

Exposition on Psalm 37

by St. Augustine

The sermon emphasizes the importance of trusting in the Lord, delighting in the Lord, submitting to the Lord, and ceasing from anger, as the wicked shall be cut off and the righteous shall inherit the land.

Scripture: Psalm 36:1, Psalm 139:23, Matthew 13:30, Matthew 25:34, Mark 13:32, Luke 5:19, 2 Corinthians 5:10, Colossians 3:3

Topics: "Righteous Living", "Gods Judgment"

Description

St. Augustine preaches about the importance of living righteously and trusting in God's judgment, highlighting the contrast between the fate of the righteous and the wicked. He emphasizes the need to trust in God's wisdom and guidance, even in the face of challenges and persecutions, knowing that God will ultimately deliver the righteous and condemn the ungodly. St. Augustine encourages believers to keep innocence, make peace, and have faith in God's salvation, as the wicked will face destruction while the righteous will inherit eternal life.

Transcript

On the first part of the psalm.

1. With terror do they hear of the coming of the last day, who will not be secure by living well: and who fain would live ill, long. But it was for useful purposes that God willed that day to remain unknown; that the heart may be ever ready to expect that of which it knows it is to come, but knows not when it is to come. Seeing, however, that our Lord Jesus Christ was sent to us to be our Master, He said, that of the day not even the Son of Man knew, Mark 13:32 because it was not part of His office as our Master that through Him it should become known to us. For indeed the Father knows nothing that the Son knows not; since that is the Very Knowledge of the Father Itself, which is His Wisdom; now His Son, His Word, is His Wisdom. But because it was not for our good to know that, which however was known to Him who came indeed to teach us, though not to teach us that which it was not good for us to know, He not only, as a Master, taught us something, but also, as a Master, left something untaught. For, as a Master, He knew how both to teach us what was good for us, and not to teach us what was injurious. Now thus, according to a certain form of speech, the Son is said not to know what He does not teach: that is, in the same way that we are daily in the habit of speaking, He is said not to know what He causes us not to know.. ..

2. This it is that disturbs you who are a Christian; that you see men of bad lives prospering, and surrounded with abundance of things like these; you see them sound in health, distinguished with proud

honours; you see their family unvisited by misfortune; the happiness of their relatives, the obsequious attendance of their dependants, their most commanding influence, their life uninterrupted by any sad event; you see their characters most profligate, their external resources most affluent; and your heart says that there is no Divine judgment; that all things are carried to and fro by accidents, and blown about in disorderly and irregular motions. For if God, you say, regarded human affairs, would his iniquity flourish, and my innocence suffer? Every sickness of the soul has in Scripture its proper remedy. Let him then whose sickness is of that kind that he says in his heart things like these, let him drink this Psalm by way of potion....

3. Be not envious because of evil-doers, neither be envious against the workers of iniquity Psalm 36:1. For they shall soon wither like the grass, and shall fade like the herbs of the meadow Psalm 36:2. That which to you seems long, is soon in the sight of God. Conform you yourself to God; and it will be soon to you. That which he here calls grass, that we understand by the herbs of the meadow. They are some worthless things, occupying the surface only of the ground, they have no depth of root. In the winter then they are green; but when the summer sun shall begin to scorch, they will wither away. For now it is the season of winter. Your glory does not as yet appear. But if your love has but a deep root, like that of many trees during winter, the frost passes away, the summer (that is, the Day of Judgment) will come; then will the greenness of the grass wither away. Then will the glory of the trees appear. For you (says the Apostle) are dead, Colossians 3:3 even as trees seem to be in winter, as it were dead, as it were withered. What is our hope then, if we are dead? The root is within; where our root is, there is our life also, for there our love is fixed. And your life is hid with Christ in God. Colossians 3:3 When shall he wither who is thus rooted? But when will our spring be? When our summer? When will the honour of foliage clothe us around, and the fullness of fruit make us rich? When shall this come to pass? Hear what follows: When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall you also appear with Him in glory. And what then shall we do now? Be not envious because of the evil-doers, neither be envious against the workers of iniquity. For they shall soon wither like the grass, and fade like the herb of the meadow.

4. What should you do then? Trust in the Lord Psalm 36:3. For they too trust, but not in the Lord. Their hope is perishable. Their hope is short-lived, frail, fleeting, transitory, baseless. Trust thou in the Lord. Behold, you say, I do trust; what am I to do?

And do good. Do not do that evil which you behold in those men, who are prosperous in wickedness. Do good, and dwell in the land. Lest haply you should be doing good without dwelling in the land. For it is the Church that is the Lord's land. It is her whom He, the Father, the tiller of it, waters and cultivates. For there are many that, as it were, do good works, but yet, in that they do not dwell in the land, they do not belong to the husbandman. Therefore do thou your good, not outside of the land, but do thou dwell in the land. And what shall I have?

And you shall be fed in its riches. What are the riches of that land? Her riches are her Lord! Her riches are her God! He it is to whom it is said, The Lord is the portion of mine inheritance, and of my cup. In a late discourse we suggested to you, dearly beloved, that God is our possession, and that we are at the same time God's possession. Hear how that He is Himself the riches of that land.

Delight yourself in the Lord Psalm 36:4. As if you had put the question, and had said Show me the riches of that land, in which you bid me dwell, he says, Delight yourself in the Lord.

5. And He shall give you the desires of your heart. Understand in their proper signification, the desires of your heart. Distinguish the desires of your heart from the desires of your flesh; distinguish as much as you can. It is not without a meaning that it is said in a certain Psalm, God is (the strength) of mine heart. For there it says in what follows: And God is my portion for ever. For instance: One labours under bodily blindness. He asks that he may receive his sight. Let him ask it; for God does that too, and gives those blessings also. But these things are asked for even by the wicked. This is a desire of the flesh. One is sick, and prays to be made sound. From the point of death he is restored to health. That too is a desire of the flesh, as are all of such a kind. What is the desire of the heart? As the desire of the flesh is to wish to have one's eyesight restored, to enable him, that is, to see that light, which can be seen by such eyes; so the desire of the heart relates to a different sort of light. For, Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God. Delight you yourself in the Lord; and He shall give you the desires of your heart.

6. Behold (you say), I do long after it, I do ask for it, I do desire it. Shall I then accomplish it? No. Who shall then? Reveal your way unto the Lord: trust also in Him, and He shall bring it to pass Psalm 36:5. Mention to Him what you suffer, mention to Him what thou dost desire. For what is it that you suffer? The flesh lusts against the spirit, and the spirit against the flesh. Galatians 5:17 What is it then that you desire? Wretched man that I am! Who shall deliver me from the body of this death? Romans 7:24 And because it is He Himself that will bring it to pass, when you shall have revealed your ways unto Him; hear what follows: The grace of God through Jesus Christ our Lord. What is it then that He is to bring to pass, since it is said, Reveal your way unto Him, and He will bring it to pass? What will He bring to pass?

And He shall bring forth your righteousness as the light Psalm 36:6. For now, your righteousness is hid. Now it is a thing of faith; not yet of sight. You believe something that you may do it. You do not yet see that in which you believe. But when you shall begin to see that, which you believed before, your righteousness will be brought forth to the light, because it is your faith that was your righteousness. For the just lives by faith.

7. And He shall bring forth your judgment as the noon-day. That is to say, as the clear light. It was too little to say, as the light. For we call it light already, even when it but dawns: we call it light even while the sun is rising. But never is the light brighter than at mid-day. Therefore He will not only bring forth your righteousness as the light, but your judgment shall be as the noon-day. For now do you make your judgment to follow Christ. This is your purpose: this is your choice: this is your judgment....

8. What should I do then? Hear what you should do. Submit to the Lord, and entreat Him Psalm 36:7. Let this be your life, to obey His commandments. For this is to submit to Him; and to entreat Him until He gives you what He has promised. Let good works continue; let prayer continue. For men ought always to pray, and not to faint. Luke 18:1 Wherein do you show that you are submitted to Him? In doing what He has commanded. But haply thou dost not receive your wages as yet, because as yet you are not able. For He is already able to give them; but you are not already able to receive them. Exercise yourself in works. Labour in the vineyard; at the close of the day crave your wages. Faithful is He who brought you into the vineyard. Submit to the Lord, and entreat Him.

9. See! I do so; I do 'submit to the Lord, and I do entreat.' But what do you think? That neighbour of mine is a wicked man, living a bad life, and prosperous! His thefts, adulteries, robberies, are known to me. Lifted up above every one, proud, and raised on high by wickedness, he deigns not to notice me. In these circumstances, how shall I hold out with patience? This is a sickness; drink, by way of remedy. Fret not yourself because of him who prospers in his way. He prospers, but it is in his way: you suffer, but it is in

God's way! His portion is prosperity on his way, misery on arriving at its end: yours, toil on the road, happiness in its termination. The Lord knows the way of the righteous; and the way of the ungodly shall perish. Thou walkest those ways which the Lord knows, and if you dost suffer toil in them, they do not deceive you. The way of the ungodly is but a transitory happiness; at the end of the way the happiness is at an end also. Why? Because that way is the broad road; its termination leads to the pit of hell. Now, your way is narrow; and few there be that enter in through it: Matthew 7:13-14 but into how ample a field it comes at the last, you ought to consider. Fret not yourself at him who prospers in his way; because of the man who brings wicked devices to pass.

Cease from anger, and forsake wrath Psalm 36:8. Wherefore are you angry? Wherefore is it that, through that passion and indignation, you blaspheme, or almost blaspheme? Against the man who brings wicked devices to pass, cease from anger, and forsake wrath. Do you not know whither that wrath tempts you on? You are on the point of saying unto God, that He is unjust. It tends to that. Look! Why is that man prosperous, and this man in adversity? Consider what thought it begets: stifle the wicked notion. Cease from anger, and forsake wrath: so that now returning to your senses, you may say, My eye is disturbed because of wrath. What eye is that, but the eye of faith? To the eye of your faith I appeal. Thou believed in Christ: why did you believe? What did He promise you? If it was the happiness of this world that Christ promised you, then murmur against Christ; yes! Murmur against Him, when you see the wicked flourishing. What of happiness did He promise? What, save in the Resurrection of the Dead? But what in this life? That which was His portion. His portion, I say! Do you, servant and disciple, disdain what your Lord, what your Master bore?...

For evil-doers shall be cut off Psalm 36:9. But I see their prosperity. Believe Him who says, they shall be cut off; Him who sees better than thou, since His eye anger cannot cloud. For evil-doers shall be cut off. But those that wait upon the Lord,-- not upon any one that can deceive them; but verily on Him who is the Truth itself--But those that wait upon the Lord, they shall inherit the land. What land, but that Jerusalem, with the love of which whosoever is inflamed, shall come to peace at the last.

10. But how long is the sinner to flourish? How long shall I have to endure? You are impatient; that which seems long to you, will soon come to pass. It is infirmity makes that seem long, which is really short, as is found in the case of the longings of sick men. Nothing seems so long as the mixing of the potion for him when thirsty. For all that his attendants are making all speed, lest haply the patient be angry; When will it be done? (he cries). When will it be drest? When will it be served? Those who are waiting upon you are making haste, but your infirmity fancies that long which is being done with expedition. Behold ye, therefore, our Physician complying with the infirmity of the patient, saying, How long shall I have to endure? How long will it be?

Yet a little while, and the sinner shall not be Psalm 36:10. Is it certainly among sinners, and because of the sinner, that you murmur. A little while, and he shall not be. Lest haply because I said, They that wait upon the Lord, they shall inherit the land, you should think that waiting to be of very long duration. Wait a little while, you shall receive without end what you wait for. A little while, a moderate space. Review the years from Adam's time up to this day; run through the Scriptures. It is almost yesterday that he fell from Paradise! So many ages have been measured out, and unrolled. Where now are the past ages? Even so, however, shall the few which remain, pass away also. Had you been living throughout all that time, since Adam was banished from Paradise up to this present day, you would certainly see that the life, which had thus flown away, had not been of long duration. But how long is the duration of each individual's life? Add any number of years you please: prolong old age to its longest duration: what is it? Is it not but a morning

breeze? Be it so, however, that the Day of Judgment is far off, when the reward of the righteous and of the unrighteous is to come: your last day at all events cannot be far off. Make yourself ready against this! For such as you shall have departed from this life, shall you be restored to the other. At the close of that short life, you will not yet be, where the Saints shall be, to whom it shall be said, Come, you blessed of My Father: inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the beginning of the world. Matthew 25:34 You will not yet be there? Who does not know that? But you may already be there, where that beggar, once covered with sores, was seen at a distance, at rest, by that proud and unfruitful rich man in the midst of his torments. Surely hid in that rest you wait in security for the Day of Judgment, when you are to receive again a body, to be changed so as to be made equal to an Angel. How long then is that for which we are impatient, and are saying, When will it come? Will it tarry long? This our sons will say hereafter, and our sons' sons will say too; and, though each one of these in succession will say this same thing, that little while that is yet to be, passes away, as all that is already past has passed away already! O thou sick one! Yet a little while, and the sinner shall not be. Yea, you shall diligently consider his place, and you shall not find him....

11. But the meek shall inherit the land Psalm 36:11. That land is the one of which we have often spoken, the holy Jerusalem, which is to be released from these her pilgrimages, and to live for ever with God, and on God. Therefore, They shall inherit the land. What shall be their delight? And they shall delight themselves in the abundance of peace. Let the ungodly man delight himself here in the multitude of his gold, in the multitude of his silver, in the multitude of his slaves, in the multitude, lastly, of his baths, his roses, his intoxicating wines, his most sumptuous and luxurious banquets. Is this the power you envy? Is this the glory that delights you? Would not his fate be worthy to be deplored, even if he were to be so for ever? What shall be your delights? And they shall delight themselves in the abundance of peace. Peace shall be your gold. Peace shall be your silver. Peace shall be your lands. Peace shall be your life, your God Peace. Peace shall be to you whatsoever you desire....

On the Second Part of the Psalm.

1. Then follow these words: The wicked plots against the just, and gnashes upon him with his teeth Psalm 36:12: But the Lord shall laugh at him Psalm 36:13. At whom? Surely at the sinner, gnashing upon the other with his teeth. But wherefore shall the Lord laugh at him? For He foresees that his day is coming. He seems indeed full of wrath, while, ignorant of the morrow that is in store for him, he is threatening the just. But the Lord beholds and foresees his day. What day? That in which He will render to every man according to his works. For he is treasuring up unto himself wrath against the day of wrath, and revelation of the just judgment of God. Romans 2:6, 5 But it is the Lord that foresees it; you do not foresee it. It has been revealed to you by Him who foresees it. You did not know of the day of the unrighteous, in which he is to suffer punishment. But He who knows it has revealed it to you. It is a main part of knowledge to join yourself to Him who has knowledge. He has the eyes of knowledge: have thou the eyes of a believing mind. That which God sees, be thou willing to believe. For the day of the unjust, which God foresees, will come. What day is that? The day for all vengeance! For it is necessary that vengeance should be taken upon the ungodly, that vengeance be taken upon the unjust, whether he turn, or whether he turn not. For if he shall turn from his ways, that very thing, that his injustice has come to an end, is the infliction of vengeance....

2. The wicked have drawn out the sword, and have bent their bow, to cast down the poor and needy, and to slay such as be of upright heart Psalm 36:14. Their weapon shall enter into their own heart Psalm 36:15. It is an easy thing for his weapon, that is, his sword, to reach your body, even as the sword of the

persecutors reached the body of the Martyrs, but when the body had been smitten, the heart remained unhurt; but his heart who drew out the sword against the body of the just did not clearly remain unhurt. This is attested by this very Psalm. It says, Their weapon, that is, Their sword shall, not go into their body, but, their weapon shall go into their own heart. They would fain have slain him in the body. Let them die the death of the soul. For those whose bodies they sought to kill, the Lord has freed from anxiety, saying, Fear not them who kill the body, but cannot kill the soul. Matthew 10:28 ...

3. And their bows shall be broken. What is meant by, And their bows shall be broken? Their plots shall be frustrated. For above He had said, The wicked have drawn out the sword and bent their bows. By the drawing out of the sword he would have understood open hostility; but by the bending of the bow, secret conspiracies. See! His sword destroys himself, and his laying of snares is frustrated. What is meant by frustrated? That it does no mischief to the righteous. How then, for instance (you ask), did it do no mischief to the man, whom it thus stripped of his goods, whom it reduced to straitened circumstances by taking away his possessions? He has still cause to sing, A little that a righteous man has, is better than great riches of the ungodly Psalm 36:16.

4. ...For the arms of the wicked shall be broken Psalm 36:17. Now by their arms is meant their power. What will he do in hell? Will it be what the rich man had to do, he who was wont to fare sumptuously in the upper world, and in hell was tormented? Therefore their arms shall be broken; but the Lord upholds the righteous. How does He uphold them? What says He unto them? Even what is said in another Psalm, Wait on the Lord, be of good courage; and let your heart be strengthened. Wait, I say, on the Lord. What is meant by this, Wait on the Lord? Thou sufferest but for a time; you shall rest for ever: your trouble is short; your happiness is to be everlasting. It is but for a little while you are to sorrow; your joy shall have no end. But in the midst of trouble does your foot begin to slip? The example even of Christ's sufferings is set before you. Consider what He endured for you, in whom no cause was found why He should endure it? How great soever be your sufferings, you will not come to those insults, those scourgings, to that robe of shame, to that crown of thorns, and last of all to that Cross, which He endured; because that is now removed from the number of human punishments. For though under the ancients criminals were crucified, in the present day no one is crucified. It was honoured, and it came to an end. It came to an end as a punishment; it is continued in glory. It has removed from the place of execution to the foreheads of Emperors. He who has invested His very sufferings with such honour, what does He reserve for His faithful servants?...

5. But observe whether that was fulfilled in his case which the Psalm now speaks of. The Lord strengthens the righteous.-- Not only so (says that same Paul, while suffering many evils), but we glory in tribulations also: knowing that tribulation works patience, and patience experience; and experience hope; but hope makes not ashamed, because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost, which is given unto us. Romans 5:3-5 Justly is it said by him, now righteous, now strengthened. As therefore those who persecuted him did no harm to him, when now strengthened, so neither did he himself do any harm to those whom he persecuted. But the Lord, he says, strengthens the righteous....

6. Therefore the Lord does strengthen the righteous. In what way does He strengthen them? The Lord knows the ways of the spotless ones Psalm 36:18. When they suffer ills, they are believed to be walking ill ways by those who are ignorant, by those who have not knowledge to discern the ways of the spotless ones. He who knows those ways, knows by what way to lead His own, them that are gentle, in the right way. Whence in another Psalm he said, The meek shall He guide in judgment; them that are gentle will He teach His way. How, think you, was that beggar, who lay covered with sores before the rich man's door,

Luke 16:20 spurned by the passers by! How did they, probably, close their nostrils and spit at him! The Lord, however, knew how to reserve Paradise for him. How did they, on the other hand, desire for themselves the life of him who was clad in purple and fine linen, and fared sumptuously every day! Luke 16:19 But the Lord, who foresaw that man's day coming, knew the torments, the torments without end, that were in store for him. Therefore The Lord knows the ways of the upright.

7. And their inheritance shall be for ever Psalm 36:18. This we hold by faith. Does the Lord too know it by faith? The Lord knows those things with as clear a manifestation, as we cannot speak of even when we shall be made equal to the Angels. For the things that shall be manifest to us, shall not be equally manifest to us as they are now to Him, who is incapable of change. Yet even of us ourselves what is said? Beloved, now are we the sons of God: and it does not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when He shall appear, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is. 1 John 3:2 There is therefore surely some blissful vision reserved for us; and if it can be now in some measure conceived, darkly and through a glass, 1 Corinthians 13:12 yet cannot we in any way express in language the ravishing beauty of that bliss, which God reserves for them that fear Him, which He consummates in those that hope in Him. It is for that destination that our hearts are being disciplined in all the troubles and trials of this life. Wonder not that it is in trouble that you are disciplined for it. It is for something glorious that you are being disciplined. Whence comes that speech of the now strengthened righteous man: The sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared to the glory which shall be revealed in us? Romans 8:18 What is that promised glory to be, but to be made equal to the Angels and to see God? How great a benefit does he bestow on the blind man, who makes his eyes sound so as to be able to see the light of this life....What reward then shall we give unto that Physician who restores soundness to our inward eyes, to enable them to see a certain eternal Light, which is Himself?...

8. They shall not be ashamed in the evil time Psalm 36:19. In the day of trouble, in the day of distress, they shall not be ashamed, as he is ashamed whose hope deceives him. Who is the man that is ashamed? He who says, I have not found that which I was in hopes of. Nor undeservedly either; for you hoped it from yourself or from man, your friend. But cursed is he that puts his trust in man. Jeremiah 17:5 You are ashamed, because your hope has deceived you; your hope that was set on a lie. For every man is a liar. But if you dost place your hopes on your God, you are not made ashamed. For He in whom you have put your trust, cannot be deceived. Whence also the man whom we mentioned just above, the now strengthened righteous man, when fallen on an evil time, on the day of tribulation, what says he to show that he was not ashamed? We glory in tribulation; knowing that tribulation works patience, and patience experience, and experience hope; but hope makes not ashamed. Whence is it that hope makes not ashamed? Because it is placed on God. Therefore follows immediately, Because the love of God is spread in our hearts by the Holy Spirit, which is given unto us. Romans 5:3-5 The Holy Spirit has been given to us already: how should He deceive us, of whom we possess such an earnest already? They shall not be ashamed in the evil time, and in the days of famine they shall be satisfied....

9. For the wicked shall perish. But the enemies of the Lord, when they shall begin to glory, and to be lifted up, immediately shall consume away utterly, even as the smoke Psalm 36:20. Recognise from the comparison itself the thing which he intimates. Smoke, breaking forth from the place where fire has been, rises up on high, and by the very act of rising up, it swells into a large volume: but the larger that volume is, the more unsubstantial does it become; for from that very largeness of volume, which has no foundation or consistency, but is merely loose, shifting and evanescent, it passes into air, and dissolves; so that you perceive its very largeness to have been fatal to it. For the higher it ascends, the farther it is

extended, the wider the circumference which it spreads itself over, the thinner, and the more rare and wasting and evanescent does it become. But the enemies of the Lord, when they shall begin to glory, and to be lifted up, immediately shall consume away utterly even as the smoke. Of such as these was it said, As Jannes and Jambres withstood Moses, so do these also resist the Truth; men of corrupt minds, reprobate concerning the faith. 2 Timothy 3:8 But how is it that they resist the Truth, except by the vain inflation of their swelling pride, while they raise themselves up on high, as if great and righteous persons, though on the point of passing away into empty air? But what says he of them? As if speaking of smoke, he says, They shall proceed no farther, for their folly shall be manifest unto all men, even as theirs also was....

10. The wicked borrows, and pays not again Psalm 36:20. He receives, and will not repay. What is it he will not repay? Thanksgiving. For what is it that God would have of you, what does He require of you, except that He may do you good? And how great are the benefits which the sinner has received, and which he will not repay! He has received the gift of being; he has received the gift of being a man; and of a being highly distinguished above the brutes; he has received the form of a body, and the distinction of the senses in the body, eyes for seeing, ears for hearing, the nostrils for smelling, the palate for tasting, the hands for touching, and the feet for walking; and even the very health and soundness of the body. But up to this point we have these things in common even with the brute; he has received yet more than this; a mind capable of understanding, capable of Truth, capable of distinguishing right from wrong; capable of seeking after, of longing for, its Creator, of praising Him, and fixing itself upon Him. All this the wicked man has received as well as others; but by not living well, he fails to repay that which he owes. Thus it is, the wicked borrows, and pays not again: he will not requite Him from whom he has received; he will not return thanks; nay, he will even render evil for good, blasphemies, murmuring against God, indignation. Thus it is that he borrows, and pays not again; but the righteous shows mercy, and lends Psalm 36:21. The one therefore has nothing; the other has. See, on the one side, destitution: see, on the other, wealth. The one receives and pays not again: the other shows mercy, and lends: and he has more than enough. What if he is poor? Even so he is rich; do you but look at his riches with the eyes of Religion. For you look at the empty chest; but dost not look at the conscience, that is full of God....

11. For such as shall bless Him shall inherit the land Psalm 36:23, that is, they shall possess that righteous One: the only One who both is truly righteous, and makes righteous: who both was poor in this world, and brought great riches to it, wherewith to make those rich whom He found poor. For it is He who has enriched the hearts of the poor with the Holy Spirit; and having emptied out their souls by confession of sins, has filled them with the richness of righteousness: He who was able to enrich the fisherman, who, by forsaking his nets, spurned what he possessed already, but sought to draw up what he possessed not. For God has chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty. 1 Corinthians 1:27 And it was not by an orator that He gained to Himself the fisherman; but by the fisherman that He gained to Himself the orator; by the fisherman that He gained the Senator; by the fisherman that He gained the Emperor. For such as shall bless Him shall inherit the land; they shall be fellow-heirs with Him, in that land of the living, of which it is said in another Psalm, You are my hope, my portion in the land of the living.. ..

12. Observe what follows: The steps of a good man are ordered by the Lord; and he delights in His way Psalm 36:23. That man may himself delight in the Lord's way, his steps are ordered by the Lord Himself. For if the Lord did not order the steps of man, so crooked are they naturally, that they would always be going through crooked paths, and by pursuing crooked ways, would be unable to return again. He

however came, and called us, and redeemed us, and shed His blood; He has given this ransom; He has done this good, and suffered these evils. Consider Him in what He has done, He is God! Consider Him in what He has suffered, He is Man! Who is that God-Man? Had not you, O man, forsaken God, God would not have been made Man for you! For that was too little for you to requite, or for Him to bestow, that He had made you man; unless He Himself should become Man for you also. For it is He Himself that has ordered our steps; that we should delight in His way....

13. Now if man were to be through the whole of his life in toil, and in sufferings, in pain, in tortures, in prison, in scourgings, in hunger, and in thirst, every day and every hour through the whole length of life, to the period of old age, yet the whole life of man is but a few days. That labour being over, there is to come the Eternal Kingdom; there is to come happiness without end; there is to come equality with the Angels; there is to come Christ's inheritance, and Christ, our joint Heir, Romans 8:17 is to come. How great is the labour, for which you receive so great a recompense? The Veterans who serve in the wars, and move in the midst of wounds for so many years, enter upon the military service from their youth, and quit it in old age: and to obtain a few days of repose in their old age, when age itself begins to weigh down those whom the wars do not break down, how great hardships do they endure; what marches, what frosts, what burning suns; what privations, what wounds, and what dangers! And while suffering all these things, they fix their thoughts on nothing but those few days of repose in old age, at which they know not whether they will ever arrive. Thus it is, the steps of a good man are ordered by the Lord, and he delights in His way. This is the point with which I commenced. If you delight in the way of Christ, and art truly a Christian (for he is a Christian indeed who does not despise the way of Christ, but delights in following Christ's way through His sufferings), do not thou go by any other way than that by which He Himself has also gone. It appears painful, but it is the very way of safety; another perhaps is delightful, but it is full of robbers. And he delights in His way.

14. Though he fall, he shall not be utterly cast down; for the Lord upholds his hand Psalm 36:24. See what it is to delight in Christ's way. Should it happen that he suffers some tribulation; some forfeiture of honour, some affliction, some loss, some contumely, or all those other accidents incident to mankind frequently in this life, he sets the Lord before him, what kind of trials He endured! And, though he fall he shall not be utterly cast down, for the Lord upholds his hand, because He has suffered before him. For what should you fear, O man, whose steps are ordered so, that you should delight in the way of the Lord? What should you fear? Pain? Christ was scourged. Should thou fear contumelies? He was reproached with, You have a devil, who was Himself casting out the devils. Haply you fear faction, and the conspiracy of the wicked. Conspiracy was made against Him. You can not make clear the purity of your conscience in some accusation, and sufferest wrong and violence, because false witnesses are listened to against you. False witness was borne against Him first, not only before His death, but also after His resurrection....

On the Third Part of the Psalm.

1. I have been young, and now am old; yet have I not seen the righteous forsaken, nor his seed begging bread Psalm 36:25.

If it is spoken but in the person of one single individual, how long is the whole life of one man? And what is there wonderful in the circumstance, that a single man, fixed in some one part of the earth, should not, throughout the whole space of his life, being so short as man's life is, have ever seen the righteous forsaken, nor his seed begging bread, although he may have advanced from youth to age. It is not anything worthy of marvel; for it might have happened, that before his lifetime there should have been

some righteous man seeking bread; it might have happened, that there had been some one in some other part of the earth not where he himself was. Hear too another thing, which makes an impression upon us. Any single one among you (look you) who has now grown old, may perhaps, when, looking back upon the past course of his life, he turns over in his thoughts the persons whom he has known, not find any instance of a righteous man begging bread, or of his seed begging bread, suggest itself to him; but nevertheless he turns to the inspired Scriptures, and finds that righteous Abraham was straitened, and suffered hunger in his own country, and left that land for another; he finds too that the son of the very same man, Isaac, removed to other countries in search of bread, for the same cause of hunger. And how will it be true to say, I have never seen the righteous forsaken, nor his seed begging bread? And if he finds this true in the duration of his own life, he finds it is otherwise in the inspired writings, which are more trustworthy than human life is.

2. What are we to do then? Let us be seconded by your pious attention, so that we may discern the purpose of God in these verses of the Psalm, what it is He would have us understand by them. For there is a fear, lest any unstable person, not capable of understanding the Scriptures spiritually, should appeal to human instances, and should observe the virtuous servants of God to be sometimes in some necessity, and in want, so as to be compelled to beg bread: should particularly call to mind the Apostle Paul, who says, In hunger and thirst; in cold and nakedness; 2 Corinthians 11:27 and should stumble thereat, saying to himself, Is that certainly true which I have been singing? Is that certainly true, which I have been sounding forth in so devout a voice, standing in church? 'I have never seen the righteous forsaken, nor his seed begging bread.' Lest he should say in his heart, Scripture deceives us; and all his limbs should be paralyzed to good works: and when those limbs within him, those limbs of the inner man, shall have been paralyzed (which is the more fearful paralysis), he should henceforth leave off from good works, and say to himself, Wherefore do I do good works? Wherefore do I break my bread to the hungry, and clothe the naked, and take home to mine house him who has no shelter, Isaiah 58:7 putting faith in that which is written? 'I have never seen the righteous forsaken, nor his seed begging bread;' whereas I see so many persons who live virtuously, yet for the most part suffering from hunger. But if perhaps I am in error in thinking the man who is living well, and the man who is living ill, to be both of them living well, and if God knows him to be otherwise; that is, knows him, whom I think just, to be unjust, what am I to make of Abraham's case, who is commended by Scripture itself as a righteous person? What am I to make of the Apostle Paul, who says, 'Be followers of me, even as I also am of Christ.' 1 Corinthians 11:1 What? That I should myself be in evils such as he endured, 'In hunger and thirst, in cold and nakedness'? 2 Corinthians 11:27

3. Whilst therefore he thus thinks, and while his limbs are paralyzed to the power of good works, can we, my brethren, as it were, lift up the sick of the palsy; and, as it were, lay open the roof of this Scripture, and let him down before the Lord. Luke 5:19 For you observe that it is obscure. If obscure therefore, it is covered. And I behold a certain patient paralytic in mind, and I see this roof, and am convinced that Christ is concealed beneath the roof. Let me, as far as I am able, do that which was praised in those who opened the roof, and let down the sick of the palsy before Christ; that He might say unto him, Son, be of good cheer, your sins be forgiven you. Luke 5:20 For it was so that He made the inner man whole of his palsy, by loosing his sins, by binding fast his faith....

4. But who is the righteous man, who has never been seen forsaken, nor his seed begging bread? If you understand what is meant by bread, you understand who is meant by him. For the bread is the Word of God, which never departs from the righteous man's mouth....See now if holy meditation does 'keep you' in

the rumination of this bread, then have you never seen the righteous forsaken, nor his seed begging bread.

5. He is always merciful, and lends Psalm 36:26. *Fœneratur* is used in Latin indeed, both for him who lends, and for him who borrows. But in this passage the meaning is more plain, if we express it by *fœnerat*. What matters it to us, what the grammarians please to rule? It were better for us to be guilty of a barbarism, so that you understand, than that in our propriety of speech ye be left unprovided. Therefore, that righteous man is all day merciful, and (*fœnerat*) lends. Let not the lenders of money on usury, however, rejoice.

For we find it is a particular kind of lender that is spoken of, as it was a particular kind of bread; that we may, in all passages, remove the roof, and find our way to Christ. I would not have you be lenders of money on usury; and I would not have you be such for this reason, because God would not have you....Whence does it appear that God would not have it so? It is said in another place, He that puts not out his money to usury. And how detestable, odious, and execrable a thing it is, I believe that even usurers themselves know.

Again, on the other hand, I myself, nay rather our God Himself bids you be an usurer, and says to you, Lend unto God. If you lend to man, have you hope? And shall you not have hope, if you lend to God? If you have lent your money on usury to man, that is, if you have given the loan of your money to one, from whom you expect to receive something more than you have given, not in money only, but anything, whether it be wheat, or wine, or oil, or whatever else you please, if you expect to receive more than you have given, you are an usurer, and in this particular are not deserving of praise, but of censure.

What then, you say, am I to do, that I may 'lend' profitably? Consider what the usurer does. He undoubtedly desires to give a less sum, and to receive a larger; do thou this also; give thou a little, receive much. See how your principal grows, and increases! Give things temporal, receive things eternal: give earth, receive heaven! And perhaps you would say, To whom shall I give them? The self-same Lord, who bade you not lend on usury, comes forward as the Person to whom you should lend on usury!

Hear from Scripture in what way you may lend unto the Lord. He that has pity on the poor, lends unto the Lord. Proverbs 10:17 For the Lord wants not anything of you. But you have one who needs somewhat of you: you extend it to him; he receives it. For the poor has nothing to return to you, and yet he would himself fain requite you, and finds nothing wherewith to do it: all that remains in his power is the good-will that desires to pray for you. Now when the poor man prays for you, he, as it were, says unto God, Lord, I have borrowed this; be Thou surety for me.

Then, though you have no bond on the poor man to compel his repayment, yet you have on a sponable security. See, God from His own Scriptures says unto you; Give it, and fear not; I repay it. It is to Me you give it. In what way do those who make themselves sureties for others, express themselves? What is it that they say? I repay it: I take it upon myself. It is to me you are giving it. Do we then suppose that God also says this, I take it on Myself. It is unto me you give it?

Assuredly, if Christ be God, of which there is no doubt, He has Himself said, I was an hungred, and you gave Me meat. Matthew 25:35 And when they said unto Him, When saw we You hungry? Matthew 25:37 that He might show Himself to be the Surety for the poor, that He answers for all His members, that He is the Head, they the members, and that when the members receive, the Head receives also; He says, Inasmuch as you have done it to one of the least of these that belong to Me, you have done it unto Me.

Matthew 25:40 Come, thou covetous usurer, consider what you have given; consider what you are to receive. Had you given a small sum of money, and he to whom you had given it were to give you for that small sum a great villa, worth incomparably more money than you had given, how great thanks would you render, with how great joy would you be transported! Hear what possession He to whom you have been lending bestows. Come, you blessed of My Father, receive Matthew 25:34 -- What?

The same that they have given? God forbid! What you gave were earthly things, which, if you had not given them, would have become corrupted on earth. For what could you have made of them, if you had not given them? That which on earth would have been lost, has been preserved in heaven. Therefore what we are to receive is that which has been preserved. It is your desert that has been preserved, your desert has been made your treasure. For consider what it is that you are to receive.

Receive-- the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world. On the other hand, what shall be their sentence, who would not lend? Go ye into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels. Matthew 25:41 And what is the kingdom which we receive called? Consider what follows: And these shall go into everlasting burning; but the righteous into life eternal. Matthew 25:46 Make interest for this; purchase this. Give your money on usury to earn this. You have Christ throned in heaven, begging on earth. We have discovered in what way the righteous lends. He is always merciful, and lends.

6. And his seed is blessed. Here too let not any carnal notion suggest itself. We see many of the sons of the righteous dying of hunger; in what sense then will his seed be blessed? His seed is that which remains of him afterwards; that wherewith he sows here, and will hereafter reap. For the Apostle says, Let us not be weary in well-doing; for in due season we shall reap if we faint not. As we have therefore time, he says, let us do good unto all men. Galatians 6:9-10 This is that seed of yours which shall be blessed. You commit it to the earth, and gather ever so much more; and do you lose it in committing it to Christ? See it expressly termed seed by the Apostle, when he was speaking of alms. For this he says; He which sows sparingly, shall reap also sparingly; and he which sows in blessings, shall also reap in blessings. 2 Corinthians 9:6 ...

7. Observe therefore what follows, and be not slothful. Depart from evil, and do good Psalm 36:27. Do not think it to be enough for you to do, if you dost not strip the man who is already clothed. For in not stripping the man who is already clothed, you have indeed departed from evil: but do not be barren, and wither. So choose not to strip the man who is clothed already, as to clothe the naked. For this is to depart from evil, and to do good. And you will say, What advantage am I to derive from it? He to whom you lend has already assured you of what He will give you. He will give you everlasting life. Give to Him, and fear not! Hear too what follows: Depart from evil, and do good, and dwell for evermore. And think not when you give that no one sees you, or that God forsakes you, when haply after you have given to the poor, and some loss, or some sorrow for the property you have lost, should follow, and you should say to yourself, What has it profited me to have done good works? I believe God does not love the men who do good. Whence comes that buzz, that subdued murmur among you, except that those expressions are very common? Each one of you at this present moment recognises these expressions, either in his own lips, or on those of his friend. May God destroy them; may He root out the thorns from His field; may He plant the good seed, and the tree bearing fruit! For wherefore are you afflicted, O man, that you have given some things away to the poor, and hast lost certain other things? Do you see not that it is what you have not given, that you have lost? Wherefore do you not attend to the voice of your God? Where is your faith? Wherefore is it so fast asleep? Wake it up in your heart. Consider what the Lord Himself said unto you, while exhorting you to good works of this kind: Provide yourselves bags which wax not old; a treasure in the heavens that

fails not, where no thief approaches. Luke 12:33 Call this to mind therefore when you are lamenting over a loss. Wherefore do you lament, thou fool of little mind, or rather of unsound mind? Wherefore did you lose it, except that thou did not lend it to Me? Wherefore did you lose it? Who has carried it off? You will answer, A thief. Was it not this, that I forewarned you of? That you should not lay it up where the thief could approach? If then he who has lost anything, grieves, let him grieve for this, that he did not lay it up there, whence it could not be lost.

8. For the Lord loves judgment, and forsakes not His Saints Psalm 36:28. When the Saints suffer affliction, think not that God does not judge, or does not judge righteously. Will He, who warns you to judge righteously, Himself judge unrighteously? He loves judgment, and forsakes not His Saints. But (think) how the life of the Saints is hid with Him, in such a manner, that who now suffer trouble on earth, like trees in the winter-time, having no fruit and leaves, when He, like a newly-risen sun, shall have appeared, that which before was living in their root, will show itself forth in fruits. He does then love judgment, and does not forsake His Saints....

9. But the unrighteous shall be punished; the seed of the wicked shall be cut off. Just as the seed of the other shall be blessed, so shall the seed of the wicked be cut off. For the seed of the wicked is the works of the wicked. For again, on the other hand, we find the son of the wicked man flourish in the world, and sometimes become righteous, and flourish in Christ. Be careful therefore how you take it; that you may remove the covering, and make your way to Christ. Luke 5:19 Do not take the text in a carnal sense; for you will be deceived. But the seed of the wicked-- all the works of the wicked-- will be cut off: they shall have no fruit. For they are effective indeed for a short time; afterwards they shall seek for them, and shall not find the reward of that which they have wrought. For it is the expression of those who lose what they have wrought, that text which says, 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 The seed of the wicked, then, shall be cut off.

10. The righteous shall inherit the land Psalm 36:29. Here again let not covetousness steal on you, nor promise you some great estate; hope not to find there, what you are commanded to despise in this world. That land in the text, is a certain land of the living, the kingdom of the Saints. Whence it is said: You are my hope, my portion in the land of the living. For if your life too is the same life as that there spoken of, think what sort of land you are about to inherit. That is the land of the living; this the land of those who are about to die: to receive again, when dead, those whom it nourished when living. Such then as is that land, such shall the life itself be also: if the life be for ever, the land also is to be yours for ever. And how is the land to be yours for ever?

And they shall dwell therein (it says) for ever. It must therefore be another land, where they are to dwell therein for ever. For of this land (of this earth) it is said, Heaven and earth shall pass away. Matthew 24:35

11. The mouth of the righteous speaks wisdom Psalm 36:30. See here is that bread. Observe with what satisfaction this righteous man feeds upon it; how he turns wisdom over and over in his mouth. And his tongue talks of judgment.

The law of his God is in his heart Psalm 36:31. Lest haply you should think him to have that on his lips, which he has not in his heart, lest you should reckon him among those of whom it is said, This people honour Me with their lips, but their heart is far from Me. Isaiah 29:13 And of what use is this to him?

And none of his steps shall slide. The word of God in the heart frees from the snare; the word of God in the heart delivers from the evil way; the word of God in the heart delivers from the slippery place. He is with you, Whose word departs not from you. Now what evil does he suffer, whom God keeps? Thou settest a watchman in your vineyard, and feelest secure from thieves; and that watchman may sleep, and may himself fall, and may admit a thief. But He who keeps Israel shall neither slumber nor sleep. The law of his God is in his heart, and none of his steps shall slide. Let him therefore live free from fear; let him live free from fear even in the midst of the wicked; free from fear even in the midst of the ungodly. For what evil can the ungodly or unrighteous man do to the righteous? Lo! see what follows.

The wicked watches the righteous, and seeks to slay him Psalm 36:32. For he says, what it was foretold in the book of Wisdom that he should say, He is grievous unto us, even to behold; for his life is not like other men's. Wisdom 2:15 Therefore he seeks to slay him. What? Does the Lord, who keeps him, who dwells with him, who departs not from his lips, from his heart, does He forsake him? What then becomes of what was said before: And He forsakes not His Saints?

12. The wicked therefore watches the righteous, and seeks to slay him. But the Lord will not leave him in his hands Psalm 36:33. Wherefore then did He leave the Martyrs in the hands of the ungodly? Wherefore did they do unto them whatsoever they would? Matthew 17:12 Some they slew with the sword; some they crucified; some they delivered to the beasts; some they burnt by fire; others they led about in chains, till wasted out by a long protracted decay. Assuredly the Lord forsakes not His Saints. He will not leave him in his hands. Lastly, wherefore did He leave His own Son in the hands of the ungodly? Here also, if you would have all the limbs of your inner man made strong, remove the covering of the roof, and find your way to the Lord. Hear what another Scripture, foreseeing our Lord's future suffering at the hands of the ungodly, says. What says it? The earth is given into the hands of the wicked. Job 9:24 What is meant by earth being given into the hands of the ungodly? The delivering of the flesh into the hands of the persecutors. But God did not leave His righteous One there: from the flesh, which was taken captive, He leads forth the soul unconquered....

The Lord will not leave him in his hand, nor condemn him when there shall be judgment for him Psalm 36:33. Some copies have it, and when He shall judge him, there shall be judgment for him. For him, however, means when sentence is passed upon him. For we can express ourselves so as to say to a person, Judge for me, i.e. hear my cause. When therefore God shall begin to hear the cause of His righteous servant, since we must all be presented before the tribunal of Christ, and stand before it to receive every one the things he has done in this body, 2 Corinthians 5:10 whether good or evil, when therefore he shall have come to that Judgment, He will not condemn him; though he may seem to be condemned in this present life by man. Even though the Proconsul may have passed sentence on Cyprian, yet the earthly seat of judgment is one thing, the heavenly tribunal is another. From the inferior tribunal he receives sentence of death; from the superior one a crown, Nor will He condemn him when there shall be judgment for him.

13. Wait on the Lord Psalm 36:34. And while I am waiting upon Him, what am I to do?-- and keep His ways. And if I keep them, what am I to receive? And He shall exalt you to inherit the land. What land? Once more let not any estate suggest itself to your mind:-- the land of which it is said, Come, you blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world. Matthew 25:34 What of those who have troubled us, in the midst of whom we have groaned, whose scandals we have patiently endured, for whom, while they were raging against us, we have prayed in vain? What will become of them? What follows? When the wicked are cut off, you shall see it....

I have seen the ungodly lifted up on high, and rising above the cedars of Libanus Psalm 36:35. And suppose him to be lifted up on high; suppose him to be towering above the rest; what follows?

I passed by, and, lo, he was not! I sought him, and his place could nowhere be found! Psalm 36:36. Why was he no more, and his place nowhere to be found? Because you have passed by. But if you are yet carnally-minded, and that earthly prosperity appears to you to be true happiness, you have not yet passed by him; you are either his fellow, or you are below him; go on, and pass him; and when you have made progress, and hast passed by him, you observe him by the eye of faith; you see his end, you say to yourself, Lo! He who so swelled before, is not! just as if it were some smoke that thou were passing near to. For this too was said above in this very Psalm, They shall consume and fade away as the smoke.. ..

14. Keep innocency Psalm 36:37; keep it even as you used to keep your purse, when thou were covetous; even as you used to hold fast that purse, that it might not be snatched from your grasp by the thief, even so keep innocency, lest that be snatched from your grasp by the devil. Be that your sure inheritance, of which the rich and the poor may both be sure. Keep innocency. What does it profit you to gain gold, and to lose innocence?

Keep innocency, and take heed unto the thing which is right. Keep thou your eyes right, that you may see the thing which is right; not perverted, wherewith you look upon the wicked; not distorted, so that God should appear to you distorted and wrong, in that He favours the wicked, and afflicts the faithful with persecutions. Do you not observe how distorted your vision is? Set right your eyes, and behold the thing that is right. What thing that is right? Take no heed of things present. And what will you see?

For there is a remainder for the man that makes peace. What is meant by there is a remainder? When you are dead, you shall not be dead. This is the meaning of there is a remainder. He will still have something remaining to him, even after this life, that is to say, that seed, which shall be blessed. Whence our Lord says, He that believes in Me, though he die, yet shall he live; John 11:25 -- seeing there is a remainder for the man that makes peace.

15. But the transgressors shall be destroyed in the self-same thing Psalm 36:38. What is meant by, in the self-same thing? It means for ever: or all together in one and the same destruction.

The remainder of the wicked shall be cut off. Now there is (a remainder) for the man that makes peace: they therefore who are not peace-makers are ungodly. For, Blessed are the peace-makers: for they shall be called the children of God. Matthew 5:9

16. But the salvation of the righteous is of the Lord, and He is their strength in the time of trouble Psalm 36:39. And the Lord shall help them, and deliver them; He shall deliver them from the sinners Psalm 36:40. At present therefore let the righteous bear with the sinner; let the wheat bear with the tares; let the grain bear with the chaff: for the time of separation will come, and the good seed shall be set apart from that which is to be consumed with fire. Matthew 13:30 The one will be consigned to the garner, the other to everlasting burning; for it was for this reason that the just and the unjust were at the first together; that the one should lay a stumbling-block, that the other should be proved; that afterwards the one should be condemned, the other receive a crown....

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