

NOT GUILTY

Wednesday, February 14

Reading: Psalm 17

Psalm 17:3 *Though you probe my heart, though you examine me at night and test me, you will find that I have planned no evil; my mouth has not transgressed...5 My steps have held to your paths; my feet have not stumbled.*

Sitting in a courtroom, you hear a lot of people pleading innocent. Some do so because they actually did not do the crime they are charged with. Others are guilty of the crime but plead “not guilty” in hopes of receiving a lighter sentence or “beating the rap.” So depending on the situation, a “not guilty” plea may be true or false.

In Psalm 17, David enters a plea of “not guilty” before the Lord. His enemies are once again attacking him. This time their weapon is apparently accusing David of some great wrong against the people he serves as king.

In times when we feel wronged, David’s prayer can help us examine ourselves to be sure we are praying rightly.

David’s first step is to examine himself (17:1-5). He is certain his cause is just. His prayer is honest- free of deceit, hypocrisy, or ulterior motives. He asks God to “probe my heart” to see if any wrong is hidden there. He had not accepted a bribe nor been violent toward those who accused him. He held firm to God’s path because he obeyed God’s Word (“what Your lips have commanded”).

David’s next step is to remember God’s love (17:6-9). David had experienced God’s great love and saving hand many times as a fugitive from King Saul in the wilderness. Often God had been his only refuge - his only source of safety. He prays that God would protect him “as the apple of Your eye.” This refers to the pupil, the most tender and sensitive part of the eye. He also pleads for protection “in the shadow of Your wings.” This is the image of a bird protecting her young (both images come from Deuteronomy 32:10-11). David knew he was vulnerable and needed God’s love to sustain him.

David’s last step is to describe his enemies (17:10-14). Their hearts are closed to God. They are arrogant and vicious as a lion hunting its prey. Their only concern is with the here and now! Their “reward is in this life” with no regard for the future.

Though some of David’s words sound vindictive to us, we must notice that David is pouring out his distress to God. He is not throwing them in his enemies face. He is taking his appeal to God and leaving justice in His hands. David’s final words again express his hope for the future - a future where he will see God face to face and be satisfied in His presence (17:15).

As we come to God in prayer, we should examine ourselves as well. Can we claim “not guilty” before God? Do we have another “less holy” reason for making this request? Is our heart right with God or is some sin being hidden that the Lord needs to reveal? Is the love of God displayed through our request? Will we trust Him and be satisfied with God’s answer?

THRU THE BIBLE Reading: Leviticus 4-6; Mark 5