

Exposition on Psalm 34

by St. Augustine

The sermon emphasizes the importance of humility, seeking the Lord, and approaching Him with a contrite heart in order to experience His blessings and light.

Scripture: Psalm 33:1-2, Psalm 33:5, Psalm 33:8, Psalm 33:12, Psalm 33:18, Psalm 33:20-22

Topics: "Righteous Living", "Faith Assurance"

Description

St. Augustine preaches about the importance of righteousness, humility, and trust in the Lord. He emphasizes the need to depart from evil, do good, seek peace, and have patience in tribulations. St. Augustine highlights the significance of faith as the firm support of a Christian, likening it to unbreakable bones. He explains that the death of sinners is the worst, especially for those who hate the righteous one, but assures that the Lord redeems the souls of His servants, and none who trust in Him shall perish.

Transcript

A psalm of David, when he changed his countenance before Abimelech, and he sent him away, and he departed.

1. Because there was there a sacrifice after the order of Aaron, and afterwards He of His Own Body and Blood appointed a sacrifice after the order of Melchizedek; He changed then His Countenance in the Priesthood, and sent away the kingdom of the Jews, and came to the Gentiles. What then is, He affected? He was full of affection. For what is so full of affection as the Mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ, who, seeing our infirmity, that He might deliver us from everlasting death, underwent temporal death with such great injury and contumely? And He drummed: because a drum is not made, except when a skin is extended on wood; and David drummed, to signify that Christ should be crucified. But, He drummed upon the doors of the city: what are the doors of the city, but our hearts which we had closed against Christ, who by the drum of His Cross has opened the hearts of mortal men? And was carried in His Own Hands: how carried in His Own Hands? Because when He commended His Own Body and Blood, He took into His Hands that which the faithful know; and in a manner carried Himself, when He said, This is My Body. Matthew 26:26 And He fell down at the doors of the gate; that is, He humbled Himself. For this it is, to fall down even at the very beginning of our faith. For the door of the gate is the beginning of faith; whence begins the Church, and arrives at last even unto sight: that as it believes those things which it sees not, it may deserve to enjoy them, when it shall have begun to see face to face. So is the title of the Psalm; briefly we have heard it; let us now hear the very words of Him that affects, and drums upon the doors of the city.

2. I will bless the Lord at all times; His praise shall be ever in my mouth Psalm 33:1. So speaks Christ, so also let a Christian speak; for a Christian is in the Body of Christ; and therefore was Christ made Man, that that Christian might be enabled to be an Angel, who says, I will bless the Lord at all times. When shall I bless the Lord? When He blesses you? When the goods of this world abound? When you have great abundance of grain, oil, and wine, of gold and silver, of servants and cattle; when this mortal health remains unwounded and sound; when all that are born to you grow up, nothing is withdrawn by immature death, happiness wholly reigns in your house, and all things overflow around you; then shall you bless the Lord? No; but at all times. Therefore both then, and when according to the time, or according to the scourges of our Lord God, these things are troubled, are taken away, are seldom born to you, and born pass away. For these things come to pass, and thence follows penury, need, labour, pain, and temptation. But you, who hast sung, I will bless the Lord at all times: His praise shall be ever in my mouth, both when He gives them, bless; and when He takes them away, bless. For it is He that gives, it is He that takes away: but Himself from him that blesses Him He takes not away.

3. But who is it that blesses the Lord at all times, except the humble in heart. For very humility taught our Lord in His Own Body and Blood: because when He commends His Own Body and Blood, He commends His Humility, in that which is written in this history, in that seeming madness of David, which we have passed by, And his spittle ran down over his beard. 1 Samuel 21:13 When the Apostle was read, You heard the same spittle, but running down over the beard. One says perhaps, What spittle have we heard? Was it not read but now, where the Apostle says, The Jews require a sign, and the Greeks seek after wisdom? But now it was read, But we preach, says he, Christ crucified (for then He drummed), unto the Jews a stumbling block, and unto the Greeks foolishness; but unto them which are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the Power of God, and the Wisdom of God. Because the Foolishness of God is wiser than men, and the Weakness of God is stronger than men. 1 Corinthians 1:22-25 For spittle signifies foolishness; spittle signifies weakness. But if the Foolishness of God is wiser than men, and the Weakness of God is stronger than men; let not the spittle as it were offend you, but observe that it runs down over the beard: for as by the spittle, weakness; so by the beard, strength is signified. He covered then His Strength by the body of His Weakness, and that which without was weak, appeared as it were in spittle; but within His Divine Strength was covered as a beard. Therefore humility is commended unto us. Be humble if you would bless the Lord at all times, and that His praise should be ever in your mouth....

4. But wherefore does man bless the Lord at all times? Because he is humble. What is it to be humble? To take not praise unto himself. Who would himself be praised, is proud: who is not proud, is humble. Would you not then be proud? That you may be humble, say what is here written; In the Lord shall my soul be praised: the humble shall hear thereof and be glad Psalm 33:2. Those then who will not be praised in the Lord, are not humble, but fierce, rough, lifted up, proud. Gentle cattle would the Lord have; be thou the Lord's jumentum; that is, be thou humble. He sits upon you, He rules you: fear not lest you stumble, and fall headlong: that indeed is your infirmity; but consider Who sits upon you. You are an ass's colt, but you carry Christ. For even He on an ass's colt came into the city; and that beast was gentle....Be not ye as the horse or as the mule, which have no understanding. For horse and mule sometimes lift up their neck, and by their own fierceness throw off their rider. They are tamed with the bit, with bridle, with stripes, until they learn to submit, and to carry their master. But you, before your jaws are bruised with the bridle, be humble, and carry your Lord: wish not praise for yourself, but praised be He who sits upon you, and say thou, In the Lord shall my soul be praised; the humble shall hear thereof, and be glad....

5. Now follows, O magnify the Lord with me Psalm 33:3. Who is this that exhorts us, that we should magnify the Lord with him? Whoever, Brethren, is in the body of Christ, ought for this to labour, that the Lord may be magnified with him. For he loves the Lord, whoever he is. And how does he love Him? So as not to envy his fellow-lover....Let them blush who so love God as to envy others. Abandoned men love a charioteer, and whoever loves a charioteer or hunter, wishes the whole people to love with him, and exhorts, saying, Love with me this pantomime, love with me this or that shame. He calls among the people that shame may be loved with him; and does not a Christian call in the Church, that the Truth of God may be loved with him? Stir up then love in yourselves, Brethren; and call to every one of yours, and say, O magnify the Lord with me. Let there be in you that fervour. Wherefore are these things recited and explained? If you love God, bring quickly to the love of God all who are joined unto you, and all who are in your house; if the Body of Christ is loved by you, that is, if the unity of the Church, bring them quickly to enjoy, and say, O magnify the Lord with me.

6. And let us exalt His Name together. What is, let us exalt His Name together? That is, in one. For many copies so have it, O magnify the Lord with me; and let us exalt His Name in one. Whether it be said, together, or in one, it is the same thing. Therefore bring quickly whom you can, by exhorting, by transporting, by beseeching, by disputing, by rendering a reason, with meekness, with gentleness. Bring them quickly unto love; that if they magnify the Lord, they may magnify Him in one....

7. I sought the Lord, and He heard me Psalm 33:4. Where heard the Lord? Within. Where gives He? Within. There you pray, there you are heard, there you are blessed. You have prayed, you are heard, you are blessed; and he knows not who stands by you: it is all carried on in secret, as the Lord says in the Gospel, Enter into your closet, and when you have shut your door, pray to your Father which is in secret; and your Father which sees in secret, shall reward you openly. Matthew 6:6 When therefore you enter into your chamber, you enter into your heart. Blessed are they who rejoice when they enter into their heart, and find therein nought of evil....

8. I sought the Lord, and He heard me. Who then are not heard, seek not the Lord. Attend, Holy Brethren; he said not, I sought gold from the Lord, and He heard me; I sought from the Lord long life, and He heard me; I sought from the Lord this or that, and He heard me. It is one thing to seek anything from the Lord, another to seek the Lord Himself. I sought (says he) the Lord, and He heard me. But you, when you pray, saying, Kill that my enemy, seekest not the Lord, but, as it were, makest yourself a judge over your enemy, and makest your God an executioner. How do you know that he is not better than thou, whose death you seek? In that very thing haply he is, that he seeks not yours. Therefore seek not from the Lord anything without, but seek the Lord Himself, and He will hear you, and while thou yet speakest, He will say, Lo, here I am. Isaiah 65:24 ...

9. I have said who was the exhorter, namely, that lover who would not alone embrace what he loves, and says, Approach unto Him, and be ye lightened Psalm 33:5. For he says what he himself proved. For some spiritual person in the Body of Christ, or even our Lord Jesus Christ Himself according to the flesh, the Head exhorting His Own Members, says; what? Approach unto Him, and be ye lightened. Or rather some spiritual Christian invites us to approach to our Lord Jesus Christ Himself. But let us approach to Him and be lightened; not as the Jews approached to Him, that they might be darkened; for they approached to Him that they might crucify Him: let us approach to Him that we may receive His Body and Blood. They by Him crucified were darkened; we by eating and drinking The Crucified are lightened. Approach unto Him, and be ye lightened. Lo, this is said to the Gentiles. Christ was crucified amid the Jews raging and seeing; the Gentiles were absent; lo, they have approached who were in darkness, and they who saw not are

lightened. Whereby approach the Gentiles? By following with faith, by longing with the heart, by running with charity. Your feet are your charity. Have two feet, be not lame. What are your two feet? The two commandments of love, of your God, and of your Neighbour. With these feet run thou unto God, approach unto Him, for He has both exhorted you to run, and has Himself shed His Own Light, as he has magnificently and divinely continued. And your faces shall not be ashamed. Approach (says he) unto Him, and be ye lightened; and your faces shall not be ashamed. No face shall be ashamed but of the proud. Wherefore? Because he would be lifted up, and when he has suffered insult, or ignominy, or mischance in this world, or any affliction, he is ashamed. But fear not thou, approach unto Him, and you shall not be ashamed....

10. As the Prophet testifies, The poor man cried, and the Lord heard him Psalm 33:6. He teaches you how you may be heard. Therefore are you not heard, because you are rich. Lest haply thou say, you cried and wast not heard, hear wherefore; The poor man cried, and the Lord heard him. As poor cry thou, and the Lord hears. And how shall I cry as poor? By not, if you have anything, presuming therefrom upon your own strength: by understanding that you are needy; by understanding that so long are you poor, as you have not Him who makes you rich. But how did the Lord hear him? And saved him out of all his troubles. And how saves He men out of all their troubles? The Angel of the Lord shall send round about them that fear Him, and shall deliver them Psalm 33:7. So it is written, brethren, not as some bad copies have it, The Lord shall send His Angel round about them that fear Him, and He shall deliver them: but thus, The Angel of the Lord shall send round about them that fear Him, and shall deliver them. Whom called He here the Angel of the Lord, who shall send round about them that fear Him, and shall deliver them? Our Lord Jesus Christ Himself is called in Prophecy, the Angel of the great Counsel, the Messenger of the great Counsel; so the Prophets called Him. Even He then, the Angel of the great Counsel, that is, the Messenger, shall send unto them that fear the Lord, and shall deliver them. Fear not then lest you be hid: wheresoever you have feared the Lord, there does that Angel know you, who shall send to succour you, and shall deliver you.

11. Now will He speak openly of the same Sacrament, whereby He was carried in His Own Hands. O taste and see that the Lord is good Psalm 33:8. Does not the Psalm now open itself, and show you that seeming insanity and constant madness, the same insanity and sober inebriety of that David, who in a figure showed I know not what, when in the person of king Achis they said to him, How is it? When the Lord said, Except a man eat My Flesh and drink My Blood, he shall have no life in him? John 6:53 And they in whom reigned Achis, that is, error and ignorance, said; what said they? How can this man give us his flesh to eat? John 6:52 If you are ignorant, Taste and see that the Lord is good: but if you understand not, you are king Achis: David shall change His Countenance and shall depart from you, and shall quit you, and shall depart.

12. Blessed is the man that trusts in Him. Why needs this to be explained at length? Whoever trusts not in the Lord, is miserable. Who is there that trusts not in the Lord? He that trusts in himself....

13. O fear the Lord, all you His saints, for there is no want to them that fear Him Psalm 33:9. For many therefore will not fear God the Lord, lest they suffer hunger. It is said to them, Defraud not; and they say, Whence can I feed myself? No art can be without imposture; no business can be without fraud. But fraud God punishes: fear God. But if I should fear God, I shall not have whence to live. O fear the Lord, all you His saints, for there is no want to them that fear Him. He promises plenty to him that trembles, and doubts, lest haply if he should fear God, he should lose things superfluous. The Lord fed you despising Him, and will He desert you fearing Him? Attend, and say not, Such an one is rich, and I am poor. I fear the Lord, he

by not fearing how much has he gained, and I by fearing am bare! See what follows; The rich do lack and suffer hunger, but they that seek the Lord shall not want any good thing Psalm 33:10. If you receive it according to the letter, He seems to deceive you, for you see that many rich men that are wicked die in their riches, and are not made poor while they live; you see them grow old, and come even to the end of life amid great abundance and riches. You see their funeral pomp celebrated with great profusion, the man himself brought rich even to the sepulchre, having expired in beds of ivory, his family weeping around; and you say in your mind, if haply you know some both sins and crimes done by him: I know what things that man has done; lo, he has grown old, he has died in his bed, his friends follow him to the grave, his funeral is celebrated with all this pomp; I know what he has done; the Scripture has deceived me, and has spoken falsely, where I hear and sing; The rich do lack and suffer hunger. When was this man in need? When did he suffer hunger? But they that seek the Lord shall not want any good thing. Daily I rise up to Church, daily I bend the knee, daily I seek the Lord, and have nothing good: this man sought not the Lord, and he has died in the midst of all these good things! Thus thinking, the snare of offense chokes him; for he seeks mortal food on the earth, and seeks not a true reward in heaven, and so he puts his head into the devil's noose, his jaws are tied close, and the devil holds him fast unto evil doing, that so he may imitate the evil men, whom he sees to die in such plenty.

14. Therefore understand it not so....When you are filled with spiritual riches, can you be poor? And was he therefore rich, because he had a bed of ivory; and are you poor who hast the chamber of your heart filled with such jewelry of virtues, justice, truth, charity, faith, endurance? Unfold your riches, if you have them, and compare them with the riches of the rich. But such an one has found in the market mules of great value, and has bought them. If you could find faith to be sold, how much would you give for that, which God wills that you should have gratis, and you are ungrateful? Those rich then lack, they lack, and what is heavier, they lack bread....For He has said, I am the Living Bread which came down from Heaven. John 6:51 And again, Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled. But they that seek the Lord shall not want any good thing: but what manner of good, I have already said.

15. Come, you children, hearken unto me: I will teach you the fear of the Lord Psalm 33:11. You think, brethren, that I say this: think that David says it; think that an Apostle says it; nay think that our Lord Jesus Christ Himself says it; Come, you children, hearken unto Me. Let us hearken unto Him together: hearken ye unto Him through us. For He would teach us; He the Humble, He that drums, He that affects, would teach us....

16. What man is he that desires life, and loves to see good days? Psalm 33:12. He asks a question. Does not every one among you answer, I? Is there any man among you that loves not life, that is, that desires not life, and loves not to see good days? Do ye not daily thus murmur, and thus speak; How long shall we suffer these things? Daily are they worse and worse: in our fathers' time were days more joyful, were days better. O if you could ask those same, your fathers, in like manner would they murmur to you of their own days. Our fathers were happy, miserable are we, evil days have we: such an one ruled over us, we thought that after his death might some refreshing be given to us; worse things have come: O God, show unto us good days! What man is he that desires life, and loves to see good days? Let him not seek here good days. A good thing he seeks, but not in its right place does he seek it. As, if you should seek some righteous man in a country, wherein he lived not, it would be said to you, A good man you seek, a great man you seek, seek him still, but not here; in vain you seek him here, you will never find him. Good days you seek, together let us seek them, seek not here....Read the Scriptures....

17. Let not a Christian then murmur, let him see whose steps he follows: but if he loves good days, let him hearken unto Him teaching and saying, Come, you children, hearken unto Me; I will teach you the fear of the Lord. What would you? Life and good days. Hear, and do. Keep your tongue from evil Psalm 33:13. This do. I will not, says a miserable man, I will not keep my tongue from evil, and yet I desire life and good days. If a workman of yours should say to you, I indeed lay waste this vineyard, yet I require of you my reward; you brought me to the vineyard to lop and prune it, I cut away all the useful wood, I will cut short also the very trunks of the vines, that you have thereon nothing to gather, and when I have done this, you shall repay to me my labour. Would you not call him mad? Would you not drive him from your house or ever he put his hand to the knife? Such are those men who would both do evil, and swear falsely, and speak blasphemy against God, and murmur, and defraud, and be drunken, and dispute, and commit adultery, and use charms, and consult diviners, and withal see good days. To such it is said, you can not doing ill seek a good reward. If you are unjust, shall God also be unjust? What shall I do, then? What do you desire? Life I desire, good days I desire. Keep your tongue from evil, and your lips that they speak no guile, that is, defraud not any, lie not to any.

18. But what is, Depart from evil? Psalm 33:14. It is little that thou injure none, murder none, steal not, commit not adultery, do no wrong, speak no false witness; Depart from evil. When you have departed, you say, Now I am safe, I have done all, I shall have life, I shall see good days. Not only says he, Depart from evil, but also, and do good. It is nothing that thou spoil not: clothe the naked. If you have not spoiled, you have declined from evil; but you will not do good, except thou receive the stranger into your house. So then depart from evil, as to do good. Seek peace, and ensue it. He has not said, You shall have peace here; seek it, and ensue it. Whither shall I ensue it? Whither it has gone before. For the Lord is our peace, has risen again, and has ascended into Heaven. Seek peace, and ensue it; because when thou also hast risen, this mortal shall be changed, and you shall embrace peace there where no man shall trouble you. For there is perfect peace, where you will not hunger....

19. The Eyes of the Lord are upon the righteous: fear not then; labour; the eyes of the Lord are upon you. And His Ears are open unto their prayers Psalm 33:15. What would you more? If an householder in a great house should not hearken to a servant murmuring, he would complain, and say, What hardship do we here suffer, and none hears us. Can you say this of God, What hardships I suffer, and none hears me? If He heard me, haply, do you say, He would take away my tribulation: I cry unto Him, and yet have tribulation. Only do thou hold fast His ways, and when you are in tribulation, He hears you. But He is a Physician, and still have you something of putrefaction; you cry out, but still He cuts, and takes not away His Hand, until He has cut as much as pleases Him. For that Physician is cruel who hears a man, and spares his wound and putrefaction. How do mothers rub their children in the baths for their health. Do not the little ones cry out in their hands? Are they then cruel because they spare not, nor hearken unto their tears? Are they not full of affection? And yet the children cry out, and are not spared. So our God also is full of charity, but therefore seems He not to hear, that He may spare and heal us for everlasting.

20. Haply say the wicked, I securely do evil, because the Eyes of the Lord are not upon me: God attends to the righteous, me He sees not, and whatever I do, I do securely. Immediately added the Holy Spirit, seeing the thoughts of men, and said, But the Face of the Lord is against them that do evil; to cut off the remembrance of them from the earth Psalm 33:16.

21. The righteous cried, and the Lord heard them, and delivered them out of all their troubles Psalm 33:17. Righteous were the Three Children; out of the furnace cried they unto the Lord, and in His praises their flames cooled. The flame could not approach nor hurt the innocent and righteous Children praising God,

and He delivered them out of the fire. Daniel 3:28 Some one says, Lo, truly righteous were those who were heard, as it is written, The righteous cried, and the Lord heard them, and delivered them out of all their troubles: but I have cried, and He delivers me not; either I am not righteous, or I do not the things which He commands me, or haply He sees me not. Fear not: only do what He commands; and if He deliver you not bodily, He will deliver you spiritually. For He who took out of the fire the Three Children, did He take out of the fire the Maccabees? 2 Maccabees 7:3 Did not the first sing hymns in the flames, these last in the flames expire? The God of the Three Children, was not He the God also of the Maccabees? The one He delivered, the other He delivered not. Nay, He delivered both: but the Three Children He so delivered, that even the carnal were confounded; but the Maccabees therefore He delivered not so, that those who persecuted them should go into greater torments, while they thought that they had overcome God's Martyrs. He delivered Peter, when the Angel came unto him being in prison, and said, Arise, and go forth, Acts 12:7 and suddenly his chains were loosed, and he followed the Angel, and He delivered him. Had Peter lost righteousness when He delivered him not from the cross? Did He not deliver him then? Even then He delivered him. Did his long life make him unrighteous? Haply He heard him more at last than at first, when truly He delivered him out of all his troubles. For when He first delivered him, how many things did he suffer afterwards! For there He sent him at last, where he could have suffered no evil.

22. The Lord is near unto them that have broken their heart; and saves such as be lowly in spirit Psalm 33:18. God is High: let a Christian be lowly. If he would that the Most High God draw near unto him, let him be lowly. A great mystery, Brethren. God is above all: you raise yourself, and touchest not Him: you humble yourself, and He descends unto you. Many are the troubles of the righteous Psalm 33:19: does He say, Therefore let Christians be righteous, therefore let them hear My Word, that they may suffer no tribulation? He promises not this; but says, Many are the troubles of the righteous. Rather, if they be unrighteous they have fewer troubles, if righteous they have many. But after few tribulations, or none, these shall come to tribulation everlasting, whence they shall never be delivered: but the righteous after many tribulations shall come to peace everlasting, where they shall never suffer any evil. Many are the tribulations of the righteous: but the Lord delivers him out of all.

23. The Lord keeps all their bones: not one of them shall be broken Psalm 33:20: this also, Brethren, let us not receive carnally. Bones are the firm supports of the faithful. For as in flesh our bones give firmness, so in the heart of a Christian it is faith that gives firmness. The patience then which is in faith, is as the bones of the inner man: this is that which cannot be broken. The Lord keeps all their bones: not one of them shall be broken. If of our Lord God Jesus Christ he had said this, The Lord keeps all the bones of His Son; not one of them shall be broken; as is prefigured of Him also in another place, when the lamb was spoken of that should be slain, and it was said of it, Neither shall you break a bone thereof: Exodus 12:46 then was it fulfilled in the Lord, because when He hung upon the Cross, He expired before they came to the Cross, and found His Body lifeless already, and would not break His legs, that it might be fulfilled which was written. John 19:33 But He gave this promise to other Christians also, The Lord keeps all their bones; not one of them shall be broken. Therefore, Brethren, if we see any Saint suffer tribulation, and haply either by a Physician so cut, or by some persecutor so mangled, that his bones be broken; let us not say, This man was not righteous, for this has the Lord promised to His righteous, of whom He said, The Lord keeps all their bones; not one of them shall be broken. Would you see that He spoke of other bones, those which we called the firm supports of faith, that is, patience and endurance in all tribulations? For these are the bones which are not broken. Hear, and see ye in the very Passion of our Lord, what I say. The Lord was in the middle Crucified; near Him were two thieves: the one mocked, the other believed: the one was condemned, the other justified: the one had his punishment both in this world, and that which shall be, but

unto the other said the Lord, Verily I say unto you, Today shall you be with Me in Paradise; Luke 23:43 and yet those who came broke not the bones of the Lord, but of the thieves they broke: as much were broken the bones of the thief who blasphemed, as of the thief who believed. Where then is that which is spoken, The Lord keeps all their bones; not one of them shall be broken? Lo, unto whom He said, Today shall you be with Me in Paradise, could He keep all his bones? The Lord answers you: Yea, I kept them: for the firm support of his faith could not be broken by those blows whereby his legs were broken.

24. The death of sinners is the worst Psalm 33:21. Attend, Brethren, for the sake of those things which I said. Truly Great is the Lord, and His Mercy, truly Great is He who gave to us to eat His Body, wherein He suffered such great things, and His Blood to drink. How regards He them that think evil and say, Such an one died ill, by beasts was he devoured: he was not a righteous man, therefore he perished ill; for else would he not have perished. Is he then righteous who dies in his own house and in his own bed?

This then (do you say) it is whereat I wonder; because I know the sins and the crimes of this same man, and yet he died well; in his own house, within his own doors, with no injury of travel, with none even in mature age. Hearken, The death of sinners is worst. What seems to you a good death, is worst if you could see within. You see him outwardly lying on his bed, do you see him inwardly carried to hell? Hearken, Brethren, and learn from the Gospel what is the worst death of sinners.

Were there not two in that age, a rich man who was clothed in purple and fine linen, and fared sumptuously every day; another a poor man who lay at his door full of sores, and the dogs came and licked his sores, and he desired to be fed with the crumbs which fell from the rich man's table? Now it came to pass that the poor man died (righteous was that poor man), and was carried by Angels into Abraham's bosom. He who saw his body lying at the rich man's door, and no man to bury it, what haply said he?

So die he who is my enemy; and whoever persecutes me, so may I see him. His body is accursed with spitting, his wounds stink; and yet in Abraham's bosom he rests. Luke 16:19-22 If we are Christians, let us believe: if we believe not, Brethren, let none feign himself a Christian. Faith brings us to the end. As the Lord spoke these things, so are they. Does indeed an astrologer speak unto you, and it is true, and does Christ speak, and it is false? But by what sort of death died the rich man?

What sort of death must it not be in purple and fine linen, how sumptuous, how pompous! What funeral ceremonies were there! In what spices was that body buried! And yet when he was in hell, being in torments, from the finger of that despised poor man he desired one drop of water to be poured upon his burning tongue, and obtained it not. Learn then what means, The death of sinners is worst; and ask not beds covered with costly garments, and to have the flesh wrapped in many rich things, friends exhibiting a show of lamentation, a household beating their breasts, a crowd of attendants going before and following when the body is carried out, marble and gilded memorials.

For if you ask those things, they answer you what is false, that of many not light sinners, but altogether wicked, the death is best, who have deserved to be so lamented, so embalmed, so covered, so carried out, so entombed. But ask the Gospel, and it will show to your faith the soul of the rich man burning in torments, which was nothing profited by all those honours and obsequies, which to his dead body the vanity of the living did afford.

25. But because there are many kinds of sinners, and not to be a sinner is difficult, or perhaps in this life impossible, he added immediately, of what kind of sinners the death is worst. And they that hate the

righteous one (says he) shall perish. What righteous one, but Him that justifies the ungodly? Romans 4:5 Whom, but our Lord Jesus Christ, who is also the propitiation for our sins? 1 John 2:2 Who then hate Him, have the worst death; because they die in their sins, who are not through Him reconciled to our God. For the Lord redeems the souls of His servants. But according to the soul is death to be understood either the worst or best, not according to bodily either dishonour, or honours which men see. And none of them which trust in Him shall perish Psalm 33:22; this is the manner of human righteousness, that mortal life, however advanced, because without sin it cannot be, in this perishes not, while it trusts in Him, in whom is remission of sins. Amen.

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