



Coptic Orthodox Diocese of the Southern United States



# The Holy Book of Psalms

Psalm 17

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# Introduction

- The title is, A prayer of David
- There are four other psalms that have the same title, (Psalm 86,90,102,142)
- David would not have been a man after God's own heart, if he had not been a man of prayer
- David was the author of this Psalm; and it appears to have been written about the time in which Saul had carried his persecution against him to its highest, 1 Samuel 27:1-12
- Some think that this Psalm was written just after leaving Jonathan, when David went into exile



# Introduction

- And some think that we can't assign it to a specific time in David's life, because there are too many possible events where this connects with his general circumstances
- This Psalm is remarkable for its trust in God, its glorious heavenly hope, and for its absence of any confidence in self
- Some think the Psalm 16-24 represent a complete Messianic collection
- Each Psalm of these offer a clear prophecy about the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ





# Introduction

- St. Jerome applied all what was mentioned in this psalm on the Lord Jesus, and some other fathers such as St. Augustine counted all what came in this psalm as concerning the Lord Jesus and His people
- St. Augustine says, “This prayer must be assigned to the Person of the Lord, with the addition of the Church, which is His body.”



# Introduction

## Psalm Outline

- The Plea of the Righteous 17:1-5
- The Petition for Protection 17:6-9
- Defeat My Proud and Arrogant Enemies 17:10-14
- Praise and Final Victory 17:15

# The Plea of the Righteous

## 17:1-5



- As it is common in Psalms, David prayed from a time of crisis
- The urgency with which David called on God to pay attention to his petition suggests that he was in a very difficult position
- Here he began his appeal to God by declaring the *justice* of his *cause*
- With a righteous *cause* and a just appeal, the Psalmist appears before the righteous Judge confident in the integrity of his motives towards God and man
- The psalmist assumes that he is persecuted unjustly
- He assured God he was speaking the truth in what he was about to say



# The Plea of the Righteous

## 17:1-5



- Unless he had been convinced of this, he could not have called on God to justify and absolve him
- A good conscience is the key condition of earnest prayer
- The characteristics mentioned here, of his justice, his innocent, and *is not from deceitful lips*, all of these apply first and foremost to Jesus Christ, for He is the absolute perfect righteous One, and His lips have no deceit (1 Peter 2:22)
- The Lord intercedes by His own righteousness for the sake of His people, and the Father listens always to His intercession
- The Lord Jesus is the One who entreats

# The Plea of the Righteous

## 17:1-5



- He prays as the Head for His body's sake, the church
- He regards the case of His people as His personal case
- He intercedes for the sake of His saints because "*in all their affliction He was afflicted*" (Isaiah 63:9)
- *Let my vindication*, He is urging God to not delay it, but speedily examine his cause, and give sentence in it
- David did not want a *vindication* that came from himself
- In his long struggle with King Saul, David had several opportunities to set things right himself, but he refused and waited until *vindication* came from the *presence* of God



# The Plea of the Righteous

## 17:1-5



- David wants God to see *the things that are upright*
- As God examines David, David is convinced that God will see that David has been involved in upright things
- And therefore, God will pass judgment in David's favor – giving David the justice that he needs against his enemies
- He knows his heart, and his ways but he is asking God to judge him as according to what He finds
- David is not afraid to be judged by the just God
- He believed that his cause was just
- He is asking God to not let him fall under the judgment of man

# The Plea of the Righteous

## 17:1-5



- David says in verse 3 that God has proved his heart
- He has tested David's heart like one would test metal with fire
- God has found David's heart to be genuine and blameless
- It takes some level of patience and maturity to let God test one's heart in this manner
- David *did* allow God to test his heart, and therefore he came with great confidence in prayer
- He claimed that in the present conflict, in which evil people were opposing him, he had done nothing worthy of their hatred

# The Plea of the Righteous

## 17:1-5



- David was not asking for acceptance by God because of his own righteousness
- God had examined David's attitudes, as well as his actions, and had no basis for condemning him
- Furthermore, David had previously made a strong commitment not to sin
- God is the searcher of the heart and though God has no need to make use of any means to know the heart, and what is in it; yet in order to make what is in the hearts of his people known, He proves them sometimes by adversity, as he did Abraham and Job



# The Plea of the Righteous

## 17:1-5



- And sometimes by prosperity, by mercies given forth in a wonderful way, as to the Israelites in the wilderness, Deuteronomy 8:2
- And sometimes by suffering false prophets and false teachers to be among them, Deuteronomy 13:3
- In one or other or more of these ways God proved the heart of David, and found him to be a man after His own heart; and in the first of these ways He proved Christ, who was found faithful to Him that appointed Him, and was a man approved of God
- *You have visited me in the night*, Obedience is not just an outward thing that happens only when someone can be seen

# The Plea of the Righteous

## 17:1-5



- It's a lifestyle that goes on 24 hours a day
- The psalmist may have meant to offer his heart at night when he leaves all those around him, and reveal to the Lord the depths of his heart and his good intention, away from people
- God can then see sincere integrity inside him that has no animosity or injustice even against those who hated him
- God could see in his heart real eagerness
- The psalmist may have wished to declare how easy it is for people to judge against him, by their misunderstanding his words or his deeds
- But as for God, He judges according to his depths

# The Plea of the Righteous

## 17:1-5



- It is as if he is saying with St. Peter the apostle, after denying the Lord *“Lord, You know all things, You know that I love You”* (John 21:17)
- The psalmist has become absolutely prepared to offer his thoughts, his words and his deeds for an accurate examination from God
- David gives specific areas where he’s innocent
- *I have purposed that my mouth shall not transgress*, So, David’s speech is innocent
- Control of speech which is visible evidence of what is truly stored in the heart



# The Plea of the Righteous

## 17:1-5



- Rejection of the world's ways "*I have kept away from the paths of the destroyer.*" which is visible evidence of obedience
- Faithfulness to God's ways "*Uphold my steps in Your paths*" which is visible evidence of sanctification, being set apart wholly unto God for His purpose
- The words of God's lips had shown him the steps he was to take, and he asks the strength of God's grace to enable him to walk in those steps
- He had been kept from *the paths of the destroyer*; but this was not sufficient

# The Plea of the Righteous

## 17:1-5



- He must walk in God's paths - must spend his life in obedience to the Divine will
- David is not being self-righteous or self-sufficient
- But he is stating that he's innocent and certainly not worthy of the persecution that he is facing from his deadly enemies
- And because this is the case, David feels confident that God will protect him from those enemies

# The Petition for Protection

## 17:6-9



- Now that David has stated his innocence and his loyalty to the Lord, he asks God to hear him
- Prayer had been the constant practice of the psalmist
- David's calm confidence in the midst of his crisis is encouraging
- Though his problems were not gone yet, he still was confident that God would *hear* when he *called*
- Experience is a great teacher
- He who has tried the faithfulness of God in hours of need, has great boldness in putting his case before the throne



# The Petition for Protection 17:6-9



- *Incline Your ear to me, and hear my speech*, The Psalmist here comes back to his first prayer, and thus sets us an example of pressing our request again and again, until we have a full assurance that we have succeeded
- *Show Your marvelous lovingkindness*, The word implies a signal intervention on his behalf
- The need is great, but God's power is greater
- Such is the *lovingkindness* of God to his people in Christ; which is sovereign, free, special, distinguishing, everlasting, and unchangeable

# The Petition for Protection

## 17:6-9



- David was now exposed to approaching danger; if God did not work miracles for him, he must fall by the hand of Saul
- Yet he expects all from God's *lovingkindness*
- Many of us ask for or only expect God's *moderate* lovingkindness
- We make our prayers, our faith, and our expectations small
- David here shows us a pattern to expect and ask from God *marvelous lovingkindness*
- David clearly affirms that God only saves those who put their trust in Him

# The Petition for Protection

## 17:6-9



- No part of the body more precious and more carefully guarded than the eye
- And of the eye, no part more peculiarly to be protected than the apple
- This figure of speech is also used in Deuteronomy 32:10, Proverbs 7:2, and Zechariah 2:8
- David used the phrase *apple of Your eye* to describe something precious, easily injured and demanding protection
- David wanted to be kept by God as if he was something *valuable* and even *fragile*



# The Petition for Protection

## 17:6-9



- With this figure, David was asking God to keep him in the center of His vision, not to let him out of His sight but to keep His eye on him
- *Hide me under the shadow of Your wings*, This is another powerful figure of speech
- The idea is of how a mother bird shields her young chicks from dangers by gathering them under her wings
- This metaphor is also used in three other Psalms (Psalms 36:7, 57:1, 63:7)
- Jesus used this same word picture to show His love and desired care for Jerusalem in Matthew 23:37

# The Petition for Protection

## 17:6-9



- These two phrases are powerful pictures of God's care for His people
- David specifies those from whom he needs protection; the threat was real
- He faced not only *oppression* that made his life difficult, but also *deadly enemies* who wanted to end his life
- Enemies against his soul or life
- In the midst of these real threats, David did the right thing; he *prayed*
- The enemies of a believer's soul are mortal adversaries
- Deadly sins are deadly enemies lead to spiritual death

# Defeat My Proud and Arrogant Enemies 17:10-14



- David here begins to describe the deadly enemies who oppressed him
- They were insensitive (*fat hearts*), and spoke *proudly*
- Self-indulgence has hardened their feelings and clouded their souls
- *their fat hearts*, They have closed up their hearts because of wealth and great prosperity
- They were prosperous and were consequently self-confident and proud, and were inconsiderate of others
- *they speak proudly*, Boasting of their own power, and of the great things they had done, or would do



# Defeat My Proud and Arrogant Enemies 17:10-14



- Riches and self-indulgence are the fuel upon which some sins strengthen their flames
- Pride, wealth, and sensual desires were Sodom's sins, *“Look, this was the iniquity of your sister Sodom: She and her daughter had pride, fullness of food, and abundance of idleness; neither did she strengthen the hand of the poor and needy.”* (Ezekiel 16:49)
- In verse 11 David sees himself as a city surrounded from all sides by enemies
- The enemies have their eyes set with one purpose which is to throw the innocent down to the ground

# Defeat My Proud and Arrogant Enemies 17:10-14



- Their eyes are focused on that one goal
- The enemies set their eyes on throwing the innocent to the ground – in the same way that a lion would to his prey
- These men are waiting for the right time to destroy David and his fellow innocents
- David described the dangerous, wild, beast-like actions of his enemies
- He could see himself as a prey chased by the hunter, or as prey the lion plots to devour

# Defeat My Proud and Arrogant Enemies 17:10-14



- This also was shown in Christ, when Judas followed Him into the garden with a group of men
- And when He was surrounded by wicked men as He went to the cross, and hung upon it, John 18:2
- And may likewise be applied to the case of all the believers, who are troubled on every side, are affected by the corruptions of their hearts, the temptations of Satan, and the persecutions of the men of the world, 2 Corinthians 4:8
- David spoke first in the single person manner, and starting from verse 10, followed the plural one



# Defeat My Proud and Arrogant Enemies 17:10-14



- Some of the Fathers see this as a symbol for the Lord Jesus declaring that the adversary does not desire Christ the Lord alone, but he also desires to devour the entire church of Christ
- The Fathers think the enemies here are those who have crucified the Lord Jesus, whose hearts were closed against every influence for good, or knowing the truth
- They had the *flat* and narrow heart
- As for their mouths, they uttered arrogance instead of praising God's name

# Defeat My Proud and Arrogant Enemies 17:10-14



- The more furious the attack, the more intense David's prayer
- There was nothing else for him to do except to lift up his eyes to find help from God; his eye rests solely upon the Almighty
- He feels that God has but to *Arise* and the work will be done at once
- He is asking God to prevent the execution of the wicked designs against him and to stop him in his attempt
- David declared his dependence on God to protect him not because he was afraid of such lion-like enemies; as a young boy David had beaten both the bear and the lion (1 Samuel 17:33-37)

# Defeat My Proud and Arrogant Enemies 17:10-14



- It was because David needed to see his enemy defeated by the hand of God, not the hand of David
- *Arise, O LORD*, When He arises, David wants God to crash his enemies
- *cast him down*, When the ungodly are cast down, the righteous are delivered out of their hand
- While Saul persecuted David, he often missed his goal, when he thought he had him sure!
- And how were Christ's enemies disappointed by His resurrection, who thought they had gained their point when they had put him to death!



# Defeat My Proud and Arrogant Enemies 17:10-14



- The Lord will confront the enemy and bring him to his knees
- By the Lord's sword and by the Lord's hand is David's deliverance pictured as coming soon
- God's *sword* may also mean His Word that is used as a disciplinary weapon
- *From men of the world who have their portion in this life*, David recognized that one characteristic of his enemies was that they looked much more to *this life* than they did to eternity
- Men who are altogether worldly, whose views, aspirations, hopes, longings, are bounded by this life - the *sons of this world*, as our Lord expressed it (Luke 16:8)

# Defeat My Proud and Arrogant Enemies 17:10-14



- And, they may very well have had some satisfactions in this life as he states in verse 14
- *They are satisfied with children*, Have a numerous offspring, whom they educate in the same principles, and to whom they leave a large earthly heritage, and who spend it as their fathers have done, and perhaps even more wickedly
- In the opening section David presented evidence of his own good spiritual standing before God; here he presents the evidence of the offenders' bad spiritual standing
- They combine to present a case of why David needs, and is worthy of, God's protection



# Praise and Final Victory 17:15

- With the low desires of worldly men who looked only to this life and not to eternity the Psalmist contrasts his own spiritual aspirations
- Their satisfaction is in their wealth and family honors
- And he does not envy their happiness because his hopes and happiness are of another nature
- Their blessings are not for an instant to be compared with his
- *I will see Your face in righteousness*, David's happiness is in God's presence and in enjoying communion with Him and all the blessings that flow from it





# Praise and Final Victory 17:15

- His greatest delight was in God, not in the temporal things of this world
- David was confident not only of life after death, but that he would one day *see* the *face* of God
- To see God on earth is fulfilled by faith and in heaven by seeing Him face to face
- David knew that the transition from this life to the next was like *awaking*
- These words may be interpreted, not of David's awaking, but of the glory of God awaking or appearing; which would afford an infinitely greater satisfaction than worldly men have in worldly things



# Praise and Final Victory 17:15

- In times of opposition from godless people whose whole lives revolve around material matters, God's faithful followers can enjoy God's fellowship now
- They can also look forward to divine deliverance and to seeing the Lord one day
- David's hope lay in a continuing relationship with God, and so does ours
- He found comfort in his relationship with God in this life as being superior to what the wicked enjoyed
- We do too, but we also know that in addition, when we die, we will go into the Lord's presence and from then on be with Him (2 Corinthians 5:8; 1 Thessalonians 4:17)

# Discussion



- On what basis can David say that he is righteous?
- What do you learn from this psalm about dealing with false accusations? Why is the Lord our best defense attorney?
- According to this Psalm, in what ways does David trust in God?
- What is the primary characteristic that marks David's enemies?





# Discussion

- What is the hope that David refers to in the final verse of this Psalm?
- When you pray, how confident are you that God will hear you? What if He does not answer your prayers? Are you still confident that He hears you and cares about your heart's desires? Why or why not?
- Do we trust in God or do we fear the enemy? Is it possible to trust in God and fear the enemy at the same time? Is it possible to trust in our own strength rather than trusting in God?