

Beholding the Face of God

Psalm 14:1 "*A Prayer of David.*

Hear a just cause, O LORD; attend to my cry! Give ear to my prayer from lips free of deceit!

² From your presence let my vindication come! Let your eyes behold the right!

³ 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.

⁴ With regard to the works of man, by the word of your lips I have avoided the ways of the violent.

⁵ My steps have held fast to your paths; my feet have not slipped.

⁶ I call upon you, for you will answer me, O God; incline your ear to me; hear my words.

⁷ Wondrously show your steadfast love, O Savior of those who seek refuge from their adversaries at your right hand.

⁸ Keep me as the apple of your eye; hide me in the shadow of your wings,

⁹ from the wicked who do me violence, my deadly enemies who surround me.

¹⁰ They close their hearts to pity; with their mouths they speak arrogantly.

¹¹ They have now surrounded our steps; they set their eyes to cast us to the ground.

¹² He is like a lion eager to tear, as a young lion lurking in ambush.

¹³ Arise, O LORD! Confront him, subdue him! Deliver my soul from the wicked by your sword,

¹⁴ 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.

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

Psalm 17

Antinomianism

A COUPLE OF YEARS AGO at our church's annual Reformation dinner party, myself and two of my daughters came dressed up in a most unusual set of costumes. While others came as distinguished queens or famous Reformers, we wore blue garments, had white beards, and little pointy red hats. "What in the world does your costume have to do with Reformation day?" everyone kept asking. We would simply hold up our signs, each with someone much smaller dressed up in the same costume but with a red line crossed through it. "We are anti-gnomians," was our response. Everyone had a good laugh.

I spent this last week at the inaugural conference for the Reformed Baptist Network. In those meetings, someone preached a sermon on the current Reformed world and how

in his opinion antinomianism is becoming a very big problem. “**Antinomian**” has nothing to do with gnomes. It is literally someone who is “**against law.**” It is defined as, “**One who holds that under the gospel dispensation of grace the moral law is of no use or obligation because faith alone is necessary to salvation.**”

On this, antinomians create **category mistakes**. **First**, if defined this way, it assumes that the law plays no role in leading someone to salvation by faith alone. Yet, if we do not know the bad news of our breaking of the law, what need is there for the good news that Jesus forgives those who trust in him alone? The law drives us to Christ. **Second**, the Reformation has never taught that sanctification is by faith alone, but that justification is by faith alone. In this way, a definition that talks about “salvation” and the law collapses justification and sanctification into one big category. But each, along with election and glorification and calling (etc.) are parts of salvation. Salvation is the whole thing.

We are **justified**, that is brought into a right legal standing before God by faith alone, but we are not elected by faith at all. **Election** is merely the good pleasure of God to save any wicked person that he wants to. **Glorification** is

by grace alone. God need not glorify any of us, but by his promise through the gospel, he chooses to glorify those whom he has elected before the foundations of the world. And **sanctification**—in this sense I’m talking about that long forward trudging through this life in a way that increases our holiness and mortifies (or puts to death) the sin in our bodies, this is a wonderful dance of the Holy Spirit making us holy **by using the law** of God to continually convict of us of our sins, **and the gospel** which tells us we never do or did anything ourselves to be elected, justified, or glorified.

My experience in the Reformed world has seen the whole spectrum regarding people’s relationship to the law. I’ve seen fundamentalistic **legalism**, I’ve seen pretty **good balance**, and I’ve seen **antinomianism**. I don’t run in the the same circles as this preacher does, but I’ve seen enough to know that I’m no fonder of people who live their lives in proud abandonment of God’s law than I am people who make themselves and everyone else miserable with unbiblical legalistic adherence to (supposedly) it. There is something about our Psalm today that made me think about the antinomian side of this imbalance.

Psalm 17: A Model Prayer

Psalm 17 is simply titled: *A Prayer of David*. There are only two with this exact title in the Psalter (the other is Psalm 86). As such, these are not occasional like so many other early Psalms are. They are generic. These serve as **model prayers** for you and I. But in what ways?

In different ways. Both begin with a similar request. “**Hear a just cause**” (17:1) and, “**Incline your ear to me**” (86:1). Both boldly approach the throne where God sits. Your prayers to God must be bold and not timid, for this is the example given to you by David.

Both begin in the imperative mood. He tells God to listen to him. These aren't questions: Lord, will you listen to me? These aren't requests: Lord, please incline your ear to me. They are bold commands! **What kind of a person commands God**, and on what basis would anyone ever think to do such a thing?

Well, in Psalm 86, the command's reason is that he is “**poor and needy**” (1), he is **trusting** in the Lord alone (3), he is **sinful** (5), and the LORD is the covenant God of *hesed* (“steadfast love”; 5) who loves to answer those who call

upon him in faith. In Psalm 86, David needs **grace** (6, **15-17**), he needs God to **teach him His ways** (**11**). In these ways, Psalm 86 expands on the NT model prayer: **The Lord's Prayer**. That prayer states among other things, “**Forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors.**” Sin and forgiveness are front and center. God has promised us in his word that if we know ourselves to be sinful, and if we will humble ourselves, that he will forgive us in Christ Jesus when we pray to him. That is why David can boldly command God to listen to him. It isn't based on David's presumption. He isn't treating God like a genie in a bottle. He isn't seeking to rule God. Rather, he is asking the Lord for mercy.

Keeping God's Law

Psalm 17 is different, at least on one level, even though it is also a prayer of David. Consider the following statements in light of this idea of antinomianism. The prayer begins, “**Hear a just cause, O LORD; attend to my cry! Give ear to my prayer from lips free of deceit!**” (**Ps 17:1**). **Lips free of deceit?** The next verse says, “**... Let your eyes behold the right!**” (**2**). **The right?** The third verse says, “**You have tried my heart ... and you will find nothing. I have purposed that**

my mouth will not transgress” (3). God will find nothing, no transgression? This language continues. “With regard to the works of man ... I have avoided the ways of the violent” (4). David has avoided the ways of the violent? “My steps have held fast to your paths; my feet have not slipped” (5). What could this possibly mean?

The language here might seem to be that of a perfect man. We remember the very first Psalm and how it sets up essentially a perfect man “who walks not in the counsel of the wicked, nor stands in the way of sinners, nor sits in the seat of scoffers” (Ps 1:1). Along with Psalm 2, Psalm 1 is the *Introduction* to the Psalter. We expect to find language that sounds similar throughout it. And we do.

In Psalm 1, while it can be said in some kind of way that believers are righteous like “the man” in first verse, it is also true that there is The Man who would become perfect in the absolute sense. That is why so many of the Church Fathers believed that the Man of Psalm 1:1 is in the ultimate sense, Jesus Christ. The whole psalter is therefore necessarily about him. It is set up with him as the main Singer of the Psalms.

But Psalm 17, while speaking in some ways like Psalm 1, also has a context. It isn't giving for us an idyllic picture

of a perfect man. Rather, David is praying, “From your presence (*panim*) let my vindication come!” (2). Along with the very first words, “hear a just cause,” vindication (Hb: *mishpat*; Gk: *krima*) is legal language. David’s prayer is picturing himself before the heavenly court. God is the Judge. He—at least on a first reading—is the defense attorney. He is putting his life into the hands of the God who judges all. And he desires judgment or vindication to come forth from God’s “presence.”

But vindication with regard to what? What kind of a fool (remember Psalm 14) would ask God to judge him when he knows he is a sinner? Again, remember that David is also the author of Psalm 86. The answer is two-fold. First, this prayer of David is addressing something other than his sin. Here is where looking at the structure of the Psalm will now be helpful. David’s prayer of Psalm 17 seems to follow a simple chiasm:

- A** Hear my plea for justice (*tsedeq*) before your face (*panim*) (1-2)
- B** I have kept your law with my heart and am pure of violence (3-5)

C I call, answer me and keep me (17:6-8)

B¹ The wicked close their hearts and attack me (9-12)

A¹ I am just (*tsedeq*), let me see your face (*panim*) (13-15)¹

A Hear my plea for justice (*tsedeq*) before your face (*panim*) (1-2)

B You tested my heart, I have steady paths (3-6)

C Show me your lovingkindness (7-9)

B¹ Their closed hearts surround me (10-14)

A¹ I am just (*tsedeq*), let me see your face (*panim*) (15)²

As the “B” sections indicate (first example), the prayer has in mind—as so many other psalms have had—the wicked who are pursuing him. He is innocent *with respect to them*. Again, notice that he says he has **avoided the ways of the violent (Ps 17:4)**. What is interesting about this is that we know that David wanted to build God a temple, but God would not allow it because David was **a man of blood (1Ch 22:8; 28:3)**. But this blood was spilled in warfare, not in

¹ “Literary Structure (Chiasm, Chiasmus) of Psalms,”

http://www.bible.literarystructure.info/bible/19_Psalms_pericope_e.html, last accessed Nov 22, 2016.

² Christine Miller, “Psalm 17 Chiastic Structure,” *A Little Perspective* (Jan 17, 2016),

<http://www.alittleperspective.com/psalm-17-chiastic-structure/>, last accessed Nov 22, 2016.

personal retribution. Those are different. The former is justifiable in the Law, even though it was the occasion for Solomon rather than David building the temple. God's house was to be a house of prayer ([Isa 56:7](#)), not a house of war. In anticipation of the First Coming, a man of peace was going to build it.

Yet, David had not sought an eye for an eye on the personal level, even though he could have. Be it with Saul or Absalom or even Nabal, God has preserved his hands from shedding blood in the instances where wicked people were in one way or another after him. This is the occasion of his prayer. With regard to *this*, David is innocent. [This hits right at the antinomian spirit.](#)

David is not *here* saying that he is covered by grace and therefore viewed as not sinful, even though in fact he is. This is, of course, true. But he is actually saying that he really is innocent of the thing(s) he is being accused of doing. And this leads to an important question. Is your life one that seeks to obey God, or one that doesn't seem to care because you are "under grace?" When you pray, do you have the ability to say what David has said here? Do you want to spiritualize what David is saying because you can't understand how a

person could actually be innocent of a *specific* crime, or does your heart yearn to say the things that David has said: “Yes Lord! I have not done what they have accused me of doing.”

Let’s compare David here to the parallel in the poem—the wicked. He says, “my ... lips [are] free of deceit” (Ps 17:1). But the wicked “speak arrogantly” with their mouths (10). We saw the same thing in earlier Psalms. For example, in Psalm 12, the wicked boast with their flattering lips (3, 4, 5). David has kept God’s law with respect to his mouth and tongue. Not so the adversaries of the king. This is what sets them apart. Their actual behavior.

Again, David has also avoided violence (4). But “the wicked ... do me violence” (9). They become his enemies and “surround” him (9). Not only this, but they surround “our” steps (11). Suddenly, David moves from the singular to the plural. “I” and “me” becomes “our” and “us.” He is no longer praying just about himself, but about all “those who seek refuge from their adversaries” (7). In this way, our model prayer begins to resemble the Lord’s Prayer: “Give us this day ...” and “forgive us” and “lead us not into temptation.” Christian, your prayers for yourself should never include only yourself. Your thoughts should

constantly be going out to the saints whom God has surrounded you with not as enemies, but as those who help build you up in the Faith. God gives us one another in order to help each other on our journey towards heaven. You are to be praying for them and with them as if you are all one family.

This again leads me to think about the antinomian. Antinomians hate God's law. But they also love to lead others into the same kinds of passionate love of breaking God's law that they have. But it can be cunning like a serpent, convincing you that God doesn't really care how you behave, perhaps because something like, say—*theology*—is more important. How many sins against brothers has “truth is love” justified over the centuries?

This can also take subtle forms from peer pressure, to compromising against your conscience, to preaching that never commands you to do anything, or that that blasts against one or two sins to the exclusion of many others. One thinks of the Pharisees who, while most people think of as only legalistic, were actually antinomian as they refused to obey all kinds of laws. I once knew a man who, when golfing during an afternoon break from a Pastor's Conference told

his friend on the tee box who was starting to talk about Christ with the group behind him, “Bro, we’re golfing. You don’t need to do that.”

To have their steps surrounded (11) is no longer to have his physical person surrounded—as in his life is in danger. It is to have his *way* surrounded. His way is the way of obedience. The parallel is the second half of the verse, “They set their eyes to cast us to the ground” (17:11). This refers to something more immediate than death. It refers to getting a person to sin. “How you are fallen from heaven, O Day Star, son of Dawn! How you are cut down to the ground, you who laid the nations low!” (Isa 14:12). Satan is not dead here. Rather, he is low because he has sinned a great sin.

On all sides, the wicked are trying to get him to sin, to bring him low. David refers to this kind of attitude similarly to Psalm 10:9, “he lurks in ambush like a lion in his thicket.” He says, “He is like a lion eager to tear, as a young lion lurking in ambush” (17:12). David knew personally the power of lions over the sheep. He encountered them while a shepherd boy on the barren hills by Bethlehem. When people try to destroy the way of God’s people, when they overtly or covertly try to get them to sin, no better

metaphor applies. They are hungry lions seeking to consume the meat off the bone.

I remember an instance where there was a group of Reformed Christians gathered together for lunch at a local restaurant after church. They were all drinking beer “because Reformed people can do that.” But when someone from the church who didn’t want to drink with them refused to order a beer, she was made fun of. These are the subtle kinds of things we can do to justify antinomian behavior. In this case, not drinking themselves, but putting pressure on someone else to do what their own conscience would not allow. I’m not saying those people were wicked like David was thinking of, but the group behavior became like lions around their prey. How easily even Christians can act like this.

I really want us to grasp [the sanctification as opposed to justification in this](#). God’s people are to be people who are just, innocent, and not guilty of breaking God’s laws. He has given us his Holy Spirit. He has commanded us to obey him as our King. And he expects that we will do it, for he has given us that ability and the desire as people saved by grace to flee from temptation. [Notice the outwardness](#) of these

things. *Doing* what is right. Not being violent. Not using our mouths improperly. Etc. If we say we do not have that ability in Christ, then do we not grieve the Holy Spirit of God in us? Christians are not to behave like this. This is what the wicked are like. David didn't, and his prayer reflects it. And thus he seeks vindication before God's court in prayer because he has behaved himself as commanded by God.

It Begins in the Heart

Second, he seeks vindication because of **something going on inside of him**. This is where I said that Psalm 17 appears at first glance to be different from Psalm 86. And while the content is certainly different, the root of the matter is still the same. For David, it all begins on the inside. The difference is the heart. “**You have tried my heart**” (4). For the wicked, “**They close their hearts to pity**” (10). As he has done in other **Morning and Evening psalms**, David prays of his knowledge that God has “**visited [him] by night**” (he “awakens” in **vs. 15**) and “**tested**” him” (3). That is, he has a clean conscience towards God with regard to law keeping. It is so clear that he boldly prays to his God that he is

innocent, and that God knows it! But now David begins to reflect in his prayer upon what made him like this.

This psalm gives us glimpses of **the foundation** upon which David can have a heart tried and tested but found empty of deceit or violence. We find this in the center of the poem. Therefore, it is the most important part of the song. The center is **vv. 7-9**. They begin with **a preface**, “**I call upon you, for you will answer me, O God; incline your ear to me; hear my words**” (6). David has gone to prayer asking God to hear his case. He has presented his case before the throne. This becomes a model for us to follow in our own prayers, which means we have to be watching our own behavior day and night so that we might be found above reproach.

Now, he calls upon God to answer his request. Those requests are found in **vv. 13-15**. But **vv. 7-9** explain in more depth **why he is so bold** to approach the court like this. It is not merely because his cause is just. The center of the poem is about God, not David. In our prayers, you want not only to be innocent, but to be able to know and express the foundation of this properly so that God might use it to further sanctify you.

“Wondrously show your steadfast love, O Savior of those who seek refuge from their adversaries at your right hand” (17:7). “Keep me as the apple of your eye; hide me in the shadow of your wings” (8). Now, you may hear this and think that it is simply a request for God to do marvelous things to him because he has a just cause. But it is so much more.

Dr. Boice has shown that vs. 7 and vs. 8 come from the two main psalms of Moses in the Pentateuch. When David says, “Wondrously show,” he has in mind Exodus 15:11’s “doing wonders.” When he says, “Your steadfast love,” the parallel is “your unfailing love” (13). And when he says, “by your right hand,” this comes from Ex 15:12. Listen to the full stanza:

Who is like you, O LORD, among the gods? Who is like you, majestic in holiness, awesome in glorious deeds, doing wonders? You stretched out your right hand; the earth swallowed them. You have led in your steadfast love the people whom you have redeemed; you have guided them by your strength to your holy abode. (Ex 15:11-13)

This is exactly what David is praying. His prayer is built upon things God has done in the past. The key word is *hesed* or “steadfast love,” even as it will be in Psalm 86. This is **God’s covenant love**. David is not asking God to show him favor because he is a good little boy, but to extend his wondrous covenant love, because this is what God has promised to do, as God has already condescended into a covenant relationship with him. David is asking not to be exonerated merely because he is innocent, but also because he has been saved. “**O Savior of those...**” David is asking to be heard not because he is perfect, but because he has sought refuge at the right hand of the Father.

What is at the right hand of the Father? Our Lord Jesus Christ. Moses sings, “**Terror and dread fall upon them; because of the greatness of your arm, they are still as a stone, till your people, O LORD, pass by, till the people pass by whom you have purchased**” (**Ex 15:16**). Who shall do this? “**The LORD is a man of war; the LORD is his name**” (**15:3**). “**Sit at my right hand, until I make your enemies your footstool.**” “**Lord, who has believed what he heard from us, and to whom has the arm of the LORD been revealed?**” (**John 12:38**).

Whose name is already wonderful? The preincarnate Lord Jesus. “Why do you ask my name, seeing it is wonderful?” (Jdg 13:18; cf. Gen 32:29). The coming Messiah. “His name shall be called Wonderful” (Isa 9:6). Who is the Savior? The Lord Jesus. “God has brought to Israel a Savior, Jesus, as he promised” (Acts 13:23). In whom do we seek refuge? The Rock of our salvation (Ps 18:2) and the Name of the LORD (Zeph 3:12): our Lord Jesus Christ.

Similarly, the phrase “apple of your eye” and being hidden “in the shadow of his wings” come from Deuteronomy 32. “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. Like an eagle that stirs up its nest, that flutters over its young, spreading out its wings, catching them, bearing them on its pinions” (Dt 32:10-11). This language comes from Genesis 1:2, where the Holy Spirit is “fluttering” over the tohu-waste waters. The same verbs are used in both passages by Moses and only in these passages by him. In other words, the image of the birds-wings and the apple of his eye are terms that we are to associate with the Holy Spirit. David is crying to his Father on the Throne (Ps 17:1) for his Son (7) and Spirit (8)

to keep him. This is his foundation, not his own righteousness.

Far from being presumptuous, both of these verses are resting in what God has done in the past for his people. Both of these songs of Moses are about salvation. “Thus the LORD saved Israel that day from the hand of the Egyptians” (Ex 14:30). “Who is like you, a people saved by the LORD” (Deut 33:29). Isaiah puts these together for us. “He became their Savior. In all their affliction he was afflicted, and the angel of his presence saved them; in his love and in his pity he redeemed them; he lifted them up and carried them all the days of old. But they rebelled and grieved his Holy Spirit” (Isa 63:9-10).

Boice says, “Each of these songs celebrates God’s faithfulness to his covenant, which he demonstrated by delivering his people from their many enemies. Therefore, when David echoes their language in the psalm, he is appealing to what God has already revealed himself to be like. God has kept his covenant in the past. He is unchanging. Therefore, he can be expected to do the same for David in his parallel and equally dangerous circumstances. It is no accident that this is also the most

confident section of the psalm. We find David saying, “I call on you, O God, for *you will answer me*” (v. 6, italics added).³ David is doing the opposite of Israel in the wilderness. He is remembering what God did for his people in his prayer, and now he calls upon the the Triune God to keep him, and to hide him.

This is something that only a believer can pray. It is something that only a person who knows himself to be a sinner can pray. It is something that only someone who needs to be saved from something can pray. It is something that only someone who has come to know the grace of God can pray. So far from resting his case upon pure innocence, *though he is innocent in these particular matters*, he ultimately rests his case and his prayer upon the God of his salvation.

Earlier we talked about the lips of David and the wicked. Now we turn to the LORD. “With regard to the works of man, by the word of your lips I have avoided the ways of the violent” (Ps 17:4). David does not have “deceitful lips” (*saphah*; vs. 1) because from the word of God’s lips, he has avoided the ways of the violent. But God’s lips speak truth.

³ James Montgomery Boice, *Psalms 1–41: An Expository Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2005), 141.

Indeed, truth is his “word.” The Greek here is *logos*. By the *logos* that comes from God’s lips, David is kept from sinning. As is right to see in many more places than most Christians feel comfortable with, *logos* has a dual meaning. **It has to, as we will see when we come to the center of the poem.** As with the NT, it refers in the ultimate sense to the Logos—the Word become flesh.

Thus we see that **two things are simultaneously true of this believer.** He is innocent of particular wrong doing and he has been saved by his God. The former is sanctification, the latter is election, effectual calling, faith, and justification. Are your prayers filled with resting in Christ, seeking refuge in the shadow of the wings of the Mighty Holy Spirit who has sealed you for the day of redemption? Using this prayer as your model, this should be the very center and heart of all of your prayers. For even when you fall short—though try as you will not to—you take refuge in the comfort of the gospel that God has done a good thing for you before you did anything good in response to him.

Bringing His Requests To God

Finally, David turns his attention to his **requests**. They fill the last three verses of the Psalm. First, he calls upon God to “**arise.**” “**Arise, O LORD!**” David is perhaps pictured as sleeping (**vs. 3**), and he will awake in a couple of verses. Before he awakens, God must awaken! The image of a glorious monarch sitting on his golden throne, only to stand at the request of his servant is stunning. But it rests upon God’s own promises. David believed that his prayers would arouse God to act!

“**Confront him, subdue him!**” He now calls upon God to pursue, catch, meet, and **conquer his enemies**. If God has just stood up, he is now pictured as riding out on his chariot as a mighty warrior preparing to do battle. Doing battle on behalf of his servant! What kind of a God does these things? One who loves his children very much.

One more theme from Moses’ song in Deuteronomy 32 is worth mentioning here. Back in **vs. 5** David said, “**My steps have held fast to your paths; my feet have not slipped.**” In **Deuteronomy 32:35** the LORD says, “**Vengeance is mine, and recompense, for the time when their foot shall slip; for the day of their calamity is at hand, and their doom comes swiftly.**” If David’s feet have not slipped, he is

praying for his enemy's feet to slip. And he is asking God to make it happen.

If you have ever been **climbing on a high, steep mountain** peak and it starts to rain, you know the sheer terror of possibly slipping off that mossy wet rock and falling who knows how far. Men are so eager to ascend the mountain of God on perfectly sunny days when no danger awaits them. But put a little water or ice on their path, and suddenly, they slip and fall to their doom. This is God's prerogative, not ours. And it fits exactly with David saying that he has not sought the way of the violent ones. Instead, **he prays that God** will subdue the enemy. As for David, he will not violate God's law. When evil people seek to harm you, do you pray as David prayed? If you do, it will keep your heart from anger, because by the Spirit you come to realize that God will do what is right.

David is speaking about true enemies here. We have already seen what they are like. True enemies of God are those who do not know him, who fight against him, who hate him and his people, who pursue them relentlessly. There are many of them. But friends, **the enemies of God are not his own children**. Sometimes, we get so angry at our

brothers and sisters that we harbor anger (which is inner violence) in our hearts towards them. We are not to be praying for their doom, but for reconciliation or peace or forgiveness or whatever needs to be done in these ways with our brothers.

The enemies of God are his affair, and rather than seek retribution against them, David retreats in his song back to the LORD. “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” (Ps 17:13-14). Do you understand that the most wicked man on earth has but a few short days, and then comes the judgment? His portion is his inheritance. His inheritance is this life. All that he has or ever will have is in this life where the moth eats away and the rust consumes and all passes away.

The wicked knows only this life. He knows only what he sees with his eyes. “You fill their womb with treasure; they are satisfied with children, and they leave their abundance to their infants” (14). He can't take it with him. It passes on to the next generation, and to the next, and on and on it goes, if the treasure isn't consumed by wicked

descendants first. There is no hope in this. It is vanity. It is fools errand to live only for such a life as this.

This is why our Lord tells us to **store up treasures in heaven**, where the moth does not eat and the rust does not consume. Where enemies cannot steal. Where wolves cannot snatch away. Thus, suddenly, David's prayer turns to eternity. "**Your Kingdom come.**" The tone very much turns to that of the Lord's Prayer. He knows that his enemy is but dust and that even if they "win" in this life, that is all they have.

When confronted with great evil, with those who seek your harm at work, in your family, or in your country ... and we all have experiences like this, **turn your gaze to heaven**. Do you see how his tone softens towards the wicked once he remembers that they have everything they are going to ever receive right now? He asks God to subdue them, but then turns his mind to their children. And therefore, perhaps subduing them isn't destroying them, but actually saving them? This is the kind of heart that Jesus told us to have for our enemies.

When you realize that this is all they have, how can this not break your hatred and anger and rage? When you see the

utter futility of their foolishness, does it not do something to your heart? Oh, that those who do not know the Lord would find refuge in the shadow of his wings, for he is a kind and loving king, merciful towards all who come to him in faith. We were all his enemies, until he subdued us by saving us through Christ Jesus. Such is his love.

Beholding God's Face

When we see this love, and when we see this futility, we cannot help but **long for heaven**. David finishes the psalm the way it began: with **the face of god**. “**As for me, I shall behold your face in righteousness; when I awake, I shall be satisfied with your likeness**” (Ps 17:15). God had tested him in the night (3), and now that he awakes, he shall be satisfied. But satisfied in what?

In the Face and Likeness of his God. At the end of the day, this is what Psalm 17 is really all about. This word “**face**” (*panim*) is the same word “**presence**” (2), and so the psalm starts and ends with this word. It is found throughout the OT. Moses desires to see the “face” of God. The Aaronic Blessing says, “**The LORD make his face to shine upon you.**” Face is a way of **speaking about the presence of God**

in his person, not his essence (*DDD*). And the person most often in mind is the Second Person. Jacob wrestled with God (i.e. the Angel; **Hos 12:4**) “face to face” (**Gen 32:30**). Gideon says he saw God face to face (**Jdg 6:22**) when he sees the Angel of the LORD. God goes “before” his people in the face of the Angel of the LORD in **Exodus 23:20-23** (cf. **Deut 4:37**). This all has Jesus in mind. Thus, Paul says, “God, who said, ‘Let light shine out of darkness,’ has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ” (**2Co 4:6**).

People today sing these songs about wanting to see the face of God. Rarely are the lyrics of these songs seeking to see the face of God in heaven, but now. So often, they are not seeking to see the face of God in the Lord Jesus Christ, but like Philip, to see the Father, not realizing that this will destroy them. The Son is never mentioned in so many of them. People clamor for something extraordinary rather than for the Son who is the exact image and likeness of God covered in human likeness. David is seeking vindication through his Savior. He is seeking his hope in his Savior. He says that this likeness, his face alone, will satisfy him.

Aaron, the priests would recite the blessing of the face

shining on the people at the end of the sacrifice system. The context is forgiveness. The context is the sacrifice of the Lamb. It was the declaration of God's restored presence with his people and their reconciliation to him. At the end of this model prayer, David's satisfaction is in the image of God made known to him in the face of his Savior. In it he prayed boldly for God to listen to him. In it he remembered the great promises of God in covenant with him. In it he brought his petitions against his enemies to be fulfilled by God and not himself. His prayer is a model for all who seek to know and obey the King of kings.

May it be so with us.