

# Exposition on Psalm 73

by St. Augustine

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*St. Augustine's exposition on Psalm 73 explores the contrast between earthly and spiritual blessings, emphasizing the ultimate fate of the righteous and the wicked.*

**Scripture:** Psalm 73:6-8, Proverbs 18:21, Isaiah 11:1, Matthew 16:26, John 1:12, 1 Corinthians 13:12, 1 Timothy 6:18

**Topics:** "Spiritual Growth", "Godly Devotion"

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## Description

St. Augustine preaches about the journey of the soul towards God, reflecting on the temptations and struggles faced in desiring earthly riches over the eternal reward of God's presence. He emphasizes the importance of choosing God as our portion and finding delight in Him alone, leading to a chaste love that cleaves to God. St. Augustine encourages putting hope in God while praising Him and sharing His praises in unity within the Church.

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## Transcript

1. This Psalm has an inscription, that is, a title, There have failed the hymns of David, the son of Jesse. A Psalm of Asaph himself. So many Psalms we have on the titles whereof is written the name David, nowhere there is added, son of Jesse, except in this alone. Which we must believe has not been done to no purpose, nor capriciously. For everywhere God does make intimations to us, and to the understanding thereof does invite the godly study of love. What is, there have failed the hymns of David, the son of Jesse? Hymns are praises of God accompanied with singing: hymns are songs containing the praise of God. If there be praise, and it be not of God, it is no hymn: if there be praise, and God's praise, and it be not sung, it is no hymn. It must needs then, if it be a hymn, have these three things, both praise, and that of God, and singing. What is then, there have failed the hymns? There have failed the praises which are sung unto God. He seems to tell of a thing painful, and so to speak deplorable. For he that sings praise, not only praises, but only praises with gladness: he that sings praise, not only sings, but also loves him of whom he sings. In praise, there is the speaking forth of one confessing; in singing, the affection of one loving. There have failed then the hymns of David, he says: and he has added, the son of Jesse. For David was king of Israel, son of Jesse, 1 Samuel 16:19 at a certain time of the Old Testament, at which time the New Testament was therein hidden, like fruit in a root. For if you seek fruit in a root, you will not find, and yet do you not find any fruit in the branches, except that which has gone forth from the root....And in like manner as Christ Himself to be born after the flesh was hidden in the root, that is in the seed of the Patriarchs, and at a certain time must be revealed, as at the fruit appearing, according as it is written, there has flourished a shoot from the root of Jesse: Isaiah 11:1 so also the New Testament itself which is

in Christ, in those former times was hidden, being known to the Prophets alone, and to the very few godly men, not by the manifestation of things present, but by the revelation of things future. For what means it, brethren (to mention but one thing), that Abraham sending his faithful servant to espouse a wife for his only son, makes him swear to him, and in the oath says to him, Put your hand under my thigh, and swear? What was there in the thigh of Abraham, where he put his hand in swearing? What was there there, except that which even then was promised to him, In your seed shall be blessed all nations? Genesis 22:18 Under the name of thigh, flesh is signified. From the flesh of Abraham, through Isaac and Jacob, and not to mention many names, through Mary was our Lord Jesus Christ.

2. But that the root was in the Patriarchs, how shall we show? Let us question Paul. The Gentiles now believing in Christ, and desiring as it were to boast over the Jews who crucified Christ; although also from that same people there came another wall, meeting in the corner, that is, in Christ Himself, the wall of uncircumcision, that is, of the Gentiles, coming from a different quarter: when, I say, the nations were lifting up themselves, he does thus depress them. For if you, he says, being cut out of the natural wild olive, hast been graffed in among them, do not boast against the branches: for if you boast, thou dost not bear the root, but the root you. Romans 11:17-18 Therefore he speaks of certain branches broken off from the root of the Patriarchs because of unbelief, and the wild olive therein graffed in, that it might be partaker of the fatness of the olive, that is, the Church coming out of the Gentiles. And who does graff the wild olive on the olive? The olive is wont to be graffed on the wild olive; the wild olive on the olive we never saw. For whosoever may have done so will find no berries but those of the wild olive. For that which is graffed in, the same grows, and of that kind the fruit is found. There is not found the fruit of the root but of the graft. The Apostle showing that God did this thing by His Omnipotence, namely, that the wild olive should be graffed into the root of the olive, and should not bear wild berries, but olive-- ascribing it to the Omnipotence of God, the Apostle says this, If you have been cut out of the natural wild olive and against nature hast been graffed into a good olive, do not boast, he says, against the branches.. ..

3. In the time then of the Old Testament, brethren, the promises from our God to that carnal people were earthly and temporal. There was promised an earthly kingdom, there was promised that land into which they were also led, after being delivered from Egypt: by Jesus son of Nave they were led into the land of promise, where also earthly Jerusalem was built, where David reigned: they received the land, after being delivered from Egypt, by passing through the Red Sea....Such were also those promises, which were not to endure, through which however were figured future promises which were to endure, so that all that course of temporal promises was a figure and a sort of prophecy of things future. Accordingly when that kingdom was failing, where reigned David, the son of Jesse, that is, one that was a man, though a Prophet, though holy, because he saw and foresaw Christ to come, of whose seed also after the flesh He was to be born: nevertheless a man, nevertheless not yet Christ, nevertheless not yet our King Son of God, but king David son of Jesse: because then that kingdom was to fail, through the receiving of which kingdom at that time God was praised by carnal men; for this thing alone they esteemed a great matter, namely, that they were delivered temporally from those by whom they were being oppressed, and that they had escaped from persecuting enemies through the Red Sea, and had been led through the desert, and had found country and kingdom: for this alone they praised God, not yet perceiving the thing which God was designing beforehand and promising in these figures. In the failing therefore of those things for which the carnal people, over whom reigned that David, was praising God, there failed the hymns of David, not the Son of God, but the son of Jesse....

4. Whose voice is the Psalm? Of Asaph. What is Asaph? As we find in interpretations from the Hebrew language into the Greek, and those again translated to us from the Greek into the Latin, Asaph is interpreted Synagogue. It is the voice therefore of the Synagogue. But when you have heard Synagogue, do not immediately abhor it, as if it were the murderer of the Lord. That Synagogue was indeed the murderer of the Lord, no man doubts it: but remember, that from the Synagogue were the rams whereof we are the sons. Whence it is said in a Psalm, Bring ye to the Lord the sons of rams. What rams are thence? Peter, John, James, Andrew, Bartholomew, and the rest of the Apostles. Hence also he too at first Saul, afterwards Paul: that is, at first proud, afterwards humble....Therefore even Paul came to us from the Synagogue, and Peter and the other Apostles from the Synagogue. Therefore when you have heard the voice of the Synagogue, do not look to the deserving thereof, but observe the offspring. There is speaking therefore in this Psalm, the Synagogue, after the failing of the hymns of David, the son of Jesse that is, after the failing of things temporal, through which God was wont to be praised by the carnal people. But why did these fail, except in order that others might be sought for? That there might be sought for what? Was it things which were not there? No, but things which were there being hidden in figures: not which were not yet there, but which there as it were in a sort were concealed in certain secret things of mysteries. What things? These, says the Apostle himself, were our figures. 1 Corinthians 10:6 ...

5. It was the Synagogue therefore, that is, they that there worshipped God after a godly sort, but yet for the sake of earthly things, for the sake of these present things (for there are ungodly men who seek the blessings of present things from demons: but this people was on this account better than the Gentiles, because although it were blessings present and temporal, yet they sought them from the One God, who is the Creator of all things both spiritual and corporal). When therefore those godly men after the flesh were observing-- that is that Synagogue which was made up of good men, men for the time good, not spiritual men, such as were the Prophets therein, such as were the few that understood the kingdom heavenly, eternal-- that Synagogue, I say, observed what things it received from God, and what things God promised to that people, abundance of things earthly, land, peace, earthly felicity: but in all these things were figures, and they not perceiving what was there concealed in things figured, thought that God gave this for a great matter, and had nothing better to give to men loving Him and serving Him: they remarked and saw certain sinners, ungodly, blasphemers, servants of demons, sons of the Devil, living in great naughtiness and pride, yet abounding in such things earthly, temporal, for which sort of things they were serving God themselves: and there sprang up a most evil thought in the heart, which made the feet to totter, and almost slip out of God's way. And behold this thought was in the people of the Old Testament: I would it be not in our carnal brethren, when now openly there is being proclaimed the felicity of the New Testament....

6. How good is the God of Israel! But to whom? To men right in heart Psalm 72:1. To men perverse what? Perverse He seems. So also in another Psalm He says: With a holy man holy You shall be, and with the innocent man innocent You shall be, and with the perverse man perverse You shall be. What is, perverse You shall be with the perverse man? Perverse the perverse man shall think You. Not that by any means God is made perverse. Far be it: what He is, He is. But in like manner as the sun appears mild to one having clear, sound, healthy, strong eyes, but against weak eyes does dart hard spears, so to say; the former looking at it it does invigorate, the latter it does torture, though not being itself changed, but the man being changed: so when you shall have begun to be perverse, and to you God shall seem to be perverse, you are changed, not He. That therefore to you will be punishment which to good men is joy. He calling to mind this thing, says, How good is the God of Israel to men right in heart!

7. But what to you? But my feet were almost moved Psalm 72:2. When were the feet moved, except when the heart was not right? Whence was the heart not right? Hear: My steps were well near overthrown. What he has meant by almost, the same he has meant by well near: and what he has meant by my feet were almost moved, the same he has meant by my steps were overthrown. Almost my feet were moved, almost my steps were overthrown. Moved were the feet: but whence were the feet moved and the steps overthrown? Moved were the feet to going astray, overthrown were the steps to falling: not entirely, but almost. But what is this? Already I was going to stray, I had not gone: already I was falling, I had not fallen.

8. But why even this? For I was jealous, he says, in the case of sinners, looking on the peace of sinners Psalm 72:3. I observed sinners, I saw them to have peace. What peace? Temporal, transient, falling, and earthly: but yet such as I also was desiring of God. I saw them that served not God to have that which I desired in order that I might serve God: and my feet were moved and my steps were almost overthrown. But why sinners have this, he says briefly: Because there is no avoidance of their death, and there is a firmament in their scourge Psalm 72:4. Now I have perceived, he says, why they have peace, and flourish on the earth; because of their death there is no avoidance, because death sure and eternal does await them, which neither does avoid them, nor can they avoid it, because there is no avoidance of their death, and there is a firmament in their scourge. And there is a firmament in their scourge. For their scourge is not temporal, but firm for everlasting. Because of these evil things then which are to be to them eternal, now what? In the labours of men they are not, and with men they shall not be scourged Psalm 72:5. Does not even the devil himself escape scourging with men, for whom nevertheless an eternal punishment is being prepared?

9. Wherefore on this account what do these men, while they are not scourged, while they labour not with men? Therefore, he says there has holden them pride Psalm 72:6. Observe these men, proud, undisciplined; observe the bull, devoted for a victim, suffered to stray at liberty; and to damage whatever he may, even up to the day of his slaughter. Now it is a good thing, brethren, that we should hear in the very words of a prophet of this bull as it were, whereof I have spoken. For thus of him the Scripture does make mention in another place: he says that they are, as it were, made ready as for a victim, and that they are spared for an evil liberty. Proverbs 7:22 Therefore, he says, there has holden them pride. What is, there has holden them pride? They have been clothed about with their iniquity and ungodliness. He has not said, covered; but, clothed about, on all sides covered up with their ungodliness. Deservedly miserable, they neither see nor are seen, because they are clothed about; and the inward parts of them are not seen. For whosoever could behold the inward parts of evil men, that are as it were happy for a time, whosoever could see their torturing consciences, whosoever could examine their souls racked with such mighty perturbations of desires and fears, would see them to be miserable even when they are called happy. But because they are clothed about with their iniquity and ungodliness, they see not; but neither are they seen. The Spirit knew them, that says these words concerning them: and we ought to examine such men with the same eye as that wherewith we know that we see, if there is taken from our eyes the covering of ungodliness....

10. At first these men are being described. There shall go forth as if out of fat their iniquity Psalm 72:7....A poor beggar commits a theft; out of leanness has gone forth the iniquity: but when a rich man abounds in so many things, why does he plunder the things of others? Of the former the iniquity out of leanness, of the other out of fatness, has gone forth. Therefore to the lean man when you say, Why have you done this? Humbly afflicted and abject he replies, Need has compelled me.

Why have you not feared God? Want was urgent. Say to a rich man, Why doest thou these things, and fearest not God?-- supposing you to be great enough to be able to say it-- see if he even deigns to hear; see if even against yourself there will not go forth iniquity out of his fatness. For now they declare war with their teachers and reprovers, and become enemies of them that speak the truth, having been long accustomed to be coaxed with the words of flatterers, being of tender ear, of unsound heart.

Who would say to a rich man, You have ill done in robbing other men's goods? Or perchance if any man shall have dared to speak, and he is such a man as he could not withstand, what does he reply? All that he says is in contempt of God. Why? Because he is proud. Why? Because he is fat. Why? Because he is devoted for a victim. They have passed over unto purpose of heart. Here within they have passed over. What is, they have passed over? They have crossed over the way. What is, they have passed over?

They have exceeded the bounds of mankind, men like the rest they think not themselves. They have passed over, I say, the bounds of mankind. When you say to such a man, Your brother this beggar is; when you say to such a man, Your brother this poor man is; the same parents you have had, Adam and Eve: do not heed your haughtiness, do not heed the vapour unto which you have been elevated; although an establishment waits about you, although countless gold and silver, although a marbled house does contain you, although fretted ceilings cover you, thou and the poor man together have for covering that roof of the universe, the sky; but you are different from the poor man in things not your own, added to you from without: yourself see in them, not them in you.

Observe yourself, how you are in relation to the poor man; yourself, not that which you have. For why do you despise your brother? In the bowels of your mothers you were both naked. Forsooth, even when you shall have departed this life, and these bodies shall have rotted, when the soul has been breathed forth, let the bones of the rich and poor man be distinguished! I am speaking of the equality of condition, of that very lot of mankind, wherein all men are born: for both here does a man become rich, and a poor man will not always be here: and as a rich man does not come rich, so neither does he depart rich; the very same is the entrance of both, and like is the departure.

I add, that perchance you will change conditions. Now everywhere the Gospel is being preached: observe a certain poor man full of sores, who was lying before the gate of a rich man, Luke 16:19 and was desiring to be filled with crumbs, which used to fall from the table of the rich man; observe also that likeness of yours who was clothed with purple and fine linen, and fared sumptuously every day. It chanced, I say, for that poor man to die, and to be borne by the Angels into the bosom of Abraham: but the other died and was buried; for the other's burial perchance no one cared....Brethren, how great was the toil of the poor man!

Of how long duration were the luxuries of the rich man! But the condition which they have received in exchange is everlasting....Deservedly too late he will say, Send Lazarus, Luke 16:27 let him tell even my brethren; since to himself there is not granted the fruit of repentance. For it is not that repentance is not given, but everlasting will be the repentance, and no salvation after repentance. Therefore these men have passed over unto purpose of heart.

11. They have thought and have spoken spitefulness Psalm 72:8. But men do speak spitefulness even with fear: but these men how? Iniquity on high they have spoken. Not only they have spoken iniquity; but even openly, in the hearing of all, proudly; I will do it; I will show you; you shall know with whom you have to do; I will not let you live. You might have but thought such things, not have given utterance to them!

Within the chambers of thought at least the evil desire might have been confined, he might have at least restrained it within his thought. Why? Is he perchance lean? There shall go forth as if out of fatness the iniquity of them. Iniquity on high they have spoken.

12. They have set against Heaven their mouth, and their tongue has passed over above the earth Psalm 72:9. For this, has passed over above the earth is, they pass over all earthly things? What is it to pass over all earthly things? He does not think of himself as a man that can die suddenly, when he is speaking; he does menace as if he were always to live: his thought does transcend earthly frailty, he knows not with what sort of vessel he is enwrapped; he knows not what has been written in another place concerning such men: His spirit shall go forth, and he shall return unto his earth, in that day shall perish all his thoughts. But these men not thinking of their last day, speak pride, and unto Heaven they set their mouth, they transcend the earth. If a robber were not to think of his last day, that is, the last day of his trial, when sent to prison, nothing would be more monstrous than he: and yet he might escape. Whither do you flee to escape death? Certain will that day be. What is the long time which you have to live? How much is the long time which has an end, even if it were a long time? To this there is added that it is nought: and the very thing which is called long time is not a long time, and is uncertain. Why does he not think of this? Because he has set against Heaven his mouth, and his tongue has passed over above the earth. And full days shall be found in them.

13. Therefore there shall return hither My people Psalm 72:10. Now Asaph himself is returning hither. For he saw these things abound to unrighteous men, he saw them abound to proud men: he is returning to God, and is beginning to inquire and discuss. But when? When full days shall be found in them. What is full days? But when there came the fullness of time, God sent His Son. Galatians 4:4 This is the very fullness of time, when He came to teach men that things temporal should be despised, that they should not esteem as a great matter whatever object evil men covet, that they should suffer whatever evil men fear. He became the way, He recalled us to inward thought, admonished us of what should be sought of God. And see from what thought reacting upon itself, and in a manner recalling the waves of its impulse, he does pass over unto choosing true things.

14. And they said, How has God known, and is there knowledge in the Most High? Psalm 72:11. See through what thought they pass. Behold unjust men are happy, God does not care for things human. Does He indeed know what we do? See what things are being said. We are inquiring, brethren, How has God known, etc. (no longer let Christians say it). For how does it appear to you that God knows not, and that there is no knowledge in the Most High? He replies, Lo! Themselves they are sinners, and in the world they have gotten abundant riches Psalm 72:12. Both sinners they are, and in the world they have gotten abundant riches. He confessed that he willed not to be a sinner in order that he might have riches. A carnal soul for things visible and earthly would have sold its justice. What sort of justice is that which is retained for the sake of gold, as if gold were a more precious thing than justice herself, or as if when a man denies the deposit of another man's goods, he to whom he denied them should suffer a greater loss, than he that denies them to him. The former does lose a garment, the latter fidelity. Lo! They are themselves sinners, and in the world they have gotten abundant riches. On this account therefore God knows not, and on this account there is no knowledge in the Most High.

15. And I said, therefore without cause I have justified my heart Psalm 72:13. In that I serve God, and have not these things; they serve him not, and they abound in these things: therefore without cause I have justified my heart, and have washed among the innocent my hands. This without cause I have done. Where is the reward of my good life? Where is the wage of my service? I live well and am in need; and the

unjust man does abound. And I have washed among the innocent my hands. And I have been scourged all the day long Psalm 72:14. From me the scourges of God do not impart. I serve well, and I am scourged; he serves not, and is honoured. He has proposed to himself a great question. The soul is disturbed, the soul does pass over things which are to pass away unto despising things earthly and to desiring things eternal. There is a passage of the soul herself in this thought; where she does toss in a sort of tempest she will reach the harbour. And it is with her as it is with sick persons, who are less violently sick, when recovery is far off: when recovery is at hand they are in higher fever; physicians call it the critical accession through which they pass to health: greater fever is there, but leading to health: greater heat, but recovery is at hand. So also is this man enfevered. For these are dangerous words, brethren, offensive, and almost blasphemous, How has God known? This is why I say, and almost; He has not said, God has not known: he has not said, there is no knowledge in the Most High: but as if inquiring, hesitating, doubting. This is the same as he said a little before, My steps were almost overthrown. He does not affirm it, but the very doubt is dangerous. Through danger he is passing to health. Hear now the health: Therefore in vain I have justified my heart, and have washed among the innocent my hands: and I have been scourged all the day long, and my chastening was in the morning. Chastening is correction. He that is being chastened is being corrected. What is, in the morning? It is not deferred. That of the ungodly is being deferred, mine is not deferred: the former is too late or is not at all; mine is in the morning.

16. If I said, I shall declare thus; behold, the generation of Your sons I have reprobated Psalm 72:15: that is, I will teach thus. How will you teach? That there is no knowledge in the Most High, that God does not know? Will you propound this opinion, that without cause men live justly who do live justly; that a just man has lost his service, because God does more show favour to evil men, or else He does care for no one? Will you tell this, declare this? He does restrain himself by an authority repressing him.

What authority? A man wishes some time to break out in this sentiment: but he is recalled by the Scriptures directing us always to live well, saying, that God does care for things human, that He makes a distinction between a godly man and an ungodly man. Therefore this man also wishing to put forth this sentiment, does recollect himself. And what says he? I have reprobated the generation of Your sons. If I shall declare thus, the generation of just men I shall reprobate. As also some copies have it, Behold, the generation of your sons with which I have been in concert: that is, with which consisting of Your sons I have been in concert; that is, with which I have agreed, to which I have been conformed: I have been out of time with all, if so I teach.

For he does sing in concert who gives the tune together; but he that gives not the tune together does not sing in concert. Am I to say something different from that which Abraham said, from that which Isaac said, from that which Jacob said, from that which the Prophets said? For all they said that God does care for things human, am I to say that He cares not? Is there greater wisdom in me than in them? Greater understanding in me than in them? A most wholesome authority has called back his thought from ungodliness.

And what follows? That he might not reprobate, he did what? And I undertook to know Psalm 72:16. May God be with him in order that he may know. Meanwhile, brethren, from a great fall he is being withheld, when he does not presume that he already knows, but has undertaken to know that which he knew not. For but now he was willing to appear as if knowing, and to declare that God has no care of things human. For this has come to be a most naughty and ungodly doctrine of unrighteous men.

Know, brethren, that many men dispute and say that God cares not for things human, that by chances all things are ruled, or that our wills have been made subject to the stars, that each one is not dealt with according to his deserts, but by the necessity of his stars--an evil doctrine, an impious doctrine. Unto these thoughts was going that man whose feet were almost moved, and whose steps were all but overthrown, into this error he was going; but because he was not in tune with the generation of the sons of God, he undertook to know, and condemned the knowledge wherein with God's just men he agreed not.

And what he says let us hear; how that he undertook to know, and was helped, and learned something, and declared it to us. And I undertook, he says, to know. In this labour is before me. Truly a great labour; to know in what manner both God does care for things human, and it is well with evil men, and good men labour. Great is the importance of the question; therefore, and this labour is before me. As it were there is standing in my face a sort of wall, but you have the voice of a Psalm, In my God I shall pass over the wall. 17. ...And he has done this; for he says how long labour is before him; until I enter into the sanctuary of God, and understand upon the last things Psalm 72:17.

A great thing it is, brethren: now for a long time I labour, he says, and before my face I see a sort of insuperable labour, to know in what manner both God is just, and does care for things human, and is not unjust because men sinning and doing wicked actions have happiness on this earth; but the godly and men serving God are wasted oftentimes in trials and in labours; a great difficulty it is to know this, but only until I enter into the Sanctuary of God. For in the Sanctuary what is presented to you, in order that you may solve this question?

And I understand, he says, upon the last things: not present things. I, he says, from the Sanctuary of God stretch out my eye unto the end, I pass over present things. All that which is called the human race, all that mass of mortality is to come to the balance, is to come to the scale, thereon will be weighed the works of men. All things now a cloud does enfold: but to God are known the merits of each severally. And I understand, he says, upon the last things: but not of myself; for before me there is labour. Whence may I understand upon the last things? Let me enter into the Sanctuary of God. In that place then he understood also the reason why these men now are happy.

18. To wit, because of deceitfulness You have set upon them Psalm 72:18. Because deceitful they are, that is fraudulent; because deceitful they are, they suffer deceits. What is this, because fraudulent they are they suffer a fraud? They desire to play a fraud upon mankind in all their naughtinesses, they themselves also suffer a fraud, in choosing earthly good things, and in forsaking the eternal. Therefore, brethren, in their very playing off a fraud they suffer a fraud. In that which but now I said, brethren, What manner of wit has he who to gain a garment does lose his fidelity? has he whose garment he has taken suffered a fraud, or he that is smitten with so great a loss? If a garment is more precious than fidelity, the former does suffer the greater loss: but if incomparably good faith does surpass the whole world, the latter shall seem to have sustained the loss of a garment; but to the former is said, What does it profit a man if he gain the whole world, but suffer the loss of his own soul? Matthew 16:26 Therefore what has befallen them? Because of deceitfulness You have set for them: You threw them down while they were being exalted. He has not said, You threw them down because they were lifted up: not as it were after that they were lifted up You threw them down; but in their very lifting up they were thrown down. For thus to be lifted up is already to fall.

19. How have they become a desolation suddenly? Psalm 72:19. He is wondering at them, understanding unto the last things. They have vanished. Truly like smoke, which while it mounts upward, does vanish, so

they have vanished. How does he say, They have vanished? In the manner of one who understands the last things: they have perished because of their iniquity. Like as the dream of one rising up Psalm 72:20. How have they vanished? As vanishes the dream of one rising up. Fancy a man in sleep to have seen himself find treasures; he is a rich man, but only until he awakes. Like as the dream of one rising up: so they have vanished, like the dream of one awaking. It is sought then and it is not: there is nothing in the hands, nothing in the bed. A poor man he went to sleep, a rich man in sleep he became: had he not awoke, he were a rich man: he woke up, he found the care which he had lost while sleeping. And these men shall find the misery which they had prepared for themselves. When they shall have awoke from this life, that thing does pass away which was grasped as if in sleep. Like as the dream of one rising up. And that there might not be said, What then? A small thing does their glory seem to you, a small thing does their state seem to you, small things seem to you inscriptions, images, statues, distinctions, troops of clients? O Lord, he says, in Your city their image You shall bring to nothing....He has taken away the pride of rich men, he gives counsel. As if they were saying, We are rich men, thou dost forbid us to be proud, dost prohibit us from boasting of the parade of our riches: what then are we to do with these riches? Is it come to this, that there is nothing which they may do therewith? Be they rich, he says, in good works; let them readily distribute, communicate. 1 Timothy 6:18 And what does this profit? Let them treasure unto themselves a good foundation for the future, that they may lay hold of true life. 1 Timothy 6:19 Where ought they to lay up treasure for themselves? In that place whereunto he set his eye, when entering into the Sanctuary of God. Let there shudder all our rich brethren, abounding in money, gold, silver, household, honours, let them shudder at that which but now has been said, You shall bring to nothing their image. Are they not worthy to suffer these things, to wit that God bring to nothing their image in His city, because also they have themselves brought to nothing the image of God in their earthly city?

20. Because my heart was delighted Psalm 72:21. He is saying with what things he is tempted: because my heart was delighted, he says, my reins also were changed. When those temporal things delighted me, my reins were changed. It may also be understood thus: because my heart was delighted in God, my reins also were changed, that is, my lusts were changed, and I became wholly chaste. My reins were changed. And hear how. And I was brought unto nothing, and I knew not Psalm 72:22. I, the very man, who now say these things of rich men, once longed for such things: therefore even I was brought to nothing when my steps were almost overthrown. And I was brought unto nothing, and I knew not. We must not therefore despair even of them, against whom I was saying such things.

21. What is, I knew not? As it were a beast I became to You, and I am always with You Psalm 72:23. There is a great difference between this man and others. He became as it were a beast in longing for earthly things, when being brought to nothing he knew not things eternal: but he departed not from his God, because he did not desire these things of demons, of the devil. For this I have already brought to your notice. The voice is from the Synagogue, that is, from that people which served not idols. A beast indeed I became, when desiring from my God things earthly: but I never departed from That my God.

22. Because then, though having become a beast, I departed not from my God, there follows, You have held the hand of my right hand. He has not said my right hand, but the hand of my right hand. If the hand of the right hand it is, a hand has a hand. The hand You have held of my right hand, in order that You might conduct me. For what has he put hand? For power. For we say that a man has that in his hand which he has in his power: just as the devil said to God concerning Job, Lay to Your hand, and take away the things which he has. Job 1:11 What is, lay to Your hand? Put forth power. The hand of God he has called the power of God: as has been written in another place, death and life are in the hands of the

tongue. Proverbs 18:21 Hath the tongue hands? But what is, in the hands of the tongue? In the power of the tongue. What is, in the power of the tongue? Out of your mouth you shall be justified, and out of your mouth you shall be condemned. Matthew 12:37 You have held, therefore, the hand of my right hand, the power of my right hand. What was my right hand? That I was always with You. Unto the left I was holding, because I became a beast, that is, because there was an earthly concupiscence in me: but the right was mine, because I was always with you. Of this my right hand You have held the hand, that is, hast directed the power. What power? He gave them power to become sons of God. John 1:12 He is beginning now to be among the sons of God, belonging to the New Testament. See in what manner the hand of his right hand was held. In Your will You have conducted me. What is, in your will? Not in my merits. What is, in Your will? Hear the apostle, who was at first a beast longing for things earthly, and living after the Old Testament. He says what? I that at first was a blasphemer, and persecutor, and injurious: but mercy I obtained. 1 Timothy 1:13 What is, in Your will? By the grace of God I am what I am. 1 Corinthians 15:10 And in glory You have taken me up. Now to what glory he was taken up, and in what glory, who can explain, who can say? Let us await it, because in the Resurrection it will be, in the last things it will be.

23. And he is beginning to think of that same Heavenly felicity, and to reprove himself, because he has been a beast, and has longed for things earthly. For what have I in Heaven, and from You what have I willed upon earth? Psalm 72:25. By your voice I see that you have understood. He compared with his earthly will the heavenly reward which he is to receive; he saw what was there being reserved for him; and while thinking and burning at the thought of some ineffable thing, which neither eye has seen, nor ear heard, nor into the heart of man has ascended, 1 Corinthians 2:9 he has not said, this or that I have in Heaven, but, what have I in Heaven? What is that thing which I have in Heaven? What is it? How great is it? Of what sort is it? And, since that which I have in heaven does not pass away, from You what have I willed upon earth?. . You reserve, he says, for me in Heaven riches immortal, even Yourself, and I have willed from You on earth that which even ungodly men have, which even evil men have, which even abandoned men have, money, gold, silver, jewels, households, which even many wicked men have: which even many profligate women have, many profligate men: these things as a great matter I have desired of my God upon earth: though my God reserves Himself for me in Heaven!

24. My heart and my flesh has failed, O God of my heart Psalm 72:26. This then for me in Heaven has been reserved, God of my heart, and my portion is my God. What is it, brethren? Let us find out our riches, let mankind choose their parts. Let us see men torn with diversity of desires: let some choose war-service, some advocacy, some various and sundry offices of teaching, some merchandise, some farming, let them take their portions in human affairs: let the people of God cry, my portion is my God. Not for a time my portion; but my portion is my God for everlasting. Even if I always have gold, what have I? Even if I did not always have God, how great a good should I have? To this is added, that He promises Himself to me, and He promises that I shall have this for everlasting. So great a thing I have, and never have it not. Great felicity: my portion is God! How long? For everlasting. For behold and see after what sort He has loved him; He has made his heart chaste: God of my heart, and my portion is God for everlasting. His heart has become chaste, for nought now God is loved, from Him is not sought any other reward. He that does seek any other reward from God, and therefore is willing to serve God, more precious does make that which he wills to receive, than Him from whom he wills to receive. What then, is there no reward belonging to God? None except Himself. The reward belonging to God, is God Himself. This he loves, this he esteems; if any other thing he shall have loved, the love will not be chaste. You are receding from the Fire immortal, you will grow cold, will be corrupted. Do not recede. Recede not, it will be your corruption, it will be your fornication. Now he is returning, now he is repenting, now he is choosing repentance, now he is saying,

my portion is God. And after what sort is he delighted with that Same, whom he has chosen for his portion.

25. Behold, they that put themselves afar from You shall perish Psalm 72:27. He therefore departed from God, but not far: for I have become as it were a beast, he says, and I am always with You. But they have departed afar, because not only things earthly they have desired, but have sought them from demons and the Devil. They that put themselves afar from You shall perish. And what is it, to become afar from God? You have destroyed every man that commits fornication away from You. To this fornication is opposed chaste love. What is chaste love? Now the soul does love her Bridegroom: what does she require of Him, from Her Bridegroom whom she loves? Perchance in like manner as women choose for themselves men either as sons-in-law or as bridegrooms: she perchance chooses riches, and loves his gold, and estates, and silver and cattle and horses, and household, and the like. Far be it. He does love Him alone, for nought he does love Him: because in Him he has all things, for by Him were made all things. John 1:3

26. But you do what? But for me to cleave to God is a good thing Psalm 72:28. This is whole good. Will you have more? I grieve at your willing. Brethren, what will you have more? Than to cleave to God nothing is better, when we shall see Him face to face. 1 Corinthians 13:12 But now what? For yet as a stranger I am speaking: to cleave, he says, to God is a good thing: but now in my sojourning (for not yet has come the substance), I have to put in God my hope. So long therefore as you have not yet cloven, therein put your hope. You are wavering, cast forward an anchor to the land. Not yet do you cleave by presence, cleave fast by hope. To put in God my hope. And by doing what here will you put in God your hope? What will be your business, but to praise Him whom you love, and to make others to be fellow-lovers of Him with you? Lo, if you should love a charioteer, would you not carry along other men to love him with you? A lover of a charioteer wherever he goes does speak of him, in order that as well as he others also may love him. For nought are loved abandoned men, and from God is reward required in order that He may be loved? Love thou God for nought, grudge God to no one....For what follows? In order that I may tell forth all Your praises in the courts of the daughter of Sion. In the courts: for the preaching of God beside the Church is vain. A small thing it is to praise God and to tell forth all His praise. In the courts of the daughter of Sion tell thou forth. Make for unity, do not divide the people; but draw them unto one, and make them one. I have forgotten how long I have been speaking. Now the Psalm being ended, even judging by this closeness, I suppose I have held a long discourse: but it does not suffice for your zeal; you are too impetuous. O that with this impetuosity ye would seize upon the kingdom of Heaven.

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