

Confessions - Book XI - Chapter II

by St. Augustine

Transcript

2. But how long would it take for the voice of my pen to tell enough of thy exhortations and of all thy terrors and comforts and leadings by which thou didst bring me to preach thy Word and to administer thy sacraments to thy people? And even if I could do this sufficiently, the drops of time[410] are very precious to me and I have for a long time been burning with the desire to meditate on thy law, and to confess in thy presence my knowledge and ignorance of it--from the first streaks of thy light in my mind and the remaining darkness, until my weakness shall be swallowed up in thy strength. And I do not wish to see those hours drained into anything else which I can find free from the necessary care of the body, the exercise of the mind, and the service we owe to our fellow men--and what we give even if we do not owe it.

3. O Lord my God, hear my prayer and let thy mercy attend my longing. It does not burn for itself alone but longs as well to serve the cause of fraternal love. Thou seest in my heart that this is so. Let me offer the service of my mind and my tongue--and give me what I may in turn offer back to thee. For "I am needy and poor"; thou art rich to all who call upon thee--thou who, in thy freedom from care, carest for us. Trim away from my lips, inwardly and outwardly, all rashness and lying. Let thy Scriptures be my chaste delight. Let me not be deceived in them, nor deceive others from them. O Lord, hear and pity! O Lord my God, light of the blind, strength of the weak--and also the light of those who see and the strength of the strong--hearken to my soul and hear it crying from the depths.[411] Unless thy ears attend us even in the depths, where should we go? To whom should we cry?

"Thine is the day and the night is thine as well." [412] At thy bidding the moments fly by. Grant me in them, then, an interval for my meditations on the hidden things of thy law, nor close the door of thy law against us who knock. Thou hast not willed that the deep secrets of all those pages should have been written in vain. Those forests are not without their stags which keep retired within them, ranging and walking and feeding, lying down and ruminating.[413] Perfect me, O Lord, and reveal their secrets to me. Behold, thy voice is my joy; thy voice surpasses in abundance of delights. Give me what I love, for I do love it. And this too is thy gift. Abandon not thy gifts and despise not thy "grass" which thirsts for thee.[414] Let me confess to thee everything that I shall have found in thy books and "let me hear the voice of thy praise." [415] Let me drink from thee and "consider the wondrous things out of thy law" [416]--from the very beginning, when thou madest heaven and earth, and thenceforward to the everlasting reign of thy Holy City with thee.

4. O Lord, have mercy on me and hear my petition. For my prayer is not for earthly things, neither gold nor silver and precious stones, nor gorgeous apparel, nor honors and power, nor fleshly pleasures, nor of bodily necessities in this life of our pilgrimage: all of these things are \"added\" to those who seek thy Kingdom and thy righteousness.[417]

Observe, O God, from whence comes my desire. The unrighteous have told me of delights but not such as those in thy law, O Lord. Behold, this is the spring of my desire. See, O Father, look and see--and approve! Let it be pleasing in thy mercy\\

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