

The Apple of Your Eye

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[0 : 00] Well, if we could, this evening, for a short while, if we could turn back to that portion of Scripture that we read. The book of Psalms and Psalm 17.

The book of Psalms, Psalm 17. I want us to look at the whole Psalm. But if we read again at verse 6. Psalm 17, verse 6.

Where David says, Keep me as the apple of your eye. Hide me in the shadow of your wings.

I'm sure that we're all familiar with this metaphor that's used here in Psalm 17. The apple of your eye. And we're probably more familiar with this metaphor because like many sayings and phrases that are used in our English language, they've been taken straight out of the Bible.

And, you know, we hear all these sayings. We hear them all the time. For example, I'm sure we've heard the saying, Another one bites the dust. That's from Psalm 72. Or the blind leading the blind.

[1 : 37] That's from Matthew 15. We've heard the phrase, By the skin of your teeth. That's from Job 19. Or can a leopard change its spots? That's from Jeremiah 13.

A drop in a bucket? It's Isaiah 40. He who is without sin cast the first stone? It's John chapter 8. Eye for an eye, tooth for a tooth? It comes from Matthew 5.

How the mighty have fallen? It's 2 Samuel chapter 1. The writing is on the wall. That was at Belshazzar's feast in Daniel 5. We have all these sayings and all these phrases in our English language that have been just lifted or taken straight out of the Bible.

And, you know, the words that we find here in Psalm 17, they're no different. Because Shakespeare and Sir Walter Scott, they use this phrase in their writings. In order to describe a person's love and affection for someone.

Where they describe that person as the apple of their eye. But, you know, what we see from its original context is that this beautiful phrase was originally penned and prayed by David, the psalmist.

[2 : 47] In which David, he prayed that the Lord, his covenant king, he prayed that the Lord would keep him as the apple of his eye. And hide him under the shadow of his wings.

And, you know, it's a beautiful prayer. And it's a prayer that we should have as we go into another year in our lives. Keep me as the apple of thine eye. Hide me in the shadow of thy wings.

You know, the title of this psalm, it reminds us that, well, this is a prayer. And it's one of five psalms in the Psalter that are identified or titled as a prayer.

Psalm 17 is titled as a prayer. Also, Psalm 86, Psalm 90, Psalm 102 and Psalm 142. They're psalms which are all identified as prayers.

But, you know, that should remind us that the book of Psalms is not only a book of praise. The book of Psalms is also a book of prayer. And it should give us license to pray the Psalms.

[3 : 49] We should plead with the Lord using the Psalms. We should petition the Lord with the Psalms. And, you know, reading Matthew Henry, it's always good to read Matthew Henry.

He introduces Psalm 17 because he affirms that the book of Psalms is not only a book of praise. It's also a book of prayer. And he says this psalm is a prayer.

And then he says, as there is a time to weep and a time to rejoice, so there is a time for praise and a time for prayer. And David's time for prayer in Psalm 17, it came when he needed grace to help in time of need.

But there are three things I just want us to learn from David's prayer here in Psalm 17. Because what we see in Psalm 17 is David's commitment in prayer, David's confidence in prayer, and David's comfort in prayer.

So there are the three things. David's commitment in prayer, David's confidence in prayer, and David's comfort in prayer. So we'll look first of all at David's commitment in prayer.

[4 : 58] His commitment in prayer. Look at verse 1. David says, 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 words of your lips, I have avoided the ways of the violent. My steps have held fast to your paths.

My feet have not slipped. What we see here is that David begins his time of prayer by crying out to the Lord. And it's a loud cry.

The way the word cry here, It expresses that David is almost yelling. He's shouting out to the Lord so that the Lord will hear him.

[5 : 56] Now we're not sure why David was crying to the Lord. It's probably because of his enemies. We see that a little later on in the psalm. But David is pleading with the Lord that the Lord will hear his voice.

But when you read verse 1, I don't really like the English translation. Because I suppose it's a bit confusing. But if you were to translate it literally, if you were to translate verse 1 literally, it would be, Hear, O Lord, and listen to the loud cry of the righteous.

Give your ear to the genuine prayer of my lips. Hear, O Lord, and listen to the loud cry of the righteous. Give your ear to the genuine prayer of my lips.

And you know, what we have to notice, first of all, is who David is addressing. He's addressing, as he says there, the Lord. He's addressing the covenant king. He's addressing the one who keeps covenant.

David is addressing the Lord who is faithful and committed to his covenant promise and his covenant people. And because David knows that his covenant king is committed to him, David is committed to the Lord in prayer.

[7 : 08] David comes to the Lord with a genuine, wholehearted commitment, longing for the Lord to hear his prayer and answer him according to his will. My friend, David's commitment in prayer is because of the covenant promise.

And you know, that should always be the basis of our commitment in prayer. That should be the basis of our commitment in prayer because we have nothing else to cling to. We have no other plea to come to the Lord with apart from the Lord's commitment and faithfulness to his covenant promise and his covenant people.

And what we have to see here in David's prayer is that David is committed in prayer because the Lord is committed to his promise. David is committed in prayer because the Lord is committed to his promise.

And we can see David's commitment in prayer by the way he prays. And you know, it's so true. You can tell a lot about someone by the way they pray, by the way they express themselves, by the language they use.

You can tell a lot about someone by the way they pray. Because David prays, he says, Hear, O Lord, and listen to the loud cry of the righteous.

[8 : 26] Give your ear to the genuine prayer of my lips. David says to the Lord, Hear me. Listen to me. Give your ear to me.

And these three phrases, they emphasize David's commitment and his earnestness. But you know, more than that, it emphasizes David's, that this is a personal prayer of David.

Because he says, Hear my cry. Listen to my righteous plea. Give your ear to my genuine prayer. Lord, hear me.

Listen to me. Give your ear to me. Listen to me, he says. And you know, I love what Spurgeon says in his commentary on this psalm. He says, David would not have been a man after God's own heart if he had not been a man of prayer.

And David's prayer, says Spurgeon, is an appeal to heaven from the persecutions of earth. David's prayer is an appeal to heaven from the persecutions of earth.

[9 : 36] And, you know, well, that's what prayer is, is it not? Prayer is an appeal to heaven from the persecutions of earth. And David's appeal to his covenant king, it not only reveals his commitment in prayer, but it also reveals his commitment to the Lord.

His commitment to the Lord in the midst of persecution. As we said, we don't know what persecutions David was facing in his life at this point. But we know that David faced many persecutions.

He was often on the run from King Saul. He was often on the run from his son Absalom. He faced hostility and rejection on many levels. And yet he was committed to the Lord in prayer.

And he was committed to the Lord in the midst of his persecutions. And in this commitment to the Lord, David is pleading for help. He's pleading for vindication.

He says in verse two, he says, from your presence, let my vindication come. Let your eyes behold the right. You have tried my heart.

[10 : 41] You have visited me by night. You have tested me and you will find nothing. I have purposed that my mouth will not transgress. And in this, David is emphasizing his commitment to the Lord in prayer.

That he's committed to the Lord even in the midst of persecution. But you know, we need to be clear here. David's claim of righteousness, where he says, let your eyes behold the right of the righteous.

His claim of righteousness is not a claim of self-righteousness. When David says that, when he says to the Lord that you will find nothing in me, he's not saying that he's sinless.

But David is saying that when it comes to his persecution, he's blameless. He's saying it's not because of any sin in my life or any fault of my own that I've been persecuted.

No, David's persecution, he knows that his persecution is coming all because of his commitment to the Lord. David is being persecuted and maligned and harassed because of his desire to live his life wholeheartedly, committed to the Lord and his cause.

[11 : 54] It's because of his commitment to his covenant king and his kingdom that David is being persecuted for righteousness' sake. And you know, what does Jesus say about this?

What does Jesus, the covenant king, say about this? You remember what Jesus said in the Sermon on the Mount? The Sermon on the Mount is, it's all about how to live your life as a committed Christian.

The Sermon on the Mount is all about how to be committed to the covenant king and his kingdom. But it's in the Sermon on the Mount that Jesus says, blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

Jesus says that if you live your life as a committed Christian, if you're committed to the covenant king and his kingdom, says Jesus, you're blessed.

You're blessed. Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. And the blessing that Jesus promises and the blessing that David is praying for is the blessing of vindication.

[13 : 05] David longs for vindication from his persecution. And David knows that the Lord, his covenant king, he promises vindication at the resurrection.

He promises vindication at the resurrection to all those who persevere in the midst of persecution. And this is why David is committed in prayer.

David is clinging to the Lord's promise of vindication at the resurrection to all those who persevere in the midst of persecution.

persecution. And you know, that was the same promise that Jesus issued to his disciples in the early church. That the Lord Jesus Christ promises vindication at the resurrection to all those who persevere to the end.

And you know, let's not think that persecution is just when you're maligned and beaten because you're a Christian. That is persecution. But persecution can come in many forms in many ways.

[14 : 08] because we're persecuted. We're persecuted by the world, the flesh, and the devil. We experience persecution from the world and all their opposition.

We experience persecution by the flesh and its sinfulness and its weakness and even its death. We experience persecution from the devil because he never leaves us alone.

But you know, the covenant promise is that those who are righteous, those who are committed to the covenant king, those who persevere in the midst of persecution, Jesus says we will be vindicated at the resurrection.

And you know, that's what our catechism teaches us. That's what our catechism teaches us. The catechism asks what benefits, what blessings do believers receive from Christ at the resurrection?

And the catechism teaches us that at the resurrection, believers will be raised up in glory. They will be openly acknowledged and acquitted in the day of judgment.

[15 : 14] They will be made perfectly blessed and they will go into the full enjoying of God to all eternity. And so what David is saying here is that at the resurrection, as those who have been committed to the covenant king, those who have persevered in the midst of persecution, they will be vindicated.

We will be vindicated. And you know, that's what David was praying for. And that's why we see David's commitment in prayer. He's committed because he knows the Lord's promise of vindication.

In fact, David describes his commitment to the Lord 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.

David confesses that he has been faithful and he has been committed to the word, the word that has come from the lips of the Lord. David confesses that he has been committed to his covenant king, to the Lord Jesus Christ, and he has listened and he has faithfully followed his word.

But you know, despite David's commitment in prayer and David's commitment to persevere, David knew that he needed to know and be assured of the Lord's commitment and faithfulness to him.

[16 : 34] And that's why he makes this beautiful appeal in verse 5. It says in the Psalter, how David describes, he says, hold up my goings, Lord me guide, in those thy paths divine, so that my footsteps may not slide out of those ways of thine.

It's a wonderful appeal to know the Lord's faithfulness and assurance. And you know, it's David's commitment in prayer that then led to David's confidence in prayer.

And that's what we see secondly, David's confidence in prayer. David's confidence in prayer. Look at verse 6. He says, 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 Saviour, 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, from the wicked who do me violence, my deadly enemies who surround me.

Now we said that David is committed in prayer because the Lord is committed to his covenant promise. The Lord, the covenant king, the one who keeps covenant, he is faithful and he is committed to his covenant promise and his covenant people.

[17 : 56] And it's because of this that David is committed in prayer. David's commitment is because of the covenant promise. But what we see in these verses, in verses 6 to 9, is that David has confidence because of the covenant promise.

David has confidence because of the covenant promise. And David's confidence in prayer is because of the Lord's commitment and faithfulness to his people.

And you know, you can hear David's confidence in verse 6 because he says, I call upon you for you will answer me, O God. I call upon you for you will answer me.

There's confidence in David's prayer. There's a boldness. There's an assurance that the Lord will hear and the Lord will answer. Because David knows that the Lord is committed. The Lord is faithful to his promises.

And that's what gives David confidence. that's what gives him boldness. And you know, it's the covenant of grace that should give to us that confidence and that boldness to come to the throne of grace.

[19 : 04] It's the covenant of grace that should give to us a boldness and a confidence to come to the throne of grace. As I know we'll be reminded in the letter to the Hebrews.

You remember those wonderful words where we're told that we have this covenant, prophet, priest and king. And he's able to sympathize with all our weaknesses. He has been touched with a feeling of our infirmities.

He was in all points tempted as we are, yet without sin. And we're told that it's because of his covenant commitment and faithfulness that we are urged, we're invited, to come boldly to the throne of grace.

That we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need. And that's what David is doing. He was coming with boldness and confidence to his covenant king, the Lord Jesus Christ.

But you know, there's so much in this psalm, I find it fascinating. What we have to notice is how David describes his covenant king. David describes the covenant king as God in verse 6.

[20 : 14] He says, I call upon you for you will answer me, O God. Incline your ear to me, hear my words. And this reference to God describes the covenant king as our creator.

And so David is acknowledging the covenant king as God our creator. He is God our creator. But in the following verse, in verse 7, David says, wondrously show your steadfast love, O saviour, of those who seek refuge from their adversaries at your right hand.

And what we have to notice from these two verses is that David describes his covenant king who is the Lord Jesus Christ. He describes him in verse 6 as God our saviour, and then in verse 7, sorry, in verse 6 as God our creator, and then in verse 7 as God our saviour.

And what David is affirming to us is that the covenant king, the one who keeps covenant, he is both creator and saviour. He is God our creator, and he is God our saviour.

And you know, this is the foundation of David's confidence in prayer. And it should be the foundation of our confidence in prayer. That the covenant king whom we come before in prayer, this covenant king who is faithful and committed to his covenant promises and his covenant people, he is both our creator and our saviour.

[21 : 44] And as our covenant king, as our creator and our saviour, David reminds us here that we're loved with his covenant steadfast love.

And that's what David is longing to know more of. He wants to know more of the Lord's love. David wants to experience the unfailing, unqualified, unconditional, unchanging, unrestricted covenant love of his covenant king, Jesus Christ.

Because he says in verse 7, wondrously show your steadfast love, O saviour. Wondrously show your steadfast love, O saviour, of those who seek refuge from their adversaries at your right hand.

And the way David wants to know the Lord's wonderful covenant love is through redemption. He wants to know it through redemption.

That's why he mentions the right hand at the end of verse 7. David is drawing attention to the power and the authority of the covenant king because he's able to redeem and rescue his people.

[22 : 58] And David's confidence in prayer is that the Lord can, and the Lord is able to wondrously show his redemption. Because in his covenant love, his people, they are precious to the Lord and they are protected by the Lord.

In his covenant love, David reminds us that his people are precious to the Lord and protected by the Lord. That's why he prays in verse 8, keep me as the apple of your eye, hide me in the shadow of your wings.

keep me as the apple of your eye, hide me in the shadow of your wings. And you know what we need to know about that beautiful verse there in verse 8, is that these words are the words that were used to describe the greatest act of redemption in the Old Testament.

Because when the Lord rescued the children of Israel from slavery and bondage in Egypt, Moses and the children of Israel, they sang a song of salvation.

And in that song that's recorded for us in Deuteronomy 32, in that song, Moses and the children of Israel, they sang of the Lord's covenant commitment and the Lord's faithfulness towards his people.

[24 : 15] They praised the Lord for his act of redemption, for his wonderful display of steadfast love and faithfulness. they sang about how the Lord loved them and how he delivered them, he brought them up out of Egypt, out of the house of bondage.

They sang about how the Lord saw them as a precious people because he kept them as the apple of his eye. But more than that, Moses and the Israelites, they sang because the Lord saw them as a protected people, that he hid them under the shadow of his wings.

And the words that they sing in Deuteronomy 32, they say, like an eagle that stirs up its nest, that flutters over its young, spreading out its wings, catching them, he kept them as the apple of his eye and hid them under the shadow of his wings.

And you know, here's David and he's praying that what the Lord's redeemed experienced at the banks of the Red Sea, that's what he longs to experience.

as he comes to the throne of grace. Lord, 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.

[25 : 36] My friend, David's confidence in prayer is that he longs to know and experience the unfailing, unqualified, unconditional, unchanging and unrestricted love of his covenant king, Jesus Christ.

And what better prayer to have in the midst of the world, the flesh and the devil than to know that we're precious to the Lord and we're protected by the Lord.

Keep me as the apple of your eye, hide me in the shadow of your wings. We are the Lord's redeemed. And because we're the Lord's redeemed, we're a precious people and we're a protected people.

And our prayer should be, keep me as the apple of your eye, hide me in the shadow of your wings. You know, what we ought to learn, even from David's prayer in Psalm 17, what we should learn about this prayer, what we should learn about our prayer life, is that prayer should have a priority in our lives.

Because this should be our daily prayer, keep me as the apple of your eye, hide me in the shadow of your wings. And so David, as he comes before the Lord, we see David's commitment in prayer, we see his confidence in prayer, but lastly we see his comfort, his comfort in prayer.

[26 : 58] David's comfort in prayer. Look at verse 10. He says, they close their hearts to pity. With their mouths, 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 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. Now David, he brings his prayer to its conclusion by describing the comfort he has because of prayer.

David describes in these verses that you could say that he's describing the enemies that are against him, and he says that they speak arrogantly against him. They surround him. They set their eyes upon him, he says.

[28 : 07] But you know, it seems to me that although David had many physical enemies who sought to do him harm, these enemies that he speaks of here in these closing verses, they seem to be more spiritual enemies.

And that by engaging in prayer, he was entering into this spiritual warfare, this battle of the Christian life. Because he says in verse 12, he is like a lion eager to tear, as a young lion lurking in ambush.

He is like a lion. And it seems to me that David is referring to his greatest spiritual enemy, the enemy of his own soul, the enemy of our soul, which is the devil.

And is that not how the apostle Peter described the devil? He said, be vigilant for your adversary the devil. He goes about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour. And David here, he says, he's like a lion eager to tear as a young lion lurking in ambush.

The devil is like a crouching lion, he says, a lion that's slowly moving in on its enemy, ready to leap out and just catch its prey. But you know, David's comfort in prayer is that despite the opposition of the devil, David knows that greater is he who is in you than he who is in the world.

[29 : 29] And David prays, arise, O Lord, confront him, subdue him, deliver my soul from the wicked by your sword.

David says, arise, O Lord, arise, covenant king, arise, God and saviour, arise and confront him, confront the devil, subdue him and deliver my soul from the wicked by your sword.

Lord, you know, our daily prayer should be, get behind me, Satan. We should be praying as David's praying, arise, O Lord.

And you know, I can't help but think that David's comfort in prayer, his comfort is all coming from the promise of the empty tomb. The promise of the empty tomb.

Because as we said earlier, the covenant king, the Lord Jesus Christ, he promises vindication at the resurrection. And it's a promise to all those who persevere in the midst of persecution.

[30 : 35] And you know, it was the hope of the resurrection that gave David comfort in prayer. Because at the resurrection, death would be defeated, the devil would be destroyed.

That's what would happen. And you know, the reason I speak about resurrection so often is because of Psalm 16. Psalm 16 and Psalm 17, they're very closely linked together.

And in Psalm 16, the end of Psalm 16, you have verse 10, you will not abandon my soul to the grave or let your holy ones see corruption. And that verse is quoted in Acts chapter 2 in relation to the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

And so it's all about the promise of the resurrection. So David's commitment, his confidence, his comfort in prayer is that the Lord Jesus Christ, he promises vindication at the resurrection.

Which is why David and every Christian who falls asleep in Jesus, they can say in verse 15, as for me, I shall behold your face in righteousness. When I awake, I shall be satisfied with your likeness.

[31 : 43] My Christian friend, when we pray, we ought to have commitment, confidence and comfort. And it should go beyond the grave.

That's what we're being taught here. We should have commitment, confidence and comfort that goes beyond the grave. Because our great covenant hope, as the catechism reminds us, our covenant hope is that at the resurrection, at that glorious morning, we will be raised up in glory.

We will be openly acknowledged and accounted on the day of judgment. We will be made perfectly blessed. And we will go into the full enjoying of God, the full enjoying of God to all eternity.

Do you know, David is teaching us this evening that when we pray by faith, and this is every time we pray by faith, we ought to have commitment, confidence and comfort.

Because our great covenant hope is that when our end comes, whenever our end comes, faith will give way to sight. And we will finally see our covenant King, Jesus.

[33 : 00] And when we see him, says John, we shall be like him. We will be like him. And so our confession, your confession tonight, as it is in verse 15, as for me, I shall behold your face in righteousness.

When I awake, I shall be satisfied with your likeness. Well, may the Lord bless these few thoughts to us.

Let us pray. O Lord, our gracious God, enable us and give to us that commitment in prayer. Give to us, Lord, a confidence to come boldly to that throne of grace.

And Lord, give to us comfort that when we come to this throne, that we not only find mercy, but that we find that grace to help in time of need. And Lord, that our daily prayer would be as we, as we war against the world, the flesh and the devil, that our prayer would be, Lord, keep me as the apple of thine eye and hide me in the shadow of thy wings.

We realize that without thee we can do nothing. But Lord, with thee all things are possible. Keep us, Lord, and we pray. Keep us faithful. Keep us humble. Help us, Lord, to walk in the ways of righteousness, ever looking to our covenant king, Jesus Christ, how he is so faithful to us, how he is so committed towards us.

[34 : 31] And that, Lord, when we look at ourselves, we see that we're so unfaithful and often so uncommitted. And yet, Lord, he is one who never changes. He is the same yesterday, today, and forever.

Bless us then, Lord, we pray. Remember us in our different circumstances, our different situations, our doubts, and our worries. We bless thee, Lord, that we're able to cast every care upon thee, knowing that thou art one who cares for us.

Oh, do us good, and we pray. Go before us. Take away our iniquity. Receive us graciously. For Jesus' sake. Amen. Well, we're going to sing some verses in conclusion from that psalm.

Psalm 17. Psalm 17, the Scottish Psalter. We're singing verses 5 to 9, and then we're singing the last verse, verse 15.

Psalm 17, and verse 5. Hold up my goings, Lord, me guide, in those thy paths divine, so that my footsteps may not slide out of those ways of thine.

[35 : 42] I called have on thee, O God, because thou wilt me hear, that thou mayst hearken to my speech, to me, and incline thine ear. Thy wondrous loving kindness show, thou that by thy right hand saves them that trust in thee from those that up against them stand.

As the apple of the eye me keep, in thy wings shade me close, from lewd oppressors compassing, me round as deadly foes. And then the last verse, but as for me, I thine own face, and righteousness will see, and with thy likeness, when I wake, I satisfied shall be.

These verses of Psalm 17, to God's praise. Amen. Amen. Hold up my goings, Lord, me guide, in those thy paths divine, So that my fruit's tree not slide Atop those ways so climb I call and come on thee, O God Because thou wilt me hear That thou mayst hark into my speech

To me in cline thy ear Thy wondrous loving kindness Shows the love by thy right hand Since then thou trust in thee From those that have against them stand As thou belong, thee I be keep In thy wings shed me close

From you to precious compass And thou hast in me round us Deadly foes God, as for thee I lie O grace and righteousness Righteousness will see And with thy likeness When I wait Thy satisfied shall be The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ The love of God the Father

[39 : 28] And the fellowship of the Holy Spirit Be with you all Now and forevermore Amen