

Exposition on Psalm 18

by St. Augustine

This sermon explores the theme of deliverance through Christ, using the Psalm as a song of deliverance, praise, trust, and victory.

Scripture: Psalm 17:7

Topics: "Christ And Church", "Spiritual Warfare"

Description

St. Augustine preaches on the Psalm of David, highlighting the relationship between Christ and the Church as the Head and the Body. The sermon emphasizes the love, strength, and deliverance provided by the Lord to His people, showcasing the victory over enemies and the assurance of God's protection. Through poetic imagery, St. Augustine delves into the spiritual battles faced by believers, the divine intervention in times of trouble, and the ultimate reward for righteousness and faithfulness.

Transcript

To the end, for the servant of the Lord, David himself.

1. That is, for the strong of hand, Christ in His Manhood. The words of this song which he spoke to the Lord on the day when the Lord delivered him out of the hands of his enemies, and of the hand of Saul; and he said, On the day when the Lord delivered him out of the hands of his enemies and of the hand of Saul: namely, the king of the Jews, whom they had demanded for themselves. 1 Samuel 8:5 For as David is said to be by interpretation, strong of hand; so Saul is said to be demanding. Now it is well known, how that People demanded for themselves a king, and received him for their king, not according to the will of God, but according to their own will.

2. Christ, then, and the Church, that is, whole Christ, the Head and the Body, says here, I will love You, O Lord, My strength Psalm 17:1. I will love You, O Lord, by whom I am strong.

3. O Lord, My stay, and My refuge, and My deliverer Psalm 17:2. O Lord, who hast stayed Me, because I sought refuge with You: and I sought refuge, because You have delivered Me. My God is My helper; and I will hope in Him. My God, who hast first afforded me the help of Your call, that I might be able to hope in You. My defender, and the horn of My salvation, and My redeemer. My defender, because I have not leant upon Myself, lifting up as it were the horn of pride against You; but have found You a horn indeed, that is, the sure height of salvation: and that I might find it, You redeemed Me.

4. With praise will I call upon the Lord, and I shall be safe from Mine enemies Psalm 17:3. Seeking not My own but the Lord's glory, I will call upon Him, and there shall be no means whereby the errors of ungodliness can hurt Me.

5. The pains of death, that is, of the flesh, have compassed Me about. And the overflowings of ungodliness have troubled Me Psalm 17:4. Ungodly troubles stirred up for a time, like torrents of rain which will soon subside, have come on to trouble Me.

6. The pains of hell compassed Me about Psalm 17:5. Among those that compassed Me about to destroy Me, were pains of envy, which work death, and lead on to the hell of sin. The snares of death prevented Me. They prevented Me, so that they wished to hurt Me first, which shall afterwards be recompensed unto them. Now they seize unto destruction such men as they have evilly persuaded by the boast of righteousness: in the name but not in the reality of which they glory against the Gentiles.

7. And in Mine oppression I called upon the Lord, and cried unto My God. And He heard My voice from His holy temple Psalm 17:6. He heard from My heart, wherein He dwells, My voice. And My cry in His sight entered into His ears; and My cry, which I utter, not in the ears of men, but inwardly before Him Himself, entered into His ears.

8. And the earth was moved and trembled Psalm 17:7. When the Son of Man was thus glorified, sinners were moved and trembled. And the foundations of the mountains were troubled. And the hopes of the proud, which were in this life, were troubled. And were moved, for God was angry with them. That is, that the hope of temporal goods might have now no more establishment in the hearts of men.

9. There went up smoke in His wrath Psalm 17:8. The tearful supplication of penitents went up, when they came to know God's threatenings against the ungodly. And fire burns from His face. And the ardour of love after repentance burns by the knowledge of Him. Coals were kindled from Him. They, who were already dead, abandoned by the fire of good desire and the light of righteousness, and who remained in coldness and darkness, re-enkindled and enlightened, have come to life again.

10. And He bowed the heaven, and came down Psalm 17:9. And He humbled the just One, that He might descend to men's infirmity. And darkness under His feet. And the ungodly, who savour of things earthly, in the darkness of their own malice, knew not Him: for the earth under His feet is as it were His footstool.

11. And He mounted above the cherubim, and did fly Psalm 17:10. And He was exalted above the fullness of knowledge, that no man should come to Him but by love: for love is the fulfilling of the law. Romans 13:10 And full soon He showed to His lovers that He is incomprehensible, lest they should suppose that He is comprehended by corporeal imaginations. He flew above the wings of the winds. But that swiftness, whereby He showed Himself to be incomprehensible, is above the powers of souls, whereon as upon wings they raise themselves from earthly fears into the air of liberty.

12. And has made darkness His hiding place Psalm 17:11. And has settled the obscurity of the Sacraments, and the hidden hope in the heart of believers, where He may lie hidden, and not abandon them. In this darkness too, wherein we yet walk by faith, and not by sight, 2 Corinthians 5:7 as long as we hope for what we see not, and with patience wait for it. Romans 8:25 Round about Him is His tabernacle. Yet they that believe Him turn to Him and encircle Him; for that He is in the midst of them, since He is equally the friend of all, in whom as in a tabernacle He at this time dwells. Dark water in clouds of air. Nor let any one on this account, if he understand the Scripture, imagine that he is already in that light, which

will be when we shall have come out of faith into sight: for in the prophets and in all the preachers of the word of God there is obscure teaching.

13. In respect of the brightness in His sight Psalm 17:12: in comparison with the brightness, which is in the sight of His manifestation. His clouds have passed over. The preachers of His word are not now bounded by the confines of Judæa, but have passed over to the Gentiles. Hail and coals of fire. Reproofs are figured, whereby, as by hail, the hard hearts are bruised: but if a cultivated and genial soil, that is, a godly mind, receive them, the hail's hardness dissolves into water, that is, the terror of the lightning-charged, and as it were frozen, reproof dissolves into satisfying doctrine; and hearts kindled by the fire of love revive. All these things in His clouds have passed over to the Gentiles.

14. And the Lord has thundered from heaven Psalm 17:13. And in confidence of the Gospel the Lord has sounded forth from the heart of the just One. And the Highest gave His voice; that we might entertain it, and in the depth of human things, might hear things heavenly.

15. And He sent out His arrows, and scattered them Psalm 17:14. And He sent out Evangelists traversing straight paths on the wings of strength, not in their own power, but His by whom they were sent. And He scattered them, to whom they were sent, that to some of them they should be the savour of life unto life, to others the savour of death unto death. 2 Corinthians 2:16 And He multiplied lightnings, and troubled them. And He multiplied miracles, and troubled them.

16. And the fountains of water were seen. And the fountains of water springing up into everlasting life, John 4:14 which were made in the preachers, were seen. And the foundations of the round world were revealed Psalm 17:15. And the Prophets, who were not understood, and upon whom was to be built the world of believers in the Lord, were revealed. At Your chiding, O Lord: crying out, The kingdom of God has come near unto you. Luke 10:9 At the blasting of the breath of Your displeasure; saying, Unless you repent, you shall all likewise perish. Luke 13:5

17. He has sent down from on high, and has fetched Me Psalm 17:16: by calling out of the Gentiles for an inheritance a glorious Church, not having spot, or wrinkle. Ephesians 5:27 He has taken Me out of the multitude of waters. He has taken Me out of the multitude of peoples.

18. He has delivered Me from My strongest enemies Psalm 17:17. He has delivered Me from Mine enemies, who prevailed to the afflicting and overturning of this temporal life of Mine. And from them which hate Me; for they are too strong for Me: as long as I am under them knowing not God.

19. They have prevented Me in the day of My affliction Psalm 17:18. They have first injured Me, in the time when I am bearing a mortal and toilsome body. And the Lord has become My stay. And since the stay of earthly pleasure was disturbed and torn up by the bitterness of misery, the Lord has become My stay.

20. And has brought Me forth into a broad place Psalm 17:19. And since I was enduring the straits of the flesh, He brought Me forth into the spiritual breadth of faith. He has delivered Me, because He desired Me. Before that I desired Him, He delivered Me from My most powerful enemies (who were envious of Me when I once desired Him), and from them that hated Me, because I do desire Him.

21. And the Lord shall reward Me according to My righteousness Psalm 17:20. And the Lord shall reward Me according to the righteousness of My good will, who first showed mercy, before that I had the good will. And according to the cleanness of My hands He will recompense Me. And according to the cleanness

of My deeds He will recompense Me, who has given Me to do well by bringing Me forth into the broad place of faith.

22. Because I have kept the ways of the Lord Psalm 17:21. That the breadth of good works, that are by faith, and the long-suffering of perseverance should follow after.

23. Nor have I walked impiously apart from My God. For all His judgments are in My sight Psalm 17:22. For with persevering contemplation I weigh all His judgments, that is, the rewards of the righteous, and the punishments of the ungodly, and the scourges of such as are to be chastened, and the trials of such as are to be proved. And I have not cast out His righteousness from Me: as they do that faint under their burden of them, and return to their own vomit.

24. And I shall be undefiled with Him, and I shall keep Myself from Mine iniquity Psalm 17:23.

25. And the Lord shall reward Me according to My righteousness Psalm 17:24. Accordingly not only for the breadth of faith, which works by love; but also for the length of perseverance, will the Lord reward Me according to My righteousness. And according to the cleanness of My hands in the sight of His eyes. Not as men see, but in the sight of His eyes. For the things that are seen are temporal; but the things that are not seen are eternal: 2 Corinthians 4:18 whereto the height of hope appertains.

26. With the holy You shall be holy Psalm 17:25. There is a hidden depth also, wherein You are known to be holy with the holy, for that You make holy. And with the harmless You shall be harmless. For Thou harmest no man, but each one is bound by the bands of his own sins. Proverbs 5:22

27. And with the chosen You shall be chosen. Psalm 17:26. And by him whom You choose, You are chosen. And with the froward You shall be froward. And with the froward Thou seemest froward: for they say, The way of the Lord is not right: Ezekiel 18:25 and their way is not right.

28. For You will make whole the humble people Psalm 17:27. Now this seems froward to the froward, that You will make whole those who confess their sins. And You will humble the eyes of the proud. But them that are ignorant of God's righteousness, and seek to establish their own, Romans 10:3 You will humble.

29. For you will light My candle, O Lord Psalm 17:28. For our light is not from ourselves; but You will light my candle, O Lord. O my God, You will enlighten my darkness. For we through our sins are darkness; but You, O my God, wilt enlighten my darkness.

30. For by You shall I be delivered from temptation Psalm 17:29. For not by myself, but by You, shall I be delivered from temptation. And in my God shall I leap over the wall. And not in myself, but in my God shall I leap over the wall, which sin has raised between men and the heavenly Jerusalem.

31. My God, His way is undefiled Psalm 17:30. My God comes not unto men, except they shall have purified the way of faith, whereby He may come to them; for that His way is undefiled. The words of the Lord have been proved by fire. The words of the Lord are tried by the fire of tribulation. He is the Protector of them that hope in Him. And all that hope not in themselves, but in Him, are not consumed by that same tribulation. For hope follows faith.

32. For who is God, but the Lord? Psalm 17:31 whom we serve. And who God, but our God? And who is God, but the Lord? Whom after good service we sons shall possess as the hoped-for inheritance.

33. God, who has girded me with strength Psalm 17:32. God, who has girded me that I might be strong, lest the loosely flowing folds of desire hinder my deeds and steps. And has made my way undefiled. And has made the way of love, whereby I may come to Him, undefiled, as the way of faith is undefiled, whereby He comes to me.

34. Who has made my feet perfect like harts' feet Psalm 17:33. Who has made my love perfect to surmount the thorny and dark entanglements of this world. And will set me up on high. And will fix my aim on the heavenly habitation, that I may be filled with all the fullness of God. Ephesians 3:19

35. Who teaches my hands for battle Psalm 17:34. Who teaches me to work for the overthrow of mine enemies, who strive to shut the kingdom of heaven against us. And You have made mine arms as a bow of steel. And You have made my earnest striving after good works unwearied.

36. And You have given me the defence of my salvation, and Your right hand has held me up Psalm 17:35. And the favour of Your grace has held me up. And Your discipline has directed me to the end. And Your correction, not suffering me to wander from the way, has directed me that whatsoever I do, I refer to that end, whereby I may cleave to You. And this Your discipline, it shall teach me. And that same correction of Yours shall teach me to attain to that, whereunto it has directed me.

37. You have enlarged my steps under me Psalm 17:36. Nor shall the straits of the flesh hinder me; for You have enlarged my love, working in gladness even with these mortal things and members which are under me. And my footsteps have not been weakened. And either my goings, or the marks which I have imprinted for the imitation of those that follow, have not been weakened.

38. I will follow up mine enemies, and seize them Psalm 17:37. I will follow up my carnal affections, and will not be seized by them, but will seize them, so that they may be consumed. And I will not turn, till they fail. And from this purpose I will not turn myself to rest, till they fail who make a tumult about me.

39. I will break them, and they shall not be able to stand Psalm 17:38: and they shall not hold out against me. They shall fall under my feet. When they are cast down, I will place before me the loves whereby I walk for evermore.

40. And You have girded me with strength to the war Psalm 17:39. And the loose desires of my flesh have You bound up with strength, that in such a fight I may not be encumbered. You have supplanted under me them that rose up against me. You have caused them to be deceived, who followed upon me, that they should be brought under me, who desired to be over me.

41. And you have given mine enemies the back to me Psalm 17:40. And you have turned mine enemies, and hast made them to be a back to me, that is, to follow me. And You have destroyed them that hate me. But such other of them as have persisted in hatred, You have destroyed.

42. They have cried out, and there was none to save them Psalm 17:41. For who can save them, whom You would not save? To the Lord, and He did not hear them. Nor did they cry out to any chance one, but to the Lord: and He did not judge them worthy of being heard, who depart not from their wickedness.

43. And I will beat them as small as dust before the face of the wind Psalm 17:42. And I will beat them small; for dry they are, receiving not the shower of God's mercy; that borne aloft and puffed up with pride they may be hurried along from firm and unshaken hope, and as it were from the earth's solidity and stability. As the clay of the streets I will destroy them. In their wanton and loose course along the broad

ways of perdition, which many walk, will I destroy them.

44. You will deliver Me from the contradictions of the people Psalm 17:43. You will deliver Me from the contradictions of them who said, If we send Him away, all the world will go after Him.

45. You shall make Me the head of the Gentiles. A people whom I have not known have served Me. The people of the Gentiles, whom in bodily presence I have not visited, have served Me. At the hearing of the ear they have obeyed Me Psalm 17:44. They have not seen Me with the eye: but, receiving my preachers, at the hearing of the ear they have obeyed Me.

46. The strange children have lied unto Me. Children, not to be called Mine, but rather strange children, to whom it is rightly said, You are of your father the devil, John 8:44 have lied unto Me. The strange children have waxen old Psalm 17:45. The strange children, to whom for their renovation I brought the new Testament, have remained in the old man. And they have halted from their own paths. And like those that are weak in one foot, for holding the old they have rejected the new Testament, they have become halt, even in their old Law, rather following their own traditions, than God's. For they brought frivolous charges of unwashed hands, Matthew 15:2 because such were the paths, which themselves had made and worn by long use, in wandering from the ways of God's commands.

47. The Lord lives, and blessed be my God. But to be carnally minded is death: Romans 8:6 for the Lord lives, and blessed be my God. And let the God of my salvation be exalted Psalm 17:46. And let me not think after an earthly fashion of the God of my salvation; nor look from Him for this earthly salvation, but that on high.

48. O God, who givest Me vengeance, and subduest the people under Me Psalm 17:47. O God, who avengest Me by subduing the people under Me. My Deliverer from My angry enemies: the Jews crying out, Crucify Him, Crucify Him. John 19:6

49. From them that rise up against Me You will exalt Me Psalm 17:48. From the Jews that rise up against Me in My passion, You will exalt Me in My resurrection. From the unjust man You will deliver Me. From their unjust rule You will deliver Me.

50. For this cause will I confess to You among the Gentiles, O Lord Psalm 17:49. For this cause shall the Gentiles confess to You through Me, O Lord. And I will sing unto Your Name. And You shall be more widely known by My good deeds.

51. Magnifying the salvation of His King Psalm 17:50. God, who magnifies, so as to make wonderful, the salvation, which His Son gives to believers. And showing mercy to His Christ: God, who shows mercy to His Christ: To David and to His seed for evermore: to the Deliverer Himself strong of hand, who has overcome this world; and to them whom, as believers in the Gospel, He has begotten for evermore. What things soever are spoken in this Psalm which cannot apply to the Lord Himself personally, that is to the Head of the Church, must be referred to the Church. For whole Christ speaks here, in whom are all His members.

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