

**Psa. 17:0 ¶ A Prayer of David.**

Though I think many of David's songs sound like prayers, this one is specifically identified as such. I think the psalms provide abundant testimony that David was a man of prayer—a characteristic he had in common with Jesus our Savior.

Though we don't know the specific circumstances, it would seem from a reading of this psalm that it was a prayer made at a time when David was on the run from his enemies before he became king.

**Psa. 17:1 ¶ Hear the right, O LORD, attend unto my cry, give ear unto my prayer, that goeth not out of feigned lips.**

David pleads with the LORD to listen to his prayer, a sincere and honest prayer with no hypocrisy or hidden motives. He was calling out to God from a position of desperation and need with a heart of faith.

**Psa. 17:2 Let my sentence come forth from thy presence; let thine eyes behold the things that are equal.**

The Hebrew root for "sentence" makes reference to making a judgment of vindication or punishment. The Hebrew for "equal" is a reference to making a righteous judgment. Though David is asking God to be fair in His judgment, we know that ALL of His judgments are good and without partiality.

*Psalms 19:9 "The fear of the LORD is clean, enduring for ever: the judgments of the LORD are true and righteous altogether."*

*Deuteronomy 10:17 "For the LORD your God is God of gods, and Lord of lords, a great God, a mighty, and a terrible, which regardeth not persons, nor taketh reward...."*  
(reward = bribe)

*2 Chronicles 19:7 "Wherefore now let the fear of the LORD be upon you; take heed and do it: for there is no iniquity with the LORD our God, nor respect of persons, nor taking of gifts." (respect = partiality; gifts = bribe)*

*Romans 2:11 "For there is no respect of persons with God."*  
(respect = favoritism)

It is obvious that David is expecting a judgment in his favor, but it is also obvious that he is willing to accept God's judgment whatever. Spurgeon expressed it beautifully: "In David's case, he felt his cause to be so right that he simply desired the Divine eyes to rest upon the matter, and he was confident that equity would give him all that he needed."

**Psa. 17:3 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.**

David acknowledges that the LORD has tested him and cared for him during the night, a reference to times of adversity. He relates how the LORD has tried him, a reference to refining him to get rid of the sin in his life. David's words indicate that at the time of this prayer his heart is right before the LORD and that he has purposed not to transgress with his mouth.

I can so identify with David's heart. I think my mouth is the part of me that needs the most sanctification.

I like Gill's comments: "This properly belongs to God, who is the searcher of the heart and reins, and is desired by all good men; 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 know, or rather to make known, what is in the hearts of his people, he proves them sometimes by adversity, as he did Abraham and Job, and sometimes by prosperity, by mercies given forth in a wonderful way, as to the Israelites in the wilderness (Deuteronomy 8:2); sometimes by suffering false prophets and false teachers to be among them (Deuteronomy 13:3); and sometimes by leaving corruptions in them, and them to their corruptions, as he left the Canaanites in the land, and as he left Hezekiah to his own heart (Judges 2:22). 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...."

**Psa. 17:4 Concerning the works of men, by the word of thy lips I have kept *me* from the paths of the destroyer.**

**Psa. 17:5 Hold up my goings in thy paths, *that* my footsteps slip not.**

I think David is basically saying that in comparison to other men, men that are not committed to serving the LORD, he has been able to avoid the ways of violence and wrongdoing by holding fast to God's word. He has carefully chosen to walk in obedience before the LORD. He has tried not to take even one step in the direction of disobedience.

I think this is one of the keys to success in the Christian life. It is to purpose in one's heart, to carefully ponder each action, each step, to walk in obedience to God's word.

**Psa. 17:6 I have called upon thee, for thou wilt hear me, O God: incline thine ear unto me, *and* hear my speech.**

**Psa. 17:7 Shew 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*.**

Because David has a relationship with the LORD, he knows from experience that God will hear his prayer. Even so, he petitions the LORD for special attention. He asks the LORD to demonstrate yet again his "marvelous lovingkindness," the wonderful mercy that He shows to all that put their trust in Him when in danger from their enemies.

The reference to God's right hand is a reference to His strength and power.

**Psa. 17:8 ¶ Keep me as the apple of the eye, hide me under the shadow of thy wings,**

**Psa. 17:9 From the wicked that oppress me, from my deadly enemies, who compass me about.**

David asks God to protect him as one protects the apple of the eye, a reference to the pupil, the center part of the eye. It is a phrase that references something of great treasure and importance to someone. He asks for protection by making comparison to how a bird protects its chicks. David wants such protection from the wicked men, the enemies that surround him.

Maybe David was thinking of these verses in Deuteronomy.

*Deuteronomy 32:9–11 “For the LORD’S portion is his people; Jacob is the lot of his inheritance. He found him in a desert land, and in the waste howling wilderness; he led him about, he instructed him, he kept him as the apple of his eye. As an eagle stirreth up her nest, fluttereth over her young, spreadeth abroad her wings, taketh them, beareth them on her wings....”*

It is verses 9-12 that make me think this prayer must have been made at a time when David was on the run before he became king.

**Psa. 17:10 They are inclosed in their own fat: with their mouth they speak proudly.**

Verse 10 - Many translations make reference to a heart that is so fat it is without feeling, and I think that is valid. I am reminded of another verse in psalms that uses such an analogy.

*Psalms 119:70 “Their heart is as fat as grease; but I delight in thy law.”*

An unfeeling heart goes hand-in-hand with a proud heart that is evidenced by speech that is haughty and arrogant.

**Psa. 17:11 They have now compassed us in our steps: they have set their eyes bowing down to the earth;**

**Psa. 17:12 Like as a lion that is greedy of his prey, and as it were a young lion lurking in secret places.**

I think the CJB is a bit clearer than the KJV with these verses: *“They track me down, they surround me; they watch for a chance to bring me to the ground. They are like lions eager to tear the prey, like young lions crouching in ambush.”*

I like Spurgeon’s comments on verse 12: “Lions are not more greedy, nor their ways more cunning than are Satan and his helpers when engaged against the children of God. The blood of souls the adversary thirsts after, and all his strength and craft are exerted to the utmost to satisfy his detestable appetite. We are weak and foolish like sheep; but we have a shepherd wise and strong, who knows the old lion’s wiles, and is more than a match for his force; therefore will

we not fear, but rest in safety in the fold. Let us beware, however, of our lurking foe; and in those parts of the road where we feel most secure, let us look about us lest, peradventure, our foe should leap upon us.”

**Psa. 17:13 Arise, O LORD, disappoint him, cast him down: deliver my soul from the wicked, *which is thy sword*:**

**Psa. 17:14 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.**

David prays for the LORD to deliver him from his enemy, from men who are “men of the world.” These men have no interest in spiritual things. Their focus is on accumulating treasure in this world, in having children and being able to leave them a great inheritance.

Sadly, I think this is still today an accurate description of those that reject the LORD as their Savior. They are focused on the things of this world—indulging the lust of the flesh, accumulating the things they desire and living with a focus of selfish pride.

*1 John 2:16 “For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world.”*

What regret they will have when the time comes that they stand before the throne of God and realize that they rejected the opportunity to accumulate heavenly treasure and experience eternal life with the LORD.

**Psa. 17:15 As for me, I will behold thy face in righteousness: I shall be satisfied, when I awake, with thy likeness.**

This has been a favorite verse of mine for a while; but, honestly, I read it differently from the main intent as given by most translations. David is looking forward to seeing the LORD face to face after his death—and so am I! It is the next part that I took to heart a bit differently. I can see that it is an exclamation to the first part of the verse. But I also read in it the truth that when I see my Savior face to face, I will get to see him clothed in His likeness with the glory with which man was first created in His image. I will no longer be clothed in sinful flesh; I will be clothed with flesh that is incorruptible and without sin. I can hardly wait!