

Psalm 17

Introduction and Theme

My habit of trying to talk to Amy when can't hear me (e.g. different room, through walls, etc.) I just assume she can hear me never asking myself whether she can.

1. This psalm can be categorized as a psalm of prayer or petition
2. David cries out to the LORD for justice and deliverance, and he is confident the LORD will answer him
3. We will learn the basis of that confidence as we walk through the psalm
4. Theme: the LORD's justice and deliverance

A. Structure and Poetry

1. Structure:
 - a: 1st plea (1-2)
 - a': Supporting evidence (3-5)
 - b: 2nd plea (6-9)
 - b': Supporting evidence (10-12)
 - c: 3rd plea (13-14a)
 - c': Favorable verdict (14a-15)
2. Poetic elements:
 - a. Overarching theme of a court case with the LORD hearing David's case and a favorable ruling
 - b. Subtle Imagery:
 - 1) The LORD as a Judge trying David's case (1-3)
 - 2) The LORD as a Savior who protects David (6-9)
 - 3) The LORD as a Warrior who delivers David (13-14)
 - c. Word pictures:
 - 1) Lion lurking in hiding place ready to attack its prey (this is also simile since like is used)
 - 2) David's enemies with bellies full of treasure
 - d. Anthropomorphism (giving God human characteristics): the LORD has ears, eyes, hands, wields a sword
 - e. Zoomorphism (giving God animal characteristics): the LORD has wings

B. Teaching

1. David's first plea is that the LORD would grant him justice (1-5)—notice the imagery of the LORD as a righteous judge:
 - a. We find his plea in the first two verses (1-2): **"Hear a just cause, O LORD, give heed to my cry; Give ear to my prayer, which is not from deceitful lips. 2 Let my judgment come forth from Your presence; Let Your eyes look with equity."**

- 1) The first thing we see here is that David is an innocent man pleading for the LORD to hear his case:
 - a) He refers to his case as a **“just cause”** – another way to render this would be **“a righteous cause”**
 - b) David brings his case before the LORD in honesty, not **“from deceitful lips”**
 - c) We don’t know the exact nature of the case, only that it has to do with David being surrounded by his enemies who seek to destroy him
 - 2) The second thing we see here is that David is seeking justice from the LORD: **“Let my judgment come forth from Your presence”**
 - 3) The third thing we see here is that David is depending upon the LORD’s equity:
 - a) The Hebrew word translated as **“equity”** here is the word for uprightness or straightness
 - b) In other words, it refers to the LORD’s ability to make the right decision
- b. David now begins to present the evidence in support of his case (3-5):
- 1) The first bit of evidence is that the LORD Himself has found no offense in David (3):
 - a) **“You have tried my heart”** (e.g. examined)
 - b) **“You have visited me by night”** (e.g. investigated)
 - c) **“You have tested me and You find nothing”**—the word for test here is the word for refining gold which implies the LORD actively testing David to see if he would pass the test
 - d) Interesting note on the tenses:
 - The first three words (tried, visited and tested) are in the perfect tense meaning an action that began in the past but continue in the present
 - The last word (find) is in the imperfect which is often translated in a future sense
 - So, one possible way to understand this would be, **“Even though you have continued to try, investigate, and test me you will find nothing”**
 - 2) The second bit of evidence is that David has shown himself to be committed to walking according to the LORD’s commands (3d-5): **“I have purposed that my mouth will not transgress. 4 As for the deeds of men, by the word of Your lips I have kept from the paths of the violent. 5 My steps have held fast to Your paths. My feet have not slipped.”**
2. David’s second plea is that the LORD would grant him protection (6-12)—the imagery of the LORD as savior isn’t so subtle here because David refers to him directly as Savior:
- a. We find this plea in vs. 6-9:
 - 1) It begins with confidence that the LORD would answer him (6): **“I have called upon You, for You will answer me, O God; Incline Your ear to me, hear my speech.”**
 - 2) David attributes this confidence to the LORD’s faithfulness (7): **“Wondrously show Your lovingkindness, O Savior of those who take refuge at Your right hand From those who rise up against them.”**
 - 3) That David is pleading for the LORD’s protection here is clear because of the two metaphors he uses (8-9): **“Keep me as the apple of the eye; Hide me in the shadow of Your wings from the wicked who despoil me, my deadly enemies who surround me.”--**

David is alluding to the LORD's words from Deuteronomy 32:9-11 (READ) where these two metaphors are used in the context of the LORD protecting Israel as His own people

- b. Just as David provided evidence in support of his case after his first plea, he does the same here after his second plea: (10-12)
 - 1) In his first defense, he focused on his own innocence
 - 2) However, now he focuses on his enemies' guilt:
 - In vs. 8-9 David said they were wicked men who were out to **"despoil"** him (e.g. devastate, destroy, ruin)
 - **"They have closed their unfeeling heart"** (10a) --they are incapable of compassion
 - **"With their mouth they speak proudly"** (10b) -- they are boastful and arrogant
 - **"They have now surrounded us in our steps; they set their eyes to case us down to the ground. He is like a lion that is eager to tear, and as a young lion lurking in hiding places"** (11-12) --They set their hearts on destroying God's people like a lion that is eager to attack and devour its prey (notice the poetic use of simile)
3. David's third plea is that the LORD would deliver him (13-15)—notice the subtle imagery of the LORD as a warrior rising up and delivering David through the use of the sword and His bare hands:
 - a. David calls on the LORD to execute his justice (13-14): **"Arise, O LORD, confront him, bring him low; Deliver my soul from the wicked with Your sword, 14 From men with Your hand, O LORD, From men of the world, whose portion is in this life, And whose belly You fill with Your treasure;"**
 - 1) Notice the imperatives: arise, confront, bring low, deliver—these are all military terms and this is David's call to action for God
 - 2) Justice for David not only involves his rescue, but God's judgment against his enemies
 - b. There is another element to God's justice reflected in how David ends the psalm (READ 14-15):
 - 1) The Hebrew is difficult to translate here which accounts for the various ways different English translations render it
 - 2) Rather than go through the differences, David's point appears to be this:
 - a) The most satisfaction the wicked men of the world receive is from their portion in this life (e.g. treasure, children)
 - b) However, the righteous, like David, will be satisfied with something far more—they will behold the LORD's face and be satisfied with Him

Conclusion

1. What we have in this psalm is a man calling out to God for justice and help
2. The first thing that comes to mind for me is something James wrote in James 5:16-17:
"Therefore, confess your sins to one another, and pray for one another so that you may be healed. The effective prayer of a righteous man can accomplish much. 17 Elijah was a man with a nature like ours, and he prayed earnestly that it would not rain, and it did not rain on the earth for three years and six months."
3. All kinds of people pray, call out to God for help (saved and unsaved alike), but many never consider the kind of people to whom God listens:

- a. James says it's the prayers of a righteous man that get answered
 - b. David wrote in Psalm 34:15, **"The eyes of the LORD are toward the righteous and His ears are open to their cry."**
 - c. Solomon wrote in Proverbs 15:29, **"The LORD is far from the wicked, but He hears the prayer of the righteous."**
4. Do you think there is a lesson in this for us?
- a. When you pray, do you ever ask yourself, "Is there anything straining my relationship with the LORD right now? Any sin that might be getting in the way?"
 - b. When David called upon the LORD in this psalm he was confident the LORD would answer him because he wasn't aware of any sin that was straining his relationship with the LORD
 - c. Remember his words from v. 2-5 (READ)
 - d. When was the last time you examined yourself?