

Psalm 17 Sermon

“A Prayer for Vindication”

Intro:

Thank you for being here this morning my name is Brian Dixen and I'm the full-time music director for GCF. I am often asked, “what do you say you do here at GCF?”

To clarify my position: What I do is develop and manage the music ministries for all three churches by ...

- Casting vision for the music ministries
- Identifying and train leads to carry out that vision
- Assist those leads with rehearsals, selecting songs, and updating equipment
- Lastly, I manage the audio and visual teams.

This morning however I get to put on a different hat as I will be preaching God's word, but before I do, please join me in prayer.

Pray

Illustration:

Richard Jewell was a private security guard working Atlanta's Centennial Olympic Park on July 27th 1996 when a bomb suddenly exploded! Chaos and panic quickly followed and Jewell stepped into action helping lead many of the bystanders to safety. Jewell was called a hero for jumping into action and helping others. But that was short lived ...

A story was leaked to the papers that Jewel was not a hero but was actually the man who planted the bomb. He was ridiculed by the media and followed by the FBI. It took several weeks of investigation before the FBI finally acknowledged that Jewel was not a suspect in the bombing. But by that point Jewell life changed forever.

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Jewell’s attorney said, “it’s a war! why in this bevy of stories does not anyone point out the fact that Richard was a hero one day and a demon the next? They have destroyed this man’s life!” When interviewed a decade later Jewel confessed that he was still angry about the false accusations and the devastating impact it had on his life.

Transition:

You may not have had to face public ridicule from the media or been followed by the FBI but I would venture to bet that all of us have had a season in our lives similar to Jewell. Where our lives have been flipped upside down because of a sin committed against us. Whether that was being wrongly accused, abused, or persecuted ... we are no strangers to the devastating impact of sin.

When this happens, it is natural for us to respond with anger, or to shut down, or to lash out at others. It is normal to cry out to God asking why? Why God would you allow this to happen, why God would you allow this to happen to me, and why God do you allow bad people to do bad things and seemingly get away with it. Unfortunately, there is no shortage of stories of people being devastated by sinful acts committed against them and we don’t have to leave this building to find those stories.

Psalm 17 is a prayer from a man who has been devastated by sinful acts committed against him. The psalmist David is on the run being persecuted and falsely accused and has suffered for many years because of this. Psalm 17 is David’s plea for vindication and it shows us ***that those who live godly lives can confidently pray for vindication.***

What is vindication? It is the action of clearing someone of blame or suspicion. It’s proof that someone is right, reasonable, or justified.

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Before we go any further, I’m curious, how many of you are like me and find yourself on the struggle bus when it comes to prayer, that you wished you prayed more often?

My hope this morning is that we will be encouraged by David’s prayer in Psalm 17. That this will ignite a spark within all of us to seek God in prayer for refuge, rescue, and restoration!

So, what then does confident prayer for vindication look like? Well, there are three aspects to it and these are my three main points this morning:

First, we must pray with Honesty

Second, we must pray with Humility

Third, we must pray with Hope

1st Point: We must pray with Honesty (v.1-5)

“Look with me at verses 1 through 5 ... “

Psalm 17:1-5 'Hear a just cause, O Lord; attend to my cry! Give ear to my prayer from lips free of deceit! 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. My steps have held fast to your paths; my feet have not slipped. '

Sub point a. First, we see that honest prayer is bold.

Now some of you may be reading this and thinking to yourself, David is not bold he's arrogant! What makes him think he can say this to God, what makes him think he can approach God this way ... God clearly knows all and all sees all So what in the world is David thinking?

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Well, to understand where David is coming from we need to understand the situation that David is in. Many scholars believe that David wrote Psalm 17 out of his experience in the desert of Maon when he barely escaped the relentless pursuit of King Saul. Let's take a quick look at this from 1 Samuel 23:

1 Samuel 23:24-26a 'Now David and his men were in the wilderness of Maon, ~~in the Arabah to the south of Jeshimon.~~ And Saul and his men went to seek him. And David was told, so he went down to the rock and lived in the wilderness of Maon. And when Saul heard that, he pursued after David in the wilderness of Maon. Saul went on one side of the mountain, and David and his men on the other side of the mountain. And David was hurrying to get away from Saul.'

Illustration:

Have you ever been chased? And not by a friend playing tag but by someone you're trying to actually get away from? *Growing up my friends dad Mark* was a man's man. Mark was strong and athletic, knew everything about football baseball and basketball, coached high school football and baseball and was very competitive and successful.

It wasn't uncommon while hanging out at their house mark would challenge us teenage boys to arm wrestling or who can bench press the most or random footrace down the street. *Needless to say mark was an intense individual.*

Every year our church would host a Turkey bowl usually played by college aged guys because we did not play two hand touch we did not play flag football, we played full tackle football. One year mark decided to join us he was in his 40s at the time and clearly the oldest guy on the field. Now at that time I was young, athletic and pretty quick and I usually could get one to two guys to miss a tackle before I would be taken down.

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On one particular play my defender slipped and fell leaving me wide open my buddy Jeff threw me the ball and I had 60-70 yards of open field ahead of me And that's when I noticed heavy footsteps behind me with heavy grunting and breathing, it was mark! Like a Raging Bull chasing down the matador Mark was gaining on me. As he got closer he began what I can only describe as a war chant: “I'm going to get you, I'm going to get you!”

At that moment I was no longer running to score a touchdown, I was running for my life! I can honestly say I have never run that fast ever before and ever since then.

What was supposed to be a friendly and fun game was now the most terrifying experience of my life. By God's grace I was able to stay just far enough ahead of him to avoid whatever devastating blow Mark was going to give me.

For David there was nothing friendly or fun about his situation. David was not simply being chased he was being hunted. King Saul's jealousy raged against David, why? David had become more popular than Saul for his military success as a warrior in Saul's army. Saul could not handle it, from 1 Samuel 18 to the end of the book you read how Saul's jealousy drove him mad ... falsely accusing David of wanting to take the Kingdom from him and his constant endeavor to kill David.

So, what comes across as arrogant statements of sinlessness in verses 1 through 5 in context is actually David's honest case for righteousness under persecution. One scholar says it this way,

“Pay attention that believers never allege their own righteousness before God, otherwise they are hypocrites, unless they are in persecution. For in that case, they are certain that they suffer on account of their righteousness and their adversaries have an unjust case.” (Bugenhagen)

This is why he makes the bold statement **“from your presence let my vindication come! (v.2)”**

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At that time if a legal case that was too difficult for the courts an individuals could go to the temple (Where God manifested his presence) and appear before the priests or the judge and receive a divine decision. So, David is saying he’s not afraid to stand in God’s presence and plead his case for innocence because his adversaries have an unjust case, and he is being persecuted on the account of his righteousness.

This is why he says in verse 4 “with regard to the works of man 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.”

“*By the word of your lips*” is a reference to God’s Word and “*your paths*” is a reference to his commandments. David is essentially saying what the Holy Spirit inspire Peter to write in 1 Peter chapter 2:

1 Peter 2:15 For this is the will of God, that by doing good you should put to silence the ignorance of foolish people.

Transition

David's prayer shows us that honest prayer is bold. In addition, we see ...

Sub point b: Honest prayer is intimate

Think about the stress and anxiety of David situation. Think about how tempting it would have been for David who was a mighty warrior feared by many nations to simply confront Saul and defeat him in battle. But he doesn't instead he goes to his heavenly father for help. Psalm 17 gives us a glimpse into the relationship David had with God, he trusted God, he believed in God's power to act on his behalf.

Simply put, we see David is truly a child calling out to his father! When was the last time you prayed like this? When was the last time you approached God as a child in need of his father's help?

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Many of us had earthly fathers that dismissed us, who seemed to be more annoyed of us than loved us, or outright abused us and because of this we can attribute these things to God wrongly assuming that he is annoyed with us and doesn't want to be bothered by our prayers. But nothing can be further from the truth. Listen to what the author of Hebrews says in Hebrews chapter 4;

Hebrews 4:14-16 'Since then we have a great high priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus, the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession. For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin. Let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need.'

Illustration:

Every week at the end of service my boys Nolan and John confidently run up on stage to meet me as if they're part of the worship team. As if they own the church and there's nothing off limits to them. It doesn't matter who I'm talking to, what I'm doing, or what's going on around us, they boldly approach their dad. Why? Well, they want to make sure they ask for a ride home with me before their sisters do!

My boys are seven and four and I love how kids at that age are oblivious to their surroundings, all that matters to them is that I'm their dad and they're my kids. Therefore no matter the circumstance they can approach confidently.

In the same way you can approach the throne of grace with confidence, why? Because God is your father and you are his child.

Think about it. This is why the veil was torn in two, right? God took away what separated us from him so that we can approach him. Not in fear of a father who will reject us, but in confidence of a father who loves us who wants us around.

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Transition:

David's prayer shows us that we must pray confidently for vindication with honesty

2nd Point: We must pray with Humility

Look with me at verses 6 and 7

Psalm 17:6-7 'I call upon you, for you will answer me, O God; incline your ear to me; hear my words. Wondrously show your steadfast love, O Savior of those who seek refuge from their adversaries at your right hand.

Here David echoes what we heard last week from Psalm 16:

Psalm 16:1-2 'Preserve me, O God, for in you I take refuge. I say to the Lord, “You are my Lord; I have no good apart from you.” '

Sub point a: Here we see that ... **Humble prayer seeks a refuge in God.**

When you're stressed, when you are tired, when you are in the middle of a hardship: Where do you seek refuge (a safe place from hardships)?

Where do you seek refuge when things between you and your spouse are hard?

Where do you seek refuge when your kids won't stop misbehaving?

Where do you seek refuge when your siblings annoy you?

Where do you seek refuge when work is all consuming?

Where do you seek refuge when dealing with financial struggles?

Where do you seek refuge when a loved one suddenly dies?

Where do you seek refuge when your spouse says to you, “I want a divorce?” or when the doctor says to you, “You have cancer?”

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The stress of these situations and many others Often expose where we seek refuge And if we're being honest more often than not it isn't God. Since the fall of man we've been exchanging our refuge in God for a refuge in:

- Our intelligence
- Our strength
- Our country
- Our home
- Our marriage
- Our kids
- Food
- Alcohol
- Netflix
- Instagram
- TikTok
- Our youthfulness
- Our success
- Our talent
- Our money

These in-and-of-themselves are not bad but when they become our refuge ... they expose the idol of our hearts. What we take refuge in is ultimately what we put our trust in.

So I challenge us this morning to Seek God for refuge in the small trails so that you are prepared to find shelter in him during the big trial of your life. (*REPEAT*)

Transition:

Humble prayer seeks a refuge, in addition ...

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Sub point b: Humble prayer seeks a sovereign God

Look with me at verses 8 and 9

Psalm 17:8-9 '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.'

Here David is referencing Moses from Deuteronomy chapter 32 which says this;

Deuteronomy 32:10-12 “He (God) found him (Israel) 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. Like an eagle that stirs up its nest, that flutters over its young, spreading out its wings, catching them, bearing them on its pinions, the Lord alone guided him, no foreign god was with him.

David referencing this passage is him recounting the ways God sovereignly delivered his people from Egypt. In that account God miraculously displayed his power setting his people free and leading them to the promised land. Knowing the context and what David is going through it makes sense that he would reference Deuteronomy 32 because it aptly speaks to what he's going through. It also shows us the importance of knowing God's word.

Understanding who God is based on His word gives us comfort when our souls are troubled because it shows us a God who wants to provide for us, who wants to protect us, who wants to lavish his love on us and be our safe place our refuge!

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Speaking of God as our refuge John Piper said it this,

“God is not an employer looking for employees. He is an Eagle looking for people who will take refuge under his wings.”

Ever since the fall of man we all suffer from *spiritual amnesia!* We so quickly forget the goodness of God and how he has sovereignly protected, provided, and preserved us.

All throughout the Bible we see a call to remember, to remember who God is, remember what God has done, remember that God through the Holy Spirit is with us! That is why we gather on Sundays; it is to remember the saving work of Jesus Christ on our behalf!

Without this reminder we resort to a works-based gospel depending on the works of our own hands rather than the scars on his hands.

Transition:

David’s prayer in Psalm 17 is showing us our need for a refuge, our need for a sovereign God, and our need for the gospel! David’s prayer shows us that we must pray with honesty, we must pray with humility, and lastly

3rd Point: We must pray with Hope

Look with me at verses 10 through 14

Psalm 17:10-14 ' They close their hearts to pity; with their mouths they speak arrogantly. They have now surrounded our steps; 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

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with treasure; they are satisfied with children, and they leave their abundance to their infants.'

Here David gives us a picture of his enemies and their plans against him. We see:

1. First, their nature is calloused and arrogant verse 10,
2. Second, their actions are cruel and destructive verse 11,
3. Third, their attacks are fierce verse 12.

In all of nature there are very few animals that can top the fierceness lion.

Illustration:

In March of 1898 the British started building a railway bridge over the Tsavo River in Kenya. The building site consisted of several camps spread over an area of 8 miles, accommodating the several thousand mostly Indian workers. The project was led by Lieutenant John Henry Patterson, who arrived just days before the disappearances and killings began.

During the next nine months of construction, two maneless male lions stalked the campsite, dragging workers from their tents at night, devouring them. Crews tried to scare off the lions and built campfires and thorn fences made of whistling thorn trees around their camp for protection to keep the man-eaters out, all to no avail; the lions leaped over or crawled through the thorn fences. Patterson noted that early in their killing spree only one lion at a time would enter the areas and seize victims, but later they became more brazen, entering together and each seizing a victim.

Eventually other officials arrived, with reinforcements to assist in the hunt for the lions. Patterson set traps and tried several times to ambush the lions at night from a tree. After repeated unsuccessful attempts, he shot the first lion on December 9th 1898. Twenty days later, the second lion

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was found and killed shot up to nine times over several days. The first lion killed measured 9 ft 8 in from the nose to the tip of tail. It took eight men to carry the carcass back to their camp. It was estimated that the two lions stalked and killed around 135 victims.

Can you imagine the fear, stress, and anxiety that was experienced by the men being stalked by lions, hearing others around them being dragged from their tents and eaten in the middle of the night.

The reality is we too have an enemy that is stalking us like a lion. Listen to what 1st Peter chapter 5 says;

1 Peter 5:8 Be sober-minded; be watchful. Your adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour.

Though an enemy is seeking to destroy us, like David we too can pray with confidence against our enemy! We too can boldly ask for God to act on our behalf, and we too can pray with hope!

look again with me at verses 13 and 14

Psalm 17:13-14 '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.

This section of his prayer David appeals to God for action. It is a plea against his enemies and for his own rescue and restoration.

David has pleaded his case of innocence to God and is now saying his enemies are anything but innocent. He's contrasting the wicked with the righteous the worldly with the godly and the main difference is hope. For the wicked and worldly their only hope lies in this life what's right here right now in front of them. But for the righteous, for the godly our hope is rooted in the life to come!

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Look with me at verse 15

Psalm 17:15 'As for me, I shall behold your face in righteousness; when I awake, I shall be satisfied with your likeness.'

Often with biblical characters we can elevate them thinking that they were super spiritual, near perfect, more in touch with God. But that's not the case, David was a man - Sinful and broken. David does not know how God is going to act on his behalf, David does not know if God is going to save him from his enemies, David had no idea what the outcome of his situation would be. So, David wisely puts his hope in the promises of God!

But what David could only hope for we now can claim victory in, the cross of Christ!

You see, we are not the good guys in the redemptive story, no we are like David's enemies calloused and arrogant, cruel and destructive, fiercely opposed to God.

Romans 5:8-11 But God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. Since, therefore, we have now been justified by his blood, much more shall we be saved by him from the wrath of God. For if while we were enemies we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, now that we are reconciled, shall we be saved by his life. More than that, we also rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received reconciliation.

True vindication can only be found in the life, death, resurrection, and ascension of Jesus our Savior because ...

True vindication took place when Jesus was betrayed by those he loved
True vindication took place when Jesus was beaten, mocked, and wrongly accused.

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True vindication took place when our savior carried the cross, the instrument of his death, to Golgotha!

True vindication took place when nails were driven into his hands in his feet

True vindication took place when the cross was raised, and Jesus’ broken and marred body was on display

True vindication took place when a spear was thrust into his side

True vindication took place when Jesus like a lion roared it is finished!

True vindication took place when three days later Jesus stepped out of the tomb

True vindication took place when over 500 people bore witness to the resurrected Jesus,

True vindication took place when he commanded his disciples to go and make disciples of all nations

True vindication took place when Jesus ascended into heaven and took his rightful place seated at the right hand of God the father almighty.

And we look forward to the day when true vindication comes to completion as Christ returns to judge the living in the dead, to administer perfect justice, and establish his Kingdom where we will dwell with him ... free from the agony of sin forever.

This is a claim a non-believers cannot make. God’s wrath is upon those who walk away from the Lord who say there is no God ... from what we've heard preached in weeks prior we know that it is the fool who says there is no God.

But for those who have put their trust in Jesus ...

Psalm 17 shows us *that we can confidently pray for and trust in God’s perfect vindication.*