

Exposition on Psalm 56

by St. Augustine

This sermon explores the theme of persecution and suffering for Christ, and encourages the listener to trust in God's power and protection.

Scripture: Romans 10:4

Topics: "Worship And Praise", "Faith And Trials"

Description

St. Augustine preaches about the importance of loving and worshiping God wholeheartedly, emphasizing the need to offer praise and vows to God from the depths of the heart, regardless of external circumstances. He reflects on the story of Job to illustrate how true worship and faith in God should not be dependent on material blessings but on an unwavering commitment to God's will and praise. St. Augustine encourages believers to endure trials, remain faithful, and trust in God's providence, knowing that God sees the heart and desires genuine worship and love.

Transcript

1. Just as when we are going to enter into any house, we look on the title to see whose it is and to whom it belongs, lest perchance inopportunately we burst into a place whereunto we ought not; and again, in order that we may not through timidity withdraw from that which we ought to enter: as if in a word we were to read, These estates belong to such an one or to such an one: so on the lintel of this Psalm we have inscribed, At the end, for the people that from holy men were put afar off, to David himself, at the inscription of the Title, when the Allophyli held him in Gath. 1 Samuel 21:10 Let us therefore take knowledge of the people that from holy men were put afar off at the inscription of the Title. For this does belong to that David whom now ye know how to understand spiritually. For there is here commended to our notice no other than He of whom has been said, The end of the Law is Christ for righteousness to every man believing. Romans 10:4 Therefore when you hear, at the end, unto Christ give heed, lest tarrying in the way thou arrive not at the end....

2. Who are then the people that from holy men were put afar off at the inscription of the Title? Let the Title itself declare to us that people. For there was written a certain title at the Passion of the Lord, when the Lord was crucified: there was in that place a Title inscribed in Hebrew, in Greek, and in Latin, The King of the Jews; John 19:19 in three tongues as though by three witnesses the Title was confirmed: because in the mouth of two or three witnesses shall stand every word.. ..

3. What therefore means that which to the title itself still belongs, namely, that the Allophyli held him in Geth? Geth was a certain city of the Allophyli, that is, of strangers, to wit, of people afar from holy men. All they that refuse Christ for King become strangers. Wherefore strangers are they made? Because even that vine, though by Him planted, when it had become sour what heard it? Wherefore have you been turned into sourness, O alien vine? Jeremiah 2:21 It has not been said, My vine: because if Mine, sweet; if sour, not Mine; if not Mine, surely alien. There held him, then, Allophyli in Geth. We find indeed, brethren, David himself, son of Jesse, king of Israel, to have been in a strange land among the Allophyli, when he was sought by Saul, and was in that city and with the king of that city, 1 Samuel 21:10 but that there he was detained we read not. Therefore our David, the Lord Jesus Christ out of the seed of that David, not alone they held, but there hold Him still Allophyli in Geth. Of Geth we have said that it is a city. But the interpretation of this name, if asked for, signifies press....How therefore here is He held in Geth? Held in a winepress is His Body, that is, His Church. What is, in a winepress? In pressings. But in a winepress fruitful is the pressing. A grape on the vine sustains no pressing, whole it seems, but nothing thence flows: it is thrown into a winepress, is trodden, is pressed; harm seems to be done to the grape, but this harm is not barren; nay, if no harm had been applied, barren it would have remained.

4. Let whatsoever holy men therefore that are suffering pressing from those that have been put afar off from the saints, give heed to this Psalm, let them perceive here themselves, let them speak what here is spoken, that suffer what here is spoken of....Private enmities therefore let no one think of, when about to hear the words of this Psalm: Know ye that for us the wrestling is not against flesh and blood, but against princes and powers, and spiritual things of wickedness, Ephesians 6:12 that is, against the devil and his angels; because even when we suffer men that annoy us, he is instigating, he is inflaming, as it were his vessels he is moving. Let us give heed therefore to two enemies, him whom we see, and him whom we see not; man we see, the devil we see not; man let us love, of the devil beware; for man pray, against the devil pray, and let us say to God, Have pity on me, O Lord, for man has trodden me down Psalm 55:1. Fear not because man has trodden you down: have thou wine, a grape you have become in order that you should be trodden. All day long warring he has troubled me, every one that has been put afar off from the saints. But why should not here be understood even the devil himself? Is it because mention is made of man? does therefore the Gospel err, because it has said, A man that is an enemy has done this? Matthew 13:28 But by a kind of figure may he also be called a man, and yet not be a man. Whether therefore it was him whom he that said these words was beholding, or whether it was the people and each one that was put afar off from holy men, through which kind the devil troubles the people of God, who cleave to holy men, who cleave to the Holy One, who cleave to the King, at the title of which King being indignant they were as though beaten back, and put afar off: let him say, Have pity on me, O Lord, for man has trodden me down: and let him faint not in this treading down, knowing Him on whom he is calling, and by whose example he has been made strong. The first cluster in the winefat pressed is Christ. When that cluster by passion was pressed out, Isaiah 63:3 there flowed that whence the cup inebriating is how passing beautiful! Let His Body likewise say, looking upon its Head, Have pity on me, O Lord, for man has trodden me down: all day long warring he has troubled me. All day long, at all times. Let no one say to himself, There have been troubles in our fathers' time, in our time there are not. If you suppose yourself not to have troubles, not yet have you begun to be a Christian. And where is the voice of the Apostle, But even all that will live godly in Christ, persecutions shall suffer. 2 Timothy 3:12 If therefore you suffer not any persecution for Christ, take heed lest not yet you have begun godly to live in Christ. But when you have begun godly to live in Christ, you have entered into the winepress; make ready yourself for pressings: but be not thou dry, lest from the pressing nothing go forth.

5. Mine enemies have trodden me down all day long Psalm 55:2. They that have been put afar off from holy men, these are mine enemies. All day long: already it has been said, From the height of the day. What means, from the height of the day? Perchance it is a high thing to understand. And no wonder, because the height of the day it is. For perchance they for this reason have been put afar off from holy men, because they were not able to penetrate the height of the day, whereof the Apostles are twelve shining hours. Therefore they that crucified Him, as if man, in the day have erred. But why have they suffered darkness, so that they should be put afar off from holy men? Because on high the day was shining, Him in the height hidden they knew not. For if they had known, never the Lord of Glory would they have crucified. 1 Corinthians 2:8 ...

6. For many men that war against me, shall fear Psalm 55:3. Shall fear when? When the day shall have passed away, wherein they are high. For for a time high they are, when the time of their height is finished they will fear. But I in You will hope, O Lord. He says not, But I will not fear: but, Many men, that war against me, shall fear. When there shall have come that day of Judgment, then shall mourn for themselves all the tribes of the earth. Matthew 24:30 When there shall have appeared the sign of the Son of Man in heaven, then secure shall be all holy men. For that thing shall come which they hoped for, which they longed for, the coming whereof they prayed for: but to those men no place for repentance shall remain, because in that time wherein fruitful might have been repentance, their heart they hardened against a warning Lord. Shall they too raise up a wall against a judging God? The godliness of this man do thou indeed acknowledge, and if in that Body you are, imitate him. When he had said, Many men, that war against me, shall fear: he did not continue, But I will not fear; lest to his own powers ascribing his not fearing, he too should be amid high temporal things, and through pride temporal he should not deserve to come to rest everlasting: rather he has made you to perceive whence he shall not fear. But I, he says, in you will hope, O Lord: he has not spoken of his confidence: but of the cause of his confidence. For if I shall not fear, I may also by hardness of heart not fear, for many men by too much pride fear nothing....

7. In God I will praise my discourses, in God I have hoped: I will not fear what flesh does to me Psalm 55:4. Wherefore? Because in God I will praise my discourses. If in yourself you praise your discourses: I say not that you are not to fear; it is impossible that thou have not to fear. For your discourses either false you will have, and therefore your own, because false: or if your discourses shall be true, and you shall deem yourself not to have them from God but of yourself to speak; true they will be, but you will be false: but if you shall have known that you can say nothing true in the wisdom of God, in the faith of the Truth, save that which from Him you have received, of whom is said, For what have you which you have not received? 1 Corinthians 4:7 Then in God you are praising your discourses, in order that in God you may be praised by the discourses of God....In God I have hoped, I will not fear what flesh does to me. Were you not the same that a little before wast saying, Have pity on me, O Lord, for man has trodden me down; all day long warring he has troubled me? How therefore here, I will not fear what flesh does to me? What shall he do to you? Thou yourself a little before hast said, Hath trodden me down, has troubled me. Nothing shall he do, when these things he shall do? He has had regard to the wine which flows from treading, and has made answer, Evidently he has trodden down, evidently has troubled; but what to me shall he do? A grape I was, wine I shall be: In God I have hoped, I will not fear what flesh does to me.

8. All day long my words they abhorred Psalm 55:5. Thus they are, you know. Speak truth, preach truth, proclaim Christ to the heathen, proclaim the Church to heretics, proclaim to all men salvation: they contradict, they abhor my words. But when my words they abhor, whom think ye they abhor, save Him in whom I shall praise my discourses? All day long my words they abhorred. Let this at least suffice, let them

abhor words, no farther let them proceed, censure, reject! Be it far from them!

Why should I say this? When words they reject, when words they hate, those words which from the fount of truth flow forth, what would they do to him through whom the very words are spoken? What but that which follows, Against me all the counsels of them are for evil? If the bread itself they hate, how spare they the basket wherein it is ministered? Against me all the counsels of them are for evil. If so even against the Lord Himself, let not the Body disdain that which has gone before in the Head, to the end that the Body may cleave to the Head.

Despised has been your Lord, and will you have yourself be honoured by those men that have been put afar off from holy men? Do not for yourself wish to claim that which in Him has not gone before. The disciple is not greater than his Master; the servant is not greater than his Lord. If the Master of the family they have called Beelzebub, how much more them of His household? Matthew 10:24-25 Against me all the counsels of them are for evil. 9. They shall sojourn, and shall hide Psalm 55:6.

To sojourn is to be in a strange land. Sojourners is a term used of those then that live in a country not their own. Every man in this life is a foreigner: in which life ye see that with flesh we are covered round, through which flesh the heart cannot be seen. Therefore the Apostle says, Do not before the time judge anything, until the Lord come, and He shall enlighten the hidden things of darkness, and shall manifest the thoughts of the heart; and then praise shall be to each one from God. 1 Corinthians 4:5 Before that this be done, in this sojourning of fleshly life every one carries his own heart, and every heart to every other heart is shut.

Furthermore, those men of whom the counsels are against this man for evil, shall sojourn, and shall hide: because in this foreign abode they are, and carry flesh, they hide guile in heart; whatsoever of evil they think, they hide. Wherefore? Because as yet this life is a foreign one. Let them hide; that shall appear which they hide, and they too will not be hidden. There is also in this hidden thing another interpretation, which perchance will be more approved of. For out of those men that have been put afar off from holy men, there creep in certain false brethren, and they cause worse tribulations to the Body of Christ; because they are not altogether avoided as if entirely aliens....Not even those men nevertheless let us fear, brethren: I will not fear what flesh does to me.

Even if they sojourn, even if they go in, even if they feign, even if they hide, flesh they are: do thou in the Lord hope, nothing to you shall flesh do. But he brings in tribulation, brings in treading down. There is added wine, because the grape is pressed: your tribulation will not be unfruitful: another sees you, imitates you: because thou also in order that you might learn to bear such a man, to your Head hast looked up, that first cluster, unto whom there has come in a man that he might see, has sojourned, and has hidden, to wit, the traitor Judas.

All men, therefore, that with false heart go in, sojourning and hiding, do not thou fear: the father of these same men, Judas, with your Lord has been: and He indeed knew him; although Judas the traitor was sojourning and hiding, nevertheless, the heart of him was open to the Lord of all: knowingly He chose one man, whereby He might give comfort to you that would not know whom you should avoid. For He might have not chosen Judas, because He knew Judas: for He says to His disciples, Have not I chosen you twelve, and one out of you is a devil?

John 6:70 Therefore even a devil was chosen. Or if chosen he was not, how is it that He has chosen twelve, and not rather eleven? Chosen even he is, but for another purpose. Chosen were eleven for the work of probation, chosen one for the work of temptation. Whence could He give an example to you, that

wouldest not know what men you should avoid as evil, of what men you should beware as false and artificial, sojourning and hiding, except He say to you, Behold, with Myself I have had one of those very men!

There has gone before an example, I have borne, to suffer I have willed that which I knew, in order that to you knowing not I might give consolation. That which to Me he has done, the same he will do to you also: in order that he may be able to do much, in order that he may make much havoc, he will accuse, false charges he will allege....

10. These same men shall mark my heel. For they shall sojourn and hide in such sort, that they may mark where a man slips. Intent they are upon the heel, to see when a slip may chance to be made; in order that they may detain the foot for a fall, or trip up the foot for a stumble; certes that they may find that which they may accuse. And what man so walks, that nowhere he slips? For example, how speedily is a slip made even in tongue? For it is written, Whosoever in tongue stumbles not, the same is a perfect man. James 3:2 What man I pray would dare himself to call or deem perfect? Therefore it must needs be that every one slip in tongue. But let them that shall sojourn and shall hide, carp at all words, seeking somewhere to make snares and knotty false accusations, wherein they are themselves entangled before those whom they strive to entangle: in order that they may themselves be taken and perish before that they catch other men in order to destroy them....Whatever good thing I have said, whatever true thing I have said, of God I have said it, and from God have said it: whatever other thing perchance I have said, which to have said I ought not, as a man I have said, but under God I have said. He that strengthens one walking, does menace one straying, forgive one acknowledging, recalls the tongue, recalls him that slipped....Attend thou unto the discourses of him whom you blame, whether perchance he may teach you something to your health. And what, he says, shall he be able to teach to my health, that has so slipped in word? This very thing perchance he is teaching you to your health, that you be not a carper at words, but a gatherer of precepts. As my soul has undergone. I speak of that which I have undergone. He was speaking as one experienced: As my soul has undergone. They shall sojourn and hide. Let my soul undergo all men, men without barking, men within hiding, let it undergo. From without coming, like a river comes temptation: on the Rock let it find you, let it strike against, not throw you down; the house has been founded upon a Rock. Matthew 7:25 Within he is, he shall sojourn and hide: suppose chaff is near you, let there come in the treading of oxen, let there come in the roller of temptations; you are cleansed, the other is crushed.

11. For nothing You shall save them Psalm 55:7. He has taught us even for these very men to pray. However they shall sojourn and hide, however deceitful they be, however dissemblers and liars in wait they be; do thou pray for them, and do not say, Shall God amend even such a man, so evil, so perverse? Do not despair: give heed to Him whom you ask, not him for whom you ask. The greatness of the disease do you see, the might of the Physician do you not see? They shall sojourn and hide: as my soul has undergone. Undergo, pray: and there is done what? For nothing You shall save them. You shall make them safe so as that nothing to You it may be, that is, so that no labour to You it may be. With men they are despaired of, but Thou with a word dost heal; You will not toil in healing, though we are astounded in looking on. There is another sense in this verse, For nothing You shall save them: with not any merits of their going before You shall save them....They shall not bring to You he-goats, rams, bulls, not gifts and spices shall they bring You in Your temple, not anything of the drink-offering of a good conscience do they pour thereon; all in them is rough, all foul, all to be detested: and though they to You bring nothing whereby they may be saved; For nothing You shall save them, that is, with the free gift of Your Grace....

12. In anger the peoples You shall bring down. You are angry and dost bring down, dost rage and save, dost terrify and call. Thou fillest with tribulations all things, in order that being set in tribulations men may fly to You, lest by pleasures and a wrong security they be seduced. From You anger is seen, but that of a father. A father is angry with a son, the despiser of his injunctions: being angry with him he boxes him, strikes, pulls the ear, drags with hand, leads to school. How many men have entered, how many men have filled the House of the Lord, in the anger of Him brought down, that is, by tribulations terrified and with faith filled? For to this end tribulation stirs up; in order to empty the vessel which is full of wickedness, so as that it may be filled with grace.

13. O God, my life I have told out to You Psalm 55:8. For that I live has been Your doing, and for this reason I tell out my life to You. But did not God know that which He had given? What is that which you tell out to Him? Will you teach God? Far be it. Therefore why says he, I have told out to You? Is it perchance because it profits You that I have told out my life? And what does it profit God? To the advantage of God it does profit. I have told out to God my life, because that life has been God's doing. In like manner as his life Paul the Apostle did tell out, saying, I that before was a blasphemer and a persecutor and injurious, he shall tell out his life. But mercy I have obtained. 1 Timothy 1:13 He has told out his life, not for himself, but for Him: because he has told it out in such sort, that in Him men believe, not for his own advantages, but for the advantages of Him....O God, my life I have told out to You. You have put my tears in Your sight. You have hearkened to me imploring You. As also in Your promise. Because as You had promised this thing, so You have done. You have said You would hearken to one weeping. I have believed, I have wept, I have been hearkened unto; I have found You merciful in promising, true in repaying.

14. Turned be mine enemies backward Psalm 55:9. This thing to these very men is profitable, no ill to these men he is wishing. For to go before they are willing, therefore to be amended they are not willing. Thou warnest your enemy to live well, that he amend himself: he scorns, he rejects your word: Behold him that advises me; behold him from whom I am to hear the commandments whereby I shall live! To go before you he wills, and in going before is not amended. He minds not that your words are not yours, he minds not that your life to God you tell out, not to yourself. In going before therefore he is not amended: it is a good thing for him that he be turned backward, and follow him whom to go before he willed. The Lord to His disciples was speaking of His Passion that was to be. Peter shuddered, and says, Far be it, O Lord; Matthew 16:22 he that a little before had said, You are the Christ, Son of the living God, having confessed God, feared for Him to die, as if but a man. But the Lord who so came that He might suffer (for we could not otherwise be saved unless with His blood we were redeemed), a little before had praised the confession of Peter....But immediately when the Lord begins to speak of His Passion, he feared lest He should perish by death, whereas we ourselves should perish unless He died; and he says, Far be it, O Lord, this thing shall not be done. And the Lord, to him to whom a little before He had said, Blessed you are, and upon this Rock I will build my Church, says, Go back behind, Satan, an offense you are to Me. Why therefore Satan is he, that a little before was blessed, and a Rock? For you savour not the things which are of God, He says, but those things which are of man. Matthew 16:23 A little before he savoured the things which are of God: because not flesh and blood has revealed to you, but My Father which is in the Heavens. When in God he was praising his discourse, not Satan but Peter, from petra: but when of himself and out of human infirmity, carnal love of man, which would be for an impediment to his own salvation, and that of the rest, Satan he is called. Why? Because to go before the Lord he willed, and earthly counsel to give to the heavenly Leader. Far be it, O Lord, this thing shall not be done. You say, Far be it, and you say, O Lord: surely if Lord He is, in power He does: if Master He is, He knows what He does, He knows what He teaches. But you will to lead your Leader, teach your Master, command your Lord,

choose for God: much you go before, go back behind. Did not this too profit these enemies? Turned be Mine enemies backward; but let them not remain backward. For this reason let them be turned backward, lest they go before; but so that they follow, not so that they remain.

15. In whatsoever day I shall have called upon You, behold I have known that my God are You Psalm 55:9. A great knowledge. He says not, I have known that God You are: but, that my God are You. For yours He is, when you He succours: yours He is, when thou to Him art not an alien. Whence is said, Blessed the people of whom is the Lord the God of the same. Wherefore of whom is? For of whom is He not? Of all things indeed God He is: but of those men the God peculiarly He is said to be, that love Him, that hold Him, that possess Him, that worship Him, as though belonging to His own House: the great family of Him are they, redeemed by the great blood of the Only Son. How great a thing has God given to us, that His own we should be, and He should be ours! But in truth foreigners afar have been put from holy men, sons alien they are. See what of them is said in another Psalm: O Lord, deliver me, he says, from the hand of alien sons, of whom the mouth has spoken vanity, and the right hand of them is a right hand of iniquity.. ..

16. Let us therefore love God, brethren, purely and chastely. There is not a chaste heart, if God for reward it worships. How so? Reward of the worship of God shall not we have? We shall have evidently, but it is God Himself whom we worship. Himself for us a reward shall be, because we shall see Him as He is. 1 John 3:2 Observe that a reward you shall obtain....I will tell you, brethren: in these human alliances consider a chaste heart, of what sort it is towards God: certainly human alliances are of such sort, that a man does not love his wife, that loves her because of her portion: a woman her husband does not chastely love, that for these reasons loves him, because something he has given, or because much he has given. Both a rich man is a husband, and one that has become a poor man is a husband. How many men proscribed, by chaste wives have been the more beloved! Proved have been many chaste marriages by the misfortunes of husbands: that the wives might not be supposed to love any other object more than their husband, not only have they not forsaken, but the more have they obeyed. If therefore a husband of flesh freely is loved, if chastely he is loved; and a wife of flesh freely is loved, if chastely she is loved; in what manner must God be loved, the true and truth-speaking Husband of the soul, making fruitful unto the offspring of everlasting life, and not suffering us to be barren? Him, therefore, so let us love, as that any other thing besides Himself be not loved: and there takes place in us that which we have spoken of, that which we have sung, because even here the voice is ours: In whatsoever day I shall have called upon You, behold, I have known that my God are You. This is to call upon God, freely to call upon Him. Furthermore, of certain men has been said what? Upon the Lord they have not called. The Lord they seemed as it were to call unto themselves and they besought Him about inheritances, about increasing money, about lengthening this life, about the rest of temporal things: and concerning them the Scripture says what? Upon the Lord they have not called. Therefore there follows what? There they have feared with fear, where there was no fear. What is, where there was no fear? Lest money should be stolen from them, lest anything in their house should be made less; lastly, lest they should have less of years in this life, than they hoped for themselves: but there have they trembled with fear, where there was no fear....In God I will praise the word, in the Lord I will praise the discourse Psalm 55:10: in God I have hoped, I will not fear what man does unto me Psalm 55:11. Now this is the very sense which above has been repeated.

17. In me, O God, are Your vows, which I will render of praise to You Psalm 55:12. Vow ye, and render to the Lord your God. What vow, what render? Perchance those animals which were offered at the altars aforetime? No such thing offer thou: in yourself is what you may vow and render. From the heart's coffer

bring forth the incense of praise; from the store of a good conscience bring forth the sacrifice of faith. Whatsoever thing you bring forth, kindle with love. In yourself be the vows, which you may render of praise to God.

Of what praise? For what has He granted you? For You have rescued my soul from death Psalm 55:13. This is that very life which he tells out to Him: O God, my life I have told out to You. For I was what? Dead. Through myself I was dead: through You I am what? Alive. Therefore in me, O God, are Your vows, which I will render of praise to You. Behold I love my God: no one does tear Him from me: that which to Him I may give, no one does tear from me, because in the heart it is shut up.

With reason is said with that former confidence, What should man do unto me? Let man rage, let him be permitted to rage, be permitted to accomplish that which he attempts: what is he to take away? Gold, silver, cattle, men servants, maid servants, estates, houses, let him take away all things: does he by any means take away the vows, which are in me, which I may render of praise to God? The tempter was permitted to tempt a holy man, Job; Job 1:12 in one moment he took away all things: whatever of possessions he had had, he carried off: took away inheritance, slew heirs; and this not little by little, but in a crowd, at one blow, at one swoop, so that all things were on a sudden announced: when all was taken away, alone there remained Job, but in him were vows of praise, which he might render to God, in him evidently there were: the coffer of his holy breast the thieving devil had not rifled, full he was of that wherefrom he might sacrifice.

Hear what he had, hear what he brought forth: The Lord has given, the Lord has taken away; as has pleased the Lord, so has been done: be the name of the Lord blessed. Job 1:21 O riches interior, whither thief does not draw near! God Himself had given that whereof He was receiving; He had Himself enriched him with that whereof to Him he was offering that which He loved. Praise from you God requires, your confession God requires. But from your field will you give anything? He has Himself rained in order that you may have.

From your coffer will you give anything? He has Himself put in that which you are to give. What will you give, which from Him you have not received? For what have you which you have not received? 1 Corinthians 4:7 From the heart will you give? He too has given faith, hope, and charity: this you must bring forth: this you must sacrifice. But evidently all the other things the enemy is able to take away against your will; this to take away he is not able, unless thou be willing.

These things a man will lose even against his will: and wishing to have gold, will lose gold; and wishing to have house, will lose house: faith no one will lose, except him that shall have despised her.

18. Because You have rescued my soul from death, my eyes from tears, and my feet from slipping: that I may be pleasing before God in the light of the living Psalm 55:13. With reason he is not pleasing to alien sons, that are put afar off from holy men, because they have not the light of the living, whence they may see that which to God is pleasing. Light of the living, is light of the immortal, light of holy men. He that is not in darkness, is pleasing in the light of the living.

A man is observed, and the things which belong to him; no one knows of what sort he is: God sees of what sort he is. Sometimes even the devil himself he escapes; except he tempt, he finds not: just as concerning that man of whom just now I have made mention:...Does Job by any means worship God for nought? Job 1:9 For this was true light, this the light of the living, that gratis he should worship God. God saw in the heart of His servant His gratuitous worship. For that heart was pleasing in the sight of the Lord in the light

of the living: the devil's sight he escaped, because in darkness he was.

God admitted the tempter, not in order that He might Himself know that which He did know, but in order that to us to be known and imitated He might set it forth. Admitted was the tempter; he took away everything, there remained the man bereft of possessions, bereft of family, bereft of children, full of God. A wife certainly was left. Job 2:9 Merciful do ye deem the devil, that he left him a wife? He knew through whom he had deceived Adam....With wound smitten from head even unto feet, whole nevertheless within, he made answer to the woman tempting, out of the light of the living, out of the light of his heart: you have spoken as though one of the unwise women, Job 2:10 that is, as though one that has not the light of the living.

For the light of the living is wisdom, and the darkness of unwise men is folly. You have spoken as though one of the unwise women: my flesh you see, the light of my heart you see not. For she then might more have loved her husband, if the interior beauty she had known, and had beheld the place where he was beautiful before the eyes of God: because in Him were vows which he might render of praise to God. How entirely the enemy had forborne to invade that patrimony! How whole was that which he was possessing, and that because of which yet more to be possessed he hoped for, being to go on from virtues unto virtue.

Therefore, brethren, to this end let all these things serve us, that God gratis we love, in Him hope always, neither man nor devil fear. Neither the one nor the other does anything, except when it is permitted: permitted for no other reason can it be, except because it does profit us. Let us endure evil men, let us be good men: because even we have been evil. Even as nothing God shall save men, of whom we dare to despair. Therefore of no one let us despair, for all men whom we suffer let us pray, from God let us never depart.

Our patrimony let Him be, our hope let Him be, our safety let Him be. He is Himself here a comforter, there a remunerator, everywhere Maker-alive, and of life the Giver, not of another life, but of that whereof has been said, I am the Way, and the Truth, and the Life: John 14:6 in order that both here in the light of faith, and there in the light of sight, as it were in the light of the living, in the sight of the Lord we may be pleasing.

Source: <https://sermonindex.net/speakers/st-augustine/exposition-on-psalm-56/>

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