

PSALM 17

Notes

I. BIBLICAL TEXT

Psalm 17

Prayer for Protection against Oppressors

A Prayer of David

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.

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.

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 from those who rise up against them.

8 Keep me as the apple of the eye; hide me in the shadow of Your wings 9 From the wicked who despoil me, my deadly enemies who surround me.

10 They have closed their unfeeling heart, with their mouth they speak proudly. 11 They have now surrounded us in our steps; they set their eyes to cast us down to the ground. 12 He is like a lion that is eager to tear, and as a young lion lurking in hiding places.

13 Arise, O Lord, confront him, bring him low; deliver my soul from the wicked with Your sword, 14 from men with Your hand, O Lord, 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. 15 As for me, I shall behold Your face in righteousness; I will be satisfied with Your likeness when I awake.

II. INTRODUCTION

A. TYPE OF PSALM

1. INDIVIDUAL LAMENT—WITH IMPRECATIONS

2. A 'PRAYER'

a. Sub-title description given to 5 Psalms

▪ **17—86—90—92—142**

b. **Habakkuk 3** is another 'prayer' song/psalm

▪ **Habakkuk 3**—has musical instruction for its singing—'upon Shigionoth'

- The 5 'Prayer' Psalms—have no musical notations

B. AUTHORSHIP

- DAVID—ATTRIBUTED IN HEADING

C. OCCASION

1. EARLY IN DAVID'S LIFE
 - o Obviously before his adultery, deceit, and murder of Uriah
 - o David describes himself as upright before the Lord, not having slipped
2. WHEN DAVID FELT THREATENED BY ENEMIES
 - o Probably while Saul was pursuing David—I Sam 23-4 and 26
 - o Seems to describe I Sam 23:25—David fleeing Saul in the Wilderness of Maon

D. THEMES

1. SINCERELY DEVOUT PERSONS SHOULD NOT FEAR GOD'S JUSTICE
2. RIGHTEOUSNESS COMES FROM GOD—HIS GUIDING AND GUARDING US
3. ASSURANCE THAT ONE IS JUST COMES ONLY FROM GOD'S EXAMINATION
4. GOD WILL LISTEN AND ANSWER WHEN WE CALL UPON HIM
5. ONLY GOD CAN PROTECT US FROM EVIL
6. WICKED PEOPLE DO ACTIVELY SEEK TO DESTROY THE JUST
7. WORLDLY PEOPLE MAY BE FILLED WITH PLEASURE BUT NOT TRULY SATISFIED
8. ULTIMATE SATISFACTION IS NOT LIFE ALONE—BUT LIVING IN GOD'S PRESENCE

E. STRUCTURE

1. SIX STANZAS—*Keil and Delitsch*
 - o vv 1-2—4 lines
 - o vv 3-5—7 lines
 - o vv 6-7—4 lines
 - o vv8-9—4 lines
 - o vv10-12—6 lines
 - o vv13-15—7 lines

2. OUTLINE

- Petition for God to hear—**vv1-2**
- Plea of righteousness—**vv3-5**
- Petition for deliverance—**vv6-9**
- Description of adversaries' cruelty—**vv10-12**
- Petition for adversaries' defeat—**vv13-14**
- Assertion of trust and hope—**v15**

F. BIBLICAL CONTEXT

1. LIKE PSALM 16—[THOUGH PSALM 16 IS A PSALM OF TRUST]
 - a. Both close with hope of blessed vision of God's presence—**16:11—17:15**
 - b. Similar petitions—*preserve me*—**shamar**—**16:1—17:8**
 - c. Nightly fellowship with God—**16:7—17:3**
 - d. Form of address in prayer—to God as **El**—**16:1—17:8**
2. TONE SIMILAR TO OTHER PSALMS EXPRESSING DAVID'S SENSE OF THREAT
 - Like **Psalms 7 and 11**

III. EXPOSITION

A. STANZA ONE

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.*

Verse 1

1. David appeals to God—the **Mighty One**—**El**
2. Context: appeals to God as **judge**—as in a **courtroom**
3. David asserts he is just—and honest—knowing two things
 - That God—hates deceit and boastfulness—**Ps 5:4-6**
 - That God—knows the heart—**Ps 11:4**
4. David's cause is 'just'
 - a. Just—**tsedeq** = rightness—righteousness—justice
 - b. KJV = *hear the right*
 - c. Not a statement of self-righteousness

- d. But an honest statement of sincerity
 - As far as David knows—he has fulfilled his intention to please God

Verse 2

1. David asks for unbiased judgment
 - o Equity—**meysnar** = straight—even—level
2. He does so—fully assured of his own innocence

B. STANZA TWO

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.

Verse 3

1. You have visited me by night
 - o Similar to **16:7**—David's thinks of God's counsel in the night
 - o Here—the night is also when God visits him—and searches his heart
2. You have tested me and You find nothing
 - a. David's certainty about his just cause—in vv1-2—is based on this fact
 - b. He is assured—because God has already tested him
 - At night—one on one—just God and David
 - God has re-assured him through an intimate dialogue
3. Nothing sinful comes from David's mouth
 - a. Reinforces idea that his lips are not deceitful—v1
 - b. Also indicates there is 'nothing' sinful in his heart—v3
 - c. Even if tempted to say something sinful—he will not let his mouth cause him to sin
 - d. Intentional effort—requires focused self-control
 - He 'purposes'—**zamam** = to plot, devise, fix thoughts upon
 - e. Like James's emphasis—bridle the tongue—**Jas 3:1-12**
4. David's obedience—**vv4-5**
 - a. His 'deeds' and 'steps'—are not absolutely perfect behavior
 - b. But the result of genuine intentions of the heart

- You have tried my heart—you know my intentions

Verse 4

1. David has been kept—from doing violence
 - o Kept—**shamar** = guarded, protected—here = restrained
 - o From violence—**periyts** = destroyer (KJV)—robber, murderer
2. David attributes his faithfulness to God
 - a. God's lips—that have kept David from committing violence
 - b. David knows that God hates bloodshed—**Ps 5:6**
3. **Example—I Sam 25:33**
 - o Abigail interceded with David
 - o She convinced him not to seek revenge and kill her husband Nabal
 - o David thanked God for sending Abigail—and keeping him from violence

Verse 5

1. David's feet have not slipped
 - a. **nowt** = shaken—overthrown—fallen
 - b. Usage in previous two Psalms—confidence in God's protection against attack
 - **15:5c**—the righteous man will not be shaken
 - **16:8**—the Lord is at my right hand, I will not be shaken
 - c. Here—confidence in God sustaining Him against temptation
2. David does not mean—that He has never sinned
 - o Instead—he regularly keeps to God's path
 - o His lifestyle—is habitually walking with the Lord
 - o He does not love sin—and habitually walk apart from God
 - o He does not follow the paths of violence—v4

C. STANZA THREE

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 from those who rise up against them.*

Verse 6

1. Again—David calls upon God as the **Mighty One—El**
2. But context shifts
 - a. From courtroom and God as judge—to God as Friend
 - b. Incline Your ear = lend me your ear (as a friend)
 - c. Becomes even more intimate in next verse
 - David appeals to God’s lovingkindness
3. David’s confidence in God
 - a. God *will* answer Him
 - b. *Because* David is sincere—his cause is just—and he is obedient—vv1-5

Verse 7

1. Further shift in context—to God as Savior
 - a. **Yasha** = one who saves—liberates—is victorious in battle
 - b. Root word for the name **Jesus**
2. Wondrously show Your lovingkindness
 - a. God’s lovingkindness—**cheded** = mercy
 - Steadfast love = ‘true love’—faithful covenant love—like marital devotion
 - b. Wondrous
 1. David already said—***I will tell of all Your wonders—9:1***
 2. **palah** = distinct—set apart [something distinctive/unique]—wonderful
 3. The idea here—something so unique and hard—only God can do it
 - As when God rebuked Sarah’s doubt
 - **Gen 18:14—*Is anything to hard*** (literally—‘wonderful’) ***for the Lord.***
3. Those who take refuge at your right hand
 - a. Take refuge—**chacah**—put total trust in someone/thing
 - b. As David before—took refuge in God—**16:1**
 - David’s was God’s ‘refugee’
 - c. Result—because the Lord was at his right hand—David was not shaken—**16:8**

4. Contrast
 - a. David takes refuge in God
 - b. God protects David from those who rebel against God
 - c. Those who attack David—are outsiders—not taking refuge in God

D. STANZA FOUR

8 *Keep me as the apple of the eye; hide me in the shadow of Your wings* **9** *From the wicked who despoil me, my deadly enemies who surround me.*

Verse 8

1. Apple of the eye
 - a. Literal phrase = ‘little man of the daughter’
 - Little man = small image of person mirrored when looking into another’s eye
 - Literal meaning = little daughter of the eye
 - b. Meaning—the pupil of the eye
 - c. Implication
 - Intimate relation between psalmist and God
 - So close—that the psalmist is mirrored in the great eye of God
 - God keeps His eye closely on the psalmist
 - d. **Example—in Moses’s Song** v

Dt 32:10—*He found him* [Jacob] *in a dessert land, and in the howling waste of a wilderness; he encircled him, He cared for him. He guarded him as the pupil of His eye.*

2. Shadow of Your wings
 - a. The protection of God—like a parent—that shields David
 - b. **Example—in Moses’s song**

Dt 32:11—*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.*

- c. Example—Boaz said this to Ruth

Ruth 2:12—*You have come under the wings of the God of Israel for refuge*

Verse 9

1. Deadly enemies

- Like those who—**Ezek 25:6**—*rejoiced with all the scorn of your soul against the land of Israel*
 - Like those—**Ps 27:12**—*such as breathe out violence*
2. Two actions by these enemies
 - a. Oppress me
 - **shadad**—do violence
 - Contrasted with David—who is kept from doing violence—v4
 - b. Surround me—compass me about
 - Sense of foreboding and impending threat
 - Introduces next stanza—David’s enemies are closing in on him

E. STANZA FIVE

10 *They have closed their unfeeling heart, with their mouth they speak proudly.* **11** *They have now surrounded us in our steps; they set their eyes to cast us down to the ground.* **12** *He is like a lion that is eager to tear, and as a young lion lurking in hiding places.*

Verses 10-12—the heartless and cruel predators encircle their prey

Verse 10

1. They have closed their unfeeling heart
 - a. Literally = ‘they closed their fat’
 - b. KJV = ‘they are enclosed in their own fat’
 - c. Extremely self-indulgent and self-focused
 1. They are closed—callous—insensitive to others—and to God
 2. Hard-hearted
 - Like the prophetic word of warning in Isaiah

Is 6:10—*Render the hearts of this people insensitive, their ears dull, and their eyes dim; otherwise they might see with their eyes, hear with their ears, understand with their hearts, and return and be healed.*
2. With their mouth they speak proudly
 - **Ps 10:2-7**—describes the arrogant and boastful pride of the wicked

Verse 11

1. They have surrounded us—set their eyes to cast us down
2. The plans of God’s enemies—against the godly

- a. Are intentionality wicked
 - b. They purposely have tracked down the godly—and surrounded them
3. The situation seems hopeless—but it is not

Verse 12

- 1. Like a lion eager to tear—a young lion lurking
 - o But God has already prepared David for such danger
 - o Remember David’s own experience fighting the lion and the bear
 - o Recounted by him—to Saul—**I Sam 17:34-37**
- 2. Irony
 - a. David is of the tribe of Judah
 - b. Judah’s emblem = the lion

Gen 49:9-10—*And Judah is a lion’s whelp . . . he couches, he lies down as a lion, and as a lion, who dares rouse him up? The scepter shall not depart from Judah*

Nu 24:9—Balaam applied this description to Israel in general

F. STANZA SIX

13 *Arise, O Lord, confront him, bring him low; deliver my soul from the wicked with Your sword, 14 from men with Your hand, O Lord, 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. 15 As for me, I shall behold Your face in righteousness; I will be satisfied with Your likeness when I awake.*

- 1. The wicked will encounter two things
 - a. Encounter with God—Who will confront and judge them—**v13**
 - b. They will be satiated with worldly things they love—**v14**
 - 1. Contrasted with genuine satisfaction and fulfilment—**v15**
 - 2. Implication—this will be to no avail—they will not be satisfied, but empty
 - 3. God may give them all they want in this life—but their focus is not on God
 - 4. So—they will be deprived of what really matters—getting God Himself
- 2. Now—David shifts appeal from **El**—to the **Lord**—in **vv13-14**
 - o Personal—covenant God—**Jehovah**

Verse 13

1. Arise, O Lord
 - a. Like—Rise up, O Lord—in **9:19** and **10:12**
 - b. David calls upon Jehovah—to take a stand for him
2. As the lion pursues and springs upon David
 - o May God intercept and throw it down
3. God’s judgment will be delivered by His sword—indirectly
 - a. Wielded by the hands of men of the world (of this age)—**v14**
 - b. God uses worldly men to execute His judgment
 - **Example**—God used **Assyria** as—*the rod of My anger*—**Is 10:5**

Verse 14

1. Men of the world
 - a. Of the world—**cheled** = from ‘creep’ ‘glide’ ‘slip away’
 - b. Related to Syriac for weasel or mole
 - c. Talmudic usage = to cover hide—temporal life that glides by unnoticed
 - d. Meaning = temporary—contrasted with that which abides—endless duration
2. They seem ‘satisfied’
 - a. Satisfied—**male** = **filled**
 - b. They are filled with many things that meet their physical needs—of the belly
 - c. But this does not permanently satisfy—the stomach is continually hungry!
3. Their fullest satisfaction comes from their children
 - a. Full [of children]—**saba** = **fulfilled**—have excess—enriched
 - b. It is true—children are a blessing
 - In the right context—**Ps 127:3ff; 128:3ff**
 - c. But not when God is not acknowledged
 - d. Not when they are to establish a perpetual legacy
 1. Then they become a snare—for self-glory
 2. Endless cycle—of trying to perpetuate one’s reputation
4. Summary:

○ Godless men who have no other home but the world, who are filled by worldly lust and fulfilled by establishing a legacy—will never be truly fulfilled

5. Contrasted with the satisfaction of knowing God

16:5—*The Lord is the portion of my inheritance and my cup*

Verse 15

1. The contrast

a. **Is not** between this world and the promise of life to come

▪ Remember—a full concept of future life had not developed in the OT

b. **Is** between this world and the promise of God Himself

1. The sublimity of seeking and pleasing God—for God Himself

2. Not because of a future reward—beyond God

3. Instead—God Himself—is the reward—the goal

2. *As for me*—emphatic contrast with previous verse

○ Similar to Joshua’s proclamation—but as for me and my house—**Josh 24:15**

3. Being satisfied—with God

a. **saba** = fulfilled—have excess—enriched

b. To have more than enough

c. While worldly men are satisfied with having children—establishing a human legacy

d. David will be satisfied only—by the very presence/image of God

4. ‘When I awake’

a. **quwts** = awake—be an allusion to the Resurrection

b. It is used this way in **Is 26:19** and **Dan 12:2**

5. To see God’s form was Moses’s supreme privilege

○ The Lord knew him face to face—**Dt 34:10**

○ He spoke mouth to mouth with God and beheld His form—**Nu 12:8**

6. Seeing God—in the Nt

○ Blessed are the pure in heart—for they will see God—**Mt 5:8**

○ The promise: ***we shall see Him just as He is***—**I Jn 3:2**