

Day 334 - THURSDAY: January 4th

Psalms 17, 19 & 20

Psalms 17:1-15 NKJV

A Prayer of David. Hear a just cause, O LORD, Attend to my cry; Give ear to my prayer which is not from deceitful lips. Let my vindication come from Your presence; Let Your eyes look on the things that are upright. You have tested my heart; You have visited me in the night; You have tried me and have found nothing; I have purposed that my mouth shall not transgress. Concerning the works of men, By the word of Your lips, I have kept away from the paths of the destroyer. Uphold my steps in Your paths, That my footsteps may not slip. I have called upon You, for You will hear me, O God; Incline Your ear to me, and hear my speech. Show Your marvelous lovingkindness by Your right hand, O You who save those who trust in You From those who rise up against them. Keep me as the apple of Your eye; Hide me under the shadow of Your wings, From the wicked who oppress me, From my deadly enemies who surround me. They have closed up their fat hearts; With their mouths they speak proudly. They have now surrounded us in our steps; They have set their eyes, crouching down to the earth, As a lion is eager to tear his prey, And like a young lion lurking in secret places. Arise, O LORD, Confront him, cast him down; Deliver my life from the wicked with Your sword, With Your hand from men, O LORD, From men of the world who have their portion in this life, And whose belly You fill with Your hidden treasure. They are satisfied with children, And leave the rest of their possession for their babes. As for me, I will see Your face in righteousness; I shall be

satisfied when I awake in Your likeness.

Psalms 19:1-14 NKJV

To the Chief Musician. A Psalm of David. The heavens declare the glory of God; And the firmament shows His handiwork. Day unto day utters speech, And night unto night reveals knowledge. There is no speech nor language Where their voice is not heard. Their line has gone out through all the earth, And their words to the end of the world. In them He has set a tabernacle for the sun, Which is like a bridegroom coming out of his chamber, And rejoices like a strong man to run its race. Its rising is from one end of heaven, And its circuit to the other end; And there is nothing hidden from its heat. The law of the LORD is perfect, converting the soul; The testimony of the LORD is sure, making wise the simple; The statutes of the LORD are right, rejoicing the heart; The commandment of the LORD is pure, enlightening the eyes; The fear of the LORD is clean, enduring forever; The judgments of the LORD are true and righteous altogether. More to be desired are they than gold, Yea, than much fine gold; Sweeter also than honey and the honeycomb. Moreover by them Your servant is warned, And in keeping them there is great reward. Who can understand his errors? Cleanse me from secret faults. Keep back Your servant also from presumptuous sins; Let them not have dominion over me. Then I shall be blameless, And I shall be innocent of great transgression. Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart Be acceptable in Your sight, O LORD, my strength and my Redeemer.

Psalms 20:1-9 NKJV

To the Chief Musician. A Psalm of David. May the LORD answer you in the day of trouble; May the name of the God of Jacob defend you; May He send you help from the sanctuary, And strengthen you out of Zion; May He remember all your offerings, And accept your burnt sacrifice. Selah May He grant you according to your heart's desire, And fulfill all your purpose. We will rejoice in your salvation, And in the name of our God we will

set up our banners! May the LORD fulfill all your petitions. Now I know that the LORD saves His anointed; He will answer him from His holy heaven With the saving strength of His right hand. Some trust in chariots, and some in horses; But we will remember the name of the LORD our God. They have bowed down and fallen; But we have risen and stand upright. Save, LORD! May the King answer us when we call.

Daily Deep Dive:

Psalm 17:

The UCG reading program states: "Psalm 17. David calls for God's attention and vindication. His is a "just cause," and he knows that God is aware of his innocence (verses 1-3). Yet we should recognize that David is not at all prideful over his obedience to God, as he realizes the need for God's help to continue in His ways (verse 5). David bases his request for vindication on God's "lovingkindness" (*hesed*)—His covenant loyalty, whereby He is faithful to save those who trust in Him (verse 7).

David's request that God keep him as the "apple of Your eye" (verse 8) makes use of an expression also found in Deuteronomy 32:10, Proverbs 7:2 and Zechariah 2:8. This phrase poetically depicts the sensitivity of the pupil (apple) of one's eye and portrays God as focused on and very attentive to His people. Interestingly, "in Old English the pupil of the eye was called a 'mannikin,' meaning 'little man,' because the pupil gave back the reflection of a grown man as a little man. So too with the Hebrew, for it too means 'little man,' or even 'dear little man'" (Knight, *Psalms*, comments on Psalm 17:1-15).

David's desire that God hide him "under the shadow of Your wings" (verse 8) pictures the protection a mother hen provides her chicks. It also portrays an intimate relationship with God (see the Beyond Today Bible Commentary on Ruth 3). David pictures his enemies, on the other hand, as young lions, "lurking in secret places," eager to strike (verses 11-12). Their having "fat hearts" in verse 10 speaks of "their greedy, self-loving, and insensitive nature" (*Expositor's Bible Commentary*, note on verses 10-12)—their "callous hearts" (NIV).

Commentators are not clear on the correct translation of the second half of verse 14. Where the first half is clearly talking about the worldly people who receive their portion in this life, it is not clear whether the second half is still speaking of these (as in the NKJV) or if the reference changes to the godly (as in the NIV). Related to this is the question over whether the phrase translated "hidden treasure" in the NKJV denotes something positive or negative. If negative, the righteous could not be meant. If positive, either the righteous or the wicked could be meant. The evidence seems to favor the understanding that the meaning is positive and that worldly people are meant. These are content to amass possessions and leave them to their children. Their sights are set on nothing higher than what falls to them in this life.

David in contrast looks to the far future for his ultimate reward. His reflection here on the resurrection, "I shall be satisfied when I awake in Your likeness" (verse 15) reminds us of the apostle John's wonderful prophetic declaration concerning our awesome destiny, "We shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is" (1 John 3:2)." [END]

Psalm 19:

The UCG reading program states: "Psalm 19 is a wisdom psalm in which David praises God's creation and instruction. David calls attention to the heavens because the sun, the moon, and the stars declare the Creator's glorious activity. The radiance of the sun and the orderly appearance of the moon and stars bear witness to the existence of a Master Designer (see also Romans 1:20).

Verse 4 of Psalm 19 reads variously, "their *line* has gone out" (perhaps meaning *orbit*) and "their *voice* goes out" (NRSV). Even in English, the word "line" can denote a geometric line, a line of text or the text an actor is given to speak aloud. David mentions that the *voice* of the celestial bodies can be heard everywhere (verse 3). "The poem talks of *hearing* the glory of God. It declares that behind the whole majesty of nature there is *sound*, the sound of the Word of God. The whole creation, even without the use of *words*, sounds forth the divine Word; when put into Greek, this is the word Logos that we meet in John 1:1" (George Knight, *Psalms*, The Daily Study Bible Series, comments on Psalm 19:1-6).

Some see in these verses the idea that, prior to His written revelation in Scripture, God formed the constellations to communicate the story of His plan for humanity—imagery that was corrupted in pagan mythology (see, for instance, E.W. Bullinger's book *The Witness of the Stars* and E. Raymond Capt's book *The Glory of the Stars*). Yet even apart from that, the heavens certainly have a powerful message to communicate. As verse 1 shows, they demonstrate the sublime majesty, creativity, genius and power of God.

David compares the sun to a bridegroom, cheerfully leaving his chamber, and to the strength of a champion prepared for his race.

"Nothing," he adds, "is hidden from the sun's radiance and strength," just as nothing is hidden from the glory of God. It is interesting to consider that in the New Testament, Jesus Christ, God the Word made flesh, is referred to as both the "bridegroom" (Matthew 25:1-10) and the "light of the world" (John 8:12)—His followers also have this latter distinction through reflecting the "light" of His character (Matthew 5:14).

Just as God (both Father and Son) is brilliant in glory and illuminating, so also is God's law. Indeed, the psalm now moves from the heavenly revelation to the written revelation of God. The word "law" is translated from the Hebrew *torah* and means instruction (verses 7-10). "This portion of the psalm "presents six words for the law of God—law, testimony, statutes, commandment, fear, and judgments; six evaluations of the law—perfect, sure, right, pure, clean, and true; and six results—converting the soul, making wise the simple, rejoicing the heart, enlightening the eyes, enduring forever, and righteous altogether" (*Nelson Study Bible*, note on vv. 7-10). Curiously, the terms here are thoroughly elaborated on exactly 100 psalms later—in Psalm 119.

Consideration of God's majesty as revealed in the heavens and the stark perfection of His law, David is reminded of his own inadequacies. He asks a searching question, "Who can understand his [own] errors?" (verse 12). God says that a man's heart is desperately wicked and that only He really understands it (Jeremiah 17:9). Since a man can't get to the bottom of his nature and rid himself of his faults, God must intervene to forgive him of his shortcomings and help him to obey (Psalm 19:12). God's power can enable us to stay away from deliberate sins and reveal

the secret faults over the course of our years of seeking to follow His way of life (verse 13; 139:23-24).

David prays that his words and thoughts will be pleasing in God's sight, similar to the request he makes in Psalm 141:3: "Set a guard, O Lord, over my mouth; keep watch over the door of my lips." Such a "guard" is the Holy Spirit reminding us of right and wrong, which we learn from our study of God's Word. The Spirit helps us to do what we should. But the choice to do the right and the effort to control the lips remains up to us." [END]

Verse 12 through 14 – Oh that each of us would pray these words each day to God. What beautiful words David was inspired and led to record for us here.

Psalm 20:

The UCG reading program states: "Psalm 20 appears to be a prayer for God to bless an upcoming military battle, yet "day of trouble" can have a wide application throughout the lives of God's people, as we engage in spiritual battles.

David states that those who "trust in chariots, and some in horses," have fallen on the battlefield, but his forces will triumph in the name of the Lord (verses 7-8). David cites the custom of soldiers presenting offerings and sacrifices before going into battle. *The Expositor's Bible Commentary* note on verse 3 states, "The Israelite practice of presenting sacrifices and offerings before a military campaign was an act of devotion and submission to the Lord (1 Samuel 7:9-10; 1 Samuel 13:9-12)."

The word "salvation" (verse 5) is also translated "deliverance." On this occasion the psalmist speaks of being delivered from a physical enemy. He is not referring to ultimate spiritual salvation. The New International Version translates this verse, "We will

shout for joy when you are victorious." For us today, this can mean God giving us daily victories over sin and difficult circumstances.

The phrase "lift up our banners" (same verse, NIV) conveys a sense of confidence that those who trust in God will experience His blessings. The word *banner* comes from the root word "to flaunt," "to be conspicuous." David's armies will fly their victory flags so all will know that "the Lord saves His anointed; He will answer him from His holy heaven with the saving strength of His right hand" (verse 6). David himself was God's anointed. Jesus Christ is of course the ultimate anointed—and all believers are part of His spiritual army. Yet all of God's spiritual children are also His anointed individually—anointed with the Holy Spirit. David concludes with, "May the King answer us when we call." *The Nelson Study Bible* notes on verses 7-9 that "above King David was God the Great King; moreover, one day King Jesus would rule from sea to sea." [END]