

Women in the Word
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PSALM 17:
Our God Hears, Our God Loves, Our God Rescues

A. COVENANT & CONFLICT

The context of Psalm 17 is covenant and conflict.

God, from the beginning, has a people. He establishes a relationship with them. He says to them, from Genesis to Revelation, *“I will be your God, and you will be My people.”* (The Creator of the cosmos wants us as His own!)

God’s people, from the beginning, have enemies. War was declared (by God Himself!), in Genesis 3: *“I will put enmity between your seed and the woman’s seed.”*

History unfolds, and humanity branches out into 1) those to whom God reveals Himself, who are called His own, and (2) those who will not submit to their Maker, going headlong into destruction, at warfare with God.

B. THE COVENANT HEAD PRAYS

‘Hear Your covenant servant.’

Doesn’t God listen anyway? Why does David have to ask (3xs in v1 alone!)?

Not like the pagans, who name their own god and think they have to get his attention (I King 18:24ff):

[Elijah said] “You call upon the name of your god, and I will call upon the name of the LORD....” And [the prophets of Baal] called upon the name of Baal from morning until noon, saying “O Baal, answer us!” But there was no voice, and no one answered. And they leaped around the altar they had made...cried aloud and cut themselves...raved on....but there was no voice. No one answered; no one paid attention.”

David isn’t persuading God to listen. Verse 6 shows his motive: *“I call on You, for You will answer me.”* Hear me, Lord, because You are my hearing God! *“Give ear”* because You are personal to me.

‘Judge according to Your covenant.’

David is not claiming moral perfection (not Lancelot ☺). He is:

-- asserting his innocence, in these circumstances, before the Judge: enemies are coming against me without cause; I did not bring this on myself

--speaking of covenant faithfulness. In ancient Israel this meant trusting Yahweh, adhering to the worship system, offering the sacrifices God requires. (See Job 1:8, where God Himself calls Job “blameless and upright”).

‘Show Your covenant love.’

The centerpiece of Psalm 17 is v 7: “*Wondrously show Your steadfast love...*”

That’s the saving, unending love of the One who says, “I am your God, you are My people.” It’s *hesed*, clear covenant talk--no other god has ever claimed ‘steadfast love’ for a people!! Spoken by God about Himself at Mt Sinai; when the covenant is established: He proclaims to Moses, “*The LORD, the LORD God, compassionate and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in lovingkindness and truth*” (Exod 34:6).

‘Protect and rescue Your covenant people.’

v 8, David describes the LORDS’s rescuing love in the words of Moses, Deut 32:9-12

*But the LORD's portion is his people,
Jacob his allotted heritage.
¹⁰ “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.
¹¹ Like an eagle that stirs up its nest,
that flutters over its young,
spreading out its wings, catching them,
bearing them on its pinions,
¹² the LORD alone guided him,
no foreign god was with him.*

C. THE CONFLICT IS DESCRIBED

v 9 “surround”--an all-out commitment to destroy God’s people
v 10 No pity; proud; hearts enclosed in (lit.) “fat” = self-indulgence.
v 12 relentless, waiting to kill
v 14 Satisfied with this world only.

D. THE GREAT COVENANT HEAD WINS!

Jesus is the truly blameless one.

He perfectly did His Father's will (*"I glorified you on earth, having accomplished the work that you gave me to do."* John 17:4). Sinless (Heb 4:15, 2 Cor 5:21).

Jesus was surrounded by enemies, from birth to death

Herod, Pharisees, Romans, Judas, the crowd...constant plots, betrayal, mocking (Matt 2, John 5, 7 11, Matt 12, 26, etc etc!)

Jesus was NOT rescued, so that we could be.

Even his enemies spoke this truth: *"He saved others; He cannot save Himself"* (Matt 27:42).

E. THE CONFLICT WILL END!

Final victory from greatest enemy.

I Cor 15:22-26 ²² *For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ shall all be made alive.* ²³ *But each in his own order: Christ the first fruits, then at his coming those who belong to Christ.* ²⁴ *Then comes the end, when he delivers the kingdom to God the Father after destroying every rule and every authority and power.* ²⁵ *For he must reign until he has put all his enemies under his feet.* ²⁶ *The last enemy to be destroyed is death.*

The ultimate "wondrously shown" covenant love: resurrection and moral perfection.

"As for me, I shall behold Your face in righteousness; when I awake, I shall be satisfied with Your likeness." v 15

"Beloved, we are God's children now, and what we will be has not yet appeared; but we know that when he appears we shall be like him, because we shall see Him as he is." 1 John 3:2

Thank You, Lord, for the insights of: O. Palmer Robertson, *The Flow of the Psalms: Discovering Their Structure and Theology*; Derek Kidner, *Ps 1-72, An Intro and Commentary*, Tyndale OT commentaries; James M. Boice, *Psalms Volume 1, An Expository Commentary*.