

- ✠ This psalm is written in the form of a Lament.
 - ✧ See the note about “lament” in the introduction to Psalm 3.
 - ✧ It is suggested that the psalm may be divided into two sections : verses 2-9, and verses 10-25. The second section makes a parallel with the first section. Therefore, verses 2-6 (cry for help) refer to verse 10 ; verse 5 (the situation) refers to verses 11-14 ; verse 6 (confidence in God) refers to verses 15, 20-21 ; verse 7 (protestation of innocence) refers to verses 16-19 (prayer for vindication) ; verses 8-9 (grateful recognition of God’s help) refer to verses 22-25.
- ✠ This psalm is read fully at Great Compline.
- ✠ Saint Jerome explains that this psalm is about King David as history, and it is also a prophecy about the Lord.
- ✠ Saint Augustine perceives that the words of this psalm alternate between the words of the Prophet David and the words of the Saviour.
- ✠ Cassiodorus considers that we may hear the voice of the Saviour throughout the words of this psalm. He associates the words with the Passion and Resurrection of Christ.
- ✠ Saint Gregory of Nessa says that this psalm, continuing from the previous psalms, reminds us not to be attached to anything harmful.
- ✠ *The Orthodox Study Bible* indicates that this psalm reveals the extreme humiliation of Christ on the Cross.

“Prayer of Christ on the Cross”

“A Passion Psalm. Confident prayer in trouble”

“Thou hast redeemed me, O Lord God of Truth”

1 For the End. A psalm by David ; about when he was beside himself.

V 1 About the Inscription : in the Masoretic (Hebrew) text, the Inscription is “For the choirmaster. A Psalm of David”.

✠ About “for the End” : see the note about “for the End” on Psalm 4:1.

✠ About “*A psalm ... himself*” : Saint Augustine reminds us that King David was in a state which may be described as being beside himself with fear. However, it is more usual to describe it as a state of intense joy, and contemplation of heavenly things. He refers us to the Apostle’s words in 2 Corinthians 5:13-14 ; 12:1-4. He also reminds us that the substance of this psalm shows reason why King David might have fear. In a Christological application, Saint Augustine struggles with the possibility that Christ might have felt fear in the face of death, since He knew what He had come to do ; yet, He took on the totality of our humanity in its fallenness, which is influenced by fear.

✠ About “*beside himself*” : this translates the Greek word ἔκστασις, *ekstasē, ecstasy*, which means literally to stand outside, or beside. This expression may describe a state resulting from intense fear, or a state of mental breakdown. However, it is primarily used to describe a spiritual state of intense love and joy.

✧ This word may mean the subjective experience of complete focus on and involvement of a person with the object of a person’s awareness. In literature, it may refer to the removal of the mind or body from its normal place of function. Besides the examples given by Saint Augustine, there are Old Covenant examples with regard to various prophets. See 4 Moses 11:25 ; 24:2 ; 1 Kingdoms 10:6, 10 ; 19:20 ; 4 Kingdoms 3:15 ; Psalm 115:2 ; Ezekiel 3:14 ; 11:24 ; 37:1. There are also examples of the use of musical instruments by some prophets : 2 Kingdoms 10:5 ; 4 Kingdoms 3:15.

✧ See verse 23 ; see also the note about “*beside myself*” on Psalm 115.2.

[Ἐπὶ σοὶ, Κύριε, ἠλπίσα In te, Domine, speravi]

2 On You, O LORD, have I hoped ;/ may I not be put to shame unto the age./ In Your righteousness rescue me, and set me free.

V 2 Psalm 30:2-4 is the same as Psalm 70:1-3.

✠ About “*on you ... age*” : Saint Augustine perceives these words to be from the Mediator, Christ, in anticipation of the time of the Passion. He points out that there are two sorts of shame. The first is that which we may feel during this life. This is a good shame, since it leads to repentance (see Daniel 3:33, in Matins Canticle 7). The second is the eternal shame which some will endure after the Final Judgement (see Matthew 25:41-46). This is not a good shame, since it is permanent.

✠ About “*Lord*” : see verses 5, 6, 10, 15, 18, 20, 22, 24, 25 ; see the note about “*Lord*” on Psalm 1:2.

✠ About “*hoped*” : see verses 7, 15, 20, 25 ; see also the note about “*hope*” on Psalm 4:6. See also the notes on Psalm 30:2, 15 ; 32:22.

✠ About “*not be put to shame*” : see verse 18 ; see also the note about “*not put to shame*” on Psalm 21:6.

✠ About “*unto the age*” : see the note about “*unto the ages*” on Psalm 5:12.

✠ About “*Your righteousness*” : Saint Augustine admits that our supposed “*righteousness*” would lead only to condemnation. God’s “*righteousness*” is the source of any life-giving “*righteousness*” in human beings. He shows us that the Apostle demonstrates in Romans 4:5 how the Lord makes us righteous through His righteousness. Saint Augustine also cites Romans 10:3 as an example of the Apostle’s certainty that no-one can become righteous without deriving it from in God’s righteousness.

✧ Evagrius of Pontus explains that the Lord not only sets us free unto righteousness, but also unto moderation, strength, and love. Righteousness is understood correctly to include and embrace all other good and godly traits. He further sees an anticipation of Christ in these words, and he refers us to 1 Corinthians 1:30.

✧ Bishop Theodoret of Cyrrhus affirms the wisdom of the Prophet David which is demonstrated throughout these verses. He appeals for God’s help only on the basis of God’s righteousness, on which he hopes.

✧ Cassiodorus makes a strong connexion between the words of this psalm and the person of Christ. Because of the nature of His righteousness, the Lord consistently repaid evil behaviour with goodness and righteousness.

✠ About “*Your righteousness*” : see the note about “*Your righteousness*” on Psalm 5:9.

✠ About “*righteousness*” : see the notes about “*righteousness*” on Psalm 5:9.

✠ About “*rescue*” : Metropolitan Bartholomew (Anania) suggests that the sense of this phrase is “get me out”, “remove me”, “take me away” (from trouble in danger of death).

✧ See verse 16 ; see also the note about “*rescue*” on Psalm 6:5.

✠ About “*set me free*” :

✧ See verse 3 ; see also Psalms 60:2 ; 63:2 ; 70:2 ; 81:4 ; 90:15 ; 138:2, 5 ; 142:9 ; 143:7, 11 ; Daniel 3:43 (Matins Canticle 7).

3 Incline Your ear to me,/ and hasten to set me free./ Be to me a protecting God,/ and a House of Refuge to save me ;

V 3 About this verse : Arnobius the Younger explains that God does hear the pleas of thos who hope on Him, and that He does, indeed set them free. He saves them.

✠ About “*incline Your ear*” : Saint Augustine is convinced that the Saviour fulfilled the request in the *kenosis* of His Incarnation. However, in His incarnation, He did bend down, as we see in His writing in the soil in John 8:6. He further emphasises that the Lord, not being limited by a material body, makes no shift in attitude or disposition as He hears us, since He is always inclined by His love to hear us.

✧ See the note about *"incline Your ear"* on Psalm 16.6.

✧ About *"hasten"* (hurry) : Saint Augustine explains that this verb demonstrates that although all of time seems extremely long to us, it is but a moment for God.

✧ About *"set me free"* : see the note on verse 2.

✧ About *"be to me a protecting God"* : Father P Reardon comments that these words, easily ascribed to Christ, must be ours also, as we walk a similar path.

✧ See the note about *"protect"* on Psalm 19:2.

✧ About *"God"* : see verses 6, 15. See the note about *"God"* on Psalm 3:3.

✧ About *"House of Refuge"* : Saint Augustine, with reference to Psalm 138:7-8, admits that there is no place to which anyone may flee for safety and refuge, except to the Lord Himself. The Lord is Himself that Home of Refuge for us. He is always easy to be found, and He is always available to us.

✧ This is used as a sort of title for the Lord. For other examples of this sort of usage, see the notes on Psalm 17:2, 3.

✧ About *"Refuge"* : see verse 4 ; see also the note about *"refuge"* on Psalm 9:10.

✧ About *"to save"* : see verses 8, 17 ; see also the note about *"save"* on Psalm 3:8.

4 for You are my Strength and Refuge,/ and for the sake of Your Name You will lead me on the way and nourish me.

V 4 About *"Strength"* and *"Refuge"* : these words are used as a sort of title for the Lord. For other examples of this sort of usage, see the notes on Psalms 17:2, 3 ; 24:14.

✧ About *"Refuge"* : see the note on verse 3.

✧ About *"for the sake of Your Name"* : Saint Augustine emphasises that this phrase clarifies for us that none of us is worthy of this careful attention from the Lord. Rather, He leads and feeds us because of the nature of His love.

✧ Bishop Theodoret of Cyrrihus points out that the Prophet does not request help on the basis of any personal virtue, but rather on the basis of God's love and compassion for us.

✧ See the note about *"for the sake of His Name"* on Psalm 22:3.

✧ About *"lead me on the way"* : see the note about *"lead me on the way"* on Psalm 5:9.

✧ About *"nourish me"* : Saint Augustine expresses the confidence that the Lord gives nourishment for the sake of strengthening us towards the future reception of the food of Heaven (see Psalm 104:40) which God

gives to the angels (see Psalm 77:25). The Lord who promises us such food (see John 6:32, 41, 50, 51) provides us at present with milk in His maternal mercy. In the same way that a nursing mother enables the food for her child to pass first through her own flesh so that the infant may be nourished by the food she has eaten, so the Lord took flesh and came to us so that we might be able to ingest His wisdom.

✧ See 5 Moses 32:18 (Matins Canticle 2) ; Psalm 32:19. See also the note about "*nourishment*" (noun) on Psalm 64:10.

5 You will lead me out of this snare which they hid for me,/ for You are my Protector, O LORD.

V 5 About "*lead ... snare*" : Saint Augustine explains that while these words are a preparation for the Saviour's Passion, they also serve as a warning that the Evil One has prepared such snares for everyone, everywhere and always. Anyone who does not have confidence in and protection from the Lord will fall into this snare which has two loops. The first is error which leads us astray, primarily through greed, which must (as with the Saviour) be avoided. He refers us to Matthew 4:1-11 ; Luke 4:1-13. The second loop is terror which would break us. This tactic was introduced to the Saviour at the Passion. As the Saviour kept fear away, so must we under His protection.

✧ Bishop Theodoret of Cyrrhus refers us to Psalm 7:1 (the Inscription) and the plot of Ahitophel against King David (2 Kingdoms, chapter 17) with regard to the "*snare*".

✧ About "*lead ... out*" : see the note about "*lead ... out*" on Psalm 24:17.

✧ About "*snare which they hid*" : see Psalm 9:16.

✧ About "*snare*" : Cassiodorus follows a Christological interpretation as he perceives the snare as referring to the plots which were prepared in secret against Christ in order to destroy Him. Regardless, the Saviour was well aware of the presence of the ambush, and of what He would do in order to fulfil the work of salvation.

✧ See the note about "*snare*" on Psalm 9:16.

✧ About "*hid*" : see the notes about "*have hidden*" on verse 20 ; see the note about "*conceal*" on verse 21; see also the note about "*hid*" on Psalm 9:16.

✧ About "*Protector*" : see the notes about "*Protector*" on Psalm 17:2, 3.

✧ About "*Lord*" : see the note about "*Lord*" on verse 2.

6 Into Your hands shall I entrust my spirit :/ You have redeemed me, O LORD God of truth.

V 6 About “*into Your hands ... redeemed me*” : Saint Augustine comments, along with others after him, that these words are directly preparing us for the Passion of Christ, and that the first phrase is cited verbatim by the Saviour on the Cross. Indeed, the Saviour wishes us to see Him throughout the content of this psalm, and also of Psalm 21. He shows us how the words of these psalms are transfigured by how the Saviour lived them out, and how He spoke them. Further, the word “*redeemed*” reveals the confidence of the Saviour that the Father carried through on all His promises by bringing about the Resurrection. This confidence is shown when the Saviour commits His spirit to the hands of the Father. This opinion is supported by Theodore of Mopsuestia.

✠ About “*Your hands*” : see verse 16 ; see the note about “*Your hands*” on Psalm 8:7.

✠ About “*spirit*” : this word here translates the Greek πνεῦμα, *pneuma*, which translates the Hebrew word רוּחַ, *rûah*. It is this which comes directly from God and gives life to human beings. In either language, it can also mean “wind”, or “breath”. The word-choice in English depends somewhat on the context. “*Spirit*” may also refer to a bodiless being, and to the Holy Spirit (see Psalm 32:6). This word is, in some ways, related to “mind”, which is a sort of link with “soul”. It is also averred that it is the “spirit” which enables a human being to reflect the image and likeness of God.

✧ See Psalms 33:19 ; 50:12, 19 ; 75:13 ; 76:4, 7 ; 77:8, 39 ; 103:4, 29 ; 105:33 ; 141:4 ; 142:4, 7 ; 145:4 ; Isaiah 26:9, 18 (Matins Canticle 5) ; Daniel 3:39 (Matins Canticle 7) ; Daniel 3:86 (Matins Canticle 8) ; Luke 1:47 (Matins Canticle 9, Part 1) ; Luke 23:46 ; John 19:30 ; Acts 7:59. See the note about “*soul*” on Psalm 3:3.

✠ About “*redeemed*” : see the notes about “*redeem*” on Psalm 7:3.

✠ About “*Lord*” : see the note on verse 2.

✠ About “*God*” : see the note on verse 3.

✠ About “*truth*” : see verse 24 ; see also the note about “*truth*” on Psalm 5:10.

7 You hated those uselessly guarding their futility ;/ but as for me, I have hoped on the LORD.

V 7 About this verse : Saint Augustine reviews many examples of the emptiness of putting any trust in things, money, people, power, and the like. None of these has eternal substance, value, or being. It is empty to hold worldly pleasures in high esteem. We will die, and they will perish. He refers us to Isaiah 40:6-8. Rather, it makes true sense only to put our hope and trust on the Lord.

✠ About “*You hated*” : see the note about “*You have hated*” on Psalm 5:6 ; see also the note about “*hated*” on Psalm 10:5.

✠ About “*uselessly*” : see the note about “*uselessly*” on Psalm 24:3.

✠ About “*futility*” : Saint Athanasius : “By ‘follies’ he means distractions of the present life, by occupying ourselves with which we labour in vain”.

✧ Metropolitan Bartholomew (Anania) explains that “*futility*”, which may also be translated as “empty vanities” or “hollow vanities” may be a metaphor for idols.

- ✧ Archimandrite Lazarus (Moore) mentions that with reference to Biblical usage, *'futility'*, or "empty follies", could also refer to idolatry, about which there are many direct and indirect references, especially amongst the Prophets.
- ✧ Some translate *"futility"* as "folly". It is noted by some that in Syriac, this may refer also to false worship.
- ✧ See the note about *"futility"* on Psalm 4:3.

- ✧ About *"hoped"* : see the note on verse 2.
- ✧ About *"Lord"* : see the note on verse 2.

8 I shall exult and be glad in Your mercy ;/ f or You looked upon my
humility./ You saved my soul from its anguish.

V 8 About *"exult"* : see the note about *"exult"* on Psalm 2:11.

- ✧ About *"be glad"* : see the note about *"may they be glad"* on Psalm 5:12.
- ✧ About *"mercy"* : see verses 17, 22 ; see the note about *"mercy"* on Psalm 5:8.
- ✧ About *"humility"* : Cassiodorus points out the importance of keeping it in mind that the One whose *"humility"* has been observed is the Lord Himself. This *"humility"* is vividly expressed in the Incarnation of the Logos.
- ✧ See the note about *"humility"* on Psalm 21:22.
- ✧ About *"saved"* : see the note on verse 3.
- ✧ About *"soul"* : see verses 10, 14 ; see the note about *"soul"* on Psalm 3:3.
- ✧ About *"anguish"* : Saint Augustine offers that this anguish includes our ignorance of the heart of anyone else (lacking discernment, we tend to think wrongly of the other, valuing the enemy and suspecting the faithful friend) ; ignorance of our own heart ; our dislike or fear of our mortality (our resistance to accepting the inevitable) : our desire to come to the Kingdom of Heaven without encountering and experiencing death (2 Corinthians 5:1-4) ; our resistance to overcoming bad habits (Romans 7:18-19) ; our constant inclination to be in fear. His usage is related to a Latin source word more closely related to "constraint".
- ✧ See the note about *"anguish"* on Psalm 24:17.

9 You did not shut me up in the hands of enemies ;/ on a spacious place
have You set my feet.

V 9 About *"did not shut me up"* : see Psalms 16:10 ; 34:3 ; 67:31 ; 70:50 ; Isaiah 26:20 (Matins Canticle 5).

- ✧ About *"enemies"* : Saint Augustine explains that this phrase refers not to the clutches of any of our neighbours or people with whom we may disagree (and for whom we must pray, as we are told in Matthew 5:44), but rather to the devil. When we die well in the Lord, then we are set free from his clutches ; but if we die badly, away from the Lord, then we become tightly bound by his power and

identified with him. If the Lord sets us free, then the enemy has nothing in or about us to take hold of [see John 14:30].

✧ See verses, 12, 16 ; see the note about “*enemies*” on verse 16 ; see the note about “*enemies*” on Psalm 5:9.

✧ About “*spacious place*” : Saint Augustine comments that the love within us has been released from the vice of fear and we can walk freely forever in the spaciousness of the Lord’s freedom.

✧ See the note about “*broad place*” on Psalm 17:20.

✧ About “*set my feet*” : Saint Augustine explains that the path is narrow (Matthew 7:14) to the those who plot labouriously ; however, to the one who lives, the path is wide. Therefore, the Lord has made right-living easy for us, although it once seemed very difficult.

✧ About “*feet*” : Psalms 16:5 ; 17:37.

10 Have mercy on me, O LORD, for I am afflicted./ My eye was disturbed
because of fury : my soul, and my belly also ;

V 10 About “*have mercy*” : see the note about “*have mercy*” on Psalm 6:3.

✧ About “*Lord*” : see the note on verse 2.

✧ About “*afflicted*” : Saint Augustine begins by recalling the great relief felt by those who have been set free. Nevertheless, affliction continues in a sense. From the perspective of the Body of Christ, some are at liberty, and some are in affliction. Within this Body, the freedom and peace of those set free may support, encourage and comfort those who are being afflicted. The suffering of the afflicted may temper the joy of those at liberty and urge them to prayer. He further considers the state of the Church which sometimes suffers great persecution, and which is sometimes at liberty. When the believers become lax and hard of heart in their liberty, they can fall into a divided life of worshipping the Lord perfunctorily and at the same time participating in activities which are contrary to righteousness and the correct life of any Christian. The faithful person must nevertheless persevere. In this context, he gives us reference to Psalm 39:6 ; Matthew 24:12, 13 ; Luke 5:6.

✧ About “*my eye ... fury*” : Saint John Cassian explains significantly that the deadly poison of anger has to be rooted out from the deepest parts of our soul. As long as the poison remains anywhere, it blinds the eye of the soul. Thus poisoned, we cannot come to having either right judgement or the ability to make good decisions, nor can we develop the insight that arises from an honest scrutiny or maturity of counsel, nor can we have the capacity for true spiritual light.

✧ Saint John, Abbot of Sinai emphasises that the heart’s eye must not be troubled by anger. Anger leads to fury. Fury leads to revenge. One sin leads to another related sin. Those who are angry become distorted as they fight fire with fire. However, while a lone wolf may trouble a whole flock, one virtuous person may benefit a whole community.

✧ See Psalm 6:8.

✧ About “*disturbed*” : see the note about “*disturbed*” on Psalm 6:8.

✠ About “*fury*” : Saint Augustine comments that disturbance is an inevitable consequence of “*fury*”, which is intense anger. He cautions us to recall the limitation of righteous anger and the great importance of avoiding hatred.

✧ See the note about “*fury*” on Psalm 6:8.

✠ About “*soul*” : see the note on verse 8.

✠ About “*belly*” : Saint Augustine explains that this means that because of having been so stirred up by negative emotions, everything about his inner life is in turmoil.

11 for my life fainted because of pain, and my years because of groanings./
My strength became weak in poverty,/ and my bones were stirred up.

V 11 About the verse : Saint Augustine approaches these words from the perspective of the Christ-loving pastor. Again responding to the faithlessness and cynicism of many persons, he describes the wide-ranging work done by the careful pastor in order to nurture the Lord’s rational sheep, and the pain that is felt when this work is trivialised or ignored, and when people betray the Christ they pretend to follow.

✠ About “*fainted*” : see Psalms 63:7 ; 72:26 ; 83:3 ; 89:7, 9 ; 106:5 ; 118:81 ; 141:4 ; 142:7 ; Jonah 2:8 (Matins Cantic 6).

✠ About “*pain*” : see the note about “*pains*” on Psalm 12:3.

✠ About “*groanings*” : see the note about “*groaning*” on Psalm 6:7.

✠ About “*strength*” : see the note about “*strength*” on Psalms 17:2, 3 ; 24:14.

✠ About “*became weak*” : see the note about “*became weak*” on Psalm 9:4.

✠ About “*poverty*” : see Psalms 43:25 ; 87:10 ; 106:10, 41.

✠ About “*my bones were stirred up*” : see Psalm 6:3.

✠ About “*stirred up*” : see the note about “*stir ... up*” on Psalm 2:5.

12 In the sight of all my enemies I have become an object of reproach,/ and
very much so to my neighbours,/ and a fear to my acquaintances./
Those beholding me outside fled from me.

V 12 About this verse : Saint Athanasius advises us that when we understand that because of the truth of our Christian Faith, we are hated and persecuted by our kin and acquaintances, then we should neither fear nor despair, but rather be stalwart, look ahead, carry on with our serving the Lord, and sing Psalm 30.

✧ Saint Augustine makes a very lengthy reflection about this verse. He begins by stating that the worst enemies of the Church are bad Christians, and he refers us to the words of the Prophet Ezekiel (Ezekiel 15:2-5). It is they who by their disgraceful living make Christ "*an object of reproach*". It would have been better that they never knew Christ than to know Him and to reject and betray Him (see 2 Peter 2:21, 22). He further refers us to 1 John 2:19. The situation is lamentable because those who might approach Christ are repelled by the bad example. Thus, Christ and all who are faithful become tarred by the same brush of the reprobates. He says that the only antidote can be to take care never to see evil in the neighbour.

✧ About "*enemies*" : see the note about "*enemies*" on verse 9.

✧ About "*reproach*" : Cassiodorus comments that the innocent and immaculate Christ was reproached by those who were tainted by sin. They did this when they assailed Him with false accusations, and they accused Him of being both a demon-possessed Samaritan (John 8:48), and a godless Sabbath-breaker (John 9:16).

✧ In this regard, Father P Reardon refers us to Mark 15:29-32.

✧ See the note about "*reproach*" on Psalm 21:7.

✧ About "*neighbours*" : see the note about "*neighbour*" on Psalm 11:3.

✧ About "*fear*" : this expression, "*a fear*", suggests being a source or cause of "*fear*".

✧ See the notes about "*fear*" on Psalms 13:5 ; 14:4.

✧ About "*beholding*" : see the note about "*beholding*" on Psalm 21:8.

✧ About "*those ... from me*" : see Psalm 37:12.

✧ About "*fled*" : Saint Augustine explains that because the beholders could not in any way perceive the inward and invisible hope in the Prophet David or in Christ, they ran away and sought to depend on tangible material things.

✧ See the note about "*flee*" on Psalm 10:1 ; see also Mark 14:50.

13 I have been forgotten from the heart, just as if dead./ I have become just as a vessel destroyed,

V 13 About "*forgotten*" : see Ecclesiastes 9:5. See the note about "*forgetting*" (human) on Psalm 9:18.

✧ About “heart” : see the note about “heart” on Psalm 4:3.

✧ About “dead” (adjective) : see also the note about “dead” (noun) on Psalm 87:5.

✧ About “a vessel destroyed” : Bishop Theodoret of Cyrrhus elaborates on the treatment of both the Prophet David and Christ, as he says that the one speaking is given up for lost and has passed out of memory, just as does any cast-aside broken vessel, or an entombed corpse. He notes that the destruction of the vessel both emphasises and explains the “forgetting”.

✧ Cassiodorus draws our attention to the similarity between heretics and those who crucified Christ in that both try to subject Christ to their will and plots. They both ignore and forget who He is. When Jesus died, those who crucified Him considered that He was done away with despite all the dignity, patience and love He had demonstrated previously.

✧ See the note about “potter’s vessel” on Psalm 2:9 ; see Ecclesiastes 12:6 ; Jeremiah 48:38 (Masoretic text only).

✧ About “destroyed” : see the note about “destroy” on Psalm 5:7.

14 for I heard the blame of many sojourning round about./ When they gathered together against me,/ they took counsel to seize my soul.

V 14 About “for I heard ... round about” : Saint Augustine comments that the negative criticism levelled against us by those who live near to us find their source in the reaction of the critics to the bad behaviour of bad Christians. Their offending behaviour is perceived by the critics as being the way all Christians behave, and they cannot see the good behaviour of true Christians. He further explains that others seem to prefer to follow circuitous paths rather than to follow the Prophet David and Christ on the straight path to the eternal homeland.

✧ Saint John of Kronstadt draws our attention to the great danger that lies in levelling blame against those who fall into sin, or against those who are rumoured to have fallen, and the yet the worse danger of spreading such blame. If a person should sin, it is not for us to accuse but rather to pray for the person and to support and encourage repentance. There is none who does not sin, even the greatest saints. It is poisonous for us to entertain rumours of sin in others, yet more poisonous to gossip, and even more deadly poisonous to imagine sin in others. This behaviour increases their own condemnation. It is always for us to intercede for others, and to support them on the right path. He refers us to Romans 14:4 : “Who are you to judge another’s servant? To his own master he stands or falls. Indeed, he will be made to stand, for God is able to make him stand”.

✧ See Jeremiah 20:10. See also the similar references in the Masoretic text of Jeremiah 6:25 ; 20:3, 10 ; 46:5 ; 49:29.

✠ About “*blame*” : this translates the Greek word ψόγος, *psogos*, which means “fault”, “censure”. This may refer (as a noun) to the actual responsibility for a fault, or to the rightful or wrongful imposition or application (as a verb) of this responsibility. Sometimes, such an accusation is levelled against someone in order to divert attention from the actual culprit.

✠ About “*sojourning*” : this is a verbal noun. See Habakkuk 3:16 (Matins Canticle 4) ; Psalms 54:16 ; 64:1 ; 118:54 ; 119:5. See also the note about “*sojourn*” on Psalm 5:5.

✠ About “*round about*” : Saint Augustine refers to the critics who live nearby the Christians, who encircle the Temple and pronounce their negative accusations, but who do not enter it. They are caught in their focus on cyclic time ; they are taken up by the concerns of the present time as though bound to a wheel. They are unwilling to enter the Temple ; they do not know the truth ; they are not concerned with eternity. He refers us to Psalm 11:9 ; 82:14.

✧ The Greek adverb’s root is in a word which means “circuit”, “cycle”. Alternative translations of the adverb might be “from all sides”, “all around”. Such encircling, together with “*sojourning*”, may well suggest an intentional surrounding.

✧ See the note about “*round about*” on Psalm 3:7.

✠ About “*gathered together*” : see the note about “*gathered together*” on Psalm 2:2.

✠ About “*took counsel*” : see Psalms 61:5 ; 70:10 ; 82:4, 6.

✠ About “*counsel*” : see the note about “*counsel*” on Psalm 1:1.

✠ About “*to seize*” : this infinitive is one of the translations of a Greek word of many applications which can mean “to take from” as well as “to seize”. Because of the context, this translation uses the meaning which means to take hold of (or possession of) something or someone suddenly and forcibly. Saint Augustine follows a similar meaning, and with it he makes his extension of understanding these words to describe the violent behaviour of those who refuse to enter the Church as they try to force the believers away from Christ.

✧ See 2 Moses 15:14, 15 (Matins Canticle 1) ; Psalm 47:7 ; Isaiah 26:11 (Matins Canticle 5).

✠ About “*soul*” : see the note on verse 8.

15 But as for me, I have hoped on You, O LORD./ I said : “You are my God”.

V 15 About this verse : Cassiodorus addresses this verse from the perspective of Christ, as the Incarnate Logos, the God-Man. In contrast with the enemies who trust in their own strength, and whose power is nonexistent, Christ hopes on the Lord God alone. Christ was well aware that His life and death are in the power of the Father.

✧ See John 10:18.

✧ About “*hoped*” : Saint Augustine emphasises the importance of putting our hope solely on the Lord, and not on humans or any other thing. Further, he stresses how crucial it is that we come to maturity in giving up and turning away from any other hope than the Lord, who is our only hope. [We may quickly recall the apostolic words of 1 Peter 2:2, which must be followed by those of 1 Corinthians 3:2 and Hebrews 5:12 in order to mature in the Lord.]

✧ Father P Reardon mentions that throughout this psalm there is an alternation of tenses between the past and the future. On the basis of our past experience of God’s love, we persevere through the present towards the future, with confidence in the reliability of His constant, loving, personal support and protection. He refers us to Romans 8:24.

✧ See the note about “*hoped*” on verse 2.

✧ About “*Lord*” : see the note on verse 2.

✧ About “*You are my God*” : Saint Augustine points out that the Prophet David makes this strong assertion because man-made gods do nothing ; human beings always willy-nilly fail. It is only the Lord who is always constant, always faithful, always true, and always and only God. [It also stresses the living and personal relationship between the Prophet David and the Lord.]

✧ See the note about “*You are my God*” on Psalm 21:11.

✧ About “*God*” : see the note on verse 3.

16 In Your hands are my lots ;/ rescue me from the hand of my enemies,/ and from those closely pursuing me.

V 16 About “*Your hands*” (of God) : see the note about “*Your hands*” on verse 6.

✧ About “*lots*” : Saint Augustine explains that this refers to the direction that has been given by God to our life. This direction is given only by God, who alone knows what is truly good and best for each of us. His will is also what is fair for us. Since “*lot*” generally refers to our portion or our inheritance, which is in fact God’s will for us, we sometimes discern God’s will for us by using the casting of “*lots*”. Saint Augustine gives us the example of the choosing of Matthias in Acts 1:21-26. He emphasises that there is grace in the “*lot*” in that it convey’s God’s love and His will, and because this “*lot*” is our inheritance. Simon Magus was rebuked in Acts 8:20-21 because he thought that it was able to be purchased. There is no accident in the “*lot*”.

✧ This word is used to translate the Greek word κλήρος, *klēros*. It may also mean “allotment”, “share”, “portion”, “inheritance”. See Psalms 67:14 ; 124:3. See also the note about “*cast lots*” on Psalm 21:19, where yet another meaning applies.

✧ Bishop Diodorus of Tarsus explains that “*lots*” refers to the variety of situations in our lives, both painful and joyful, tribulation and relief, and that the Lord is with us in His love in all.

✧ About “*rescue*” : see the note on verse 2.

✧ About “*hand*” (of enemies) : see the note about “*hands*” on Psalm 7:4.

✧ About “*enemies*” : Saint Augustine suggests that we all pray for our enemies. If we do not pray for our enemies, but rather bear rancour towards them, then we become like them, and we join them. When human enemies attack, they do so as agents of evil. He further explains that the spiritual enemies (the devil and his hosts) are treated differently, and we pray to be rescued from them. He reminds us of the words of the Apostle in Ephesians 6:12. Yet further, he associates bad and false Christians with the work of the dark powers, since they lead others astray into the darkness of unbelief. He also refers us to Ephesians 5:8.

✧ See the note about “*enemies*” on verse 9.

✧ About “*closely pursuing*” : see the note about “*closely pursue*” on Psalm 7:6.

17 Make Your Face shine on Your bond-servant ;/ save me in Your mercy.

V 17 About “*make Your Face shine*” : Saint Augustine explains, with reference to Psalm 42:1, that this is a request to be so illumined [see Wisdom 5:6] as to enable one to be a true and faithful servant of the Lord, to be as true grain, and not as mere chaff. [See Job 22:28.]

✧ See the note about “*the light of Your Face upon us*” on Psalm 4:7

✧ About “*Face*” : see the note about “*face*” on Psalm 4:7.

✧ About “*bond-servant*” : see the note about “*bond-servant*” on Psalm 18:12.

✧ About “*save me in Your mercy*” : Cassiodorus tells us that these words reveal that the Prophet does not have confidence in himself, but rather in the Lord’s loving-kindness and compassion. In his humility, he can never be sated with the work of the Lord.

✧ About “*save*” : Saint Augustine explains that the Prophet David avoids any show of pride when he implores the Lord to save him because of His great mercy.

✧ See the note on verse 3.

✧ About “*mercy*” : see the note about “*mercy*” on verse 8.

18 O LORD, may I not be put to shame,/ for I have called upon You./ May the impious be put to shame,/ and may they be led down to Hadēs.

V 18 About “*Lord*”, see the note on verse 2.

About “*may I not be put to shame*” : see the note on verse 2.

✠ About “*put to shame*” : Saint Augustine explains that as the Prophet David does in this phrase and elsewhere, we must begin by addressing the Lord, and that this is how we may hope not to be put to shame. He shows us that in verse 2, eternal shame is implied.

❖ This phrase is generally understood to mean to be embarrassed, disgraced, dishonoured, humiliated. Eternal shame refers to result of the Last Judgement for the goats.

✠ About “*I have called upon You*” : Saint Augustine remarks that in his day, even the pagans invoked God in some manner and for various reasons, whereas the Prophet David’s invoking was in a focussed and specific manner. Further, he explains that “*call upon*” can and does imply that as we “*call upon*” the Lord, we also call Him into ourselves [in Latin, but it is also possible in Greek]. If he and we do so, such an invitation also implies that the home of the heart has already been made ready to receive Him. To pray otherwise is actually not to pray (Psalms 13:4 ; 52:5). He exhorts us all to call upon the Lord as does the Prophet David.

✠ About “*called upon*” : see the note about “*call ... saved*” on Psalm 17:4.

✠ About “*the impious*” : see the note about “*the impious*” on Psalm 1:1.

✠ About “*be put to shame*” : see the note about “*be put to shame*” on Psalm 6:11.

✠ About “*led down to Hadēs*” : see 1 Kingdoms 2:6 (Matins Canticle 3) ; Psalms 29:4 ; 48:15 ; 54:16 ; 87:4 ; 113:25 ; 138:8 ; 140:7.

✠ About “*Hadēs*” : see the note about “*Hadēs*” on Psalm 6:6.

19 Let the deceitful lips be speechless,/ which speak lawlessness against the righteous one in pride and contempt.

V 19 About “*let ... speechless*” : Saint Augustine explains that these words of the Prophet David have an application first in the life of Christ and then in the Church. The scorn of those who scoffed at Christ at the Crucifixion is perpetuated until now by those who are stubborn in their disbelief. This scorn of Christ is at the same time scorn and rejection of the Lord God, and of the Church, together with her members. Nevertheless, because Christ is incarnate Truth, this scorn is empty and ineffectual. The scornful sneering

must however be endured until that Day of Judgement, when the Lord will reveal the Truth. He refers us to the Wisdom of Solomon 5:1-5.

✧ Evagrius of Pontus encourages one prone to deceit to cease speaking, since deceit is conveyed through words. Thus, the habit may be neutralised.

✧ About *"deceitful lips"* : see the note about *"deceitful lips"* on Psalm 11:3.

✧ About *"deceitful"* : see the note about *"deceitful"* on Psalm 5:7.

✧ About *"lawlessness"* : see the note about *"lawlessness"* on Psalm 5:5.

✧ About *"righteous one"* : see the note about *"the righteous one"* on Psalm 5:13, and the note on Psalm 30:2.

✧ About *"pride"* : see the notes about *"pride"* on Psalm 16:10. See *"excessively proudly"* in verse 24.

✧ About *"contempt"* : see Psalms 106:40 ; 118:22 ; 122:3, 4.

20 How great is the multitude of Your loving-kindness, O LORD,/ which You have hidden for those fearing You,/ and wrought for those hoping on You in the presence of the sons of Men.

V 20 About *"loving-kindness"* : see the note about *"loving-kindness"* on Psalm 13:1.

✧ About *"Lord"* : see the note on verse 2.

✧ About *"have hidden"* : Saint Gregory of Nyssa addresses the hiddenness of God's abundant goodness. It is not always evident in this present life. To perceive it requires hope, and unbelief makes it imperceptible. Were it blatantly perceptible, there could be no objection of unbelievers, since it would be so obvious. In the age to come, we will be able to see clearly what at present we know only by faith and hope.

✧ Saint Augustine demonstrates the wonder and multitude of God's love for us in that He constantly keeps covert His ever-present and ever-active love for us, so that having tasted its sweetness, we will be enticed towards a purer love for Him. In the more perfect personal encounter is revealed yet greater sweetness.

✧ Bishop Theodoret of Cyrrhus suggests that the Lord hides His loving-kindness as an enticement for those who have come to love Him in order to draw them into a yet deeper and more fruitful relationship of love with Him.

✧ Archimandrite Lazarus (Moore) draws our attention to the phrase *"hidden for"*, as he explains that the Supreme Goodness, that is God, is hidden in all things. Heaven is likewise hidden everywhere. *"Seek and you will find"* (Matthew 7:7). God is hidden in order to be found. We may

likewise understand that the apparent defeat and shame of the Cross is in fact the supreme victory, blessing and grace of eternal redemption. He refers us to Psalms 73:12 ; 110:9.

✧ See the note about “*hid*” on verse 5. See also the note about “*conceal*” on verse 21.

✧ About “*those fearing You*” : see the note about “*fearing the Lord*” on Psalm 14:4.

✧ About “*those hoping on You*” : Saint Augustine explains that once those who have followed the example of Christ have come to undistorted and undistracted love for the Lord, their hope will be fulfilled with overflowing love and life in the love of the Lord.

✧ About “*hoping*” : see the note about “*hoped*” on verse 2.

✧ About “*in the presence of the sons of Men*” : Saint Augustine encourages us that once we have come to a mature and loving relationship with the Lord, we must share it by the manner in which we live amongst those around us so that they may have an opportunity to encounter the Lord also.

✧ About “*sons of men*” : see the note about “*sons of men*” on Psalm 4:3.

21 You will conceal them in a secret place of Your Face,/ away from the stirring of Men ;/ You will shelter them in Your tent,/ away from the contradiction of tongues.

V 21 About this verse : Saint Gregory of Nyssa reminds us that we are helped by God’s love and goodness in ways that are not clearly seen in this life ; but our hope is in Him in the life which is to come. Until then, our faith reassures us.

✧ About “*conceal*” : this translates the Greek word κατακρύπτω, *katakryptō*, which means “cover over”, “hide away”.

✧ See the note about “*have hidden*” on verse 20.

✧ About “*secret place of Your face*” : Saint Augustine explains that this place is in fact in the presence of God. He refers us to verse 3 of this psalm. He, Himself, is our protection. It is crucial that we therefore purify our hearts. It is in so doing that we allow Him to dwell in us, and that we dwell in Him, both in this life and in the next.

✧ Metropolitan Bartholomew (Anania) suggests that this means “the secret of Your presence”. This secret may be the sacramental presence, the Altar of the Lord, or the mystical experience where God is present and remains mystery.

✧ About “*secret place*” : see the note about “*secret place*” on Psalm 17:12.

✧ About “*Face*” : see the note about “*face*” on Psalm 4:7.

✠ About “*stirring*” : this word implies a certain amount of disordered commotion (perhaps muddying of water), not mere movement.

✧ See the note about “*stirred up*” on Psalm 2:5.

✠ About “*shelter*” : see the note about “*shelter*” on Psalm 16:8.

✧ Arnobius the Younger assures us that although the righteous suffer trials in this age, perseverance brings joy and consolation in the future, in the New Jerusalem on high.

✠ About “*tent*” : Saint Augustine tells us that the “*tent*” is the Church, in which we are protected. The Church is still in the midst of its progress through life towards Heaven.

✧ See the note about “*tent*” on Psalm 14:1.

✠ About “*contradiction of tongues*” : Saint Augustine explains that this refers not only to the many contrary opinions of human beings, which are often accompanied by falsehood, but also to the opinions which people hold which are contrary to the teachings and the truth of Christ. It is under God’s care that we are protected from the confusion of contradictory opinions. He reminds us that we are shielded by being within the Church.

✠ About “*contradiction*” : see the note about “*contradiction*” on Psalm 17:44.

22 Blessed be the LORD ;/ for He has made wonderful His mercy in a fortified city.

V 22 About “*blessed*” : see the note about “*blessed*” on Psalm 17:47.

✧ See also the note about “*bless*” on Psalm 5:13.

✠ About “*Lord*” : see the note on verse 2.

✠ About “*wonderful*” : see the note about “*made wonderful*” on Psalm 4:4.

✠ About “*mercy*” : see the note about “*mercy*” on verse 8.

✠ About “*fortified city*” : Bishop Theodoret of Cyrrihus compares the Lord’s loving protection of us to the strong protecting fortifications which surround a walled city on every side.

✧ Cassodorus considers this city to be a metaphor for the walled city of Jerusalem which has rested as a Temple of Faith in the midst of the nations. The surrounding nations have had available to them the principles of the Christian life, experience and faith. From Jerusalem, all those around were watered by the springs of heavenly life stemming from Christ. In this city, our Saviour walked, taught, healed, suffered, died, and rose again, and from this city have mighty mysteries emanated.

✧ See Psalms 59:11 ; 107:11 ; Proverbs 21:21. See also Psalm 140:3.

✧ About “city” : see Psalms 47:2, 3, 9 ; 59:11 ; 107:11 ;

23 But as for me, I said when I was beside myself :/ “I have been cast away from the sight of Your eyes”./ Because of this, You heard the voice of my supplication,/ when I cried out to You.

V 23 About “beside myself” : see the note about “beside himself” on verse 1.

✧ About “I have been cast ... eyes” : Saint Augustine draws a link between this sense of disconnexion and the words in Matthew 14:26-32. He shows us that the Apostle Peter did manage to walk upon the water as long as his focus was on the Lord. However, when he was distracted by the tempest about him, it was as though he altogether forgot that the Lord was there. He was overcome by fear, and he sank in the waters. It was only when he came to his senses and returned his focus to the Lord that he remembered that the loving Lord was standing there before him.

✧ Saint Poemen the Great, in describing his spiritual condition, describes his sense that he had “thrown into the place where Satan is thrown”.

✧ Bishop Theodoret of Cyrrhus draws our attention to the fact that the Prophet David’s sin caused a rupture of communication and harmony with the Lord, and it made a sort of separation between him and the Lord. He felt that he was far from the Lord ; but he came to understand that the Lord took everything into account, and He did not despise him. Rather, He accepted him in repentance.

✧ Archimandrite Lazarus (Moore) cautions that if we accept the idea that we could in any way be separated from God, then we will enter into a delusion and even to madness. [It is not possible to be separated from God, whose love is everywhere.]

✧ Archimandrite Zacharias (Zachariou) says on the other hand that Archimandrite Sophrony, with Saint Silouan, calls this sense of distance from the Lord a “charismatic repentance”, because this sense in fact detaches Man from everything that is created, and it helps him to become attached to everything which is uncreated. In other words, it helps him to be the better attached to the Lord.

✧ About “sight of Your eyes” : see the note about “face” on Psalm 4:7.

✧ About “voice of my supplication” : see the note about “voice of my supplication” on Psalm 5:3. See also Psalm 144:19.

✧ About “cried out” : Saint Augustine reminds us that it was only after the Apostle Peter remembered that the Lord was there before him that he was able to cry out for help. It was at precisely this same moment that the Lord in His love was reaching out to take his hand and lift him up again.

✧ See the note about “*cried out*” and “*listened*” on Psalm 3:5. See also Lamentations 3:53-55.

24 Love the LORD, all you His holy ones ;/ for the LORD seeks out truth,/ and those acting excessively proudly does He requite.

V 24 About “*love the Lord*” : Saint Augustine exhorts us all to choose the Lord above all, so that we may truly become holy. He repeatedly asks us with determination to turn away from every evil and darkness and with determination to unite ourselves to the Lord’s love.

✧ Cassiodorus shows us that the Prophet David encourages us to love the Lord so that we may all love the Lord not as mere servants, but as friends [John 15:15]. Servants have fear for their lord, but friends have love.

✧ About “*Lord*” : see the note on verse 2.

✧ About “*holy ones*” : see the note about “*holy one*” on Psalm 4:4.

✧ About “*seeks out*” : see the note about “*seeking ... out*” on Psalm 9:11.

✧ About “*truth*” : see the note on verse 6.

✧ About “*excessively proudly*” : Metropolitan Bartholomew (Anania) explains that this phrase means literally, “those working with superfluous pride”.

✧ See the note about “*pride*” on verse 19.

✧ See Job 22:29 (Masoretic text only) ; Proverbs 29:23 ; 1 Peter 5:5.

✧ About “*requite*” : Saint Augustine encourages us to bear with those who insist on persisting in pride. He assures us that the Lord will “*requite*” them, but in His own time, not ours. He alone knows the hearts of all and the best time when He may act for the correction or straightening of each one. It is for Christians to be patient, and not to seek revenge, in imitation of the example of Christ, always with hope.

✧ See the note about “*requited*” on Psalm 7:5, and the note about “*requite*” on Psalm 17:21.

25 Take courage, and let your heart become strong,/ all you, hoping on the LORD.

V 25 About this verse : Cassiodorus explains that the Prophet David, having given us a taste of what he had come to know would happen with regard to the coming of Christ, now reminds us that we must not

lose hope on the Lord. Despite all the difficulties, trials and temptations that our Saviour faced, all had been prepared in advance, and He shared these things with His disciples. In and with Him, we face similar troubles. Nevertheless, the Lord Himself, the loving Lord, is our goal, and it is for us never to let go of our confidence in Him that He is always with us.

✧ Arnobius the Younger reminds us that, as shown in the previous verse, the Lord will judge us in righteousness and truth. Therefore, we ought to take strength from Him to persevere in hope.

✧ About “*take courage ... strong*” : see Psalm 26:14 ; see also 1 Corinthians 16:13.

✧ About “*courage*” : see Psalm 26:14 ; see also Psalm 67:7.

✧ About “*heart*” : see the note about “*heart*” on verse 13.

✧ About “*become strong*” : see the note about “*strengthen*” on Psalm 16:5.

✧ About “*strong*” : see the note about “*strong*” on Psalm 7:12.

✧ About “*hoping*” : see the note about “*hoped*” on verse 2.

✧ About “*Lord*” : see the note on verse 2.

O Most Good God,
in supplication, we prevail upon Your limitless tenderness ;
that, while we search for Your truth,
we may grind down the tumour of hateful pride. — Roman
