



Lake Wales  
Church of Christ  
463 N. Buck Moore Rd.  
Lake Wales, FL 33898  
[www.lakewalescoc.com](http://www.lakewalescoc.com)  
(863) 676-4114

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# Tower of Strength

“The name of the Lord is a strong tower  
The righteous runs into it and is safe.”

—Proverbs 18:10

## I Am Never Satisfied

Psalm 17 is a prayer of David, asking God to deliver him from the many enemies who surround him.

David cries out,

Arise, O Lord, confront him, bring him low;  
Deliver my soul from the wicked with Your  
sword.

From men, with Your hand, O Lord...

But the most fascinating part of the psalm is the last two verses, which provide a brief but insightful contrast between the wicked man and godly man.

David finishes,

Deliver my soul ... from men of the world,  
Whose portion is in this life,  
And whose belly You fill with Your treasure;  
They are satisfied with children,  
And leave their abundance to their babes.

A wicked person is first and foremost a “man of the world.” His mindset is entirely focused on the things in the world. He spends his mornings figuring out ways to buy a bigger house, and spends his evenings

figuring out how to buy a faster car. He craves big paychecks, big scores, and flashy symbols of success. His “portion is in this life.” The word “portion” evokes the language of a dinner plate (Gen. 43:34, Exo. 16:4, 1 Sam. 1:5, Prov. 30:8), or of an inheritance (Deut. 18:1, Isa. 53:12, Ezek. 48:1). The piece of meat, or the piece of land, that the worldly man sets his eyes upon, he often receives.

For one who received such blessings, thanksgiving would be the appropriate response. But the worldly man does not recognize God’s role in filling his belly with “[His] treasure.” Jesus reminds us that God “causes His sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous” (Matt. 5:45). But the wicked man gives God no credit.

We might ask ourselves why God sees fit to reward such efforts with success. After all, wouldn’t it be better if God piled riches in the lap of the Christian, and heaped calamity on the head of the wicked man? But that’s not the way God has arranged the world. God rarely rewards faith with worldly things. The Christian’s portion is above. But the worldly man’s portion is the world.

And so there’s really no mystery as to why the worldly man heaps up riches. There is no doubt that a man so thoroughly focused on worldly things often succeeds in worldly things. You hit what you aim at. If you focus on the world, you tend to make your place in it more secure. So, the “man of the world” may become very successful, accomplish great things, accumulate a lot of wealth, and fold his hands in rest with the adulation of his friends and neighbors. In fact, the words of verse 14 could be made into a very respectable modern epitaph: “he was filled with life and treasure, he had lots of children, and divided a great inheritance among them.” But, sadly, this would be the end of the story. For the world and all its works are destined to be burned up. “Truly I say to you, they have their reward in full” (Matt. 6:2).

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What a stark contrast is found in David’s description of his own motivations and priorities. In the last verse, he says,

As for me, I shall behold Your face in righteousness;  
I will be satisfied with Your likeness when I awake.

What a description of the godly man! Whereas the wicked man's portion is on earth, David confesses that his portion is different. As Jeremiah said while examining the desolate ruins of the city and the land, " 'The Lord is my portion,' says my soul. 'Therefore I have hope in him' " (Lam. 3:24; *cf.* Numb. 18:20). David is looking forward to seeing God's face. And nothing at all will satisfy until he arrives at that moment in his existence when he stands before God to behold His glorious likeness.

A key to the contrast between the worldly man and the godly man is the word "satisfied," which appears in both verses. The worldly man is satisfied with the bounty of the world. But the godly man is not satisfied. Now, don't misunderstand—it's not that he is discontent or unthankful. Far from it! He appreciates every blessing that comes from God. But earthbound things are not his aim. The things of the world aren't the object of his truest affection.

When you get back from the vacation of a lifetime, what do you do? Plan another! You were very thankful, but you weren't permanently satisfied. When you finish the meal of a lifetime, do you skip breakfast the next day? No. You were very thankful, but you weren't permanently satisfied. No worldly thing can ultimately satisfy. Hebrews 11:13–16 reminds us that this is the way it is with godly people. The world has its pleasant things, but they don't satisfy; they can't satisfy. "Having confessed that they were strangers and exiles on the earth, for those who say such things make it clear that they are seeking a country of their own ... that is, a heavenly one."

David won't be tricked by the fake. He wants the real. Christians are destined to wander, but not because they are lost. They seek a kingdom that is permanent.

So, what use is it to check off everything from your bucket list, but miss out on the greatest adventure of all? I love forests and mountains,

but I will never be satisfied until I see the city with the streets of God and the Lamb illuminating the whole (Rev. 21–22)!

What use is it to run sprints, swim laps, crank out pull ups, only to have the whole body wither and decay one day? I shall never be satisfied when I look in the mirror until I see myself clothed with the robes of the redeemed, with the resurrection body! Until then we groan in this tent, unfulfilled, (2 Cor. 5:2–4).

Cars are great and gadgets are cool, but what's the use of a faster 0–60 time or a newer version 6.0 when the real excitement is in the kingdom above? We can hardly imagine how good it's going to be (2 Cor. 2:9). Until I possess that, I will be unsatisfied. "Those who hunger and thirst for righteousness will be satisfied" (Matt. 5:6).

Note that David says, "I shall behold Your face in righteousness." The Christian knows the only way he will get to enjoy what he longs for is to fix the sin problem. Redemption is the gift of God, which comes through the blood of Christ. When Moses wanted to see God, he wouldn't allow it, lest he die! When Isaiah entered the throne room of God he collapsed and said, "Alas, I am a man of unclean lips!" We are often ashamed of our behavior. One day we will stand before God without shame. Our lives will grieve Him no more, because He clothes us in white robes washed by His Son's precious blood, so that we may enter into His glorious presence.

In fact, David ends this psalm in a special way. "I will be satisfied with your likeness when I awake." It is entirely possible David simply meant "the next day" (compare "by night" in v. 3). But for us as Christians, it reminds us of the coming to life that is promised in the resurrection. It reminds us to focus on the greater blessings of eternity, rather than the barren and futile trinkets of the world. —*John Guzzetta*

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### **Quote of the Week:**

"I will praise the Lord while I live;

I will sing praises to my God while I have my being.

Do not trust in princes,

In mortal man, in whom there is no salvation" (Psalm 146:2–3).