

THRU THE BIBLE EXPOSITION
Psalms: Living By Faith In God
XVII. Handling Pressing, Dangerous Foes
(Psalm 17:1-15)

Introduction: (To show the need . . .)

Today, we face a variety of pressing, dangerous foes:

(1) We face them in the mainstream news media: a letter by Dennis Barna of Southington in the Republican-American, February 25, 2022, p. 8A, lamented, "There seems to be no honest, unbiased news source available today. We are living in dangerous times."

(2) We face it in Vladimir Putin: (a) His "attack on Ukraine and retaliatory sanctions from the West" created a conflict that "accelerates inflation, rattles markets and portends trouble for everyone . . ." (Paul Wiseman and David McHugh, "Russia-Ukraine conflict raises big risks for global economy," *Ibid.*, p. 5B) (b) "Putin" then "escalated East-West tensions by ordering Russian nuclear forces put on high alert . . . raising fears that the invasion of Ukraine could lead to nuclear war . . ." ("Putin threatens to ready his nuclear arsenal," *Ibid.*, February 28, 2022, p. 1A)

(3) We face them in the spiritual realm: (a) Four believers have recently told me of disturbing interactions they have experienced with believers who hold to Calvinistic theology. (b) This is a widespread problem, too, for "Trinity Evangelical Divinity School, Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary and Southern Baptist Theological Seminary" now "trend toward . . . Calvinism," and "(u)nder the leadership of Al Mohler, Jr., the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary has become a hotbed of Calvinism and is training class after class of Calvinist proselytizers." (David Cloud, "Calvinism on the March," December 10, 2020; wayoflife.org/reports/Calvinism_on_the_march.html) Furthermore, in the Afterward of the book by David Steele, Curtis Thomas, and Lance Quinn titled, The Five Points of Calvinism: Defined, Defended and Documented, 2004, Dr. John MacArthur, a very influential pastor and Bible teacher, wrote these words: ". . . (T)he five points of Calvinism. I believe them not because of historical pedigree, but because that is what Scripture teaches." (monergism.com/thethreshold/articles/MacArthur_5pts.html) [If we wonder what the "five points" of Calvinism are, we will explain and evaluate them in view of Scripture in the Conclusion of this sermon.]

(c) Even more disturbing is the report by "Steve Lemke, provost of New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary" who "warns: 'I believe that [Calvinism] is potentially the most explosive and divisive issue facing us . . . It has already . . . split literally dozens of churches, and it holds the potential to split the entire [Southern Baptist] convention.'" ("The Future of Southern Baptists as Evangelicals," April 2005)." (*Ibid.*)

(d) We at Nepaug Bible Church have long taught that Calvinism and its rival Arminianism both greatly err, but with so many influential people pushing divisive Calvinistic theology today, one may wonder what we should do!

Need: *So, we ask, "How does God direct that we respond to such pressing, dangerous foes?!"*

- I. In Psalm 17:1-12, David called unto the Lord to deliver him from pressing, dangerous enemies:**
 - A. With emotional intensity, David pleaded with God to pay attention to his "ringing cry" (*rinnah*, B. D. B., A Heb. and Eng. Lex. of the O. T., p. 943) that came from lips that were unhypocritical, Psalm 17:1.
 - B. David was confident that God would grant his petition, for he was living uprightly before the Lord and he had "held firmly" (*tamoq*, Qal inf. absolute of *tamak*, "grasp, hold," *Ibid.*, p. 1069) to God's tracks so that his feet had not even slipped in erring from God's ways, Psalm 17:2-5.
 - C. Concerned that his foes had proudly tracked him down with violent, calloused intent and had surrounded him, preparing as a powerful lion to pounce on him and to slay him, David hoped God would guard him as the "apple" or pupil of God's eye and conceal him under the shadow of the Lord's wings, Psalm 17:6-12.
- II. David asked God to rise up, confront, and bring down his foes, rescuing him from them, Psalm 17:13-14:**
 - A. Realizing that God's goodness to all had led David's pressing, dangerous foes to enjoy material blessings so that they could store up treasures for their children (Psalm 17:14 KJV), David asked God to rise up against his foes, to "confront" (*qadam*, *Ibid.*, p. 869-870) them and bring them down in defense of David, Psalm 17:13a.
 - B. David asked God to rescue his life from the wicked by using His sword to destroy David's foes, Psalm 17:13b.
- III. In the end, David was confident that God would grant his petition and greatly bless him, Psalm 17:15:**
 - A. Most commentators interpret Psalm 17:15 as David's hope that after he died, he would "awake" in the resurrection and then be satisfied with seeing God in His likeness. (Bible Know. Com., O. T., p. 805)
 - B. However, the context of Psalm 17 shows David sought deliverance from death, not resurrection from the dead, and the verse can be interpreted to show that David anticipated God's granting his petition (as follows):

1. Seeing God's "face" in Psalm 17:15a can refer to David's request in Psalm 17:2a where, in the Hebrew, David wrote, "From Your [God's] face" (*millepaneka*, Kittel, Bib. Heb., p. 986) might vindication come.
2. The verb "awake" in Psalm 17:15b translates the Hebrew verb *qis*, and though it can mean to awake from sleep, it can also mean to awake from an ecstatic prophetic trance, *Ibid.*, p. 884.
3. Thus, the **context** of the psalm as a *whole* argues for David's expressing certainty that when he came out of the prophetic trance in which he was writing this psalm, he would be confident that he had *figuratively* "beheld God's face of approval" in God's having granted his petition to deliver him from his enemies!

Lesson: *David handled the threat of pressing, dangerous foes he faced by asking God with purity of life and motives for deliverance and protection, confident his appeal under such circumstances would bring God's blessing.*

Application: *(1) May we trust in Christ Who died as our Atoning Sacrifice for sin that we might receive God's gift of eternal life, John 3:16; 1 Corinthians 15:1-11. (2) In facing pressing, dangerous foes, may we pray with purity of life and motives for God's deliverance and protection, confident God will answer our petition with His blessing.*

Conclusion: (To illustrate the message . . .)

In applying this message, we know from Psalm 17 with 1 John 3:22 that God wants us to obey His Word as the basis of seeing Him grant our petitions. Accordingly, we check Scripture to see what God expects us to do relative to the issues of concern in our sermon introduction before we even pray to the Lord about them (as follows):

(1) On the mainstream media's bias, 2 Timothy 3:13 predicts men will go from bad to worse, deceiving and being deceived. Our role, then, is to trust Scripture over man's views in the news, 2 Timothy 3:14-17.

(2) On Vladimir Putin's effect on the economy, Hebrews 13:5-6 directs us not to covet, but to be content with what we possess, and God will provide all we need beyond what we possess no matter what evil men do unto us.

(3) On Putin's nuclear threat, Psalm 127:1b claims that unless the Lord guards us, our defensive is futile. Also, Revelation 3:21 with 7:17 predicted we would face a **Mini-Great Tribulation**, **not the Great Tribulation** with its Armageddon campaign, so God wants us to be settled and live sensible, peaceable lives, 2 Thessalonians 2:16-17

(4) On Calvinism, Christ in Revelation 3:17b KJV predicted the dominance of Calvinism in our era with its "five points" of **Total depravity**, **Unconditional election**, **Limited atonement**, **Irresistible grace**, and **Perseverance of the saints**, i. e. "**TULIP**," He critically relabeled them "wretched, miserable, poor, blind and naked" and the contexts where these five words appear elsewhere in Scripture work to critique these "five points"! We explain: (a) On "**Total depravity**," the KJV word "wretched" renders the Greek word *talaiporos* that appears elsewhere in Scripture only in Romans 7:24 (Arndt & Gingrich, A Grk.-Eng. Lex. of the N. T., 1967, p. 8a) where one is carnal opposite what he wills, Romans 7:15-24. Calvinists claim that being totally depraved, lost man's will and nature are both corrupt, but Romans 7:15-24 presents the will as not bound by the sin nature though the nature is totally corrupt! Thus, Jesus countered Calvinism's claim that the will is corrupt so one cannot of himself believe the Gospel! (b) On "**Unconditional election**," the KJV word "miserable" renders the Greek term *eleeinos*, and it occurs elsewhere only in 1 Corinthians 15:19 (*Ibid.*, p. 249) of those who hope only in this life. Calvinists say that God sovereignly chose who would trust in Christ to be saved, but 1 Peter 1:2; 2 Thessalonians 2:13 and Ephesians 1:3-6 teach election only to **post-justification** goals, both now and in eternity. [See our URL on "Making Sense of God's Election" on our Church website's home page.] Christ thus taught that God's election is not for people to trust in Him in this life, but for those God foreknew would trust in Christ of their own will to enjoy God's goals that **follow justification!** (c) On "**Limited atonement**," the KJV word "poor" in light of Revelation 3:18 and 1 Peter 1:7 means a **weak** faith in **believers** (Revelation 3:19 with Hebrews 12:7-8) versus Calvinism's claim that God gives rich "saving faith" **only** to the elect so they can believe, that Christ then logically died **only** for the "elect," providing **limited** atonement. Christ here shows there is no divine gift of "saving faith," only a human faith that anyone can author, implying **unlimited** atonement! (d) On "**Irresistible grace**," the KJV word "blind" signals a lack of discernment versus the Calvinist's claim that God makes the elect discern the truth to trust in Christ. Actually, the Holy Spirit convicts the whole world so anyone can trust in Christ, John 16:7-11. (e) On the "**Perseverance of the saints**," the KJV word "naked" via Revelation 3:18, 15:15 and 19:8 is a **cessation** of godly works versus Calvinism's claim that a believer's salvation security comes from his **persevering** in godly works due to God's predestination. In reality, a believer can have all his works burned up at the Bema Seat of Christ and yet be saved (1 Corinthians 3:13-15), so Calvinism's view of salvation security errs! Rather, God secures the believer's salvation by sealing him with the Holy Spirit when he is saved, Ephesians 1:13-14.

May we trust in Christ Who died as our Atoning Sacrifice for sin that we might receive God's gift of eternal life. May we align with Scripture so we can pray for God's deliverance from pressing, dangerous foes!