

Exposition on Psalm 89

by St. Augustine

The sermon is an exposition of Psalm 89, highlighting God's mercy and faithfulness, and the establishment of His truth in the heavens.

Scripture: Psalm 88:1-2, Psalm 89:34, Matthew 5:14, Matthew 23:38, Acts 2:29, Romans 11:1, Romans 15:8, 1 Corinthians 4:13, Galatians 3:11

Topics: "Gods Faithfulness", "Church Unity"

Description

St. Augustine preaches about the faithfulness of God's promises, despite the challenges faced by His people. He highlights the change brought by Christ's resurrection and the reproaches endured by Christians. The Psalmist calls on God to remember the rebukes His servants faced and to uphold His Anointed. Despite blasphemies, the blessing of the Lord endures forever, and believers express gratitude for His mercy. St. Augustine urges unity in faith and respect for the Church as the Mother of believers, emphasizing the importance of honoring both God and His Church.

Transcript

1. Understand, beloved, this Psalm, which I am about to explain, by the grace of God, of our hope in the Lord Jesus Christ, and be of good cheer, because He who promised, will fulfil all, as He has fulfilled much: for it is not our own merit, but His mercy, that gives us confidence in Him. He Himself is meant, in my belief, by the understanding of *Āṯthan* the Israelite: which has given this Psalm its title. You see then, who is meant by *Āṯthan*: but the meaning of the word is strong. No man in this world is strong, except in the hope of God's promises: for as to our own deservings, we are weak, in His mercy we are strong. Weak then in himself, strong in God's mercy, the Psalmist thus begins: I will sing of Your mercies, O Lord, for ever: with my mouth will I make known Your truth unto all generations Psalm 88:1.

2. Let my limbs, he says, serve the Lord: I speak, but it is of Yours I speak. With my mouth will I make known Your truth: if I obey not You, I am not Your servant: if I speak on my own part, I am a liar. To speak then from You, and in my own person, are two things: one mine, one Yours: Truth Yours, language mine. Let us hear then what faithfulness he makes known, what mercies he sings.

3. For You have said, Mercy shall be built up for ever Psalm 88:2. It is this that I sing: this is Your truth, for the making known of which my mouth serves. In such wise You say, I build, as not to destroy: for some Thou destroyest and buildest not; and some whom Thou destroyest Thou dost rebuild. For unless there were some who were destroyed to be rebuilt, Jeremiah would not have written, See, I have this day set

you to throw down and to build. Jeremiah 1:10 And indeed all who formerly worshipped images and stones could not be built up in Christ, without being destroyed as to their old error.

While, unless some were destroyed not to be built up, it would not be written, He shall destroy them, and not build them up. . . In what follows, he joins these two words, mercy and faithfulness; For You have said, Mercy shall be built up for ever: Your truth shall be established in the Heavens: in which mercy and truth are repeated, for all the ways of the Lord are mercy and truth, for truth in the fulfilment of promises could not be shown, unless mercy in the remission of sins preceded.

Next, as many things were promised in prophecy even to the people of Israel that came according to the flesh from the seed of Abraham, and that people was increased that the promises of God might be fulfilled in it; while yet God did not close the fountain of His goodness even to the Gentiles, whom He had placed under the rule of the Angels, while He reserved the people of Israel as His own portion: the Apostle expressly mentions the Lord's mercy and truth as referring to these two parties.

For he calls Christ a minister of the Circumcision for the truth of God, to confirm the promises made unto the fathers. Romans 15:8 See how God deceived not; see how He cast not off His people, whom He foreknew. For while the Apostle is treating of the fall of the Jews, to prevent any from believing them so far disowned of God, that no wheat from that floor's fanning could reach the granary, he says, God has not cast away His people, whom He foreknew; for I also am an Israelite.

Romans 11:1-2 If all that nation are thorns, how am I who speak unto you wheat? So that the truth of God was fulfilled in those Israelites who believed, and one wall from the circumcision is thus brought to meet the corner stone. But this stone would not form a corner, unless it received another wall from the Gentiles: so that the former wall relates in a special manner to the truth, the latter to the mercy of God. Now I say, says the Apostle, that Jesus Christ was a minister of the Circumcision for the truth of God, to confirm the promise made unto the fathers: and that the Gentiles might glorify God for His mercy.

Romans 15:8-9 Justly then is it added, Your truth shall Thou establish in the Heavens: for all those Israelites who were called to be Apostles became as Heavens which declare the glory of God: as it is written by them, The Heavens declare the glory of God, and the firmament shows His handywork. . . Since, although they were taken up from hence before the Church filled the whole world, yet as their words reached to the ends of the world, we are right in supposing this which we have just read, Your truth shall Thou establish in the Heavens, fulfilled in them.

4. You have said, I have made a covenant with My chosen Psalm 88:3. What covenant, but the new, by which we are renewed to a fresh inheritance, in our longing desire and love of which we sing a new song. I have made a covenant with My chosen, says the Psalmist: I have sworn unto David My servant. How confidently does he speak, who understands, whose mouth serves truth! I speak without fear; since You have said. If You make me fearless, because You have said, how much more so dost Thou make me, when You have sworn! For the oath of God is the assurance of a promise. Man is justly forbidden to swear: Matthew 5:34 lest by the habit of swearing, since a man may be deceived, he fall into perjury. God alone swears securely, because He alone is infallible.

5. Let us see then what God has sworn. I have sworn, He says, to David My servant; your seed will I establish for ever Psalm 88:4. But what is the seed of David, but that of Abraham. And what is the seed of Abraham? And to your seed, He says, which is Christ. Galatians 3:16 But perhaps that Christ, the Head of the Church, the Saviour of the body, Ephesians 5:23 is the seed of Abraham, and therefore of David; but

we are not Abraham's seed? We are assuredly; as the Apostle says, And if you be Christ's, then are you Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise. Galatians 3:29 In this sense, then, let us take the words, brethren, Your seed will I establish for ever, not only of that Flesh of Christ, born of the Virgin Mary, but also of all of us who believe in Christ, for we are limbs of that Head. This body cannot be deprived of its Head: if the Head is in glory for ever, so are the limbs, so that Christ remains entire for ever. Your seed will I establish for ever: and set up your throne to generation and generation. We suppose he says, for ever, because it is to generation and generation: since he has said above, with my mouth will I ever be showing Your truth to generation and generation. What is to generation and generation? To every generation: for the word needed not as many repetitions, as the coming and passing away of the several generations. The multiplication of generations is signified and set forth to notice by the repetition. Are possibly two generations to be understood, as you are aware, my beloved brethren, and as I have before explained? For there is now a generation of flesh and blood: there will be a future generation in the resurrection of the dead. Christ is proclaimed here: He will be proclaimed there: here He is proclaimed, that He may be believed in: there, He will be welcomed, that He may be seen. I will set up Your throne from one generation to another. Christ has now a throne in us, His throne is set up in us: for unless he sat enthroned within us, He would not rule us: but if we were not ruled by Him, we should be thrown down by ourselves. He therefore sits within us, reigning over us: He sits also in another generation, which will come from the resurrection of the dead. Christ will reign for ever over His Saints. God has promised this; He has said it: if this is not enough, God has sworn it. As then the promise is certain, not on account of our deservings, but of His pity, no one ought to be afraid in proclaiming that which he cannot doubt of. Let that strength then inspire our hearts, whence Athanasius received his name, strong in heart: let us preach the truth of God, the utterance of God, His promises, His oath; and let us, strengthened on every side by these means, glorify God, and by bearing Him along with us, become Heavens.

6. O Lord, the very Heavens shall praise Your wondrous works Psalm 88:5. The Heavens will not praise their own merits, but Your wondrous works, O Lord. For in every act of mercy on the lost, of justification of the unrighteous, what do we praise but the wondrous works of God? Thou praisest Him, because the dead have risen: praise Him yet more, because the lost are redeemed. What grace, what mercy of God! You see a man yesterday a whirlpool of drunkenness, today an ornament of sobriety: a man yesterday the sink of luxury, today the beauty of temperance: yesterday a blasphemer of God, today His praiser: yesterday the slave of the creature, today the worshipper of the Creator. From all these desperate states men are thus converted: let them not look at their own merits: let them become Heavens, and praise the wondrous works of Him by whom they were made Heavens....

7. For who is he among the clouds, who shall be compared unto You, Lord! Psalm 88:6. Is this to be the praise of the Heavens, is this to be their rain? What? Are the preachers confident, because none among the clouds shall be compared unto the Lord? Does it appear to you, brethren, a high ground of praise, that the clouds cannot be compared with their Creator? If it is taken in its literal, not in its mystical meaning, it is not so: what? Are the stars that are above the clouds to be compared with the Lord?

What? Can the Sun, Moon, Angels, Heavens, be even compared with the Lord? Why is it then that he says, as if he meant some high praise, For who is he among the clouds? etc. We understand, my brethren, those clouds, as the Heavens, to be the preachers of truth; Prophets, Apostles, the announcers of the word of God....If therefore the clouds are the preachers of the truth, let us first enquire why they are clouds. For the same men are Heavens and clouds: Heavens from the brightness of the truth, clouds from the hidden things of the flesh: for all clouds are obscure, owing to their mortality: and they come and go.

It is on account of these very obscurities of the flesh, that is, of the clouds, that the Apostle says, Therefore judge nothing before the time, until the Lord come, who will bring to light the hidden things of darkness. 1 Corinthians 4:5 You see at this moment what a man is saying: but what he has in his heart, you cannot see: what is forced from the cloud, you see, what is kept within the cloud, you see not. For whose eyes pierce the cloud? The clouds therefore are the preachers of the truth in the flesh.

The Creator of all things Himself came in the flesh....We are called clouds on account of the flesh, and we are preachers of the truth on account of the showers of the clouds: but our flesh comes in one way, His by another. We too are called sons of God, but He is the Son of God in another sense. His cloud comes from a Virgin, He is the Son from eternity, co-eternal with the Father. Who is he then among the clouds, that shall be compared unto the Lord? And what is he among the sons of God, that shall be like the Lord?

Let the Lord Himself say whether He can find one like Himself. Whom do men say that I the Son of Man am? Because I appear, because I am seen, because I walk among you, and perhaps at present I have become common; say, whom do men say that I the Son of Man am? Surely when they see a son of man, they see a cloud; but say, Whom do men say that I am? In answer they gave Him the reports of men; Some say that You are John the Baptist: some Elias, and others Jeremias, or one of the prophets.

Many clouds and sons of God are here mentioned: for because they were righteous and holy, as the sons of God, Jeremias, Elias, and John are called also sons of God: in their character of preachers of God, they are styled clouds. You have said what clouds men imagine Me to be: do ye too say, Whom say ye that I am? Peter replying in behalf of all, one for those who were one, answered, You are the Christ, the Son of the living God; Matthew 16:13-16 not like those sons of God who are not made equal to You: You have come in the flesh: but not as the clouds, who are not to be compared unto You.

8. ...God is very greatly to be feared in the counsel of the righteous, and to be had in dread of all them that are round about Him Psalm 88:7. God is everywhere; who therefore are round about Him, who is everywhere? For if He has some round about Him, He is represented as finite on every side. Moreover, if it is truly said to God and of God, of His greatness there is no end; who remain, who are round about Him, except because He who is everywhere, chose to be born of the flesh on one spot, to dwell among one nation, in one place to be crucified, from one spot to rise again and ascend into Heaven. Where He did this, the Gentiles are round about Him. If He remained where He did these things, He would not be great, and be had in dread of all them that are round about Him; but since He preached when there in such a manner as to send preachers of His own name through all nations over the whole world; by working miracles among His servants, He has become great, and to be had in dread of all them that are round about Him.

9. O Lord God of Hosts, who is like You? Your truth, most mighty Lord, is on every side Psalm 88:8. Great is Your power: You have made Heaven and earth, and all things that in them are: but greater still is your loving-kindness, which has shown forth Your truth to all around You. For if You had been preached only on the spot where You deigned to be born, to suffer, to rise again, to ascend; the truth of that promise of God would have been fulfilled, to confirm the promises made unto the fathers: but the promise, that the Gentiles may glorify God for His mercy, Romans 15:9 would not have been fulfilled, had not that truth been explained, and diffused to those around You from the spot where You deigned to appear. On that spot You thundered out of Your own cloud: but to scatter rain upon the Gentiles round about, You have sent other clouds. Truly in Your power have You fulfilled what You have said, Hereafter shall you see the Son of Man sitting on the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of Heaven. Matthew 26:64

10. ...For you have heard, like men accustomed to the watering of the clouds of God, Your truth then is in the circuit of You. But when without persecutions, when without opposition, since it is said, that He was born for a sign which shall be spoken against? Luke 2:34 Since then that nation, where You deigned to be born, and to dwell, was as a land separated from the waves of the heathen, so that it appeared dry and ready for watering with rain, while the rest of the nations were as a sea in the bitterness of their sterility; what do Your preachers who scatter Your truth in circuit of You, when the waves of that sea rage furiously? Thou rulest the power of the sea Psalm 88:9. For what was the result of the sea raging thus, but the day which we are now keeping holy? It slew Martyrs, scattered seeds of blood, the harvest of the Church sprang up. Safely then let the clouds go forth: let them diffuse Your truth in circuit of You, let them not fear the savage waves. Thou rulest the power of the sea. The sea swells, buffets, and roars: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted beyond what you are able: 1 Corinthians 10:13 and so, Thou stillest the waves thereof when they rise.

11. Lastly, what have You done in the sea itself, to pacify its rage, and to weaken it? You have humbled the proud as one that is wounded Psalm 88:10. There is a certain proud serpent in the sea, of which another passage of Scripture speaks, I will command the serpent, and he shall bite him; Amos 9:3 and again, There is that Leviathan, whom You have made to mock him, whose head He bruises above the water. You, he says, hast humbled the proud, as one that is wounded. You have humbled Yourself, and the proud was humbled: for the proud held the proud ones through pride: but the great One is humbled, and by believing in Him become small. While the little one is nourished by the example of One who from greatness descended to humility, the devil has lost what he held: because the proud held only the proud. When such an example of humility was displayed before them, men learned to condemn their own pride, and to imitate the humility of God. Thus also the devil, by losing those whom he had in his power, has even himself been humbled; not chastened, but thrown prostrate. You have humbled the proud like one that is wounded. You have been humbled, and hast humbled others: You have been wounded, and hast wounded others: for Your blood, as it was shed to blot the handwriting of sins, Colossians 2:14 could not but wound him. For what was the ground of his pride, except the bond which he held against us. This bond, this handwriting, You have blotted out with Your blood: him therefore have You wounded, from whom You have rescued so many victims. You must understand the devil wounded, not by the piercing of the flesh, which he has not, but by the bruising of his proud heart. You have scattered Your enemies abroad with Your mighty arm.

12. The heavens are yours, the earth also is Yours Psalm 88:11. From You, over Your earth they rain. Yours are the heavens, by whom is preached Your truth in circuit of You; Yours is the earth, which has received Your truth in circuit of You; and what has resulted from that rain? You have laid the foundation of the round world, and all that therein is. You have created the north and the seas Psalm 88:12. For nothing has any power against You, against its Creator. The world indeed may rage through its own malice, and the perversity of its will; does it nevertheless pass over the bound laid down by the Creator, who made all things? Why then do I fear the north wind? Why do I fear the seas? In the north indeed is the devil, who said, I will sit in the sides of the north; I will be like the Most High; Isaiah 14:13-14 but You have humbled, as one wounded, the proud one. Thus what You have done in them has more force for Your dominion, than their own will has for their wickedness. You have created the north and the seas.

13. Thabor and Hermon shall rejoice in Your name. Those mountains are here understood, but they have a meaning. Thabor and Hermon shall rejoice in Your name. Thabor, when interpreted, signifies an approaching light. But whence comes the light of which it is said, You are the light of the world, Matthew

5:14 unless from Him concerning whom it is written, That was the true light, which lights every man coming into the world? John 1:9 The light then which is the light of the world comes from that light which is not kindled from any other source, so that there is no fear lest it be extinguished. The light then comes from Him, who is that candle which is not set beneath the bushel, but on a candlestick, Tabor the coming light. Hermon means his curse. Justly the light comes and is made the curse of him. Of whom but the devil, the wounded one, the proud one? Our illumination then is given from You; that he is held accursed of us, who kept us in his own error and pride, is from You. Tabor and Hermon, therefore, shall rejoice, not in their own merits, but in Your name. For they shall say, Not unto us, Lord, not unto us, but to Your name give the praise, on account of the raging sea: lest the heathen say, Where is now their God?

14. You have a mighty arm Psalm 88:13. Let no man arrogate anything to himself. You have a mighty arm: by You we were created, by You we have been defended. You have a mighty arm: strong be Your hand, and high be Your right hand.

15. Righteousness and judgment are the preparation of Your seat Psalm 88:14. Your righteousness and judgment will appear in the end: they are now hidden. Of Your righteousness it is treated in another Psalm, on the hidden things of the Son. There will then be a manifestation of Your righteousness and judgment: some will be set on the right, others on the left hand: Matthew 25:33 and the unbelieving will tremble, when they see what now they mock at, and believe not: the righteous will rejoice, when they shall see what they now see not, yet believe.

Righteousness and judgment are the preparation of Your seat: especially in the Day of Judgment. What then now? mercy and truth go before Your face. I should fear the preparation of Your seat, Your justice, and Your coming judgment, did not mercy and truth go before You: why should I at the end fear Your righteousness, when with Your mercy going before You Thou blottest out my sins, and by showing forth Your truth fulfilllest Your promises? Mercy and truth go before Your face.

For all the paths of the Lord are mercy and truth. 16. In all these things shall we not rejoice? Or shall we contain our joy? Or shall words suffice for our gladness? Or shall the tongue be able to express our rejoicing? If therefore no words suffice, Blessed is the people, O Lord, that knows glad shouting Psalm 88:15. O blessed people! Do you conceive aright, do you understand, glad shouting? For except thou understand glad shouting, you can not be blessed. What do I mean by understanding glad shouting?

Whether you know the source of that rejoicing which is beyond words to express. For this joy is not of yourself, since he that glories, let him glory in the Lord. 1 Corinthians 1:31 Rejoice not then in your own pride, but in God's grace. See that that grace is such, that the tongue fails to express its greatness, and then you understand glad shouting....O Lord, they shall walk in the light of Your countenance. They shall rejoice in Your name all the day Psalm 88:16. That Tabor and Hermon shall rejoice in Your name: all day shall they rejoice, if they will, in Your name; but if they will rejoice in their own name, they shall not rejoice all day: for they shall not continue in their joy, when they shall delight in themselves, and fall through pride.

That they may rejoice all day, therefore, they shall rejoice in Your name, and in Your righteousness shall they be exalted. Not in their own, but in Yours: lest they have a zeal of God, but not according to knowledge. For some are noted by the Apostle, that they have a zeal of God, but not according to knowledge, being ignorant of God's righteousness, and going about to establish their own, and not rejoicing in Your light, and thus not submitting themselves unto the righteousness of God.

Romans 10:2-3 And why? Because they have a zeal of God, but not according to knowledge. But the people who knows glad shouting (for the former err from want of knowledge, but blessed is the people not that knows not, but that knows glad shouting), whence ought it to shout, whence to rejoice, but in Your name, walking in the light of Your countenance? And it shall deserve to be exalted, but in Your righteousness: let every man take away altogether his own righteousness, and be trembled: the righteousness of God shall come, and he shall be exalted, and in Your righteousness shall they be exalted.

17. For You are the glory of their strength: and in Your good pleasure You shall lift up our horns Psalm 88:17: because it has seemed good to You, not because we are worthy.

18. For of the Lord is our taking up Psalm 88:18. For I was moved like a heap of sand, that I might fall; and I should have fallen, had not the Lord taken me up. For of the Lord is (our) taking up: and of the Holy One of Israel our King. Himself is your taking up, Himself your illumination: in His light you are safe, in His light you walk, in His righteousness you are exalted. He took you up, He guards your weakness: He gives you strength of Himself, not of yourself.

19. You spoke sometime in vision unto Your sons, and said Psalm 88:19. You spoke in your vision. You revealed this to Your Prophets. For this reason You spoke in vision, that is, in revelation: whence Prophets were called seers. They saw something within, which they were to speak without: and secretly they heard what they preached openly. Then You spoke in vision unto Your sons, and said, I have laid help upon One that is mighty. You understand Who is meant by mighty? I have exalted One chosen out of the people. And Who is meant by chosen? One who, you rejoice, is already exalted.

20. I have found David My servant: that David from David's seed: with My holy oil have I anointed Him Psalm 88:20: for it is said of Him, God, even Your God, has anointed You with the oil of gladness above Your fellows.

21. My hand shall hold Him fast, and My arm shall strengthen Him Psalm 88:21: because there was a taking up of man; because flesh was assumed in the Virgin's womb, Luke 1:31 because by Him who in the form of God is coequal with the Father, the form of a servant was taken, and He became obedient unto death, even the death of the Cross. Philippians 2:6, 8

22. The enemy shall not be able to do him violence Psalm 88:22. The enemy rages indeed but he shall not be able to do Him violence: he is wont to hurt, but he shall not hurt. How then shall he afflict Him? He will exercise Him, but he shall not hurt Him. There shall be profit in his raging; for those against whom he rages shall be crowned in their conquering. For how is he conquered, if he rages not against us? Or where is God our helper, if we fight not? The enemy therefore shall do what is in his power; but he shall not be able to do Him violence: the son of wickedness shall not come near to hurt Him.

23. I will cut in pieces His enemies before His face Psalm 88:23. They are cut in pieces from their conspiracy, and in that they believe they are cut in pieces; for they believe by degrees; as when the calf's head was ground small, they will come to be the drink of God's people. For Moses ground down the calf's head, and sprinkled it upon the water, and made the children of Israel drink it. Exodus 32:20 All the unbelieving are ground: they believe by degrees; and they are drunk by the people of God, and pass into Christ's body. I will cut in pieces His foes before His face: and put to flight them that hate Him.

24. My truth also and My mercy is with Him Psalm 88:24. All the paths of the Lord are mercy and truth. Remember, as much as you can, how often these two attributes are urged upon us, that we render them back to God. For as He showed us mercy that He might blot out our sins, and truth in fulfilling His promises; so also we, walking in His path, ought to give back to Him mercy and truth; mercy, in pitying the wretched; truth, in not judging unjustly. Let not truth rob you of mercy, nor mercy hinder truth: for if through mercy you shall have judged contrary to truth, or by rigorous truth shall have forgotten mercy, you will not be walking in the path of God, where mercy and truth meet together. And in My name shall His horn be exalted. Why should I say more? You are Christians, recognise Christ.

25. I will set His hand also in the sea Psalm 88:25: that is, He shall rule over the Gentiles; and His right hand in the floods. Rivers run into the sea: avaricious men roll onwards into the bitterness of this world: yet all these kinds of men will be subject to Christ.

26. He shall call me, You are My Father, and the lifter up of My salvation Psalm 88:26.

And I will make Him my first-born; higher than the kings of the earth Psalm 88:27. Our Martyrs, whose birthdays we are celebrating, shed their blood on account of these things, which were believed though not yet seen; how much more brave ought we to be, as we see what they believed? For they had not yet seen Christ raised on high among the kings of the earth: as yet princes were taking counsel together against the Lord and His Anointed: what follows in the same Psalm was not then fulfilled, Be wise now therefore, O you kings: be learned, you that are judges of the earth. Now indeed Christ has been exalted among the kings of the earth.

27. My mercy will I keep for Him for ever: and my Testament faithful with Him Psalm 88:28. On His account, the Testament is faithful: in Him the Testament is mediated: He is the Sealer, the Mediator of the Testament, the Surety of the Testament, the Witness of the Testament, the Heritage of the Testament, the Coheir of the Testament.

28. His seed will I make to endure world without end Psalm 88:29. Not only for this world, but unto the world without end: whither His seed, which is His heritage, the seed of Abraham, which is Christ, will pass. But if you are Christ's, you are also Abraham's seed: and if you are destined His heirs for ever, He will establish His seed unto world without end: and His throne as the days of Heaven. The thrones of earthly kings are as the days of the earth: different are the days of Heaven from those of earth. The days of Heaven are those years of which it is said, You are the same, and Your years shall not fail. The days of the earth are soon overtaken by their successors: those which precede are shut out from us: nor do those which succeed remain: but they come that they may go, and are almost gone before they have come. Such are the days of earth. But the days of Heaven, which are also the One day of Heaven, and the never failing years, have neither beginning nor end: nor is any day there narrowed between yesterday and tomorrow: no one there expects the future, nor loses the past: but the days of Heaven are always present, where His throne shall be for ever and ever.. ..

29. This is a strong pledge of the promise of God. The sons of this David are the children of the Bridegroom; all Christians therefore are called His sons. But it is much indeed that God promises, that if Christians, that is, If his children forsake My law, and walk not in My judgments Psalm 88:30; if they profane My statutes, and keep not My commandments Psalm 88:31; I will not spurn them, nor will I send them away from Me in perdition: but what will I do? I will visit their offenses with the rod, and their sin with scourges Psalm 88:32. It is not the mercy of one that calls them only; but also that chastises and scourges

them. Let therefore your Father's hand be upon you, and if you are a good son, repel not chastening; for what son is there, to whom his father gives not chastening? Hebrews 12:7 Let Him chasten him, so long as He takes not from him His mercy: let Him beat him when obstinate, as long as He does not disinherit him. If you have well understood the promises of your Father, fear not to be scourged, but to be disinherited: for whom the Lord loves He chastens: and scourges every son whom He receives. Hebrews 12:6 Does the sinful son spurn chastening, when he sees the only Son without sin scourged? I will visit their offenses with the rod. Thus too the Apostle threatens: What will you? Shall I come unto you with a rod? 1 Corinthians 4:21 Let not pious sons say, if You are coming with a rod, come not at all. For it is better to be taught with the Father's rod, than to perish in the caresses of the robber.

30. Nevertheless, My mercy will I not utterly take from Him Psalm 88:33. From whom? From that David to whom I gave these promises, whom I anointed with my holy oil of gladness above His fellows. Do you recognise Him from whom God will not utterly take away His mercy? That no one may anxiously say, since He speaks of Christ as Him from whom He will not take away His mercy, What then will become of the sinner? Did He say anything like this, I will not take My loving-kindness utterly from them?

I will visit, He says, their offenses with the rod, and their sin with scourges. You expected for your own security, I will not utterly take my loving-kindness from them. And indeed this is the reading of some books, but not of the most accurate: though, where they have it, it is a reading by no means inconsistent with the real meaning. For how can it be said that He will not utterly take His mercy from Christ? Has the Saviour of the body committed anything of sin either in Heaven or in earth, who sits even at the right hand of God, who also makes intercession for us?

Romans 8:34 Yet it is from Christ: but from His members, His body which is the Church. For in this sense He speaks of it as a great thing that He will not take away His mercies from Him, supposing us not to recognise the only Son, who is in the bosom of the Father; John 1:18 for there the Man is not counted for His Person, but the One Person is God and Man. He therefore does not utterly take His mercies from Him, when He takes not His mercy from His body, His members, in which, even while He was enthroned in Heaven, He was still suffering persecutions on earth; and when He cried from Heaven, Saul, Saul, not why do you persecute My servants, nor why do you persecute My saints, nor My disciples, but, why do you persecute Me?

Acts 9:4 As then, while no one persecuted Him when sitting in Heaven, He cried out, Why do you persecute Me? when the Head recognised its limbs, and His love allowed not the Head to separate Himself from the union of the body: so, when He takes not away His mercies from Him, it is surely that He takes it not from us, who are His limbs and body. Yet ought we not on that account to sin not without apprehension, and perversely to assure ourselves that we shall not perish, be our actions what they may.

For there are certain sins and certain offenses, to define and discourse of which it is either impossible for me, or if it were possible, it would be too tedious for the time we have at present. For no man can say that he is without sin; for if he says so, he will lie; if we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. 1 John 1:8 Each one therefore is needfully scourged for his own sins; but the mercy of God is not taken away from him, if he be a Christian.

Certainly if you commit such offenses as to repel the hand of Him who chastens, the rod of Him who scourges you, and art angry at the correction of God, and fliest from your Father when He chastens you, and will not suffer Him to be your Father, because He spares you not when thou dost sin; you have

estranged yourself from your heritage, He has not thrown you off; for if you would abide being scourged, you would not abide disinherited. Nor will I do hurt in My truth. For His mercy in setting free shall not be taken away, lest His truth in taking vengeance do harm.

31. My covenant will I not profane, nor reject the thing that is gone out of my lips Psalm 88:34. Because his sons sin, I will not on this account be found false: I have promised; I will do. Suppose they choose to sin even as past hope, and so fall into sins as to offend their Father's countenance, and deserve to be disinherited; is it not still God Himself, of whom it is said, From these stones He will raise up sons to Abraham? Matthew 3:9 Therefore I tell you, brethren, many Christians sin venially, many are scourged and so corrected for their sin, chastened, and cured; many turn away altogether, striving with a stiff neck against the discipline of the Father, even wholly refusing God as their Father, though they have the mark of Christ, and so fall into such sins, that it can only be announced against them, that they who do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God. Galatians 5:21 Nevertheless, Christ shall not be destitute of an inheritance on their account: not for the chaff's sake shall the wheat also perish: Matthew 3:12 nor on account of bad fish shall nothing be cast into the vessels from that net. Matthew 13:47 The Lord knows them that are His. 2 Timothy 2:19 For He who predestined us before we were born, promised undoubtingly: For whom He did predestinate, them He also called: and whom He called, them He also justified: and whom He justified, them He also glorified. Romans 8:29-30 Let desperate sinners sin as far as they choose: let the members of Christ reply, If God is with us, who shall be against us? God will not therefore do hurt in His truth, nor will He profane His Testament. His Testament remains immovable, because in His foreknowledge He predestined His heirs; and He will not reject the thing that is gone out of His lips.

32. Listen for your confirmation in hope, for your security, if you know yourself to be among the members of Christ. I have sworn once by My holiness that I will not lie unto David Psalm 88:35. Do you wait till God swear a second time? How often is He to swear, if in one oath He is false? One oath He made for our life, who sent His Only One to die for us. I have sworn once by My holiness, that I will not lie unto David. His seed shall endure for ever Psalm 88:36. His seed endures for ever; because the Lord knows them that are His.

And His seat is like as the sun before me: and as the moon perfect for evermore: and the faithful witness in heaven Psalm 88:37. They are His seat, in whom He sits and reigns. But if His seat, His members also; because even our members are the seat of our head. See how all our other members sustain our head: but the head supports nothing above itself, but is itself supported by the rest of our limbs, as if the whole body of a man were the seat of his head. His seat, therefore, all in whom God reigns, shall be like as the sun before Me, He says: because the righteous in the kingdom of My Father shall shine like the sun.

Matthew 13:43 But the sun is meant in a spiritual, not a bodily sense, as that which shines from Heaven, which He makes to rise upon the just and unjust. Matthew 5:45 Finally, that sun is not before men's eyes only, but even those of cattle and the smallest insects; for which of the vilest animals sees not that sun? What does he say to distinguish the sun meant here? Like as the sun before Me. Not before men, before the flesh, before mortal animals, but before Me, and as the moon.

But what moon? One that is perfect for evermore. For although that moon which we know becomes perfect, the next day she begins to wane, after her orb is full. He shall be as the moon perfect for evermore, He says. His seat shall be made perfect as the moon, but that moon is one which will be perfect for evermore. If as the sun, why also as the moon? The Scriptures usually signify by the moon the

mortality of this flesh, because of its increasings and decreasings, because of its transitory nature.

The moon is also interpreted as Jericho: one who was descending from Jerusalem to Jericho fell among robbers: Luke 10:30 for he was descending from immortality to mortality. Similar then is the flesh to that moon, which every month suffers increase and decrease: but that flesh of ours will be perfect in the resurrection: and a faithful witness in heaven. Thus then, if it was our mind only that would be perfected, he would compare us only to the sun: if our body only, to the moon; but as God will perfect us in both, in respect of the mind it is said, like as the sun before Me, because God only sees the mind: and as the moon, so is the flesh: which shall be made perfect for evermore, in the resurrection of the dead: and a faithful witness in Heaven, because all that was asserted of the resurrection of the dead was true.

I beseech you, hear this again more clearly, and remember it: for I know that some understand, while others are yet enquiring perhaps what I meant. There is no article of the Christian faith which has encountered such contradiction as that of the resurrection of the flesh. Finally, He who was born for a sign that should be spoken against, resumed His own flesh after death to meet the caviller; and He who could have so completely cured His wounds that their scars would have entirely vanished, retained those scars in His body, that He might cure the wounds of doubt in the heart.

Indeed nothing has been attacked with the same pertinacious, contentious contradiction, in the Christian faith, as the resurrection of the flesh. On the immortality of the soul many Gentile philosophers have disputed at great length, and in many books they have left it written that the soul is immortal: when they come to the resurrection of the flesh, they doubt not indeed, but they most openly deny it, declaring it to be absolutely impossible that this earthly flesh can ascend to Heaven. Thus that moon shall be perfect for evermore, and shall be the faithful witness in heaven against all gain-sayers.

33. These promises, so sure, so firm, so open, so unquestioned, were made concerning Christ. For although some are mysteriously veiled, yet some are so clear, that all that is obscure is easily revealed by them. Such being the case, see what follows: But You have approved and brought to nothing and forsaken Your Anointed Psalm 88:38. You have overthrown the testament of Your servant, and profaned His holiness on the ground Psalm 88:39. You have broken down all His hedges, and made His strongholds a terror Psalm 88:40....How is this?

You have promised all those things: and You have brought to pass their reverse. Where are now the promises which but a little before filled us with delight? Which we so joyfully applauded, which we so fearlessly made our boast of? It is as if one promised, and another destroyed. And this is the mystery: for the words are not another, but You, Thou who promised, who even swore in condescension to human doubt, You have promised this, and done thus! Whence shall I get Your oath, where shall I find Your promise fulfilled?

Would then God promise, or swear thus falsely? And yet why then these promises, and these acts? I answer, that He acted thus in fulfilment of those promises. But who am I, to say this? Let us see therefore whether it is the language of the Truth; what I say will not then be without foundation. It was David to whom the fulfilment of these promises in his seed, that is, in Christ, was promised: and as they were addressed to David, men expected their completion in David. Further, lest when any Christian asserted these promises to have referred to Christ, another by applying them to David, because he described the fulfilment of all of them in David, might thus err; He cancelled them in David, thus obliging us when we see them unfulfilled in David, to look to another quarter for their fulfilment.

Thus also in the case of Esau and Jacob, we find the elder worshipped by the younger, though it is written, The elder shall serve the younger; Genesis 25:23 so when you see it unfulfilled in those two brothers, you look for two peoples in whom to discover the completion of what God in His truth deigns to promise. From the fruit of your body, says the Lord unto David, shall I set upon your sea. He promised from his seed something for evermore: and, Solomon, born to him, became master of such wisdom, that the promise of God respecting the fruit of David's body was believed to have been fulfilled in him; but Solomon fell, and gave room for hoping for Christ; that since God can neither be deceived nor deceive, He might not make His promise to rest in one who He knew would fall, but you might after the fall of Solomon look back to God, and demand His promise.

Have You, O Lord, deceived? Have You failed to fulfil Your promise? Do You not exhibit what You have sworn? Perhaps God might reply, I swore and promised: but Solomon would not persevere. What then? Did not You, Lord God, know beforehand that he would not persevere? Indeed You knew. Why then did You promise me what should be eternal in one who would not persevere? Have You not answered; But if his children forsake My law, and walk not in My judgments; if they keep not My statutes, and profane My testament; yet My promise shall remain, and My oath shall be fulfilled: I have sworn once in My Holiness, within, in a certain mystery, in the very spring whence the Prophets drank, whence they burst forth to us of these things, I have sworn once that I will not fail David. Show forth then what You have sworn, give us what You have promised. The fulfilment is taken from that David, that it might not be looked for in that David: wait therefore for what I have promised.

34. Even David himself knew this. Consider his words; You have rejected and brought him down to nothing. Where then is Your promise? You have put off Your Anointed. This expression cheers us, among much that is sorrowful: for the promise of God is still valid; for You have put off Your Anointed, not taken Him away. See then what was the fate of that David, in whom the ignorant hoped for the fulfilment of the promises of God, in order that those promises might be more firmly relied upon for their fulfilment in another. You have put off Your Anointed: You have overthrown the testament of Your servant. For where is the Old Testament of the Jews? Where that land of promise, in which they sinned while they dwelt in it, on the overthrow of which they wandered afar? Ask you for the kingdom of the Jews; it exists not: you ask for the altar of the Jews; it is not: you ask for the sacrifice of the Jews; it is not: you ask for the priesthood of the Jews; it is not. You have overthrown the testament of Your servant, and profaned his holiness on the earth. You have shown that what they thought holy, was earthly. You have broken down all his hedges, with which You have entrenched him: for how could he have been spoiled unless his hedges had been broken down? You have made his strongholds a terror. Why terror? That it should be said to the sinners, For if God spared not the natural branches, take heed lest He also spare not you. Romans 11:21

All they that go by the way have spoiled him: that is, all the heathen that go by the way, meaning, all who pass through this life, have spoiled Israel, have spoiled David. First of all, see his fragments in all nations: for it is of the Jews that it is said, They shall be a portion for foxes. For the Scripture calls wicked, crafty, and cowardly kings, whom another's virtue terrifies, foxes. Thus when our Lord Himself was speaking of the threatening Herod, He said, Go, and tell that fox. Luke 13:32 The king who fears no man, is not a fox: like that Lion of Judah, of whom it is said, Stooping down You rose up, and slept as a lion. Genesis 49:9 At Your will You stooped down, at Your will rose; because You would, You slept. And thus in another Psalm he says, I slept. Was not the sentence complete, I slept, and took rest, and rose up again, because the Lord shall uphold Me? Why is the word ego added? And thus with a strong emphasis on the word I, they raged against Me, they troubled Me: but had I not willed, I had not slept. Those then concerning whom it

was declared that they should be a portion for foxes, are now spoken of as follows; All they that go by have spoiled him: and he has become a reproach to his neighbours Psalm 88:41. You have set up the right hand of his enemies, and made all his adversaries to rejoice Psalm 88:42. Look at the Jews, and see all things fulfilled that were predicted. You have turned away the help of his sword. How they were used to fight few in number, and to strike down many. You have turned away the help of his sword, and You give him not victory in the battle Psalm 88:43. Naturally then is he conquered, naturally taken prisoner, naturally made an outcast from his kingdom, naturally scattered abroad: for he lost that land, for which he slew the Lord. You have loosed him from cleansing Psalm 88:44. What is this? Amongst all the evils, this is a matter for great fear; for howsoever God may beat, howsoever He may be angry, howsoever He may flog and scourge, yet let Him scourge him bound, whom He is to cleanse, not loose him from cleansing. For if He loose him from being purified, he becomes incapable of cleansing, and must be an outcast. From what cleansing then is the Jew loosed? From faith; for by faith we live: Galatians 3:11 and it is said of faith, purifying their hearts by faith: Acts 15:9 and as it is only the faith of Christ that cleanses; by disbelief in Christ, they are loosed from purification. You have loosed him from cleansing, and cast his throne down to the ground. And so You have broken it. The days of his seat have You shortened Psalm 88:45. They imagined that they should reign for ever. And covered him with confusion. All these things happened to the Jews, Christ yet not being taken away, but His advent deferred.

35. Let us therefore see whether God fulfils His promises. After these stern penalties which have been recorded as having been inflicted upon this people and kingdom, that God might not be supposed to have fulfilled His promises in it, and so not to grant another kingdom in Christ, of which kingdom there shall be no end; the Prophet addresses Him in these words, Lord, how long will You hide Yourself unto the end? Psalm 88:46. For possibly it was not from them and to the end; because blindness in part is happened to Israel, until the fullness of the Gentiles be come in, and so all Israel shall be saved. Romans 11:25 But in the mean while shall Your wrath burn like fire.

36. O remember what my substance is Psalm 88:47. That David, who was placed among the Jews in the flesh, in Christ in hope, speaks Remember what is my substance. For not because the Jews fell away, did my substance fail: for from that people came the Virgin Mary, and from her the flesh of Christ; that Flesh sins not, but purifies sins; there, says David, is my substance. O remember what my substance is. For the root has not entirely perished; the seed shall come to whom the promise was made, ordained by Angels in the hand of a Mediator. Galatians 3:19 For You have not made all the sons of men for nought Psalm 88:47. Lo! All the sons of men have gone into vanity: yet You have not made them for nought. If then all went into vanity, whom You have not made for nought; have You not reserved some instrument to purify them from vanity? This which You have reserved to Yourself to cleanse men from vanity is Your Holy One, in Him is my substance: for from Him are all, whom You have not made for nought, purified from their own vanity. To them it is said, O you sons of men, how long are you heavy in heart? Wherefore have ye such pleasure in vanity, and seek after leasing? Perhaps they might become anxious, and turn from their vanity, and when they found themselves polluted with it, might seek for purification from it: then help them, make them secure. Know this also, that the Lord has made wonderful His Holy One. He has made His Holy One to be admired: thence He has purified all from their vanity: there, says David, is my substance: O remember it! For You have not made all the sons of men for nought. You have therefore reserved something to purify them: and who is He whom You have reserved? What man is he that lives, and shall not see death? This man then who shall live and not see death, shall purify them from nothingness. For He made not all men for nought, nor can He who made them so despise His own creatures, as not to convert and purify them.

37. What man is he that shall live, and shall not see death? Psalm 88:48. For being raised from the dead He dies no more, and death has no more dominion over Him. Romans 6:9 And as in another Psalm it is said, You shall not leave my soul in Hell, neither shall Thou suffer Your Holy One to see corruption, the Apostolic teaching takes up this testimony, and in the Acts of the Apostles Acts 2:29 thus argues against the unbelieving; Men and brethren, we know that the patriarch David is dead and buried, and his flesh has seen corruption. Therefore it cannot be said of him, neither shall Thou suffer Your Holy One to see corruption. Of whom then is it said? What man is he that shall live, and shall not see death? Perhaps there is no man such. Nay, but who is it? is said to make you inquire, not despair. But perhaps there may be some man that shall live, and shall not see death, and yet perhaps he did not speak of Christ, who died? There is no man that shall live, and shall not see death, except Him who died for mortals. That you may be assured that it is said of Him, consider the sequel; What man is he that lives, and shall not see death? Did He never die then? He did. How then shall He live, and never see death? He shall deliver His own soul from the hands of Hell. He is spoken of alone indeed, in that He alone of all others shall live, and shall not see death: He shall deliver His own soul from the hand of Hell, because although the rest of His faithful shall rise from the dead, and shall themselves live for evermore, without seeing death; yet they shall not themselves deliver their own souls from the hands of Hell. He who delivers His own soul from the hands of Hell, Himself delivers those of His believers: they cannot do so of themselves. Prove that He delivers His own soul. I have power to lay down My life, and I have power to take it again. No man takes 'it from Me;' for I Myself slept, but I lay it down of Myself, and take it again, because it is He Himself who delivers His own soul from the hands of Hell.

38. But in the very faith in Christ great difficulties occurred, and the heathen in their rage long said, When shall he die, and his name perish? On account of these then who have now long believed in Christ, but were destined to doubt for some time, these words follow, Lord, where are Your old loving-kindnesses? Psalm 88:49. We have now acknowledged Christ our purifier, we now possess Him in whom Your promises were to be fulfilled; show forth in Him what You have promised. It is He Himself that shall live, and not see death: Himself who delivers His own soul from the hand of Hell: and yet we are still in suffering. Thus spoke the Martyrs, whose birthdays we are celebrating. He shall live, and not see death: He delivers His soul from the hands of Hell: yet for Your sake we are killed all the day long: and are counted as sheep appointed to be slain. Lord, where are Your old loving-kindnesses which You swore unto David in Your truth?

39. Remember, Lord, the rebuke that Your servants have Psalm 88:50. Even while Christ was living, and while He was sitting on His Father's right hand, reproaches were cast against the Christians: they long were reproached with the name of Christ. That widowed one who brought forth, and whose children were more than those of the married wife, heard ill names, heard reproaches: but the Church, multiplied as she is, extending right and left, no longer remembers the reproach of her widowhood. Remember, Lord, in the memory of whom there is abundant sweetness. Remember, forget not. Remember what? the rebuke that Your servants have: and how I do bear in my bosom the rebukes of many people. I went, says he, to preach of You, and I heard reproaches, and bore them in my bosom, because I was fulfilling the prophecy. Being defamed we entreat: we are made as the filth of the earth, and are the offscouring of all things unto this day. 1 Corinthians 4:13 Long the Christians bore reproaches in their bosom, in their heart: nor dared resist their revilers; before, when it was a crime to answer a heathen: it is now a crime to remain a heathen. Thanks be to the Lord! He remembered our rebukes: He raised the horn of His Anointed on high, He made Him the Wonderful among the kings of the earth. Now no one insults Christians, or if he does, it is not in public: he speaks as if he were still more fearful of being heard, than anxious to be believed. I

bear in my bosom the rebukes of many people.

40. Wherewith Your enemies have blasphemed You, O Lord Psalm 88:51, both Jews and Pagans. Wherewith they have blasphemed. Wherewith have they blasphemed You? With the change of Your Anointed. They objected that Christ died, and was crucified. Madmen, what is your reproach? Although there is now no one to use it: yet supposing some still remaining that so speak, what is your reproach? That Christ died? He was not destroyed, but changed. He is styled dead on account of the three days.

Wherewith then have your enemies blasphemed You? Not with the loss, not with the perdition of Your Anointed, but with His change. He was changed from temporal to eternal life: He was changed from the Jews to the Gentiles; He was changed from earth to heaven. Let then Your vain enemies blaspheme You still for the change of Your Anointed. Would that they may be changed: they will not in that case blaspheme the change of Christ, which displeases them since they themselves will not be changed.

For there is no change with them, and they fear not God. 41. They have blasphemed the change of Christ; but what do you answer? The blessing of the Lord for evermore. Amen and Amen Psalm 88:52. Thanks to His mercy, thanks to His grace. We express our thanks: we do not give them, nor return them, nor repay them: we express our thanks in words, while in fact we retain our sense of them. He saved us for no reward, He heeded not our impieties: He searched us out when we searched not for Him, He found, redeemed, emancipated us from the bondage of the devil and the power of his wicked angels: He drew us to Him to purify us by that faith, from which He releases those enemies only who believe not, and who for that reason cannot be purified.

Let those who still remain infidels say every day what they choose; day by day they shall be fewer and fewer that remain; let them revile, mock, accuse, not the death, but the change of Christ. Do they not see that, when they say these things, they fail in purpose either by believing or by dying? For their curse is temporal: but the blessing of the Lord for evermore. To confirm that blessing is added, Amen and Amen. This is the signature of the bond of God. Secure then of His promises, let us believe the past, recognise the present, hope for the future.

Let not the enemy lead us astray from the way, that He, who gathers us like chickens under His wings, may foster us: lest we stray from His wings, and the hawk of the air carry us off while yet unfledged. For the Christian ought not to hope in himself: if he hopes to be strong, let him be reared by his mother's warmth. This is the hen who gathers her young together; whence is the reproach of our Saviour against the unbelieving Jerusalem. Behold, your house shall be left unto you desolate.

Matthew 23:38 Hence was it said, You have made his strongholds a terror. Since then they would not be gathered together under the wings of this hen, and have given as a warning to teach us to dread the unclean spirits that fly in the air, seeking daily what they may devour; let us gather ourselves under the wings of this hen, the divine Wisdom, since she is weakened even unto death of her chickens. Let us love our Lord God, let us love His Church: Him as a Father, Her as a Mother: Him as a Lord, Her as His Handmaid, as we are ourselves the Handmaid's sons.

But this marriage is held together by a bond of great love: no man offends the one, and wins favour of the other. Let no man say, I go indeed to the idols, I consult possessed ones and fortune-tellers: yet I abandon not God's Church; I am a Catholic. While you hold to your Mother, you have offended your Father. Another says, Far be it from me; I consult no sorcerer, I seek out no possessed one, I never ask advice by sacrilegious divination, I go not to worship idols, I bow not before stones; though I am in the party of

Donatus.

What does it profit you not to have offended your Father, if he avenges your offended Mother? What does it serve you, if you acknowledge the Lord, honour God, preach His name, acknowledge His Son, confess that He sits by His right hand; while you blaspheme His Church? Does not the analogy of human marriages convince you? Suppose you have some patron, whom you court every day, whose threshold you wear with your visits, whom you daily not only salute, but even worship, to whom you pay the most loyal courtesy; if you utter one calumny against his wife, could you re-enter his house?

Hold then, most beloved, hold all with one mind to God the Father, and the Church our Mother. Celebrate with temperance the birthdays of the Saints, that we may imitate those who have gone before us, and that they who pray for you may rejoice over you; that the blessing of the Lord may abide on you for evermore. Amen and Amen.

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