

Satisfied with God

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Preacher: Shawn Woo

[0 : 00] Heavenly Father, though some of us are weary this evening, we have gathered because we seek your presence.

You are always with us, but when we are gathered together, Lord, we experience you in a fresh way as your church, as your body.

And so we have gathered so that we can hear your voice through your word and also in our prayers. We have gathered so that we can encourage one another and pray for one another. So won't you please lead us and speak to us from your word in Psalm 17. So that your word may inform our prayers and guide us throughout this evening.

In Jesus' name we pray. Amen. We're in Psalm 17. It is entitled, A Prayer of David.

[1 : 18] Psalm 17. It goes, I have heard of my purpose that my mouth will not transgress.

With regard to the works of men, by the word of your lips, I have avoided the ways of the violent. My steps have held fast to your paths. My feet have not slipped.

I call upon you, O God. I call upon you for you will answer me, O God. Incline your ear to me. I call upon you for you, O God. I call upon you for you. I call upon you for you. I call upon you for you. show your steadfast love.

O Savior of those who seek refuge from their adversaries at your right hand. Keep me as the apple of your eyes. Keep me as the apple of your eye. Hide me in the shadow of your wings.

From the wicked who do me violence, my deadly enemies who surround me. They close their hearts to pity. With their mouths they speak arrogantly. They have now surrounded our steps.

[2 : 38] They set their eyes to cast us to the ground. He is like a lion eager to tear as a young lion lurking in ambush. Arise, O Lord.

Confront him. Subdue him. Deliver my soul from the wicked by your sword. From men by your hand, O Lord. From men of the world whose portion is in this life.

You fill their womb with treasure. They are satisfied with children. And they leave their abundance to their infants. As for me, I shall behold your face in righteousness.

When I awake, I shall be satisfied with your likeness. In this psalm, we see first the kind of portrait of the righteous sufferer in verses 1 to 5.

And then we see the portrait of the wicked oppressor that's kind of contrasted with the psalmist in verses 6 to 12. And then finally, we see the faithful deliverer in verses 13 to 15.

[3 : 44] And in verse 1, we see the start of David's petition to God as a righteous sufferer. He begins to plead his just cause. He says, Hear a just cause, O Lord.

Verse 1. O Lord, attend to my cry. Give ear to my prayer from lips free of deceit. So he's saying that God should hear him and listen to him because his lips are free of deceit.

And because his cause is just. And so that's why he asks for vindication in verse 2. From your presence, let my vindication come. Let your eyes behold the rights. So we don't know exactly what the nature of his oppression and suffering is.

But he's being unfairly charged and assaulted by his enemies. So he's asking for God's vindication. If only God would hear him out, then he believes, he's confident that he will be vindicated.

He wants God to see what is true and fair. So he says to him, Behold the right. See the right. And David continues in verse 3. He says, You have tried my heart.

[4 : 42] You have visited me by night. You have tested me and you will find nothing. I have purposed and my mouth will not transgress. So the language of trying and testing evokes refining metal.

So David feels like he's been in the fire, really being refined, tested. And he also says that God visited him at night, by night, which the visitation, the word visit, suggests some kind of interrogation

or investigation.

So maybe it's during his prayers at night. You know, he feels like God's searching him, investigating him. But even in the midst of such divine probing, David's confident that he won't be found sinful in the ways that he's being accused.

So he cries out to God in confidence, You will find nothing. I have purposed and my mouth will not transgress. David has solemnly resolved not to transgress by his speech.

This kind of reminds me of what Job says. He says he has made a covenant with his eyes not to, you know, look simply at a young woman. And it's that kind of resolute commitment, you know, saying he's purposed that his mouth will not transgress.

[5 : 51] And that's a challenging example for me to look at. Because James talks about the danger of the tongue, how it's like a fire that sets ablaze a forest.

And it's easy to be rash in our speech. You know, but people, I mean, if we look around us, if we look at even ourselves, people who will be quite reticent to speak against God to his face are actually sometimes quite free in their speech.

That dishonor is God nonetheless, whether it be in gossip or slander or complaints or just uncharitable criticism toward others. And yet we ought to follow David's example and purpose that our mouths will not transgress.

So we're in Psalm 17. And not only does David abstain from just speaking evil, he also abstains from ways of the wicked, works and ways.

It says, in verse 4, he says, With regard to the works of man, by the word of your lips I have avoided the ways of the violent. This principle is similar to what found in Psalm 119, 9 to 11.

[7 : 04] It says, How can a young man keep his way pure? By guarding it according to your word. With my whole heart I seek you. Let me not wander from your commandments. I have stored up your word in my heart that I might not sin against you.

Right? So it's the same way the Psalmist here, David's saying here in verse 4, By the word of your lips I have avoided the ways of the violent. That's the key to avoiding the ways of the violent, the ways of the wicked, is to keep the word of God close to our hearts, to guard it in our hearts, so that in the moment of temptation, in the moment of pressure, the word rises up in our minds, in our hearts, and guards us, and keeps us on the straight path, straight and narrow path that Christ calls us to.

And so because of that, because he has done that, he says in verse 5, My steps, his ways, his steps have held fast to your paths. My feet have not slipped.

Now we might be a little bit skeptical at this point, like, David, are you serious? I mean, did you really not sin? Or did you really stay in that path all the time? And I don't think David's insisting on absolute innocence, you know, that he was sinless.

Rather, I think he's speaking concerning a particular situation that he's in right now, where he's being assaulted and being falsely accused by his enemies. And on that account, he says he has been innocent.

[8 : 22] So it's kind of like, you know, a robber who goes to court, you know, he's clearly guilty, but he's being charged for murder, and he didn't commit murder, right? So he can be declared innocent on that count, while still being a guilty man on another way, right?

So like, David is not claiming absolute innocence, but he says on this particular occasion, this context, he is blameless on this count, what he's being charged with. So he pleads with God, behold the right, vindicate me, O Lord.

And so that's the plea of the righteous sufferer. And then now we can look at the portrait of the wicked oppressors in verses 6 to 12. The wicked oppressor is really kind of the symmetrical opposite of the righteous sufferer in this psalm.

And the psalmist, the author of the psalm, conveys that by using similar words, but in the opposite way. So for example, in verse 3, psalmist says that his heart, the word heart, has been tried and refined.

But then the wicked, on the other hand, it says in verse 10, they close their hearts to pity. And this is a really cool way the Hebrew poetry writes about it.

[9 : 35] So in verse 10, the word heart is actually not found in verse 10. The literal translation of the phrase is, their fat closes in. That's what it says in verse 10. It doesn't say that their heart's close to pity, but that's their way of conveying that their heart's close to pity.

So they picture, for example, like the heart's here, the fat closing in. That's how callous they are. Their hearts have been shut off from showing compassion or pity.

So that's the kind of metaphorical way. So it says their fat closes in, so meaning their hearts are close to pity. Another example of that is in Job 15, 27. And then, so David continues the comparison or the contrast rather than verse 3.

I have purposed that my mouth will not transgress. So his mouth will not transgress. But then in verse 10, it says, their mouths, the oppressor's mouths, speak arrogantly. So David's heart has been tried by God, but the wicked oppressor's hearts closed.

And David's mouth has been purposed to not sin, not transgress, but their mouths speak arrogantly. And then finally, in verse 5, David says, my steps have held fast to your paths.

[10:41] But the wicked, in contrast, in verse 10, have now surrounded our steps. So that's the kind of military language. He's being surrounded. They're lurking in ambush, really.

So unlike the psalmist who refrains from violence and stays on that straight path, the wicked are like a lion eager to tear. They have surrounded the steps of the righteous. So in light of his own just cause that he talked about in verse 1 and the oppressor's wickedness, on that basis, David cries out to God for help.

But the ultimate basis is not his innocence and their wickedness, but the ultimate basis we see in verses 7 and 8. It says, wondrously show your steadfast love, or Savior of those who seek refuge from their adversaries at your right hand.

Keep me as the apple of your eye. Hide me in the shadow of your wings. So the basis for David's prayer of faith is in God's steadfast love, right, which can also be translated as loving kindness, which refers to his covenant love, covenant faithfulness to his people.

That's the word that's used to describe God's character in Exodus 34 when he reveals himself to Moses, the Israelites. And the words used in verse 7, three words, wonder, steadfast love, and right hand, are all actually words that occur in Exodus 15, the exact same words that were used to celebrate God's deliverance of Israel from Egypt.

[12:08] So there's a deliberate comparison here, a parallel really, of the fact that the psalmist, having looked back, remembered God's deliverance in Egypt, is now crying out for deliverance again as God did at that time.

So he's hearkening back to how God was faithful to his covenant before and using that as a basis to ask God to be faithful to him, his steadfast love, his covenant love, his unchanging love.

And I love his request, so personal and intimate. Keep me as the apple of your eye. The apple of your eye. I mean, that's the most vulnerable and seemingly precious part, right, in a way, I mean, just instinctively we protect our eyes, the apple of our eyes.

And keep me as the apple of your eye. Hide me in the shadow of your wings, that protection over us. And after appealing to God's steadfast love, David calls upon God specifically to destroy the wicked and deliver him.

So verses 13 to 14. Arise, O Lord. That's, again, military language. Confront him. Subdue him. Deliver my soul from the wicked by your sword. From men by your hand, O Lord.

[13:17] From men of the world whose portion is in this life. So just as them surrounding his steps is probably metaphorical, this likewise is metaphorical using God come to his aid.

Deliver him with your sword. And we might expect that, you know, given this drastic prayer for divine intervention, we would see the result in the end of the psalm of, you know, God dashing his enemies to pieces and rescuing David.

But we see something that's quite different. It says in verse 14, men of the world whose portion is in this life. It says, you, referring to God, you fill their womb with treasure.

They are satisfied with children and they leave their abundance to their infants. God does that for the wicked men. They prosper in this world. Their wombs are filled with treasure and they have many children and enough wealth to bequeath to their children.

And so this is a really stark teaching, you know, that God's, what seemingly is, what seems like divine favor, wealth, prosperity, well-being, health, even are not necessarily signs of God's presence and favor with them.

[14:34] And because in the end, their portion is in this life and not in the God who is bigger than this life. And so if they might be satisfied in this life, but if they don't have God, they don't have the most important riches.

They don't have the greatest treasure. And so David adds his contrast in verse 15. Yes, they're satisfied. Yes, they have abundance. But as for me, I shall behold your face in righteousness. When I awake, I shall be satisfied with your likeness. That's the portion of the righteous, right? The wicked oppressor's portion is in this life, in this world, but the portion of the righteous sufferer is in God himself.

And the psalm has now come full circle and we see kind of the closure because in the beginning, David pleaded his just cause and asked God to behold the right.

And now at the end in verse 15, David's confidence that he shall behold God's face. The same word, he asked God to behold the right. Now he knows that he will behold God's face in righteousness, which is the same word as just when David pleaded for his just cause.

[15 : 44] So he's confident that his prayer is going to be answered. His just cause that he prayed for, he pleaded for, and his prayer that God would behold the right, now that gets answered. And because of that, David cannot behold God's face in righteousness.

And as Christians, and we can look at that at the very end of that verse 15. It says, when I awake, I shall be satisfied with your likeness. He thinks he's going to see God, right? He thinks he's going to be in the presence of God.

And as Christians, we, of course, have that covenant faithfulness of God. In the Old Testament, we can look back to like the psalmist does. But we also can look back to Jesus, right?

Because he's the ultimate demonstration of God's covenant faithfulness. And Hebrews 1.3 tells us that Christ is the radiance of the glory of God and the exact imprint of his nature.

And in Colossians 1.15, it says that he's the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation. Philippians 2.6 says Christ was in the form of God. And finally, Romans 8.3 tells us that by sending God's own son in the likeness of sinful flesh and for sin, God commanded sin in the flesh.

[16 : 51] So this David imagined seeing God and being satisfied with his likeness. But in Jesus, we have the ultimate fulfillment of that, the likeness of God come down in the flesh.

And because of that, we can always behold him. And through the Spirit, we can be always assured that we are his children. And because of that, we can always have the confidence like David to cry out to him as righteous sufferers, knowing that we can behold him and he beholds our right.

With that, let's seek God in prayer together.