him, **He kept him as the apple of His eye.**

This analogy is also used in Zechariah in reference to the Lord’s Second Coming.

Slide # 6

Zechariah 2:8 (NKJV)

8 For thus says the LORD of hosts: “He sent Me after glory, to the nations which plunder you; **for he who touches you touches the apple of His eye.**

The idea here in Zech. 2:8 is that God is sending Messiah to bring glory to Himself by plundering the nations who have plundered Israel. The world should really pay attention to the last part of the verse, “***for he who touches you touches the apple of His eye.***”

God is very SENSITIVE and PROTECTIVE when it comes to Israel. To try and harm them is like trying to poke God in the eye. That is going to get a response from the Almighty that is not going to be good for the instigator.

David appeals to God for this kind of intense protection.

And then using another figure he asks God to hide him under the shadow of His wings. This figure also goes back to Deut. 32.

Slide # 7

Deuteronomy 32:11 (NKJV)

11 As an eagle stirs up its nest, Hovers over its young, Spreading out its wings, taking them up, Carrying them on its wings,

This too is a picture of protection. A mother bird naturally shields her chicks from predators or from any harm. This figure of speech is used repeatedly in the Psalms (Ps. 36:7; 57:1; 63:7) and was also used by Jesus in Matthew 23:37.

These two figures “apple of Your eye” and “under Your wings” are powerful pictures of God’s care for His people. David appeals to God for this special care in the context of great oppression and danger. Specifically...

9 From the wicked who oppress me, From my deadly enemies who surround me.

These enemies of David were not nice people. They are described as wicked and deadly. They obviously wanted to KILL David and they had him surrounded. And David in effect is sing, “Where could I go but to the Lord?”

One of the commentators spoke of a certain Bible teacher who had the custom of praying a certain prayer when he was under attack: “Lord, your property is in danger.” It is good to think and pray personally. David did that. He spelled out exactly how he felt to the Lord.

10 They have closed up their fat hearts; With their mouths they speak proudly.

“Closed up their fat heart” is thought to be an idiom for insensitivity. They had a HARD heart and spoke arrogantly.

11 They have now surrounded us in our steps; They have set their eyes, crouching down to the earth,

We don’t know exactly the occasion David is referring to but twice he mentions they have him surrounded as seen in verse 9 and now again in verse 11.

Slide # 8

This psalm has no firm connection to any particular recorded event in David’s life, but it is not hard to see it belonging to the long period when Saul hunted David. During that time David refused to strike out

against Saul when he had the opportunity, because he knew that *God* must strike against Saul, and not David himself.

– **David Guzik**

Whatever the occasion they had David and his men surrounded and now were ready to pounce...

12 As a lion is eager to tear his prey, And like a young lion lurking in secret places.

David sees his enemy like a wild dangerous beast who is just waiting to destroy its prey. No wonder he title this Psalm "A Prayer of David". This was a time of intense pressure. And so David prayed...

13 Arise, O LORD, Confront him, cast him down; Deliver my life from the wicked with Your sword,

David appeals to the LORD to arise to action and confront the enemy, cast him down and deliver David's life. And He is asking God to be very proactive in an aggressive way by delivering Him with His sword.

God is here pictured as the Divine Warrior who is going to battle for His child.

14 With Your hand from men, O LORD, From men of the world who have their portion in this life, And whose belly You fill with Your hidden treasure. They are satisfied with children And leave the rest of their possessions for their babes.

David describes his enemies as those who live for this world and when they die they leave it all behind.

What an apt description of the lost: Their portion is in this life. They live for now. This is everything to them. And for a time it really seems to go well with them as they amass all kinds of treasure. Their families do well. But then suddenly they leave it all behind to their babes. They held what this world has to offer – but not for long.

David asks to be delivered from the likes of these men.

In contrast to the worldview of the wicked who live for now and brutalize God's people is the settled confidence that David has in the Lord.

David has poured out his heart to God and he has come to rest in verse 15.

15 As for me, I will see Your face in righteousness; I shall be satisfied when I awake in Your likeness.

David is thinking about death. In verse 14 he points out that the wicked have their portion in this life. In contrast, in verse 15 he points out that his portion is with the Lord. David had a hope beyond this life.

Most all conservative commentators agree that in this verse David is talking about eternity. When David says, “I will see Your face in righteousness” the idea is that he would have a righteousness that would enable him to see God.

We know that ultimately this is imputed righteousness on the basis of Christ’s sacrifice for us when we put our faith in Christ. David was a man of faith and therefore was justified by faith. What David as a man of trust/faith envisioned was being with God in intimate fellowship.

David says, “I shall be satisfied when I awake in Your likeness.” Ultimate satisfaction is not found in this life. We were made for God and satisfaction is found only in God. And perfect satisfaction will be when we see God face to face. There is fullness of joy in His presence (Ps. 16:11).

Slide # 9

Thou hast
made us for Thyself,
O Lord, and our hearts
are restless until
they find their
rest in
Thee.

-St. Augustine

Most believe that the language here of “Awake” is a metaphor depicting the resurrection of the human body. As such this is a key text in the OT on the hope of immortality beyond this life.

The OT does not give much detail about life after death or the truth of the resurrection, but it is definitely represented there. Job is the oldest book in the Bible and it certainly represented there.

Slide # 10**Job 19:25–27 (NKJV)**

25 For I know that my Redeemer lives, And He shall stand at last on the earth;

26 And after my skin is destroyed, this I know, That in my flesh I shall see God,

27 Whom I shall see for myself, And my eyes shall behold, and not another. How my heart yearns within me!

Slide # 11**Daniel 12:2 (NKJV)**

2 And many of those who sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, Some to everlasting life, Some to shame and everlasting contempt.

In the previous chapter the resurrection of the Holy One (that is the Messiah) is depicted in Psalm 16:10. So resurrection truth is most certainly found in the OT but it is not fully developed until we get to the NT.

As I say, “when I awake” is thought to be the idea of arising from the sleep of death. Death in the NT is consistently spoken of as sleeping for the believer.

This will be ultimate satisfaction! We will be completely restored to experience fully what God has intended for humanity – that is satisfying fellowship with Himself.

It has been noted that Ps. 17:15 and 1 John 3:2 are very similar in their resurrection emphasis.

Slide # 12**Psalm 17:15 (NKJV)**

15 As for me, I will see Your face in righteousness; I shall be satisfied when I awake in Your likeness.

1 John 3:2 (NKJV)

2 Beloved, now we are children of God; and it has not yet been revealed what we shall be, but we know that when He is revealed, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is.

David is called a “prophet” in Acts 2:30 as God spoke through him prophetically. As an OT prophet David probably did not fully comprehend the significance of what he wrote (cf. 1 Pet. 1:10-12). But looking at further NT revelation it seems that what David had to say anticipates what Paul would write about 1000 years later.

Slide # 13

Romans 8:29 (NKJV)

29 For whom He foreknew, He also predestined to be **conformed to the image of His Son**, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren.

When we see Jesus we will be like Him. The conforming work of God in us to the image of Jesus will then be complete. Then we will fully know the satisfaction that David wrote about in Psalm 17:15.

Slide # 14

Revelation 22:4 (NKJV)

4 They shall see His face, and His name shall be on their foreheads.

When your eternity with God is settled you can then rest in what He has for you in the here and now. If God is going to take care of us for all eternity, well then, certainly He can take care of these few years on earth which are but a vapor.

“Our lifelong nostalgia, our longing to be reunited with something in the universe from which we now feel cut off, to be on the inside of some door which we have always seen from the outside, is no mere neurotic fancy, but the truest index of our real situation. And to be at last summoned inside would be both glory and honour beyond all our merits and also the healing of that old ache.” (C.S. Lewis, *The Weight of Glory*, 1941)

Indeed, as David wrote: “I shall be satisfied when I awake in Your likeness.”

Glory – the Best is Yet to be!