

A meditation on Psalm 17—attributed as a prayer of David

Outline:

- Verses 1-2: Introduction
- Verses 3-5: Defense of innocence and righteousness
- Verses 6-7: Declare Yahweh's covenant love and faithfulness
- Verses 8-9: Prayer for Deliverance (part 1)
- Verses 10-12: Description of adversaries as evil
- Verses 13-14: Prayer for Deliverance (part 2)
- Verse 15: Statement of psalmist's focus

I'm not good at forced Scripture memorization. I can do it, but it really doesn't have meaning. Better to be within the word, to have continuous reading and study, in order to bring Scripture to mind, to bring meaning into life. That's how it works for me.

It's also helpful at times to study outlines and patterns, as in Psalm 17. There are so many helpful study Bibles and resources that are available to help us learn more about what we read and what we pray in Scripture.

If you are looking for something to do, some discipline for the season of Lent, maybe praying the Psalms is something that you would like to do. You could pick a different Psalm each day or pick out one Psalm to use for the week and pray through it daily. It seems like the more times we read and pray through a Scripture passage, different things stand out.

Those things that stand out in Psalm 17:

- Verses 6-7: hear my prayer, show the wonder of your love – What does the wonder of God's love look like through prayer? I always think of two stories in particular about someone who prays. First, I think of growing up as a child in a household that included my great grandmother. She wasn't an extremely charismatic person, but I do remember her hands folded in prayer. I can't help but think that she prayed for God to show the wonder of God's love to her family and community. I now have a set of porcelain praying hands in my office that my mom once gave as a gift to her grandmother (my great grandmother). I had asked my mom if I could have it if she ever wanted to get rid of them. I am not a huge fan of knick-knacks and this one in particular isn't valuable except for the value of what it reminds me of – seeing my grandmother praying for the wonder of God's love. Second, I think of my husband, who lost his father at a young age. He doesn't have very many of his own memories of his dad. What he does remember is seeing his father in his chair with his Bible open and smoking his pipe. He, too, was most likely praying for the wonder of God's love to care for his children and his family. My husband has his pipe tobacco box, not because he smokes a pipe, but because it reminds him of that memory of his father praying.
- Verse 8: God's love is protective and it surrounds us even when we can't find the words. God's love is there to guide us in our prayers as we turn to Scripture for help and comfort.

- Verse 15: This is the psalmist's statement of focus – his belief that he is righteous because God is righteous through him.
- Psalm 17 is a prayer to God that affirms our faith in the face of adversity. It is a place to turn to in order to give us proof that life can go on beyond a crisis; beyond those who may tear us down and come after us, as in the case of David. It becomes a reminder to use that faith can be an exercise in hope. We may not always feel like it and we may lose sight of the hope that we have in God, but those are the times that we can open our Bibles and read and read and read so that God can open our eyes to that hope once again.

(helpful resource – Larry Broding on Psalm 17 and various commentaries on the Psalms)

**This was the meditation given for Lenten worship on Wed., Feb. 24th*