

Rise Up, O Lord!

Psalm 17:1-15

Introduction

It can be a difficult thing to ask someone for something. I really don't enjoy it at all. One of the places where I am most aware of this is in a restaurant. It has always made me uncomfortable to ask the server for something. There have been times when I have been served a steak that wasn't cooked the way I wanted it. For some reason, in those moments, I find it very difficult to ask the server to take it back and make it right. Believe me, I want to. I have seen other people, when on the receiving end of a poorly prepared dish, boldly demand the server to take it back and make it right. In envy I have thought to myself, I wish I could be bold like that!

Now, I think I am a little less timid about asking today than I have been in the past. But, it is still difficult for me. I have to psyche myself up and build the courage to do it.

Did you know that many people feel this same way when it comes to asking God for things? Many Christians experience fear and guilt when it comes to asking God for personal things. We really shouldn't. After all, Jesus Himself did say, *"Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you; for every one that asketh receiveth; and he that seeketh findeth; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened."* (Matthew 7:7-8)

King David provides many examples of prayer in the Psalms. It seems that he was a man of prayer. It also appears that he was a man who was not afraid to boldly ask God for things in prayer. Let's consider his prayer in Psalm 17.

David's Bold Prayer

David makes seventeen requests in only fifteen verses. In this Psalm of prayer he peppers the Lord with his petitions. He is not shy or afraid.

David is bold in his requests. Notice, especially verse 13, *"Arise, O Lord, disappoint him, cast him down: deliver my soul from the wicked, which is thy sword..."* David is speaking here as if he is God's alarm clock. In Psalm 35:23 David cries out to the Lord in a similar fashion, *"Stir up thyself, and wake to my judgment, even unto my cause, my God and my Lord."* What amazing boldness David has in his prayer life! Do you ever pray with this kind of audacity?

David exemplifies the most basic kind of prayer in Psalm 17, the prayer of asking. Some people feel that we really ought not pray this way. But, bold, asking prayer is clearly taught here and throughout Scripture. In the prayer of asking, we come as needy children before our Heavenly Father.

Reasons for David's Boldness in Prayer

David is desperate. He is surrounded by enemies who are attacking him with their words. *"...hide me under the shadow of thy wings, from the wicked that oppress me, from my deadly enemies, who compass me about. They are inclosed in their own fat: with their mouth they speak proudly. They have now compassed us in our steps: they have set their eyes bowing down to the earth; like as a lion that is greedy of his prey, and as it were a young lion lurking in secret places."* (v. 9-12)

Desperation produces boldness in prayer!

David is confident in the Lord. David, the man after God's own heart, knows that he can speak freely with the expectation of God's help. He identifies God, in verse 7, as the One who *"...savest by thy right hand them which put their trust in thee..."* It is because of God's ability and willingness to save those who cry out to him that David boldly asks in verse 8, *"Keep me as the apple of the eye, hide me under the shadow of thy wings..."*

In Deuteronomy 32:10-11 Moses celebrates God's love and care for the nation of Israel. He says that God *"...kept him as the apple of His eye."* He says that God cared for Israel *"As an eagle stirreth up her nest, fluttereth over her young, spreadeth abroad her wings, taketh them, beareth them on her wings."* Israel was special to God and He took care of them. David understood that he too was precious to God and that gave him the confidence to pray with bold assurance!

You are special to God. 1st Peter 5:6-7 says, *"Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt you in due time: Casting all your care upon him; for he careth for you."*

The Deeper Purpose of Bold Prayers of Asking

Obviously, we ask come to God in prayer and ask Him for things because we want His help. Psalm 17 is a wonderful example of praying in order to get help from God.

A deeper reason for prayers of supplication is also seen in this Psalm. Notice that David begins by crying out to God for help, *"Hear the right, O Lord, attend unto my cry, give ear unto my prayer, that goeth not out of feigned lips."* (v. 1) Yet, by the end of Psalm 17, he says, *"As for me, I will behold thy face in righteousness: I shall be satisfied, when I awake, with thy likeness."* As David prays, he is transformed. He discovers that his deepest desire is not really what God can do for him, but for God himself. He yearns for God's presence. He realizes that the only satisfaction that exists for his soul is the presence, and peace of God in his life.

Conclusion

The Word of God invites us to lay our requests before God with bold freedom. The God who saves and loves us will answer us when we pray. But this psalm also points to the deeper purpose of open-hearted supplication. When we lay ourselves before the Lord, we come to know him more deeply and intimately.