

Psalm 17

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[0 : 00] into the psalm that we read in the book of Psalms, Psalm number 17, and reading at verse 8. Psalm 17, verse 8, Keep me as the apple of your eye, hide me in the shadow of your wings.

Now, as we see at the beginning of this psalm, it tells us that this is a prayer of David. And actually, there's only, I think, another four of the psalms that have that title.

The psalms, of course, are full of prayers, but this is entitled a prayer, an actual prayer of David. So, as I say, while there are only five psalms that bear that actual title as a prayer of David, there are prayers in all the psalms.

And I think it's one of the things that we should use the psalms for, is to help us in prayer, so that we are able to, as we read through the psalms, and some of the sentiments that are expressed and some of the petitions that are offered, because there are so often declarations, exclamations, petitions in the psalms.

It's a great thing for us to use these things for us to base our own prayer life on, so that we can actually turn around and use these things in our prayer to the Lord.

[1 : 33] And, you know, if we base our prayer upon what the Lord is saying, or what the Word is saying, then we know that we're praying according to His will.

Because we're told that if we pray according to His will, He will hear us, and He will give us that which we have asked for. So, if we are ever praying according to God's Word, then we are definitely praying according to His will.

And if we're praying according to His will, He will hear us, and He will answer us in accordance with that. So, that is why it is so important to use the Word of God as a basis, often, for our prayers.

The Lord loves us coming with His Word, bringing His Word before Himself and saying, Lord, do as you have said. Now, as we see here, the psalmist is in trouble.

He's in real trouble. And as is his custom, he goes to the Lord with his troubles. And that's so important for us to do, because our lives are filled with troubles and filled with worries.

[2 : 40] And while it's all very well to say it's not good to worry, I'm sure every single one of us is prone at one level or another to worry.

Some are more prone to it than others because of a particular disposition or a particular makeup. Some people, they're just naturally not worried. There are other people who naturally are worried. But irrespective of which category we come into, there are always things in life that will cause us some level of anxiety or other.

And that's why it's so important to bring everything to the Lord. And David was certainly that type of person. When you look at his life and when you look at the Psalms, you see that it was a habit and the pattern of his life to bring everything.

And it wasn't just the difficult things and the hard things. And when David was struggling, that he brought things to the Lord. Even when things were going well. Even when he was prospering.

[3 : 44] He would stop and he would acknowledge God and he would say to the Lord, Lord, you filled my life with good things. There were days when David cried before the Lord because of his loss, because of the things that he had lost and the people that he lost.

But there were other times he was crying before the Lord with joy at how good God was to him spiritually and temporally. So, you see, the pattern of David's life was one where he lived his life to the Lord and for the Lord and with the Lord.

And that's why God's own declaration of David was that he was a man after his own heart. He was a special man. There's no doubt whatever. David was an absolutely amazing believer.

But David comes to the Lord. And I suppose there are three key areas in this psalm. We're not going to look at them all. But the three key, as you would almost say, prayers are the three key

statements with regard to the Lord.

And David is, in the first verse, he's saying, Here. In the fifth verse, David says, And we'll look at that just in a moment.

[5 : 01] I'm just going to say one word on that. And then here in verse 8, To hear, to hold, and to hide. And I'm sure we have gone to the Lord with these very same things.

Lord, hear my cry. Lord, hold up my ways. Lord, hide me in the shelter of your wings.

I'm sure we've all prayed these prayers. We've asked the Lord to hear us, to hold us, and to hide us. And so, that's what we find David is doing here.

And when David, at the beginning, really, he says, Here, I just cause, O Lord, attend to my cry. Give ear to my prayer. From lips free of deceit.

From your presence let my vindication come. You have tried my heart. You have visited me by night. You have tested me. And you will find nothing. And so on.

[6 : 02] Now, David, there is no person who probably, in the Bible, acknowledged his sin more clearly and more forcibly than David.

Again, when you go through the Psalms, you will find David pouring out his heart with regard to his sin. And he's saying, Against you, you only.

Against thee, thee only have I sinned. And he kept acknowledging his transgression and his sin.

When Nathan came to see him after his adulterous relationship, he said, I have sinned.

I have sinned before the Lord. And you constantly find David acknowledging his sin. So when David is here saying, You've tried my heart.

You've visited me by night. You've tested me. And you will find nothing. And he talks about his lips being free of deceit. And David isn't here saying, I am an absolutely sinless person.

[7 : 03] And I have never said anything deceitful in my life. Because David knew, or David was to speak so deceitfully. And I think probably one of the worst moments of David's deceit was when he wined and dined Uriah and then put him to death, trying to cover his sinful relationship with Bathsheba.

And that was the thing that the Lord picked up on. Because remember how it says that David, his life was exemplary except with regard to Uriah.

It was the utter deceit where he took him to the palace and he wined him and he dined him. And at the same time gave Uriah a letter which was sealing his own death.

And so at the one hand to say, David would never say, No deceit has ever come from my mouth. I have never acted dishonorably or deceitfully.

What David is specifying here is that in this particular matter, he is being pursued by enemies. False charges are being laid against him.

[8 : 18] And he is saying, Lord, I am innocent of what they are saying. I have not in any wise done what is being said. My lips are clear on this.

My heart is clear. You can try me and examine me. So David is showing that although trouble has come upon him, there isn't a direct link between his actions and the trouble that he is now in.

And I think that's very important to establish. Because sometimes we say to ourselves when something happens, Oh, that's because of this. And the Bible tells us quite clearly that that's not the case.

We find it right throughout that sometimes those who walked closest to the Lord, troubles came upon them. And the Lord shows, say, for instance, in the life of Job, the Lord makes it very clear that although trouble upon trouble came upon Job, it wasn't as a direct link because Job was such the Lord himself said that Job was a righteous man.

So we're not to assume that because a particular form of trouble comes into our life, then it's a direct link to something that we have done. And that's really what David is saying.

[9 : 37] All these troubles have come upon me. But, Lord, I am innocent. There is no direct link. And so that's what David is at pains to establish.

And then in verse 5, he says, My steps have held fast to your paths. My feet have not slipped. Now, if we were looking in the authorized version, it would say, Hold up my goings in thy paths.

Which really is quite different to what is being said here, where it says, My steps have held fast to your paths. But I tend to think that both are true in the sense that David's initial prayer would have been to the Lord to hold his steps.

Because David was always asking for that. You can go elsewhere and you find that this was something David was always asking the Lord to direct his path, to direct his steps, to keep him in the way.

And so David, I think, here is acknowledging that the Lord has kept him. That the Lord is the one who has guided his steps. The steps of a good man are ordered by the Lord.

[10:52] And so David is acknowledging that. And he's saying to the Lord, Lord, you have kept my steps. And if it weren't for you, then I would have fallen.

And I think David is actually saying this to reinforce what we were already saying, that he is innocent of what he is being accused of.

Now, it's a hard thing when you are unjustly accused of anything. Verse 4, With regard to the works of man, by the word of your lips, I have avoided the ways of the violent.

My steps have held fast to your paths, and so on. Now, there's no doubt whatever that he is surrounded by deadly enemies.

Verse 10, They close their hearts to pity. With their mouths they speak arrogantly. And there's all this sense of deceit and violence all around them.

[11:52] And it's very, very difficult when you've tried to walk honestly and uprightly in the way of the Lord. And all that's happening to you is your suffering because of it.

And yet, that's something that's happened right throughout the history of our church. And when I say our church, the history of the church. Right from the very beginning. And it was never more true of the head of our church, the Lord Jesus Christ.

Because his life was one of innocence and perfection. Every word he spoke was beautiful. Even if it was by way of rebuke, it was holy and righteous and just.

And yet, they couldn't stand him. They couldn't bear him. They couldn't wait to get rid of him. They had to agree, even his critics. And they said, never a man speak like this man.

His words were so powerful. And there was such a sense of authority with them. And even his critics were saying that. Where did this man? Where was his learning?

[12:57] He doesn't speak like the scribes and the Pharisees. And these men are taught. This man is not taught. And yet, he speaks with greater authority than any of them. And people marveled at the words of Jesus.

And yet, they couldn't bear them. Because they had to, as it says, he was hated without a cause. So, here's David. And he's surrounded by enemies. And he's praying for deliverance.

And he's praying that the Lord will keep him. The Lord will shelter him and uphold him. And just like David, you and I face many enemies. Now, today, you may be saying to yourself, well, I'm not particularly aware of any great enemies.

Maybe I don't get on with everybody in life. And maybe they've got a wee bit of hassle here and a wee bit of hassle there. But by and large, I don't have people that I would say are real enemies. My friend, by coming to church here today, there is one enemy who has marked you out.

And an enemy who's more powerful and more frightening and more destructive than any human enemy. And this enemy, indeed, works through human agencies.

[14:08] We have many enemies. For instance, we have the world. The world is an incredible enemy of the cause of Christ. Now, very often when we think of the world, we very often tend to think of people.

And I think that's a wrong conception. Because, for instance, you might work with, you might be the only Christian at work. And you have to say, quite honestly, that while their attitudes and their way of thinking and all that is completely different in many ways to use, yet they do not take you aside. In fact, it's a very reverse. You might get on fine with them, but you find yourself that it actually stimulates your Christianity so that you find yourself praying for them.

You find yourself involved with them and sometimes having to give an answer with regard to your faith and so on. The most subtle influence of the world is just that its influence with regard to its thinking, with regard to its philosophies, with regard to its aims and its standards, with regard to where it's going and what it wants.

And these things so often influence our thinking so that we're often sucked aside, we're pulled aside. The world is like a magnet pulling little parts of us aside so that our thinking ceases sometimes to be Christian and we begin to follow the world's ways.

[15 : 44] For instance, the world is an incredibly judgmental place. And it's funny, the world is very easy to criticize the church in these things.

But the world is an incredible... We live in the most extraordinarily judgmental society. And everybody is passing judgment on everybody else.

Everybody seems to be wanting to devour. You pick up your papers and it's all about who will get this person and that person and this person and that person and this person. And if the church begins to think like that, it's gone completely off the rails.

That's worldly thinking. The church has to think in the way that Christ... Judge not that ye be not judged. The church has to think in the way that Christ thought.

And so we've got to... Its attitude is so important. Our attitude, our thinking, our assessment. And we've got to think the way the Bible sets out before us.

[16 : 49] So the world's influence is so subtle and yet it is so powerful. And that's why we need... We need God's help. We need God's grace.

We need to take His guidance to heart. And again, you see, if we get sucked in by the world, it is so...

It will stimulate unbelief within us. It's so deadly. And again, there's so many things we could say with regard to our own heart, which is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked and with regard to the evil one and so on.

But David prays, and then he says, Keep me as the apple of your eye. Hide me in the shadow of your wings. I think we know that the eye is just...

It's so sensitive. It's so tender. And a little, just a tiny, tiny little speck. Somebody was using...

[17 : 52] In the question meeting down in Tolstown Friday night, somebody was giving the example of sin. And they were saying, If you see a little speck of dust, or just a tiny, tiny, tiny little speck there in front of you, it's so tiny that you wouldn't even look at you.

You couldn't really see it unless almost you had a microscope in front of you. Put that in your eye, and it becomes really irritable. That little speck that is so insignificant there, once it's in there, it distorts, it troubles you, it bothers you, and so on.

And the example was given of sin, of how we have to watch sin, although it may seem so little and so trivial and such like, yet when it's part of us, how dangerous and subtle and irritating and spoiling things it is.

But that's just showing how tender the eye is. It is so, so sensitive. And David is saying, Lord, keep me like the most tender, special, sensitive thing that you have.

The eye, there's so much protection around the eye. Spurgeon, in his own inimitable way, says that the eye is protected by the hedge of the eyebrows, by the curtain of the eyelids, and by the fence of the eyelashes.

[19 : 30] And when you think about it, it's a really graphic way of putting it. The hedge of the eyebrows, the curtain of the eyelids, and the fence of the eyelashes.

And God has made us in such a way because we have this incredibly sensitive thing here in the eye that there's all this protection around it to keep it.

So this is what David is saying. Lord, keep me like that. And why is David praying like this?

Because David knows that the Lord loves him.

And you know, that's a wonderful thing. To know that the Lord loves you. And can I ask you today, how do you know that the Lord loves you? Well, do you know how we know the Lord loves us, first and foremost, is from the Word.

If it weren't for the Word of God, we could never know God's love to us, either in the general sense of God so loving the world that He gave His only begotten Son, nor could we know it individually and personally were it not for the Word.

[20 : 40] We would never ever, of our own logic or our own abilities, work out all that God has done for us, or the extravagance of His love, or the purposes of His love, were it not revealed to us in the Word.

And we go to the Word and we find that God loves us. And there are so many instances, and so many phrases, and so many sentences, declaring of what that love is, of how wide it is, and of how deep it is, and of how everlasting it is, and the purposes of that love.

And so David is basing his prayer on the knowledge that he has of God's love to him. And that makes such a difference. David would probably, if David didn't know of God's love with regard to

revelation to us, he might find it hard to say, Oh Lord, keep me, so that I am at the very, very, very, very center of your life, and deal with me as the most sensitive person that you have.

But he can do so, because he knows of God's covenant love, His extravagant love. And so David goes with courage. But not only do we know it from the Word, but we know it through the Word being applied by the Spirit into our heart, so that there is this intimate knowledge.

That's one of the wonderful things that happens when a person is converted. We call Him Abba, Father. There's an immediate, there's a response we see.

[22 : 30] It's not something that we have to say, I wonder if I can dare call God in heaven my Father. No, it happens. It's almost automatic. It's natural.

It's spontaneous. Because the Holy Spirit has given us this knowledge and this assurance. Yeah, you can.

You don't analyze it. It's spontaneous. You say, Oh, Father, my Father. We address Him with confidence. No longer running away like Adam. Running to Him as a child to a Father.

And so this is a wonderful thing. And you know, the more that we spend in the Word, seeking to know, like the psalmist said, one thing I of the Lord desired and will seek to obtain that all days of my life I may within God's house remain that I, the beauty of the Lord, may behold me and admire. This is what you want. And the more you want that, the more the Lord will give to you. And the more He gives to you, the more persuaded you will be of His love.

[23 : 40] It's like John. Jesus loved all His disciples, certainly the eleven of them. But John was termed the disciple whom Jesus loved.

There was an inner three. There were three that seemed to be closer to Jesus, but even out of the three there was this one. The disciple. And we find John as the one. He was the one who lay against Jesus.

There seemed to have been an even closer bond. And the closer you are to the Lord, the more you will be persuaded of that love.

And very briefly, keep me as the apple of your eye. Hide me in the shadow of your wings. Hide me. It's one of the things from our earliest age. We wanted that occasions to be hidden.

I can remember even, it's one of the sort of early memories, standing when there was things that I wasn't too sure about, things I felt uneasy about, with my mum and dad and kind of hiding behind them and looking out.

[24 : 53] I've still got little memories of that, things that used to worry me. I remember there was this huge, it seems bizarre now, this massive grinder, this huge piece of machinery that you would get for grinding stones into gravel.

And when I was a wee boy, I thought it was some huge monster. And I still remember when we would walk by, walking on the other side of my mum and dad and just peering around.

I wanted, I wanted a wee look at it, but I wanted, I wanted to be hidden at the same time. And that's, that's how it is in life. We spend a lot of our life trying to hide.

And when we, particularly if we're scared, if we're worried about anything, we want, we want to hide. Well, here's David and he's, he's in danger. And he says, Lord, you've got to hide me, hide me, hide me under the shadow of your wings.

I remember when I was on the bike ride of the years, 1993, and we, part of where we came in our bike, in our ride, remember us stopping and looking into all these, there's this kind of, it's not a, it wasn't a massive mountain range, but it was still quite a mountain range.

[26 : 15] And it was all these barren, really powerful rocks. It was En Gedi. And that's where David spent a lot of his life hiding from Saul. I found it fascinating.

I couldn't get my eyes away from it to think, this is where David actually, this is where David was actually running and hiding, place full of caves. And you could see in the distance, wee caves. And he spent so much of his time and he was darting in and out, living the life of the outlaw.

Maybe this prayer came from times like that. Lord, I feel so vulnerable. David was after him with 3,000 men. I was thinking that. Where on earth could you hide even although you're in this mountain range?

Trying to hide behind our wee rock here and darting here, darting there. Hide me in the shadow of your wings. How real and powerful that prayer would have been at a moment like that.

And that's what our prayer is as well. Hide me, Lord, in the shadow of your wings. Hide me. That's what Paul said with regard to his salvation.

[27 : 21] To be found in him, not having mine own righteousness. We need to be covered with the righteousness of Jesus. That's what's, we're hidden in him.

We sang at the very beginning, he that doth in the secret place of the Most High reside under the shade of him that does the Almighty shall abide. One of the most moving pictures in the New Testament is that of Jesus.

Remember when he stood over Jerusalem and he said, O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, how often I would have gathered you together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and you would not.

I'm sure you remember the story of the prairie fire, and these great prairie fires are so destructive and almost as far as the eye can see being destroyed.

And on one occasion in one of these prairie fires and everything before it was being burnt, and houses and lands and crops and animals, and after it was all over, this farmer went back to what had been his land.

[28 : 36] and his house was burnt down, and his barns were burnt down, and stables were burnt down, everything. Just such a sense of devastation and distress, and he kicked this burnt stone, black stone, or he thought it was kind of like a black stone, and it disintegrated.

it, but from under it, as he kicked it, came these three or four little chickens, tiny little chicks, and what he had kicked had actually been a mother hen, and she had surrounded them.

If one feather had come out in the blaze, but she was completely burnt, just, it was like, just ash, and sort of like the bone and ash, but he didn't realize it looked like this, and when he kicked it, it was just disintegrated.

But these little chicks miraculously had survived the fire, and that mother had wrapped them in and kept them, and they were protected, and they lived.

She died. What a wonderful picture that is of what Jesus has done for us, because the fire of God's judgment is going to come upon all the world, but Jesus has come to shelter us and to cover us from that fire, and in fact, that fire consumed him.

[30 : 10] He was burnt. He became the total sacrifice in order that we may have life. Well, will you today seek to have this Jesus as your own?

This is a dark, cruel, dangerous world. There is only one place of refuge in it, and that is in Jesus. Will you trust your life to Jesus today?

Let us pray. Oh, Lord, our God, we pray that as we have come under the word and as we have been reminded of your goodness to us and of all that has been done, may we shelter under the outstretched arms of Jesus, arms of invitation, arms of welcome, arms of security, and may we know your peace.

Bless us, we pray. Grant us grace in all that lies ahead of us. Take us all home safely, we pray. Let us thank you, for giving us our sin in Jesus' name. Amen. Thank