

# Psalm 17 Matt Taylor 10<sup>th</sup> May 2026

How do you respond to being accused?

Accusations, whether they're true or false, can come to us, can't they? They come to us from outside — when we're at school, at home, in the workplace, online, offline. They can come from those who don't really know us and those who are very close to us.

Accusations can be true and they can be false. Our sin finds us out and we stand accused. Or fictional lies are made up about us. The accusation comes — how do you respond? Where do you go? Where do you find refuge when you're being accused?

Maybe you're the kind of person who just defends yourself. The accusation comes and we play it straight back to it. Our refuge is in our defence. Or maybe you're the kind of person who just likes to run away. We run away verbally and physically.

Accusations come from outside, but they also come from within. We know that as Christians, don't we? Because we have the evil one, Satan, who is the accuser, accusing us, making us feel unworthy — whether it is that he drags up past sins to condemn us, or our background. And in his wily ways, he even uses the sufferings of this age, the sufferings we're going through, to accuse us: “Hey Matt, you know, if God really loved you, then you wouldn't be going through this hard time, would you?”

Satan, the great accuser, accuses us within. And in those moments, where do we seek refuge? Do we justify ourselves against him? “Hey no, look at my record, Satan. Look how good I actually am.” Or do we run away and feel

distant from God? “Yes, Satan, you’re right,” and we shrink away from God. We can’t come into his presence.

How do you respond to being accused?

Psalm 17 is a prayer for vindication. Look with me to little number 2, verse 2. David prays, “Let my vindication come from you.” Or the end of the Psalm, little number 15: “As for me, I shall be vindicated.” On that final day, a vindication — a declaration that he is not guilty, free from accusation.

Psalm 17 is a prayer of David. It is written by him. We see that in the superscription, that little italics under Psalm 17: “A prayer of David.” It is penned by him. But as with Psalm 16, as we saw last week, David penned this Psalm out of his own experiences, but trusting in God’s sure covenant promises made with him that one of his descendants would fulfil God’s promises to David.

So David was trusting, as he wrote this Psalm, in one to come — that he was a type of one to come. And in the Scriptures we see that this covenant with David is fulfilled, filled full, in the person of the Lord Jesus Christ. He is the true and greater David. He’s the one who fulfils all the promises that God made to him. And wonderfully, united by faith to Jesus, David’s prayer can be ours.

So, to return to our question: how do we respond when we’re accused? Well, the short answer is: pray Psalm 17, united by faith to the Lord Jesus Christ, who fulfils David’s prayer.

### **1. Cry to the Lord for vindication based on Jesus’s integrity.**

Our first thing we see from the Psalm is there in verse 1: a cry to the Lord for vindication based on Jesus’s integrity. The Psalm begins: “Hear me, Lord, my plea is just.” Three words in the original Hebrew: “Hear, Lord, justice.”

You see, David crying to the Lord for justice is an acknowledgement that he is the source of where justice is going to come from — God, the God of the Bible. He is the judge of all the earth and he will do what is right. There is no higher court than God. So if vindication comes from him, well then he is free from all accusation. Hence he prays, verse 2: “Let my vindication come from you.”

But presenting his request to God, why is it that God should listen? Why should God not just dismiss David out of hand? Why, at the end of verse 1: “Hear my prayer; it does not rise from deceitful lips”? David says God should listen to his prayer because of his integrity.

Now at this moment, I want to zoom out from Psalm 17 to this wider section that we’ve been looking at — Psalms 15 to 24. It’s asking the big question: who is it that can enter into God’s presence? And Psalm 17, if you will, asks the question not “who as a person can enter into God’s presence?” but “whose works can come before God?” Who is it that God will listen to?

For prayer is us bringing our words into God’s presence. In the Old Testament, people would pray towards the temple. Why? Because the temple was where God dwelled on earth. They’d pray towards the temple and God would hear in heaven.

There’s a wonderful line in John chapter 9. The man who was born blind and had been given his sight by Jesus says in his debates with the Pharisees: “We know that God does not listen to sinners. He listens to the godly person who does his will.”

You see, God doesn’t listen to those who are opposed to him. The prayers of sinners are not heard by God. No, God only listens to the godly. And that is why, verses 3 to 5, David says, “Hey look, God, my life is an open book before

you. God, probe my heart. Examine me at night. Look at the deepest things inside me.”

And even in those times when darkness covers my life and no one else sees at night — examine me then, when my subconscious rules my dreams. “God, my life is an open book, and what you see, you will find,” midway through verse 3, “that I have planned no evil. My mouth has not transgressed.”

Verse 4: he’s kept himself away from the ways of the world. Verse 5: he’s resolutely stuck to the path of God’s word. And because of his integrity, verse 6, he knows that God will answer him. And so he presents his cry for vindication to the Lord.

Now if we’ve read the books of 1 and 2 Samuel, we can see that actually David does live a pretty good life. There’s a great moment in 1 Samuel chapter 24 when Saul is pursuing David. David’s been anointed to be king. Saul, who is the king, is pursuing David.

David and his friends are on the run and they’re hiding in a cave. And it happens that Saul needs to relieve himself, so he goes into the cave. David and his friends are in the back of the cave. An opportune moment: Saul’s alone. David could kill him and claim the throne. He even cuts off the corner of Saul’s robe to show how close he is to him.

And yet David didn’t kill him. Why? Because he did not plan evil. He’s not a violent man following the ways of violence. No, Saul was the Lord’s anointed, so he did not kill him, though the Lord would bring David to the throne in his own time. So on one level, this could be said of David’s own integrity.

But also we know the story in 2 Samuel 11, where David did plan evil against Uriah, the husband of Bathsheba, the woman David had slept with. So David’s integrity was somewhat missing. And that’s why it’s helpful to

remember that David ultimately is trusting in the righteousness of another. He is trusting in Jesus and his perfection. And that is why God will listen to his cries.

And two implications follow on from this. Firstly, what a privilege prayer is. You know, when we say, “I pray this in Jesus’ name,” that is not just some way of signing off our prayers, like “best wishes” or “much love” as we do on an email.

Though it’s so deeply theologically true that if we’re not united to Jesus, if we’re not in Jesus’s name, then God should not listen to our prayers. It’s only because of Jesus’s own perfection that God will hear our prayers. And what a privilege it is to bring our petitions, our praise, to the God of all the earth.

And I say this not just so our prayer meeting attendance rises on Tuesday, but come with his people and present our praise and petition. It can be hard, can’t it, praying out loud? Maybe you find it awkward praying in groups. Don’t worry — come along. You don’t have to pray out loud. You can just join in with the “Amen” at the end of a prayer, saying, “Yes, truly, I agree with that.”

What a privilege prayer is. But also, what wonderful news the imputed righteousness of Christ is. Sorry, that’s a technical term, isn’t it? That Christ gives us all his glorious perfection.

Because when we’re crying out for vindication, we’ve been accused. The reality is: I should be accused. I am guilty. I stand condemned. And yet wonderfully, if we’re united to Jesus, then his righteousness becomes ours. His perfection becomes ours.

When we're accused and we know that our sin has found us out, we can cry for vindication all based on Jesus. Cry to the Lord for vindication based on Jesus's integrity.

## **2. Seek refuge in the Lord based on his saving character.**

There are lots of links between Psalm 17 and Psalm 16. I drew lines all over it this week and I got up to 14 unique links between these two Psalms. And one of them is there in verse 7, the end of verse 7. David writes: "those who take refuge in you from their foes."

And that echoes the beginning of Psalm 16 over the page on page 549. Have a look with me, you can see it there: "Keep me safe, my God, for in you I take refuge." This link of taking refuge in God.

Why run to the Lord for refuge? Why is it good to seek refuge in him? Well, it is because of who he is.

And in verses 7 to 8, it's as though David is humming the tunes of the songs that he sung as a child, as he makes reference to the two great songs of the opening narrative of the Bible, the Torah — the first five or six books of the Bible.

See, there are two big songs in the Torah. They happen as God's people have crossed the Red Sea in Exodus 15 — the Song of the Sea — where Moses proclaims the great victory of the Lord. There is no God like him, the one who is mighty to save.

And the second song is in Deuteronomy 32, again penned by Moses, as God's people stand on the verge of entering into the promised land. It's a song where he again proclaims the name of the Lord: "Ascribe greatness to the Lord, the Rock." And he shows the great saving work of the Lord, but also his caring character towards his people, that he is a life-giving God.

And so if you look at verse 7, you see those links to Exodus 15. The Lord who is awesome in working wonders, who stretched out his right hand to rescue his people from Egypt. Wonders, love, right hand.

But also Deuteronomy 32, where God speaks of his care for his people, shielding them and guarding them as the apple of his eye. That's a strange phrase, isn't it?

Apparently the Hebrew idiom comes from the idea of the tiny image of a baby in the pupil of his or her mother's eye as a mother looks down upon them at the breast. That picture of intimacy and care. But also the image of an eagle spreading its wings over its young to care for them.

The ideas we see again in verse 8: "Keep me as the apple of your eye; hide me in the shadow of your wings." Just as God saved and cared for his people in the Exodus, so this God is the God that David cries to, both for life and for care — that he will work the same wonders and keep caring deeply for him.

When we need saving from accusation, we can fly to the same God. That Exodus imagery is finally fulfilled in the Lord Jesus Christ — the one who works an amazing wonder to rescue us from our own sin as he gave his life on the cross. The one who cares for us deeply as the apple of his eye, in the shadow of his wings.

David's experience is fulfilled in Christ. And in Christ, we can know that same life and love of the Father. We can seek refuge in the Lord now, but also in eternity too.

See, there is that day of accusation to come — the day of judgment — when we'll stand before the Lord. And we can imagine Satan rocking up at that moment to accuse us, and all our sins, all our wrongdoings, brought before the Lord.

And yet because of what Christ has done, those sins are washed away and the verdict of “not guilty” falls. Not because of anything we’ve done, but all because of God’s steadfast love, the works of wonder, his mighty acts of salvation by his right hand. That he’s cared for us as one cares for the apple of your eye, keeping us in the shadow of his wings. That judgment falls on him and not on us.

We can seek refuge. Or have you sought refuge in Christ on that final day?

### **3. Hope in the Lord for justice based on resurrection satisfaction.**

Thirdly, we can hope in the Lord for justice based on resurrection satisfaction.

When it comes to vindication, to getting justice, we so desperately want it, don’t we? I don’t know if you’ve ever been falsely accused, but if you have, there is a real desire for vindication.

And David — what did he do? Well, he entrusted himself to the Lord, who judges justly. Look with me to verse 13: “Rise up, Lord, confront them. Bring them down with your sword. By your hand save me from such people.”

You see, the wicked in verses 9 to 12 really were a real danger that David was facing. They were surrounding him, out to destroy him, to throw him down, verse 11, to the ground. But he looks to the Lord, not himself, to bring vindication.

He doesn’t grab his sword and seek to bring them down to the ground before they can bring him to the ground. It’s not like a fight that’s going to happen and who’s going to win. He’s not trying to bring vindication himself. No, he hopes in the Lord to do it.

See, verse 13: it's his sword, it's his hand, verse 14, that will bring vindication. He entrusts himself to the Lord who judges justly.

You know, it's tempting, isn't it, to fight fire with fire when we're accused? Let's not do that. Let's be like David. Let's be like the Lord Jesus and look to the Lord. Let's commit ourselves to the Lord, hoping in him.

But David moves on in verse 14 into some verses which are quite tricky to translate. And if you've got another version in front of you, maybe the ESV or the KJV, it can sound as though David's kind of praying a prayer of blessing upon his enemies: "Fill their womb with treasure; they are satisfied with children and leave their abundance to their infants."

So he's kind of praying that his enemies would be very successful in this life. But what we need to realise when we're looking at this verse is David has already highlighted at the end of the first half of verse 14 that his enemies have a horizon that ends at this life: "those of this world whose reward is in this life."

So David is saying, "God, give them over to their desires. If all that they have is this life, if that's where they think vindication comes from, well, give it to them. Give them children. Fill their wombs with them. Let their riches pass on to them, because that is where they find satisfaction. That is where their portion is."

Verse 15, David says, "Well, as for me, I have something better." Psalm 16 — we've already heard him say that his portion is the Lord's.

He has a resurrection horizon, a horizon beyond this life. And when he awakes from the sleep of death and his eyes see the Lord, well then that is when his satisfaction will be: seeing the Lord's likeness.

David is looking forward to the resurrection and ascension of Christ that will bring true vindication. And we see that in Christ himself, don't we? The one who was despised and rejected on Good Friday now reigning in eternity, having risen and ascended to the Father's right hand.

But why does the resurrection and ascension of Christ bring vindication?

Well, you may know that as Jesus cries on the cross as he dies, he cries, "It is finished." Crying out that the penalty for sin has come to an end, it has all been paid, it is finished.

But how do we know that is true? How do we know that every last drop of accusation against Christ and against us as his people has been paid?

It is only in his resurrection that we know that death has been defeated fully, finally, forever. And in his ascension, as we were seeing earlier on, the wonderful victory of Christ is proclaimed for all to see. And united to Christ, his resurrection, his vindication, can become ours.

And which is why I love this line later on in the creed. You can go round again the circle with "I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy catholic church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins." But it's this line which is such good news when we are facing accusation:

"I believe in the resurrection of the body."

For it may be that we are facing accusation that is true. Our sin has found us out. We stand condemned. Convicted of our sin, we trust Christ, that he has paid the price for our sin. That all the judgment that is ours has fallen on him. We come to him for forgiveness.

And yet no one believes us. People say, "You need to face the consequences of your own actions now." And we live in this perpetual death. "Where's my

vindication, Lord? I've trusted Christ. Your promise is I've received your forgiveness."

But this line in the creed gives us hope, doesn't it? Because "I believe in the resurrection of the body," and there is a day of vindication. For all my sins — past, present and future — have been paid for in Christ.

And when the trumpet sounds and the graves empty, then all will see that I have put my trust in Christ and my sins have been paid for in the resurrection of the body to come. And in that moment we will see our Lord face to face. We will be satisfied with seeing his likeness.

What a wonderful day it will be — that day of vindication.

But until then, we need to have our imaginations fired with this hope of what will be, to know the joy of seeing the Lord's face, and that we will be satisfied with his likeness on that final day.

So brothers and sisters, as we come to a close, are you in need of vindication from accusation this morning?

Well firstly, cry to the Lord for vindication based on Christ's righteousness. Seek refuge in the Lord for salvation based on his character. And hope in the Lord for justice based on resurrection satisfaction.

You see, we may fall into sin again this week, and we can come to the Lord for vindication. It may be we face false accusation. Maybe the evil one digs up things from our past. We can come to the Lord for justice in Christ.

Let me lead us in prayer.

"Hear, Lord, justice."

Father, thank you so much that you are a God of justice, that you are the judge of all the earth and you will do right.

Thank you that you have done what is right in the Lord Jesus Christ. That united to him by faith, he has faced all the punishment that our sin deserves. That trusting in him, we can be truly free from accusation.

And thank you so much for the glorious hope of the resurrection of the body — that one day our own vindication will be proclaimed for all to see as we rise and reign with you in glory.

Please fill our hearts, fill our minds, and fill our community, we pray, with this glorious hope that you've given to us in Christ.

We ask this for your glory's sake. Amen.