

# A Prayer for Protection

*Psalms Series*

By Don Green

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## **Truth Community Church**

4183 Mt. Carmel Tobasco Road

Cincinnati, OH 45255

**Website:** [truthcommunitychurch.org](http://truthcommunitychurch.org)

David gives us a pattern for prayer when we are facing oppression or injustice at the hands of men. If we know something of the experience of violence or wicked oppression in those that have wronged us in life, Psalm 17 kind of leaps off the page with an appeal to God to take note of our case and to be kind and merciful to us. As we've been teaching through these Psalms sequentially, starting at Psalm 1 and sometime in the next 3 or 4 years, I trust we'll finish Psalm 150 having gone through all of the Psalms verse-by-verse, my design here in approaching the Psalms is to treat each Psalm as a single message. There is a unit of thought, there is a particular message that each Psalm is designed to convey and I want to use the Psalms as a unit of thought and not try to break them up over multiple weeks which would take forever to get through and also would cause us to lose the big picture as we go through the Psalms and so that's why we're approaching them in the way that we are. Next week or the next time that we're together, Psalm 18 will have 50 verses. That will be a challenge. Psalm 119, looking down the road, has 176 verses. I'm not quite sure how all of that's going to work out given the way that I try to preach but we'll figure that out as we go along.

Tonight we have the joy of looking at Psalm 17 and what David does here as he's praying for protection, there are certain ways that he is appealing to God, the ways that he is thinking about God that are very evident and we want to bring those to the surface and focus on those. David is going to show us three ways to appeal to God when we are under attack from wicked men so that we can properly ask for God's help in the midst of our conflict. This sounds so basic that I almost hesitate to say it but the way that we think about God is going to effect the way that we pray to God and if you know God and you understand God, then you are able better to pray and better to appeal to him just as you could go to a family member and more readily and comfortably engage with them in a spirit of love and trust than if you were to walk up to a stranger and try to speak to them. The Psalms teach us to know God. The Psalms teach us not only to worship God, they do that, but they are also teaching us about God and how we should interact with him and it's very common, of course, for men of all stripes to pray when troubles assault them but the question is: do you know the God that you're praying to? Are you praying knowledgeablely? Do you understand him? Is there even a reason for God to hear you and respond to you?

Well, as we look at Psalm 17, we see these three different aspects of the way that David appeals to God and it teaches us about God. It teaches us how to trust him. How to talk with him. And it shows us the realms of God's character in which we are able to go and rest in him if we are indeed Christians who have had our sins forgiven and we are reconciled to him. So let's dive in and take a look at it. David here, Psalm 17, there is a title to it called "A Prayer of David," and that's a simple designation. There is not much explanation. Again, we don't know exactly what the occasion is of this Psalm but as you read through it, you see that David is feeling pressure from men, that he feels under attack and that there are men out to harm him and he feels in his humanness weakness in the face of these attackers and so he appeals to God to be the one to protect him, help him and ultimately to deliver him. As you go through the Psalm, you realize that he's speaking to God in different capacities and that's what we're going to see, these three capacities of the way in which he addresses God and calls upon him for help in his trouble.

Let's look at the first one which we're going to title this point, I should say, point 1. The call to the seeing Judge. The call to the seeing Judge. David is appealing to God in these opening five verses as a Judge who deals with men righteously. He is appealing to God as the one who is an arbiter between right and wrong, between men who follow him and men who sin against him and David says, "God, in your capacity as Judge, look upon my situation and come to my help." He is assuming that God knows about the situation. He is assuming that God sees and understands both David's integrity and the nature of the men that are opposing him and on that basis, he calls upon God and appeals to God for a righteous judgment on his behalf.

Look at the first two verses of Psalm 17 as we open up here and dive into the text. David, praying urgently says, "Hear a just cause, O LORD," using the name Yahweh, that name that appeals to God in his covenant keeping, promise keeping role as the Lord over his people.

1 Hear a just cause, O LORD, give heed to my cry; Give ear to my prayer,  
which is not from deceitful lips. 2 Let my judgment come forth from Your  
presence; Let Your eyes look with equity.

So he's appealing to God as a Judge. "Hear a just cause. Let my judgment come forth from your presence." He's saying, "God, there is a dispute going on here, as it were. There is a dispute between me and those that are tormenting me and I ask you to step into this situation in your role as a Judge and to judge fairly." Why does David pray that way? Why does he appeal to the Judge that way? It's because he is confident that he is in the right and that the Lord will deal with him and if the Lord acts as a Judge, that means that the situation will come out favorably to David. Notice in verse 1, that three times he makes an urgent appeal and repeats it in different ways. He says, "Hear me. Hear a just cause. Give heed to my cry." Thirdly, "Give ear to my prayer." It's as though he's knocking on the door of heaven and saying, "God, open up. The court needs to be opened. The court needs to be in session to hear what I have to say here, to hear my cry, to hear my prayer and, God, I am coming before you in honesty and so I ask you to deal with this in an equitable manner, in a fair and just way."

Now, these words that's I'm about to use are not expressed in what David says directly. The words are not used but understand what David is doing here. There is a deep knowledge of God that is presupposed in what he is saying here in these opening two verses. He is appealing to the omniscience of God and the righteousness of God. The omniscience of God meaning that God knows everything, including the inner desires and the inner thoughts of the human heart. That's how God would be able to judge this situation because he knows about it. He's not a remote deity that is spinning off in orbit someplace unconcerned about the affairs of men. David says, "God, I know that you know about this. I know that you are actively engaged in your creation. I know that you care about me and so, God, I am appealing to you to take notice and to act on my behalf because I have a cause here that is so far unaddressed."

In addition to that, appealing to God in his omniscience, kind of like Peter does at the end of the Gospel of John where he says, "Lord, you know all things. You know that I love you." He's appealing to an attribute of God saying, "I know that you are like this and because you are like this, I know that you know the situation and therefore I appeal to you to deal with me favorably because I rest in what I understand about your attributes, about your character, about your nature." He's appealing to the omniscience of God. Along with that, beloved, what I want you to see is that he is obviously appealing to the righteousness of God. He believes deeply and he understands and knows implicitly that God is a righteous, just God who deals with people who are living righteously in one way and that he judges the wicked.

I know that there are many of you that are visiting either here in the room or perhaps online that haven't necessarily been with us for all of our study of the Psalms and so I invite you to turn back to Psalm 1:6. Those of you that have been with us know exactly what this verse says because I appeal to it so many times, but in many ways for those of you that are new to our exposition of the Psalms, in many ways, the entire 150 Psalms, in many ways simply exposit on Psalm 1:6, the opening Psalm, which says and concludes that "The LORD knows the way of the righteous, But the way of the wicked will perish." David is appealing to this knowledge that the Lord knows his way and that he knows the way of the wicked and because God is righteous, the way of the righteous men will ultimately be blessed and the way of the wicked will be perished. It presupposes the fact that God is a God who judges and the fact that he blesses the righteous shows that he blesses them in righteousness according to his own holy character. That which is contrary to his law ultimately is doomed to failure and judgment and David knowing this, appeals to God to deal with him accordingly. He calls upon the knowledge of God and the justice of God to support his cause.

Now watch this: in the midst of this, David is aware of the fact that if God knows the hearts of everyone, he knows his own heart as well and David says at the end of verse 1, he says, "My prayer does not come from deceitful lips." He's mindful that he has searched his own heart here and so he's urgently praying here and his assumption is, his knowledge is, his confidence and his trust is this: that the righteousness of God will motivate God to act on his behalf. He says, "God, because you are this way, I am

confident that you will respond to my prayer in acting on my behalf. That you will not be silent and indifferent in the face of injustice and my cause before you, Lord, is just," and so he urgently appeals to Yahweh, the God of the covenant, who has made great promises and has sworn to keep them. "God, you are righteous. God, you know. God, you are a promise keeping God to your people therefore I have every ground to appeal to you with confidence that you will honor my prayer and bless me in the end." He's calling to the Judge who sees. The God who knows.

In light of this, the next three verses are quite bold in what they say. David prays in a way that might seem inappropriate until you understand exactly what he's saying. So let's look at the next three verses, verses 3 through 5 here. He hasn't gotten to his exact request yet. He's just invoking God. He's calling to God's attention and now he says in verse 3,

3 You have tried my heart; You have visited me by night; You have tested me and You find nothing; I have purposed that my mouth will not transgress. 4 As for the deeds of men, by the word of Your lips I have kept from the paths of the violent. 5 My steps have held fast to Your paths. My feet have not slipped.

David here is making a remarkable proclamation in the presence of God that he is praying to God with integrity. He has searched his heart and he says, "Lord, I'm not praying in a deceitful way. I'm praying in accordance with your will. My life shows the marks of a man who has separated himself from the ways of the wicked. I have pursued the word of your lips. My steps have held fast to your path." He is saying, "I am praying to you out of integrity and therefore I should have influence before your throne as I speak." It's a remarkable prayer. It's a bold prayer as he makes this petition before the Lord.

Now, is that a right way to pray? I mean, we don't really think about praying with that kind of bold declaration of our own righteousness. Well, understand what David is saying here. David is not suggesting that he is sinless when he prays this way. That's not the point of his petition. Rather, he is stating to God that he is blameless in the situation that he is bringing before him and that he has a clear conscience as he prays. There is integrity in his heart. There is a blamelessness in his words. There is a blamelessness in his conduct. Again, he is appealing to the omniscience of God and says, "God, you know this to be true therefore you have reason to hear my prayer. You have no cause to rebuke me as I pray to you because my heart, my words, my conduct are blameless before you."

Now, let's think about this for a minute. That prayer sounds pretty bold, doesn't it? But understand that in truth, it simply reflects that David has examined his life before he has prayed. David, knowing that he's going to an omniscient Judge, has not approached prayer in a light-hearted or a flippant or casual manner. Before he articulated this prayer, he had examined himself to see whether he was praying with integrity or not. It would be a foolish mistake for a man to go into the presence of God with a heart full of hypocrisy and sin and indifference to the law of God and say, "I am praying before you with integrity." The very holiness of God, the omniscience of God should act as a brake and a

throttle for men to just burst into his presence without any sense of consideration of whether God has a reason to listen to them or not. So David has examined himself.

I remember some time ago in a period of pouring my heart out before the Lord in prayer about someone that's not here and has nothing to do with our church and so it's not related to anything pertaining to Truth Community Church but someone where at the time, there was a bit of a ruptured relationship and I just remember pouring out my heart and saying, "Lord, you know what I said. You know what I did in this situation. You know how I have dealt with this person and you know how they've responded. Lord, I can't do anything to achieve the reconciliation that I would desire and so I just ask you, I appeal to you, Lord. Lord, you know what this situation has been over time. You know the course of the relationship and, Lord, I just commit my cause to you." You just appeal to the knowledge of God in a situation that you can't do anything about. I'm confident that many of you know something about having those kinds of desires in your heart and that sense of having nowhere else to go with your appeal and so you just pour it out and you just rest in and cast yourself upon the knowledge and the care of God and you can leave it there because God is a Judge who sees. God is a God who knows. You know, when we pray that way, we're not saying that we're sinless, that we're perfect, that we're utterly sanctified. We're not saying any of that and David isn't saying any of that here in Psalm 17 either. He's just pouring his heart out and saying, "Lord, I have this situation on my mind. I've examined my heart and I pour it out and I just appeal to you. Lord, you know the truth in this situation. Deal with me according to righteousness and according to what you know to be true."

So let's take a moment to pause here and just ask this question from a pastoral perspective as you consider and hear this Psalm and read its words, the fact that David has engaged in self-examination should be an encouragement to you, a challenge to you, a call to you, to engage in self-examination yourself. When we follow in the footsteps of David who had examined himself before he prayed to the Lord, then it's only fitting for us to ask the question: have I examined my heart? Have you examined your heart and considered your ways before the Lord? Are you able to pray to God with that kind of integrity because you have dealt with your sin? You have confessed your sin? You have repented of sin? Ultimately in a most fundamental way, we cannot approach God at all until we have decisively repented from sin and turned to the Lord Jesus Christ and entrusted ourselves to his righteousness and his shed blood for the forgiveness of our sins that we could be reconciled to God. Have you done that? Do you know what that means to turn to God in that way? In a fundamental way turning your back on a life of sin so that you would be reconciled to God and the Lord Jesus Christ? For those of us as Christians praying and we know what it means to be forgiven. We understand what it means to be a Christian. Well, the self-examination doesn't stop there. The question is: is your life manifesting the kind of integrity that God's word calls you to? Or do you have lies residing in your heart? Is there untruthfulness in your conduct with men or before God? Is there immorality in your life? Is there bitterness that you care clinging to and hiding in your heart that is unfit of the holiness of God?

You see, we have to examine ourselves before we can pray in this way to a holy God. Even if you're a Christian, you have no right to go into the presence of God and to ask for his help and to protest your case before him if you're harboring those kinds of sins in your heart. We have to deal with ourselves. We have to examine ourselves. We have to repent and confess our sins because Scripture teaches us, indeed it warns us, that we should not expect God's blessing, we should not expect him to respond favorably to our prayers if we approach him with sinful lives including the inner things of your heart.

Turn back to Psalm 15 which we studied months ago because we took a break from the exposition of the Psalms. But in Psalm 15, David asked a similar question, dealt with this theme. There are a lot of repetitious themes in the Psalms. As you go through different issues in life, the same fundamental themes seem to come back. David says, "O LORD, who may abide in Your tent?" Psalm 15:1. "O LORD, who may abide in Your tent? Who may dwell on Your holy hill?" Lord, who may have fellowship with you? Who can rest and abide in your presence? Which is no different than saying, "Lord, who can approach you and find favor in your sight?" And David answers his own question. He says, "He who walks with integrity, and works righteousness, And speaks truth in his heart."

So we read these things and we say, "Wow, you know, this is serious. This provokes self-examination. This causes me to want to examine my life and forsake that which is displeasing to the Lord because," and here's the way that you should be thinking if you're a Christian. This is what you should be thinking if you're not a Christian. In other words, everyone should think this way. There should be nothing that is more precious to you than having access to God and being right with him and living with integrity before him. Nothing is more important than that and only a Christian is reconciled to God and as Christians we must be mindful of the fact that God regards the way that we walk in terms as he considers how he will respond to our prayers. Scripture lays it out before us. There is integrity. There is righteousness. There is truth that must mark the one who walks with God.

That gives us another reason that I'm glad our church is called Truth Community Church. Psalm 15:2, "He speaks truth in his heart." Every time we walk into this building, it should be a reminder to us that there must be truth in our hearts and that we can't tolerate hypocrisy or lies or deceit in the way that we think or the way that we interact with men and certainly in the way that we walk before a holy omniscient God.

Look over at Psalm 66:18 as well. The Psalmist says in Psalm 66:18, "If I regard wickedness in my heart, The Lord will not hear." If there is a treasuring of sin, if there is a clinging to grudges and bitterness, Psalms teach us and elsewhere the Scriptures teach us, don't expect God to respond favorably to you. You must come to him with clean hands or you cannot come at all. And if that sounds too harsh in the New Testament era, let me remind you of what Jesus said in Matthew 6 as he taught his disciples to pray. He said, "Our Father who is in heaven, Hallowed be Your name. Your kingdom come. Your will be done, As in heaven so also upon earth. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our debts," what? "As we also have forgiven our debtors." There is a recognition even in the Lord's Prayer that he teaches his disciples to pray that we treat

God and we approach God with a humility and with a sense of integrity that we don't ask God to give us which we are consciously withholding from men. On what basis would you ask God to forgive your sins if you are unwilling to forgive those fellow humans that have sinned against you? Your sins against God are far greater than what anyone has ever done to you and I realize that some of you have been greatly sinned against in your life. That some of the things that have happened to you are utterly unconscionable, what men have done to you. Yet you have to look beyond that and realize that your own lives and your own sin are an offense or a violation or a crime against the law of an eternal holy God who will hold you accountable.

Only when we view things in that perspective do we humble ourselves enough to say, "Lord, I want your forgiveness and I'm willing to let go of the grudges against others. I'm not going to hold the grudge and the bitterness in my heart, Lord, because what's more important to me," getting back to this theme, we're circling back around, "what's more important to me than anything, rather than being angry at someone who sinned against me, Lord, the most important thing is that I would be reconciled to you and that I would be secure in your presence and know that I am living in the light and under the assurance of your blessing. And when your word tells me don't regard wickedness in my heart and come to me in prayer, when your word say I can ask forgiveness only to the extent that I'm willing to forgive then, Lord, there's nothing that I want to hold against men because the most important thing for me is to be right before my Creator and to know that I can pray and expect you to respond favorably to me."

David had done that, as we go back to Psalm 17. David says, "You've tried my heart." What he's describing here in Psalm 17:3 is he's just giving a poetic reference to the omniscience of God that God knows his inner man. He says, "God, you've tried my heart. You've visited me by night. You've tested me and you find nothing." He says, "God, you know." Well, that means that David has examined his heart first and hasn't prayed this in a flippant way and so here in the opening five verses of Psalm 17, as David is preparing to ask God for deliverance, he calls upon a knowing God to judge his situation and he's confident that God will view him favorably and act on his behalf because he's praying with integrity and he's appealing to a Judge who is righteous and knowing and David says, "I know the Judge and I know my case and the verdict will be favorable to me when it's all said and done." Wow. David was a man of God and he called upon a seeing Judge.

But it goes further than that. David is not only confident in God's righteousness, that's fortress for our souls, the righteousness of God. That's an anchor. That's a rock of refuge. That's a place that you can go for protection but there is another aspect to the unified character of God to which David appeals here in Psalm 17 that reinforces his confidence as he prays that also motivates God to act on his behalf. You appeal on the basis of righteousness to the Judge and you expect the Judge to respond favorably but there is another aspect to what David is saying here in Psalm 17 and he's making a call to a sympathetic Savior. A sympathetic Savior, not just a seeing Judge but he's calling upon God as a sympathetic Savior. What's striking about Psalm 17 or one of the things that is striking about Psalm 17 is that it is saturated in a confident trust in the benevolence of

God, the goodness of God, the faithfulness of God. He is utterly assured of the character of God toward him.

Look at Psalm 17, beginning in verse 6 as we move into this second point: the call to the sympathetic Savior. David says,

6 I have called upon You, for You will answer me, O God; Incline Your ear to me, hear my speech. 7 Wondrously show Your lovingkindness, O Savior of those who take refuge at Your right hand.

He appeals to what the English translation here has called the lovingkindness of God. It's a word that refers to God's loyal love to his own. His faithful commitment to care for those that he has brought into covenant with himself. And he says, "I have called upon you in that capacity, O God. Incline your ear to me and hear my speech." Here he's appealing to God not as the Judge but as his Savior. As the one who will deliver him, saving him and delivering him from the midst of this situation and from those that are attacking him and he says, "God, I want you to wondrously display your loyalty to me in this matter about which I am addressing you."

Now, let's remember a little bit of context that David here is praying somewhere about 1,000 years before the time of Christ. 400 years prior to that time, God had wondrously and miraculously delivered his people from slavery in Egypt through a series of ten miraculous signs dumped at the feet of Pharaoh. Later splitting the Red Sea. Bringing his people through on dry land and then having the waters come back and cover the greatest army the world at that time and burying them in the depths of the water. The history of God's people, the history of the nation, was anchored in this mighty, wondrous deliverance of a saving God on their behalf who acted miraculously to save them, who acted miraculously to keep them through 40 years of wilderness wandering and then delivered them into the land with further great signs and wonders. We studied all of that, surveyed it anyway in months gone by here on Tuesday nights.

So when David is praying this way in verse 7, look at it with me again, "Wondrously show Your lovingkindness, O Savior of those who take refuge at Your right hand From those who rise up against them." I left out that when I read it earlier, that last clause of verse 7. David has in mind the fact that he belongs to a people, he belongs to a nation that God's power as expressed by the metaphor of his right hand, God in his power had delivered his people time and time and time again throughout their history up to that point. And David calls upon him and says, "You have a wondrous ability to deliver your people in the midst of their hardship and their slavery and from those who hate them and I'm calling upon you to do that. God, I know that you love your people and I belong to your people and therefore I appeal to you in your love to exercise your power on my behalf." There is this great knowledge of God that is built into this manner of praying.

Listen, David is no self-righteous boaster here in Psalm 17. He is speaking to his Judge and he's speaking to the one who loves him. It's an incredible bringing together of the severity and the mercy of God. Of the holiness and the mercy of God, the grace of God



are meeting together here in this Psalm and David, because he's been reconciled to God through faith, knows that this God will respond to him and deal with him favorably. He is sure. He is confident that God will display his loyal love to him and bring help to him in this situation.

Do you know God like that? Is God simply someone out there? I mean, God forbid that anyone in this room or under the sound of my voice would think of God in such casual, flippant terms as the "Big Man upstairs." Someone say that, they're just saying, "I'm not a Christian and I don't know anything about God even though I'm referring to somebody remote from me." But Christian, speaking to you hear tonight, has your walk with God led you into that kind of intimacy with him where you're so certain of his righteousness and you're so certain of his love that you say, "I know that he will deal well with me"? You see, we need to stop thinking about God as someone who is a little bit remote from us as Christians. Who is perhaps withholding his kindness until he sees how it plays out in our lives. That's not the right way to think about God. Listen, if the Lord Jesus Christ, as you say you believe, if he truly left heaven and came to earth to live a righteous life and to offer that life as a sacrifice to God on your behalf that your sins might be washed away, if he loves us so much that he did that on our behalf that he might gather us up and bring us to heaven with him one day and enjoy life in the midst of his blessing here on earth in between, well listen, doesn't that say volumes about his righteous and good and loving intentions towards you? If you know these things to be true and if you've been reconciled to God that way, then where you need to grow and what you need to be committed to and what you need to realize your blessing is, is that you can know that this God who saved you in the person of the Lord Jesus Christ is favorably disposed towards you and intends nothing but your blessing in your life. And to know God and to know this Lord Jesus Christ is to walk in an ever increasing settled assurance that says, "Do you know what? God is going to bless me in this life and far more than I can calculate in the life to come." It means that you have an assurance that you trust God so implicitly that your mind would not accuse him. Your mind would not suspect of him that one day he would pull the rug out from you as if he was going to play a dirty trick on you like a school age kid playing tricks on people out of the wickedness of their hearts.

God's not like that. You understand that, don't you? He is a good, faithful, righteous God who gives loyal love to his people. If he was a God of loyal love to the nation of Israel in all of their failures and sin and rebellion, how much more those that he purchased at the price of his own blood will he be faithful and loyal and bless them in the end? You see, it's not presumption for us as Christians to say, "God will bless us." It is only the righteous proper response for us to say, "Of course God will bless me in the end. Of course he's being good to me even now. I couldn't suspect of any kind of unfaithful dealings from the one who yielded up his hands to the nails that my soul might be reconciled to the Creator against whom I sinned." Out. Out. Out. Out. Out with the suspicions against God. Out with the questionings about his goodness and his intentions towards you. Of course his intentions are good. Of course his intentions are loving. Didn't the cross settle that question for all time for those of us who know him?

So it is righteous for us to go before God with an expectation that he will bless us. Jesus opened the Sermon on the Mount in Matthew 5. I keep telling you, I'm going to get there one day in the pulpit of Truth Community. It will be a great day when we do. But Jesus said repeatedly, "Blessed are those who are poor in spirit. Blessed are those who mourn. Blessed are the gentle. Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness." What is he saying except that God gives favor to the people who manifest those repentant characteristics. We are the privileged recipients of divine favor and there should be no room in your heart to have any suspicions towards the goodness of God. That's stating it negatively, in the positive way, that means that when we come to God, we come with the sense that we can pray to him, "God, show me your loyal love. Display your favor to me over the course of this situation, over the course of my life. Father, I ask not only for myself but for those that I know and love that out of the bounty of your goodness you would bless them materially, relationally, spiritually. God, that all of your abundant favor would be upon your people. And God, I'm confident," you should be praying and saying in your own heart even as I'm saying these words, "God, I'm confident that you're more intent on blessing me than I am intent on receiving it because your character is perfect and your love toward your people is loyal and faithful, without fail and without exception. And to the extent that my circumstances seem to contradict that, Lord, it's just because I don't see the whole picture. I will never bring an accusation against your loyal love."

Now, David here as we go through Psalm 17, uses two metaphors to express the deliverance that he speaks or the way better stated, the way that he is resting in the care of God. Psalm 17:8, he says,

8 Keep me as the apple of the eye; Hide me in the shadow of Your wings.

What he's saying here is, "Lord, I'm confident that you view me as a tender object of your affections." When he says, "Keep me as the apple of the eye," it's a reference to the pupil of the eye, perhaps the most sensitive part of the human body and you know this by experience. If you've ever been poked in the eye, if you've ever gotten a piece of grit in your eye, you know how irritating and sensitive that is and the human body is built to protect that eyeball and you reflexively, if somebody starts to poke at your eye, you just flinch back because you're protecting that pupil from the sensitivity. Your body just knows to do that.

David here is saying, "God, protect me like a man protects the pupil of his own eye. God, protect me like a mother bird protects her young under her wings." We get the sense of this meaning from another Old Testament passage. Turn back to Deuteronomy 32:10 just so you can see this, another context in which these metaphors are used. Deuteronomy 32:10, actually we'll start in verse 9. Moses is speaking here in Deuteronomy 32:9, "For the LORD'S portion is His people; Jacob is the allotment of His inheritance," so he's invoking God's love for his people here. Verse 10, "He found him," God found Israel, "in a desert land, And in the howling waste of a wilderness; He encircled him, He cared for him," look at this, "He guarded him as the pupil of His eye." Verse 11, "Like an eagle that stirs up its nest, That hovers over its young, He spread His wings and caught them,

He carried them on His pinions." A wonderful picture of the care of God for his own, that God is sensitive to care for his people.

So David appeals to this sympathy in God's character and asks him to show a parental care to his own. That is how confident he is in God's attitude toward him. "God, protect me like a man protects his eyes from intruders," you could say. Well, David goes on now, having expressed his confidence here in his sympathetic Savior. He now proceeds to describe his enemies. They are on the hunt. They are a real threat to him. Look at verse 9, having established this, he is appealing to this sympathetic Savior and now he starts to unfold what it is that he's seeking sympathy for. He says, verse 9, "Keep me,

9 From the wicked who despoil me, My deadly enemies who surround me.

He says, "They are deadly. They are after me." And he goes on and he says, "They are cold and they are harsh and they're out for my destruction." Look at verse 10,

10 They have closed their unfeeling heart, With their mouth they speak proudly. 11 They have now surrounded us in our steps;

Notice the plural there, "us, our steps." He's expanding his prayer to those that are with him as well.

11 They have now surrounded us in our steps; They set their eyes to cast us down to the ground.

He says, "They're like a lion that's on the hunt that's after the prey. The king of the forest after its prey, going to get it. That's the sense in which they're viewing me, Father." Look at verse 12, he personifying his enemies says,

12 He is like a lion that is eager to tear, And as a young lion lurking in hiding places.

He says, "Lord, my enemies are wicked, they're arrogant and they intend my destruction. They want to tear me like a lion would tear a gazelle that it wants to eat. So strong and so wicked and so powerful are their intentions toward me." David is feeling the pressure from his enemies.

Well, let's think about that for a moment. Let's take and apply it at whatever level you want to apply it on. Whether we look at it from a perspective internationally and see the rise of these Islamic terrorists who are gladly in bloodthirsty glee butchering who name the name of Christ. Whether it's the wicked people in our own country that are trying to overturn the nature of morality and we see that they've got influence and they are stronger than us and we're not able to stop them. You can't get at them. They're hiding in the wings and who knows where they formulate their plots. Or whether it's just deeply personal to you in your own life with someone that's out to undermine your position and causing you personal harm and threat. What you should be taking, whatever level you

want to engage this Psalm at tonight, what you should be engaging in your heart and mind from what we've seen so far in Psalm 17 is that it is greatly encouraging for us. It is greatly empowering, ennobling, strengthening, peace inducing in our hearts to know that we have a seeing Judge and a sympathetic Savior in the midst of our earthly battles.

I have no question that God sees what ISIS is doing and that he will one day deal with them and that their success and their wicked bloodthirsty ways prosper only for a short time. Listen, all of world history is a testimony to the fact that these butchers rise for a time in the purpose of God but God turns them over and casts them down in the end. Look at the Assyrians. Look at the Babylonians. Look at the Persians. Look at the Greeks. Look at the Romans. It happens throughout the course of history. We may not see it in our lifetime but the outcome is sure. The purveyors of wickedness in our own nation, they're doomed to fail. Why? Psalm 1:6, "For the LORD knows the way of the righteous, But the way of the wicked will perish." I have no doubt about the outcome, do you? Do you have any doubt that the Lord will deal with this righteously in his time? And when we look for the wicked in the end, their place will be nowhere to be found? They're nothing but a vapor on a meadow that will dissipate in the rising of the sun. S-u-n for the metaphor, S-o-n for the rising of Christ.

So we rest in our righteous Judge, the Judge who sees. We rest in our sympathetic Savior. And we know that he will take care of us. Yet, beloved, having seen all of this in Psalm 17, you know, you could get to the end of verse...and this is what I love about the Psalms. I'm just starting to talk over myself now because I just get so excited about what you see going on in the Psalms and you should share in the excitement as well. You go through these things in the Psalms and you say, "Man, for God to be a seeing Judge, that's wonderful." Then another bigger wave comes in and you say, "Oh, he's a sympathetic Savior to his people? Well, that carries me into a whole other dimension. That's wonderful! Thank God. Oh, let's just close in prayer," you might think.

But David's not done even yet. He goes on in our third point this evening as we start to wrap things up. He makes a call to his satisfying refuge. His satisfying refuge in verses 13 through 15. You'll be amazed at where this goes. If the wicked are strong like a lion, then David needs a powerful protector. Now he frames his request. Now he actually lays his request before the Lord in verse 13. He says, "Arise, O LORD," notice again the word Yahweh there, all capital letters, LORD, Yahweh, the covenant keeping God. "Arise my promise keeping God who has sworn to be faithful to me,"

13 Arise, O LORD, confront him, bring him low; Deliver my soul from the wicked with Your sword,

He's asked for his deliverance now. He says, "Lord, deliver me. You rise and exercise your power and cast him down from the threat that he is presenting against me." And he goes on and he describes the wicked and he contrasts himself with the wicked in the closing two verses here. He says, look at the end of verse 13,

13 Deliver my soul from the wicked with Your sword, 14 From men with Your hand, O LORD,

Then he describes them. He says, "From men of the world." In other words, men whose affections are set on this earthly life alone. Verse 14,

From men of the world, whose portion is in this life, And whose belly You fill with Your treasure; They are satisfied with children, And leave their abundance to their babes.

What is he saying? He's saying, "Lord, these people that I'm praying for your help against, they have a totally earthbound worldly perspective. They receive your gifts. They fill their stomachs with your blessing and they never give you thanks. They take the gift but ignore and reject and sin against the Giver." He says, "They have worldly affections. They are only focused on this world." But David has a different focus that we see in verse 15 and oh how wonderful this verse is. David says, "As for me," he's contrasting himself. He says, "They have this worldly earthbound perspective but I've been praying to you, O Lord, my seeing Judge and my sympathetic Savior, and I'm someone different. I'm not like them. As for me, there is something else about me." Verse 15,

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

What is he saying? He's saying, "Lord, my expectation and my affections are centered on things that transcend this world. They are worldly minded. As for me, Lord, I am not worldly minded. I have a whole different hope that animates my heart." What's he saying? The last time in Psalm 16:10 we saw that David prophesied of the resurrection of Christ. Here in Psalm 17, do you know what he's doing? He's looking forward to his own physical resurrection in the coming kingdom of God. He's looking forward to the time when he himself will see God face-to-face. He says, "That will be my satisfaction. That will be my glory. That's my affection that I want to see your likeness when I awake." You say, "How do you know he's not just going to wake up tomorrow morning? How do you know that that's not what he's talking about? Or when he wakes up out of this trial?" Well, first of all, that would be a very world-centered perspective. That's not much of a contrast to say, "They're worldly minded but when I wake up, everything will be okay here in this life." That doesn't make any sense. That's not much of a contrast for the climax of a great Psalm like this. But other Scriptures help us see what he means when he says, "When I awake." He's referring to awaking after he dies.

Turn to the right in your Bibles to Isaiah 26:19. Isaiah 26:19, a direct prophesy. A direct statement of the resurrection. Isaiah 26:19, "Your dead will live; Their corpses will rise. You who lie in the dust, awake and shout for joy, For your dew is as the dew of the dawn, And the earth will give birth to the departed spirits." He says, "Awake from the dead." That's what David is saying in Psalm 15, "I'm going to awake. After I die, I'm going to awake and I am going to see your likeness." 1 John 3:2 from a New Testament perspective says, "we will be like Him, because we will see Him just as He is." And

David says, "My wicked enemies, world bound as they are, God, rise up and judge them in righteousness and protect me from them. And I want you to know, Lord, that my desires are not simply for an earthly deliverance so my world can go better, no, my desires and my heart are set upon seeing you face-to-face. That's when the ultimate satisfaction of my heart will be realized when I see my God face-to-face." It's an utter declaration that his affections are consumed by the greatness and the glory of his God and when he is with him face-to-face in the resurrection, that's when his full satisfaction will take place. His desires, in other words, are eternal. They are spiritual. When he awakes after death, then he will find his complete fulfillment and satisfaction. Charles Spurgeon said and I quote, "Compared to this deep, ineffable, eternal fullness of delight, the joys of his enemies are as a drop of a bucket to the ocean."

You don't have to answer this out loud but I would just ask you this question which I think I've asked in times gone by: is there a nagging sense in your heart as you go through life that there is just something always that's just dissatisfying about being in this world? There is just this sense that, "You know, I don't belong here. This place can't be my home. The things that the men of the world love and pursue and get wrapped up in, I just find that this does not engage me. There is a gulf that is hard to relate to the things that they care about. They are so bound up in here and now and I just find that that doesn't appeal to me." Do you know anything like that? That's what David is saying here, that his ultimate goal, his ultimate desire, his heart is set upon that which is still yet to come and this seeing Judge and this sympathetic Savior, this satisfying refuge of his soul, that's where the fullness of his affections are lodged. That's the mark of a godly man.

Do you know God like that? Do you want God like that? Christian, let me say it this way: David has walked us through here in this Psalm tonight, through an entire approach to life. We walk in righteousness before God and when difficulties come, we turn to him in believing prayer and set our hope on our eternal reward. I mean, that's a big sweep of it but that's it. We walk in righteousness. When difficulties come, we turn to God and renew our trust in him all looking forward to the ultimate outcome when we are with him face-to-face. That's what David has expressed here. Do you know God like that? Do you want him like that? I do and I believe that most of you do too and because our God is seeing and sympathetic, we can know that he will bless us beyond our wildest expectations in the end.

If you don't know Christ tonight, if all of this sounds foreign to you, it's because you're separated from God. Tonight is your opportunity to come to Christ and ask him to save you and to bring you into his family and to deliver you from this world and from the certain judgment to come and to know that when you come to Christ like that, he will bless you in the end.

Let's bow together in prayer.

*Father, we thank you that you are our protection. You are our satisfaction. You are the God who sees. You are the God who sympathizes. You are the God who is faithful. We look forward to that day when we see you face-to-face. Until you grant us that wonderful,*

*great vision, O God, protect us in the meantime. The enemies are many and they are vicious and they have no regard for righteousness or for the souls of your servants. Father, we are undaunted by that because our God is great and our God is good. Father, for those here tonight perhaps for those who are seeing or hearing in different media, we ask for your grace upon them. This is a difficult life. This is a hard road that we walk sometimes, Father, and sometimes the wickedness that has been done to us is so great and so vast that it is just overwhelming and incalculable. Father, for those that have suffered like that, I pray that this exposure to the love and the grace and the mercy of God would be a balm and a consolation to their heart that would encourage and strengthen them and give them the motivation to renew their trust in you if they are in Christ, Father, to turn to Christ and ask for his mercy if they don't know you. Lord, we thank you that you are still on your throne and ever will be there and we thank you that we will one day gather around and cast our crowns at your glorious feet and bow down and worship and cry out, "Worthy is the Lamb!" In Christ's name we pray. Amen.*