

Confessions - Book IV - Chapter XI

by St. Augustine

Transcript

16. Be not foolish, O my soul, and do not let the tumult of your vanity deafen the ear of your heart. Be attentive. The Word itself calls you to return, and with him is a place of unperturbed rest, where love is not forsaken unless it first forsakes. Behold, these things pass away that others may come to be in their place. Thus even this lowest level of unity^[102] may be made complete in all its parts. "But do I ever pass away?" asks the Word of God. Fix your habitation in him. O my soul, commit whatsoever you have to him. For at long last you are now becoming tired of deceit. Commit to truth whatever you have received from the truth, and you will lose nothing. What is decayed will flourish again; your diseases will be healed; your perishable parts shall be reshaped and renovated, and made whole again in you. And these perishable things will not carry you with them down to where they go when they perish, but shall stand and abide, and you with them, before God, who abides and continues forever.

17. Why then, my perverse soul, do you go on following your flesh? Instead, let it be converted so as to follow you. Whatever you feel through it is but partial. You do not know the whole, of which sensations are but parts; and yet the parts delight you. But if my physical senses had been able to comprehend the whole--and had not as a part of their punishment received only a portion of the whole as their own province--you would then desire that whatever exists in the present time should also pass away so that the whole might please you more. For what we speak, you also hear through physical sensation, and yet you would not wish that the syllables should remain. Instead, you wish them to fly past so that others may follow them, and the whole be heard. Thus it is always that when any single thing is composed of many parts which do not coexist simultaneously, the whole gives more delight than the parts could ever do perceived separately. But far better than all this is He who made it all. He is our God and he does not pass away, for there is nothing to take his place.

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