

HIDE ME IN THE SHADOW OF YOUR WINGS

Psalm 17: 1-15 – Pastor Richard P. Carlson

This 17th Psalm is a psalm that begins with David's plea and prayer for God to hear him and it ends in a praise of satisfaction. How many of us are ever truly satisfied? When can we ever say we are satisfied with what we have done, what we have given or what we have finished? Our lives seem to be forever filled with the sense of all that is incomplete, imperfect, and fragmented. How can we be satisfied? Jesus gave to His disciples and to all of us the beatitudes. The 4th beatitude (Mt. 5: 16) is about this matter of being satisfied. "Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied." Our emptiness can be filled in Jesus. Our deepest longings can be met in Him. Our created purpose is to know the Lord, to love Him, and to fully do His will. All other hungers will re-occur and persist. Only our hunger for God can be satisfied. There is an assurance that comes to us as believers which drives out all fear and frustration. We know we still need to grow and that there is much more ground to be covered, more land to be occupied, and more battles to be fought and won. Yet, in spite of all we know is ahead of us, we know in Jesus that we are called, appointed, set apart, loved, forgiven, and predestined by God to be conformed to the image of God's Son. This knowledge and awareness is not arrogance. It is simply a joyous realization of God's gift. We don't need to spend much of our day taking our spiritual pulse, checking up on our spiritual status, and constantly asking for reports about how we are doing. No, we belong to Jesus. We know it. This assurance liberates us to love and serve Him. It fills us with God's own Holy Spirit, whose desire is that we walk righteously.

Psalm 17 is a psalm that proceeds and doubles back; it goes forward three steps and then backward two. As I poured out my soul to the Lord this week, seeking a handle to preach this psalm to you, I saw a basic cohesiveness in the psalm based on David's deep need for the Lord and his dependence upon the Lord. Sadly, sometimes we can resent finding out somebody needs us and we may deny their request or ignore their need. With God, He never ignores us, and if our needs are truly needs that He has led us to recognize, we can be certain He will not deny meeting our needs, but as Philippians 4: 19 declares, "And my God will supply every need of yours according to His riches in glory in Christ Jesus. As I made this discovery about Psalm 17, the psalm then began to fall into place. It fell into four categories or four elements of need. They are all needs we can address to God: (1) I need you to hear me, justly, (2) I need you to have me, completely, (3) I need you to hold me, tightly, and (4) I need you to hide me until I awake in Your likeness. As we importune our Lord and lay these 4 pleas before Him, let us each expect His supply for us, even as He provided for David. What are these four needs?

I NEED YOU LORD, TO HEAR ME JUSTLY. (I.) Notice verse 1 and 6. “Hear a just cause, O Lord; attend to my cry! Give ear to my prayer from lips free from deceit!...I call upon You, for You will answer me, O God; incline Your ear to me; hear my words.” This plea and petition is eager. David jumps into this psalm with no fanfare—just a plea for God to listen to him justly. Being falsely accused, David the psalmist and singer asserts his innocence. David describes his cause by the Hebrew word, **tsedheq**—just, right. This is a painful cry or literally, an outcry. David is quick to remind the Lord that there is no hypocrisy in what he says. He promises God that his prayer does not come from deceitful lips. There is no pharisaic pride here in David’s words. David isn’t saying he is sinless. He is only declaring to the Lord that in this present distress he is in, the distress has truly not been occasioned by his own sins. David is suggesting the truth when he is implying in his prayer that it is only when we are not regarding iniquity or deceit in our hearts that God can hear us. Psalm 66: 18,19 declares, “If I had cherished iniquity in my heart, the Lord would not have listened. But truly God has listened; He has attended to the voice of my prayer.” Beloved, are some of us in a bind, in a situation where honestly we are being falsely accused? God help us to pray with David, “I need You to hear me justly.” “Listen to my righteous and just cause.”

In verse 6, David is reiterating his cry to be heard by the Lord. He is becoming more specific, “Incline Your ear, hear my words.” Notice David was coming to God in faith as he says in verse 6—“I call upon You, for You will answer me, O God.” Have you ever noticed how hard it is for us to listen to a just cause. We are so prone, all of us to judgment. We jump to conclusions. We even are prone to judge those needing our help—we judge them by jumping to false conclusions. David is pleading with God to hear him without jumping to a false or unwarranted decision. One story always stays with me about the old woodcutter who lived in a tiny village. Although very poor, cutting wood and dragging it out of the forest to sell it, and living hand to mouth in poverty, yet the woodcutter was envied by everyone because of a beautiful white horse he owned. Even the king coveted his treasure because of the horse’s splendor, majesty, and strength. Many people offered the woodcutter fabulous prices for his horse. The woodcutter would always say, “The horse is not a horse to me; it is like a friend, a person, not just a possession. How could I ever sell my friend? The woodcutter was poor, but he always refused to end his poverty by selling his horse. One morning, the horse was missing from his stable. The village-people all told him, “What a fool you are! You could be rich in getting whatever price you wanted for your horse. Now you are only a poor cursed woodcutter.” He replied, “How can you judge? All I know is that the horse is gone and the stable is empty. Is it a curse or a blessing? Who can say? We see only a fragment of life.” The people laughed at him for his crazy

words until the white horse returned to the stable from the forest 15 days later. The white horse returned with a dozen wild horses. The village people said to the woodcutter, “You were right, old man. It is a blessing. Forgive us!” The woodcutter replied, “You go too far. Only can I say for sure that the dozen horses returned with the white horse. Good or bad, I don’t know. We only see a fragment of our lives. But inside, the people knew it was a blessing for the wild horses could be tamed and trained and sold for money. One day, the old man’s only son decided to break one of the wild horses, until the horse threw him off. Both the son’s legs were broken. The village people said, “Old man, you were right. The horses were not a blessing, but a curse. Now you will have no one to help you in your old age.” Weeks later, the country was propelled into war. Every son had to go to war. Every boy had to join the army. Only the old man’s son was excluded because he was injured and recovering. There was little chance the boys going to war would return to their home. The village people said, “Old man, you were right.” Then they wept. They went on, “God knows your son’s accident was a blessing. His legs may be broken, but at least he is alive and he is with you. Our sons are gone forever.” The old man responded, “It is impossible to talk with you; you always draw conclusions. No one knows. Say only this. “Your sons have gone to war and mine did not. No one knows if it is a blessing or a curse. No one is wise enough to know but God. Only God knows. The old woodcutter was right. Final judgment is in God’s hands. He doesn’t jump to conclusions. God sees the whole picture. We all need God to hear us justly as we cry out to Him for help, without deceit. Secondly,

I NEED YOU LORD, TO HAVE ME, COMPLETELY. (II.) Verses 2, 3 are full of possessive words as David speaks of God as belonging to him. Psalm 23 is known for this—“The Lord is my shepherd.” Here in these two verses, I see the words “me” “my” and “I” seven times. Listen! “From Your presence, let **my** vindication come! Let Your eyes behold the right! You have tried **my** heart, You have visited **me** by night, You have tested **me**, and you will find nothing; **I** have purposed that **my** mouth will not transgress. With regard to the works of man, by the word of Your lips, **I** have avoided the ways of the violent.” David is grabbing hold of God in prayer and wanting and needing the Lord to have him, and have him and possess him completely. Look at these six pleas for God to have him or possess him. David is pleading with God **(1) Have my presence in yours.**—v. 2a. David is saying, “From Your presence, let my vindication come. David knew just like Job did that any justice we will ever find must flow from God’s presence. **(2) Have me vindicated as Your eyes behold the right.** Notice how much David’s desire for God to see the truth and vindicate him is like Job in Job 213: 1-6. Beloved, we who know the Lord, can claim His vindication. Isaiah 54: 17 tells us, “This is the heritage of the servants of the Lord and their vindication is from Me,

declares the Lord.” **(3) Have my heart tried so You find nothing amiss.** Verse 3 declares, “You have tried my heart. David is asking the Great Searcher of our hearts to prove his heart is right in the matter he has been falsely accused of. The Hebrew word for try here is to assay—meaning to examine metals to test their genuineness. Lord, we may pray, test me, try me, prove me—and as Job said in Job said in Job 23: 10. “But He knows the way that I take; When He has tried me, I shall come forth as gold.” **(4) Have a home in me for Your night visits.** I read in verse 3, “You have visited me by night. You have tested me, and You will find nothing.” In a time when we can be alone with God without pretense, when our timeless Lord can speak to us as He spoke to Samuel as a child, may our home and our heart be open to God’s Spirit in night visits. In night visits, I have found that God is all about purifying me and telling me His plans for purifying me. Night visits are so often God’s time to come to inspect, to test, to examine, and to initiate plans for our purification, for making us more like Him. Beloved, it is a special having or possessing of the Lord when He chooses to have you or me for one of His night visits. His word may not be an easy word, but we all need even the wisdom of Eli, whom we don’t elevate as a great man of God. Yet, Eli was certain God had paid a night visit to Samuel, the young boy, the son of Elkanah and Hannah. When Samuel told him what the Lord said, Eli did not rebut it or argue with God’s word to Samuel in the night season. He said, in I Samuel 3: 18, “It is the Lord. Let Him do what seems good to Him.” **(5) Have my mouth purposed not to transgress.** A purposed mouth by God having our mouth as His mouthpiece means we are held back from any hasty or unseemly utterance. When wrongly accused, most of us are ready to attack, and our verbal attacks often indict us, rather than vindicate us. **(6) Have my lips avoid the words of the violent.** What I see in verse 4 is David reading the lips of his Lord, learning to say what God says—listening to the words of God’s lips, and thus avoiding the ways of the violent who curse, who swear, who become vulgar, and who use anything they can find from the past to bring us or others down. Thirdly,

I NEED YOU LORD, TO HOLD ME TIGHTLY. (III.) Notice in verse 5 that David is confessing his holding fast to the paths of the Lord. I think of the words of the prophet Habakkuk in Habakkuk 3: 19 where he says, “The Lord God is my strength, who makes my feet nimble as a hind’s feet, as the feet of a deer or mountain goat and He sets me to range the heights.” But David obviously knew as we all need to know that we cannot stay steadfast only in our own strength. Go down to verse 8, the first part. “Keep me as the apple of your eye.” The Hebrew word for keep or guard or hold is **shamar**. This is a huge word. It means to hedge about with thorns, to guard, to protect, to attend to, to keep, to watch over, to take care of, to preserve, to hold me surely and to look narrowly to observe my every

step. Now David uses this Hebrew verb to apply to him as if God is guarding and keeping the apple or pupil of His own eye. The Hebrew word for apple or pupil of the eye is **iyshown**. It literally means a small or diminutive man, the little man of the eye, the pupil, the ball of the eye. Few parts of the body are so well guarded as our eyes. Study how God has arranged our eyes inside our skull so that it isn't easy to put out our eyes. Think of what David is asking for and think of God's promise that He will do so. David wants to not only hold fast to the Lord. He wants the Lord, he needs the Lord to hold fast to him and guard him as being as precious to Himself as His very own eyes. The word eye is rare, it is **bath**. It means the daughter of the eye. It is the Hebrew expression for the little towns and villages like Bethlehem, the daughters of a city. The picture is that the pupil or apple, the little man of the eye has its birth through the daughter of the eye. In the pupil of the eye, a person sees his own image reflected in miniature. The miniature image is like a Bethlehem city. Why guard such a small little thing? We all do, and David would lead us to cry to God to guard us as the pupil of His own eye.

David learned this figure of speech from the law of Moses in Deuteronomy 32: 10. Here, Moses is speaking of how God took care of His people Israel. I read, "But the Lord's portion is His people, Jacob His allotted heritage. He found him in a desert land, and in the howling waste of the wilderness; He encircled him, He cared for him. He kept him as the apple of His eye." Moses used a different word for kept him—not **shamar**, but **natsar**. Natsar means to guard, to protect, to maintain, to keep, and to preserve. Lord, I need you to hear me justly, have me completely, hold me tightly, and fourthly and lastly,

I NEED YOU LORD, TO HIDE ME UNTIL I AWAKE IN YOUR

LIKENESS. (IV.) Here is this last long section from verse 7-15. I see ten ways David wants to be hidden in God. We sing, "Thou blest Rock of Ages, I'm hiding in Thee." We sing, "Rock of Ages, cleft for me, let me hide myself in Thee." Look with me at these hiding ways of God that David is crying out for. **(1) Hide me safely.** Verse 8b is our message title. I love these words: "Hide me in the shadow of Your wings." David is crying to be hidden under God's wings. As a bird or hen guards her young, David is crying out for God to hide him under His divine wings. **(2) Hide me lovingly.** Notice verses 7, 10. "Wondrously show your steadfast love, O Savior of those who seek refuge from their adversaries at your right hand... Contrast this steadfast love with David's enemies in verse 10—They close their hearts to pity." **(3) Hide me securely.** Notice verse 9. "Hide me from the wicked who do me violence, my deadly enemies who surround me." David saw his enemies as encircling him with murderous intent. This vicious intent reminds me of a time out deer hunting when I was hunting with another man. I had gotten my

deer and field dressed it completely. It was in the back of the truck. Wisely I took my gun with me as I told my hunting buddy I would go down over a hill and into a large valley and flush out a huge stand of aspens. He promised he would not shoot toward me. I was about a mile from him when I stepped up on a knoll and I noticed a coyote dead ahead of me. Then I looked around me as coyotes had surrounded me. I had blood on my shoes and they had tracked me down. They had vicious intent. Thankfully, I had my 30-06. I raised it and fired. Like cockroaches when you turn the light on, those coyotes made a fast exit. David was surrounded not by coyotes, but murderous wolves, or grizzlies whose purpose was, v. 9 to do him violence, as deadly enemies to surround him, and open their mouths arrogantly, v. 10 to devour him. . **(1) Hide me safely. (2) Hide me lovingly. (3) Hide me securely. (4) Hide me intentionally from all harm.** Notice verse 11. They have now surrounded our steps; they set their eyes to cast us to the ground. Complete overthrow of David and his followers was the intent of his enemies. This could well be Saul and his followers or it could be for a short time, David's son Absalom and his followers. **(5) Hide me from ambush as a wise father would.** Speaking of the enemy in verse 12, David says, He, perhaps Saul is like a lion eager to tear, as a young lion lurking in ambush. David is telling God that he felt entrapped and he needed to be hidden—something God did for him many times. **(6) Hide me protectively.** Notice verse 13a—where David cries out, “Arise, O Lord! Confront him, subdue him.” **(7) Hide me powerfully behind Your own sword.** Verse 13b declares, “Deliver my soul from the wicked by Your sword.” It is a frequent picture in the Word that God is the Lord God of Hosts who carries a sharp sword whose very Word is a sharp sword. **(8) Hide me by Your hand.** Notice verse 14a—“From men by Your hand, O Lord. Remember that hiding us by His omnipotent hand is not a problem for the Lord. **(9) Hide me from having a life that looks and feels and thinks and dreams like the world.** Notice David is praying, “Lord, deliver me from men of the world whose portion is this life. This means deliver me from those whose devotion is to the world, to the spirit of the world, the ways of the world, the music of the world, the companions of the world, the activities of the world, the pleasures of the world, who think the things of this world are their only lasting treasure that satisfy them fully. The rest of this verse makes me want to cry—for You, Lord, open the wombs of the enemy and give them treasure—babies—they are satisfied with children and with leaving their abundance to their children. It sounds beautiful—but that's the end of it. Notice the contrast—v. 15—**(10) Hide me until I behold Your face and am satisfied when I awake in Your likeness.** Oh, how I love my seven children and 16, soon 18 grandchildren, but they are not the end of my satisfaction. My ultimate satisfaction is in You, Lord. I read, “As for me, I shall behold Your face in righteousness; when I awake, I shall be satisfied with Your likeness.” Hear/Have/Hold/Hide!