

# Exposition on Psalm 17

by St. Augustine

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*St. Augustine's exposition on Psalm 17 emphasizes the importance of sincerity in prayer, perfection in God's paths, and the protection and defense of God's people.*

**Scripture:** Psalm 16:3

**Topics:** "Divine Protection", "Righteous Living"

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## Description

St. Augustine preaches a prayer of David, emphasizing the importance of seeking righteousness and truth from God, being tested and found righteous through tribulations, and keeping away from speaking works of men but focusing on God's glory. The prayer also includes a plea for protection from enemies, deliverance from the ungodly, and a declaration of appearing in God's righteousness. St. Augustine highlights the need to trust in God's mercy, seek His protection, and ultimately find satisfaction in His glory.

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## Transcript

A prayer of David himself.

1. This prayer must be assigned to the Person of the Lord, with the addition of the Church, which is His body.
2. Hear My righteousness, O God, consider My supplication Psalm 16:1. Harken unto My prayer, not in deceitful lips: not going forth to You in deceitful lips. Let My judgment from Your countenance go forth Psalm 16:2. From the enlightening of the knowledge of You, let Me judge truth. Or at least, let My judgment go forth, not in deceitful lips, from Your countenance, that is, that I may not in judging utter anything else than I understand in You. Let My eyes see equity: the eyes, of course, of the heart.
3. You have proved and visited Mine heart in the night-season Psalm 16:3. For this Mine heart has been proved by the visitation of tribulation. You have examined Me by fire, and iniquity has not been found in Me. Now not night only, in that it is wont to disturb, but fire also, in that it burns, is this tribulation to be called; whereby when I was examined I was found righteous.
4. That My mouth may not speak the works of men Psalm 16:4. That nothing may proceed out of My mouth, but what relates to Your glory and praise; not to the works of men, which they do beside Your will. Because of the words of Your lips. Because of the words of Your peace, or of Your prophets. I have kept

hard ways. I have kept the toilsome ways of human mortality and suffering.

5. To perfect My steps in Your paths Psalm 16:5. That the love of the Church might be perfected in the strait ways, whereby she arrives at Your rest. That My footsteps be not moved. That the signs of My way, which, like footsteps, have been imprinted on the Sacraments and Apostolical writings, be not moved, that they may mark them who would follow Me. Or at least, that I may still abide fixedly in eternity, after that I have accomplished the hard ways, and have finished My steps in the straits of Your paths.

6. I have cried out, for You have heard Me, O God Psalm 16:6. With a free and strong effort have I directed My prayers unto You: for that I might have this power, You have heard Me when praying more weakly. Incline Your ear to Me, and hear My words. Let not Your hearing forsake My humiliation.

7. Make Your mercies marvellous Psalm 16:7. Let not Your mercies be disesteemed, lest they be loved too little.

8. Who savest them that hope in You from such as resist Your right hand: from such as resist the favour, whereby You favour Me. Keep Me, O Lord, as the apple of Your eye Psalm 16:8: which seems very little and minute: yet by it is the sight of the eye directed, whereby the light is distinguished from the darkness; as by Christ's humanity, the divinity of the Judgment distinguishing between the righteous and sinners. In the covering of Your wings protect Me. In the defence of Your love and mercy protect Me. From the face of the ungodly who have troubled Me Psalm 16:9.

9. Mine enemies have compassed about My soul; they have shut up their own fat Psalm 16:10. They have been covered with their own gross joy, after that their desire has been satiated with wickedness. Their mouth has spoken pride. And therefore their mouth spoke pride, in saying, Hail, King of the Jews, Matthew 27:29 and other like words.

10. Casting Me forth they have now compassed Me about Psalm 16:11. Casting Me forth outside the city, they have now compassed Me about on the Cross. Their eyes they have determined to turn down on the earth. The bent of their heart they have determined to turn down on these earthly things: deeming Him, who was slain, to endure a mighty evil, and themselves, that slew Him, none.

11. As a lion ready for prey, have they taken Me Psalm 16:12. They have taken Me, like that adversary who walks about, seeking whom he may devour. 1 Peter 5:8 And as a lion's cub dwelling in secret places. And as his cub, the people to whom it was said, You are of your father the devil: John 8:44 meditating on the snares, whereby they might circumvent and destroy the just One.

12. Arise, O Lord, prevent them, and cast them down Psalm 16:13. Arise, O Lord, Thou whom they suppose to be asleep, and regardless of men's iniquities; be they blinded before by their own malice, that vengeance may prevent their deed; and so cast them down.

13. Deliver My soul from the ungodly. Deliver My soul, by restoring Me after the death, which the ungodly have inflicted on Me. Your weapon: from the enemies of Your hand Psalm 16:14. For My soul is Your weapon, which Your hand, that is, Your eternal Power, has taken to subdue thereby the kingdoms of iniquity, and divide the righteous from the ungodly. This weapon then deliver from the enemies of Your hand, that is, of Your Power, that is, from Mine enemies. Destroy them, O Lord, from off the earth, scatter them in their life. O Lord, destroy them from off the earth, which they inhabit, scatter them throughout the world in this life, which only they think their life, who despair of life eternal. And by Your hidden things their

belly has been filled. Now not only this visible punishment shall overtake them, but also their memory has been filled with sins, which as darkness are hidden from the light of Your truth, that they should forget God. They have been filled with swine's flesh. They have been filled with uncleanness, treading under foot the pearls of God's words. And they have left the rest to their babes: crying out, This sin be upon us and upon our children. Matthew 27:25

14. But I shall appear in Your righteousness in Your sight Psalm 16:15. But I, Who have not appeared to them that, with their filthy and darkened heart, cannot see the light of wisdom, I shall appear in Your righteousness in Your sight.

I shall be satiated, when Your glory shall be manifested. And when they have been satiated with their uncleanness, that they could not know Me, I shall be satiated, when Your glory shall be manifested, in them that know Me. In that verse indeed where it is said, filled with swine's flesh, some copies have, filled with children: for from the ambiguity of the Greek a double interpretation has resulted. Now by children we understand works; and as by good children, good works, so by evil, evil.

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