

PERFECT JUSTIFICATION AND PERFECT PARDON NO. 2789

A SERMON
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DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT NEW PARK STREET CHAPEL, SOUTHWARK,
ON A LORD'S-DAY EVENING, DURING THE SUMMER OF 1860.

“In those days, and in that time, says the LORD, the iniquity of Israel shall be sought for, and there shall be none; and the sins of Judah, and they shall not be found: for I will pardon them whom I preserve.”
Jeremiah 50:20.

I do not profess to have attained sufficient proficiency in interpreting the prophetic parts of Holy Scripture to be able to enter, as some can, into the minutes of the future and to tell when any particular promise will have its actual, literal fulfillment and, indeed, if I could do so, it would not serve my purpose at this time, for I wish to take my text—perhaps you may think by way of accommodation—as describing what shall be the case with all God's people when, having crossed the Jordan of death, they shall stand before the Great White Throne—and, indeed, what is now the case with all those “who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us.”

I shall use my text thus—first, I shall say something about *the great iniquities and sins mentioned in the text*. And then, secondly, I shall speak, at greater length, upon *the great forgiveness by which these sins have been put away*. May God grant that many of us may feel that we have a sweet and undoubted participation in the complete pardon and deliverance which are here spoken of!

I. So, first, let us meditate for a little while upon THE GREAT INIQUITIES AND SINS MENTIONED IN THE TEXT.

Those sins were of no common order. Israel was a nation, chosen out of the world, to be the peculiar people of the Lord. They were chosen, not because of anything especially good in them, for they were always a stiff-necked and rebellious race, but because of God's Sovereign Grace. Because of this special privilege, even if they had been only ordinary sinners, their sin would have assumed a most serious aspect, for never does sin seem to be so black as when it is committed in spite of great love, special peace, high privileges and other Divine blessings.

The Israelites were not an ignorant people. They did not sin, as the Philistines did, in the dark. They were not left in the dim twilight of nature, but they had the fullest Revelation of God's mind and will that was afforded to any people in those days. They were not taught the Truth of God by a system that was too high for them to understand, for the types and symbols of the ancient sanctuary were exactly adapted to the infant state of the Jewish commonwealth and to the immature condition of the Israelites' spiritual life. Well might the Lord say concerning them, “What could have been done more to My vineyard, that I have not done in it?” He had brought the goodly vine up out of Egypt. He had planted it in the richest soil in the whole earth. He had built a wall around it by making His chosen people to be separate from all the other nations in the world and He had dug a winepress for the gathering in of the fruits of the vineyard. And so He might well ask, “Why, when I looked that it should bring forth grapes, brought it forth wild grapes?”

Therefore, I repeat what I said just now—If the children of Israel had only sinned as other nations did, yet their sins would have been of the most heinous character because of the greatness of their privileges and the peculiar and special love that had been lavished upon them. But they were sinners of an unusual kind—they were positively unmatched in guilt by any nation under Heaven! What other nation forsook the gods whom they worshipped, even though they were only idols? Did not the idolaters cleave to Baal and hold fast to Ashtaroth? Do we find that even when the heathen na-

tions were smitten, they forsook the god they professed to worship? Did they not still blindly and foolishly cling to their worthless idols and bow before them?

Yet the children of Israel cast away their God—they who had worshipped Jehovah turned aside from Him and bowed down before Baal and, oftentimes did they grieve the Lord and provoke Him to anger because they went after other gods and worshipped idols that were not gods. This was a new evil under Heaven—a thing unheard of and unknown. The heathen would sooner have lost their nationality than they would have forsaken the idols that they adored, but Israel had played the harlot with many lovers. She, who ought to have been the most chaste of spouses, was unfaithful to her Lord and went gadding abroad among those whom He abhorred!

Besides, my Brethren, I would have you remember that the children of Israel provoked God, perhaps, more than any other nation that has ever been upon the face of the earth by reason of the fact that *the provocations of other nations were speedily punished and not permitted to continue as long as those of Israel*. God commanded that the Canaanites should be exterminated because of their abominable sins, yet they were not greater sinners than some, at least, of the Israelites were! Some of the incidents recorded in the Old Testament evince a state of morality in the commonwealth of Israel as low, as sensual, as degraded as even the criminality of Sodom itself! As a nation, they had sinned as foully as others and, in some respects, still more foully because, when they were often smitten and chastened for their sin, they returned to it, like the dog to his vomit, “and the sow that was washed to her wallowing in the mire.” Think of the provocation that Israel gave to the Lord in the wilderness! Remember that time when Jehovah said to Moses, “I have seen this people and, behold, it is a stiff-necked people: let Me alone, that I may destroy them, and blot out their name from under Heaven: and I will make of you a nation mightier and greater than they.” Though the Lord turned from the fierceness of His anger, yet His anger was fierce and terrible against the rebellious people.

Think, too, of their continual revolts under the Judges—to omit, for the while, the possibly better state they were in under Joshua’s leadership. They were first in bondage to one power and then to another, for the simple reason that there was hardly one false god that they had not worshipped, nor was there any form of lust or crime which Israel had not learned. Then remember the abominable iniquities of the house of Israel during the days of the kings who followed Solomon—how they offered incense to false gods in all their high places, and bowed down to idols in all their groves and under almost every green tree. They adopted the very worst forms of idolatry—they made their children pass through the fire—they offered up their little ones as a sacrifice to Moloch! The murder of infants was common among them. They were not content to imitate the better part of the heathen idolatries, but they must take the whole and drain the black cup to its dregs—and they even seem to have exceeded the wickedness of those whom they imitated! The provocations of Rome have been many. The iniquities of the great Grecian empire were intolerable. The pride of Babylon was more than God could endure. The crying sins of Nineveh reached unto Heaven. The guilt of Sodom and Gomorrah was very great. But the children of Israel, in the race for the prize of evil, distanced all these who were, apparently, greater sinners than themselves!

I feel that we must give the pre-eminence to them, especially when we consider their transgressions in the light of the love and favor which the Lord God had displayed towards them. Yet, Brothers and Sisters, our text is true. Let us read it again, remembering what I have been saying about Israel’s iniquity. “In those days, and at that time, says the Lord, the iniquity of Israel shall be sought for, and there shall be none; and the sins of Judah, and they shall not be found: for I will pardon them whom I preserve.” Their provocations, their idolatries, their lusts were all to be swept away and to be forgotten! Crimes which had accumulated upon crimes were all to be covered in the depths of the sea! Surely, this should give hope to the very chief of sinners! If any of you are sorely depressed because of your great guiltiness, this passage should afford you much encouragement for, if God took so completely away, not the sins of those who had lightly offended against Him, but the crimes of the very blackest of criminals, why may He not wash away yours, also? And why may not you hope and even be confidently assured that the blood of Jesus Christ, God’s Son, cleanses you from all sin?

II. Now I turn, in the second place, to look, for a little while, at THE COMPLETE PARDON SPOKEN OF IN THE TEXT. Let us first consider the words and then the sense of them—“The iniquity of Israel shall be sought for, and there shall be none; and the sins of Judah, and they shall not be found.”

First, look *at the words of the text*. This is a metaphorical form of speech—“The iniquity of Israel shall be sought for, and there shall be none; and the sins of Judah, and they shall not be found.” You remember that Rachel hid the im-

age under the seat on which she sat, so that when her father searched for it, he could not find it—yet it was there all the while. But it is not to be so with our sins! They are to be searched for, but there shall be none. They are to be sought for, but so effectually shall they have been put away that they shall not be found. Not only shall they not be discovered, but there shall not be *any to be discovered*. They shall be so completely removed, so absolutely annihilated, that they shall have ceased to exist! Come, let me draw a picture for you. Are there any who will ever search for the sins of God's people? There are many who would do so if they could—and there are some who must do so.

There is, first of all, *an awakened conscience*. One of the first things which an awakened conscience does is to search for sin. It will never rest content in the house where there is sin—it will go through every chamber of the heart and track sin to its most secret recesses. A blind, dead, sensual conscience may lie in the same bed with sin and not be disturbed, but an awakened conscience can detect it afar off and will have nothing to do with it. The lie, or any other form of iniquity, cannot tarry within sight of a conscience, the eyes of which have been spiritually opened. But, Believer, you are so fully pardoned that, though your tender conscience may search for sin, it shall not be found! Even when your conscience shall be illuminated with the sunlight of Heaven and all its obliquity and dimness of vision shall be taken away—if it should in *Heaven* look for sin, “there shall be none.” It is not difficult to realize that a blind man cannot see sin and a man with a blind conscience cannot see sin in himself, but I say that the man with the keenest spiritual sight, the man with the enlightened, the intelligent, the instructed, the perfect conscience may search the forgiven soul through and through, but there shall not, upon that soul, be found even the shadow of a spot! So thorough shall the washing be that the eyes, which now run with tears day and night because of the consciousness of sin, shall then be free from tears, for it shall see no sin to weep over—it shall behold no iniquity over which it has to grieve and no crime for which it has to mourn. Oh, glorious cleansing is this, when even an awakened conscience shall search and find no sin!

But more than this, there is within us another eye which is even quicker in seeing sin than is our conscience, and that is the eye of *our unbelief*. It is amazing, my Brothers and Sisters, how soon our unbelief finds a ground for fear lest we should be lost. It seems to find such a reason, often, when there is none. It will catch at any little circumstance in our daily life to make us imagine that God has forgotten us. Unbelief is blind to good and to God, but it is very quick of sight to everything that is fearful and terrifying. I have known some Christians so full of unbelief that it was very difficult to give them any comfort—they were most dexterous in finding out the worst parts of their character and history—and very crafty in, as it were, seeking to neutralize the force of God's promises by mentioning some evil thing in their own experience which seemed as if it deprived them of their right to receive the promised gift. But God so fully pardons His people that even their doubts, their fears, or their searching unbelief shall not be able to find a flaw in it!

If it were possible for me to be smitten with unbelief even in Heaven, so that I should begin to mistrust my standing in Christ, or to try to find a reason why I should mistrust, I should not be able to do so. However much I might seek to find any speck or spot of sin, I would be obliged to say at the last, “Great God, I am clean through Jesus' blood, I am clean every whit.” And even now, Beloved, and even here, though your unbelief thinks it sees a dozen sins, yet remember that those sins, at least as far as the guilt of them is concerned, are not really there. They are forever put away! Christ has drowned them in the Red Sea of His precious blood! There may seem to you to still be guiltiness upon you, but there is none if God has pardoned you, for “there is, therefore, now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus.” You may think that there is, but there is not—God now sees no sin in Judah, nor iniquity in Israel. He may see it to reprove it, or to chastise it, but judicially to avenge it, He sees none. Our Lord has made us so perfectly white that there is no spot to be found in us. He has so completely covered us with the robe of His matchless righteousness that no imperfection shall be seen in us even when we come to the perfect world where we are to dwell with Him forever! What a precious thought is this! Lord, give us Grace to believe it and to dwell in Christ—and enjoy to the fullest all our privileges in Him!

But, further, there are other eyes, besides our own, which are always searching for our sins and, among them, there is the *quick eye of the envious world*. There are some of us who have good reason to be dead to the world, for the world has never spoken a good word concerning us, but has always been ready to magnify our faults when it could find any, or to lie against us where there was no fault at all. I, of all men, have no reason to respect public rumor! I do not respect it and I cannot, for, of all lying things, public rumor seems almost to exceed Satan, himself, in the lies which it will invent! Thus men who are to stand pre-eminent as God's ministers must make up their minds, when they commence their ministry, that they will probably be accused of every crime in the calendar! I should not be greatly surprised if you were to be told

that I had committed the grossest iniquity that ever was perpetrated and, my Brothers and Sisters, should you hear such a thing, it will not so much distress my spirit as it might have done in years gone by, now that I know that the world's tongue is always ready to speak the worst word it can against the man who does it the most harm. If I am to fight the Lord's battles, I may leave Him to fight mine! If I defend His Character, He will defend mine! I shall not defend my own—that I know—it is always a bad thing for a man to be his own defender!

You must, all of you, have noticed in your more private capacity, how quick the men of the world are to find fault with you. You just stumble and they say that you have had a serious fall. There is one spot upon your cheek and they declare that your face is covered with mire. You stooped to pick up a pin and they affirm that you stole a ton of gold. That is the style in which they usually magnify our faults—and if they cannot find any, then they tell lies and invent them! It is a grand testimony to a man's uprightness when worldlings cannot say anything against him without lying, for it shows that there is nothing of which they can truthfully accuse him! It is a noble thing for a man to be in such a position and then he can say, "Now have I come where I desire to be—there is no love lost between the world and me. The world is dead to me and I am dead to the world." If we say hard things of the world—as we are bound to do if we are faithful—of course it will say hard things of us. If we say that it is a flaunting harlot, that its beauty is only painted and its joys are a sham, we must not be surprised if it says the same concerning us. Have you never noticed how, if two men are driving in the street, and one of them is on the wrong side, he is generally the one to call out to the other, "What are you doing?" So is it usually with the Church and the world—the world, because it is on the wrong side, will be sure to cry out to the Church, "What are you doing there?"

Well, Christian, there is a joyous thought for all who have been slandered and abused! The day is coming when "the iniquity of Israel shall be sought for, and there shall be none; and the sins of Judah, and they shall not be found"—when, *before the eyes of an assembled universe*, God's despised servants shall be fully vindicated and against them not a dog shall move his tongue, even as it was in the day when Israel came up out of Egypt. Oh, glorious shall be that resurrection of buried reputations when there shall come up from the grave, not only God's people, but also their characters, and they who have served the Lord faithfully shall shine as the stars in the firmament of Heaven forever and ever! It is to me a joyous thought that sinners who hate the Word of God, and hate God's people, shall search for their sins, but shall not be able to find them!

Yet again, Brothers and Sisters, there is one whose eye is even quicker than that of the world! One who is always searching for our faults—and that is our *infernal enemy*, *Satan*—Apollyon, the destroyer! Oh, how he watches us to do us harm! Never did a lion, crouching ready to spring upon its prey, watch the harmless deer feeding upon the plain, or drinking at the spring, more keenly and more fiercely than Satan watches us. He is always seeking to find faults in God's people, that he may accuse them, sometimes through their own conscience and, at other times, by himself bringing the accusation against them up to the very Throne of the King! Happy, happy shall be the day when even Satan shall not be able to find fault with us! For then, in the Pit, he may bite at his iron bonds and may in secret hate and long to slander us, but his malice will all be in vain! The old serpent shall be unable to spit his venom upon the people of God. It will be a glorious triumph for you, poor devil-tried child of God, when you shall put your foot upon the old dragon's neck and he shall be powerless to harm you!

But there is One, whose eyes are quicker than those of the world, and whose sight is keener than that of Satan—it is HE, the all-seeing One, our Father and our God. "All things are naked and opened unto the eyes of Him with whom we have to do." If there were the faintest trail of sin upon us, He would discover it, for does He not search the heart and try the reins of the children of men? Can we hide ourselves anywhere from His Presence? Would the top of Carmel be too high for Him, or the depths of the sea too deep? If we seek to mount above the clouds to escape Him, or fly beyond the western sea to get beyond His sight, He is still there—everywhere, above, beneath, around—all eyes, all ears, seeing all things, hearing all things, knowing—even before they are our own—the unformed thoughts that are within our inmost soul. But what a joy it is for us to know that even He will not be able to find a sin in any one of His blood-washed children! Up from the blessed bath we come and even Omniscience, itself, can see no spot remaining upon us. In the full blaze of the awful glory of the Day of Judgment, when God's eyes shall read the most secret thoughts of the ungodly, and when His voice shall wake the echoes of every conscience, His eyes shall see no sin in those for whom Christ died! And His voice

shall awaken in them no accusing thought, but only cause them unsullied joy because He perceives in them not even the shadow of a fault, for they are “accepted in the Beloved.”

This is a sweet Truth of God and it is easy to utter, but how difficult it sometimes seems to grasp and hold it firmly! Yet, if we are believers in Jesus, we are complete in Him, perfect in Christ Jesus, for He has put away all our iniquities and cast all our sins behind His back into the depths of the sea. His own declaration to each of His redeemed ones, is, “I have blotted out, as a thick cloud, your transgressions and, as a cloud, your sins.” Fly, Gabriel, to all the countless hosts of Christ’s elect! Look upon each one as they now gather before the eternal Throne of God and say, you bright discerning angel, have you found a fault in any one of them? There is Mary Magdalene and there the penitent thief and yonder are Saul of Tarsus and Manasseh, and many more who were great sinners while here below—but can you see any sin in them now? There, too, stand the glorious hosts of those who, in these later days, have crossed the stream and entered their eternal rest. I charge you, O you watchers, you holy ones, tell me, can you find a fault in any one of them? The answer of all of them is, “No, the fact that they are here proves that they are without sin, for of this city it is written, ‘There shall in no wise enter into it anything that defiles.’” Yes, when the Last Great Day shall come, and the whole family of the redeemed shall be safely housed in their Father’s home above, if each one should, individually, be put into the scales of the sanctuary, there is not one of whom it would be said, “Tekel: you are weighed in the balances, and are found wanting.” If they were all to be cast into the crucible, not one grain of dross would be found in the whole of them! Though many of them were, once, among the very chief of sinners, yet if they were all to be examined—as they will be—by the eyes of Infinite Justice, yet, in them all, no trace or shadow of sin shall be discovered!

Now, in closing, I want you to take *the sense of the words*, which I understand to be that when God pardons His people, He pardons all their sins at once—not half, but all! Their blasphemy, their lust, their theft, their pride, their lying, or whatever their sin may have been—this is God’s receipt in full for all their indebtedness to Him—“The blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses from all sin.” If you believe in Jesus now, my Hearer, there is not one sin recorded against you in God’s Book of Remembrance, nor a tithe of a sin, nor a shadow of iniquity!

Not only does God pardon all the sins of His people, but He pardons in all senses of the term. You know that, sometimes, a man pardons his son for his wrongdoing, yet he cannot fully reinstate him in his confidence. He will not trust him with his money as he does his son who never wandered away from home. But God pardons completely. He harbors no ill thought of you, but loves you no less than He would have done if you had never sinned. If you had been as Adam was once—perfect and pure, without spot—God could not love you more than He does now, nor could He give you greater privileges, or higher honors. He has given you the promise of a crown and a share in His Son’s Throne and Glory! He has made you joint-heir with Christ of all that He has—what more could He have done for you had you been an absolutely perfect being?

But, further, when God pardons a sinner, He puts away all his sin forever. The cloud may return after the rain, but the cloud of my sin comes back no more. When the winter is gone and the springtime and the summer have made their presence felt, yet we know that winter will come again and the leaves will fall from the trees. But the winter of my spirit’s sin will never return. The great sea, when it rolls up in its might, must go out again at the ebbing of the tide. But that ocean of the love of God, which covers up my sins, will never roll back, but shall abide at the full forever and ever! The sun of God’s mercy never sets when it has once risen. The stream of Divine Love never dries up when it has once begun to flow. It is no brook like Cherith, at the side of which a Prophet might sit down for a little while and then its waters fail—but it is an ever-flowing river, as perpetual as the eternal Fountain in the heart of God Himself!

I know not where my brethren who think that pardoned sin may come back again, ever get any comfort. O Beloved, this Bible would be to me like a casket emptied of its jewels if you could ever take from me the firm belief that once forgiven, sin is no more imputed! Once washed away, the filthiness never returns! That was a magnificent argument of the Apostle Paul—“If, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of His Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by His life.” Do you see the pith of the argument? If, when we were enemies, we were reconciled—the harder work—how much more, being *friends*, we shall be saved! And if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled by His death, how much more, being *friends*, shall we be saved by His life!

If we are washed in Jesus’ blood, verily we are clean, so clean that—

“Not the shadow of a spot

Shall on our soul be found.”

Come death when it may, we shall meet it with joy, and not with sorrow, for—

“With our Savior’s garments on”

we shall be—

“Holy as the Holy One!”

Sinner, if you have never known what it is to be pardoned, let it not seem like a dream to you. If you ask, “May I be forgiven?” I answer—Yes, certainly you may! Listen to what God Himself has said—“Come now, and let us reason together, says the Lord: though your sins are as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they are red like crimson, they shall be as wool.” Sinner, if you believe in Christ, be your sins ever so many, they shall be blotted out, for—

*“The moment a sinner believes,
And trusts in His crucified God,
His pardon at once He receives,
Redemption in full through His blood.”*

So, without delay, just as you are, come and trust in Christ! and your sins, which are many, shall be forgiven you, and you shall go on your way rejoicing in hope of the glory of God, even as you are rejoicing in the assurance of the love of God. Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON: *PSALM 18:1-35.*

Verse 1. *I will love You, O LORD, my strength.* What a blessed “I will”—“I will love You”! He does love the Lord, and he declares that he will continue to do so. He feels that he must do so, for the Lord has been his strength. There are many aspects under which the love of our heart is most justly and fitly given to God and this is one of them. If the Lord has been the strength of our heart, then let our heart love Him.

2. *The LORD is my rock, and my fortress, and my deliverer; my God, my strength, in whom I will trust; my buckler, and the horn of my selection, and my high tower.* How David heaps up the epithets! When the Believer once begins to praise the Lord, there is no end to it. He can never even satisfy himself, much less can he hope to rise to the height of this great argument! Notice how many of those little pronouns there are. Luther used to say that the very marrow of divinity lies in the pronouns. Certainly the sweetness—the honey of it lies here. Let me read the verse again, putting the emphasis on the pronouns—“The Lord is *my* rock, and *my* fortress, and *my* deliverer; *my* God, *my* strength, in whom *I* will trust; *my* buckler, and the horn of *my* salvation, and *my* high tower.”

3. *I will call upon the LORD, who is worthy to be praised: so shall I be saved from my enemies.* Calling upon Him in prayer, and rendering praise to Him, “so shall I be saved from my enemies.” You remember how the army of Jehoshaphat marched forth into the valley of Berachah, singing and praising the Lord? They had no need to strike a blow, for the Lord gave them a glorious victory when they began to sing and to praise! And we might have more victories if we had more praise and more prayer. Now David goes on to tell us what had happened to him and what happened to the children of Israel when they came up out of the land of Egypt and went into the wilderness.

4, 5. *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.* That is, “went before me,” “lay in my pathway.” Did you ever have a window opened in your heart so that you could see all the ruin of your nature—all the possibilities of evil that lay asleep within your soul? Did you ever feel, as you gazed upon that sight, as if you were looking over the edge of the bottomless Pit? Ah, then, you have been in the condition which the Psalmist here describes—“The sorrows of Hell compassed me about: the snares of death lay in my pathway.”

6. *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.* That is a wonderful expression, “My cry came before Him, even into His ears.” That is, of course, speaking after the manner of men—and we cannot speak in any other manner. God appeared to hear David’s cry as you and I hear a thing when we say, “It seemed to ring in my ears, I could not get rid of the sound of it.” What happened then?

7. *Then the earth shook and trembled; the foundations also of the hills moved and were shaken, because He was angry.* The Lord was angry with those who had made His child cry, as a father is angry with one who injures a beloved child of his, or as a mother is angry with one who puts her babe to pain. The Lord made the earth to tremble because He was angry at the oppressors of His servant.

8. *There went up a smoke out of His nostrils, and fire out of His mouth devoured: coals were kindled by it.* That is David's graphic and striking representation of the indignation of God on his behalf.

9. *He bowed the heavens also, and came down: and darkness was under His feet.* This is a wonderful description of the interposition of God on behalf of His people. The scene referred to by David is probably the destruction of the Egyptians at the Red Sea, and the deliverance of the children of Israel from their cruel enemies.

10. *And He rode upon a cherub, and did fly: yes, He did fly upon the wings of the wind.* So swift is prayer to reach the heart of God—and so swift is God to come to the help of His people!

11, 12. *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.* For all the dread artillery of Heaven shall be used for the defense of the faithful. God will hold nothing in reserve when His people are in danger.

13. *The LORD also thundered in the heavens, and the Highest gave His voice; hail stones and coals of fire.* What made God speak in those terrible tones? It was the faint and feeble cry of His poor servant down below. Can you and I make thunder? Yes, we can. If we can thunder at the gates of Heaven by prayer, God will thunder in the heavens in His Omnipotence! He will quickly respond to His children's cries. The first Christians who were employed in the Roman armies were called the thundering legion, because, it was said, once upon a time when they prayed, God sent a thunders-torm to destroy their enemies and, truly, a living Church of God that is full of prayer, may be called a thundering legion!

14. *Yes, He sent out His arrows, and scattered them; and He shot out lightning, and discomfited them.* What a wonderful picture this is—as if the Eternal had taken down His bow and aimed His shafts of lightning against the foes of His people!

15. *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.* At the Red Sea, Moses sang, "You did blow with Your wind, the sea covered them: they sank as lead in the mighty waters." But here, David does not represent God as sending forth a great wind, but as if, in His eagerness to help His servant, His very nostrils gave forth such a mighty blast as made the sea to divide, so that "the channels of the waters were seen." It is one of the most vivid pieces of poetry that ever fell from the pen of Inspired or uninspired man!

16, 17. *He sent from above, He took me, He drew me out of many waters. He delivered me from my strong enemy, and from them who hated me: for they were too strong for me.* When a child of God is in such a condition that he cannot help himself and he cries to his Heavenly Father, then the Lord always helps him. Our proverb says, "God helps those that help themselves." That is true, but there is something better than that. God helps those who *cannot* help themselves. That proves the greatness of His mercy, which endures forever. David said of his foes, "They were too strong for me," but they were not too strong for the Lord to overthrow!

18. *They prevented me in the day of my calamity: but the LORD was my stay.* "I leaned on Him. I rested on Him. I relied on Him and so I was made peaceful, calm, quiet, confident in Him—"The Lord was my stay."

19. *He brought me forth also into a large place; He delivered me, because He delighted in me.* What do you say to that, Believer? That God delights in you—that He finds something in you, which He has put there by His Grace, which is the object of His benevolence? Is it not your likeness to His dear Son, whom He loves so much, that wherever He sees His image, there His love flows forth?

20. *The LORD rewarded me according to my righteousness; according to the cleanness of my hands has He recompensed me.* For when God gives a man holiness, He will give him happiness! Holiness and happiness usually go together and if, for a while, they seem to be divided, they shall soon be united again.

21-24. *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. The godly never see any merit in their own works, they never have any trust in them for salvation, yet they cannot help observing, with pleasure, that when God enables them to walk uprightly, He sooner or later delivers them. If you come into any trouble because you fear God and serve Him, you will come out of it again. Yes, and come out of it like the three holy children came out of the furnace—with not so much as the smell of fire remaining upon you.

25, 26. *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 obstinate You will show Yourself obstinate.* If a man walks in an obstinate way, and opposes God, he will soon find that God treats him in a similar fashion. Sinners shall surely smart for their sin. Rebels shall yet sing another tune, however loudly they may boast today and scoff at God and His people.

27. *For You will save the afflicted people.* There is comfort there for any of you who are His people, and who are under His afflicting hand.

27. *But will bring down high looks.* Pride enflames the indignation of Jehovah—it is to the humble that He has regard.

28. *For You will light my candle: the LORD my God will enlighten my darkness.* Plead that promise if you are in the dark at this moment. If you are God's child, He will bring you out into the light before long.

29. *For by You I have run through a troop; and by my God have I leaped over a wall.* God's warriors have to fight in various ways and in all they must show themselves like men, and ascribe all their triumphs to their Lord.

30. *As for God, His way is perfect: the word of the LORD is tried: He is a buckler to all those that trust in Him.* No armor of proof or shield of brass so well secures the warrior as the Covenant God of Israel protects His warring people. He is Himself the buckler of trustful ones.

31. *For who is God save the LORD? Or who is a rock save our God?* Where can lasting hopes be fixed? Where can the soul find rest? Where is stability to be found? Where is strength to be discovered? Surely, in the Lord Jehovah alone can we find rest and refuge!

32- 36. *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.* I think you will see that David has given us, in this Psalm, the reasons why he began by saying, "I will love You, O Lord, my strength."

—Adapted from *The C. H. Spurgeon Collection*, Version 1.0, Ages Software, 1.800.297.4307

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