

## Psalm 17 Calling on God

By Pastor Roy Hogan

Many Psalms are referred to as a “Psalm of David.” The word Psalm is used to indicate a sacred song or poem used in worship. This Psalm is different. It can best be referred to as a “prayer of David.” Much is said about the manner of prayer in this chapter 17. Some have also said this Psalm could possibly mirror the prayer the Lord prayed in the garden of Gethsemane. David certainly never suffered like the Lord did. Yet, we do know he had his share of pain, rejection, and sorrow. The David of the Old Testament reminds us of the Apostle Paul of the New Testament. These two saints certainly were acquainted with suffering. Maybe it was not always the kind of suffering inflicted physically, but the pain of rejection and loneliness was a part of the life of both these men.

17:1-2

*Hear the right, O LORD, attend unto my cry, give ear unto my prayer; that goeth not out of feigned lips. 2 Let my sentence come forth from thy presence; let thine eyes behold the things that are equal.*

No one can know the number of prayers prayed around the world in a single day. One is made to wonder which prayers are effective? God *hears* all prayers for he knows all things and is in all places. God hearing a prayer is a first step. How many of the *heard* prayers are answered by God? What kind of prayer gets the attention of God? He surely does not answer every prayer prayed. In years gone by, saints of God spoke about praying prayers that *move* God. I surely wish to pray in a fashion that will move him.

Verse 1 begins with the spiritual condition of the person praying: *Hear the right, O LORD*. The word right is short for righteous. God does not hear the prayer of a sinner. God does not hear the prayer of the unrighteous or the transgressor. Psalm 66:18 *If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me*. This is simple language all can understand. How can we get a prayer

through to God when we are mad at someone or angry over a certain situation? When we disregard the commands of God in our heart, we stop God's hand from moving when we pray. James 5:16 *Confess your faults one to another, and pray one for another, that ye may be healed. The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much.* God requires that when we pray we have a clean heart, a heart that is righteous.

Further, to have God hear and answer our prayers, we must not pray with *feigned* lips. The meaning of feigned is *deceitful*. No one can trick or fool God. He is too wise. We must serve God hands open and palms up, and not with a closed fist pointing downward. Have you ever tried to hide something from God? It is a futile exercise. It is he who knows the very number of hairs on the head of every man.

In verse 2, David expresses to God that he desperately wants an answer to his prayer. We have all been guilty at some time of praying and when we have finished, we do not remember what we prayed. We have prayed prayers wherein we make request to God and minutes later we do not remember what we ask him for. David means business with God when he says *let my sentence come forth from thy presence*. He is saying to God "I need and expect an answer from you." I cannot direct God. Yet, it is scriptural to pray and expect an answer from God. This is effective praying. If we are not interested in what our prayers say and mean neither is God. Apostle Paul had a thorn in the flesh. He wanted it removed, so he prayed to God for removal. He prayed three times. The first time, no answer. The second time, God gave no answer. The third time he asks of God, God answered.

Some of us are parents and have children. Children can ask for many things. It is not practical to grant every request. However, if the child repeats the request once or maybe twice, the child has our attention. Sometime we pray, and if God does not answer the first time, we give up. Were we really serious about our request?

17:3-4

*Thou hast proved mine heart; thou hast visited me in the night; thou hast tried me, and shalt find nothing; I am purposed that my mouth shall not transgress. 4 Concerning the works of men, by the word of thy lips I have kept me from the paths of the destroyer.*

David is satisfied that he has no hidden sin for he states in verse 3 *thou hast visited me in the night*. He points to the night and declares he has done no evil in the darkness. The Bible tells us *men love darkness because their deeds are evil*. Men attempt to abide by the law of God in daylight and in time of openness, and then dabble in sin when darkness comes. God invented night-vision goggles- not the military. Some men leave home and drive some distance to get away from familiar surroundings. Once in a strange land where they are not known, they engage in sinful behavior. In the eyes of Jehovah God, there is no difference in 12 o'clock noon and 12 o'clock midnight. David opens up his heart to examination by God even in the midnight hour. Are you hiding anything from God? Is your safe deposit box open to God? Is your bookcase, refrigerator, and bank account open to God? Achan hid his sin to no avail.

Verse 3 points us to the seriousness of our speech. The words of our mouth matter to God. Too often we let our mind lead us to believe the only sin is some action that displeases God. We can offend God with our speech. Psalm 19:14 *Let the words of my mouth, and the meditation of my heart, be acceptable in thy sight, O LORD, my strength, and my redeemer*. Some things we say are not acceptable to God. Indeed, our speech matters to God. You may have never hit another person with your fist, but you hit them with words. You sinned against God. How many times does our tongue sour our relationship with God, and in turn, renders our prayers ineffective.

We are reminded in verse 4 of the great need in our life to be guided by God's Word. I am thankful for the Bible. It is our guide. How do men know not to steal? The Bible tells us not to. The Bible

is the breathed words of God written with pen and ink. Nothing else can steer my life or your life around the obstacles of life keeping us from destruction.

17:5-6

*Hold up my goings in thy paths, that my footsteps slip not. 6 I have called upon thee, for thou wilt hear me, O God: incline thine ear unto me, and hear my speech.*

In verse 5, *goings* means “to go straight.” If we are to travel with the Lord, the path will be straight or else we depart from God. Do we ever stop to remember that God hates sin? To swerve from his path is to sin. David pleases for God to help him stay “between the lines.” He pleases for God’s help to keep him out of the ditch. When we step out of the path of God, what happens? Then we are on slippery ground and our *footsteps slip*. The Devil’s slopes are slippery. When one gets on slippery ground, falling is inevitable and furthermore, it does not take a long time to fall. It can happen in 30 seconds. David sinned the moment he sent for Bathsheba, not after she arrived.

Verse 6 reminds us we have a wonderful God we can talk to. I am glad I do not serve Baal, or Allah, or Buda.

17:7-9

*Show thy marvellous lovingkindness, O thou that savest by thy right hand them which put their trust in thee from those that rise up against them. 8 Keep me as the apple of the eye, hide me under the shadow of thy wings, 9 From the wicked that oppress me, from my deadly enemies, who compass me about.*

We all have enemies though some may not know who their enemies are. It would be interesting to look into the heart of the ACLU and see just how much of an enemy they are to the people of God. David uses verse 7 and 9 to voice his concern to God in regard to his enemies. In these two verses he speaks of his enemies in three ways: those that *rise up* against him, those that *oppress*

him and those that *compass* me about. His enemy had three prongs. The Devil is not fool. The Devil's army is not a bunch of misfits. His army is not a Boy's Scout troop.

The Devil can attack in so many ways. There are those the *rise up*. You do not think up have an enemy in this world, then the Devil rises up from nowhere. Sometimes you want to say to folk "I thought you were my friend." The actions of these kind of enemies is spontaneous.

Then there are those that *oppress*. Behind the scenes, they are working to tear you down. We all have many enemies of this type. The ungodliness that goes on behind the scene would scare us all to death if we only knew their power and intent. There are organizations with billion-dollar budgets working to close churches, outlaw Christianity, and classify Bible-preaching as hate speech.

The third enemy is the one that *compasses* you. This enemy is visible. This is the family member who despises who you are as a child of God and yet, will sit at your table at the Thanksgiving meal. They shake your hand and utter contempt toward you beneath their breath. They will call you for help on Monday and stab you in the back on Tuesday.

Rest assured, our enemy is sophisticated. This should make us more dependent on God that ever before.

I am glad for the fact stated in verse 8- the children of God are the *apple* of God's eye. He is not interested in another universe. He is not interested in a few billion more stars. You and you and you are the apple of his eye. Likewise, God's children are under the *shadow of his wings*. I have been around farms some in my life. It is interesting as well as amazing to see the storm-clouds gather, the thunder begins to roll, and the mother hen gathers her chicks beneath the shelter of her wings. Bless the name of the Lord for his

place of safety beneath his wings. This far exceeds the safety provided by the iron dome in Israel.

17:10-12

*They are enclosed in their own fat: with their mouth they speak proudly. 11 They have now compassed us in our steps: they have set their eyes bowing down to the earth; 12 Like as a lion that is greedy of his prey, and as it were a young lion lurking in secret places.*

Speaking of the enemies in verse 10, they are described as *inclosed in their own fat*. Rest assured, the Devil is not on welfare. Beware, the Devil is rich. The Devil is swimming in money. He does not need welfare. Whatever you do, do not give him a donation for he has plenty of money. The richest industry in America may well be the alcohol industry. God's children sometimes plod along with meager means. No so with the Devil and his demons.

Verse 10 mentions *pride*. Watch out for pride. It is a sure sign of the presence of the Devil and his minions. Pride remains on the list of seven things God hates in Proverbs chapter 6. Anyone who will openly disgrace the name of God with vile speech is laced with pride. Humble people will never do that. A man who steals from the poor is filled with pride. I have seen too many of God's children ruined when the Devil came along and infused them with pride. So, if you would like to be wise in regard to being able to identify your enemy, watch for pride.

Thus far we have seen two identify marks of the enemy of God's people. They are prosperity and pride. Now, we come to the third identifying mark- persistence. The young lion is mentioned in verse 12. One of his tactics is to couch down and wait and wait and wait for the perfect moment to leap upon his prey. The Devil is not a quitter. He is not a Baptist. He is not a novice. He is not easily discouraged. He oozes with patience. He will not take his ball and go home the first time he is offended. You may have to tell him no

every day in your effort to quit that bad habit. You may have to tell him once, twice, three, four or five times to go away. This is called persistence. One the mount he never tempted the Lord once or twice. He tempted him, the very Son of God, three times!

17:13-15

*Arise, O LORD, disappoint him, cast him down: deliver my soul from the wicked, which is thy sword: 14 From men which are thy hand, O LORD, from men of the world, which have their portion in this life, and whose belly thou fillest with thy hid treasure: they are full of children, and leave the rest of their substance to their babes. 15 As for me, I will behold thy face in righteousness: I shall be satisfied, when I awake, with thy likeness.*

We have one hope in this life in regard to protection from evil. The devil is the prince and the power of this world. He is the god of this world. Christianity is not in charge. The church is not in charge. The godly do not reign. God is our hope.

I love it when the Devil gets *disappointed* as mentioned in verse 13. No one but God can *show* him up. No one but God can *shut* him up. I am no match for Satan. I must rest on God to handle this dirty work.

Truth and right are in a war. We are not in a battle; we are in a war. Christianity is under attack and always has been. This is nothing new. How I wish I could push a button and end it all. I wish God would nuke the Devil. God can and one day he will chew him up and spit him out. God will drop the atomic bomb on the Devil. But since we are surrounded by the Devil, the Lord must first gather his children out of harms way. Soon, the trumpet will wound. The bride of Christ will leave this sinful world. Then and only then will our troubles end.

There is one other option for getting away from the Devil. That option is to die. David took the path of death. We are on planet earth, which is the Devil's headquarters, while David is resting in

the presence of God. His sword has been plucked in the sand of time never to battle again.