

PSALMS 17

From the tenor of this Psalm, it seems evident that it was penned at a time when David was close to the Lord and was walking with Him. He was apparently experiencing persecution from others for no discernable cause.

Call for Justice

{17:1} **Hear**, O LORD, my righteous plea; **listen** to my cry. **Give ear** to my prayer-- it does not rise from deceitful lips.

In many of the Psalms, the prayers start out with pleas for God to hear, to listen and to pay attention to the one who is praying. You could well ask, "If no one is listening, then why would we pray?" Or we could turn this idea around and ask "Since God is listening, then why would he ever cease praying?" God listens to the cry of the heart rather than the words of our lips. Unless these are aligned, then we voice prayers in vain. Someone once said, hypocritical piety is double iniquity. Since most people can not stand those who speak deceitfully, how could he ever expect God to listen to a deceitful prayer?

{2} May my vindication come from you; may your eyes see what is right. {3} Though you probe my heart and examine me at night, though you test me, you will find nothing; I have resolved that my mouth will not sin.

In reading this, we can almost picture a courtroom situation in which the Psalmist is pleading his case before God, the Righteous Judge. In this trial, there is no jury. The decision of the Judge is final and David is confident that the judgement will be in his favor.

God judges us and whether we are vindicated or condemned is dependent upon whether we choose God's way or the way of the world. As we are being transformed into the image of Jesus, our mind is renewed and develops a new way of thinking and interpreting events around us. Even our dreams will come into alignment with righteous actions. Dreams of sinful action should be a serious concern for us since these reveal areas where sin may have a foothold in our lives. It is much easier to carry out our resolve to not speak evil than to control our thought life to not entertain evil thoughts. (A related idea from the New Testament is found in 1John 3:21 Beloved, if our heart condemn us not, then have we confidence toward God.)

The confidence that God will not find any fault in us is justified only for those who have been declared righteous (justified) by the perfect work of redemption of God, the Son. "He who knew no sin, became sin for me, that I might become the righteousness of God in Christ." 2 Cor 5:21

{4} As for the deeds of men-- by the word of your lips I have kept myself from the ways of the violent.

Our interpretation of what we see others do must be in the light of God's word. We may be tempted to do some act because "everyone else is doing it;" however, if it is not in agreement with godly principles, then we must choose a different route for our lives. C. H. Spurgeon wrote concerning this verse: *We should soon imitate the example of the worst of men if the grace of God did not use the Word of God as the great preservative from evil. The paths of the destroyer have often tempted us; we have been prompted to become destroyers too, when we have been sorely provoked, and resentment has grown warm; but we have remembered the example of our Lord, who would not call fire from heaven upon his enemies, but meekly prayed, "Father, forgive them."*

Plea for Grace During Trials

{5} My steps have held to your paths; my feet have not slipped.

{6} I call on you, O God, for you will answer me; give ear to me and hear my prayer.

If we talked to someone and he or she never gave us a response, then we would soon stop trying to communicate. David was concerned whether God would “hear” his prayer. The requirement for God to hear our prayers is that we not “regard iniquity in our hearts.” If our steps have, indeed, held to God’s paths and our feet have not slipped, then we will not have anything to be concerned about regarding iniquity in our hearts. By combining these thoughts, we may discover the cause of prayerlessness in the lives of many nominal Christians. If we let worldly thoughts dominate our thinking and fill our hearts with wrong desires, then we discover the cause behind and the reality of the maxim “sin separates us from God.” The other side of this coin is stated by James as “the effectual, fervent prayer of a righteous man avails (is strong to accomplish) much.”

The testimony of David in verse six answers the question, “Why do you pray?” The answer is simply profound or profoundly simple: “God **will** answer our prayers.”

Protection from Foes

{7} Show the wonder of your great love, you who save by your right hand those who take refuge in you from their foes. {8} Keep me as the apple of your eye; hide me in the shadow of your wings {9} from the wicked who assail me, from my mortal enemies who surround me.

David may have had in mind physical foes whom he battled. However, as Paul wrote, the real battles are with powers and principalities in the spiritual realm. The church is the army of God and we are called to arms for the cause of Christ. We cannot win any of these battles in our own strength but must rely upon the Lord for His protection. Having confidence that God loves us as a prized possession (apple of His eye) and holds us close to Himself (shadow of His wings) frees us from fear of those who oppose the Kingdom of God.

{10} They close up their callous hearts, and their mouths speak with arrogance. {11} They have tracked me down, they now surround me, with eyes alert, to throw me to the ground. {12} They are like a lion hungry for prey, like a great lion crouching in cover.

Those who have sold out to the world’s system (godliness humanism) are not willing to consider the claims of God upon their lives. They are totally closed minded on this subject. Their objective is to remove (throw down) any reference to God from our society. They are well organized and dedicated to their cause. Only with help from God, will the church win this war.

Prayer for Wicked to Fail and Be Disappointed

{13} Rise up, O LORD, confront them, bring them down; rescue me from the wicked by your sword. {14} O LORD, by your hand save me from such men, from men of this world whose reward is in this life.

We must look to God for protection, because we are not to just cower and hide from the enemy. We are to engage the enemy in battle so that we “occupy” the land that God has entrusted to us. Just as Israel did not possess the promised land of Canaan without numerous battles, we will not walk in the promises of God to the church without battles. Our weapon in the battles is the “sword of the Lord” which is the word of God. The enemy is clearly defined for us as “men of this world whose reward is in this life.” This is as concise as definition of a “secular humanist” as you will find.

Confidence in God's Salvation

You still the hunger of those you cherish; their sons have plenty, and they store up wealth for their children.

{15} And I - in righteousness I will see your face; when I awake, I will be satisfied with seeing your likeness.

In contrast to those whose focus is on the rewards of materialism, fame and power; those who respond to the love of God will find a quietness in their soul because they have found that which satisfies the deep longing in their inner most being. In seeking first the Kingdom of God, the material things in life will take care of themselves since all that God provides in this area is not squandered in a mindless pursuit to have more and more of thing that are not needed and certainly will not bring true happiness. Instead of wanting more of the things of this world, the child of God wants more of the things of God and looks forward to that day when we can see the face of God. In the meantime, every child of God should be using every circumstance to let God transform him into the very image of His Son Jesus. Our desire can find some fulfillment in this life if we see the likeness of God in our own lives as we are being transformed daily into His very image.