

Confessions - Book IV - Chapter Xii

by St. Augustine

Transcript

18. If physical objects please you, praise God for them, but turn back your love to their Creator, lest, in those things which please you, you displease him. If souls please you, let them be loved in God; for in themselves they are mutable, but in him firmly established--without him they would simply cease to exist. In him, then, let them be loved; and bring along to him with yourself as many souls as you can, and say to them: "Let us love him, for he himself created all these, and he is not far away from them. For he did not create them, and then go away. They are of him and in him. Behold, there he is, wherever truth is known. He is within the inmost heart, yet the heart has wandered away from him. Return to your heart, O you transgressors, and hold fast to him who made you. Stand with him and you shall stand fast. Rest in him and you shall be at rest. Where do you go along these rugged paths? Where are you going? The good that you love is from him, and insofar as it is also for him, it is both good and pleasant. But it will rightly be turned to bitterness if whatever comes from him is not rightly loved and if he is deserted for the love of the creature. Why then will you wander farther and farther in these difficult and toilsome ways? There is no rest where you seek it. Seek what you seek; but remember that it is not where you seek it. You seek for a blessed life in the land of death. It is not there. For how can there be a blessed life where life itself is not?"

19. But our very Life came down to earth and bore our death, and slew it with the very abundance of his own life. And, thundering, he called us to return to him into that secret place from which he came forth to us--coming first into the virginal womb, where the human creature, our mortal flesh, was joined to him that it might not be forever mortal--and came "as a bridegroom coming out his chamber, rejoicing as a strong man to run a race." [103] For he did not delay, but ran through the world, crying out by words, deeds, death, life, descent, ascension--crying aloud to us to return to him. And he departed from our sight that we might return to our hearts and find him there. For he left us, and behold, he is here. He could not be with us long, yet he did not leave us. He went back to the place that he had never left, for "the world was made by him." [104] In this world he was, and into this world he came, to save sinners. To him my soul confesses, and he heals it, because it had sinned against him. O sons of men, how long will you be so slow of heart? Even now after Life itself has come down to you, will you not ascend and live? But where will you climb if you are already on a pinnacle and have set your mouth against the heavens? First come down that you may climb up, climb up to God. For you have fallen by trying to climb against him. Tell this to the souls you love that they may weep in the valley of tears, and so bring them along with you to God, because it is by his spirit that you speak thus to them, if, as you speak, you burn with the fire of love.

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