

PSALM 17 – A CRY FOR DIVINE PROTECTION! (Part 1)

INTRODUCTION

The world is a dangerous place to all believers who live for Christ. Just as the world hated Christ, the world will also hate those who live like Him and for Him. Jesus stated this truth very clearly to all His disciples in **John 15:18-21** (KJV), *“If the world hate you, ye know that it hated me before it hated you. **19** If ye were of the world, the world would love his own: but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you. **20** Remember the word that I said unto you, The servant is not greater than his lord. If they have persecuted me, they will also persecute you; if they have kept my saying, they will keep yours also. **21** But all these things will they do unto you for my name's sake, because they know not him that sent me.”* As enemies of all true believers of Christ, the world constantly seeks to hinder the cause of Christ even as believers obey the Word of God to constantly promote Christ by their good works. This clash between good and evil will remain till the Lord's return in power and glory.

Therefore, as the believer is in constant danger and he is perpetually in a spiritual warfare, God's protection is a most needful element in his life. If he were to fight God's battle alone without God's help, then he would surely lose, for Satan is not an impotent foe. He wields his dastardly deeds with masterly strokes of deception. His cunning devices have secured many victims which include kings and even the wisest man on earth such as King Solomon. Satan and his numerous demons as wily foes to every born again believer will do their utmost to destroy testimonies using every evil way at his disposal. These evil methods would include persecutions which bring pain or seduction and which elicit a slow but sure death to the testimony of the child of God. The struggle that God's children face is not the loss of their salvation, for that is secure as God has assured and promised in passages of Holy Scriptures such as **John 10:29** (KJV), *“My Father, which gave them me, is greater than all; and no man is able to pluck them out of my Father's hand.”* Also **Romans 8:38-39** (KJV), *“For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, **39** Nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.”*

What is at stake is the physical life of every believer. This is the life of testimony that he must live to glorify God so that sinners might see Christ in the lives of God's children. By this and the sharing of the gospel message, God will use His children to save sinners. This makes the life of the believer very important; thus he cannot fall and become a stumbling block to a sinner's salvation! Also, his godly and victorious life can be an encouragement to other believers

especially to those who are new to the faith. David found himself in a situation that caused him to cry to God for protection. This psalm is most apt for all who are living for Christ.

I. PROTECT THE MOUTH (verses 1-3) – Using three imperatives, David appealed to the LORD for help. The help needed was protection against his enemies who tried to destroy him. The first imperative was a cry to the LORD to hear him. David deliberately described himself as “the right.” David had examined his own heart thoroughly and was certain before the LORD that it was not due to sin that the enemies were after him. If it was for sins committed, David would not have dared to make this prayer unto his LORD. It is imperative that every believer realizes this need for honesty and sincerity with his own inner soul! If he is not truthful, then he fools himself and his prayer will not be heard by the LORD because he can never fool God. The second imperative he used was “attend” which has the idea of pleading to “pay close attention.” David described his prayer as crying, i.e. a cry with a shrill sound. This was a cry of urgency and desperation. The third imperative was “give ear.” This means a plea to God to incline His ears to hear David’s prayer. Three imperatives in quick succession but the same emphasis on pleading with the LORD to hear his desperate prayer. The reason is that David’s cry was from unfeigned lips. David examined his own life first before he made this appeal to the LORD for protection.

Verses 2-3 – David cried to the LORD to examine him Himself! David declared that his judgement began from the presence of the LORD, not man and not even himself. Using synonymous parallelism, David asked the LORD to behold with His eyes the things that are equal, i.e. right or fair or just. David was not asking for any injustice from the LORD. The word for “behold” has the meaning of “perception with intelligence.” David asked the LORD to examine both sides fairly and justly. He asked for equality of treatment from his LORD. David was not asking for special treatment because he was God’s child. He pleaded for God to punish the enemies simply because they were David’s enemies. The cry for fairness and justice is amplified here! David further acknowledged that the LORD had proved his heart. The word “proved” means “to investigate” or “to examine.” David said that the LORD had already examined his heart which refers to his motives. David’s motives were not self-centered. He was a man after God’s own heart, i.e. constantly seeking the will of God in his life and seeking only to promote the LORD’s Name. He did not ask for a dynasty but the LORD gave him one anyway because his heart was right with God.

David also said that the LORD visited him in the night. Night time is the time when man would sin against God. Man believes that the darkness would cover their sins and they would not be caught. David was the same man, by day or by night. He said that the LORD had already visited him and examined his life thoroughly. Then David used a very strong word, “tried” to describe

the LORD's examination of his heart and life. The word "tried" means "to purge away by using a refining fire." David claimed before the LORD that the LORD had already put his heart and life under the refining fire to burn and see if there was any dross and impurity. The conclusion was that the LORD would find nothing! This was David's confidence before the LORD. Every believer needs to have this same kind of confidence that David had before the LORD whenever we pray.

David was very determined that no matter what he faced and however bad his adversities might be, he would endure and not allow his mouth to transgress. He refused to murmur against the LORD. The sin of our mouths is one of the easiest ways a believer sins against his LORD. It is no wonder that the Bible teaches us that the measure of a mature believer is his ability to control his mouth! **James 3:1-2 (KJV)**, *"My brethren, be not many masters, knowing that we shall receive the greater condemnation. 2 For in many things we offend all. If any man offend not in word, the same is a perfect man, and able also to bridle the whole body."*

II. PROTECT THE PATHS (verses 4-5) – David realized that one of the ways to fall into sin is to take vengeance into one's own hands. Retaliation is the best form of sinning against the LORD. By nature of the old man, retaliation is the way to go. But for David, the man after God's own heart, it was the way of the LORD that he would go. Emphasizing the works of men by placing the phrase "concerning the works of men" at the beginning of the sentence, David said that no matter what wicked men might do to him he would hold on to God's Word. David knew that he was not wrestling against flesh and blood but against principalities in high places. It was a spiritual warfare that David was wrestling against. If David deviated from God's Word and behaved like his enemies wanting to take vengeance into his own hands, then he would have sinned against the LORD. Satan would have won! Satan's ploy is to get God's servants to fall into sin. David had kept himself from the paths of the destroyer. The "destroyer" refers to a violent person. David refused to become a violent man like his enemies who harassed him and wanted him dead. He rested in this truth that the path of the LORD was the way he must tread no matter how the enemies might try to push him out of it by causing him to sin!

Verse 5 – Using the infinitive as the imperative, which emphasizes both duration and determination, David cried to the LORD to hold his goings in God's paths. It was as if David was waning in his resolve to follow God's Word. He pleaded for the LORD to help and it was a constant and continuous help that he sought from the LORD. Using synthetic parallelism, David asked the LORD to hold him fast so that his footsteps would not slip. He was determined with God's help never to sin against the LORD. David was already obeying the Word of the LORD. He could not do it alone. He asked the LORD to protect him so that he might continue to walk in

the paths of the LORD as his enemies constantly tried to push him off these paths. The moment David sinned, his enemies would have won. David refused to fall into sin!