

Exposition on Psalm 102

by St. Augustine

The sermon reflects on the richness of Christ and the importance of recognizing one's own poverty in order to seek spiritual growth and healing.

Scripture: Exodus 3:6, Psalm 101:1, Isaiah 58:9, John 1:14, 1 Corinthians 15:28, 2 Corinthians 8:9, Galatians 3:29, Philippians 2:7, 2 Peter 3:5

Topics: "Eternal Nature", "Faithful Service"

Description

St. Augustine preaches about the eternal nature of God and the temporary nature of earthly things, emphasizing the need for faith and good works to dwell in the everlasting presence of God. He reflects on the perishable nature of the heavens and the enduring nature of God, encouraging believers to trust in God's unchanging nature. St. Augustine highlights the importance of serving God faithfully to ensure a place in His eternal kingdom, where the children of His servants, symbolizing good works, will dwell for ages.

Transcript

1. Behold, one poor man prays, and prays not in silence. We may therefore hear him, and see who he is: whether it be not perchance He, of whom the Apostle says, Though He was rich, yet for your sakes He became poor, that you through His poverty might be rich. 2 Corinthians 8:9 If it is He, then, how is He poor? For in what sense He is rich, who sees not? What then is richer than He, by whom riches were made, even those which are not true riches? For through Him we have even these riches, ability, memory, character, health of body, the senses, and the conformation of our limbs: for when these are safe, even the poor are rich. Through Him also are those greater riches, faith, piety, justice, charity, chastity, good conduct: for no man has these, except through Him who justifies the ungodly....Behold, how rich! In one so rich, how are we to recognise these words? I have eaten ashes as it were bread: and mingled my drink with weeping. Have these so great riches come to this? The former state is a very high one, this is a very lowly one....Yet still examine whether this poor man be He; since, The Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us. John 1:14 Reflect also upon these words: I am Your servant, and the Son of Your handmaid. Observe, this handmaid, chaste, a virgin, and a mother: for there He received our poverty, when He was clothed in the form of a servant, emptying Himself; lest you should dread His riches, and in your beggarly state should not dare approach Him. There, I say, He put on the form of a servant, there He was clothed with our poverty; there He made Himself poor, and us rich. We are now drawing near to understand these things of Him: nevertheless we may not as yet rashly pronounce....

2. Let him add poverty then to poverty: let Him transfigure unto Himself our humble body: let Him be our Head, we His limbs, let there be two in one flesh. Philippians 3:21 ...For He has deigned to hold even us as His limbs. The penitent also are among His limbs. For they are not shut out, nor separated from His Church: nor would He make the Church His spouse, unless by words like these: Repent ye, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand. Matthew 3:2 Let us then hear what the head and the body prays, the bridegroom and bride, Christ and the Church, both one Person; but the Word and the flesh are not both one thing; the Father and the Word are both one thing; Christ and the Church are both one Person, one perfect man in the form of His own fullness....Let us hear therefore Christ, poor within us and with us, and for our sakes. For the title itself indicates the poor one. Lastly, remember that I conjectured who that poor one was: let us hear His prayer, and recognise His Person; and mistake not, when you shall have heard anything that cannot apply to His Head; it was for this reason that I have prefaced as I have, that whatever you shall hear of this description, you may understand as sounding from the weakness of the body, and recognise the voice of the members in the head. The title is, A Prayer of the afflicted, when he was tormented, and poured out his prayer before the Lord. It is the same poor one who elsewhere says: From the ends of the earth will I call upon You, when my heart is in heaviness. He is afflicted because He is also Christ; who in the Prophet's words calls Himself both Bridegroom and Bride: He has bound on me the diadem as on a bridegroom, and as a bride has adorned me with an ornament. Isaiah 61:10 He called Himself Bridegroom, He called Himself Bride; wherefore this, unless Bridegroom applies to the Head, Bride to the body? They are one voice then, because they are one flesh. Let us hear, and recognise ourselves in these words; and if we see that we are without, let us labour to be there.

3. Hear my prayer, O Lord: and let my crying come unto You Psalm 101:1. Hear my prayer, O Lord, is the same as, Let my crying come unto You: the feeling of the suppliant is shown by the repetition. Turn not Your face away from me. When did God turn away His Face from His Son? When did the Father turn away His Face from Christ? But for the sake of the poverty of my members, Turn not away Your face from me: whatsoever day I am troubled, incline Your ear unto me Psalm 101:2....You are in trouble this day, I am in trouble; another is in trouble tomorrow, I am in trouble; after this generation other descendants, who succeed your descendants, are in trouble, I am in trouble; down to the end of the world, whoever are in trouble in My body, I am in trouble....Peter prayed, Paul prayed, the rest of the Apostles prayed; the faithful prayed in those times, the faithful prayed in the following times, the faithful prayed in the times of the Martyrs, the faithful pray in our times, the faithful will pray in the times of our descendants. Right soon: for I now ask that which You are willing to grant. I ask not earthly things, as an earthly man; but redeemed at last from my former captivity, I long for the kingdom of heaven; Hear me right soon: for it is only to such a longing that You have said, Even while You are speaking, I will say, Here I am. Isaiah 58:9 Wherefore do you call? In what tribulation? In what want? O poor one, before the gate of God all-rich, in what longing do you beg? From what destitution do you ask relief? From what want do you knock, that it may be opened unto you?

4. For my days are consumed away like smoke Psalm 101:3. O days! If days: for where day is heard of, light is understood. My days, my times; wherefore, like smoke, unless from the puffing up of pride?...See smoke, like pride, ascending, swelling, vanishing: deservedly therefore failing, and not steadfast. And my bones are scorched up as it were in an oven. Both my bones, and my strength, not without tribulation, not without burning. The bones of the body of Christ, the strength of His body, is it anywhere greater than in the Holy Apostles? And yet see that the bones are scorched. Who is offended, and I burn not? 2 Corinthians 11:29 They are brave, faithful, able interpreters and preachers of the word, living as they speak, speaking as they hear; they are clearly brave, yet all who suffer offenses, are an oven to them. For

there is love there, and more so in the bones. The bones are within all the flesh, and support all the flesh. But if any man suffer any offense, and endanger his soul; the bone is scorched in proportion as it loves....

5. Look back to Adam, whence the human race sprung. For how but from him was misery propagated? Whence but from him is this hereditary poverty? Let him then, who in his own body was at one time in despair, now that he is set in Christ's body, say with hope, My heart is smitten down, and withered like grass Psalm 101:4. Deservedly, since all flesh is grass. Isaiah 40:6 But how did this happen unto you? Since I have forgotten to eat my bread. For God had given His commandment for bread. For what is the bread of the soul? The serpent suggesting, and the woman transgressing, he touched the forbidden fruit, Genesis 3:6 he forgot the commandment: his heart was smitten as it deserved, and withered like grass, since he forgot to eat his bread. Having forgotten to eat bread, he drinks poison: his heart is smitten, and withered like grass....Now eat that bread which you had forgotten. But this very Bread has come, in whose body you may remember the voice of your forgetfulness, and cry out in your poverty, so that you may receive riches. Now eat: for you are in His body, who says, I am the living bread which came down from heaven. John 6:41 You had forgotten to eat your bread; but after His crucifixion, all the ends of the earth shall be reminded, and be converted unto the Lord. After forgetfulness, let remembrance come, let bread be eaten from heaven, that we may live; not manna, as they did eat, and died; John 6:49 that bread, of which it is said, Blessed are they who hunger and thirst after righteousness. Matthew 5:6

6. For the voice of my groaning, the bones cleave unto my flesh Psalm 101:5. For many groan, and I also groan; even for this I groan, because they groan for a wrong cause. That man has lost a piece of money, he groans: he has lost faith, he groans not: I weigh the money and the faith, and I find more cause for groaning for him who groans not as he ought, or does not groan at all. He commits fraud, and rejoices. With what gain, with what loss? He has gained money, he has lost righteousness. For the latter reason, he who knows how to groan, groans; he who is near the head, who righteously clings to Christ's body, groans for this reason. But the carnal do not groan for this reason, and they cause themselves to be groaned for, because they do not groan for this reason; nor can we despise them, whether they groan not at all, or groan for the wrong cause. For we wish to correct them, we wish to amend them, we wish to reform them, and when we cannot, we groan; and when we groan, we are not separated from them....

7. I have become like a pelican in the wilderness, and like an owl among ruined walls Psalm 101:6. Behold three birds and three places: the pelican, the owl, and the sparrow; and the three places are severally, the wilderness, the ruined walls, and the house-top. The pelican in the wilderness, the owl in the ruined walls, and the sparrow in the house-top. In the first place we must explain, what the pelican signifies: since it is born in a region which makes it unknown to us. It is born in lonely spots, especially those of the river Nile in Egypt. Whatever kind of bird it is, let us consider what the Psalm intended to say of it. It dwells, it says, in the wilderness. Why enquire of its form, its limbs, its voice, its habits? As far as the Psalm tells you, it is a bird that dwells in solitude. The owl is a bird that loves night. *Parietin*¹, or ruins, as we call them, are walls standing without roof, without inhabitants, these are the habitation of the owl. And then as to the house-top and the sparrows, you are familiar with them. I find, therefore, some one of Christ's body, a preacher of the word, sympathizing with the weak, seeking the gains of Christ, mindful of his Lord to come. Matthew 25:26 Let us see these three things from the office of His steward. Hath such a man come among those who are not Christians? He is a pelican in the wilderness. Hath he come among those who were Christians, and have relapsed? He is an owl in the ruined walls; for he forsakes not even the darkness of those who dwell in night, he wishes to gain even these. Hath he come among such as are Christians dwelling in a house, not as if they believed not, or as if they had let go what they had believed, but walking

lukewarmly in what they believe? The sparrow cries unto them, not in the wilderness, because they are Christians; nor in the ruined walls, because they have not relapsed; but because they are within the roof; under the roof rather, because they are under the flesh. The sparrow above the flesh cries out, hushes not up the commandments of God, nor becomes carnal, so that he be subject to the roof. What ye hear in the ear, that preach ye on the housetops. Matthew 10:27 There are three birds and three places; and one man may represent the three birds, and three men may represent severally the three birds; and the three sorts of places, are three classes of men: yet the wilderness, the ruined walls, and the house-top, are but three classes of men.

8. ...Let us not pass over what is said, or even read, of this bird, that is, the pelican; not rashly asserting anything, but yet not passing over what has been left to be read and uttered by those who have written it. Do ye so hear, that if it be true, it may agree; if false, it may not hold. These birds are said to slay their young with blows of their beaks, and for three days to mourn them when slain by themselves in the nest: after which they say the mother wounds herself deeply, and pours forth her blood over her young, bathed in which they recover life. This may be true, it may be false: yet if it be true, see how it agrees with Him, who gave us life by His blood. It agrees with Him in that the mother's flesh recalls to life her young with her blood; it agrees well. For He calls Himself a hen brooding over her young. Matthew 23:37 ...If, then, it be so truly, this bird does closely resemble the flesh of Christ, by whose blood we have been called to life. But how may it agree with Christ, that the bird herself slays her own young? Does not this agree with it? I will slay, and I will make alive: I will wound, and I will heal. Deuteronomy 32:39 Would the persecutor Saul Acts 9:4 have died, unless he were wounded from heaven; or would the preacher be raised up, unless by life given him from His blood? But let those who have written on the subject see to this; we ought not to allow our understanding of it to rest upon doubtful ground. Let us rather recognise this bird in the wilderness; as the Psalm expresses it, A pelican in the solitude. I suppose that Christ born of a Virgin is here meant. He was born in loneliness, because He alone was thus born. After the nativity, we come to His Passion....Born in the wilderness, because alone so born; suffering in the darkness of the Jews as it were in night, in their sin, as it were in ruins: what next? I have watched: and have become even as it were a sparrow, that sits alone upon the house-top Psalm 101:7. You had then slept amid the ruins, and had said, I laid me down, and slept. What means, I slept? Because I chose, I slept: I slept for love of night: but, I rose again, follows. Therefore I watched, is here said. But after He watched, what did He? He ascended into heaven, He became as a sparrow by flying; that is, by ascending; alone on the house-top; that is, in heaven. He is therefore as the pelican by birth, as the owl by dying, as the sparrow by ascending again: there in the wilderness, as one alone; here in the ruined walls, as one slain by those who could not stand in the building; and here again watching and flying for our sakes alone on the house-top, He there intercedes in our behalf. Romans 8:34 For our Head is as the sparrow, His body as the turtle-dove. For the sparrow has found her an house. What house? In heaven, where He does mediate for us. And the turtle-dove a nest, the Church of God has found a nest from the wood of His Cross, where she may lay her young, her children.

9. Mine enemies revile me all day, and they that praised me are sworn together against me Psalm 101:8. With their mouth they praised, in their heart they were laying snares for me. Hear their praise: Master, we know that You are true, and teachest the way of God in truth, neither carest Thou for any man. Is it lawful to give tribute unto Cæsar, or not? Matthew 22:16-17 And whence this evil repute, except because I came to make sinners my members, that by repentance they may be in my body? Thence is all the calumny, thence the persecution. Why eats your Master with publicans and sinners? They that be whole need not a physician, but they that be sick. Matthew 9:11-12 Would that you were aware of your sickness, that you

might seek a physician; ye would not slay Him, and through your infatuated pride perish in a false health.

10. I have eaten ashes as it were bread: and mingled my drink with weeping Psalm 101:9. Because He chose to have among His members these kinds of men, that they should be healed and set free, thence is the evil repute. Now at this day what is the character of Pagan calumny against us? What, brethren, do ye conceive they tell us? You corrupt discipline, and pervert the morality of the human race. Why do you attack us; say why? What have we done? By giving, he replies, to men room for repentance, by promising impunity for all sins: for this reason men do evil deeds, careless of consequences, because everything is pardoned them, when they are converted....And what is to become of you, miserable man, if there shall be no harbour of impunity? If there is only licence for sinning, and no pardon for sins, where will you be, whither will you go? Surely even for you did it happen, that that afflicted one ate ashes as it were bread, and mingled His drink with weeping. Does not such a feast now please you? But nevertheless, he replies, men add to their sins under the hope of pardon. Nay, but they would add to them if they despaired of pardon. Do you not observe in what licentious cruelty gladiators live? Whence this, except because, as destined for the sword and sacrifice, they choose to sate their lust, before they pour forth their blood? Would you not also thus address yourself? I am already a sinner, already an unjust man, one already doomed to damnation, hope of pardon there is none: why should I not do whatever pleases me, although it be not lawful? Why not fulfil, as far as I can, any longings I may have, if, after these, nothing but torments only be in store? Would you not thus speak unto yourself, and from this very despair become still worse? Rather than this, then, He who promises forgiveness, does correct you, saying, As I live, says the Lord, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked; but that the wicked turn from his way and live. Ezekiel 13:11 ...For in order that men might not live the worse from despair, He promised a harbour of forgiveness; again, that they might not live the worse from hope of pardon, He made the day of death uncertain: fixing both with the utmost providence, both as a refuge for the returning, and a terror to the loitering. Eat ashes as bread, and mingle your drink with weeping; by means of this banquet you shall reach the table of God. Despair not; pardon has been promised you. Thanks be to God, he says, because it is promised; I hold fast the promise of God. Now therefore live well. Tomorrow, he replies, I will live well. God has promised the pardon; no one promised you tomorrow....

11. And that because of your indignation and wrath: because you have taken me up, you have cast me down Psalm 101:10. This is your wrath, O Lord, in Adam: that wrath in which we were all born, which cleaves unto us by our birth; the wrath from the stock of iniquity, the wrath from the mass of sin: according to what the Apostle says, We also were once the children of wrath, even as others. For He says not, the wrath of God shall come upon him: but, abides upon him: because that wrath in which he was born is not taken away....Man set in honour, is made in the image of God: raised up to this honour, lifted up from the dust, from the earth, he has received a reasonable soul; by the vivacity of that very reason, he is placed before all beasts, cattle, birds that fly, and fishes. Genesis 1:26 For which of these has reason to understand? Because none of them is created in the image of God....Therefore, Because You have taken me up, You have cast me down: punishment follows me, because You have given me a free choice. For if You had not given me a free choice, and for this reason did not make me better than cattle, just condemnation would not follow me when I sinned. Thus You have taken me up in giving me freedom of choice, and by Your judgment You have cast me down.

12. My days have declined like a shadow Psalm 101:11....He had said above, My days are consumed away like smoke; and he now says, My days have declined like a shadow. In this shadow, day must be recognised; in this shadow, light must be discerned; lest afterward it be said in late and fruitless

repentance, What has pride profited us? Or what good has riches with our vaunting brought us? All those things are passed away like a shadow. Wisdom 5:8-9 Say at this season, all things will pass away like a shadow, and you may not pass away like a shadow. My days have declined like a shadow, and I am withered like grass. For he had said above, my heart is smitten down, and I am withered like grass. But the grass bedewed with the Saviour's blood will flourish afresh. I have withered like grass; I, that is, man, after that disobedience; this I have suffered from Your just judgment: but what are You?

13. For not because I have fallen, have You grown old: for You are strong to set me free, who hast been strong to humble me. But You, O Lord, endurest for ever: and Your remembrance throughout all generations Psalm 101:12. Your remembrance, because Thou dost not forget: throughout all generations, forasmuch as we know the promise of life, both present and future. 1 Timothy 4:8

14. You shall arise, and have mercy upon Sion: for it is time that Thou have mercy upon her Psalm 101:13. What time? But when the fullness of time had come, God sent forth His Son, made of a woman, made under the Law. And where is Sion? To redeem them that were under the Law. Galatians 4:4-5 First then were the Jews: for thence were the Apostles, thence those more than five hundred brethren, 1 Corinthians 15:6 thence that later multitude, who had but one heart and one soul toward God. Acts 4:32 Therefore, the time has come. What time? Behold, now is the accepted time: behold, now is the day of salvation. 2 Corinthians 6:2 Who says this? That Servant of God, that Builder, who said, You are God's building. 1 Corinthians 3:9-11

15. Here therefore what says he? For your servants take pleasure in her stones Psalm 101:14. In whose stones? In the stones of Sion? But there are those there that are not stones. Not stones of what? What then follows? and pity the dust thereof. I understand by the stones of Sion all the Prophets: there was the voice of preaching sent before, thence the ministry of the Gospel assumed, through their preaching Christ became known. Therefore your servants have taken pleasure in the stones of Sion. But those faithless apostates from God, who offended their Creator by their evil deeds, have returned to the earth, whence they were taken. They have become dust, they have become ungodly. But wait, Lord; bear with us, Lord; be long-suffering, O Lord: let not the wind rush in, and sweep away this dust from the face of the earth. Let your servants come, let them come, let them acknowledge in the stones your voice, let them pity the dust of Sion, let them be formed in your image: let the dust say, lest it perish, Remember that we are but dust. This of Sion: was not that which crucified the Lord, dust? What is worse, it was dust from the ruined walls; altogether dust it was, but nevertheless it was not in vain said of this dust, Father, forgive them. From this very dust there came a wall of so many thousands who believed, and who laid the price of their possessions at the Apostles' feet. From that dust then there arose a human nature formed and beautiful. Who among the heathen acted thus? How few are there whom we admire for having done thus, compared with the many thousands of these converts? At first suddenly three, afterwards five thousand; all living in unity, all laying the price of their possessions, when they had sold them, at the Apostles' feet, that it might be distributed to each, as each had need, who had one soul and one heart toward God. Who made this even of that very dust, but He who created Adam himself out of dust? This then is concerning Sion, but not in Sion only.

16. The heathen shall fear Your Name, O Lord; and all the kings of the earth Your Majesty Psalm 101:15. Now that You have pitied Sion, now that Your servants have taken pleasure in her stones, by acknowledging the foundation of the Apostles and Prophets; now that they have pitied her dust; so that man is formed, or rather re-formed, in life out of dust; hence preaching has increased among the heathen: let the heathen fear Your Name, let another wall approach also from the heathen, let the Corner Stone

Ephesians 2:20 be recognised, let the two who come from different regions, but who no longer differ in belief, meet in close union.

17. For the Lord shall build up Sion Psalm 101:16. This work is going on now. O you living stones, run to the work of building, not to ruin. Sion is in building, beware of the ruined walls: the tower is building, the ark is in building; remember the deluge. This work is in progress now; but when Sion is built, what will happen? And He will appear in His glory. That He might build up Sion, that He might be a foundation in Sion, He was seen by Sion, but not in His glory: we have seen Him, and He had no form nor comeliness. Isaiah 53:2 But truly when He shall have come with His angels to judge, Matthew 25:31 shall they not look then upon Him whom they have pierced? Zechariah 12:10 and they shall be put to confusion when too late, who refused confusion in early and healthful repentance.

18. He has turned Him unto the prayer of the poor destitute, and despised not their desire Psalm 101:17. This is going on now in the building of Sion: the builders of Sion pray, they groan: He is the one poor, because the poor are many; because the thousands among so many nations are one in Him, because He is the unity of the peace of the Church, He is one, He is many: one, through love: many, on account of His extension. Therefore we now pray, we now run: now, if any man has used to be otherwise, and lived differently, let him eat ashes as it were bread, and mingle his drink with weeping. Now is the time, when Sion is in building: now the stones are entering into the structure: when the building is finished, and the house dedicated, why do you run, to ask when too late, to beg in vain, to knock to no purpose, doomed to abide without with the five foolish virgins? Matthew 25:12 Therefore now run.

19. Let these things be written for those that come after Psalm 101:18. When these words were written, they profited not so much those among whom they were written for they were written to prophesy the New Testament, among men who lived according to the Old Testament. But God had both given that Old Testament, and had settled in that land of promise His own people. But since Your remembrance is from generation to generation, belongs not to the ungodly, but to the righteous; in our generation belongs to the Old Testament; while in the other generation belongs to the New Testament; and since the New Testament announces this that was prophesied, Let these things be written for those that come after: and the people which shall be created, shall praise the Lord. Not the people which is created, but the people which shall be created. What is clearer, my brethren? Here is prophesied that creation of which the Apostle says: Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature; old things are passed away; behold, all things have become new. 2 Corinthians 5:17 For he has looked down from His lofty sanctuary. He has looked down from on high, that He might come unto the humble: from on high He has become humble, that He might exalt the humble....

20. Out of the heaven did the Lord look down upon the earth Psalm 101:19: that He might hear the mournings of such as are in fetters, and deliver the children of such as are put to death Psalm 101:20. We have found it said in another Psalm, O let the sorrowful sighs of the fettered come before You; and in a passage where the voice of the martyrs was meant. Whence are the martyrs in fetters?...But God had bound them with these fetters, hard indeed and painful for a season, but endurable on account of His promises, unto whom it is said, On account of the words of Your lips, I have kept hard ways.

We must indeed groan in these fetters in order to gain the mercy of God. These fetters must not be shunned, in order to gain a destructive freedom and the temporal and brief pleasure of this life, to be followed by perpetual bitterness. Accordingly Scripture, Ecclesiastes 6:24-32 that we may not refuse the fetters of wisdom, thus addresses us: ...Then shall her fetters be a strong defence for you, and her chains

a robe of glory. Let the fettered therefore cry out, as long as they are in the chains of the discipline of God, in which the martyrs have been tried: the fetters shall be loosed, and they shall fly away, and these very fetters shall afterwards be turned into an ornament.

This has happened with the martyrs. For what have the persecutors effected by killing them, except that their fetters were thereby loosed, and turned into crowns?...The remission of sins, is the loosing. For what would it have profited Lazarus, that he came forth from the tomb, unless it were said to him, loose him, and let him go? John 11:44 Himself indeed with His voice aroused him from the tomb, Himself restored his life by crying unto him, Himself overcame the mass of earth that was heaped upon the tomb, and he came forth bound hand and foot: not therefore with his own feet, but by the power of Him who drew him forth.

This takes place in the heart of the penitent: when you hear a man is sorry for his sins, he has already come again to life; when you hear him by confessing lay bare his conscience, he is already drawn forth from the tomb, but he is not as yet loosed. When is he loosed, and by whom is he loosed? Whatsoever you shall loose on earth, He says, shall be loosed in Heaven. Matthew 15:19 Forgiveness of sins may justly be granted by the Church: but the dead man himself cannot be aroused except by the Lord crying within him; for God does this within him.

We speak to your ears: how do we know what may be going on in your hearts? But what is going on within, is not our doing, but His. 21. That the name of the Lord may be declared in Sion Psalm 101:21. For at first, when the fettered were appointed unto death, the Church was oppressed: since these tribulations the Name of the Lord has been declared in Sion, with great freedom, in the Church herself. For she is Sion: not that one spot, at first proud, afterwards taken captive; but the Sion whose shadow was that Sion, which signifies a watchtower; because when placed in the flesh, we see into the things before us, extending ourselves not to the present which is now, but to the future.

Thus it is a watchtower: for every watcher gazes far. Places where guards are set, are termed watchtowers: these are set on rocks, on mountains, in trees, that a wider prospect may be commanded from a higher eminence. Sion therefore is a watchtower, the Church is a watchtower....If therefore the Church be a watchtower, the Name of the Lord is already declared there. Not the Lord's Name only is declared in that Sion, but His praise, He says, in Jerusalem.

22. And how is it declared? In the nations gathering together in one, and the kingdoms, that they may serve the Lord Psalm 101:22. How is this accomplished, unless by the blood of the slain? How accomplished, but by the groans of the fettered? Those therefore who were in tribulation and humility have been heard; that in our times the Church might be in the great glory which we see her in, so that the very kingdoms which then persecuted her, now serve the Lord.

23. She answered Him in the way of His strength Psalm 101:23....The preceding words show, that either His praise, or Jerusalem, answered: for it was said, And His praise in Jerusalem; in the nations gathering together in one, and the kingdoms, that they may serve the Lord. Respondit ei. We cannot say, the kingdoms answered, for he would have said responderunt. Respondit ei. We cannot say, the nations answered, for he would have said, responderunt (in the plural). Since then it is Respondit ei, in the singular, we look for the singular number above, and find that the words, His praise, and Jerusalem, are the only words in which we find it. But since it is doubtful, whether it be His praise, or Jerusalem, let us expound it each way. How did His praise answer Him? When they who are called by Him thank Him. For He calls, we answer; not by our voice, but by our faith; not by our tongue, but by our life....From His elect

and holy men, Jerusalem also answers Him. For Jerusalem also was called: and the first Jerusalem refused to hear, and it was said unto her, Behold, your house shall be left unto the desolate. Matthew 23:38 ...But that Jerusalem, of whom it was written, Sing, O barren, you that did not bear, She has answered Him. What means, She has answered Him? She despises Him not when He called. He sent rain, She gave fruit.

24. She answered Him: but where? in the path of His strength....The Church therefore answered Him not in the way of weakness; because after His resurrection He called the Church from the whole world, no longer weak upon the cross, but strong in heaven. For it is not the praise of the Christian faith that they believe that Christ died, but that they believe that He arose from the dead. Even the Pagan believes that He died; and makes this a charge against you, that you have believed in one dead. What then is your praise? It is that you believe that Christ arose from the dead, and that thou dost hope that you shall rise from the dead through Christ: this is the praise of faith. For if you shall confess with your mouth that Jesus is the Lord, and shall believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you shall be saved. Romans 10:9-10 ...This is the faith of Christians. In this faith then, in which the Church is gathered, She has answered Him, She gave Him worship according to His commandments: in the path of His strength, not in the path of His weakness.

25. How she answered Him, you have already heard above. In the gathering of the nations into one. Herein she answered Him, in unity: he who is not in unity, answers Him not. For He is One, the Church is unity: none but unity answers to Him who is One....Since some were destined to say against her, She has existed, and no longer does exist; Show me, He says, the shortness of my days, what is it, that I know not what apostates from me murmur against me? Why is it that lost men contend that I have perished? For they surely say this, that I have been, and no longer am: Show me the shortness of my days. I do not ask from You about those everlasting days: they are without end, where I shall be; it is not those I ask of: I ask of temporal days; show unto me my temporal days; show me the shortness, not the eternity, of my days. Declare unto me, how long I shall be in this world: on account of those who say, She has been, and is no more: on account of those who say, The Scriptures are fulfilled, all nations have believed, but the Church has become apostate, and has perished from among all nations....

26. Do you see not that there are still nations among whom the Gospel has not been preached? Since then it is needful that what the Lord spoke shall be fulfilled, declaring unto the Church the shortness of my days, that this Gospel be preached in all nations, and then that the end may come, why is it that you say that the Church has already perished from among all nations, when the Gospel is being preached for this purpose, that it may be in all nations? Therefore the Church remains even unto the end of the world, in all nations; and this is the shortness of Her days, because all that is limited is short; so that She may pass into eternity from this brief existence. May heretics be lost, may that which they are be lost, and may they be found, that they may be what they are not. Shortness of days will be unto the end of the world: shortness for this reason, because the whole of this season, I say not from this day unto the end of the world, but from Adam down to the end of the world, is a mere drop compared with eternity.

27. Let not therefore heretics flatter themselves against me, because I said, the shortness of my days, as if they would not last down to the end of the world. For what has he added? O my God, take me not away in the midst of my days Psalm 101:24. Deal Thou not with me according as heretics speak. Lead me on unto the end of the world, not only to the middle of my days; and finish my short days, that You may afterwards grant unto me eternal days. Wherefore then have you asked concerning the shortness of your days? Wherefore? Do you wish to hear? Your years are in the generation of generations. This is why I

asked concerning those short days, because although my days should endure unto the end of the world, yet they are short in comparison of Your days. For Your years are in the generation of generations. Wherefore does he not say, Your years are unto worlds of worlds; for thus rather is eternity usually signified in the holy Scriptures; but he says, Your years are in the generation of generations? But what are your years? What, but those which do not come, and then pass away? What, but they which come not, so as to cease again? For every day in this season so comes as to cease again; every hour, every month, every year; nothing of these is stationary; before it has come, it is to be; after it has come, it will not be. Those everlasting years of yours, therefore, those years that are not changed, are in the generation of generations. There is a generation of generations; in that shall your years be. There is one such, and if we acknowledge it aright, we shall be in it, and the years of God shall be in us. How shall they be in us? Just as God Himself shall be in us: whence it is said, That God may be all in all. 1 Corinthians 15:28 For the years of God, and God Himself, are not different: but the years of God are the eternity of God: eternity is the very substance of God, which has nothing changeable; there nothing is past, as if it were no longer: nothing is future, as if it existed not as yet. There is nothing there but, Is: there is not there, Was, and Will be; because what was, is now no longer: and what will be, is not as yet: but whatever is there, simply Is....Behold this great I Am! What is man's being to this? To this great I Am, what is man, whatever he be? Who can understand that To Be? Who can share it? Who can pant, aspire, presume that he may be there? Despair not, human frailty! I am, He says, the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob. You have heard what I am in Myself: now hear what I am on your account. This eternity then has called us, and the Word burst forth from eternity. It is now eternity, it is now the Word, and no longer time.

28. ...From so many generations you will gather together all the holy offspring of all generations, and wilt form one generation thence: In this generation of generations are Your years, that is, that eternity will be in that generation, which is collected from all generations, and reduced into one; this shall share in Your eternity. Other generations are born for fulfilling their times, out of which this one is regenerated for ever; though changed it shall be endued with life, it shall be fitted to bear You, receiving strength from You.

29. You, Lord, in the beginning hast laid the foundation of the earth: and the Heavens are the work of Your hands Psalm 101:25....God laid the foundation of the earth, we know: the heavens are the works of His hands. For do not imagine that God does one thing with His hand, another by His word. What He does by His word, He does by His hand: for He has not distinct bodily members, who said, I Am That I Am. And perhaps His Word is His hand, assuredly His hand is His power. For inasmuch as it is said, Let there be a firmament, Genesis 1:6 and there was a firmament; He is understood to have created it by His Word; but when He said, Let Us make man in Our image, after Our likeness; Genesis 1:26 He seems to have created him by His hand. Hear therefore: The heavens are the work of Your hands. Lo, what He created by His word, He created also by His hands; because He created them through His excellence, through His power. Observe rather what He created, and seek not to know in what manner He created them. It is much to you to understand how He created them, since He created yourself so, that you may first be a servant obeying, and afterwards perhaps a friend understanding. John 15:15

30. They shall perish, but You shall endure Psalm 101:26. The Apostle Peter says this openly: By the word of God the heavens were of old, etc. 2 Peter 3:5-6 He has said then that the heavens have already perished by the flood: and we know that the heavens perished as far as the extent of this atmosphere of ours. For the water increased, and filled the whole of that space in which birds fly; thus perished the heavens that are near the earth; those heavens which are meant when we speak of the birds of heaven. But there are heavens of heavens higher than these in the firmament: but whether these also shall perish

by fire, or those only which perished also by the flood, is a much harder question among the learned, nor can it easily, especially in a limited space of time, be explained. Let us therefore dismiss or put it off; nevertheless, let us know that these things perish, and that God endures....

31. Perhaps by the heavens we here may understand, without being far-fetched, the righteous themselves, the saints of God, abiding in whom God has thundered in His commandments, lightened in His miracles, watered the earth with the wisdom of truth, for The heavens have declared the glory of God. But shall they perish? Shall they in any sense perish? In what sense? As a garment. What is, as a garment? As to the body. For the body is the garment of the soul; since our Lord called it a garment, when He said, Is not the life more than meat, and the body than raiment? Matthew 6:25 How then does the garment perish? Though our outward man perish, yet the inward man is renewed day by day. 2 Corinthians 4:16 They then shall perish: but as to the body: But You shall endure....Such heavens therefore shall perish; not, however, for ever; they shall perish, that they may be changed. Does not the Psalm say this? Read the following: They shall all wax old as does a garment; and as a vesture shall Thou change them, and they shall be changed. You hear of the garment, of the vesture, and do you understand anything but the body? We may therefore hope for the change of our bodies also, but from Him who was before us, and abides after us....But You are the same, and Your years shall not fail Psalm 101:27. But what are we to those years with these beggarly years? And what are they? Yet we ought not to despair. He had already said in His great and exceeding Wisdom, I Am That I Am; and yet He says to console us, I am the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob: Exodus 3:6 and we are Abraham's seed: Galatians 3:29 even we, although abject, although dust and ashes, trust in Him. We are servants: but for our sakes our Lord took the garb of a servant: Philippians 2:7 for us who are mortal the Immortal One deigned to die, for our sakes He showed His example of resurrection. Let us therefore hope that we may reach these lasting years, in which days are not spent in a revolution of the Sun, but what is abides even as it is, because it alone truly is.

32. The children of Your servants shall dwell there: and their seed shall stand fast for ages Psalm 101:28: for the age of ages, the age of eternity, the age that abides. But, the children, he says, of Your servants: is it to be feared lest we be the servants of God, and our children, and not ourselves, dwell there? Or if we are the children of the servants, inasmuch as we are the Apostles' children, what are we to say? Can those children rising after have so unhappy a presumption, as to boast in their late succession, and so to venture to say, We shall be there; the Apostles will not be there? May this be far from their piety as children, from their faith as little ones, from their understanding when of age! The Apostles also will be there: rams go before, lambs follow. Wherefore then, the children of Your servants; and not in brief, Your servants? Both they are Your servants, and their children are Your servants; and the children of these, their grandsons, what are they but Your servants? You would include them all briefly, if You should say, Your servants shall dwell therein....The children of Your servants, are the works of Your servants; no one shall dwell there, but through his own works. What therefore means, Their children shall dwell? Let no man boast that he shall dwell there, if he calls himself God's servant, and has not works; for none but children shall dwell there. What means therefore, The children of Your servants shall dwell there? Your servants shall dwell there by their own works, Your servants shall dwell there through their own children. Be not therefore barren, if you dost wish to dwell there; send before the children whom you may follow, by sending them before you, not by burying them. Let your children lead you to the land of promise, the land of the living, not of the dying: while you are living here in this pilgrimage, let them go before you, let them receive you....

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