

As the title describes, this psalm represents a prayer of David is making to the LORD. The language Davis uses portrays himself as someone who has come before the LORD as one would do before a judge seeking justice from his oppressor. David trusts that the LORD will recognize the righteousness of his heart and the evil intentions of his enemy and then take the appropriate action.

A Prayer of David

1 Hear the right, O LORD, attend unto my cry, give ear unto my prayer, *that goeth* not out of feigned lips.

“A Prayer of David” – This title gives us the author of the psalm: David (not all of the psalms were written by David). The fact that it is described as a prayer implies that the words are directed to the LORD rather than to the listeners or readers of the psalm. Many psalms are directed to the listener/reader with the purpose of encouraging us and strengthening our trust in God. Even though this psalm is not written directly to us, God placed it in His word so that we could still be encouraged by its words.

“Hear the right [justice; righteousness], O LORD, attend unto my cry” – David seems to be using the imagery of a courtroom where he has come to present his case before the LORD, the righteous judge. David is asking the LORD to listen to his plea and recognize that his cause is righteous and just. He is trusting that the LORD will vindicate and rescue him once He sees the evil that his enemies have evil planned against him.

“give ear unto my prayer, that goeth not out of feigned [deceitful] lips” – David wants the LORD hear his prayer for justice and recognize that it is genuine and honest. He is not trying to deceive the LORD in order to get an unfair advantage over his enemy.

2 Let my sentence come forth from thy presence; let thine eyes behold the things that are equal.

“Let my sentence [to make a legal decision] come forth from thy presence” – David does not want his verdict to come from a human judge. He wants the LORD to decide who is in the right.

“let thine eyes behold the things that are equal [upright]” – The word “equal” speaks of a court case where neither side has an unfair advantage over the other when presenting their case. David knows that the LORD will weigh the arguments of both sides (David’s and his enemies’) equally and see that his cause is the righteous one.

3 Thou hast proved mine heart; thou hast visited *me* in the night; thou hast tried me, *and* shalt find nothing; I am purposed *that* my mouth shall not transgress.

“Thou hast proved [to examine; to test] mine heart; thou hast visited *me* in the night” – David knows that the LORD has examined his heart and can see that he is being honest and upright. He then says that the LORD has “visited him in the night” to examine his heart and motives. We let our guard down at night when we are asleep and can’t consciously attempt to deceive others. The LORD came to David at his most vulnerable time to test his heart.

“thou hast tried [to refine; to test] me, and shalt find nothing” – The Hebrew word for “tried” is the word used when purifying and testing metals such as gold or silver. David declares that the LORD has found no impurities in his heart or his motives.

“I am purposed *that* my mouth shall not transgress” – David is determined not to sin with his mouth. He wants to be careful that he does not blaspheme God, slander his fellow man or say anything that is deceitful or untrue. This is a noble but difficult goal, to which James testifies (**James 3:2** “*For in many things we offend all. If any man offend not in word, the same is a perfect man, and able also to bridle the whole body*”).

4 Concerning the works of men, by the word of thy lips I have kept *me from* the paths of the destroyer. 5 Hold up my goings in thy paths, *that* my footsteps slip not.

“Concerning the works of men, by the word of thy lips I have kept *me from* the paths of the destroyer [a violent person; robber or murderer]” – In addition to endeavoring to not sin with his mouth, David also intends to avoid performing sinful actions (“the works of men”). David has listened to and obeyed God’s law (“the word of thy lips”), and by doing so he has avoided doing the things that violent people do.

“Hold up my goings in thy paths, *that* my footsteps slip not” – David understands that he is human and can succumb to temptation, so he asks the LORD to help him keep “his goings” in the paths that the LORD wants. He knows that his “footsteps” can slip and cause him to sin against the LORD, so he prays that the LORD will prevent this from happening.

6 I have called upon thee, for thou wilt hear me, O God: incline thine ear unto me, *and* hear my speech.

“I have called upon thee, for thou wilt hear me, O God” – David has called on the LORD because he knows that the LORD will hear him and respond. He is trusting that the LORD will rescue him from his enemies.

“incline thine ear unto me, *and* hear my speech” – David asks the LORD to “incline thine ear unto me” (give His attention) and listen to his prayer.

7 Shew thy marvellous lovingkindness, O thou that savest by thy right hand them which put their trust *in thee* from those that rise up *against them*.

“Shew thy marvellous [to separate; set apart] lovingkindness” – The Hebrew word David uses to describe the LORD’s loving kindness carries the idea that it is a kindness unlike the kindness that anyone else can exhibit. It is unique and is the type of kindness that can only come from the LORD. David wants the LORD to exhibit this unique loving kindness to him.

“O thou that savest by thy right hand them which put their trust *in thee* from those that rise up *against them*” – David describes the LORD as the One Who rescues from their oppressors all those have put their trust in Him. The LORD does this with His “right hand,” which is the hand of strength and power. The LORD as a strong and faithful helper of those who have put their trust in Him.

8 Keep me as the apple of the eye, hide me under the shadow of thy wings, 9 From the wicked that oppress me, *from my deadly enemies, who compass me about.*

“Keep me as the apple [pupil] of the eye, hide me under the shadow of thy wings” – David asks for the LORD’s protection. He wants the LORD to protect Him in the same way that a person would protect their eye from injury, and in the same way that a mother bird protects her young by hiding them under her wings.

“From the wicked that oppress me, from my deadly enemies, who compass me about” – David identifies those who He wants God’s protection from: wicked people who try to oppress him and deadly enemies who want to kill him. David sees these people all around him, presenting a constant danger.

10 They are inclosed in their own fat: with their mouth they speak proudly.

“They are inclosed in their own fat” – This is an OT expression referring to those with no compassion for others (Deut. 32:15; Job 15:27; Ps. 73:7; Jer. 5:28). The expression pictures someone whose heart is so insulated by fat that it cannot be touched by the needs of others. David’s assessment of his enemies are that they are so preoccupied with themselves and seeking their own desires that they have no compassion for those that they may be harming.

“with their mouth they speak proudly” – The way they talk demonstrates their arrogance and the fact they only care about satisfying their own desires. They boast of how they will gain the advantage over David.

11 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, and as it were a young lion lurking in secret places.*

“They have now compassed [surrounded] us in our steps: they have set their eyes bowing down to the earth” – These enemies have surrounded David, and are attempting to stealthily position themselves to pounce on him, as he describes in the next verse.

“Like as a lion *that is greedy of his prey, and as it were a young lion lurking in secret places*” – The setting of their eyes bowing to the ground apparently refers to the way a lion crouches close the ground when sneaking up on his prey, since that is the picture that David uses here. His enemies are like a lion who is sneaking up on his prey, remaining hidden until the moment he pounces.

13 Arise, O LORD, disappoint him, cast him down: deliver my soul from the wicked, *which is thy sword:* 14 From men *which are thy hand,* O LORD, from men of the world, *which have their portion in this life, and whose belly thou fillest with thy hid treasure: they are full of children, and leave the rest of their substance to their babes.*

“Arise, O LORD, disappoint [meet; confront] him, cast him down” – David asks the LORD to intercept his enemy and neutralize the threat. The enemy planned to cast David down but instead the LORD will intervene and cast the enemy down.

“deliver my soul from the wicked, *which is thy sword: From men which are thy hand, O LORD*” – The phrases “which is” and “which are” are in italics, indicating that these words do not exist in the original Hebrew text. Other translations use the word “by” in place of the italicized words. David is asking the LORD to rescue him from his enemies “by thy sword” and “by thy hand.” He wants the LORD to intervene and rescue him from his enemy’s evil plans.

“from men of the world, *which have their portion in this life*” – In contrast to David, whose portion is the LORD (Psalm 16:5 “*The LORD is the portion of mine inheritance and of my cup: thou maintainest my lot*”), David’s enemies (“the men of the world”) have their portion in this life. All they can hope to have is whatever power and possession they can gain from this world, while David has the eternal blessings that come from the LORD.

“and whose belly thou fillest with thy hid [something hidden, like a treasure] treasure” – The phrase “hid treasure” is not saying that the LORD is blessing the wicked specifically, but that they benefit from the general blessings that the LORD gives to mankind. The LORD give us all, whether righteous or wicked, air to breathe, rain for our crops, prosperity, etc. (Matt. 5:45b “*...for he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust*”). These blessings are “hidden” in the sense that the “men of the world” do not recognize where these blessings come from. Because they only “have their portion in this life,” these are the only blessings they will receive.

“they are full of children, and leave the rest of their *substance to their babes*” – These “men of the world” have plenty of children and they expect to leave their unused wealth to them when they die. They do not think in terms of eternal blessings (teaching their children to fear and obey God) and so they believe that leaving an inheritance is the most appropriate thing they can do for their children.

15 As for me, I will behold thy face in righteousness: I shall be satisfied, when I awake, with thy likeness.

“As for me, I will behold thy face in righteousness” – David now draws the contrast between these “men of the world” and himself. When his life is over and he stands before the LORD, David will be able to look upon the face of the LORD as a righteous man. He will not do this in his own righteousness, but the righteousness that came from the LORD through the forgiveness of his sins. David already mentioned his dependence on the LORD to help him remain obedient (v. 5).

“I shall be satisfied, when I awake, with thy likeness” – When David dies and opens his eyes in the LORD’s presence, he won’t be concerned about how much wealth he accumulated during his lifetime. He won’t care how much glory and praise was given to him by men because he was king of Israel. Seeing the likeness of the LORD will satisfy David and he will not feel like something is missing. He will be happy to see the LORD’s face and spend eternity worshiping in His presence (Rev. 22:3-4 “*And there shall be no more curse: but the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it; and his servants shall serve him: And they shall see his face; and his name shall be in their foreheads*”).