

A Suitable Watchword

by C.H. Spurgeon

C.H. Spurgeon emphasizes the power and necessity of a brief, heartfelt, and direct prayer for God's help in all circumstances, encouraging believers to rely solely on God while actively cooperating with His strength.

Scripture: Psalm 12:1, Philippians 2:13, Luke 18:27, Romans 7:24-25, 1 Corinthians 9:24, Joshua 14:11, 1 Kings 17:4-6, Luke 24:39

Topics: "Prayer", "Dependence on God", "Christian Perseverance"

Description

In this devotional sermon, C.H. Spurgeon explores the profound simplicity and power of the prayer 'Help, Lord.' Drawing from David's example in Psalm 12:1, Spurgeon encourages believers to pray brief, direct, and seasonable prayers that express genuine dependence on God. He teaches that such prayers should be accompanied by active effort and faith, offering encouragement for those facing trials, spiritual conflicts, or seeking deeper understanding of Scripture.

Transcript

"Help, LORD." Psalm 12:1.

THIS was a prayer of David. It was offered under peculiar circumstances. He had been treacherously betrayed again and again. He delivered the city of Keilah from the Philistines and then had to flee from the place, or the men of Keilah would have delivered him up to his enemy, Saul. He went to the wilderness of Ziph and the men of Ziph at once ran to Saul to betray him. Doeg was present when David received some help from Ahimelech the priest and he set off straightway to inform the king. Everyone seemed to act treacherously with David while he was in his state of wandering. He therefore turned away altogether from men in whom he could put no confidence—and he cried, "Help, Lord."

Let us spend a few minutes, first of all, in remarks upon the prayer itself. Then let us offer a few suggestions as to when it may be used. And we will close up with some encouragement to expect and answer.

I. First as to THE PRAYER ITSELF.

That which strikes you at once is its shortness—"Help, Lord." Two words—and one of these is rather the direction of the prayer than the prayer itself. It is the very soul of brevity. "Help, Lord." I may, however, say that it is none too short for all that for there is a fullness and suggestiveness in it which could not readily be

exhausted. It is no fault in our prayers if they are short. And I think in our public petitions, especially at Prayer Meetings, it is a virtue to be aimed at to be brief. Mr. Jay says, with regard to his sermons, that he knew there were some excellences which would cost him much pains to attain, "But," he said, "there was one I knew to be within my reach, namely, brevity, and therefore I made not the sermon too long." Praying, indeed, being a more spiritual exercise than even preaching, must not be protracted. It is remarkable, if you remember, that Joshua's arm never grew weary while he was fighting the Amalekites, but Moses' hands grew weary while he was up on the mountain in prayer. Because prayer is a more spiritual exercise than fighting and, consequently, the spirit being our weaker part, we feel the weakness the sooner there. Let us not, then, pray our members into a good frame and then pray them out again—but when we have expressed our desires with that fewness of words which is proper in the Presence of God, let us close our supplications and let some other Brother take up the note. This is a short prayer.

Do you not see, dear Friends, that those of you who have been saying, "We do not pray because we have not time," are guilty of a great falsehood? It cannot be lack of time. "Help, Lord." Why, it takes scarcely a second to offer such a prayer as that! It is not lack of time—it is lack of heart and lack of inclination. People talk about praying as though they needed an hour to pray every morning and every night. I grant you it would be a very blessed thing if we could get the hour. I wish that, like the Puritans, we could always get an hour for devotion every morning and likewise at evening, but this is not absolutely necessary. You working men must not say, "We cannot pray because we have not time." Why, in your work, in the midst of your goings to and fro, if God has given you the heart of prayer, you will be lifting up your soul to God! I think it is a good thing to have some small change of prayer about you. I compare this prayer to our small change. It has been said of some great men that they could not talk in company—when they got upon their feet and had a prepared discourse, they could speak very much to edification, but in general society they could not edify anyone. Someone said they had gold, but it was all in bullion—it was not minted—they could not put it into a shape so that it might be current in society. Well now, we must have the bullion of prayer, so as to be able to wrestle with God by the hour together if necessary, but to have the minted small change of brief or exclamatory prayer, to send a thought up to

Heaven—the glance of an eye, a tear-bedewed word to let drop before the Throne—that, also, is well! I invite you to adopt the prayer, brief as it is, and use it tonight, tomorrow, all your days—"Help, Lord."

Besides being very short, it was very seasonable. It is well to have seasonable prayer, for those prayers speed best that spring out of an emergency which, as with a fair wind, drives the soul to the Throne of God. The worst of those forms of prayer which are of merely human composition, I think, is that they are very much like those ready-made clothes which we see for sale—they are intended to fit everybody, and yet rarely do they fit anybody. Forms of prayer must, from the necessity of the case, be unseasonable. That is the best prayer which draws its adaptation from my present circumstances, its intensity from my present feelings and its aspiration from my present faith. It makes me cry in just such language and plead just such promises that I could not plead any other—I could not wish for any other, I could not ask in any other style than I now do. That is a seasonable prayer. David, you see, had been betrayed and deceived. He had met with flattering lips and deceitful hearts. He found all men in his day gone aside from honesty and so he turned right away from those broken cisterns that were leaking at every point, to cry to the great Fountain that he might have a draught from the cooling stream! "'Help, Lord!' Men will not help me. I am reduced to an extreme so far as the creature is concerned. Now is Your turn, O You gracious One! Put out Your mighty arm, now that man's puny arm is broken. 'Help, Lord!' Help, I pray You!"

How distinct this prayer is! There are many, many prayers that one has heard, but when uttered, you could not say what had been asked. If anyone should ask you, "What has that Brother been praying for?" you would think and say, "I really do not know. He has said, 'Lord, bless us!' but what particular blessing he desired, I was not able to make out." Many of our dear Brethren edify us with an account of their experience and with a little exposition of the Doctrines of Grace—very edifying and proper in any other shape—but as a prayer—terribly out of place! The Lord knows your experience, He knows the Doctrines of Grace and does not need you to inform Him upon these matters. This prayer is to the point, "Help, Lord." The man knows what he needs and he asks for it. He does not ask wealth, health, long life—he needs help. He has come to a dead lift and he cannot lift his burden, so he cries, "Help, Lord." It is one word, but that one word goes straight to the mark. What a mercy it is to be able to pray pointed prayers! David said, "In the morning will I direct my prayer unto You." Now, according to some scholars, the Hebrew there is, "I will marshal up my prayers." "As the sergeant sets the soldiers in a row when he is about to drill them and marshals them, and as the commander-in-chief forms them into battalions and so on, even so will I set my desires in proper order and marshal them in battalions before the Mercy Seat, that I may show that I am not uttering the crude, undigested thoughts of a careless mind, taking solemn words upon a thoughtless tongue, but that I am speaking to God that which has caused me thought—which fills me with emotions and comes from my soul with an intent and a desire, myself knowing what that intent and desire may be." Oh, let us stand fast in prayer to direct petitions—short, but seasonable and direct!

We have something else to say of it—it is rightly aimed. The Psalmist evidently looked straight up to God. He says, "Help, Lord." It is no roundabout way of praying. It is no crying, "Help, you saints and intercede for me! Blessed Virgin, plead for me!" It is, "Help, Lord." Straight to the Throne he goes! There is no knocking at the doors of second causes and human helps. "Straightforward makes the best runner." He runs immediately to his God—there is no beating around the bush to ask that he may have Providential assistance, or that a friend may be raised up for him, or that in some way he may be delivered—it is simply this, "Lord, I leave all the rest to You. Only do, You Yourself, come and undertake my cause. Put Your arm where the weight is. Put Your shoulder to the wheel. This surpasses my power and I turn entirely from all creatures to You. 'Help, Lord.'" It is a well-aimed prayer. He knew to Whom he was speaking, to One full of love and faithfulness, strength and wisdom—and so he says at once, "Help, Lord."

Nor can you fail to observe that this prayer has in it a confession of weakness. A man does not cry for help—at least, a man with such a heart as David had does not cry for help unless he needs it. Shall I ask of God for that which I already have? No, a sense of need makes me pray. David has been striving with all his might, but he finds his strength inadequate to the task. He has been looking about for help everywhere, but he finds there is no help and, sensible of his own utter nothingness and vanity, he turns at once to God. It is well when prayer is steeped in the oil of repentance, when it is dipped in a sense of need. No prayer speeds so well with God as that which comes with an empty hand before His Throne. If you bring your pitchers full, you shall take them all away empty—but if you bring your pitchers empty, you shall take them away full! "He has put down the mighty from their seats, and exalted them of low degree. He has filled the hungry

with good things; and the rich he has sent away empty." Lord, help me always to come as an empty-handed beggar to the Throne of Your mercy, that I may go away as a full-handed rejoicing saint!

And yet, with a confession of weakness, I think there is also here a resolution to exert oneself. The very word, "Help," seems to imply that he did not expect to sit still and do nothing. In the matter of our own

personal salvation, all the work is done for us by the Lord Jesus Christ, "it is finished." But in the matter of Christian service and Christian labor, it is not done for us. We are expected, having the New Life within, to set about working out our own salvation "with fear and trembling." He who has saved us expects us to run the race as pilgrims, to fight the fight as warriors, to plow the fields as husbandmen, to build the walls as laborers together with God and to work in general for Him in all sorts of ways. Now, if I cry, "Help, Lord!" that means that I intend to exert myself. You have no right to sit down and say, "Lord, help me," and not go out to seek work. He will help you—yes, help you into the jail or workhouse, but no other kind of help will you get! You have no right, when you have a besetting sin, to fold your arms and say, "Well, I hope the Lord will help me to overcome it." He will help you, but remember the old proverb, for it is true, "He helps those that help themselves." When He has taught you to smite with your sword against sin, then He will smite too. He works with you. He works in you to will and to do. He does not work in us to sleep and to slumber after our own carnal propensity, but He works in us "to will and to do of His own good pleasure." We hold not with salvation by works, but we do hold with works by salvation. We know that works cannot save—but we know that a man being saved produces good works. When I pray, then, "Lord, help! Help, Lord!" it is implied that if it is a case where I can do anything in the service of God, I shall put the strength which He has given me into active exercise and then lean upon Him.

II. Well, now, SOME SUGGESTIONS FOR THE USE OF THIS PRAYER, "Help, Lord."

There are some articles of merchandise of which we are told on the label that they will keep in all climates, and will be useful at all times. I think I may say the same of my prayer. This prayer is a sword of two edges—it is an article that can be used for a thousand different things! It is a most handy prayer. It turns every way. You may use it in all cases, at all times. Let us take one or two.

Temporal circumstances may involve you in difficulty. I suppose, Beloved, there are many of you who are often in trouble with regard to Providence. You work and do your best to provide things honest in the sight of all men, but no one can foresee crushing misfortunes. Sometimes employment fails. At another time the dishonesty of others may bring you down from competence to poverty. Sometimes sickness may fall upon you and you may be disabled. In a thousand ways you may be brought to feel that you need help in Providential matters. Now, dear Friend, today you may have been trudging all over the city looking for a friend. You have written letters and you have gone to all you know—and you are getting pretty near to the end of all your earthly hopes. I suggest that, before you leave this sanctuary, you pray this prayer, "Help, Lord." Use it, appropriate it, expand it according to your faith and your feelings somewhat thus— "Help, Lord. You did feed Your servant Elijah by ravens and You made the widow's cruse of oil and handful of meal to last. 'Help, Lord.' I do not expect a miracle, but I expect the same help which a miracle would bring me and expect it in the ordinary course of Providence. If You do not put Your hand out of Heaven to help me, You will assist me by some ordinary means which would not, however, have been available if You had not so arranged it. 'Help, Lord.'" It really is marvelous, and most of our lives will prove it, how good the Lord is in a pinch. Just when you have said, "Now it is all over with me," then it is that the Lord has appeared for your deliverance. When your hopes have been like Lazarus in the grave, not only dead, but something more, for Martha said, "Lord, by this time he stinks; for he has been dead four days"—yet even then, when Christ has appeared, there has been a resurrection to your circumstances and your comforts and you have again been able to rejoice!

Some of you are students of Scripture. Your difficulties are not pecuniary ones. You turn over, day by day, this precious Book and it is your desire to understand it, but you are vexed with certain perplexities. There are things in it which are hard to be understood and you need to arrive at definite, distinct truth, to know

true knowledge. Let me suggest to you, dear Brother, that when you have studied the Scripture anxiously and carefully, and sought out the opinions and judgments of good and gracious men who were taught of God, that you should never forget to add to all this the prayer, "Help, Lord. Help, Lord!" There is more got out of the Bible by praying than by anything else. When a certain Puritan had a dispute upon matters of doctrine with another, he was observed to speak very fluently and with great power. While his opponent spoke, he was observed taking notes—and one desired to see his notes—and what do you think they were? They were just these words, "More light, Lord! More light, Lord! More light, Lord!" That is the best way of taking notes—a cry for more Light of God! All of a sudden, that very text of Scripture which seemed as hard as a flint, will fly open by a touch of the Holy Spirit's finger when you have said in prayer, "Help, Lord."

This prayer will well suit those who are engaged in inward conflicts. I have heard of some Christians who do not believe in inward conflicts. Brother, take care lest you have to prove them beyond all other men. I heard today something which reminds me of how different our experience is at one time from what it is at another. A dear servant of the Lord was good Mr. Harrington Evans—perhaps a very model preacher, one who spoke very sweetly of Christ. A Brother was telling me today that he remembers hearing Mr. Evans say that he hardly liked a Christian to pray, "God be merciful to me, a sinner." He said, "I do not like it. The saint is forgiven. I know he sins, still he is thoroughly forgiven and there is a kind of clank of the chain about the prayer, 'God be merciful to me, a sinner.'" "Yet," said my informant, "if I am not mistaken, on Mr. Evans' tombstone are those words, 'God be merciful to me, a sinner.'" So that what he thought was a clank of the chain once, he came to look upon as being a most precious and comfortable prayer after all! And some of our Brothers do, at times, get a little top-heavy and say, "I do not make confession of sin." More the pity, Brother—you are making a birch for your own back! You will have it before long, depend upon it. There is no position for the child of God so safe, so Scriptural, so true as that of still clinging to Jesus as you did at the first—still mourning for sin and rejoicing in the Atonement made for you as a sinner! I must confess that I cannot ordinarily get that comfort by drawing near as a saint which I can get by coming to Christ as a sinner! My evidences often fail me and when they do I give up all seeking after them and go straight away, without any evidences, to Christ over again as the sinner's Savior and find fresh joy and peace in believing! May we be kept in such a frame of mind as this!

How many of you are exercised with conflicts tonight? You do not know which will get the upper hand, good or evil. There is conflict and combat going on within as though a pitted battle were being fought there. The soil of your heart is torn up by the prancing of the hoofs of the enemy horses. You think, "I shall surely perish after all." Brother, Sister, in your time of conflict here is a prayer for you, "'Help, Lord. Help, Lord!' Help the newborn babe to conquer the old man! Help the vital spark to keep its flame alive now that floods are poured out against it! Let not the dragon swallow up the man-child! 'Help, Lord.' Help! 'O wretched man that I am! Who shall deliver me from the body of this death?' Help You me, Lord, and I will yet sing, 'I thank God, through Jesus Christ, my Lord!'"

Will not this prayer suit those of you who are just now desirous to honor God in your sufferings You have lately fallen into sickness. You have to be much on your bed and you are afraid that you will get impatient. I know aged persons are sometimes troubled with the fear that if they should be long living in infirmity, they might get peevish and petulant—doubtless it is the vice of old age. Well, at such a crisis, dear Friends, whether aged or young, this prayer will suit you, "'Help, Lord. Help, Lord!' Help me if my pains multiply. Help me!" This is a prayer for dying saints at the stake. How often it has sprung from their lips! When the flames have leaped up upon them, they have prayed, "'Help, Lord.' Help me to burn! Help me to

be faithful. Suffer me not to turn aside from my Master! 'Help, Lord.' Now I have more to suffer than the creature can bear, sustain me, Lord!"

Not less meet is this prayer for those of you who are not suffering, but working. Most of us, I hope, are workers for Christ. And why should we ever go out to our work without the prayer, "Help, Lord"? And when we are in it, we cannot expect to prosper except the desire is still coming up, "Help, Lord." And when we have done the work, it is a sweet evening's prayer with which to close the day, "'Help, Lord.' Make my work to stand. 'Help, Lord.'" I give this prayer to you, my Brothers and Sisters in the Church, elders and youngsters, overseers and deacons—to you, Brothers and Sisters, who teach the young of this flock. To you who are toiling in our classes. To you who preach in the streets, or go from place to place proclaiming the Word of God. Be this your prayer henceforth, "'Help, Lord.' Help us to declare the Gospel faithfully and fully, and to be the means of bringing souls to Yourself."

Indeed, I do not know where this prayer would not be suitable! There is Mary just going out to a new situation, leaving her mother's roof, and she is thinking, "Now I do not know who my master may be, but I am a Christian and I hope I may be able, as a servant, to show what Christianity is." I am glad, Mary, you have got that wish. Now pray before you go into that new situation—"Help, Lord.' Help! I have not been all I ought to be. I have not always honored my Lord and Master, but now please help me to adorn the Doctrine of God our Savior in all things." And there is a dear Brother, perhaps, very young, who is just entering upon a new sphere of labor. It is labor new to him—his heart is in it,

but still he does not quite understand it and he wants to do it so that God may be glorified. Well then, Brother, do not go out of the door till you have said, "Lord, help. Help, Lord, and sustain me!"

And this is a prayer, I think, that we must take up, all together, in these days when Romanism is coming back all over the land. "In these perilous times, when the false prophets and the magicians are abroad seeking to entrap men with their gaudy ceremonies and their sumptuous shows, it is for us to protest and to preach the Word, but help, God of Luther! Help us to deal a death-blow to the dragon! Help, God of Calvin! Help us to unfurl the banner of the Gospel once again! Help us, God of Zwingli, to stand steadfast in the day of trial! 'Help, Lord.' It is only Your right arm that can save England from once again being under the hoof of the Pope of Rome! Come and deliver Your saints in this, their day of trial. 'Help, Lord, for the godly man ceases; for the faithful fail from among the children of men.'"

III. By way of ENCOURAGEMENT TO EXPECT AN ANSWER, let me now address a few closing words.

"Help, Lord." We may expect that He will do so in the future because He has done so in the past. You remember your conversion—

"Many days have passed since then, Many changes I have seen, Yet have been upheld till now— Who could hold me up but Thee?"

You have had much help, dear Friend. Were you to write your history, could you remember all the interpositions of Divine Providence and put them down? It would make a strange story. So I sometimes think with regard to myself. Yet I am not sure that it would, for I suppose our stories would be very much alike! We have all had to say of the goodness and mercy of God, "By terrible things in righteousness will You answer us, O God of our salvation." We have had judgment like a sentence of death in ourselves, but we have had deliverance like life from the dead! There have been drops of wormwood, but there have been seas of milk and honey! Our souls have to raise an Ebenezer here and we expect to raise one more

on Jordan's shore and to the last to sing, "Surely goodness and mercy have followed me all the days of my life." I know what the devil tells you. He is telling you that you have got into an extraordinary position now and, though God helped you before, yet this is a new trial, a wilderness where there is no way out. Well, then, "His mercies are new every morning." In new straits you shall have new mercies! Our God is the same "yesterday, today and forever," but the phases of His mercy are as numerous as the phases of our grief. He has helped you, so go to Him and He will help you again!

Take this thought to console and to comfort you—His relationship as a Covenant God to you as a sincere Christian necessitates His helping you. You have a child. That child is up to his neck in the mire and he will soon be swallowed up alive in the bog, but he cries, "Father, Father, help!" Now, some passerby who had a brutal heart might ignore the cry, but you are his father, you cannot resist his cry! "What? Not help my child?" Why, every man here feels that I would insult his manhood with the supposition that he could leave his child to perish who he might help! No, you would fly as on the wings of love to help your child! If we, being evil, would help our children, how much more shall our Father, who is in Heaven, help us?

Moreover, He is related to us in another relationship— "Your Maker is your Husband." Let any husband here imagine his wife to be in distress and she looks him in the face, and says, "My Husband, it is a time of emergency, my heart is breaking, help me." Would she have to ask twice? Not of those of us who have learned the word, "Husbands, love your wives." And surely God is the best of husbands! And if our heart can but feel the marriage-bond between our souls and Christ, we need not fear but that He will respond to our tears and to our cries. He will say, "Fear you not; for I am with you: be not dismayed; for I am your God." "When you pass through the waters, I will be with you: and through the rivers; they shall not overflow you; when you walk through the fire, you shall not be burned; neither shall the flame kindle upon you." I might enlarge on this thought, but you can think it out for yourselves. God's relationships necessitate that He should help us.

All the attributes of God are involved because they are pledged to the help of His people. Suppose He did not help us—then the enemy would say that He could not! That would be a reflection on His power. Or the foe would say that He would not. That would be an imputation on His love and, considering His promise, it would be a stain upon His Truth. He has brought us into our present condition and if He does not deliver us out of it, then that would be a stain upon His

wisdom—and the enemy would say that He steered the ship where He could not manage it. But that could never be, so trust Him and fear not! Your life is secure. He will preserve His children to the end.

But, Beloved, God will help us—we have the promise He has given. It is very beautiful to notice this in the Scriptures. When you get a prayer in one chapter, you get a promise in the next which is the very counterpart of the prayer. I may say that the promise is the type and the prayer is very often the copy printed off that type. Listen to this, "Help, Lord." Then listen to this, "I will help you." You know there is such a promise as this, "I will help you." You say, "Help, Lord," and He says, "I will help you." Do you believe your God, Christian? "I will help you." Do you believe Him? You dare not disbelieve Him! Well, then, lift up your head, brush away those tears, let those heavy hearts again be exalted and let that dull heart of yours begin to sing! You have asked for help and He has promised to give it. The thing is done. Go your way! Rejoice in your God and remember how He has said, "Delight yourself also in the Lord; and He shall give you the desires of your heart."

All this I have spoken to Christians, but there would be plenty of room and opportunity, if we had the time, to put this prayer into the lips of the sinner, too! In many respects it suits the sinner. "'Help, Lord.' I have a load of sin, take it from me. 'Help, Lord.' I have a hard, stubborn heart, melt it. 'Help, Lord.' I am blind, I am lame, I am sick. Here I lie at mercy's gate, 'Help, Lord.'" O Sinner, if you can only pray this prayer from the bottom of your soul and present it through the blood of Jesus Christ, you shall have help! I pray you, do not go to bed tonight, do not shut those eyes of your in slumber till from your heart you have uttered this prayer, "Help, Lord. Help, Lord!" And every morning rise with it. And every night retire with it till you shall have the answer! And then when you have got the answer, you may still go on and plead it in another shape, and in another form—even in the hour of death you may still plead it, "Help, Lord." When the river Jordan swells up to your chin, you may still say, "Help, Lord." Till you get up to the Throne of God and even there I was about to say, one might say, "Now, Lord, I do not need help any longer, except it be to praise You. Oh, help me to extol You, to magnify You! Give me more and more the seraph's fire, the angel's tongue. Help me to hymn Messiah's name and praise the splendor of His Grace world without end."

I leave you, then, with the prayer, "Help, Lord." May the Lord help you, for Jesus' sake! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON: PSALM 11.

Verses 1-3. I will love You, O LORD, my strength The LORD is my rock and my fortress, and my deliverer; my God, my strength in whom I will trust; my buckler, and my horn of my salvation, and my high tower I shall call upon the LORD, who is worthy to be praised: so shall I be saved from my enemies. At first he says, "I will love You," then, "I will trust You." Now he says "I will call upon You," and that calling upon God is especially in the sense of praising Him. And when you have just experienced a Divine deliverance, how full your spirit is of sacred gratitude!

4-7. The sorrows of death compassed me, and the floods of ungodly men made me afraid. The sorrows of Hell compassed me about: the snares of death prevented me. In my distress I called upon the LORD, and cried unto my God: He heard my voice out of His Temple, and my cry came before Him, even into His ears. Then the earth shook and trembled; the foundations also of the hills moved and were shaken, because He was angry. God was angry with Saul and with all David's persecutors because they hunted that good man like a partridge upon the mountains! The prayer of the poor suppliant called down the anger of God upon his adversaries.

8. There went up a smoke out of His nostrils and fire out of His mouth devoured: coals were kindled by it This is a wonderful picture of the anger of God. The Hebrews always connected manifestations of anger with the nose and mouth just as they ascribed various passions and feelings to the different members of the body. So David says, "There went up a smoke out of His nostrils and fire out of His mouth devoured." Does someone ask, "Can prayer move God in this way?" Yes, it seems so. Of course David had to speak after the manner of men—there is no other way in which men can speak, so he describes God as being thus stirred by the cry of His poor child when it came up into His ears. Nothing brings a man's temper into his face like an injury done to his child. And God, as a Father, cannot endure to have His children hurt. "He that touches you touches the apple of His eye."

9, 10. He bowed the heavens also, and came down: and darkness was under His feet And He rode upon a cherub, and did fly: yes, He did fly upon the wings of the wind. So quick is God to come to the deliverance of His persecuted people!

11-13. He made darkness His secret place; His pavilion round about Him were dark waters and thick clouds of the skies. At the brightness that was before Him, His thick clouds passed, hail stones and coals of fire. The LORD also thundered in the heavens, and the Highest gave His voice; hail storms and coals of fire. Behold the dread artillery of Heaven as God turns His terrible guns against the enemies of His people and pours out hot shot from His lofty bastion— "hail stones and coals of fire."

14, 15. Yes, He sent out His arrows, and scattered them; and He shot out lightning, and discomfited them. Then the channels of waters were seen, and the foundations of the world were discovered at Your rebuke, O LORD, at the blast of the breath of Your nostrils. The Psalmist is evidently describing the passage of the Red Sea, and likening the descent of God to His individual help to that memorable descent of God to the rescue of His entire people. And indeed, God is as great in His help to one as in His help to all! He is never little. When God helps you, my Brother, He is a great God, and greatly to be praised, as greatly so as when He comes to the rescue of an entire nation! Therefore sing unto the Lord, whose arm is lifted up for you, even for you, as truly as it was lifted upon Israel when He brought them out of Egypt "with a strong hand, and with a stretched-out arm, and with great terror."

16. He sent from above, He took me, He drew me out of many waters. [See Sermon #1432, Volume 24—divine interpositions] The Lord made another Moses of him. Pharaoh's daughter gave the name of Moses, that is, one drawn out, to the child who was brought to her, "because," she said, "I drew him out of the water."

17. He delivered me from my strong enemy, and from those who hated me; for they were too strong for me. Is that the reason why God interposed on David's behalf? Then let all His weak children find comfort in the fact that when our enemies are too strong for us, God will come and deliver us! Let us be thankful for burdens that are too heavy for us to bear and cast them upon the almighty shoulders that can easily sustain them. If we could do without God, we would do without God, but as we cannot, God will come to us and help and deliver us!

18. 19. They prevented me in the day of my calamity: but the LORD was my stay. He brought me forth also into a large place; He delivered me, because He delighted in me. What a sense of Divine love God's gracious deliverance brings! Perhaps David would never have known how greatly God delighted in him if he had not been in such dire distress and had not had such a great deliverance.

20-24. The LORD rewarded me according to my righteousness; according to the cleanness of my hands has He recompensed me. For I have kept the ways of the LORD, and have not wickedly departed from my God. For all His judgments were before me, and I did not put away His statutes from me. I was also upright before Him, and I kept myself from my iniquity. Therefore has the LORD recompensed me according to my righteousness, according to the cleanness of my hands in His eyesight. If God gives you Grace to be honest, upright, true and steadfast in the time of temptation, you may be quite sure that He will deliver you! In fact, He has already worked the greater part of your deliverance in thus keeping you from sin! The worst thing that a trouble can do for a Christian is to carry him off his feet and make him forsake his integrity.

25-27. With the merciful You will show Yourself merciful; with an upright man You will show Yourself upright; with the pure You will show Yourself pure; and with the forward You will show Yourself forward. For You will save the afflicted people; but will bring down high looks. If your faith cannot endure testing and trying, it is but poor faith. It will not do to die with if it will not do to live with it. But if you cry to the Lord

and He enables you in the time of your distress to be faithful to Him, then He will certainly give you deliverance sooner or later.

28-30. For You will light my candle: the LORD my God will enlighten my darkness. For by You I have run through a troop; and by my God have I leaped over a wall As for God, His way is perfect If you practice self-reliance, but not God-reliance, you will be sure to fail. What poor strength that is which does not come from God! Is it worthy of the name of strength at all? Is it not impotence and impudence combined? May God keep us from imagining that we can do anything apart from Him! At the same time, may His gracious Spirit work in us the sure confidence that we can do everything He bids us do when He is our Helper! David had that confidence, for He goes on to sing.

30-37. The word of the LORD is tried: He is a buckler to all those who trust in Him. For who is God says the LORD? Or who is a rock says our God? It is God that girds me with strength, and makes my way perfect He makes my feet like hinds' feet, and sets me upon my high places. He teaches my hands to war, so that a bow of steel is broken by my arms. You have also given me the shield of Your salvation: and Your right hand has held me up, and Your gentleness has made me great You have enlarged my steps under me, that my feet did not slip. I have pursued my enemies, and overtaken them: neither did I turn again till they were consumed. Remember that this is a soldier's song—a song under the old covenant when men might fight as they may not fight now. We must, therefore, spiritualize this ancient war song as we read it.

38-45. I have wounded them that they were not able to rise: they are fallen under my feet. For You have girded me with strength unto the battle: You have subdued under me those that rose up against me. You have also given me the necks of my enemies; that I might destroy them that hate me. They cried, but there was none to save them: even unto the LORD, but He answered them not. Then did I beat them small as the dust before the wind: I did cast them out as the dirt in the streets. You have delivered me from the strivings of the people; and You have made me the head of the heathen: a people whom I have not known shall serve me. As soon as they hear of me, they shall obey me: the strangers shall submit themselves unto me. The strangers shall fade away, and be afraid out of their close places. So it came to pass that the Philistines were afraid of David and he delivered his people from the attacks of all invaders, and brought them that blessed peace which Solomon enjoyed with them.

46-50. The LORD lives, and blessed be my rock; and let the God of my salvation be exalted. It is God that avenges me, and subdues the people under me. He delivers me from my enemies: yes, You lift me up above those that rise up against me: You have delivered me from the violent man. Therefore will I give thanks unto You, O LORD, among the heathen, and sing praises unto Your name. Great deliverance gives He to His king; and shows mercy to His anointed, to David, and to his seed forevermore.

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