

Where You Go For Vindication

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 08 June 2025

Preacher: J.D. Edwards

[0 : 00] We read in Isaiah 40 that the grass withers, the flower fades, but the word of the Lord stands forever. In Luke 1, the angel Gabriel ministers at the presence of God. He says that no word from God shall be void of power. Let's pray.

Lord, I ask that you will continue to minister to your people from your presence. Teach us to trust that vindication will come from the presence of God.

And teach us, Lord, to enjoy our satisfaction in you. We ask this by the powerful work of Jesus Christ, applied to his church by the Holy Spirit, for the glory of God. Amen.

There was a French novelist in the 1800s named Alexandre Dumas, and one of his characters is Edmond Dantes.

He says, this man lost his career. He lost his dignity. He lost his freedom. And through that, he lost his wife.

[1 : 21] The tragedy in this novel is that it all happened by the guy he thought was his best friend. After spending 14 years in prison, completely innocent, it was an unjust punishment he had to suffer.

And I don't want to spoil it with the details, but he's able to escape and to start walking out his slow-burning plan to vindicate himself.

To vindicate means to justify, to defend, and to avenge. I think the reason that I, and maybe some of you guys, and maybe ladies too, like movies like that, is because we want to take it into our own hands.

We want justice. We want to defend ourselves. We want to avenge all the wrongs we suffered. It's right that we want vindication. This world is very unjust.

But the question we need to wrestle with in light of Psalm 17 is, where do we go to get vindication? Some go to social media. Others go straight to lawsuits.

[2 : 35] And others go to buy a weapon. Well, as the Count of Monte Cristo, he comes back to vindicate himself. And he says, may the God of vengeance yield me his place to punish the wicked.

Now, farewell to kindness, humanity, and gratitude. He pulls out his sword. He confronts his nemesis, who can't even get the words out. He's so confused what has happened.

And the Count of Monte Cristo interrupts him, looks him in the eye, as if he knew what he was trying to ask. How did I escape? One of the great lines, with difficulty.

How did I plan this moment? With pleasure. So, beloved congregation of our Lord Jesus Christ, where you need to go for vindication is given to us in verse 2.

Would you look there? David felt, I'm sure what we have felt, what Edmund Dantes felt. Well, vindication is needed here. But look at what he says in verse 2.

[3 : 43] Let my vindication come from your presence. You see the superscription to this entire psalm. The whole thing is a prayer. It's a man on his knees before God, in the presence of God through prayer, asking for vindication.

I want us to read this psalm a few different times together, at least portions of it. First, from David's perspective, to make sure we're understanding what he was saying in this Hebrew poetry.

Then we're going to read it through from Christ's perspective, praying these words. And then finally, I think in light of those two, how we as Christians can and should pray through Psalm 17, even for vindication.

So first, from David's perspective, what are the grounds for such a prayer? I see David appealing to two things. The first one is he appeals to his own righteousness.

Look at verse 1. Hear a just cause. Literally, he says, hear righteousness. Or hear the right God. Hear the right cause.

[4 : 51] O Lord, attend to my cry. Give ear to my prayer, not from deceitful lips. He's not one trying to go to a judge and tell a version of the truth, leaving some parts out, twisting it.

He's laying it all before the Lord, hiding nothing back. He can't deceive God. He knows that. And in the presence of God, in verse 3, he says, Lord, you have tested my heart.

You have visited me in the night. The Psalms tell us how it's the Holy Spirit that searches and knows God's people. In Psalm 51, he prays, show me if there is any crooked way within my life. We lay it all out and ask the Lord to search us. He says, you have tried me and have found nothing. I have purposed that my mouth shall not transgress.

So evaluating himself in two ways. First, the mouth, the words, then the deeds. He said, my mouth hasn't transgressed. Verse 4 is the deeds concerning the works of men, the things that we would do with our lives and our action.

[5 : 55] And by the word of your lips, I have kept away from the paths of the destroyer. It sounds like David thinks he has not sinned.

Maybe ever. But we know in Psalm 130, verses 3 and 4, says, if you, O Lord, should mark iniquity, O Lord, who could stand? But with you there is forgiveness that you may be feared.

So David is saying, Lord, I fear you. And I know that if there's sin in my life, you will expose it. But I think Dale Ralph Davis commented what we all wrestle with.

These verses give some readers the case of the jitters, he wrote. They fear David is tooting his own horn here, perhaps polishing up his own righteousness. But David is playing in a more minor key. He is not claiming sinlessness, but steadfastness, not perfection, but consistency. He is saying that he has been loyal to the true king of Israel, not impeccable.

[6 : 59] That's the end of Dr. Davis's quote. So David appeals to his own righteousness, but he also appeals to who God is.

He appeals to who God is. Look at the end of verse five. He says, Lord, you uphold my steps in your paths that my footsteps may not slip.

And he says in verse two, let my vindication come from your presence. Let your eyes look on the things that are upright. And as God is searching him, look at verse six.

He says, I have called upon you for you will hear me. Oh God, incline your ear to me. Hear my speech. He's appealing to the God who cares about his people, a God who is so near his people that he listens to them.

And now look at what he points out of God's nature. Verse seven, show your marvelous, loving kindness. The Hebrew word is has said, and it's a covenant faithfulness.

[8 : 05] Show Lord your marvelous, loving kindness, your covenant faithfulness by your right hand. Oh, you who save those who trust from those who rise up.

Verse eight, keep me as the apple of your eye. Some of you might have had to have eye surgery. I've heard recently of people who had to go in for some type of eye surgery, and it's terrifying.

There's something in our bodies that physically will not let someone get close to the center part of the eye. And that's how God protects, so vigilantly protects his people.

There are also poetic connections in the words he's using. Hide me under the shadow of your wings. So when he says, keep me as the apple of your eye, he's saying that dark ball in the middle of the eye.

In the Hebrew, it can be translated, keep me as the little man inside the eye and hide me under the shadow of your wings. It's the darkest portion of the eye and the dark shadow of the wings.

[9 : 13] The believer relates to God as a little man in the middle of God's all seeing eye. And as a newly hatched chick under that great mother eagle in the nest, couldn't be more safe.

This is the imagery David is putting down to the pen, comforting his own soul in the presence of God. God will listen to his people because God's spirit exposes his people and ministers to them. And God does this because of who God is. He has loving, marvelous, covenant faithfulness for his people.

Not because of who they are, but because of who he is as God. That's the grounds of David's prayer. Next, he prays for vindication. I would like to show you two things under vindication, the need for vindication and then where it's finally found.

The need for vindication. David describes these evil men starting in verse nine. So he mentioned in verse two, that's what he's coming to ask God for, but we don't get the context all the way down to verse nine.

[10:29] Keep me from the wicked who oppress me, my deadly enemies who surround me. They close their hearts to pity. With their mouths, they speak arrogantly.

Some translations put verse 11 as coming from the mouths of these arrogant men who are wicked and oppressed David. They say, our steps have encompassed him.

They've set their eyes to cast David to the ground. Let's take this man down. He speaks of them in the plural, like here they come, they're surrounding all around me.

But he also singles out an individual, maybe like the ringleader. Maybe it was Saul himself. In verse 12, as a lion is eager to tear his prey like a young lion lurking in secret places.

This is a terrifying feeling to have an enemy stalking you, full of energy, just waiting for that moment to pounce and devour.

[11:37] It's understandable for David, for you and me, to feel like vindication is needed. I can't keep going on like this forever, this state of fear and panic.

I'm sure there were moments where David wanted to take matters into his own hands. Jason Gladding pointed out, you know, like that moment in the cave, he's got his sword or his dagger knife is out.

He has his moment. The priest reminded Edmond Dantes in the prison, he said, hatred is blind. Rage carries you away. And he who pours out vengeance from a keg runs the risk of tasting a bitter draft.

Don't do it. And in the presence of God, look at how God teaches David. Rather than David rising up with a dagger in his hand, he prays in verse 13, Arise, O Lord.

This is a call to arms. This is a call for God to rise up and act on his behalf instead of taking matters into his own hands. In verse 13, God, you confront him.

[12:45] You cast him down. You, Lord, deliver my life from the wicked with your sword. With verse 14, with your hand from men, O Lord, from men of the world.

See, David's need for vindication has been laid out for us. But now notice what he does. He says where final vindication is going to be found. David prays for vindication by contrasting contrasting what satisfies his enemies with what will satisfy him in the end.

In verse 13, he says, Their portion is in this life, whose belly you fill with hidden treasure. This is a difficult language, even hard to translate into the English.

We have to keep reading to get the sense. These wicked men are satisfied with children and they leave the rest of their inheritance for their babes. He says, These men are so worldly.

All they know about in this life is what they can see, what will satisfy their body, their bellies. And the only inheritance they care about is physical wealth, what will be passed on to the next generation in this world.

[14:03] But by contrast, David has to find his comfort in his ultimate satisfaction. Look at this glorious truth in verse 15. That was them.

As for me, I will see your face in righteousness. I shall be satisfied when I awake in your likeness. Most likely, this has layered meanings. On one hand, David is exhausted. He needs to lay down, like we saw in Psalm 4, 8, in peace.

I lay down and sleep for you alone will keep me. And when I awake, I'll be satisfied, not because my circumstances changed, but because I am before the face of God himself by faith in this life.

But of course, we have to see in verse 15 his ultimate vindication, his ultimate hope. If his circumstances won't change in this life, he gets the most glorious satisfaction.

[15:07] he will get to see and the word is behold the face of God. That's something only Moses could dream of. And even then, only in a shadowy way.

David is a man of faith who will get to stand in righteousness and behold the face of God. And there he'll be vindicated. There he will know true satisfaction.

So when I wake, when I die, my body is buried in this life, but my soul is brought up and joined to you, I will be satisfied. There, I will find my vindication.

The language David uses here is covenant language. Verse 7, he says, show your marvelous loving kindness, you who save those who trust in you.

Verse 8, keep me as the apple of your eye. The other times those words are used, it's in the books of Exodus and Deuteronomy when God's people have been brought out of slavery and bondage and God has given them his law, said, I will be your God and you shall be my people.

[16:16] You are the apple of my eye because of my covenant faithfulness to you. Christopher Ashe commented, to pray in the name of the covenant Lord is to pray in the light of his covenant revelation on the basis of his covenant promises.

That's what David is doing. The prayers of the Psalms are spoken by the Spirit who in the New Testament Paul refers to as the Spirit of Christ, Romans 8, 9.

So Christopher Ashe wrote, the Father heard Old Testament believers like David on the basis of the righteous life and the atoning death of Jesus Christ.

Those who prayed before Jesus came were heard only because they trusted in the Redeemer who would come. They believed the promises of God and in those covenant promises, 2 Corinthians 1.20 tells us that those promises find their yes in Jesus Christ who came to redeem sinners.

So by appealing to God's covenant promises, David is ultimately putting his faith in how God will fulfill these promises through Jesus. So we need to go back and read this Psalm now in light of the full gospel revelation that Jesus accomplished.

[17:36] How Jesus Christ could pray Psalm 17 for vindication. A Christian from the ancient time period, Eusebius of Caesarea, he wrote this, Psalm 17 is a prayer of the perfect man or of Christ himself for them that are to be saved by him.

That's what Psalm 17 is. We read in Hebrews 7.25 that our Lord Jesus Christ, he ever lives to intercede for his people.

He is ever living and how is Jesus living? He is praying, he is interceding for you, his people. And praise the Lord, his spirit has given us words to know how Jesus can pray for us.

Verse 1, from the lips of our Lord Jesus, he could pray, Father, hear my prayer because of my personal, perpetual, and perfect righteousness, which no other man can hold up to God.

O Lord, attend to my cry according to my human nature. Give ear to my prayer. It's not from deceitful lips. Let my vindication come from your presence.

[18:59] Let your eyes, Father, look on the things that are upright. You have tested my heart. You have visited in the night. You have tried me and found nothing.

I have purpose that my mouth should not transgress. Praise God, the Lord Jesus Christ purposed to not sin with his mouth.

In verse 5, our Lord Jesus could pray that the Holy Spirit has upheld my every step according to my human nature in the paths of God the Father.

My footsteps did not slip. Praise God for the perfect righteousness of Jesus. You and I slip every day, every hour. He did not slip and he didn't slip so that his righteousness could be yours and mine.

You have tested my heart. In verse 4, he says, concerning the works of men by the word of your lips, I have kept away from the paths of the destroyer.

[20:03] In verse 6, I have called upon you for you will hear me. O God, incline your ear to me. Hear my speech. Think of how the Lord Jesus Christ poured out his soul to his Father in the Garden of Gethsemane.

In anguish of soul, sweating blood, our Lord Jesus could comfort himself with verse 7. After I accomplish the redemption of our people, I will enjoy once again your marvelous, loving kindness by your right hand, but this time in my glorified body.

O God, you who save those who trust in you from those who rise up, even as I go into the grave, you will keep me as the apple of your eye.

You will hide me under the shadow of your wings. from the wicked who oppress me, even as I go to the cross, as I receive the slaps, the spit, the punches, the blows, my Father will keep me.

The wicked, in verse 11, they encompass him. They plot to do evil to him. The enemy, the great accuser, like a lion, thinks that on the cross he will devour the Son of God.

[21:32] And instead, on that cross, our Lord Jesus crushed the serpent's head, that ancient dragon, as he was lifted up to pay for the sin of his people, he was rising up in war to confront Satan, to cast Satan down.

And as he's put into the grave, he trusted his Father by the power of the Holy Spirit and his own resurrection power would deliver his life from death, from the hands of the wicked.

from men of this world whose portion is in this life only. In verse 15, our Lord Jesus could pray as it literally reads, I, in righteousness, I see thy face.

I am satisfied in awakening. I see thy form. Our Lord Jesus would never marry a woman or be given in marriage, but the people he is redeeming would be his bride spiritually forever.

You see how Psalm 17, it begins with a righteous plea, but in verse 15, it ends with righteous position. Our Lord Jesus would be seated at the right hand of the Father.

[23 : 04] Perfect righteousness, fulfilling the covenant of redemption so that he could turn around and bring those he purchased with his precious blood into the covenant of grace, covered in his righteousness, declared by the holy God, you, church, you are righteous because of Christ's finished work in your place.

That's how a Christian can now pray through Psalm 17. Augustine of Hippo, he said, Psalm 17 is to be assigned to the Lord in person, as we just read it, together with the church, which is his body.

We can pray Psalm 17 because Jesus fulfilled it. We can pray verse 1, hear a just cause, O Lord.

Attend to my cry now as a Christian. Give ear to my prayer, not from deceitful lips.

James 5.16 tells us, the prayer of a righteous person has great power as it is working. And if there's hidden sin in the life of a Christian, we first come before the Lord to be searched, to be made right, to confess and enjoy the freedom we have in repenting.

and we can trust that the Lord will forgive us. And from his presence, he will remind us, you child, you are justified. I will make all things right.

[24 : 34] I will defend you. And I will one day avenge you. We can pray, Lord, search my words, search my deeds, and keep me, Father, by the power of your word, like in verse 4, by the word of your lips.

Keep me from the paths of the destroyer. Colossians 3.16 and 17 says, let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, teaching and admonishing one another in all wisdom, in whatever you do, in word or in deed.

Do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him. And we beg the Lord, verse 5, Lord, I'm so weak.

Please uphold my steps in your paths, the paths that Christ already walked in front of me. Help me to follow in his footsteps.

Keep me from slipping, Lord. Verse 6, I have called up on you. You will hear me, O God. Incline your ear to me too. Hear my speech. Now Christians can and should, I believe, pray for vindication and trusting that we may not see it made right in this life, but we still ask the Lord.

[25 : 55] We ask him, make things right, it's not right. I'm reminded of the 1500s when the French Protestants were persecuted for being Protestant. They were driven out of France, which was a Catholic monarchy.

They were called Huguenots. Many of them fled to places like Switzerland because it was safer. One of those was Theodore Beza. And as he arrived, he was a bit younger than John Calvin and was disciplined by him.

Beza wrote, God's vindication of the innocent is a demonstration of his sovereign power and a rebuke of the wicked. God is powerful, but yet he's allowing his church to be persecuted by wicked men to give up everything, to suffer, to lose their worldly possessions.

And God is still sovereign and wickedness is still wicked. And so we pray, Lord, you make things right. We can pray, verse 9, Lord, deliver me from the wicked who oppress me.

It feels like deadly enemies surrounding me, Lord. They close their hearts to pity and with their mouths they speak arrogantly, Lord. This is hard.

[27 : 06] Help me. Help me. That contrast. Arise, O Lord. Confront him. Cast him down. These wicked men of this world, this is all they love.

I'm reminded of another family. This time in the USA. There was a congregation at Northampton, Massachusetts. The pastor of this congregation at this time was Jonathan Edwards.

Despite my grandma's best sketches and ideas, I don't think I'm related to him. I wish we were. If we were, it was probably from the bad side, like the black sheep that God had to bring back.

But at this congregation, it was a problem in many ways because to buy land, you had to be a member of the church. If you're a member of the church, you get to take the Lord's Supper. But they were like grandchildren of true believers that were taking the Lord's Supper.

Jonathan Edwards started to teach, look, the Lord Jesus is the covenant keeper of his people. And his covenant is not to mess around with.

[28 : 16] So Jonathan Edwards read scripture and didn't let sinners, wicked men of this world, take the Lord's Supper anymore. He fenced it off. And as a result, things got political in this church and he got fired.

Can you imagine being the congregation who fired probably the best theologian and brightest intellect born, well, I guess he was born in England, but like claimed by the Americans. So he got fired and he and his family, his wife's name was Sarah, they had 11 children at the time.

They went and they lived with the Mohacan tribe of Stockbridge, Massachusetts. The year was 1751. That's around the time of the American independence.

Remember, George Washington had wooden teeth. So your child gets a toothache, one of these 11 kids, pull it out and pop in a piece of wood in their mouth. This is a hard time to go live among a native tribe.

While he was there, he was ministering to the tribe and also a young man named David Brainerd came to be disciplined by him to go to be a missionary to another tribe, the Delaware Indians in New Jersey.

[29 : 22] While this younger man was with this tribe in New Jersey and Jonathan Edwards was with another tribe, they would correspond and encourage one another with letters from the scripture, giving each other gospel truth and reassurance as God is advancing his kingdom.

Jonathan Edwards saved all these letters and turned it into a biography of this young man because this young man became very sick and when he was 29 years old, he had to leave that tribe and come live in Jonathan Edwards' home.

And one of Jonathan Edwards' 11 children was a 16-year-old daughter who became the nurse and the caregiver for this very sick missionary while he lived in their home. There was never anything official like engagement or anything but there was a clear bond between David Brainerd and Jonathan and Sarah Edwards' daughter named Jerusha.

It's an interesting name but it's actually beautiful. She was named after a mother of a king of Israel. And it means that given as a possession or given in marriage, that's what her name means.

But tragically, this missionary, David Brainerd, died when he was 29 years old there in Jonathan and Sarah Edwards' home. Four months later, Jerusha, the 16-year-old girl, died also.

[30 : 40] They never married, had no children. Jonathan and Sarah put on the epithet of Jerusha's gravestone, the last verse of Psalm chapter 17.

As the promise they knew she would hold on to by faith, as for me, I will see your face in righteousness. I shall be satisfied when I awake in your likeness.

People of this world can put their hope in wealth and comfort, even in having a family and kids. But there's no better vindication, no better satisfaction, than abiding forever in the presence of God, the Creator.

Think of how our Lord Jesus could pray that last verse. Oh Father, through me, our people will see the face of God in righteousness.

I will suffer, I will die, I will be buried, but I will arise. I will be glorified on the third day. I will once again enjoy that satisfaction of being restored to my glory in heaven as the Lamb that was slain, standing at the right hand of the throne of God Most High.

[32 : 09] I will leave a much greater inheritance for my spiritual seed. I will share this glorious satisfaction of union to God the Father through me, God the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

I will share this with my people and when my church awakes and is resurrected in my likeness as their Lord and mediator on my great day, my people will enjoy positional righteousness before me forever.

In glorified bodies, my people will see God. They will enjoy full satisfaction of that blessed sight of God, that beatific vision of their creator and through God they will see and enjoy every detail of the new heavens and the new earth forever.

You and I, we want vindication in this life and it's only natural that we will to justify, to defend, to be avenged.

if you love God because God first loved you in Jesus Christ, then trust again today that you are already justified by the righteousness of Christ and he will continue to be your defender today, tomorrow, this whole week and as long as you're on this earth, he will one day avenge his people.

[34 : 00] He has shown in the words of verse 7 his marvelous loving kindness through his own son Jesus who's at his right hand. He has saved those who trust in him.

We can pray trusting it's true in verse 8 that he will keep us his people as the apple of his eye and he will continue to hide us and shelter and protect us under the shadow of his wings.
Brothers and sisters, dear friends, make sure you go to God for vindication. That's where we go and be satisfied with his presence above all else again today.
Amen. Let's pray. Oh Lord, we thank you for your faithfulness. Thank you for how close you come to your people, how powerfully you protect us.
Help us to trust you, Lord, and rest entirely upon you. We ask this for Christ's sake. Amen. Thank you,