

Exposition on Psalm 71

by St. Augustine

The Psalm 71 commends the grace of God that delivers us from captivity and sin, and encourages us to trust in God's help and promises.

Scripture: Romans 4:5

Topics: "Redemption And Salvation", "Faith And Hope"

Description

St. Augustine preaches about the journey of redemption and salvation, highlighting the grace of God that delivers us and the need to acknowledge our sins and turn back to God. He emphasizes the importance of faith, hope, and patience in waiting for the fulfillment of God's promises. St. Augustine reflects on the struggles of the soul, the redemption of the spirit, and the ultimate victory of righteousness over evil. He encourages continuous praise and meditation on God's righteousness, especially in the face of adversaries and challenges, knowing that God's truth and redemption will prevail in the end.

Transcript

1. In all the holy Scriptures the grace of God that delivers us commends itself to us, in order that it may have us commended. This is sung of in this Psalm, whereof we have undertaken to speak....This grace the Apostle commends: by this he got to have the Jews for enemies, boasting of the letter of the law and of their own justice. This then commending in the lesson which has been read, he says thus: For I am the least of the Apostles, that am not worthy to be called an Apostle, because I persecuted the Church of God. 1 Corinthians 15:9 But therefore mercy, he says, I obtained, because ignorant I did it in unbelief. 1 Timothy 1:13 Then a little afterwards, Faithful the saying is, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am first. 1 Timothy 1:15 Were there before him not any sinners? What then, was he the first then? Yea, going before all men not in time, but in evil disposition. But therefore, he says, mercy I obtained, in order that in me Christ Jesus might show all long-suffering, for the imitation of those that shall believe in Him unto life eternal: that is, every sinner and unjust man, already despairing of himself, already having the mind of a gladiator, so as to do whatsoever he wills, because he must needs be condemned, may yet observe the Apostle Paul, to whom so great cruelty and so very evil a disposition was forgiven by God; and by not despairing of himself may he be turned unto God. This grace God does commend to us in this Psalm also....

2. The title then of this Psalm is, as usual, a title intimating on the threshold what is being done in the house: To David himself for the sons of Jonadab, and for those that were first led captive. Jonadab (he is

commended to us in the prophecy of Jeremiah) was a certain man, who had enjoined his sons not to drink wine, and not to dwell in houses, but in tents. But the commandment of the father the sons kept and observed, and by this earned a blessing from the Lord. Now the Lord had not commanded this, but their own father.

But they so received it as though it were a commandment from the Lord their God; for even though the Lord had not commanded that they should drink no wine and should dwell in tents; yet the Lord had commanded that sons should obey their father. In this case alone a son ought not to obey his father, if his father should have commanded anything contrary to the Lord his God. For indeed the father ought not to be angry, when God is preferred before him. But when a father does command that which is not contrary to God; he must be heard as God is: because to obey one's father God has enjoined.

God then blessed the sons of Jonadab because of their obedience, and thrust them in the teeth of His disobedient people, reproaching them, because while the sons of Jonadab were obedient to their father, they obeyed not their God. But while Jeremiah was treating of these topics, he had this object in regard to the people of Israel, that they should prepare themselves to be led for captivity into Babylon, and should not hope for any other thing, but that they were to be captives.

The title then of this Psalm seems from thence to have taken its hue, so that when he had said, Of the sons of Jonadab; he added, and of them that were first led captive: not that the sons of Jonadab were led captive, but because to them that were to be led captive there were opposed the sons of Jonadab, because they were obedient to their father: in order that they might understand that they had been made captive, because they were not obedient to God. It is added also that Jonadab is interpreted, the Lord's spontaneous one.

What is this, the Lord's spontaneous one? Serving God freely with the will. What is, the Lord's spontaneous one? In me are, O God, Your vows, which I will render of praise to You. What is, the Lord's spontaneous one? Voluntarily I will sacrifice to You. For if the Apostolic teaching admonishes a slave to serve a human master, not as though of necessity, but of good will, and by freely serving make himself in heart free; how much more must God be served with whole and full and free will, who sees your very will?...The first man made us captive, the second man has delivered us from captivity.

For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ all shall be made alive. But in Adam they die through the flesh's nativity, in Christ they are delivered through the heart's faith. It was not in your power not to be born of Adam: it is in your power to believe in Christ. Howsoever much then you shall have willed to belong to the first man, unto captivity you will belong. And what is, shall have willed to belong? Or what is, shall belong? Already you belong, cry out, Who shall deliver me from the body of this death? Romans 7:24 Let us hear then this man crying out this.

3. O God, in You I have hoped, O Lord, I shall not be confounded for everlasting Psalm 70:1. Already I have been confounded, but not for everlasting. For how is he not confounded, to whom is said, What fruit had ye in these things wherein ye now blush? Romans 6:21 What then shall be done, that we may not be confounded for everlasting? Draw near unto Him, and be ye enlightened, and your faces shall not blush. Confounded you are in Adam, withdraw from Adam, draw near unto Christ, and then you shall not be confounded. In You I have hoped, O Lord, I shall not be confounded for everlasting. If in myself I am now confounded, in You I shall not be confounded for everlasting.

4. In Your own righteousness deliver me, and save me Psalm 70:2. Not in my own, but in Your own: for if in my own, I shall be one of those whereof he says, Being ignorant of God's righteousness, and their own righteousness willing to establish, to the righteousness of God they were not made subject. Romans 10:3 Therefore, in Your own righteousness, not in mine. For mine is what? Iniquity has gone before. And when I shall be righteous, Your own righteousness it will be: for by righteousness given to me by You I shall be righteous; and it shall be so mine, as that it be Yours, that is, given to me by You. For I believe in Him that justifies an ungodly man, so that my faith is counted for righteousness. Romans 4:5 Even so then the righteousness shall be mine, not however as though my own, not as though by my own self given to myself: as they thought who through the letter made their boast, and rejected grace....It is a small thing then that thou acknowledge the good thing which is in you to be from God, unless also on that account thou exalt not yourself above him that has not yet, who perchance when he shall have received, will outstrip you. For when Saul was a stoner of Stephen, Acts 7:59 how many were the Christians of whom he was persecutor! Nevertheless, when he was converted, all that had gone before he surpassed. Therefore say thou to God that which you hear in the Psalm, In You I have hoped, O Lord, I shall not be confounded for everlasting: in Your own righteousness, not in mine, deliver me, and save me. Incline unto me Your ear. This also is a confession of humility. He that says, Incline unto me, is confessing that he is lying like a sick man laid at the feet of the Physician standing. Lastly, observe that it is a sick man that is speaking: Incline unto me Your ear, and save me.

5. Be Thou unto me for a protecting God Psalm 70:3. Let not the darts of the enemy reach unto me: for I am not able to protect myself. And a small thing is protecting: he has added, and for a walled place, that You may save me. For a walled place be Thou to me, be Thou my walled place....Behold, God Himself has become the place of your fleeing unto, who at first was the fearful object of your fleeing from. For a walled place, he says, be to me, that You may save me. I shall not be safe except in You: except You shall have been my rest, my sickness shall not be able to be made whole. Lift me from the earth; upon You I will lie, in order that I may rise unto a walled place. What can be better walled? When unto that place you shall have fled for refuge, tell me what adversaries you will dread? Who will lie in wait, and come at you? A certain man is said from the summit of a mountain to have cried out, when an Emperor was passing by, I speak not of you: the other is said to have looked back and to have said, Nor I of you. He had despised an Emperor with glittering arms, with mighty army. From whence? From a strong place. If he was secure on a high spot of earth, how secure are you on Him by whom heaven and earth were made? I, if for myself I shall have chosen another place, shall not be able to be safe. Choose thou indeed, O man, if you shall have found one, a place better walled. There is not then a place whither to flee from Him, except we flee to Him. If you will escape Him angry, flee to Him appeased. For my firmament and my refuge You are. My firmament is what? Through You I am firm, and by You I am firm. For my firmament and my refuge You are: in order that I may be made firm by You, in whatever respects I shall have been made infirm in myself, I will flee for refuge unto You. For firm the grace of Christ makes you, and immovable against all temptations of the enemy. But there is there too human frailness, there is there still the first captivity, there is there too the law in the members fighting against the law of the mind, and willing to lead captive in the law of sin: Romans 7:23 still the body which is corrupt presses down the soul. Wisdom 9:15 Howsoever firm thou be by the grace of God, so long as thou still bearest an earthly vessel, wherein the treasure of God is, something must be dreaded even from that same vessel of clay. 2 Corinthians 4:7 Therefore my firmament You are, in order that I may be firm in this world against all temptations. But if many they are, and they trouble me: my refuge You are. For I will confess mine infirmity, to the end that I may be timid like a hare, because I am full of thorns like a hedgehog. And as in another Psalm is said, The rock is a refuge for the hedgehogs and the hares: but the Rock was Christ. 1 Corinthians 10:4

6. O God, deliver me from the hand of the sinner Psalm 70:4. Generally, sinners, among whom is toiling he that is now to be delivered from captivity: he that now cries, Unhappy man I, who shall deliver me from the body of this death? The grace of God through Jesus Christ our Lord. Romans 7:24-25 Within is a foe, that law in the members; there are without also enemies: unto what do you cry? Unto Him, to whom has been cried, From my secret sins cleanse me, O Lord, and from strange sins spare Your servant.. ..But these sinners are of two kinds: there are some that have received Law, there are others that have not received: all the heathen have not received Law, all Jews and Christians have received Law. Therefore the general term is sinner; either a transgressor of the Law, if he has received Law; or only unjust without Law, if he has not received the Law. Of both kinds speaks the Apostle, and says, They that without Law have sinned, without Law shall perish, and they that in the Law have sinned, by the Law shall be judged. Romans 2:12 But thou that amid both kinds dost groan, say to God that which you hear in the Psalm, My God, deliver me from the hand of the sinner. Of what sinner? From the hand of him that transgresses the Law, and of the unjust man. He that transgresses the Law is indeed also unjust; for not unjust he is not, that transgresses the Law: but every one that transgresses the Law is unjust, not every unjust man does transgress the Law. For, Where there is not a Law, says the Apostle, neither is there transgression. Romans 4:15 They then that have not received Law, may be called unjust, transgressors they cannot be called. Both are judged after their deservings. But I that from captivity will to be delivered through Your grace, cry to You, Deliver me from the hand of the sinner. What is, from the hand of him? From the power of him, that while he is raging, he lead me not unto consenting with him; that while he lies in wait, he persuade not to iniquity. From the hand of the sinner and of the unjust man....

7. Lastly, there follows the reason why I say this: for You are my patience Psalm 70:5. Now if He is patience rightly, He is that also which follows, O Lord, my hope from my youth. My patience, because my hope: or rather my hope, because my patience. Tribulation, says the Apostle, works patience, patience probation, but probation hope, but hope confounds not. Romans 5:3-5 With reason in You I have hoped, O Lord, I shall not be confounded for everlasting. O Lord, my hope from my youth. From your youth is God your hope? Is He not also from your boyhood, and from your infancy? Certainly, says he. For see what follows, that you may not think that I have said this, my hope from my youth, as if God noways profited mine infancy or my boyhood; hear what follows: In You I have been strengthened from the womb. Hear yet: From the belly of my mother You are my Protector Psalm 70:6. Why then, from my youth, except it was the period from which I began to hope in You? For before in You I was not hoping, though You were my Protector, that led me safe unto the time, when I learned to hope in You. But from my youth I began in You to hope, from the time when You armed me against the Devil, so that in the girding of Your host being armed with Your faith, love, hope, and the rest of Your gifts, I waged conflict against Your invisible enemies, and heard from the Apostle, There is not for us a wrestling against flesh and blood, but against principalities, and powers, etc. Ephesians 5:12 There a young man it is that does fight against these things: but though he be a young man, he falls, unless He be the hope of Him to whom he cries, O Lord, my hope from my youth. In You is my singing always. Is it only from the time when I began to hope in You until now? Nay, but alway. What is, alway? Not only in the time of faith, but also in the time of sight. For now, So long as we are in the body we are absent from the Lord: for by faith we walk, not by sight: 2 Corinthians 5:6 there will be a time when we shall see that which being not seen we believe: but when that has been seen which we believe, we shall rejoice: but when that has been seen which they believed not, ungodly men shall be confounded. Then will come the substance whereof there is now the hope. But, Hope which is seen is not hope. But if that which we see not we hope for, through patience we wait for it. Romans 8:24 Now then you groan, now unto a place of refuge you run, in order that you may be saved; now being in infirmity you entreat the Physician: what, when you shall have received perfect soundness

also, what when you shall have been made equal to the Angels of God, Matthew 22:30 will you then perchance forget that grace, whereby you have been delivered? Far be it.

8. As it were a monster I have become unto many Psalm 70:7. Here in time of hope, in time of groaning, in time of humiliation, in time of sorrow, in time of infirmity, in time of the voice from the fetters-- here then what? As it were a monster I have become unto many. Why, As it were a monster? Why do they insult me that think me a monster? Because I believe that which I see not. For they being happy in those things which they see, exult in drink, in wantonness, in chamberings, in covetousness, in riches, in robberies, in secular dignities, in the whitening of a mud wall, in these things they exult: but I walk in a different way, contemning those things which are present, and fearing even the prosperous things of the world, and secure in no other thing but the promises of God. And they, Let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we die. 1 Corinthians 15:32 What do you say? Repeat it: let us eat, he says, and drink. Come now, what have you said afterwards? for tomorrow we die. You have terrified, not led me astray. Certainly by the very thing which you have said afterwards, you have stricken me with fear to consent with you. For tomorrow we die, you have said: and there has preceded, Let us eat and drink. For when you had said, Let us eat and drink; you added, for tomorrow we die. Hear the other side from me, Yea let us fast and pray, 'for tomorrow we die.' I keeping this way, strait and narrow, as it were a monster have become unto many: but You are a strong helper. Be with me, O Lord Jesus, to say to me, faint not in the narrow way, I first have gone along it, I am the way itself, John 14:6 I lead, in Myself I lead, unto Myself I lead home. Therefore though a monster I have become unto many; nevertheless I will not fear, for You are a strong Helper.

9. Let my mouth be fulfilled with praise, that with hymn I may tell of Your glory, all the day long Your magnificence Psalm 70:8. What is all the day long? Without intermission. In prosperity, because You comfort: in adversity, because You correct: before I was in being, because You made; when I was in being, because You gave health: when I had sinned, because You forgave; when I was converted, because You helped; when I had persevered, because You crowned.

10. My hope from my youth, cast me not away in time of old age Psalm 70:9. What is this time of old age? When my strength shall fail, forsake not me. Here God makes this answer to you, yea indeed let your strength fail, in order that in you mine may abide: in order that you may say with the Apostle, When I am made weak, then I am mighty. 2 Corinthians 12:10 Fear not, that you be cast away in that weakness, in that old age. But why? Was not your Lord made weak on the Cross? Did not most mighty men and fat bulls before Him, as though a man of no strength, made captive and oppressed, shake the head and say, If Son of God He is, let Him come down from the Cross? Has he deserted because He was made weak, who preferred not to come down from the Cross, lest He should seem not to have displayed power, but to have yielded to them reviling? What did He hanging teach you, that would not come down, but patience amid men reviling, but that you should be strong in your God? Perchance too in His person was said, As it were a monster I have become unto many, and You are a strong Helper. In His person according to His weakness, not according to His power; according to that whereby He had transformed us into Himself, not according to that wherein He had Himself come down. For He became a monster unto many. And perchance the same was the old age of Him; because on account of its oldness it is not improperly called old age, and the Apostle says, Our old man has been crucified together with Him. Romans 6:6 If there was there our old man, old age was there; because old, old age. Nevertheless, because a true saying is, Renewed as an eagle's shall be Your youth; He rose Himself the third day, promised a resurrection at the end of the world. Already there has gone before the Head, the members are to follow. Why do you fear lest He should forsake you, lest He cast you away for the time of old age, when your strength shall have

failed? Yea at that time in you will be the strength of Him, when your strength shall have failed.

11. Why do I say this? For mine enemies have spoken against me, and they that were keeping watch for My soul, have taken counsel together Psalm 70:10: saying, God has forsaken Him, persecute Him, and seize Him, for there is no one to deliver Him Psalm 70:11. This has been said concerning Christ. For He that with the great power of Divinity, wherein He is equal to the Father, had raised to life dead persons, on a sudden in the hands of enemies became weak, and as if having no power, was seized. When would He have been seized, except they had first said in their heart, God has forsaken Him? Whence there was that voice on the Cross, My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me? So then did God forsake Christ, though God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, 2 Corinthians 5:19 though Christ was also God, out of the Jews indeed according to the flesh, Who is over all things, God blessed for ever, Romans 9:5 -- did God forsake Him? Far be it. But in our old man our voice it was, because our old man was crucified together with Him: Romans 6:6 and of that same our old man He had taken a Body, because Mary was of Adam. Therefore the very thing which they thought, from the Cross He said, Why have You forsaken Me? Matthew 27:46 Why do these men think Me left alone to their evil? What is, think Me forsaken in their evil? For if they had known, the Lord of glory they had never crucified. 1 Corinthians 2:8 Persecute and seize Him. More familiarly however, brethren, let us take this of the members of Christ, and acknowledge our own voice in these words: because even He used such words in our person, not in His own power and majesty; but in that which He became for our sakes, not according to that which He was, who has made us.

12. O Lord, my God, be not far from me Psalm 70:12. So it is, and the Lord is not far off at all. For, The Lord is near unto them that have bruised the heart. My God, unto my help look Thou. Be they confounded and fail that engage my soul Psalm 70:13. What has he desired? Be they confounded and fail. Why has he desired it? That engage my soul? What is, That engage my soul? Engaging as it were unto some quarrel. For they are said to be engaged that are challenged to quarrel. If then so it is, let us beware of men that engage our soul. What is, That engage our soul? First provoking us to withstand God, in order that in our evil things God may displease us. For when are you right, so that to you the God of Israel may be good, good to men right in heart? When are you right? Will you hear? When in that good which you do, God is pleasing to you; but in that evil which you suffer God is not displeasing to you. See ye what I have said, brethren, and be ye on your guard against men that engage your souls. For all men that deal with you in order to make you be wearied in sorrows and tribulations, have this aim, namely, that God may be displeasing to you in that which you suffer, and there may go forth from your mouth, What is this? For what have I done? Now then have you done nothing of evil, and art you just? He unjust? A sinner I am, you say; I confess, just I call not myself. But what, sinner, have you by any means done so much evil as he with whom it is well? As much as Gaiuseius? I know the evil doings of him, I know the iniquities of him, from which I, though a sinner, am very far; and yet I see him abounding in all good things, and I am suffering so great evil things. I do not then say, O God, what have I done to You, because I have done nothing at all of evil; but because I have not done so much as to deserve to suffer these things. Again, art you just, He unjust? Wake up, wretched man, your soul has been engaged! I have not, he says, called myself just. What then do you say? A sinner I am, but I did not commit so great sins, as to deserve to suffer these things. You say not then to God, just I am, and You are unjust: but you say, unjust I am, but You are more unjust. Behold your soul has been engaged, behold now your soul wages war. What? Against whom? Your soul, against God; that which has been made against Him by whom it was made. Even because you are in being to cry out against Him, you are ungrateful. Return, then, to the confession of your sickness, and beg the healing hand of the Physician. Think thou not they are happy who flourish for a time. You are

being chastised, they are being spared: perchance for you chastised and amended an inheritance is being kept in reserve....Lastly, see what follows, Let them put on confusion and shame, that think evil things to me. Confusion and shame, confusion because of a bad conscience, shame because of modesty. Let this befall them, and they will be good....

13. But I always in You will hope, and will add to all Your praise Psalm 70:14. What is this? I will add to all Your praise, ought to move us. More perfect will you make the praise of God? Is there anything to be superadded? If already that is all praise, will you add anything? God was praised in all His good deeds, in every creature of His, in the whole establishment of all things, in the government and regulation of ages, in the order of seasons, in the height of Heaven, in the fruitfulness of the regions of earth, in the encircling of the sea, in every excellency of the creature everywhere brought forth, in the sons of men themselves, in the giving of the Law, in delivering His people from the captivity of the Egyptians, and all the rest of His wonderful works: not yet He had been praised for having raised up flesh unto life eternal. Be there then this praise added by the Resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ: in order that here we may perceive His voice above all past praise: thus it is that we rightly understand this also....

14. My mouth shall tell out Your righteousness Psalm 70:15: not mine. From thence I will add to all Your praise: because even that I am righteous, if righteous I am, is Your righteousness in me, not my own: for You justify the ungodly. Romans 4:5 All the day long Your salvation. What is, Your salvation? Let no one assume to himself, that he saves himself, Of the Lord is Salvation. Not any one by himself saves himself, Vain is man's salvation. All the day long Your Salvation: at all times. Something of adversity comes, preach the Salvation of the Lord: something of prosperity comes, preach the Salvation of the Lord. Do not preach in prosperity, and hold your peace in adversity: otherwise there will not be that which has been said, all the day long. For all the day long is day together with its own night. Do we when we say, for example, thirty days have gone by, mention the nights also; do we not under the very term days include the nights also? In Genesis what was said? The evening was made, and the morning was made, one day. Genesis 1:5 Therefore a whole day is the day together with its own night: for the night does serve the day, not the day the night. Whatever you do in mortal flesh, ought to serve righteousness: whatever you do by the commandment of God, be it not done for the sake of the advantage of the flesh, lest day serve night. Therefore all the day long speak of the praise of God, to wit, in prosperity and in adversity; in prosperity, as though in the day time; in adversity, as though in the night time: all the day long nevertheless speak of the praise of God, so that you may not have sung to no purpose, I will bless God at every time, always the praise of Him is in my mouth.. ..

15. Therefore, he says, For I have not known tradings. What are these tradings? Let traders hear and change their life; and if they have been such, be not such; let them not know what they have been, let them forget; lastly, let them not approve, not praise; let them disapprove, condemn, be changed, if trading is a sin. For on this account, O thou trader, because of a certain eagerness for getting, whenever you shall have suffered loss, you will blaspheme; and there will not be in you that which has been spoken of, all the day long Your praise.

But whenever for the price of the goods which you are selling, thou not only liest, but even falsely swearest; how in your mouth all the day long is there the praise of God? While, if you are a Christian, even out of your mouth the name of God is being blasphemed, so that men say, see what sort of men are Christians! Therefore if this man for this reason speaks the praise of God all the day long, because he has not known tradings; let Christians amend themselves, let them not trade.

But a trader says to me, behold I bring indeed from a distant quarter merchandise unto these places, wherein there are not those things which I have brought, by which means I may gain a living: I ask but as reward for my labour, that I may sell dearer than I have bought: for whence can I live, when it has been written, the worker is worthy of his reward? Luke 10:7 But he is treating of lying, of false swearing. This is the fault of me, not of trading: for I should not, if I would, be unable to do without this fault.

I then, the merchant, do not shift my own fault to trading: but if I lie, it is I that lie, not the trade. For I might say, for so much I bought, but for so much I will sell; if you please, buy. For the buyer hearing this truth would not be offended, and not a whit less all men would resort to me: because they would love truth more than gain. Of this then, he says, admonish me, that I lie not, that I forswear not; not to relinquish business whereby I maintain myself. For to what do you put me when you put me away from this?

Perchance to some craft? I will be a shoemaker, I will make shoes for men. Are not they too liars? Are not they too false-swearers? Do they not, when they have contracted to make shoes for one man, when they have received money from another man, give up that which they were making, and undertake to make for another, and deceive him for whom they have promised to make speedily? Do they not often say, today I am about it, today I'll get them done? Secondly, in the very sewing do they not commit as many frauds?

These are their doings and these are their sayings: but they are themselves evil, not the calling which they profess. All evil artificers, then, not fearing God, either for gain, or for fear of loss or want, do lie, do forswear themselves; there is no continual praise of God in them. How then do you withdraw me from trading? Would you that I be a farmer, and murmur against God thundering, so that, fearing hail, I consult a wizard, in order to learn what to do to protect me against the weather; so that I desire famine for the poor, in order that I may be able to sell what I have kept in store?

Unto this do you bring me? But good farmers, you say, do not such things. Nor do good traders do those things. But why, even to have sons is an evil thing, for when their head is in pain, evil and unbelieving mothers seek for impious charms and incantations? These are the sins of men, not of things. A trader might thus speak to me-- Look then, O Bishop, how thou understand the tradings which you have read in the Psalm: lest perchance thou understand not, and yet forbid me trading.

Admonish me then how I should live; if well, it shall be well with me: one thing however I know, that if I shall have been evil, it is not trading that makes me so, but my iniquity. Whenever truth is spoken, there is nothing to be said against it.

16. Let us inquire then what he has called tradings, which indeed he that has not known, all the day long does praise God. Trading even in the Greek language is derived from action, and in the Latin from want of inaction: but whether it be from action or want of inaction, let us examine what it is. For they that are active traders, rely as it were upon their own action, they praise their works, they attain not to the grace of God. Therefore traders are opposed to that grace which this Psalm does commend. For it does commend that grace, in order that no one may boast of his own works. Because in a certain place is said, Physicians shall not raise to life, ought men to abandon medicine? But what is this? Under this name are understood proud men, promising salvation to men, whereas of the Lord is Salvation.. ..With reason the Lord drove from the Temple them to whom He said, It is written, My House shall be called the House of prayer, but you have made it a house of trading; that is, boasting of your works, seeking no inaction, nor hearing the Scripture speaking against your unrest and trading, be ye still, and see that I am the Lord.. ..

17. But there is in some copies, For I have not known literature. Where some books have trading, there others literature: how they may accord is a hard matter to find out; and yet the discrepancy of interpreters perchance shows the meaning, introduces no error. Let us inquire then how to understand literature also, lest we offend grammarians in the same way as we did traders a little before: because a grammarian too may live honourably in his calling, and neither forswear nor lie.

Let us examine then the literature which he has not known, in whose mouth all the day long is the praise of God. There is a sort of literature of the Jews: for to them let us refer this; there we shall find what has been said: just as when we were inquiring about traders, on the score of actions and works, we found that to be called detestable trading, which the Apostle has branded, saying, For being ignorant of God's righteousness, and willing to establish their own, to the righteousness of God they were not made subject.

Romans 10:3 ...Just as then we found out the former charge against traders, that is men boasting of action, exalting themselves because of business which admits no inaction, unquiet men rather than good workmen; because good workmen are those in whom God works; so also we find a sort of literature among the Jews....Moses wrote five books: but in the five porches encircling the pool, John 5:2 sick men were lying, but they could not be healed. See how the letter remained, convicting the guilty, not saving the unrighteous.

For in those five porches, a figure of the five books, sick men were given over rather than made whole. What then in that place did make whole a sick man? The moving of the water. When that pool was moved there went down a sick man, and there was made whole one, one because of unity: whatsoever other man went down unto that same moving was not made whole. How then was there commended the unity of the Body crying from the ends of the earth? Another man was not healed, except again the pool were moved.

The moving of the pool then did signify the perturbation of the people of the Jews when the Lord Jesus Christ came. For at the coming of an Angel the water in the pool was perceived to be moved. The water then encircled with five porches was the Jewish nation encircled by the Law. And in the porches the sick lay, and in the water alone when troubled and moved they were healed. The Lord came, troubled was the water; He was crucified, may He come down in order that the sick man may be made whole.

What is, may He come down? May He humble Himself. Therefore whosoever ye be that love the letter without grace, in the porches you will remain, sick ye will be, lying ill, not growing well....For the same figure also it is that Eliseus at first sent a staff by his servant to raise up the dead child. There had died the son of a widow his hostess; it was reported to him, to his servant he gave his staff: go thou, he says, lay it on the dead child. Did the prophet not know what he was doing?

The servant went before, he laid the staff upon the dead, the dead arose not. For if there had been given a law which could have made alive, surely out of the law there had been righteousness. Galatians 3:21 The law sent by the servant made not alive: and yet he sent his staff by the servant, who himself afterwards followed, and made alive. 2 Kings 4:20-36 For when that infant arose not, Eliseus came himself, now bearing the type of the Lord, who had sent before his servant with the staff, as though with the Law: he came to the child that was lying dead, he laid his limbs upon it.

The one was an infant, the other a grown man: he contracted and shortened in a manner the size of his full growth, in order that he might fit the dead child. The dead then arose, when he being alive adapted himself to the dead: and the Master did that which the staff did not; and grace did that which the letter did not. They then that have remained in the staff, glory in the letter; and therefore are not made alive. But I

will to glory concerning Your grace....In that same grace I glorying literature have not known: that is, men on the letter relying, and from grace recoiling, with whole heart I have rejected.

18. With reason there follows, I will enter into the power of the Lord: not my own, but the Lord's. For they gloried in their own power of the letter, therefore grace joined to the letter they knew not....But because the letter kills, but the Spirit makes alive: 2 Corinthians 3:6 I have not known literature, and I will enter into the power of the Lord. Therefore this verse following does strengthen and perfect the sense, so as to fix it in the hearts of men, and not suffer any other interpretation to steal in from any quarter. O Lord, I will be mindful of Your righteousness alone Psalm 70:16. Ah! alone. Why has he added alone, I ask you? It would suffice to say, I will be mindful of Your righteousness. alone, he says, entirely: there of my own I think not. For what have you which you have not received? But if also you have received, why do you glory as if you have not received. 1 Corinthians 4:7 Your righteousness alone does deliver me, what is my own alone is nought but sins. May I not glory then of my own strength, may I not remain in the letter; may I reject literature, that is, men glorying of the letter, and on their own strength perversely, like men frantic, relying: may I reject such men, may I enter into the power of the Lord, so that when I am weak, then I may be mighty; in order that You in me may be mighty, for, I will be mindful of Your righteousness alone.

19. O God, You have taught me from my youth Psalm 70:17. What have you taught me? That of Your righteousness alone I ought to be mindful. For reviewing my past life, I see what was owing to me, and what I have received instead of that which was owing to me. There was owing punishment, there has been paid grace: there was owing hell, there has been given life eternal. O God, You have taught me from my youth. From the very beginning of my faith, wherewith You have renewed me, You taught me that nothing had preceded in me, whence I might say that there was owing to me what You have given. For who is turned to God save from iniquity? Who is redeemed save from captivity? But who can say that unjust was his captivity, when he forsook his Captain and fell off to the deserter? God is for our Captain, the devil a deserter: the Captain gave a commandment, the deserter suggested guile: where were your ears between precept and deceit? Was the devil better than God? Better he that revolted than He that made you? You believed what the devil promised, and found what God threatened. Now then out of captivity being delivered, still however in hope, not yet in substance, walking by faith, not yet by sight, O God, he says, You have taught me from my youth. From the time that I have been turned to You, renewed by You who had been made by You, re-created who had been created, re-formed who had been formed: from the time that I have been converted, I have learned that no merits of mine have preceded, but that Your grace has come to me gratis, in order that I might be mindful of Your righteousness alone.

20. What next after youth? For, You have taught me, he says, from my youth: what after youth? For in that same first conversion of yours you learned, how before conversion you were not just, but iniquity preceded, in order that iniquity being banished, there might succeed love: and having been renewed into a new man, only in hope, not yet in substance, you learned how nothing of your good had preceded, and by the grace of God you were converted to God: now perchance since the time that you have been converted will you have anything of your own, and on your own strength ought thou to rely?

Just as men are wont to say, now leave me, it was necessary for you to show me the way; it is sufficient, I will walk in the way. And he that has shown you the way, will you not that I conduct you to the place? But you, if you are conceited, let me alone, it is enough, I will walk in the way. You are left, and through your weakness again you will lose the way. Good were it for you that He should have conducted you, who first put you in the way. But unless He too lead you, again also you will stray: say to Him then, Conduct me, O Lord, in Your way, and I will walk in Your truth.

But your having entered on the way, is youth, the very renewal and beginning of the faith. For before you were walking through your own ways a vagabond; straying through woody places, through rough places, torn in all your limbs, you were seeking a home, that is, a sort of settlement of your spirit, where you might say, it is well; and being in security might say it, at rest from every uneasiness, from every trial, in a word from every captivity; and thou did not find. What shall I say?

Came there to you one to show you the way? There came to you the Way itself, and you were set therein by no merits of your preceding, for evidently you were straying. What, since the time that you have set foot therein do you now direct yourself? Does He that has taught you the way now leave you? No, he says: You have taught me from my youth; and even until now I will tell forth Your wonderful works. For a wonderful thing is that which still You do; namely, that You direct me, who in the way has put me: and these are Your wonderful works.

What do you think to be the wonderful works of God? What is more wonderful among God's wonderful works, than the raising the dead? But am I by any means dead, you say? Unless dead you had been, there would not have been said to you, Rise, you that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall enlighten you. Ephesians 5:14 Dead are all unbelievers, all unrighteous men; in body they live, but in heart they are extinct. But he that raises a man dead according to the body, does bring him back to see this light and to breathe this air: but he that raises is not himself light and air to him; he begins to see, as he saw before.

A soul is not so resuscitated. For a soul is resuscitated by God; though even a body is resuscitated by God: but God, when He does resuscitate a body, to the world does bring it back: when He does resuscitate a soul, to Himself He brings it back. If the air of this world be withdrawn, there dies body: if God be withdrawn, there dies soul. When then God does resuscitate a soul, unless there be with her He that has resuscitated, she being resuscitated lives not. For He does not resuscitate, and then leave her to live to herself: in the same manner as Lazarus, when he was resuscitated after being four days dead, was resuscitated by the Lord's corporal presence....The Lord withdrew from that same city or from that spot, did Lazarus cease to live?

Not so is the soul resuscitated: God does resuscitate her, she dies if God shall have withdrawn. For I will speak boldly, brethren, but yet the truth. Two lives there are, one of the body, another of the soul: as the life of the body is the soul, so the life of the soul is God: in like manner as, if the soul forsake, the body dies: so the soul dies, if God forsake. This then is His grace, namely, that He resuscitate and be with us. Because then He does resuscitate us from our past death, and does renew in a manner our life, we say to Him, O God, You have taught me from my youth.

But because He does not withdraw from those whom He resuscitates, lest when He shall have withdrawn from them they die, we say to Him, and even until now I will tell forth Your wonderful works: because while You are with me I live, and of my soul You are the life, which will die if she be left to herself. Therefore while my life is present, that is, my God, even until now, what next?

21. And even unto oldness and old age Psalm 70:18. These are two terms for old age, and are distinguished by the Greeks. For the gravity succeeding youth has another name among the Greeks, and after that same gravity the last age coming on has another name; for πρεσβυτης signifies grave, and γLatin language the distinction of these two terms holds not, both words implying old age are inserted, oldness and old age: but you know them to be two ages. You have taught me Your grace from my youth;

and even until now; after my youth, I will tell forth Your wonderful works, because You are with me in order that I may not die, who hast come in order that I may rise: and even unto oldness and old age, that is, even unto my last breath, unless with me You shall have been, there will not be any merit of mine; may Your grace always remain with me.

Even one man would say this, you, he, I; but because this voice is that of a certain great Man, that is, of the Unity itself, for it is the voice of the Church; let us investigate the youth of the Church. When Christ came, He was crucified, dead, rose again, called the Gentiles, they began to be converted, became Martyrs strong in Christ, there was shed faithful blood, there arose a harvest for the Church: this is Her youth. But seasons advancing let the Church confess, let Her say, Even until now I will tell forth Your wonderful works.

Not only in youth, when Paul, when Peter, when the first Apostles told: even in advancing age I myself, that is, Your Unity, Your members, Your Body, will tell forth Your marvellous works. What then? And even unto oldness and old age, I will tell forth Your wonderful works: even until the end of the world here shall be the Church. For if She were not to be here even unto the end of the world; to whom did the Lord say, Behold, I am with you always, even unto the consummation of the world?

Why was it necessary that these things should be spoken in the Scriptures? Because there were to be enemies of the Christian Faith who would say, for a short time are the Christians, hereafter they shall perish, and there shall come back idols, there shall come back that which was before. How long shall be the Christians? Even unto oldness and old age: that is, even unto the end of the world. When thou, miserable unbeliever, dost expect Christians to pass away, you are passing away yourself without Christians: and Christians even unto the end of the world shall endure; and as for you with your unbelief when you shall have ended your short life, with what face will you come forth to the Judge, whom while you were living you blasphemed?

Therefore from my youth, and even until now, and even unto oldness and old age, O Lord, forsake not me. It will not be, as mine enemies say, even for a time. Forsake not me, until I tell forth Your arm to every generation that is yet to come. And the Arm of the Lord has been revealed to whom? Isaiah 53:1 The Arm of the Lord is Christ. Do not then forsake me: let not them rejoice that say, only for a set time the Christians are. May there be persons to tell forth Your arm. To whom?

To every generation that is yet to come. If then it be to every generation that is yet to come, it will be even unto the end of the world: for when the world is ended, no longer any generation will come on.

22. Your power and Your righteousness Psalm 70:19. That is, that I may tell forth to every generation that is yet to come, Your arm. And what has Your arm effected? This then let me tell forth, that same grace to every generation succeeding: let me say to every man that is to be born, nothing you are by yourself, on God call thou, your own are sins, merits are God's: punishment to you is owing, and when reward shall have come, His own gifts He will crown, not your merits. Let me say to every generation that is to come, out of captivity you have come, unto Adam you belonged. Let me say this to every generation that is to come, that there is no strength of mine, no righteousness of mine; but Your strength and Your righteousness, O God, even unto the most high mighty works which You have made. Your power and Your righteousness, as far as what? Even unto flesh and blood? Nay, even unto the most high mighty works which You have made. For the high places are the heavens, in the high places are the Angels, Thrones, Dominions, Principalities, Powers: to You they owe it that they are; to You they owe it that they

live, to You they owe it that righteously they live, to You they owe it that blessedly they live. Your power and Your righteousness, as far as what? Even unto the most high mighty works which You have made. Think not that man alone belongs to the grace of God. What was Angel before he was made? What is Angel, if He forsake him who has created? Therefore Your power and Your justice even unto the most high mighty works which You have made.

23. And man exalts himself: and in order that he may belong to the first captivity, he hears the serpent suggesting, Taste, and you shall be as Gods. Genesis 3:5 Men as Gods? O God, who is like You? Not any in the pit, not in Hell, not in earth, not in Heaven, for all things You have made. Why does the work strive with the Maker? O God, who is like You? But as for me, says miserable Adam, and Adam is every man, while I perversely will to be like You, behold what I have become, so that from captivity to You I cry out: I with whom it was well under a good king, have been made captive under my seducer; and cry out to You, because I have fallen from You. And whence have I fallen from You? While I perversely seek to be like You....

24. Ill straying, ill presuming, doomed to die by withdrawing from the path of righteousness: behold he breaks the commandment, he has shaken off from his neck the yoke of discipline, uplifted with high spirit he has broken in sunder the reins of guidance: where is he now? Truly captive he cries, O Lord, who is like You? I perversely willed to be like You, and I have been made like a beast! Under Your dominion, under Your commandment, I was indeed like: But a man in honour set has not perceived, he has been compared to beasts without sense, and has been made like them. Now out of the likeness of beasts cry though late and say, O God, who is like You?

25. How great troubles have You shown to me, many and evil! Psalm 70:20. Deservedly, proud servant. For you have willed perversely to be like your God, who had been made after the image of your Lord. Genesis 1:27 Would you have it to be well with you, when withdrawing from that good? Truly God says to you, if you withdraw from Me, and it is well with you, I am not your good. Again, if He is good, and in the highest degree good, and of Himself to Himself good, and by no foreign good thing good, and is Himself our chief good; by withdrawing from Him, what will you be but evil? Also if He is Himself our blessedness, what will there be to one withdrawing from Him, except misery? Return thou then after misery, and say, O Lord, who is like You? How great troubles have You shown to me, many and evil!

26. But this was discipline; admonition, not desertion. Lastly, giving thanks, he says what? And being turned You have made me alive, and from the bottomless places of the earth again You have brought me back. But when before? What is this again? You have fallen from a high place, O man, disobedient slave, O thou proud against your Lord, you have fallen. There hast come to pass in you, every one that exalts himself shall be humbled: may there come to pass in you, every one that humbles himself shall be exalted. Luke 14:11 Return thou from the deep. I return, he says, I return, I acknowledge; O God, who is like You? How great troubles have You shown to me, many and evil! And being turned You have made me alive, and from the bottomless places of the earth again You have brought me back. We perceive, I hear. You have brought us back from the bottomless places of the earth, hast brought us back from the depth and drowning of sin. But why again? When had it already been done? Let us go on, if perchance the latter parts of the Psalm itself do not explain to us the thing which here we do not yet perceive, namely, why he has said again. Therefore let us hear: How great troubles You have shown to me, many and evil! And being turned You have made me alive, and from the bottomless places of the earth again You have brought me back. What then? You have multiplied Your righteousness, and being turned You have comforted me, and from the bottomless places of the earth again You have brought me back Psalm 70:21.

Behold a second again! If we labour to unravel this again when written once, who will be able to unravel it when doubled? Now again itself is a redoubling, and once more there is written again. May He be with us from whom is grace, may there be with us the arm also which we are telling forth to every generation that is to come: may He be with us Himself, and as with the key of His Cross open to us the mystery that is locked up. For it was not to no purpose that when He was crucified the veil of the temple was rent in the midst, but to show that through His Passion the secret things of all mysteries were opened. Matthew 27:51 May He then Himself be with men passing over unto Him, be the veil taken away: 2 Corinthians 3:16 may our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ tell us why such a voice of the Prophet has been sent before, You have shown to me troubles many and evil: and being turned You have made me alive, and from the bottomless places of the earth again You have brought me back. Behold this is the first again which has been written. Let us see what this is, and we shall see why there is a second again.

27. ...Therein Christ died, wherein you are to die: and therein Christ rose again, wherein you are to rise again. By His example He taught you what you should not fear, for what you should hope. You feared death, He died: you despaired of rising again, He rose again. But you say to me, He rose again, do I by any means rise again? But He rose again in that which for you He received of you. Therefore your nature in Him has preceded you; and that which was taken of you, has gone up before you: therein therefore thou also hast ascended. Therefore He ascended first, and we in Him: because that flesh is of the human race....Behold one again. Hear of its being fulfilled from the Apostle: If then you have risen with Christ, the things which are above seek ye, where Christ is sitting on the right hand of God; the things which are above mind ye, not the things which are upon the earth. Colossians 3:1-2 He then has gone before: already we also have risen again, but still in hope. Hear the Apostle Paul saying this same thing: Even we ourselves groan in ourselves, looking for the adoption, the redemption of our body. What is it then that Christ has granted to you? Hear that which follows: For by hope we are saved: but hope which is seen is not hope. For that which a man sees, why does he hope for? But if that which we see not we hope for, through patience we wait for it. We have been brought back therefore again from the bottomless places in hope. Why again? Because already Christ had gone before. But because we shall rise again in substance, for now in hope we are living, now after faith we are walking; we have been brought back from the bottomless places of the earth, by believing in Him who before us has risen again from the bottomless place of the earth....You have heard one again, you have heard the other: again; one again because of Christ going before; and the other, yet however in hope, and a thing which remains to be in substance. You have multiplied Your righteousness, already in me believing, already in those that first have risen again in hope....You have multiplied Your righteousness, and being turned You have comforted me: and because of the body to rise again at the end, even from the bottomless places of the earth again You have brought me back.

28. For I will confess to You in the vessels of a Psalm Your truth Psalm 70:22. The vessels of a Psalm are a Psaltery. But what is a Psaltery? An instrument of wood and strings. What does it signify? There is some difference between it and a harp:...there seems to be signified by the Psaltery the Spirit, by the harp the flesh. And because he had spoken of two bringings back of ours from the bottomless places of the earth, one after the Spirit in hope, the other after the body in substance; hear thou of these two: For I will confess to You in the vessels of a Psalm Your truth. This after the Spirit: concerning the body what? I will psalm to You on a harp, Holy One of Israel.

29. Again hear this because of that same again and again. My lips shall exult when I shall psalm to You Psalm 70:23. Because lips are wont to be spoken of both belonging to the inner and to the outward man, it

is uncertain in what sense lips have been used: there follows therefore, And my soul which You have redeemed. Therefore regarding the inward lips having been saved in hope, brought back from the bottomless places of the earth in faith and love, still however waiting for the redemption of our body, Romans 8:23 we say what? Already he has said, And my soul which You have redeemed. But lest you should think the soul alone redeemed, wherein now you have heard one again, but still, he says; why still? but still my tongue also: therefore now the tongue of the body: all day long shall meditate of Your righteousness Psalm 70:24: that is, in eternity without end. But when shall this be? Hereafter at the end of the world, at the resurrection of the body and the changing into the Angelic state. Whence is it proved that this is spoken of the end, but still my tongue also all day long shall meditate of Your righteousness? When they shall have been confounded and shall have blushed, that seek evil things for me. When shall they be confounded, when shall they blush, save at the end of the world? For in two ways they shall be confounded, either when they shall believe in Christ, or when Christ shall have come. For so long as the Church is here, so long as grain groans amid chaff, so long as wheat groans amid tares, so long as vessels of mercy groan amid vessels of wrath made for dishonour, 2 Timothy 2:20 so long as lily groans amid thorns, there will not be wanting enemies to say, When shall he die, and his name perish? Behold there shall come the time when Christians shall be ended and shall be no more: as they began at a set time, so even unto a particular time they shall be. But while they are saying these things and without end are dying, and while the Church is continuing preaching the Arm of the Lord to every generation that is to come; there shall come Himself also at last in His glory, Matthew 25:31 there shall rise again all the dead, each with his cause: there shall be severed good men to the right hand, but evil men to the left, and they shall be confounded that did insult, they shall blush that did mock: and so my tongue after resurrection shall meditate of Your righteousness, all day long of Your praise, when they shall have been confounded and shall have blushed, that seek evil things for me.

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