

Psalm 17: The Prayer Of The Righteous

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[0 : 00] If you would, open up your copy of the Scriptures to the book of Psalms.

We're in Psalms last week, we're in Psalms again this morning. Last week we looked at Psalm 16, and so this week we're going to look at Psalm 17. There's nothing difficult about how I decide what to preach next.

It's whatever comes next, generally speaking. So Psalm 17 this morning, and if you turn there and you look, you'll notice that at the very beginning of this psalm, we are told that it is a prayer of David.

It's a straightforward title, a straightforward description of the passage that we are looking at this morning, that we're given a peek into the prayer life of King David himself.

Now that happens numerous times throughout the book of Psalms. Of course, the book of Psalms, as many of you know, it's a compilation. It's a collection of a lot of different psalms, poems and songs by men in ancient Israel.

[1 : 08] But many of them are actually composed by King David himself. We know that because they tell us that, and because oftentimes the New Testament writers will quote from them and attribute them to David himself.

And so we get a peek into the prayer life of King David. Now we know a lot about King David. We are privileged to know a lot about him because we are told a lot about his life, about his history from the books of 1 and 2 Samuel all the way through the end of 2 Kings.

And then picking up again in 1 and 2 Chronicles, we're given some more details about David. And so we know a lot about David, but the Psalms are precious and valuable because they give us into the peak of the heart of a man after God's own heart.

And I know that I struggle at times to pray as I ought. I know that I struggle at times to pray as often as I want or with the kind of fervency that I ought to pray.

And so I think to myself, who do I want to imitate? Well, of course I want to imitate Jesus and the apostles, but also I think of David, the man after God's own heart. If that is really true of him, then I want to see how he addresses the God that he so loves.

[2 : 15] I want to see how he himself interacts with God. And so I think it's valuable, it's helpful for us this morning to turn to this particular psalm and see a simple prayer of King David offered up as he asks God for help.

So I want to ask you guys to stand as we read this prayer together, beginning in verse 1. A prayer of David. 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. I call upon you for you will answer me, O God. Incline your ear to me.

- [3 : 18] Hear my words. Wondrously 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 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. They have 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 the 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.
- [4 : 16] When I awake, I shall be satisfied with your likeness. Father, thank you for this prayer. Thank you for the help and the hope that it offers us as we come with our petitions and our pleas before you.
- Give us understanding, we ask in Jesus' name. Amen. You guys take a seat. This is not a complicated psalm. It's really not. This is not a psalm that's difficult to understand.
- It's not difficult to follow. It is, as I said earlier, it is simply David's prayer to God on his behalf. He's facing troubles. We don't know exactly the exact nature of the troubles.
- We know that he's facing some enemies whom he calls his adversaries. In fact, he speaks of them in the plural initially and then he turns to begin to speak of them as a singular individual.
- So you might imagine in your mind, perhaps it's Saul that's after David. Perhaps this is in that period of David's life when Saul was chasing him and Saul's men were chasing him. That would make sense out of why at first he would speak of plural, of multiple enemies.
- [5 : 18] But it really boils down to one enemy, Saul, who's after him. But to be honest, this could happen at many different occasions in David's life. After all, David was a man of war.
- David was a king, a man who at times faced uprisings within his own family to depose him as king. So there's the possibility that this prayer could have been offered up by David at various points in his life.
- We are not told in the book of Psalms when David uttered this prayer in his life. But I think that's sometimes helpful to be given a vague sort of introduction like that so that we don't constrain David's prayer to a particular set of circumstances that we ourselves might never face.
- We might say, well, that's a fine prayer for David to pray in that particular circumstance, but I'm never going to have a family uprising against me. I'm never going to have a son turn on me and try to take my kingdom.
- I'm never going to have another king chase me and have to hide in caves and live out in the wilderness for a while. I'm never going to face those things. I'm never going to be at war with other nations and lead armies against them and have to worry about spies and all sorts of things.
- [6 : 31] I'm never going to face those circumstances, so perhaps this doesn't apply to me. We might say that, and I don't think we should even if we're given the circumstances, but we might be tempted to think that if we knew all of the circumstances that lie behind David's prayer.
- But we don't know them. We only know simply that he's asking for God to help him as he's facing off against some enemies, some adversaries in some sort of way.

And as you look at his prayer, it divides really neatly in half. The beginning of the prayer, the first seven verses, gives sort of David's grounds for his confidence. I mean, he does approach God with an incredible confidence.

That's why I love this psalm. It encourages me to pray with more confidence, to pray more boldly. He has a lot of confidence as he prays this. Look at verse 6.

I call upon you, for you will answer me, O God. David seems to believe and to know that God is going to be roused by his prayer, that God is going to respond to his prayer.

[7 : 32] So this is indeed a confident prayer. And these first seven verses tell us why David is so confident that God will in fact hear and respond positively to the prayer that he offers up.

But the prayer itself, David's actual request, we don't come into until really verse 8. We're given a hint in verse 7, but in verse 8 all the way down, in some ways through verse 15, but certainly through verse 14, we see David's petition itself, what he's really asking for.

So this morning we're going to work backwards. We're going to look at David's prayer itself, and then we're going to turn and look to the grounds that David has, the reasons that David has for asking for this with such boldness and confidence.

And I think from looking at both parts of the prayer, there are things that we can learn that will be beneficial to us in our own prayer lives. So let's take a look. Just look briefly at what David is specifically praying for.

I said it begins by focusing upon a plurality of wicked people, many wicked people who he's facing off against. So in verse 8 he says, 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, plural, who surround me.

[8 : 47] They close their hearts to pity with their mouths, they speak arrogantly, they have now surrounded our steps, they have set their eyes to cast us to the ground. So we know that they are verbally disparaging him, they're saying all sorts of things, but there's also most likely a physical threat here.

David really feels as if he's in danger, and you can see the intensity of that danger as he switches now to focus on perhaps the leader of his enemies, or maybe he just speaks of his enemies in the singular to add emphasis.

We really don't know. But you can see sort of the intensity, the real fear that David has as he's uttering this prayer. Look at verse 12. He is like a lion eager to tear as a young lion lurking in the bush.

Have you ever been afraid that something is hiding around the corner? Something is going to attack you, and something is going to get you. You know it's there, you can't see it, but you just have a sense, you just have a feeling that someone is out to get you.

My kids like to hide around corners, and jump out and try to scare me. Now, the great thing about being scared by kids is they forget to think about things like their shadows being cast from where they're standing, or sometimes when they're younger, when they're much smaller, you can hear them kind of snickering and giggling, and so it tips you off.

[10 : 08] But I can tell you this, that when I was a kid, my brother was an expert at scaring anybody. He would scare me, he would scare my mom, he would scare my dad.

He was devious in his attempts to hide in dark places and around corners, and it got to the point where there was a certain period of time and there was a certain age where I really, honestly, I just didn't even want to walk down the hallway.

I didn't want to do it at any time because I never knew, and he could be outside. He's got no thoughts of scaring me, and I'm walking like this through the hallway, just sort of leery that at any moment, he's not going to do anything, but he's just going to jump out and yell.

And so when I was a little kid, I was always kind of concerned that somebody was hiding, that he's going to get me. But for David, it's much more serious. It's much more real. It's as immediate as that.

He describes it as a lion, a young lion sort of crouching in the weeds, in the brush, ready to spring on him. He can't see the lion, but he just senses and he knows that his enemy is there.

[11 : 08] And so in light of that, he asks very specifically for God to come and to help. He says in verse 13, 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.

Arise, deliver me. David is specific. I mean, he cries out to God. In fact, he's been doing that since the very beginning of the psalm. Look up in verse 1.

In three different ways, he sort of cries out to God. He says first, Hear a just cause, O Lord, and then attend to my cry, and then finally, give ear to my prayer.

He's crying out to God throughout this. See the same thing three times in verses 6 and 7. He says, I call upon you, and then he says again, incline your ear to me, and then in verse 7, wondrously show your steadfast love.

So he's been calling out to God, but now he's calling out to God, and specifying exactly what he wants God to do. Come in and confront this person. Subdue them. Tie them up.

[12 : 15] If there's a lion lurking in the bushes for me, come in and tackle them. Wrap your arms around them. Tie their legs up. Prevent them from doing me any sort of harm. And David prays this kind of prayer, expecting that God is actually going to respond.

Actually going to do something to defend and protect David from his enemies. We don't pray these kinds of prayers as often as we ought to.

Sometimes we don't pray these kinds of prayers at all. And I think a part of the reason that we don't pray these kinds of prayers is because there's sometimes a part of us that thinks, he's probably not, I mean, he's not going to answer this.

He's not going to hear this. He's not going to answer this. I mean, he knows what I'm praying, and he knows what I want, but I prayed that one time before. I've prayed dozens of times before and things didn't turn out the way that I prayed.

And so sometimes we just grow despondent and because we grow despondent and we begin to actually lack faith that God is going to respond to our prayers, we just become muted in our prayers altogether.

[13 : 22] We just pray very general, vague things and ask God to do just general things in our lives and in the world around us, but we're afraid to get specific because if you get specific, you know whether or not God has answered your prayer and we fear sometimes that He won't do it and so we don't ask for specific things very often.

We really don't. Even when we pray for sick people, we don't pray very often specifically that God would miraculously heal them. We just say, well, Lord, we know so-and-so is sick and so pray you'd be with them and you'd help them and help them to endure through this and give them good doctrine.

All those are good prayers and we ought to pray those kinds of things, but there comes a point in time where we need to be able and willing and have the faith to pray with the kind of specificity that David does here.

And yet we don't sometimes. We don't, I think, for various reasons. Sometimes it's just a pass of feeling as though sometimes our specific prayers have not been answered the way that we hoped, the way that we wanted, and the way that we requested, and so now we're skittish about it.

Sometimes it's an imbalance in our theology that leads us to not ask God for specific things. And for us, in a kind of church like we have, the imbalance is probably going to take the form of something like, well, God is sovereign over all things.

[14 : 42] Pastor Chris preaches that all the time. I mean, we've been through Romans 9 through 11. We see He's sovereign over history, sovereign over individuals. We see those kinds of things. We know God is sovereign, and so we begin to think things like, well, if God is in control of the big picture and the details, then what's He going to do?

I mean, He's going to do what He's going to do. So we feel hampered at times because we believe that God is sovereign and we don't want to deny that. We know that there are people who reject the biblical notion of God's sovereignty and they reject it because they want to believe that what they do actually changes the outcomes of things and they want to believe that what they say matters and it makes a difference in the world and to God Himself.

And we, on the other hand, will sometimes say that God is sovereign and so we'll back off. But the truth of the matter is that the Scripture upholds both of these truths. The Scriptures are very clear that yes, God is sovereign over all things, but the Bible is also equally clear that God responds to our prayers.

He does. Whether or not you can make sense out of those two truths coinciding in your mind is beside the point. I mean, we can enter into a philosophy lecture, but that's not what preaching is for, so I'm not going to do it.

We can enter into that and try to untie the knot a little bit and figure some things out. But the truth of the matter is as people who believe in the Bible, we just need to be able to say He's absolutely sovereign over all things.

[16 : 02] Nothing happens apart from His sovereign will. And yet, He commands us to pray and says that He will respond to our prayers. We ought not to be boggled down by the tensions there, but just to believe, to rest in the fact that He is our King and to take courage that He's a King who listens and responds to the things that we ask.

Jesus tells us as much. In fact, if you'll hold your place there, I'd like you to turn over to the book of Matthew, the Gospel of Matthew. In chapter 7, Jesus actually speaks to this issue of the fact that we need to be willing to ask God to act.

Matthew chapter 7, verse 7, He says, Ask. Now He's speaking to His disciples. This is a Sermon on the Mount in which He's had His disciples sit. He's not speaking to the world at large. He's speaking to His disciples.

We'll see how it's important in a few moments. But He says to His disciples, Ask, and it will be given to you. Seek, and you will find. Knock, and it will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives. The one who seeks finds.

And to the one who knocks, it will be opened. Or which one of you, if His Son asks Him for bread, will give Him a stone? Or if He asks for a fish, will give Him a serpent? If you then who are evil know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father who is in heaven give good things to those who ask Him?

[17 : 22] Jesus says that if God is your Father, that is if you truly are a follower of Christ, He is a good Father. He's the kind of Father who when you ask for bread, He gives you bread.

When He asks for fish, He gives you a fish. He doesn't trick you. He doesn't give you a raw stone in the place of a piece of bread. No, He fills the stomachs of the empty. He comes and He responds and He helps.

Why? Because He's good. Because that's who He is. That's what He's like. And none of this is to deny God's sovereignty. None of this Jesus saying, Ask and it will be given to you.

None of that is flying in the face of the fact that God is sovereign over all things. I can show it to you in the Sermon on the Mount. Turn back a page, if you will, in your Bibles to chapter 5 of the Gospel of Matthew.

Listen to what Jesus says in the second half of verse 45. He says about God, He makes His Son rise on the evil and on the good and He sends rain on the just and on the unjust.

[18 : 24] See the sovereignty of God here? He causes the Son, that is good things, that is blessings, okay? He causes Him to go to the good and the evil. He also causes troubles and tribulations, the rain to come on the just and the unjust.

He's sovereign over all of those things. So that when Jesus says two chapters later, Ask and it will be given to you, He's not saying that and denying and saying that that God is sovereign over the giving of good things and the bringing of troubles into our lives.

He's not denying. He's simply saying, God's a good Father, so ask. Yeah, He's sovereign over all things, but He's good, so ask. And none of these things that we're seeing in the teachings of Jesus, none of those are foreign to the prayer of David.

Go back to Psalm 17. I'll show you why. I don't think that this idea of God being sovereign and yet responding to our prayers is something that we're importing into this prayer. I see it here. So if you'll look, for instance, in verse 14 of Psalm 17, He's already prayed for deliverance and He says, from men by your hand, from men of this world, so those are not believers, obviously, these are His enemies, these are men of this world, not part of the covenant people, from men of this world whose portion is in this life.

So the good things they're going to have, they're in this life, they're limited to this life, they're not looking ahead to a hope anywhere else, which is why at times they can be so greedy, they can be so willing to hurt others because they've got to get everything now.

[19 : 55] It's in this life. But then He goes on to describe how they receive their portion in this life. He says, you fill their womb with treasure.

Huh. They are satisfied with children and they leave their abundance to their infants. And we're going to see in a moment why there's such an emphasis on this life here, but notice that even in this life, it's God who fills their womb with treasure.

Now there's nothing in the ancient world more highly prized, and I think this is even true today, but certainly in a culture that pries the passing on of your land and your possessions.

There's nothing more highly prized than children. And when you read through the Old Testament in particular, it's almost striking how often those who have been chosen by God for him to work through, how often the women begin as barren women.

It's almost surprising and shocking how often that happens. In a culture in which what mattered the most was whether or not you had born children, over and over God chooses those who up to that point had been unable to do so.

[21 : 10] And so when David is saying this, David is recognizing that he's looking out and he's seeing his enemies, his adversaries, and maybe that's Saul, maybe that's Saul's men, maybe that's the Philistines, maybe, we don't really know but he looks at them as his enemies and he looks at those who are of the world and he says, but what they have, the blessings that they have in this life, you've given to them.

So he's acknowledging the same thing that Jesus is saying when Jesus says he causes the sun to rise on the good and the wicked, the good and the bad. David is acknowledging the same thing here.

That the good things that they have, they in reality come from your hand because you are sovereign over all things. And yet, that acknowledgement by David does not stop him from saying, so now, now arise, God.

Subdue them. Take them down. Do your work. Come in. I know you're sovereign. If you want to bring rain, you'll bring rain. If you want to shine the sun, you'll shine the sun.

And so I'm asking you, bring some rain on them. It never slows him down. As much as that might create problems in our own minds, if we feel the need to logically solve all the tensions in the Bible, it's going to create a lot of problems.

[22 : 25] But the reality is that David is one who rests in the sovereignty of God. We saw that even last week in Psalm 16. But he's also one who boldly asks God to do things, expecting that God himself is going to respond.

Those are the kinds of prayers that we need to be offering up. We need to be offering up the kinds of prayers that expect God to answer them. We need to be offering up prayers that are specific, that are targeted, that recognize God's sovereignty and yet never shy away from saying, this is what I desperately need right now.

Will you do it? And trusting that he's going to do something. He's going to work and he's going to move. That's not to deny that there are times when there are things that we want and because we're short-sighted in our view of the unfolding of our lives that there are going to be times when what we want is not really the best thing for us and so God's going to delay the bringing of the good into our life and his answer is not always going to be according to the specifics of what we ask.

We know that that's true. We know that our desires do not always coincide with what God is going to do. That's why James tells us, he says, you know, come now you who say tomorrow we're going to do this and that.

He says, no, instead you should say if God wills we will do this or that. That's all true but it never prevents people from saying we're going to do this and that and it shouldn't prevent us from saying, God, I want you to do this and I want you to do that.

[23 : 59] Please intervene and trusting that he can and because he's a good father he's the kind of God who will do it. Now David though has grounds for asking for praying these kinds of prayers.

David has reasons to be confident that God will respond to these kinds of prayers. And the whole first half of this psalm is really David laying out before God the reasons why he expects God to intervene and answer his prayer.

So let's look at those verses. Again, we're going to kind of work backwards even through this portion not just through the whole psalm but even through this portion because I want us to jump down to verse 7 which I think states the ultimate ground that David has for his confidence.

The ultimate reason why David can be confident that God hears and God will answer his prayers. Look at verse 7. Wondrously show your steadfast love O Savior of those who seek refuge from their adversaries at your right hand.

So David both describes God and describes himself. David is among those who seek refuge in God himself. That's who David is. And so if you want to be the kind of person that can pray boldly you need to be a person who seeks refuge in God.

[25 : 18] But the reason that you seek refuge is because you know that God is a God who shows his steadfast love and therefore one who saves those who take refuge in him.

Now this word that's translated steadfast love in the English Standard Version is going to be rendered different ways in various translations that you might have because it's a word that we can't adequately express with a simple one or two word phrase in English.

It's a Hebrew word that indicates God's covenant love and commitment directed at those who belong to him. So it's a kind of it's mercy it is love there's a reason why it's often translated steadfast love it does flow from God's love and his mercy directed at people but it's the love and mercy that flow from God's covenant commitment to his particular people.

So there's a lot packed into this phrase but at root it's David saying you are a God faithful to your covenants you are a God who comes through on your promises you and you are a God who in the covenant has promised to love us and show us mercy and so I appeal to you and to your covenant faithfulness and love I appeal to you because that's the kind of God that you are.

The ultimate ground of David's confidence in his prayer the ultimate ultimate ground is that he knows that God has made a covenant God has made a promise not only to David's descendants but to David himself God has made covenant promises and God is always faithful to his covenant promises to save and deliver and to rescue and come alongside of and help and love and support and listen and answer that's who God is and not just for the old covenant saints who could look back to the covenant made with Abraham and then the covenant made with Moses and even David and his family to the covenant made with David in 2 Samuel 7 not just old testament saints who could look back to covenants but us as well of course we can look back to some of those covenants as well the Abrahamic covenant and others but we don't have to look back that far we can simply look back to the new covenant Jesus says that the new covenant is secured by his blood and so he has made covenant promises he has sworn them on the oath of his blood that he's going to be steady he's going to be sure to the covenant and so we can know as believers that when we pray to God as our God with whom we have entered into covenant through the blood of Jesus that he'll hear and that he will answer have you ever wondered why Jesus says he says it in John 14 he says it again in John 16 and a few other places he tells us that we are to pray in his name he goes so far as to say whatever you ask in my name that you will receive why is Jesus so adamant about us praying in his name he says to the disciples in John chapter 16 you haven't been praying this way so far up to this point you've not been praying in my name but from now on you're going to pray in my name why?

[28 : 29] because Jesus is about to go to the cross he's about to shed his blood he's about to seal the covenant with his people so that their sins are forgiven and God his father becomes their father and so that now when we pray to God in the name of Jesus we are essentially saying I'm not coming to you because I deserve for you to answer my prayers I'm coming to you through Christ and through his blood and I'm asking on his behalf and in his name would you do this for me father?

you are now my father because he has made you my father so would you hear and would you answer? it's not just the capstone to our prayers it's not just sort of what we need to tag on to the word amen to make it a good solid Christian prayer it is an acknowledgement that it is only through Christ and that it is certainly through Christ that we can have our prayers heard and answered by our heavenly father the ultimate grounds of David's confidence in his prayer is God's covenant commitment in his steadfast love and mercy the ultimate grounds of all of our prayers are God's covenant commitments and his steadfast love and mercy that come to us through Jesus Christ now that's only true for you if you've trusted in him that's only true for you if you actually have been bound to him by faith which puts you into the covenant it's not true of you nothing that I'm saying and nothing that David models for us here is true for you if you are outside of that if you've not trusted in Christ and his blood has not covered you and washed away your sins then nothing that I'm telling you really applies to you yet but if you would trust in him if you would turn to him and you would say

I know that it's only by your blood that my sins can be washed away oh forgive me through Christ I repent of my sin make me your own then then you can pray these kinds of prayers and if that is true of you then you have beneath your feet the ultimate grounds of confidence upon which you can stand to believe that God will indeed answer your prayers but there's more there's more because David says more and what David said is confirmed elsewhere in scripture for us David doesn't just say you're a God of love and mercy and covenant faithfulness and so therefore I'm praying this prayer and I'm expecting that you will answer he doesn't just say that he also says in addition to the fact that you are a God of love and mercy I'm coming to you and I'm asking this prayer I'm asking it from a pure heart this prayer is coming to you from one who has endeavored to be obedient to you and to seek after you and to live a life of practical righteousness and holiness in fact David devotes more of this psalm to that than he does to any single issue in his prayer look at the very beginning he begins by saying here a just or a righteous cause so David's assuming that his prayer is a righteous prayer hear that

I'm going to give you a righteous prayer God so hear my prayer and then listen to another description give ear to my prayer from lips free of deceit David is declaring himself to be saying I'm not a liar my lips are free of deceit I'm not wrapped up in all kinds of sin and unrighteous I'm coming to you as a righteous person he goes on verse 3 you have tried my heart you have visited me by night in other words you've seen me when nobody else sees me you've seen me secretly you know you've tried my heart you've visited me by night you have tested me and you will find nothing I have purposed that my mouth will not transgress and then he says with regard to the works of man by the word of lips I have avoided the ways of the violent he says my feet have not slipped off your path now if you do know the story of David if you have read elsewhere in the Bible you might be thinking wow that seems like a bit much

David I mean didn't you kill a guy like you sent him off to get killed and he stole his wife I mean you don't exactly seem to be the model of righteousness at all times but you see we can turn elsewhere in the Psalms and we can see how David responded in that moment because David prays out of that event and he prays a prayer begging God to cleanse him and forgive him and renew him David knows how to pray when his life has been upended by his own sin right and we should know how to pray those kinds of prayers as well we should know how to come and plead and say I have this sin this secret sin in the night that no one else sees and knows but you've seen it and you know it we should know how to come and confess and ask and plead with God that he might forgive us through the blood of Jesus we should know how to do that but there are going to be other times when we're bringing a prayer to God and we're coming to him not because we are born down by our guilt and weighed down by our sin we're coming to him because we desperately need something and we look and we look at our lives and yes we could at any moment pick apart our lives and find some some sins we could find some things that we're doing wrong but David is looking in general at his life and he's saying

[33 : 54] I'm following you I'm doing what I'm supposed to do I'm not like my adversaries I'm not lying I'm not spreading false things about people I don't have any secret hidden away sins that no one else knows about right now but you because you've tested me in the night and you know and you've seen and I'm not veered off of your path onto their path I'm not living my life the way that they live their lives David can come with confidence because he's coming as a person who's living actually trying to serve and obey God in his everyday life and that makes a difference in our prayers we may not want to believe that it does but the chances are if you're struggling with that the reason is because you need to pray the other kind of prayer first because there is something there is some sin there is something buried and something hidden that no one knows about there is something happening in your life if you find yourself sort of off put by this language of I'm righteous so hear my prayer it's probably because there is some unrighteousness in your life that you need to deal with because this is not this is not just something that David says here and it's nowhere else in the Bible maybe King David can say that but I mean

I could never pray anything like that I could never approach God as someone who's living a righteous life but that's not true consider these words from the book of Proverbs chapter 15 verse 29 the Lord is far from the wicked but he hears the prayer of the righteous he's far from the wicked you know it's not literally he's omnipresent he's everywhere so how is he far from the wicked he's not listening to them he's not interested in what they have to say but for the righteous he's listening his ear is toward the righteous this is not just sort of an Old Testament idea this is this is also found in the New Testament you don't have to turn there but I just want you to hear these words from two different writers in the New Testament first of all one that you might be a little bit more familiar with from the book of James James has been talking about prayer he's been talking specifically about praying for those who are sick and then he says at the end of verse 16 of chapter 5 he says the prayer of a righteous person has great power as it is working now you memorize the King James that sounds funny to you but it's a good translation the prayer of the righteous person has great power comes with great power in other words

God's God's hearing the prayer of the righteous he hears and he responds or just another book over in 1 Peter chapter 3 Peter quoting from another point in the Old Testament though holding it to be true even under the New Covenant he quotes from Psalm 34 and he says in verse 12 of chapter 3 the eyes of the Lord are on the righteous and his ears are open to their prayer but he says the face of the Lord is against those who do evil so even the apostle Peter and even James the Lord's brother recognize that that God responds differently to the prayers of the righteous than he does for those who are living in wickedness and sin and so if you have some hesitancy about praying this kind of prayer it's one of two things either there's some there is some sin that you need to deal with and you feel like you can't pray this prayer and if you don't like this kind of prayer or it may be simply that you need to just as we need to balance ourselves with the sovereignty of God and our responsibility and our actions in the world you may need to balance yourself with understanding

God's mercy and God's grace and what he actually requires of his people because he says yes the ultimate ground of you having any confidence of your prayers being answered is the mercy of God it's the covenant faithfulness of God and you can't earn that you can just trust in it but when you are living your life as one who has received that mercy ought to be living their lives when you are pursuing him and when your heart is directed toward him it adds a kind of power to your prayer that otherwise simply would be absent it would not be there and then finally the last thing I want you to see from this psalm other than the prayer itself the petition and the grounds of his prayer I want you to see how in the middle of all that there is something that David says at the very end of this psalm in verse 15 that ought to it ought to encourage all of us and maybe even correct all of us because we hear David's prayer it's very concrete it's very much directed at these people

David even recognizes that these people are people who under God's sovereign hand they've received good things in life children and treasure and those sorts of things and yet David also recognizes in saying that their reception of these things is limited to the here and now and David has a view of reality and a view of the world that says even as I'm looking and praying that God would do something and intervene and take them down even as I'm doing that and I'm seeing their prosperity even that is not shaking my confidence in God because my confidence in him is not limited to what I'm seeing now look at verse 15 in contrast to them see they leave their abundance to their infants that means they die they're gone and they're going to have to leave everything that God gave them to somebody else that's it that's the end of it for them as for me I shall behold your face in righteousness when I awake I shall be satisfied with your likeness the hope of David ultimately is not merely that God will come in and intervene and stop his adversaries he believes that God will do that and he prays as one who believes that God will do that but the hope of David ultimately is he says

[39 : 38] I will behold your face I will be satisfied with your likeness all of our hope all of our joy all of our happiness all of our satisfaction in this life needs to be anchored in God himself and not his gracious answers to our prayers you can pray powerfully when your hope does not depend upon God specifically giving you precisely what you want but when your hope is anchored in the presence of God and the joy to be had in his presence beholding his likeness then you begin to pray as a person who has confidence to say this is a God who can answer this and yet now even now before the answer has come I am satisfied because he himself and not his work on my behalf but he himself is all I need in this life and in the life to come let's pray

Father we're so grateful for this and I continue