

Confessions - Book Viii - Chapter I

by St. Augustine

Transcript

1. O my God, let me remember with gratitude and confess to thee thy mercies toward me. Let my bones be bathed in thy love, and let them say: \"Lord, who is like unto thee?[231] Thou hast broken my bonds in sunder, I will offer unto thee the sacrifice of thanksgiving.\"[232] And how thou didst break them I will declare, and all who worship thee shall say, when they hear these things: \"Blessed be the Lord in heaven and earth, great and wonderful is his name.\"[233]

Thy words had stuck fast in my breast, and I was hedged round about by thee on every side. Of thy eternal life I was now certain, although I had seen it \"through a glass darkly.\"[234] And I had been relieved of all doubt that there is an incorruptible substance and that it is the source of every other substance. Nor did I any longer crave greater certainty about thee, but rather greater steadfastness in thee.

But as for my temporal life, everything was uncertain, and my heart had to be purged of the old leaven. \"The Way\"--the Saviour himself--pleased me well, but as yet I was reluctant to pass through the strait gate.

And thou didst put it into my mind, and it seemed good in my own sight, to go to Simplicianus, who appeared to me a faithful servant of thine, and thy grace shone forth in him. I had also been told that from his youth up he had lived in entire devotion to thee. He was already an old man, and because of his great age, which he had passed in such a zealous discipleship in thy way, he appeared to me likely to have gained much wisdom--and, indeed, he had. From all his experience, I desired him to tell me--setting before him all my agitations--which would be the most fitting way for one who felt as I did to walk in thy way.

2. For I saw the Church full; and one man was going this way and another that. Still, I could not be satisfied with the life I was living in the world. Now, indeed, my passions had ceased to excite me as of old with hopes of honor and wealth, and it was a grievous burden to go on in such servitude. For, compared with thy sweetness and the beauty of thy house--which I loved--those things delighted me no longer. But I was still tightly bound by the love of women; nor did the apostle forbid me to marry, although he exhorted me to something better, wishing earnestly that all men were as he himself was.

But I was weak and chose the easier way, and for this single reason my whole life was one of inner turbulence and listless indecision, because from so many influences I was compelled--even though unwilling--to agree to a married life which bound me hand and foot. I had heard from the mouth of Truth

that \"there are eunuchs who have made themselves eunuchs for the Kingdom of Heaven\"

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