

**Psalm 17: 1-15; “Christ’s Perfect Prayers”, A Sermon prepared for those gathered  
at Premier Estates Nursing Home, by Pastor Paul Rendall,  
on the afternoon of March 4<sup>th</sup>, 2018.**

If you would like to know and understand better, the prayers of our Lord Jesus Christ which were offered up in the days of His flesh, you should read the Psalms. The Psalms, you probably know, were written by David, and they are at many points, an accurate representation of his thoughts and feelings while undergoing trials and difficulties and persecutions from wicked men. At many points they speak of David’s triumphing over his enemies, by means of the help of God towards him; yet when you read them more carefully, asking for the help of the Holy Spirit to truly understand what is being said, you see that David was speaking not only of himself, but also prophetically in relation to Christ Himself; the Christ who would in the fullness of time come and redeem Him to God. The prayers found in this Psalm do go far beyond David’s experience, simply because David’s integrity; all of his uprightness in heart, speech, and life, came from the grace of Christ

This leads me to say that you and I can learn from David’s prayers here because they were also, in a greater sense, the prayers of Christ. You and I will learn to triumph in situations of spiritual difficulty, and oppression of spirit, and persecution by evil men, when we are looking to God in faith, and trusting in what Christ has accomplished on our behalf. As Christians, we should come to understand in time, that it is always because of the perfections of Christ’s prayers on our behalf, and His submission to the Father’s will on our behalf, and the Father’s imputing His righteousness and imparting His grace to our thoughts and prayers and actions, that is the reason that we will come to have the actual victory over all of our spiritual enemies; the world, the flesh, and the Devil. We want to look first at Christ’s prayer that the Father would vindicate Him in His righteous cause, in verses 1-5. 2<sup>nd</sup> – We will look at Christ’s prayer that the Father would wondrously show Him His marvelous lovingkindness. (verses 7-14) And 3<sup>rd</sup> – I want you to see Christ’s prayerful and certain expectation that His prayers would be answered. (verse 15)

**1<sup>st</sup> of all – We want to look at Christ’s prayer that the Father would vindicate Him in His righteous cause.** (verses 1-6)

“Hear a just cause, O Lord, attend to my cry; give ear to my prayer which is not from deceitful lips.” “Let my vindication come from Your presence; let Your eyes look on the things that are upright.” “You have tested my heart; You have visited me in the night; You have tried me and have found nothing; I have purposed that my mouth shall not transgress.” “Concerning the works of men, by the word of Your lips, I have kept away from the paths of the destroyer.” “Uphold my steps in Your paths, that my footsteps may not slip.” “I have called upon You, for You will hear me, O God; incline Your ear to me, and hear my speech.” Now, there is no doubt that these words can be understood of David’s sincerely praying that the Lord would give ear to his prayer; that he did not have deceitful lips, and that he would have the vindication of his righteous cause come from God.

I would assert to you that every Christian ought to be able to pray in this way based upon their sincere efforts at righteous speaking and acting; but they should not pray this way based upon their claim of having, on their own, evaluated their own righteous thoughts and actions, and then their having concluded that they have perfectly ordered their way before God and men. Rather, the Christian should lift up their prayers to God in the name of Jesus. They should pray to God as those who have come to realize that all of the vindication of their own righteousness (all of their being free of any particular charge concerning their cause of doing right) comes from God alone, through what Christ has done on their behalf to cover them and their righteousness with His perfect righteousness.

Your being vindicated in the sight of God and men is not based upon your own merits as deserving to be vindicated from any charge. For we all stumble in many ways, and if any man is able to bridle his tongue he is a perfect man, able to bridle the whole body as well. (James 3: 2) Rather, your appeal to God to vindicate your cause in righteousness is based upon the perfections of Christ in His prayers and His actions on your behalf. All of Christ's holy and righteous actions form the basis of the believer's righteousness being pleasing to the Father. The believer is accepted in the Beloved, Jesus Christ. God the Father said at Christ's baptism: "This is My Beloved Son, in whom I am well-pleased." The Christian who is wise is not at all self-justifying; he should understand if he is reading the Bible correctly, that he cannot at all be self-righteous, and prove anything to God. He knows, or he should know, that the only one who could truly pray the things that are prayed here in these verses, in all sincerity, with complete freedom of a condemning conscience, is Christ Himself.

The Lord Jesus never had any one word come out of His mouth from deceitful lips. The Father's eyes looked upon nothing but the uprightness of His thoughts when He examined His heart. And when God the Father visited Him in the night, the Lord Jesus could honestly say, "You have visited me in the night; You have tried me and have found nothing." I wonder if we realize as Christians that God does come to us in this way of holy visitation, to our hearts and minds at night, and He tries us? And when He tries us, what does He find? Complete perfection like the perfection found in Christ? I think not! If He did find this, that person would not need to pray in Jesus' name. But for David to say that God found nothing of sin in him was purely because of God's grace to him to help him so that He would find nothing in his heart that was not right.

On the other hand, when God visited Christ Jesus His Son, He never found one impure thought or motive; He found nothing of sinful selfishness, He found nothing of hatefulness in a sinful sense. When Christ purposed that His mouth would not transgress, He did so by the strength of His own righteous character in the motions of His heart, and in the actions of His loving obedience to God which came out in the way that He lived His life. He completely passed the test of the Father's scrutiny when He came into contact with those whom He spoke to. His heart was indeed perfect in that ultimate sense that He was completely free from sin. But when each of us looks at our own heart, none of us can say this; and if we do, we are liars and the truth is not in us.

This is why you and I need to see Christ as the primary one praying in this Psalm, and David following Him according to all of the prophecies given to him concerning Christ. For all of David's righteousness and uprightness of heart, and all of his righteous speech and actions did not come from himself, naturally being that way. They came from knowing the strength of God's grace and help to him. David trusted in God, and then having been justified by faith in the Christ who was yet to come, He came to know the reality of Christ's grace, even a thousand years before Christ was born. God bestowed this grace upon David, because He knew that when His Son came to earth and took upon Himself a human nature, and set up residence among men, He would be completely faithful where David would only be partially faithful. God would see David as complete in Christ, and He would see him as sincere in His righteous thoughts and prayers and actions, and He would accept them all for Christ's sake.

Christ's prayers, as found in this Psalm, are the perfect representation of the righteous thoughts and feelings that He had; thoughts and feelings which He expressed as prayers to God the Father as He faced the monumental trials of oppositions which came to Him from the self-righteous Pharisees, concerning what He had come to do. In this holy sense, He kept away from the paths of the destroyer; the Devil as he was the Evil One who was working through the false system of the theology of the leaders of Israel of Jesus' day. They thought that they were justified by their own works of ceremonial obedience to the law, and they thought that an outward obedience to all of the moral commandments of God was sufficient to please God. But when Christ came into the world, He did not come to call those who already thought of themselves as righteous, but rather, He came

to call sinners to repentance. He said that it is not those who are well who need a spiritual Physician, but rather those who are sick. Let us understand that all that the Lord Jesus went through, and all of His righteous words and deeds that He did when He walked upon the earth, were all done on behalf of the sinners who would trust in Him for salvation. If you have never seen yourself as a sinner, it will be hard to see yourself as needing a Savior. And thus you will trust in your own righteousness to vindicate you. But the true believer always trusts in Christ's righteousness to save them and cover them and make up for the many imperfections in their obedience. Ask yourself now – Do I do this?

**Now 2<sup>nd</sup> – I would like you to think with me about Christ's prayer that the Father would wondrously show Him His marvelous lovingkindness.** (verses 7-14)

“Show Your marvelous lovingkindness by Your right hand, O You who save those who trust in You from those who rise up against them.” “Keep me as the apple of Your eye; hide me under the shadow Your wings, from the wicked oppress me, from my deadly enemies who surround me.” The prayer of David, and the prayer of Christ, of whom David was a type, was that He would be shown marvelous lovingkindness, steadfast love, from the Father, during all the time that He was being oppressed by the wicked, during the time of His earthly ministry. He was indeed “the apple of the Father's eye”. Now you should understand that the Father loved His only-begotten Son more than all the world of men taken all together in all generations; and yet, He sent Him into the world to be our Savior from sin. In order to do this, Jesus had to be born of a woman, the virgin Mary, and born under the law, so that we who believe might then be able to receive the redemption as sons. The reason that God the Father could show mercy to David, and to every believer in all generations was that He did keep the Lord Jesus as the apple of His eye; He did hide Him under the shadow of His wings from the wicked who oppressed Him.

You will recall the many times that Jesus rose up early and went to a lonely place to pray. It was to have fellowship and communion with His Father; the One who according to His life in the flesh was His God. It was there that the Father made known to Him His marvelous lovingkindness and let Him know of His steadfast love toward Him in the midst of all of His trials and the oppressions of spirit that He must have felt during the time that He spoke the truth to the multitudes, and also with the scribes and Pharisees and rulers of Israel, who hated Him, for the most part. The Father showed Him this marvelous lovingkindness during those times when they wanted to kill Him. You may recall in Luke chapter 4 that Jesus came to Nazareth where He had been brought up, and His custom then was to go into the synagogue on the Sabbath day, and stand up to read. At that particular time, He was handed the scroll of Isaiah, and so He opened the scroll and found the place where it was written; “The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me, because He has anointed Me to preach the gospel to the poor.” “He has sent Me to preach deliverance to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those are oppressed, to preach the acceptable year of the Lord.”

“Then He closed the book, and gave it back to the attendant and sat down.” “And the eyes of all who were in the Synagogue were fixed on Him.” “And He began to say to them, “Today this Scripture is fulfilled in your hearing.” “So all the people were bearing witness to Him and marveling at the gracious words which were proceeding out of His mouth.” “And they said, ‘Is this not Joseph's son?’” “And He said to them, ‘You will surely say this proverb to Me, ‘Physician, heal yourself!’” “Whatever we have heard done in Capernaum, do also here in Your country.” And then He went on to tell them that there were many widows in Israel in Elijah's day, and he was only sent to one of them, and many lepers in Israel in the time of Elisha the prophet, and none of them was cleansed except Naaman the Syrian.” And so the people there stumbled over His words to them which were telling them that God has a special purpose in the deliverance of people from their physical ailments. It is so that they will trust in God, and do and keep His word, by faith in a Savior. Jesus was implying that they too needed to be saved from all of their sins, but that only

God could bring them that blessing. They could not expect to be healed physically or to be saved from their sins, if they refused to think that all of these great blessings came from God's mercy alone; and that He would bestow them only upon those that He wished to bestow them. This did not seem fair to them.

And so, they became very angry and rose up and thrust Him out of the city; and they led Him to the brow of the hill on which their city was built, that they might throw Jesus down over the cliff." But then it says – "He passed through the midst of them and went on His way." In another place He would say – "My time is not yet"; that is, to be taken to be put to death." The Father was keeping Jesus as the apple of His eye. Eventually, however, His time would come, and Judas would betray Him, and as they were coming to arrest Jesus in the garden of Gethsemane, the Father once more demonstrated to these wicked men that Jesus was the apple of His eye. It says in John 18: 4 – "Jesus therefore, knowing all things that would come upon Him, went forward and said to them, 'Whom are you seeking?' "They answered Him, 'Jesus of Nazareth.'" "Jesus said to them, 'I am He.'" "And Judas, who betrayed Him, also stood with them." "Then – when He said to them, 'I am He,'" they drew back and fell to the ground." That was the Father demonstrating to them His marvelous lovingkindness to His Son; that they never could have taken Jesus unless it was His will that it be so.

And so, this is the reason that David could pray in the way that he did when his deadly enemies had surrounded him and sought to take his life. He knew, as you and I should know, that escapes from death belong to the Lord, as it says in Psalm 68:20. But we now know, just as really as David knew in his day, that it is because of God's kindness and His faithfulness in giving us such a Savior, that we are assured that He will keep us, as well, as the apple of His eye. He can keep us in perfect peace when our minds are stayed upon Him. (Isaiah 26: 3) Nothing moves, and nothing harm us, while we trust in Him, as the song goes. And all the sufferings that we shall go through, as believers, are all meant for our good, and they will glorify Him, as we know that God's word says. "And we know that all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose."

**And 3<sup>rd</sup> – I want you to see Christ's prayerful and certain expectation that His prayers would be answered.**

"As for me, I will see Your face in righteousness; I shall be satisfied when I awake in Your likeness." As I believe that this Psalm has particularly had reference to the vindication of the righteous cause of the Lord Jesus, to undertake the salvation of all of God's elect people, I believe that He was looking forward in these words to seeing His Father's face in righteous approval of His glorious work of redemption which He would accomplish at the cross. The Father does not have a literal physical face, but He does have a spiritual face, which is called His Presence in verse 2. "Let my vindication come from Your presence." Such was what happened when the Lord Jesus was raised from the dead with power by the Holy Spirit, and when He passed through the heavens in His ascension and when He entered heaven and sat down on His Father's throne at His right hand until all of His enemies are made a footstool for His feet.

When this was prayed by David, it was a prayer of faith looking forward to the resurrection of the dead; to the day when Christ would appear a second time, apart from salvation, and when he would awake at the voice of Christ and see the Lord's face in righteousness. This is what we, too, look forward to; to seeing Christ's face in righteousness, that Day when we shall see Him face to face, and be glorified and forever satisfied with being made in His likeness. O that everyone here today, will trust in the Lord Jesus for His righteousness and salvation; that all of His grace may come to you, to save you and satisfy your souls both now, and forever. If you believe in Him, you will know the reality of being kept as the apple of His eye, and He will hide you under the shadow of His wings.

