

Exposition on Psalm 94

by St. Augustine

The Psalm teaches patience in suffering and instructs us to wait on God's justice, rather than taking matters into our own hands.

Scripture: Psalm 93:1, Psalm 94:17, Matthew 7:7, Romans 2:4, Philippians 2:14

Topics: "Gods Justice", "Enduring Trials"

Description

St. Augustine preaches about the importance of enduring through trials and tribulations, emphasizing the need for patience in the face of the prosperity of the wicked and the suffering of the righteous. He delves into the concept of God's justice, explaining how God's sparing of the wicked is a form of teaching and testing for the righteous. St. Augustine encourages believers to trust in God's ultimate judgment, where He will recompense each person according to their deeds and malice, highlighting the eternal consequences of one's actions.

Transcript

1. As we listened with much attention, while the Psalm was in reading, so let us listen attentively, while the Lord reveals the mysteries which He has deigned to obscure in this passage. For some mysteries in the Scriptures are shut up for this reason, not that they may be denied, but that they may be opened unto those who knock. If therefore ye knock with affection of piety, and sincere heartfelt love, He, who sees from what motives ye knock, will open unto you. Matthew 7:7 It is known unto all of us (and I wish we may not be among their number), that may murmur against God's long-suffering, and grieve either that impious and wicked men live in this world, or that they have great power; and what is more, that the bad generally have great power against the good, and that the bad often oppress the good; that the wicked exult, while the good suffer; the evil are proud, while the good are humbled. Observing such things in the human race (for they abound), impatient and weak minds are perverted, as if they were good in vain; since God averts, or seems to avert, His eyes from the good works of the pious and faithful, and to promote the wicked in those pleasures which they love. Weak men, therefore, imagining that they live well in vain, are induced either to imitate the wickedness of those whom they see flourishing: or if either through bodily or mental weakness they are deterred from doing wrong by a fear of the penal laws of the world; not because they love justice, but, to speak more openly, fearing the condemnation of men among men, they refrain indeed from wicked deeds, but refrain not from wicked thoughts. And among their wicked thoughts, the chief is the wickedness which leads them impiously to imagine that God is neglectful, and regardless of human affairs: and that He either holds in equal estimation the good and the wicked: or even, and this is a still

more pernicious notion, that He persecutes the good, and favours the wicked. He who thinks thus, although he does no harm to any man, does the greatest to himself, and is impious against himself, and by his wickedness hurts not God, but slays himself....

2. The Psalm has this title, that is, this inscription: A Psalm of David himself, on the fourth day of the week. This Psalm is about to teach patience in the sufferings of the righteous: it enjoins patience against the prosperity of the wicked, and builds up patience. This is the drift of the whole of it, from beginning to end. Wherefore then has it such a title, on the fourth of the week? The first of the week is the Lord's day: the second, is the second week-day, which people of the world call the Moon's day: the third, is the third weekday, which they term Mars' day.

The fourth of the Sabbaths therefore is the fourth week-day, which by Pagans is styled Mercury's day, and also by many Christians; but I would not call it so: and I wish they would change for the better, and cease to do so; for they have a phrase of their own, which they may use. For these terms are not of universal use: many nations have severally different names for them: so that the mode of speech used by the Church better beseems the mouth of a Christian. Yet if custom has induced any person to utter that with his tongue which his heart does disapprove, let him remember, that all those whose names the stars bear were men, and that the stars did not commence their existence in the sky, when those men began theirs, but were there long before; but on account of some mortal services rendered unto mortals, those men in their own times, because they had great power, and were eminent in this life, since they were beloved by men, not on account of eternal life, but of temporal services, received divine honours.

For then men of the old world, in being deceived and wishing to deceive, pointed to the stars in heaven, to flatter those who had done them any good service in their affection for this life, saying, that that was the star of such a man, this of another; while the man who had not beheld them before, so as to see that those stars were there before the birth of the man, were deceived into a belief: and thus this vain opinion was conceived. This erroneous opinion the devil strengthened, Christ overthrew.

According to our mode of speech, then, the fourth of the week is taken for the fourth day from the Lord's day. Attend, therefore, beloved, to what this title means. Here is a great mystery, and a truly hidden one....Let us therefore recall from the holy Scripture in Genesis, what was created on the first day; we find light: what was created on the second day; we find the firmament, which God called heaven: what was created on the third day; we find the form of earth and sea, and their separation, that all the gathering together of the waters was called sea, and all that was dry, the earth.

On the fourth day, the Lord made the lights in heaven: Genesis 1:3-19 The sun to rule the day: the moon and stars to govern the night: this was the work of the fourth day. What then is the reason that the Psalm has taken its title from the fourth day: the Psalm in which patience is enjoined against the prosperity of the wicked, and the sufferings of the good. Thou findest the Apostle Paul speaking. Do all things without murmurings and disputings: that you may be blameless and harmless, the sons of God, without rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation, among whom you shine as lights in the world, holding forth the word of life. Philippians 2:14-16 ...

3. Let us now attend to the Psalm. The Lord is the God of vengeance; the God of vengeance has dealt confidently Psalm 93:1. Do you think that He does not punish? The God of vengeance punishes. What is, The God of vengeance? The God of punishments. Thou murmurest surely because the bad are not punished: yet do not murmur, lest you be among those who are punished. That man has committed a

theft, and lives: you murmur against God, because he who committed a theft on you dies not....Therefore, if you would have another correct his hand, you must first correct your tongue: you would have him correct his heart towards man, correct your heart towards God; lest perchance, when you desire the vengeance of God, if it come, it find you first. For He will come: He will come, and will judge those who continue in their wickedness, ungrateful for the prolongation of His mercy, for His long-suffering, treasuring up unto themselves wrath against the day of wrath, and revelation of the righteous judgment of God, who will render to every man according to his deeds: Romans 2:4-6 because, The Lord is the God of vengeance, therefore has He dealt confidently....Our safety is our Saviour: in Him He would place the hope of all the needy and poor. And what says He? I will deal confidently in Him. What means this? He will not fear, will not spare the lusts and vices of men. Truly, as a faithful physician, with the healing knife of preaching in His hand, He has cut away all our wounded parts. Therefore such as He was prophesied and preached beforehand, such was He found....How great things then did He, of whom it is said, He taught them as one having authority, say unto them? Woe unto you, Scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! What great things did He say unto them, before their face? He feared no one. Why? Because He is the God of vengeance. For this reason He spared them not in words, that they might remain for Him after to spare them in judgment; because if they were unwilling to accept the healing of His word, they would afterwards incur their Judge's doom. Wherefore? Because He has said, The Lord is the God of vengeance, the God of vengeance has dealt confidently; that is, He has spared no man in word. He who spared not in word when about to suffer, will He spare in judgment when about to judge? He who in His humility feared no man, will He fear any man in His glory? From His dealing thus confidently in time past, imagine how He will deal at the end of time. Murmur not then against God, who seems to spare the wicked; but be thou good, and perhaps for a season He may not spare you the rod, that He may in the end spare you in judgment....

4. And what followed, because He dealt confidently? Be exalted, Thou Judge of the world Psalm 93:2. Because they imprisoned Him when humble, do you think they will imprison Him when exalted? Because they judged Him when mortal, will they not be judged by Him when immortal? What then says He? Be exalted, Thou, who hast dealt confidently, the confidence of whose word the wicked bore not, but thought they did a glorious deed, when they seized and crucified You; they who ought to have seized on You with faith, seized You with persecution. Thou then who hast among the wicked dealt confidently, and hast feared no man, because You have suffered, be exalted; that is, arise again, depart into heaven. Let the Church also bear with long-suffering what the Church's Head has borne with long-suffering. Be exalted, Thou Judge of the world: and reward the proud after their deserving. He will reward them, brethren. For what is this, Be exalted, Thou Judge of the world: and reward the proud after their deserving? This is the prophecy of one who does predict, not the boldness of one who commands. Not because the Prophet said, Be exalted, Thou Judge of the world, did Christ obey the Prophet, in arising from the dead, and ascending into heaven; but because Christ was to do this, the Prophet predicted it. He sees Christ abased in the spirit, abased he sees Him: fearing no man, in speech sparing no man, and he says, He has dealt confidently. He sees how confidently He has dealt, he sees Him arrested, crucified, humbled, he sees Him rising from the dead, and ascending into heaven, and from thence to come in judgment of those, among whose hands He had suffered every evil: Be exalted, he says, Thou Judge of the world, and reward the proud after their deserving. The proud He will thus reward, not the humble. Who are the proud? Those to whom it is little to do evil: but they even defend their own sins. For on some of those who crucified Christ, miracles were afterwards performed, when out of the number of the Jews themselves there were found believers, and the blood of Christ was given unto them. Their hands were impious, and red with the blood of Christ. He whose blood they had shed, Himself washed them. They who had persecuted His mortal body which they had seen, became part of His very body, that is, the Church. They shed their own

ransom, that they might drink their own ransom. For afterwards more were converted....

5. Lord, how long shall the ungodly, how long shall the ungodly triumph? Psalm 93:3. They answer, and will speak wickedness, they all will speak that work unrighteousness Psalm 93:4. What is their saying, but against God, when they say: What profits it us that we live thus? What will you reply? Does God truly regard our deeds? For because they live, they imagine that God knows not their actions. Behold, what evil happens unto them! If the officers knew where they were, they would arrest them; and they therefore avoid the officer's eyes, that they may escape instant apprehension; but no one can escape the eye of God, since He not only sees within the closet, but within the recesses of the heart.

Even they themselves believe that nothing can escape God: and because they do evil, and are conscious of what they have done, and see that they live while God knows, though they would not live if the officer discovered them; they say unto themselves, These things please God: and, in truth, if they displeased Him, as they displease kings, as they displease judges, as they displease governors, as they displease recorders, yet could we escape the eye of God, as we do escape the eyes of those authorities?

Therefore these things please God....Some righteous man comes, and says, Do not commit iniquity. Wherefore? That you may not die. Behold, iniquity I have committed: why do I not die? That man wrought righteousness: and he is dead: why is he dead? I have wrought iniquity: why has not God carried me off? Behold, that man did righteously: and why has He thus visited him? Why suffers He thus? They answer; this is the meaning of the word answer: for they have a reply to make; because they are spared, from the long-suffering of God, they discover an argument for their reply.

He spares them for one reason, they answer for another, because they still live. For the Apostle tells us wherefore He spares, he expounds the grounds of the long-suffering of God: And do you think this, O man, who judges those who do such things, and does the same, that you shall escape the judgment of God? Or do you despise the riches of His goodness, and forbearance, and long-suffering; not knowing that the long-suffering of God leads you to repentance? But you, that is, he who answers and says, If I displeased God, He would not spare me, hear what he works for himself; hear the Apostle; but after your hardness and impenitent heart treasurest up into yourself wrath against the day of wrath, and revelation of the righteous judgment of God; who will render to every man according to his deeds.

Romans 2:5-6 He therefore increases His long-suffering, you increase your iniquity. His treasure will consist in eternal mercy towards those who have not despised His mercy; but your treasure will be discovered in wrath, and what thou daily layest up little by little, you will find in the accumulated mass; you lay up by the grain, but you will find the whole heap. Omit not to watch your slightest daily sins: rivers are filled from the smallest drops.

6. ...They have humbled Your people, O Lord; and have troubled Your heritage Psalm 93:5. They have murdered the widow, and the fatherless: and slain the proselyte Psalm 93:6; that is, the traveller, the pilgrim: the comer from far, as the Psalmist calls himself. Each of these expressions is too clear in meaning to make it worth while to dwell upon them.

7. And they have said, The Lord shall not see Psalm 93:7: He observes not, regards not these things: He cares for other matters, He understands not. These are the two assertions of the wicked: one which I have just quoted, These things have you done, and I held my tongue, and you thought unrighteousness, that I will be like yourself. What means, that I will be like yourself? You think that I see your deeds, and that they are pleasing unto Me, because I do not punish them. There is another assertion of the wicked: because

God neither regards these things, nor observes that He may know how I live, God heeds me not. Does then God make any reckoning of me? Or does He even take account of me? Or of men in general? Unhappy man! He cared for you, that you might exist: does He not care that thou live well? Such then are the words of these last; and yet they have said, The Lord shall not see: neither shall the God of Jacob regard it.

8. Take heed now, you that are unwise among the people: O you fools, some time understand! Psalm 93:8. He teaches His people whose feet might slip: any one among them sees the prosperity of the wicked, himself living well among the Saints of God, that is, among the number of the sons of the Church: he sees that the wicked flourish, and work iniquity, he envies, and is led to follow them in their actions; because he sees that apparently it profits him nothing that he lives well in humility, hoping for his reward here.

For if he hopes for it in future, he loses it not; because the time is not yet come for him to receive it. You are working in a vineyard: execute your task, and you shall receive your pay. You would not exact it from your employer, before your work was finished, and yet do you exact it from God before thou dost work? This patience is part of your work, and your pay depends upon your work: thou who dost not choose to be patient, chooseth to work less upon the vineyard: since this act of patience belongs to your labouring itself, which is to gain your pay.

But if you are treacherous, take care, lest you should not only not receive your pay, but also suffer punishment, because you have chosen to be a treacherous labourer. When such a labourer begins to do ill, he watches his employer's eyes, who hired him for his vineyard, that he may loiter when his eye is turned away; but the moment his eyes are turned towards him, he works diligently. But God, who hired you, averts not His eyes: you can not work treacherously: the eyes of your Master are ever upon you: seek an opportunity to deceive Him, and loiter if you can.

If then any of you had any such ideas, when you saw the wicked flourishing, and if such thoughts caused your feet to slip in the path of God; to you this Psalm speaks: but if perchance none of you be such, through you it does address others, in these words, Take heed now; since they had said, The Lord shall not see: neither shall the God of Jacob regard it. Take heed, it says, now, you that are unwise among the people: and you fools, some time understand! 9. He that planted the ear, shall He not hear?

Or He that made the eye, does He not consider? Psalm 93:9 or He that instructs the nations, shall He not reprove? Psalm 93:10. This is what God is at present doing: He is instructing the nations: for this reason he sent His word to man throughout the world: He sent it by Angels, by Patriarchs, by Prophets, by servants, through so many heralds going before the Judge. He sent also His own Word Himself, He sent His own Son in Person: He sent the servants of His Son, and in these very servants His own Son.

Throughout the world is everywhere preached the word of God. Where is it not said unto men, Abandon your former wickedness, and turn yourselves to right paths? He spares, that you may correct yourselves: He punished not yesterday, in order that today ye may live well. He teaches the heathen, shall He not therefore reprove? will He not hear those whom He teaches? will He not judge those to whom He has beforehand sent and sown lessons of warning? If you were in a school, would you receive a task, and not repeat it?

When therefore you receive it from your master, you are being taught: the Master gives your task into your hands, and shall He not exact it from you when you come to repeat it? Or when you have begun to repeat

it, shall you not be in fear of stripes? At present then we are receiving our work: afterwards we are placed before the Master, that we may give up to Him all our past tasks, that is, that we may give an account of all those things which are now being bestowed upon us. Hear the Apostle's words: We must all appear before the judgment-seat of Christ, etc. It is He that teaches man knowledge. Does He not know, who makes you to know?

10. The Lord knows the thoughts of man, that they are but vain Psalm 93:11. For although you know not the thoughts of God, that they are righteous; He knows the thoughts of man, that they are but vain. Even men have known the thoughts of God: but those to whom He has become a friend, it is to them He shows His counsel. Do not, brethren, despise yourselves: if you approach the Lord with faith, you hear the thoughts of God; these you are now learning, this is told you, and for this reason you are taught, why God spares the wicked in this life, that you may not murmur against God, who teaches man knowledge. The Lord knows the thoughts of man, that they are but vain. Abandon therefore the thoughts of man, which are vain: that you may take hold on the thoughts of God, which are wise. But who is he who takes hold on the thoughts of God? He who is placed in the firmament of heaven. We have already chanted that Psalm, and have expounded this expression therein.

11. Blessed is the man whom You chasten, O Lord: and teachest him from Your law Psalm 93:12. Behold, you have the counsel of God, wherefore He spares the wicked: the pit is being dug for the sinner. You wish to bury him at once: the pit is as yet being dug for him: do not be in haste to bury him. What mean the words, until the pit be dug up for the sinner? Or whom does He mean by sinner? One man? No. Whom then? The whole race of such that are sinners? No; them that are proud; for he had said before, Reward the proud after their deserving. For that publican, who would not so much as lift up his eyes to heaven, but smote upon his breast, saying, God be merciful to me a sinner, Luke 18:13 was a sinner; but since he was not proud, and since God will render a recompense to the proud; the pit is being dug not for him, but for them that are such, until He render a recompense to the proud. In the words then, until the pit be dug up for the ungodly, understand the proud. Who is the proud? He who does not by confession of his sins do penance, that he may be healed through his humility. Who is the proud? He who chooses to arrogate to himself those few good things which he seems to possess, and who does detract from the mercy of God. Who is the proud? He who although he does ascribe unto God his good works, yet insults those who do not those good works, and raises himself above them....This then is the Christian doctrine: no man does anything well except by His grace. A man's bad acts are his own: his good he does of God's bounty. When he has begun to do well, let not him ascribe it unto himself: when he has not attributed it to himself, let him give thanks to Him from whom he has received it. But when he does well, let him not insult him who does not as he does nor exalt himself above him: for the grace of God is not stayed at him, so that it cannot reach another.

12. That You may give him patience in days of malice: until the pit be dug up for the ungodly Psalm 93:13. Have patience therefore every one, if you are a Christian, in time of malice. Days of malice are those in which the ungodly appear to flourish, and the righteous to suffer; but the suffering of the righteous is the rod of the Father, and the prosperity of the ungodly is their own snare. For because God gives you patience in time of adversity, until the pit be dug up for the ungodly, do not think that the Angels are standing in some place with mattocks, and are digging that great pit which shall be able to contain the whole race of the ungodly; and because ye see that the wicked are many, and say unto yourselves carnally: Truly what pit can contain so great a multitude of the wicked, such a crowd of sinners? Where is a pit of such dimensions, as to contain all, dug? When finished? Therefore God spares them. This is not

so: their very prosperity is the pit of the wicked: for into that shall they fall, as it were into a pitfall. Attend, brethren, for it is a great thing to know that prosperity is called a pitfall: until the pit be dug up for the ungodly. For God spares him whom He knows to be ungodly and impious, in His own hidden justice: and this very sparing of God, causes him to be puffed up through his impunity....The proud man raises himself up against God: God sinks him: and he sinks by the very act of raising himself up against God. For in another Psalm he thus says, You have cast them down, while they were being exalted. He said not, You have cast them down, because they were exalted; or, You have cast them down, after they were exalted; so that the period of their exaltation be one, of their casting down another: but in the very act of their exaltation were they cast down. For in proportion as the heart of man is proud, so does it recede from God; and if it recede from God, it sinks down into the deep. On the other hand, the humble heart brings God unto it from heaven, so that He becomes very near unto it. Surely God is lofty, God is above all the heavens, He surpasses all the Angels: how high must these be raised, to reach that exalted One? Do not burst yourself by enlarging yourself; I give you other advice, lest perchance in enlarging yourself you burst, through pride: surely God is lofty: do thou humble yourself, and He will descend unto you.

13. ...Do thou rejoice beneath the scourge: because the heritage is kept for you, for the Lord will not cast off His people Psalm 93:14. He chastens for a season, He condemns not for ever: the others He spares for a season, and will condemn them for evermore. Make your choice: do you wish temporary suffering, or eternal punishment? Temporal happiness, or eternal life? What does God threaten? Eternal punishment. What does He promise? Eternal rest. His scourging the good, is temporary: His sparing the wicked, is also temporary. Neither will He forsake His inheritance.

14. Until righteousness, he says, turn again unto judgment, and all they that have it are right in heart Psalm 93:15. Listen now, and gain righteousness: for judgment you can not yet have. You should gain righteousness first; but that very righteousness of yours shall turn unto judgment. The Apostles had righteousness here on earth, and bore with the wicked. But what is said unto them? You shall sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel. Matthew 19:28 Their righteousness therefore shall turn unto judgment. For whoever is righteous in this life, is so for this reason, that he may endure evils with patience: let him suffer patiently the period of suffering, and the day of judging comes. But why do I speak of the servants of God? The Lord Himself, who is the Judge of all living and dead, first chose to be judged, and then to judge. Those who have righteousness at present, are not yet judges. For the first thing is to have righteousness, and afterwards to judge: He first endures the wicked, and afterwards judges them. Let there be righteousness now: afterwards it shall turn again unto judgment. And so long He endures wicked men, as God does will, as long as God's Church shall endure them, that she may be taught through their wickedness. Nevertheless, God will not cast off His people, all such as have it are right in heart. Who are those who are right in heart? Those whose will is the will of God. He spares sinners: thou dost wish Him at once to destroy sinners. Your heart is crooked and your will perverted, when your will is one way and the will of God another. God wishes to spare sinners: thou dost not wish sinners spared. God is of long-suffering to sinners: thou dost not wish to endure sinners....Wish not to bend the will of God to your will, but rather correct your will to His. The will of God is like a rule: behold, suppose, you have twisted the rule: whence can you be set straight? But the rule itself continues straight: for it is immutable. As long as the rule is straight, you have whither to turn yourself, and straighten your perversity; you have a means of correcting what is crooked in you. But what do men will? It is not enough that their own will is crooked; they even wish to make the will of God crooked according to their own heart, that God may do what they themselves will, when they ought to do that which God wills....

15. Who will rise up for me against the wicked? Or who will take my part against the evil doers? Psalm 93:16. Many persuade us to various evils: the serpent ceases not to whisper to you to work iniquity: whichever way you shall turn, if perchance you have done well, you seek to live well with some one, and thou hardly findest any one; many wicked men surround you, for there are few grains of wheat, and much chaff. This floor has its grains of grain, but as yet they suffer. Therefore the whole mass of the wheat, when separated from the chaff, will be great: the grains are few, but when compared with the chaff, still many in themselves. When therefore the wicked cry out on every side, and say, Why do you live thus? Are you the only Christian? Why do you not do what others also do? Why do you not frequent the theatres, as others do? Why do you not use charms and amulets? Why do you not consult astrologers and soothsayers, even as others do? And thou crossest yourself, and sayest, I am Christian, that you may repel them, whosoever they are; but the enemy presses on, urges his attacks; what is worse, by the example of Christians he chokes Christians. They toil on, in the midst of heat: the Christian soul suffers tribulation: yet it has power to conquer: has it such power of itself? For this reason remark what he says. For he answers, What does it profit me that I now find charms for myself, and gain a few days? I depart hence from this life, and repair unto my Lord, who shall send me into the flames; because I have preferred a few days to life eternal, He shall send me into hell. What hell? That of the eternal judgment of God. Is it really so (the enemy answers), unless indeed thou really believest that God cares how men live? And perhaps it is not an acquaintance who speaks thus to you in the street, but your wife at home, or possibly the husband to the faithful and holy wife, her deceiver. If it be the woman to her husband, she is as Eve unto him; if as the husband unto the wife, he is as the devil unto her: either she is herself as Eve unto you, or you are a serpent unto her. Sometimes the father would incline his thoughts to his son, and finds him wicked, utterly depraved: he is in a fever of misery, he wavers, he seeks how to subdue him, he is almost drawn in, and consents: but may God be near him....

16. If the Lord, he says, had not helped me: within a little my soul had dwelt in hell Psalm 93:17. I had almost plunged into that pit which is preparing for sinners: that is, my soul had dwelt in hell. Because he already began to waver, and nearly to consent, he looked back unto the Lord. Suppose, for example's sake, he was insulted to tempt him to iniquity. For sometimes the wicked flock together, and insult the good; especially if they are more in number, and if they have taken him alone, as there is often much chaff about one grain of wheat (though there will not be when the heap has been fanned); he is then taken among many wicked ones, is insulted, and surrounded; they wish to place themselves over him, they torment him and insult him for his very righteousness. A great Apostle! say they; You have flown into heaven, as Elias did! Men do these things, so that sometime, when he listens to the tongue of men, he is ashamed to be good among the wicked. Let him therefore resist the evil; but not of his own strength, lest he become proud, and when he wishes to escape the proud, himself increase their number....

17. If I said, My foot has slipt; Your mercy, O Lord, held me up Psalm 93:18. See how God loves confession. Your foot has slipt, and you say not, my foot has slipt; but you say you are firm, when you are slipping. The moment you begin to slip or waver, confess thou that slip, that you may not bewail your total fall; that He may help, so that your soul be not in hell. God loves confession, loves humility. You have slipped, as a man; God helps you, nevertheless: yet say, My foot has slipt. Why do you slip, and yet sayest, I am firm? When I said, My foot has slipt, Your mercy, O Lord, has held me up. Just as Peter presumed, but not in strength of his own. The Lord was seen to walk upon the sea, trampling on the heads of all the proud in this life. In walking upon the foaming waves, He figured His own course when He tramples on the heads of the proud. The Church too does trample upon them: for Peter is the Church Herself. Nevertheless, Peter dared not by himself walk upon the waters; but what said he? Lord, if it be

Thou, bid me come unto You on the water. Matthew 14:28 He in His own power, Peter by His order; bid me, he says, come unto You. He answered, Come. For the Church also tramples on the heads of the proud; but since it is the Church, and has human weakness, that these words might be fulfilled, If I said, My foot has slipt, Peter tottered on the sea, and cried out, Lord, save me! Matthew 14:30 and so what is here put, If I said, My foot has slipt, is put there, Lord, I perish. And what is here, Your mercy, O Lord, has held me up, is there put, And immediately Jesus stretched forth His hand, saying, O thou of little faith, wherefore did you doubt? Matthew 14:31 It is wonderful how God proves men: our very dangers render Him who rescues us sweeter unto us. For see what follows: because he said, If I said, My foot has slipt, Your mercy, O Lord, has held me up. The Lord has become especially sweet unto him, in rescuing him from danger; and thus speaking of this very sweetness of the Lord, he exclaims and says, O Lord, in the multitude of the sorrows that I had in my heart, Your comforts have refreshed my soul Psalm 93:19. Many sorrows, but many consolations: bitter wounds, and sweet remedies.

18. Will You have anything to do with the stool of iniquity, who makest sorrow in learning? Psalm 93:20. He has said this, No wicked man sits with You, nor shall Thou have anything to do with the stool of iniquity. And he gives an account whereof he understands this, For You make sorrow in learning. For from this, because You have not spared us, do I understand that You have nothing to do with the stool of iniquity. You have this in the Epistle of the Apostle Peter, and for this reason he has adduced a testimony from the Scripture: for the time has come, he says, that judgment must begin at the house of God; that is, the time has come for the judgment of those who belong to the house of God. If sons are scourged, what must the most wicked slaves expect? For which reason he added: And if it first begin at us, what shall the end be of them that obey not the Gospel of God? To which he added this testimony: For if the righteous scarcely be saved, where shall the ungodly and sinner appear? 1 Peter 4:17-18 How then shall the wicked be with You, if Thou dost not even spare Your faithful, in order that You may exercise and teach them? Proverbs 11:31 But as He spares them not, for this reason, that He may teach them: he says, For You make sorrow in learning. Makest, that is, formest: from whence comes the word figulus (from fingo), and a potter's vessel is called fictile: not in the meaning of fiction, a falsehood, but of forming so as to give anything being and some sort of form; as before he said, He that fabricated (finxit) the eye, shall He not see? Is that, fabricated the eye a falsehood? Nay, it is understood He fashioned the eye, made the eye. And is He not a potter when He makes men frail, weak, earthly? Hear the Apostle: We have this treasure in earthen vessels. 2 Corinthians 4:7 ...Behold our Lord Himself, how He shows Himself a potter. Romans 4:20-21 Because He had made man of clay, He anointed him with clay, for whom He had not made eyes in the womb. And so when he says, Have You anything to do, etc., he says, out of grief makest learning for us, so that grief itself becomes our instruction. How is sorrow our learning? When He scourges you who died for you, and who does not promise bliss in this life, and who cannot deceive, and when He gives not here what you seek. What will He give? When will He give? How much will He give, who gives not here, who here teaches, who makes sorrow in learning? Your labour is here, and rest is promised you. You take thought that you have toil here: but take thought what sort of rest He promises. Can you conceive it? If you could, you would see that your toil here is nothing toward an equivalent....

19. Attend, brethren; it is for sale. What I have is for sale, says God unto you, buy it. What has He for sale? I have rest for sale; buy it by your toil. Attend, that we may be in Christ's name brave Christians: the remainder of the Psalm is but a little, let us not be weary. For how can he be strong in doing, who fails in hearing? The Lord will help us to expound unto you the remainder. Attend then: God has, as it were, proclaimed the kingdom of heaven for sale. You say unto Him, What is its value? The price is toil: if He were to say, its price is gold, it would not suffice to say this only, but you would seek to know how much

gold; for there is a mass of gold, and half an ounce, and a pound, and the like. He said price, that you might not be at pains to inquire, how long you should find it. The price of the commodity is toil: how much toil is it? Now seek how much you should toil for it. You are not as yet told how great that toil is doomed to be, or how much toil is required of you: God says this unto you, I show you how great that rest will be; do thou judge with what measure of toil it should be bought.

20. ...He promised rest: suffer trouble. He threatens eternal fire; despise temporal pains: and while Christ does watch, let your heart be calmed, that you also may reach the harbour. For He would not fail to prepare a harbour, who provided a vessel. Have You anything to do with the stool of iniquity, Thou who makest sorrow in learning? He tries us with the wicked, and by their persecution He teaches us. By means of the malice of the wicked the good is scourged, through the slave the son is chastened: thus is learning taught by sorrow. What God allows them power to do, that do wicked men, whom He spares for a season, do.

21. For what follows? They will be captious against the soul of the righteous Psalm 93:21. Why will they be captious? Because they can find no true ground of accusation. For how were they captious against our Lord? They made up false accusations, Matthew 26:59 because they could not find true ones. And will condemn the innocent blood. Why all this takes place, he will show in the sequel.

22. And the Lord has become my refuge Psalm 93:22, he says. You would not seek such a refuge, if you were not in danger: but you have therefore been in danger, that you might seek for it: for He teaches us by sorrow. He causes me tribulation from the malice of the wicked: pricked with that tribulation, I begin to seek a refuge which I had ceased to seek for in that worldly prosperity. For who, that is always prosperous, and rejoices in present hopes, finds it easy to remember God? Let the hope of this life give way, and the hope of God advance; that you may say, And the Lord has become my refuge: may I sorrow for this end that the Lord may become my refuge! And my God the help of my hope. For as yet the Lord is our hope, since as long as we are here, we are in hope, and not in possession. But lest we fail in hope, there is near us a provision to encourage us, and to mitigate those very evils which we suffer. For it is not said in vain, God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that you are able: but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that you may be able to bear it: 1 Corinthians 10:13 who will so put us into that furnace of tribulation, that the vessel may be hardened, but not broken. And the Lord has become my refuge: and my God the help of my hope. Why then did He seem to you to be as it were unjust, in that He spares the evil? See then how the Psalm is now set right, and be thou set right together with the Psalm: for, for this reason the Psalm contained your words. What words? Lord, how long shall the ungodly, how long shall the ungodly triumph? The Psalm just now used your words: use therefore yourself the Psalm's words in your turn.

23. And the Lord shall recompense them according to their works, and after their own malice; the Lord our God shall destroy them Psalm 93:23. The words, after their own malice, are not said without meaning. I am benefited through them: and yet it is said to be their malice, and not their benefits. For assuredly He tries us, scourges us, by means of the wicked. To prepare us for what does He scourge us? Confessedly for the kingdom of heaven. For He scourges every son whom He receives; for what son is he whom the father chastens not? Hebrews 12:7 and when God does this, He is teaching us in order to an eternal heritage: and this learning He often gives us by means of wicked men, through whom He tries and perfects our love, which He does will to be extended even to our enemies.. ..Thus also they who persecuted the Martyrs, by persecuting them on earth, sent them into heaven: knowingly they caused them the loss of the present life, while unconsciously they were bestowing upon them the gain of a future

life: but, nevertheless, unto all who persevered in their wicked hatred of the righteous, will God recompense after their own iniquities, and in their own malice will He destroy them. For as the goodness of the righteous is hurtful unto the wicked, so is the iniquity of the wicked beneficial unto the righteous....

24. Let therefore the righteous bear with the ungodly; let the temporal suffering of the righteous bear with the temporal impunity of the wicked; for the just shall live by faith. Romans 1:17 For there is no righteousness of man in this life except to live by faith, which works by love. Galatians 5:6 But if he lives by faith, let him believe both that he will himself inherit rest after his present toil, and that they will suffer eternal torments after their present exultation. And if faith works by love, let him love his enemies also, and, as far as in him lies, have the will to profit them; for thus he will prevent their injuring him when they have the will. And whenever perchance they have received power to hurt and tyrannize; let him lift his heart above, where no man hurts him, well taught and chastened in the law of God, that he may have patience given him in the days of adversity, until the pit be dug up for the ungodly....

25. This I say, brethren, that you may profit from what you have heard, and ruminare within yourselves: permit not yourselves to forget, not only by thinking over again upon these subjects, and discoursing upon them, but also by so living. For a good life which is led after God's commands, is like a pen, because it is heard writing in our hearts. If it were written on wax, it would easily be blotted out: write it in your hearts, in your character, and it shall never be blotted out.

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