

Confessions - Book X - Chapter Xxviii

by St. Augustine

Transcript

39. When I come to be united to thee with all my being, then there will be no more pain and toil for me, and my life shall be a real life, being wholly filled by thee. But since he whom thou fillest is the one thou liftest up, I am still a burden to myself because I am not yet filled by thee. Joys of sorrow contend with sorrows of joy, and on which side the victory lies I do not know.

Woe is me! Lord, have pity on me; my evil sorrows contend with my good joys, and on which side the victory lies I do not know. Woe is me! Lord, have pity on me. Woe is me! Behold, I do not hide my wounds. Thou art the Physician, I am the sick man; thou art merciful, I need mercy. Is not the life of man on earth an ordeal? Who is he that wishes for vexations and difficulties? Thou commandest them to be endured, not to be loved. For no man loves what he endures, though he may love to endure. Yet even if he rejoices to endure, he would prefer that there were nothing for him to endure. In adversity, I desire prosperity; in prosperity, I fear adversity. What middle place is there, then, between these two, where human life is not an ordeal? There is woe in the prosperity of this world; there is woe in the fear of misfortune; there is woe in the distortion of joy. There is woe in the adversities of this world--a second woe, and a third, from the desire of prosperity--because adversity itself is a hard thing to bear and makes shipwreck of endurance. Is not the life of man upon the earth an ordeal, and that without surcease?

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