

PSALM 17 – A CRY FOR DIVINE PROTECTION! (Part 2)

III. PROTECTS THE TRUSTING ONES (verses 6-9) – God’s people cannot be harmed by his enemies because God is all powerful and He will not allow anything or anyone to hurt them without His permission. However, God’s people can hurt themselves when they do not trust the LORD. David in this psalm cried to the LORD to notice his trust in Him. David was certain that the LORD will hear his prayer as seen by the phrase “for thou wilt hear me.” The word for “hear” can also mean “answer.” David knew that the LORD would answer him. This was not the first time he prayed to the LORD is obvious. He even used the imperative (“incline”) to highlight the urgency of his request. The certainty coupled with the urgency of his request demonstrates the sincerity of heart and trust. The use of the synthetic parallelism in verse 6 points to this understanding.

Verse 7 -- The LORD’s answer to the prayers of His children was to David the demonstration of the LORD’s marvelous loving kindness. It was not material possession but an intimate relationship with the LORD that measures the closeness David has with his God. What a tremendous testimony! David described God as One who “savest by thy right hand them which put their trust in thee.” There is no better way to describe the LORD than via a personal experience. This personal experience was grounded on God’s truth! It was not just a relationship that David banked on when he prayed for the LORD’s protection. It was the fact that David trusted in Him and nothing else! Just because we are believers does not mean that we trust Him in the face of trials but not in the case of David. The right hand was a symbol of power and strength. This means that David knew that the LORD will demonstrate His power and strength against the enemies of David. These enemies were described as “those that rise up against them [the people of God].” In the face of trials the children of God has no one better to trust in than the LORD. To go to someone else for help is foolishness. That does not mean that God cannot use man to help His people. But prayer must always be the first and not the last resort of every child of God. Pray without ceasing is a lifestyle every child of God must develop. It must not be in times of adversity that he cries to God for protection. It is when he prays daily to the LORD that enables him and people like David to cry to the LORD in times of adversity.

Verse 8 -- When we do not pray all the time it is very difficult to make prayer our first resort in times of need. David’s plea to God (again with a sense of urgency by the use of the imperative for “keep”) was to keep him as the apple of the eye. The apple of the eye literally refers to the pupil or dark spot in the eye. This refers to intimacy and immediate protection just as a person would by reflex protect his eye when something is about to touch it. Using another emblem with similar meaning, David appealed to the LORD to hide him under the shadow of his wings.

This is the gesture of a protective mother hen that would immediately protect her chicks when a bird of prey tries to swoop down on her brood. The protection is swift and very secure. The chicks feel extremely safe. David wants to feel safe in the shadow of the LORD. The feeling of safety is real because he knows that the LORD is able to protect him against all evil.

Verse 9 -- The enemies of David had encircled him and were about to destroy him. The use of synonymous parallelism emphasizes the danger that David found himself in. He described them as wicked and deadly. They were going against the LORD's anointed! David needed the LORD's intervention. David had to ensure that he had not done anything wrong that deserved such treatment. He said that they oppressed him which has the idea of mental and emotional stress. They wanted him dead and David was helpless against his enemies. The condition that David described here helps us to understand the urgency of his cry for the LORD's protection in the earlier verses.

IV. PROTECTS THE STEPS (verses 10-12) – The enemies of David “are inclosed in the own fat.” This is a Hebraism which means that either their heart is hardened or their eyes are blinded by their hatred for David. They will not repent or stop their evil until they succeed in killing David. They speak proudly with their mouth. They believe that they were more powerful than David. They probably had number on their side. Consistently this is the case of the enemies of God's people who bank on numbers to give them that sense of “righteousness” and courage. This folly has pervaded throughout the history of mankind since the time of the Fall of man. Truth is determined by numbers is the heart and soul of what we call “democracy—people power.” David's enemies were beyond repentance and very determined to finish off what they started against the servant of God.

Verse 11 -- Apparently David was not alone in this dilemma. He used the plural pronoun “us” when he said that his enemies “have now compassed us in our steps.” This seems to point us to the time in David's life when King Saul came after him with his elite soldiers. David hid with his men of between four to six hundred men. If it was the time of King Saul then David's enemies were indeed very overwhelming! They truly believed they could not lose as they had the whole country on their side as Saul was king of Israel. David's steps were surrounded by his enemies. Everywhere David and his men went, Saul found them. Saul tried many times to surround David to kill him so that David will not succeed him as king. Saul wanted his dynasty to continue. God has replaced him with David. Saul was incensed with David for this very reason. It was not of David's own doing that he was hunted like an animal by King Saul. The enemies were also pretentious in their conduct. They have “set their eyes bowing down to the earth.” This is a picture of one who dares not look up at the other person in the eye to show his humility. He

keeps looking at the ground as a sign of humility! This was a picture of King Saul who on at least two occasions was spared by David when the latter could have killed him easily. David confronted King Saul on these two occasions to plead with him to leave David alone. Saul acknowledged on both these occasions that David was right and he was wrong to pursue after him and wanted to kill him. He did show some semblance of this show of “humility.” Beware of those who possess false humility as they are dangerous for when your guard is down as you presume their harmless demeanour, they strike and conquer your heart and lead you down the path of sin and death.

Verse 12 – David then used two emblems to describe such individuals. The first was that they are “like a lion that is greedy of his prey.” A lion that is greedy of his prey will stalk his prey till it has the prey between his teeth. He will not relent. He will hunt till the prey is captured. This is the psyche of a lion that is determined on getting its prey. He is ferocious and has not an ounce of pity for its prey. The prey must die! The second emblem is that his enemies were like “a young lion lurking in secret places.” A young lion is strong and seems to possess an unlimited amount of strength and stamina. These are not cubs but young lions that were grown enough to kill and hunt. The difference is in their youthful zeal and stamina as compared to an old lion that tires easily. The young lion will lurk in secret places to ambush its prey. Combined the two emblem together we have a picture of a ferocious lion that is full of determination and stamina and will stealthily stalk and wait for the prey to come to kill it. David’s enemies were exactly like these two emblems. King Saul was such an enemy to David as David fled from his determined efforts to capture and kill David.

V. PROTECTS THE SOUL (verses 13-15) – David urgently requests (use of imperatives in the four verbs, “arise,” “disappoint,” “cast down,” and “deliver”) the LORD (use of vocative for “LORD”) to intervene quickly and deliver his soul. The soul here refers to David’s life. David continues to cry to his LORD based upon God’s covenantal relationship with him for quick intervention. The situation that David felt must have been very dire. He asked the LORD to “disappoint him i.e. David’s enemy.” Note David’s use of the singular to describe his enemy in “him” and “the wicked”. It was a single enemy that David who pursued him. The word for disappoint has the idea of anticipation followed by confrontation. David cried to the LORD to confront his enemy and not allow him to succeed in killing David by anticipating his every move! This happened throughout King Saul’s numerous attempts in killing David from the use of javelin and his elite thousands of soldiers employed to capture and kill David. King Saul nearly succeeded a number of times in capturing David if not for the LORD’s timely intervention. He disappointed King Saul (cf. 1 Samuel 18, 19, 23:26-29). David also cried to the LORD to cast his enemy down i.e. to bring him down to his knees. This means to humble him

completely that he might see the errors of his ways and all his attempts in pursuing David are futile. David asked for deliverance from the wicked. The wicked was described here as “thy sword.” This is a demonstration of David’s wonderful theology! The LORD is absolutely sovereign! David said that the wicked one who wanted him dead was nothing the LORD’s sword! This means that the LORD was the One who had allowed King Saul to pursue after David. As King Saul was the LORD’s sword then it cannot cut David as the sword is always in the control of the Hand that held it. David’s appeal here was based upon His experiential knowledge of the all powerful God who was his LORD!

All believers must learn to view their enemies the way David viewed them. They are the sword of the LORD to teach us trust Him completely and help our faith to grow stronger. He who wields the sword is always in total control. The sword cannot hurt or harm the child of God without the LORD’s permission.

Verse 14 – David continues his reasoning here. The men of King Saul were but the hand of the LORD. No matter how many men King Saul rallied to his side to help him capture and kill David, he and his men can never succeed. They are described here as the LORD’s hand! David further described his enemies as men of the world! They employed the arm of the flesh and know not the way of God. Their ways are characterized by carnal and worldly methods. They have their portion i.e. inheritance in this life. They used carnal means to obtain carnal possessions. King Saul was not concern for spiritual things as he was obsessed to protection and pursuit of his own dynasty. He saw in David a threat to his dynasty and he wanted David dead at all costs! The fact that David was anointed by the LORD to replace him was completely and deliberately ignored! Saul refused to accept the fact that it was the LORD’s will to begin a new dynasty to replace Saul’s dynasty because of Saul’s own failures and sins. Such carnal emphases reveal the kind of heart Saul had. It was carnal and earth bound. The LORD filled their bellies with His hid treasures. The treasure here refers to the babies i.e. the sons and daughters of these carnal men. They are described as the LORD’s treasure. These foolish men like King Saul leave behind their substance to their children! This is to highlight the foolishness of their pursuit! What King Saul tried so hard to obtain by pursuing after David are all temporal. They die and they leave everything behind to their children who could easily abuse and squander everything away. They did not help their children neither did they help themselves. Their lives are wasted and they also wasted the lives of their children by their foolish actions!

Verse 15 – David on the other hand said that as for him, he wanted to behold the face of the LORD in righteousness! The word for “behold” has the idea of “to perceive with intelligence or experience.” This means that it was not blind faith but a faith that was based upon God’s Word.

David focused his sight on his LORD by living and emphasizing righteousness in his life! That was why David told his men not to touch the LORD's anointed by killing King Saul for no one who kills the LORD's anointed would be guiltless. David desired righteousness in his life. He knew that that was the only way to see his LORD. David was not talking about salvation by good works but the evidence or fruit of his salvation was by good works. David further adds that the he shall be satisfied i.e. very fulfilled when he awakes with the LORD's likeness! David believed in his own resurrection! He knew that he will be like His LORD Jesus Christ when he is resurrected!

CONCLUSION – The LORD protects the believer's mouth, paths, those who trusts Him, his steps and his soul! The child of God has nothing to fear, now and into eternity! He will always be safe and secure in the hand of God almighty! Therefore he must long for eternal things like King David. He pursues after righteousness even as he trusts the LORD in the face of his greatest difficulties. The LORD will never fail His children. Like David we shall be filled to the full when we awake with the likeness of Jesus Christ our LORD and our Saviour! Amen.