

“Another Model Prayer”
Psalm 17
(Preached at Trinity January 17, 2010)

1. Have you considered how amazing prayer is? Prayer is an infinitely precious gift. Imagine being able to talk personally with the Creator of the universe?
2. It seems so unbelievable. How can finite man speak to an infinite God? How are we to approach Him properly -- or approach Him at all?
3. We know, first of all, that He can only be approached through Jesus Christ our Mediator. **John 14:6** – “Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me.”
4. Because of sin there is an infinite distance between God and man. Jesus died that He might bridge the gap; that we might be reconciled. No one can approach God except through our Savior, Jesus Christ.
5. Assuming that we can approach God in prayer through Jesus Christ, how can we do it properly? The people of God have always been interested in this question. Every believer is interested in prayer.
 - A. Our Lord’s disciples asked Him, “Teach us to pray?”
Luke 11:1 – “And it came to pass, that, as he was praying in a certain place, when he ceased, one of his disciples said unto him, Lord, teach us to pray, as John also taught his disciples.”
 - B. In response to this question Jesus gave them the Lord’s Prayer – it is often referred to as the model prayer.
6. But there are other prayers in the Bible. Psalm 17 is one such example. In fact this Psalm is called, “A Prayer of David.” There are four other Psalms that are called Prayer Psalms. Psalms 86, 90, 102, 142
7. As our Lord’s prayer is called the model prayer, this psalm also has several elements of excellent prayer. In this prayer we see how David argues his case before God. This seems strange to us – to forcefully argue before God. This is the nature of true prayer and Psalm 17 demonstrates it before us. May God grant us to read it to our profit.
 - I. First, David calls to God’s attention the sincerity of his prayer – **Verses 1-2**
 - A. David calls upon God to examine the rightness of his petition
Psalm 17:1 – “Hear the right, O LORD”
^{NAS} **Psalm 17:1** – “Hear a just cause, O LORD”
 1. David’s cry to God was a just cause
 2. There was no effort to conceal the truth
“give ear unto my prayer, *that goeth* not out of feigned lips.”
^{NAS} **Psalm 17:1** – “Give ear to my prayer, which is not from deceitful lips.”
 3. David was offering up a sincere prayer for a worthy cause. He was asking God to judge the situation – He was placing his life in God’s hand
Psalm 17:2 – “Let my sentence come forth from thy presence; let thine eyes behold the things that are equal.”
^{NIV} **Psalm 17:2** – “May my vindication come from you; may your eyes see what is right.”

- B. Prayer should never be flippant
1. We can pray for all things, but some things are not worthy of prayer
 2. For example, we don't have to pray about obedience to God's commands.
 - a. We can pray for help in obeying God's Word but we don't have to pray as to whether or not to obey
 - b. God's Word is absolute and unchanging – we should simply receive it.
 3. We should guard against prayer that does not have regard for God's righteous purposes. We must not seek to impose our wills upon God.
Luke 22:42 – “Saying, Father, if thou be willing, remove this cup from me: nevertheless not my will, but thine, be done.”
Matthew 26:42 – “He went away again the second time, and prayed, saying, O my Father, if this cup may not pass away from me, except I drink it, thy will be done.”
Matthew 6:10 – “Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, as *it is* in heaven.”
 4. We should guard against selfish prayers that are directed a fulfilling our lusts
James 4:3 – “Ye ask, and receive not, because ye ask amiss, that ye may consume *it* upon your lusts.”
 5. We should guard against deceit in prayer – improper motives
NAS **Psalm 17:1** – “Give ear to my prayer, which is not from deceitful lips.”
- C. David is arguing with God that his plea is right
1. To argue our case before God is no sign of disrespect. We should come before Him with holy zeal and plead our case forcibly.
 2. Jacob wrestled with God until he prevailed
Genesis 32:26 – “I will not let thee go, except thou bless me.”
 3. Jesus taught His disciples to persist in prayer
 True prayer is persistent prayer

II. Second, David argues the righteousness of his own life.

David opened his heart to God – **Verses 3-5**

- A. This should be an aspect of all prayer
1. Search me, try me, examine me
 2. David believed his heart to be right and asks God to probe him to see his innocence
Psalm 17:3 – “Thou hast proved mine heart; thou hast visited *me* in the night; thou hast tried me, *and* shalt find nothing”
 - a. This always amazes me about David. He had such confidence as he came before God.
 - b. Was David claiming to be sinless? No!
 On one hand he is claiming innocence with regard to the charges Saul and the people of Israel had raised against him.
 But on the other hand David is claiming a consistent life of obedience.

- c. David's confidence could only come through a consistently pious life. With clear conscience David knew that his heart's desire was God.
 - 3. David's life was consistently holy
 - a. David's life was that of purposed obedience. Not perfect obedience by purposed obedience
Psalm 17:3 – "I am purposed *that* my mouth shall not transgress."
NAS **Psalm 17:5** – "My steps have held fast to Thy paths. My feet have not slipped."
 - b. This is the nature of our church covenant. We are pledging together before God to strive after holiness.
 - c. What is your priority? In **Verses 3-5** David was arguing that he was determined not to sin.
- B. David was also opening his life to scrutiny
 We should always hold ourselves up to careful scrutiny – both private and public
 - 1. We must examine our own hearts
2 Corinthians 13:5 – "Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves. . ."
 - 2. We must be willing to open ourselves before the scrutiny of our brothers
James 5:16 – "Confess *your* faults one to another, and pray one for another,"
Hebrews 10:24 – "And let us consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works:"
Galatians 6:1 – "Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual, restore such an one in the spirit of meekness; considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted."
- C. We must continually hold ourselves before God
 Search me, try me
Psalm 139:23-24 – "Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts: ²⁴ And see if *there be any* wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting."
 - 1. The issue isn't informing God of our hearts. He knows all men intimately
Genesis 6:5 – "And GOD saw that the wickedness of man *was* great in the earth, and *that* every imagination of the thoughts of his heart *was* only evil continually."
Jeremiah 17:9-10 – "The heart *is* deceitful above all *things*, and desperately wicked: who can know it? ¹⁰ I the LORD search the heart, / try the reins, even to give every man according to his ways, *and* according to the fruit of his doings."
 - 2. Human beings tend to judge only by what we see outwardly. God can look upon the heart
1 Samuel 16:7 – "But the LORD said unto Samuel, Look not on his countenance, or on the height of his stature; because I have refused him: for *the LORD seeth* not as man seeth; for man looketh on the outward appearance, but the LORD looketh on the heart."
 - 3. Our prayer must be, "God reveal unto ME my heart."

- D. Righteousness creates confidence before God
1. I'm not talking about arrogant, prideful, self-righteousness
 2. I'm talking about a holy life committed to Christ
 3. Sin always hinders our prayer life
- Isaiah 59:1-2** – “Behold, the LORD'S hand is not shortened, that it cannot save; neither his ear heavy, that it cannot hear: ² But your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid *his* face from you, that he will not hear.”
- Luke 6:46** And why call ye me, Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say?

III. David argues from the standpoint of the character of God – **Verses 6-8**

- A. When we pray we should recite God's holy character to Him
1. God, you are holy and righteous – defend my case
 2. God, you are all powerful – prove yourself mighty in my deliverance
 3. God, you always keep your promises – recite His promises
- B. Listen to David - **Psalm 17:7** – “Shew thy marvellous lovingkindness”
1. We've seen this word before - רַחֲמֵי
 2. This word refers to God's electing love or His Covenantal love
David is reminding God of His covenant love
 3. This isn't the same as God's general love that God shows to both the just and the unjust. This is the love that God shows to His people as their God.
 4. David is reminding God that He has set His love upon David – particular love, everlasting love, protecting love
- Psalm 17:8** – “Keep me as the apple of the eye, hide me under the shadow of thy wings,”
- C. David is reminding God of His covenantal faithfulness
- Psalm 17:7** – “O thou that savest by thy right hand them which put their trust *in thee* from those that rise up *against them*.”
1. God has always demonstrated His covenantal love by saving His people from their enemies.
 2. We should recite this back to God
 3. Listen to the prayer of Moses after God delivered Israel from Egypt
Exodus 15:11-13 – “Who *is* like unto thee, O LORD, among the gods? who *is* like thee, glorious in holiness, fearful *in* praises, doing wonders? ¹² Thou stretchedst out thy right hand, the earth swallowed them. ¹³ Thou in thy mercy (רַחֲמֵי) hast led forth the people *which* thou hast redeemed: thou hast guided *them* in thy strength unto thy holy habitation.”
 4. By God's covenant love He saved us and by this love He will keep us
Romans 8:35 – “Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? *shall* tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword?”

IV. Finally, David argues from the danger of his situation – the seriousness of his condition
Verses 9-15

- A. David considered his need desperate
Psalm 17:9 – “From the wicked that oppress me, *from my deadly enemies, who compass me about.*”
1. David’s life is being threatened
 2. David says three things about his enemies
 - a. They close up their hearts to any pity – they are beyond feeling. They have no mercy.
Psalm 17:10 – “They are inclosed in their own fat”
NAS **Psalm 17:10** – “They have closed their unfeeling *heart*,”
ESV **Psalm 17:10** – “They close their hearts to pity;”
NIV **Psalm 17:10** – “They close up their callous hearts”
 - b. They are filled with pride and arrogance
Psalm 17:10 – “ with their mouth they speak proudly.”
 - c. They are intent on David’s destruction
Psalm 17:11-12 – “They have now compassed us in our steps: they have set their eyes bowing down to the earth; ¹² Like as a lion *that* is greedy of his prey”
 3. David pleads for deliverance
Psalm 17:13 – “Arise, O LORD, disappoint him, cast him down: deliver my soul from the wicked”
- B. We should set our situation before God
1. We should plead our desperate need.
 2. We should plead before God that His beloved child is in great need.

Conclusion:

1. We should pray continually. We should pray persuasively.
2. Are you a prayer warrior? Are you continually before God’s throne of grace?
3. Are you guilty of prayerlessness? Your prayerlessness is leaving you and all around you open to calamity.
James 4:2 – “Ye lust, and have not: ye kill, and desire to have, and cannot obtain: ye fight and war, yet ye have not, because ye ask not.”
Daniel 9:13 – “As *it is* written in the law of Moses, all this evil is come upon us: yet made we not our prayer before the LORD our God. . .”
4. May we heed the words of Paul:
1 Thessalonians 5:17 – “Pray without ceasing.”