

Psalm 17 – Vindication and Protection for the Righteous

Uniqueness of this Psalm:

- The psalm is similar to Psalm 16 where David is aware of danger and his faith encourages him not to fear, and David is convinced that God will not abandon him; yet in Psalm 17 a different, immediate danger, is pressing him to need urgent help from the LORD and here he anticipates a glorious future in the presence of the LORD.
- Structure of Psalm 17: petition is presented to the LORD (vv. 1-2); a profession of innocence (vv. 3-5); an additional petition (vv. 6-12); and, finally an appeal for deliverance from the worldly wicked (vv. 13-15).
- The category of this psalm is not a lament; but, rather a prayer song with multiple petitions and a focus on the innocent person's prayer for protection.

Summary:

- Conscious of his own uprightness but surrounded by enemies whose portion is in this life only, the psalmist prays to be kept from the evil world oppressing him, confident that he will see the abundant favor of the LORD.

Outline for Study:

I. The psalmist confidently appeals that his cause is right and his life is upright (vv. 1-5)

He petitions God to hear that his cause is just (vv. 1-2).

- There is no hypocrisy in his cause (v. 1).
- The vindication must come from God himself (v. 2).

He declares his righteousness in thought and deed (vv. 3-5).

- God's examination of his heart finds nothing wrong (v. 3).
- He has kept himself away from the destroyer (v. 4).
- He has held fast to God's way (v. 5).

II. The psalmist prays to be kept from the evil of wicked people because they are full of vicious pride (vv. 6-12)

He prays to be kept from the oppression of the world (vv. 6-8).

- The prayer is made on the basis of loyal love because the LORD saves those who take refuge in Him (vv. 6-7).
- The prayer is that he be protected in the center of God's watchful care (v. 8).

He motivates God in the prayer by lamenting the nature of the wicked (vv. 9-12).

- They are his deadly enemies who would destroy him (v. 9).
- They have become powerful and speak proudly (v. 10).
- They are ruthless and relentless in their persecution (vv. 11-12).

III. The psalmist, confident that he will see a glorious future by the grace of God, prays to be delivered from the present persecution by worldly people (vv. 13-15)

He prays to be delivered from the worldly people who are persecuting him to destroy him (vv. 13-14)

- He prays that the LORD might deliver him (v. 13).
- The LORD should deliver him from men of this world who live only for the things of this world that God provides (v. 14).

He expresses his confidence that he will see a glorious future by the grace of God (v. 15)

- He will witness the LORD's gracious response to his prayer.
- He will be satisfied with the LORD's likeness when he awakes.

Application:

- This psalm is a confident prayer for God to vindicate the righteous by bringing the opposition and arrogance of the wicked to an end.
- The importance emphasis in this psalm is that those praying can claim to be righteous – tested and examined by God, and yet righteous.
- The New Testament will confirm that the prayers of the righteous are effectual (James 5:16), but especially a prayer for vindication (example, Revelation 6:10 and Matthew 6:10).
- A great beauty in this psalm is found in the expectation of the psalmist (and the righteous of all generations) to 'awake' to a glorious future and be satisfied with the likeness of God!
- *Those who live godly lives may confidently pray for vindication and protection from the wicked, their confidence coming from the knowledge that they are right with God and that they will enjoy a glorious future with God.*
- The words of this psalm anticipate the New Testament words, promising ultimate vindication for the righteous, "We shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is" – 1 John 3:2.