
Life Beyond Death

Psalm 17

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What if all that really was important to you, was only here in this life? What would that mean?

Psalm 17 is a beacon of hope in times of distress, reminding believers of the power of sincere prayer and righteous living. It's a testament to God's protective nature, His justice, and the promise of His eternal presence. When faced with hardship, this Psalm will help us echo David's profound trust in God and aspire, like him, to dwell in God's divine presence.

So how does this Psalm move the soul?

We Plead for God's Vindication (v.1-5)

David once again opens with a prayer, a plea. He appeals to God for vindication.

Our Cause is Just (v.1-2)

- ¹ Hear a just cause, O LORD; attend to my cry!
Give ear to my prayer from lips free of deceit!
² From your presence let my vindication come!
Let your eyes behold the right!

David opens with a fervent prayer, pleading with God to listen to his righteous appeal, emphasizing his honesty and the genuineness of his prayer. He requests God's vindication against his adversaries. He wants God to intervene and publicly show that David is right in who he is, the kingship he holds, and the decisions and actions he takes.

That justice will come through God's presence and His own commitment to His character. This is not vindication because we need it and certainly because we do deserve it. The appeal here is grounded in God. It asks God to set His gaze on what is right.

Our Life is Holy (v.3-5)

- ³ You have tried my heart, you have visited me by night,
you have tested me, and you will find nothing;
I have purposed that my mouth will not transgress.
⁴ With regard to the works of man, by the word of your lips

I have avoided the ways of the violent.
⁵ My steps have held fast to your paths;
my feet have not slipped.

God knows our hearts. He has test us and tried us. This assertion in this stanza is not an empty boast. It is that which flows from our faith going through the fire (James 1). This is quite an affirmation: God has tested and will find nothing. Therefore, He can vindicate us.

We can have confidence in God's move toward us because we have a commitment to God's paths, highlighting his righteous behavior. We appeal to God for help because we have purposed to walk pleasing to Him. God has proven (v.3) through testing what we have purposed (v.3-4) to not do.

Have we ever such a purpose in our own lives? Do we commit to not transgress with the words, works and ways of the wicked and violent? Or are we so little different in the moment of trouble? Can we say that we have not slipped?

How can David say this? Because he believes it and because he wants it. He has distinctly chosen and committed himself to be different than those who have attacked him. He has a clear conscience and therefore has the confidence to ask for God's affirmation.

We Pray for God's Protection (v.6-9)

David continues to call upon God, confident in God's response. He seeks divine protection, using beautiful, striking imagery and thus demonstrates his trust in God as his refuge from his enemies.

Because of His Abundant Love (v.6-7)

⁶ I call upon you, for you will answer me, O God;
incline your ear to me; hear my words.

⁷ Wondrously show your steadfast love,
O Savior of those who seek refuge
from their adversaries at your right hand.

Listen to David's confidence. He calls, God will answer. This is not a presumption. This is relational confidence. God will bend His ear toward the petitioner and hear his asks.

I love the way David tugs at God. "Show how abundant Your love is to, well those you save, those who have sought refuge in You." This is

the source of the confidence in God's hearing the prayers and pleas. God has an overflowing love that has reached down to save, to shield, and to shelter.

David's adversaries are at God's right hand. Interesting, yes? The people on earth who opposed David and questioned his rule and righteousness were serving the agenda of the enemy of God, the accuser of souls.

Does the opportunity, amid opposition, for God to show His abundant love, motivate you to prayers?

Because of His Tender Care (v.8-9)

⁸ Keep me as the apple of your eye;
hide me in the shadow of your wings,
⁹ from the wicked who do me violence,
my deadly enemies who surround me.

When David was in spiritual and physical danger, he appealed to God for God's tender care. These are beautiful phrases and imagery. What do these highlight for us?

The apple of the eye means that God sees us as one He favors. He cares for us deeply. Therefore, we are held in his gaze. There is also an implication of being protected as we protect our eyes. We have strong reflexes to protect our eyes, particularly the center of them.

What a great phrase – God hovers over us with His outstretched wings. He hides us so we are safe. He protects us. This invokes the eagle's wings sheltering her little eaglets. It points to the mighty cherubim who hover around the throne of God. It was quoted by Ruth when she asked Boaz to be her Kinsman-Redeemer.

We need to strength of God to preserve and protect us. But it is the abundant love and tender care of God that moves his heart for us.

We Wait for God's Intervention (v.10-14)

In this stanza, David describes the wicked. They are who are characterized by their cruelty, arrogance, and indifference to God. In response to their actions, David asks God to confront them. David is secure in his belief in divine justice and intervention.

Their Arrogance is Great (v.10-12)

¹⁰ They close their hearts to pity;
with their mouths they speak arrogantly.

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

¹² He is like a lion eager to tear,
as a young lion lurking in ambush.

David was surrounded by enemies domestic and global. David characterizes them in a way that we can understand. People like this roam the streets of lawless countries, states and cities. These are Russian orcs. These are the marauding gangs in Haiti. These are antifa mobs in streets and on campuses. These are M28 gangs and Cartel “soldiers”. We have these kinds of arrogant, violent, lawless criminals in our world even hiding within armies as they did back then.

So, what is needed?

Our Deliverance is Needed (v.13-14)

¹³ Arise, O LORD! Confront him, subdue him!

Deliver my soul from the wicked by your sword,

¹⁴ from men by your hand, O LORD,

from men of the world whose portion is in this life.

You fill their womb with treasure;

they are satisfied with children,

and they leave their abundance to their infants.

But then, we find that this is actually not the kind of adversary David faces! What he described in verses 10-12 is their inner arrogance. But now he shows us that these adversaries are the ordinary, successful people of his own kingdom. Their arrogance comes, not because of violence, but because of wealth, position, and power. Inwardly they are no different than the arrogant, dangerous criminals of the world. The difference? They are more dangerous because they are the “cool kids”. They men of this world. They have all the portions that can be gained in this life. Their wealth is measured partially in the children they have. Then they have accumulated that wealth in order to pass it on to their children. They are satiated with wealth and satisfied with family. You see what he is saying? The arrogance and pride in their hearts

causes them to be totally satisfied with all that can be gained in this world, in this life. Shocking? Should be?

We Hope in Eternal Life (v.15)

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

The people of this world have their idols. God even uses those idols to doom them. They are settled and satisfied with an abundance that they can earn and leave to the children they adore.

But as for me...

We Shall Behold Him

What a sweet, sweet aspiration. What a life-changing assurance. We will see the Lord face-to-face. When we do, we will be complete in righteousness.

David has read Exodus and Job carefully. He has realized what was had and what was lost at the giving of the Law. From face-to-face in the presence of God, eating and drinking and seeing the face of God and not dying (Exodus 24:9-11) - to crouching behind a rock to see the shadow and back parts of God pass by (Exodus 33:23). Job had assurance that he would, after his death, see God.

Here in the shadow lands of the Old Testament, David turns away of the wealth and idols of his adversaries and contemplates seeing the face of God.

We Shall be Satisfied with Him

David concludes by expressing his desire to behold God's face and to be satisfied with His likeness when he awakes. In these lovely phrases, he is, indicating a yearning for spiritual communion and eternal life in God's presence.

What is there to say? Our hope and assurance in life after death is grounded in seeing Christ and being in His likeness. This hope cuts the chains to the idols that so easily are erected in our hearts.

This hope is the result of a kind of faith keeps the Lord who loves us and cares for us on the throne of our lives. David well knew how wealth and children could move from being delightful parts of life to ruling masters over our time, our attention, our energy.

What about you? Can you honestly say, that at any moment, you are more satisfied with God and His promises than all that you have in this life? Do you want to see your children grow up more than you want to wake in God's presence and see Jesus?

Reflect and Respond

For us, this heartfelt plea for God's justice and protection, should reflect our profound trust in God during a time of distress. Written as a prayer, we have the resource that compares the conduct of the wicked with our own pleasing God in our ways and walk. Therefore, we can seek God's vindication, His affirmation of our rightness before Him. Through this Psalm we can express our deep faith in the face of adversity and our earnest longing for God's presence.

This psalm reflects David's profound trust in God during a time of distress, his contrast between the wicked and the righteous, and his longing for God's presence. It also demonstrates the power of sincere prayer and righteous living.

This Psalm takes us to 2 Corinthians 3:16–5:5. Here is the inaugurated and final fulfillment of David's expectation in verse 15 of the Psalm.

¹⁶ But whenever someone turns to the Lord, the veil is taken away. ¹⁷ For the Lord is the Spirit, and wherever the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom. ¹⁸ So all of us who have had that veil removed can see and reflect the glory of the Lord. And the Lord – who is the Spirit – makes us more and more like him as we are changed into his glorious image.

¶ ¹ Therefore, since God in his mercy has given us this new way, we never give up. ² We reject all shameful deeds and underhanded methods. We don't try to trick anyone or distort the word of God. We tell the truth before God, and all who are honest know this.

³ If the Good News we preach is hidden behind a veil, it is hidden only from people who are perishing. ⁴ Satan, who is the god of this world, has blinded the minds of those who don't believe. They are unable to see the glorious light of the Good News. They don't understand this message about the glory of Christ, who is the exact likeness of God.

⁵ You see, we don't go around preaching about ourselves. We preach that Jesus Christ is Lord, and we ourselves are your servants for Jesus' sake. ⁶ For God, who said, "Let there be light in the darkness," has made this

light shine in our hearts so we could know the glory of God that is seen in the face of Jesus Christ.

⁷ We now have this light shining in our hearts, but we ourselves are like fragile clay jars containing this great treasure. This makes it clear that our great power is from God, not from ourselves.

⁸ We are pressed on every side by troubles, but we are not crushed. We are perplexed, but not driven to despair. ⁹ We are hunted down, but never abandoned by God. We get knocked down, but we are not destroyed. ¹⁰ Through suffering, our bodies continue to share in the death of Jesus so that the life of Jesus may also be seen in our bodies.

¹¹ Yes, we live under constant danger of death because we serve Jesus, so that the life of Jesus will be evident in our dying bodies. ¹² So we live in the face of death, but this has resulted in eternal life for you.

¹³ But we continue to preach because we have the same kind of faith the psalmist had when he said, "I believed in God, so I spoke." ¹⁴ We know that God, who raised the Lord Jesus, will also raise us with Jesus and present us to himself together with you. ¹⁵ All of this is for your benefit. And as God's grace reaches more and more people, there will be great thanksgiving, and God will receive more and more glory.

¹⁶ That is why we never give up. Though our bodies are dying, our spirits are being renewed every day. ¹⁷ For our present troubles are small and won't last very long. Yet they produce for us a glory that vastly outweighs them and will last forever! ¹⁸ So we don't look at the troubles we can see now; rather, we fix our gaze on things that cannot be seen. For the things we see now will soon be gone, but the things we cannot see will last forever.

⁵ ¹ For we know that when this earthly tent we live in is taken down (that is, when we die and leave this earthly body), we will have a house in heaven, an eternal body made for us by God himself and not by human hands. ² We grow weary in our present bodies, and we long to put on our heavenly bodies like new clothing. ³ For we will put on heavenly bodies; we will not be spirits without bodies. ⁴ While we live in these earthly bodies, we groan and sigh, but it's not that we want to die and get rid of these bodies that clothe us. Rather, we want to put on our new bodies so that these dying bodies will be swallowed up by life. ⁵ God himself has prepared us for this, and as a guarantee he has given us his Holy Spirit.

In the midst of all your troubles, live your life with your hope and purpose focused on Christ and all the greatness and glory that comes... beyond the death line.