

Exposition on Psalm 104

by St. Augustine

The sermon explores the themes of God's magnification, the Church's light and beauty, and the power of God's love and rebuke.

Scripture: Psalm 103:1, Psalm 104:10, Psalm 104:13, Isaiah 53:1, Isaiah 66:2, Matthew 5:3, Romans 4:5, 1 Corinthians 4:7, Colossians 3:2

Topics: "Humility And Repentance", "Gods Mercy"

Description

St. Augustine preaches about the importance of praising and serving the Lord with humility and fear, acknowledging that all good things come from God. He emphasizes the need for repentance, humility, and reliance on God's grace, warning against pride and self-righteousness. St. Augustine encourages believers to confess their sins, offer prayers with a contrite heart, and seek God's mercy and forgiveness. He reminds the listeners that God's Spirit works in those who are humble and willing to be transformed, leading them to righteousness and eternal life.

Transcript

1. ...Bless the Lord, O my soul. Let the soul of us all, made one in Christ, say this. O Lord my God, You are magnified exceedingly! Psalm 103:1. Where are You magnified? Confession and beauty You have put on. Confess ye, that you may be beautified, that He may put you on. Clothed with light as a garment Psalm 103:2. Clothed with His Church, because she is made light in Him, who before was darkness in herself, as the apostle says: You were sometime darkness, but now light in the Lord. Ephesians 5:8 Stretching out the heaven like a skin: either as easily as thou dost a skin, if it be as easily, so that you may take it after the letter; or let us understand the authority of the Scriptures, spread out over the whole world, under the name of a skin; because mortality is signified in a skin, but all the authority of the Divine Scriptures was dispensed unto us through mortal men, whose fame is still spreading abroad now they are dead.

2. Who covers with waters the upper parts thereof Psalm 103:3. The upper parts of what? Of Heaven. What is Heaven? Figuratively only we said, the Divine Scripture. What are the upper parts of the Divine Scripture? The commandment of love, than which there is none more exalted. Mark 12:31 But wherefore is love compared to waters? Because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Spirit who is given unto us. Romans 5:5 Whence is the Spirit Himself water? Because Jesus stood and cried, He that believes in Me, out of his bosom shall flow rivers of living water. John 7:37-38 Whence do we prove that it was said of the Spirit? Let the Evangelist himself declare, who follows it up, and says, But this spoke He of

the Spirit, which they were to receive, who should believe in Him. Who walks above the wings of the winds; that is, above the virtues of souls. What is the virtue of a soul? Love itself. But how does He walk above it? Because the love of God toward us is greater than ours toward God.

3. Who makes spirits His angels, and flaming fire His ministers Psalm 103:4: that is, those who are already spirits, who are spiritual, not carnal, He makes His Angels, by sending them to preach His gospel. And flaming fire His ministers. For unless the minister that preaches be on fire, he enflames not him to whom he preaches.

4. He has founded the earth upon its firmness Psalm 103:5. He has founded the Church upon the firmness of the Church. What is the firmness of the Church, but the foundation of the Church. What is the foundation of the Church, but that of which the Apostle says, Other foundation can no man lay but that is laid, which is Christ Jesus. 1 Corinthians 3:11 And therefore, grounded on such a foundation, what has she deserved to hear? It shall not be bowed forever and ever. He founded the earth on its firmness. That is, He has founded the Church upon Christ the foundation. The Church will totter if the foundation totter; but when shall Christ totter, before whose coming unto us, and taking flesh on Him, all things were made by Him, and without Him was not anything made; John 1:3 who holds all things by His Majesty, Hebrews 1:3 and us by His goodness? Since Christ fails not, she shall not be bowed for ever and ever. Where are they who say that the Church has perished from the world, when she cannot even be bowed....

5. The deep, like a garment, is its clothing Psalm 103:6. Whose? Is it perchance God's? But he had already said of His clothing, Clothed with light as with a garment. I hear of God clothed in light, and that light, if we will, are we. What is, if we will? If we are no longer darkness. Therefore if God is clothed with light, whose clothing, again, is the deep? For an immense mass of waters is called the deep. All water, all the moist nature, and the substance everywhere shed abroad through the seas, and rivers, and hidden caves, is all together called by one name, the Deep. Therefore we understand the earth, of which he said, He has founded the earth. Of it I believe he said, The deep, like a garment is its clothing. For the water is as it were the clothing of the earth, surrounding it and covering it....

6. Above the mountains the waters shall stand: that is, the clothing of the earth, which is the deep, so increased, that the waters stood even above the mountains. We read of this taking place in the deluge....The Prophet minding to foretell future things, not to relate the past, therefore said it, because he would have it understood that the Church should be in a deluge of persecutions. For there was a time when the floods of persecutors had covered God's earth, God's Church, and had so covered it, that not even those great ones appeared, who are the mountains. For when they fled everywhere, how did they but cease to appear? And perchance of those waters is that saying, Save me, O God, for the waters have come in even unto my soul. Especially the waters which make the sea, stormy, unfruitful. For whatsoever earth the sea-water may have covered, it will not rather make it fruitful than bring it to barrenness. For there were also mountains beneath the waters, because above the mountains waters stood.. ..Why were the Apostles hidden by flight? Because above the mountains the waters stood. The power of the waters was great, but how long? Hear what follows.

7. From Your rebuke they shall fly Psalm 103:7. And this was done, brethren; from God's rebuke the waters did fly; that is, they went back from pressing on the mountains. Now the mountains themselves stand forth, Peter and Paul: how do they tower! They who before were pressed down by persecutors, now are venerated by emperors. For the waters are fled from the rebuke of God; because the heart of kings is in the hand of God, He has bent it whither He would; Proverbs 21:1 He commanded peace to be given by

them to the Christians; the authority of the Apostles sprang up and towered high....The waters fled from the rebuke of God. From the voice of Your thunder they shall be afraid. Now who is there that would not be afraid, from the voice of God through the Apostles, the voice of God through the Scriptures, through His clouds? The sea is quieted, the waters have been made afraid, the mountains have been laid bare, the emperor has given the order. But who would have given the order, unless God had thundered? Because God willed, they commanded, and it was done. Therefore let no one of men arrogate anything to himself.

8. The mountains ascend, and the plains go down, into the place which You have founded for them Psalm 103:8. He is still speaking of waters. Let us not here understand mountains as of earth; nor plains, as of earth: but waves so great that they may be compared to mountains. The sea did sometime toss, and its waves were as mountains, which could cover those mountains the Apostles. But how long do the mountains ascend and the plains go down? They raged, and they are appeased. When they raged they were mountains: now they are appeased they have become plains: for He has founded a place for them. There is a certain channel, as it were a deep place, into which all those lately raging hearts of mortals have retired....They were mountains formerly, now they are plains: yet, my brethren, even a dead calm is sea. For wherefore are they not now violent? Wherefore do they not rage? Wherefore do they not try, if they cannot overthrow our earth, at least to cover it? Wherefore not?

9. Hear. You have set a bound which they shall not pass over, neither shall they turn again to cover the earth Psalm 103:9. What then, because now the bitterest waves have received a measure, that we must be allowed to preach such things even with freedom; because they have had their due limit assigned, because they cannot pass over the bound that is set, nor shall they return to cover the earth; what is doing in the earth itself? What workings take place therein, now that the sea has left it bare? Although at its beach slight waves do make their noise, although Pagans still murmur round; the sound of the shores I hear, a deluge I dread not. What then; what is doing in the earth? Who sends out springs in the little valleys Psalm 103:10. You send out, he says, springs in the little valleys. You know what little valleys are, lower places among the lands. For to hills and mountains, valleys and little valleys are opposed in contrary shape. Hills and mountains are swellings of the land: but valleys and little valleys, lownesses of the lands. Do not despise low places, thence flow springs. You send out springs in the little valleys. Hear a mountain. The Apostle says, I laboured more than they all. A certain greatness is brought before us: yet immediately, that the waters may flow, he has made himself a valley: Yet not I, but the grace of God with me. 1 Corinthians 15:10 It is no contradiction that they who are mountains be also valleys: for as they are called mountains because of their spiritual greatness, so also valleys because of the humility of their spirit. Not I, he says, but the grace of God with me....

10. What is, In the midst between the mountains the waters shall pass through? We have heard who are the mountains, the great Preachers of the word, the exalted Angels of God, though still in mortal flesh; lofty not by their own power, but by His grace; but as far as relates to themselves, they are valleys, in their humility they send forth springs. In the midst, he says, between the mountains, the waters shall pass through. Let us suppose this said thus, In the midst between the Apostles shall pass through the preachings of the Word of Truth. What is, in the midst between the Apostles? What is called in the midst, is common. A common property, from which all alike live, is in the midst, and belongs not to me, but neither belongs it to you, nor yet to me....For if they are not in the midst, they are as it were private, they flow not for public use, and I have mine, and he has his own, it is not in the midst for both me and him to have it; but such is not the preaching of peace....Therefore, brethren, let what we have said to your Love serve to this purpose, because of the springs: that they may flow from you, be ye valleys, and

communicate with all that which you have from God. Let the waters flow in the midst, envy ye no one, drink, be filled, flow forth when you are filled. Everywhere let the common water of God have the glory, not the private falsehoods of men....

11. For it follows, All the beasts of the wood shall drink Psalm 103:11. We do indeed see this also in the visible creation, that the beasts of the wood drink of springs, and of streams that run between the mountains: but now since it has pleased God to hide His own wisdom in the figures of such things, not to take it away from earnest seekers, but to close it to them that care not, and open it to them that knock; it has also pleased our Lord God Himself to exhort you by us to this, that in all these things which are said as if of the bodily and visible creation, we may seek something spiritually hidden, in which when found we may rejoice. The beasts of the wood, we understand the Gentiles, and Holy Scripture witnesses this in many places....

12. These beasts, then, drink those waters, but passing; not staying, but passing; for all that teaching which in all this time is dispensed passes....Unless perchance your love thinks that in that city to which it is said, Praise the Lord, O Jerusalem, praise your God, O Sion; for He has made strong the bars of your gates; when the bars are now strengthened and the city closed, whence, as we said some time since, no friend goes out, no enemy enters; that there we shall have a book to read, or speech to be explained as it is now explained to you. Therefore is it now treated, that there it may be held fast: therefore is it now divided by syllables, that there it may be contemplated whole and entire. The Word of God will not be wanting there: but yet not by letters, not by sounds, not by books, not by a reader, not by an expositor. How then? As, In the beginning was the Word, etc. John 1:1 For He did not so come to us as to depart from thence; because He was in this world, and the world was made by Him. Such a Word are we to contemplate. For the God of gods shall appear in Zion. But this when? After our pilgrimage, when the journey is done: if however after our journey is done we be not delivered to the Judge, that the Judge may send us to prison. But if when our journey is ended, as we hope, and wish, and endeavour, we shall have reached our Country, there shall we contemplate What we shall ever praise; nor shall That fail which is present to us, nor we, who enjoy: nor shall he be cloyed that eats, nor shall that fail which he eats. Great and wonderful shall be that contemplation....

13. The onagers shall take for their thirst. By onagers he means some great beasts. For who knows not that wild asses are called onagers? He means, therefore, some great untrained ones. For the Gentiles had no yoke of the Law: many nations lived after their own customs, ranging in proud boastfulness as in a wilderness. And so indeed did all the beasts, but the wild asses are put to signify the greater sort. They too shall drink for their thirst, for for them too the waters flow. Thence drinks the hare, thence the wild ass: the hare little, the wild ass great; the hare timid, the wild ass fierce: either sort drinks thence, but each for his thirst....So faithfully and gently does it flow, as at once to satisfy the wild ass, and not to alarm the hare. The sound of Tully's voice rings out, Cicero is read, it is some book, it is a dialogue of his, whether his own, or Plato's, or by whatever such writer: some hear that are unlearned, weak ones of less mind; who dares to aspire to such a thing? It is a sound of water, and that perchance turbid, but certainly flowing so violently, that a timid animal dare not draw near and drink. To whom sounds a Psalm, and he says, It is too much for me? Behold now what the Psalm sounds; certainly they are hidden mysteries, yet so it sounds, that even children are delighted to hear, and the unlearned come to drink, and when filled burst forth in singing....

14. Then the Psalm goes on in its text, Upon them the fowls of the heaven shall inhabit Psalm 103:12....Upon the mountains, then, the fowls of the air shall have their habitation. We see these birds

dwell upon the mountains, but many of them dwell in plains, many in valleys, many in groves, many in gardens, not all upon mountains. There are some fowls that dwell not save on the mountains. Some spiritual souls does this name denote. Fowls are spiritual hearts, which enjoy the free air. In the clearness of heaven these birds delight, yet their feeding is on the mountains, there will they dwell. You know the mountains, they have been already treated of. Mountains are Prophets, mountains are Apostles, mountains are all preachers of the truth....

15. But think not that those fowls of heaven follow their own authority; see what the Psalm says: From the midst of the rocks they shall give their voice. Now, if I shall say to you, Believe, for this said Cicero, this said Plato, this said Pythagoras: which of you will not laugh at me? For I shall be a bird that shall send forth my voice not from the rock. What ought each one of you to say to me? What ought he who is thus instructed to say? If any one shall have preached unto you a gospel other than that you have received, let him be anathema. Galatians 1:9 What do you tell me of Plato, and of Cicero, and of Virgil? You have before you the rocks of the mountains, from the midst of the rocks give me your voice. Let them be heard, who hear from the rock: let them be heard, because also in those many rocks the One Rock is heard: for the Rock was Christ. 1 Corinthians 10:4 Let them therefore be willingly heard, giving their voice from the midst of the rocks. Nothing is sweeter than such a voice of birds. They sound, and the rocks resound: they sound; spiritual men discuss: the rocks resound, testimonies of Scripture give answer. Lo! Thence the fowls give their voice from the midst of the rocks, for they dwell on the mountains.

16. Watering the mountains from the higher places Psalm 103:13. Now if a Gentile uncircumcised man comes to us, about to believe in Christ, we give him baptism, and do not call him back to those works of the Law. And if a Jew asks us why we do that, we sound from the rock, we say, This Peter did, this Paul did: from the midst of the rocks we give our voice. But that rock, Peter himself, that great mountain, when he prayed and saw that vision, was watered from above....

17. From the fruit of Your works shall the earth be satisfied. What is, From the fruit of Your works? Let no man glory in his own works: but he that glories, let him glory in the Lord. 1 Corinthians 1:31 With Your grace he is satisfied, when he is satisfied: let him not say that grace was given for his own merits. If it is called grace, it is gratuitously given; if it is returned for works, wages are paid. Romans 4:4-5 Freely therefore receive, because ungodly you are justified.

18. Bringing forth grass for the cattle, and green herb for the service of men Psalm 103:14. This is true, I perceive; I recognise the creation: the earth does bring forth grass for the cattle, and green herb for the service of men. But I perceive the words, You shall not muzzle the mouth of the ox which treads out the grain: Does God take care for oxen? For our sakes therefore the Scripture says it. 1 Corinthians 9:9 How then does the earth bring forth grass for the cattle? Because the Lord has ordained that they which preach the Gospel should live of the Gospel. He sent preachers, saying unto them, Eat such things as are set before you of them: for the labourer is worthy of his hire. Luke 10:7-8 ...They give spiritual, they receive carnal things; they give gold, they receive grass....If we have sown unto you spiritual things, is it a great matter if we shall reap your carnal things? 1 Corinthians 9:11 This the Apostle said, a preacher so laborious, so indefatigable, so well tried, that he gives this very grass to the earth. Nevertheless, he says, we have not used this power. He shows that it is due to him, yet he received it not; nor has he condemned those who have received what was due. For those were to be condemned who exact what is not due, not they who accept their recompense: yet he gave up even his own recompense. You do not cease to owe to another, because one has given up his dues, otherwise you will not be the watered earth which brings forth grass for the cattle.... You receive spiritual things, give carnal things in return: to the soldier they are

due, to the soldier you return them; you are the paymaster of Christ. Who goes a warfare any time at his own charges? Who plants a vineyard, and eats not of the fruit thereof? Or who feeds a flock, and eats not of the milk of the flock? I speak not thus, that it should be so done unto me. 1 Corinthians 9:7, 15 There has been such a soldier as gave up his rations of food even to the paymaster: yet let the paymaster pay the rations....

19. That it may bring forth bread out of the earth. What bread? Christ. Out of what earth? From Peter, from Paul, from the other stewards of the truth. Hear that it is from the earth: We have, says St. Paul, this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us. 2 Corinthians 4:7 He is the bread who descended from heaven, John 6:41 that He might be brought forth out of the earth, when He is preached through the flesh of His servants. The earth brings forth grass, that it may bring forth bread from the earth. What earth brings forth grass? Pious, holy nations. That bread may be brought forth out of what earth? The word of God out of the Apostles, out of the stewards of God's Sacraments, who still walk upon the earth, who still carry an earthly body.

20. And wine makes glad the heart of man Psalm 103:15. Let no man prepare himself for intoxication; nay, let every man prepare him for intoxication. How excellent is Your cup which makes inebriate! We choose not to say, Let no man be drunk. Be inebriated; yet beware, from what source. If the excellent cup of the Lord does saturate you, your ebriety shall be seen in your works, it shall be seen in the holy love of righteousness, it shall, lastly, be seen in the estrangement of your mind, but from things earthly to heavenly. To make him a cheerful countenance with oil....What is the making the countenance cheerful with oil? The grace of God; a sort of shining for manifestation; as the Apostle says, The Spirit is given to every man for manifestation. 1 Corinthians 12:7 A certain grace which men can clearly see in men, to conciliate holy love, is termed oil, for its divine splendour; and since it appeared most excellent in Christ, the whole world loves Him; who though while here He was scorned, is now worshipped by every nation: For the kingdom is the Lord's, and He shall be Governor among the people. For such is His grace, that many, who do not believe in Him, praise Him, and declare that they are unwilling to believe in Him, because no man can fulfil what He does command. They who with reproaches once raged against Him, are hindered by His very praises. Yet by all is He loved, by all is He preached; because He is excellently anointed, therefore He is Christ: for He is called Christ from the Chrism or anointing which He had. Messiah in the Hebrew, Christ in the Greek, Unctus in the Latin: but He anoints over His whole Body. All therefore who come, receive grace, that their countenances may be made glad with oil.

21. And bread strengthens man's heart. What is this, brethren? As it were, he has forced us to understand what bread he was speaking of. For while that visible bread strengthens the stomach, feeds the body, there is another bread which strengthens the heart, in that it is the bread of the heart....There is therefore a wine that truly makes glad the heart, and knows not to do anything else than to gladden the heart. But that you may not imagine that this indeed should be taken of the spiritual wine, but not of that spiritual bread; He has shown this very point, that it is also spiritual: and bread, he says, strengthens man's heart. So understand it therefore of the bread as thou dost understand it of the wine; hunger inwardly, thirst inwardly: Blessed are they, says our Lord, who hunger and thirst after righteousness; for they shall be filled. Matthew 5:6 That bread is righteousness, that wine is righteousness: it is truth, Christ is truth. John 14:6 I am, He said, the living bread, who came down from heaven; John 6:51 and, I am the Vine, and you are the branches. John 15:5

22. The trees of the plain shall be satisfied Psalm 103:16: but with this grace, brought forth out of the earth. The trees of the plain, are the lower orders of the nations. And the cedars of Libanus which He has

planted. The cedars of Libanus, the powerful in the world, shall themselves be filled. The bread, and wine, and oil of Christ has reached senators, nobles, kings; the trees of the plain are filled. First the humble are filled; next also the cedars of Libanus, yet those which He has planted; pious cedars, religious faithful; for such has He planted. For the ungodly also are cedars of Libanus; for, The Lord shall break the cedars of Libanus. For Libanus is a mountain: there are those trees, even according to the letter most long-lived and most excellent. But Libanus is interpreted, as we read in those who have written of these things, a brightness: and this brightness seems to belong to this world, which at present shines and is refulgent with its pomps. There are the cedars of Libanus, which the Lord has planted; those which the Lord has planted shall be filled....

23. There shall the sparrows build their nests: their leader is the house of the coot Psalm 103:17. Where shall the sparrows build? In the cedars of Libanus....Who are the sparrows? Sparrows are birds indeed, and fowls of the air, but small fowls are wont to be called sparrows. There are therefore some spiritual ones that build in the cedars of Libanus: that is, there are certain servants of God who hear in the Gospel, Sell all that you have, and give to the poor; and you shall have treasure in heaven; and come and follow Me. Matthew 19:21 ...Let him who has resigned many things, not be proud. We know that Peter was a fisherman: what then could he give up, to follow our Lord? Or his brother Andrew, or John and James the sons of Zebedee, themselves also fishermen; and yet what did they say? Behold, we have forsaken all, and followed You. Matthew 19:27 Our Lord said not to him, You have forgotten your poverty; what have you resigned, that you should receive the whole world? He, my brethren, who resigned not only what he had, but also what he longed to have, resigned much....

24. But although the sparrows will build in the cedars of Libanus, the house of the coot is their leader. What is the house of the coot? The coot, as we all know, is a water bird, dwelling either among the marshes, or on the sea. It has rarely or never a home on the shore; but in places in the midst of the waters, and thus usually in rocky islets, surrounded by the waves. We therefore understand that the rock is the fit home of the coot, it never dwells more securely than on the rock. On what sort of rock? One placed in the sea. And if it is beaten by the waves, yet it breaks the waves, is not broken by them: this is the excellency of the rock in the sea. How great waves beat on our Lord Jesus Christ? The Jews dashed against Him; they were broken, He remained whole. And let every one who does imitate Christ, so dwell in this world, that is, in this sea, where he cannot but feel storms and tempests, that he may yield to no wind, to no wave, but remain whole, while he meets them all. The home of the coot, therefore, is both strong and weak. The coot has not a home on lofty spots; nothing is more firm and nothing more humble than that home. Sparrows build indeed in cedars, on account of actual need: but they hold that rock as their leader, which is beaten by the waves, and yet not broken; for they imitate the sufferings of Christ....

25. What then follows? The loftiest hills are for the stags Psalm 103:18. The stags are mighty, spiritual, passing in their course over all the thorny places of the thickets and woods. He makes my feet like harts' feet, and sets me up on high. Let them hold to the lofty hills, the lofty commandments of God; let them think on sublime subjects, let them hold those which stand forth most in the Scriptures, let them be justified in the highest: for those loftiest hills are for the stags. What of the humble beasts? What of the hare? What of the hedgehog? The hare is a small and weak animal: the hedgehog is also prickly: the one is a timid animal, the other is covered with prickles. What do the prickles signify, except sinners? He who sins daily, although not great sins, is covered over with the smallest prickles. In his timidity he is a hare: in his being covered with the minutest sins, he is a hedgehog: and he cannot hold those lofty and perfect commandments. For the loftiest hills are for the stags. What then? Do these perish? No. For so is the rock

the refuge for the hedgehogs and the hares. For the Lord is a refuge for the poor. Place that rock upon the land, it is a refuge for hedgehogs, and for hares: place it on the sea, it is the home of the coot. Everywhere the rock is useful. Even in the hills it is useful: for the hills without the rock's foundation would fall into the deep....

26. He appointed the Moon for certain seasons Psalm 103:19. We understand spiritually the Church increasing from the smallest size, and growing old as it were from the mortality of this life; yet so, that it draws nearer unto the Sun. I speak not of this moon visible to the eye, but of that which is signified by this name. While the Church was in the dark, while she as yet appeared not, shone not forth as yet, men were led astray, and it was said, This is the Church, here is Christ; so that while the Moon was dark, they shot their arrows at the righteous in heart. How blind is he who now, when the Moon is full, wanders astray? He appointed the Moon for certain seasons. For here the Church temporarily is passing away: for this subjection to death will not remain for ever: there will some time be an end of waxing and waning; it is appointed for certain seasons. And the sun knows his going down. And what sun is this, but that Sun of righteousness, whom the ungodly will lament on the day of judgment never having risen for them; they who will say on that day, Therefore we wandered from the way of truth, and the light of righteousness shone not on us, and the sun did not arise upon us. Wisdom 5:6 That sun rises for him who understands Christ....

27. Nor think, brethren, that the sun ought to be worshipped by some men, because the sun does sometimes in the Scriptures signify Christ. For such is the madness of men; as if we said that a creature should be worshipped, when it is said, the sun is an emblem of Christ. Then worship the rock also, for it also is a type of Christ. 1 Corinthians 10:4 He was brought as a lamb to the slaughter: Isaiah 53:7 worship the lamb also, since it is a type of Christ. The Lion of the tribe of Judah has prevailed; Revelation 5:5 worship the lion also, since it signifies Christ. Observe how numerous are the types of Christ: all these are Christ in similitude, not in essence....

28. What then, when the sun went down, when our Lord suffered? There was a sort of darkness with the Apostles, hope failed, in those to whom He at first seemed great, and the Redeemer of all men. How so? Thou made darkness, and it became night; wherein all the beasts of the forest shall move Psalm 103:20....Here the beasts of the forest are used in different ways: for these things are always understood in varying senses; as our Lord Himself is at one time termed a lion, at another a lamb. What is so different as a lion and a lamb? But what sort of lamb? One that could overcome the wolf, overcome the lion. He is the Rock, He the Shepherd, He the Gate. The Shepherd enters by the gate: and He says, I am the good Shepherd: and, I am the Door of the Sheep.. ..Learn thus to understand, when these things are spoken figuratively; lest perchance when you have read that the Rock signifies Christ, 1 Corinthians 10:4 ye may understand it to mean Him in every passage. In one place it means one thing, another in another, just as we can only understand the meaning of a letter by seeing its position. The lion's cubs roaring after their prey, do seek their meat from God Psalm 103:21. Justly then our Lord, when near unto His going down, the very Sun of Righteousness recognising His going down, said to His disciples, as if darkness being about to come, the lion would roam about to seek whom he might devour, that that lion could devour no man, unless with leave: Simon, said He, this night Satan has desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat. But I have prayed for you, that your faith fail not. Luke 22:31-32 When Peter thrice denied, Matthew 26:70, 74 was he not already between the lion's teeth?...

29. The Sun has arisen, and they get them away together, and lay them down in their dens Psalm 103:22. More and more as the Sun rises, so that Christ is recognised by the round world, and glorified therein, do

the lion's whelps get them away together; those devils recede from the persecution of the Church, who instigated men to persecute the house of God, by working in the sons of unbelief. Ephesians 2:2 Now that none of them dares persecute the Church, the Sun has arisen, and they get them away together. And where are they? And they lay them down in their dens. Their dens are the hearts of the unbelieving. How many carry lions crouching in their hearts? They burst not forth thence, they make no assault upon the pilgrim Jerusalem. Wherefore do they not so? Because the Sun is already risen, and is shining over the whole world.

30. What are you doing, O man of God? Thou, O Church of God? What are you, O body of Christ, whose Head is in Heaven? What are you doing, O man, His unity? Man, he says, shall go forth to his work Psalm 103:23. Let therefore this man work good works in the security of the peace of the Church, let him work unto the end. For sometime there will be a sort of general darkening, and a sort of assault will be made, but in the evening, that is, in the end of the world: but now the Church does work in peace and tranquillity; for man shall go forth to his work, and to his labour, unto the evening.

31. O Lord, how great are made Your works! Psalm 103:24. Justly great, justly sublime! Where were those works made, that are so great? What was that station where God stood, or that seat whereupon He sat, when He did those works? What was the place where He worked thus? Whence did those so beautiful works proceed at the first? To take it word for word, every ordained creation, running by ordinance, beautiful by ordinance, rising by ordinance, setting by ordinance, going through all seasons by ordinance, whence has it proceeded? Whence has the Church herself received her rise, her growth, her perfection? In what manner is she destined to a consummation in immortality? With what heralding is she preached? By what mysteries is she recommended? By what types is she concealed? By what preaching is she revealed? Where has God done these things? I see great works. How great are made Your works, O Lord! I ask where He has made them: I find not the place: but I see what follows: In Wisdom have You made them all. All therefore You have made in Christ...The earth is full of Your creation. The earth is full of the creation of Christ. And how so? We discern how: for what was not made by the Father through the Son? Whatever walks and does crawl on earth, whatever does swim in the waters, whatever flies in the air, whatever does revolve in heaven, how much more then the earth, the whole universe, is the work of God. But he seems to me to speak here of some new creation, of which the Apostle says, If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new. And all things are of God. 2 Corinthians 5:17-18 All who believe in Christ, who put off the old man, and put on the new, Ephesians 4:22-24 are a new creature. The earth is full of Your works. On one spot of the earth He was crucified, in one small spot that seed fell into the earth, and died; but brought forth great fruit...

32. The earth is full of Your creation. Of what creation of Yours is the earth full? Of all trees and shrubs, of all animals and flocks, and of the whole of the human race; the earth is full of the creation of God. We see, know, read, recognise, praise, and in these we preach of Him; yet we are not able to praise respecting these things, as fully as our heart does abound with praise after the beautiful contemplation of them. But we ought rather to heed that creation, of which the Apostle says, 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 What old things have passed away? In the Gentiles, all idolatry; in the Jews themselves, all that servitude unto the Law, all those sacrifices that were harbingers of the present Sacrifice. The oldness of man was then abundant; One came to renovate His own work, to melt His silver, to form His coin, and we now see the earth full of Christians believing in God, turning themselves away from their former uncleanness and idolatry, from a past hope to the hope of a new age: and behold it is not yet realized, but is already

possessed in hope, and through that very hope we now sing, and say, The earth is full of Your creation. We do not as yet sing this in our country, nor yet in that rest which is promised, the bars of the gates of Jerusalem not being as yet made fast; but still in our pilgrimage gazing upon the whole of this world, upon men who on every side are running unto the faith, fearing hell, despising death, loving eternal life, scorning the present, and filled with joy at such a spectacle, we say, The earth is full of Your creation.

33. ...So is the great and wide sea also; wherein are things creeping innumerable, both small and great beasts Psalm 103:25. He speaks of the sea as terrible. Snares creep in this world, and surprise the careless suddenly; for who numbers the temptations that creep? They creep, but beware, lest they snatch us away. Let us keep watch on the Wood; even in the water, even on the waves, we are safe: let not Christ sleep, let not faith sleep; if He has slept, let Him be awakened; He will command the winds; He will calm the sea; Matthew 8:24-26 the voyage will be ended, and we shall rejoice in our country. For I see in this terrible sea unbelievers still; for they dwell in barren and bitter waters: but they are both small and great. We know this: many little men of this world are still unbelievers, many great men of this world are so: there are living creatures, both small and great, in this sea. They hate the Church: the name of Christ is a burden to them: they rage not, because they are not permitted; the cruelty which cannot burst forth in deeds, is shut up within the heart. For all, whether small or great, creeping things, both small and great, who at present grieve at the temples being shut, the altars overthrown, the images broken, the laws which make it a capital crime to sacrifice to idols; all who mourn on this account, are still in the sea. What then of us? And by what road then are we to journey unto our country? Through this very sea, but on the Wood. Fear not the danger; that wood which holds together the world does bear you up.

34. There shall go the ships Psalm 103:26. Lo, ships float upon that which alarmed you, and sink not. By ships we understand churches; they go among the storms, among the tempests of temptations, among the waves of the world, among the beasts, both small and great. Christ on the wood of His cross is the Pilot. There shall go the ships. Let not the ships fear, let them not much mind where they float, but by Whom they are steered. There shall go the ships. What voyage do they find tedious, when they feel that Christ is their Pilot? They will sail safely, let them sail diligently, they will reach their promised haven, they will be led to the land of rest.

35. There is also in that sea somewhat which transcends all creatures, great and small. What is this? Let us hear the Psalm: There is that Leviathan, whom You have formed to make sport of him. There are creeping things innumerable, both small and great beasts; there shall the ships go, and shall not fear, not only the creeping things innumerable, and beasts both small and great, but not even the serpent which is there; whom Thou, he speaks unto God, hast made to make sport of him. This is a great mystery; and yet I am about to utter what ye already know. You know that a certain serpent is the enemy of the Church: you have not seen him with the eyes of the flesh, but you see him with the eyes of faith....

36. This serpent then, our ancient enemy, glowing with rage, cunning in his wiles, is in the mighty sea. Here is that Leviathan, whom You have formed to make sport of him. Do thou now make sport of the serpent: for for this end was this serpent made. He falling by his own sin from the sublime realms of the heavens, and made devil instead of angel, received a certain region of his own in this mighty and spacious sea. What you think his kingdom, is his prison. For many say: wherefore has the devil received so great power, that he may rule in this world, and prevails so much, can do so much? How much prevails he? How much can he do? Unless by permission, he can do nothing. Do thou so act, that he may not be allowed to attack you; or if he be allowed to tempt you, he may depart vanquished, and may not gain you. For he has been allowed to tempt some holy men, servants of God: they overcame him, because they departed not

from the way, they whose heel he watched, fell not....

37. He then, my brethren, who does wish to watch the serpent's head, and safely to pass this sea; for it must be that this serpent dwells here, and, as I had commenced saying, the devil when he fell from heaven received this region; let him watch his head, on the part of the fear of the world, and of the lusts of the world. For it is hence that he suggests some object of fear or of desire; he tries your love, or your fear. If you fear hell, and lovest the kingdom of God, you will watch his head....There is no power but of God. Romans 13:1 What then do you fear? Let the dragon be in the waters, let the dragon be in the sea: you are to pass through it. He is made so as to be made sport of, he is ordained to inhabit this place, this region is given him. You think that this habitation is a great thing for him, because you know not the dwellings of the angels whence he fell: what seems to you his glory, is his damnation.

38. ...What then do you fear? Perhaps he is about to try your flesh: it is the scourge of your Lord, not the power of your tempter. His wish is to injure that salvation which is promised: but he is not allowed: but that he may not be allowed, have Christ for your Head: repel the serpent's head: consent not unto his suggestion, slip not from your path. There is that Leviathan, whom You have made to make sport of him.

39. Do you wish to see how incapable he is of hurting you, unless permitted? These, he says, wait all upon You, that You may give them meat in due season Psalm 103:27. And this serpent wishes to devour, but he devours not whom he wishes....You have heard what the serpent's meat is. Thou dost not wish that God give you to be devoured by the serpent; because not the serpent's food: i.e. forsake not the Word of God. For where it is said to the serpent, Dust you shall eat, it is said to the transgressor, Dust you are, and unto dust you shall return. Thou dost not wish to be the serpent's food? Be not dust. How, you reply, shall I not be dust? If you have not a taste for earthly things. Hear the Apostle, that you may not be dust. For the body which you wear is earth: but do thou refuse to be earth. What means this? Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth. Colossians 3:2 If you dost not set your affections on earthly things, you are not earth: if you are not earth, you are not devoured by the serpent, whose appointed food is earth. The Lord gives the serpent his food when He will, what He will: but He judges rightly, he cannot be deceived, He gives him not gold for earth. When You have given it them, they gather it....

40. When you open Your hand, they shall all be filled with good Psalm 103:28. What is it, O Lord, that You open Your hand? Christ is Your hand. To whom is the arm of the Lord revealed? Isaiah 53:1 To whom it is revealed, unto him it is opened: for revelation is opening. When You open Your hand, they shall all be filled with good. When Thou revealest Your Christ, they shall all be filled with good. But they have not good from themselves; this is oftentimes proved unto them. When Thou hidest Your face, they are troubled Psalm 103:29. Many filled with good have attributed to themselves what they had, and have wished to boast as in their own righteousnesses, and have said to themselves, I am righteous; I am great: and have become self-complacent. Unto these the Apostle speaks: What have you, that you did not receive? 1 Corinthians 4:7 But God, wishing to prove unto man that whatever he has he has from Him, so that with good he may gain humility also, sometimes troubles him; He turns away His face from him, and he falls into temptation; and He shows him that his righteousness, and his walking aright, was only under His government....

41. But why do You do this? Why do You hide Your face, that they may be troubled? You shall take away their breath, and they shall fail. Their breath was their pride; they boast, they attribute things to themselves, they justify themselves. Hide, therefore, Your face, that they may be troubled: take away their breath, and let them fail; let them cry unto You, Hear me, O Lord, and that soon, for my spirit waxes faint:

hide not Your face from me. You shall take away their breath, and they shall fail, and shall be turned to their dust. The man who repents of his sin discovers himself, that he had not strength of himself; and does confess unto God, saying, that he is earth and ashes. O proud one, you are turned to your own dust, your breath has been taken away; no longer do you boast yourself, no longer extol yourself, no longer justify yourself; you see that you are made of dust, and when the Lord turns away His face, you have fallen back into your own dust. Pray, therefore, confess your dust and your weakness.

42. And see what follows: You shall send forth Your Spirit, and they shall be made Psalm 103:30. You shall take away their spirit, and send forth Your own: You shall take away their spirit: they shall have no spirit of their own. Are they then forsaken? Blessed are the poor in spirit: Matthew 5:3 but they are not forsaken. They refused to have a spirit of their own: they shall have the Spirit of God. Such were our Lord's words to the future martyrs: Matthew 10:20 It is not ye that speak, but the Spirit of your Father which speaks in you. Attribute not your courage to yourselves. If it is yours, He says, and not Mine, it is obstinacy, not courage. For we are His workmanship, says the Apostle, created unto good works. Ephesians 2:10 From His Spirit we have received grace, that we may live unto righteousness: for it is He that justifies the ungodly. Romans 4:5 You shall take away their spirit, and they shall fail; You shall send forth Your Spirit, and they shall be made: and You shall renew the face of the earth: that is, with new men, confessing themselves to have been justified, not righteous of their own power, so that the grace of God is in them. What then? When He has taken away our spirit, we shall be turned again to our dust, beholding to our edification our weakness, that when we receive His Spirit we may be refreshed. See what follows: Be the glory of the Lord for ever Psalm 103:31. Not yours, not mine, not his, or his; not for a season, but for ever. The Lord shall rejoice in His works. Not in yours, as if they were yours: because if your works are evil, it is through your iniquity; if good, it is through the grace of God. The Lord shall rejoice in His works.

43. Who looks on the earth, and makes it tremble; who touches the hills, and they shall smoke Psalm 103:32. O earth, you were exulting in your good, to yourself you ascribed your fullness and opulence; behold, the Lord looks on you, and causes you to tremble. May He look on you, and make you tremble: for the trembling of humility is better than the confidence of pride....For it is God, he says, which works in you. For this reason then with trembling, because God works in you. Because He gave, because what you have comes not from you, you shall work with fear and trembling, for if you fear not Him, He will take away what He gave. Work, therefore, with trembling. Hear another Psalm: Serve the Lord with fear, and rejoice unto Him with trembling. If we must rejoice with trembling, God beholds us, there comes an earthquake; when God looks upon us, let our hearts tremble; then will God rest there. Hear Him in another passage: Upon whom shall My Spirit rest? Even on him that is lowly and quiet, and who trembles at My Word. Isaiah 66:2

Who looks on the earth, and makes it tremble; who touches the hills, and they shall smoke Psalm 103:32. The hills were proud, and boastful of themselves, God had not touched them: He touches them, and they shall smoke. What means the smoking of the hills? That they pray unto the Lord. Behold great hills, proud hills, vast hills, prayed not to God: they wished themselves to be entreated, and entreated not Him who was above them. For what powerful, arrogant, proud man is there upon the earth, who deigns humbly to entreat God? I speak of the ungodly, not of the cedars of Libanus, which the Lord has planted. Every ungodly man, unhappy soul, knows not how to entreat God, while he wishes himself to be entreated by men. He is a hill; it is needful that God touch him, that he may smoke: when he has begun to smoke, he will offer prayers unto God, as it were the sacrifice of his heart. He smokes unto God, he then beats his breast: he begins to weep, for smoke does elicit tears.

44. I will sing unto the Lord in my life Psalm 103:33. What will sing? Everything that is willing. Let us sing unto the Lord in our life. Our life at present is only hope; our life will be eternity hereafter: the life of mortal life, is the hope of an everlasting life. I will praise my God while I have my being. Since I am in Him for ever and ever, while I have my being, I will praise my God. Let us not imagine that, when we have commenced praising God in that state, we shall have any other work: our whole life will be for the praises of God. If we become weary of Him whom we praise, we may also become weary of praising. If He is ever loved, He is ever praised by us.

45. Let my discourse be pleasing to Him: my joy shall be in the Lord Psalm 103:34. What is the discourse of man unto God, save the confession of sins? Confess unto God what you are, and you have discoursed with Him. Discourse unto Him, do good works, and discourse. Wash you, make you clean, says Isaiah. Isaiah 1:16 What is it to discourse unto God? Unfold yourself to him who knows you, that He may unfold Himself to you who know not Him. Behold, it is your discourse that pleases the Lord; the offering of your humility, the tribulation of your heart, the holocaust of your life, this pleases God. But what is pleasing to yourself? My joy shall be in the Lord. This is that discoursing which I meant between God and yourself: show yourself to Him who knows you, and He shows Himself unto you who know not him. Pleasing unto Him is your confession: sweet unto you is His grace. He has spoken Himself unto you. How? By the Word. What Word? Christ...

46. Let the sinners be consumed out of the earth Psalm 103:35. He seems angry! O holy soul, which here does sing and groan! Would that our soul were with that very soul! Would that it were coupled with it, associated, conjoined with it! It shall behold also His loving-kindness when he is angry. For who but he who is filled with charity, understands this? Thou tremblest, because he curses. And who does curse? A saint. Without doubt he is listened to. But it is said unto the saints, Bless, and curse not. Romans 12:14 What is then the sense of the words, Let the sinners be consumed out of the earth? Let them utterly be consumed; let their spirit be taken away, that He may send forth His own Spirit, and they may be restored. And the ungodly, so that they be no more. In what that they be no more, save as wicked men? Let them therefore be justified, that they may no longer be ungodly. The Psalmist saw this, and was filled with joy, and repeats the first verse of the Psalm: Bless thou the Lord, O my soul. Let our soul bless the Lord, brethren, since He has deigned to give unto us both understanding and the power of language, and unto you attention and earnestness in hearing. Let each, as he can recall to mind what he has heard, by mutual conversation stir up the food you have received, ruminate on what you have heard, let it not descend in you into the bowels of forgetfulness. Let the treasure to be desired Proverbs 21:20 rest upon your lips. These matters have been sought out and discovered with great labour, with great labour have they been announced and discoursed of; may our toil be fruitful unto you, and may our soul bless the Lord.

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