

PSALM 32

✠ This psalm is written in the form of a Hymn. It is averred that this is a true hymn. It has the clear marks of a hymn in that, in the Hebrew, the poetic metre is very regular, and the stanzas are clearly marked.

✧ See the note about “hymn” in the introduction to Psalm 8.

✠ This psalm is also identified as a Psalm of Praise.

✧ See the note about “psalm of praise” in the introduction to Psalm 8.

✠ This psalm (vv. 1, 22) is used as the Prokeimenon of the Sunday Divine Liturgy in Tone 1. It is used (vv. 1, 22) as the Prokeimenon of the Divine Liturgy on the Fourth Sunday of Pascha. It is used (vv. 6, 13) for the Alleluia Verses of the Divine Liturgy on Pentecost. It is used (vv. 1, 22) as the second Prokeimenon of the Wednesday Presanctified Divine Liturgy in the second week of Great Lent. It is used (v. 13) as an Alleluia Verse of the Divine Liturgy on the Feast of Pascha. It is used (v. 1) as the Communion Hymn of the Divine Liturgy on Saturdays, and for “general” feast-days of martyrs and great-martyrs and for some saints’ days.

✠ Metropolitan Bartholomew (Anania) explains to us that as a whole, the psalm is an introduction (vv. 1-3), the body itself (vv. 4-19), and the conclusion (vv. 20-22). The body includes two themes : the work of God in creation and the work of God in history. In turn, the two themes are treated in three parts : the word of God (vv. 4-9), the counsel of God (vv. 10-12) and the eye of God (vv. 13-19).

✠ Saint Athanasius recommends that we sing Psalm 32 at any time when a group of good and upright (righteous) people wish to sing together.

“Hymn on the creation, and on the redemption”

“The new song of victory and heavenly earthquake”

“Praise of God’s perfection in word and work”

1 By David.

[Ἀγαλλιᾶσθε, δίκαιοι Exultate, justi]

Exult in the LORD, O you righteous ;/ praise befits the upright.

V 1 About the Inscription : in the Masoretic (Hebrew) text, there is no Inscription.

✠ About “*exult ... upright*” : Saint Basil the Great indicates that the righteous “*exult in the Lord*” freely, not from any self-interest, and not merely when personal and family conditions are good. This exultation is the natural expression of the loving communion with the Lord of immeasurable Beauty, Goodness, Joy and Wisdom, which sustains in everything those who contemplate Him. Because of the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, this joy, this exultation, is constantly present (see Galatians 5:22). The Lord is able to embrace and to contain all the righteous, and those who are in Him may draw joy to their hearts from the Source.

✧ Saint Augustine of Hippo explains that the psalm encourages us to dance for joy (*exult*) in the Lord, whose joy is unending. The joy of the righteous is in Him unceasing also. Although the unrighteous seem to dance for joy in the world, this apparent joy comes to an end. The most fitting exultation is praising the Lord, since it brings us into closer harmony with Him. Saint Augustine of Hippo cites a saying : “One is pleasing to God when one finds God pleasing to oneself”. By citing Psalm 33:2, he reminds us that our praise should continue at all times.

✧ Although this psalm is independent, it nevertheless continues directly (through paraphrase) from Psalm 31:11.

✠ About “*exult*” : see the note about “*exult*” on Psalm 2:11.

✠ About “*Lord*” : see the note about “*Lord*” on Psalm 1:2.

✠ About “*righteous*” : Saint Augustine of Hippo makes a parallel between righteousness and faith, as the Apostle Paul wrote in Romans 1:17. He is careful to exhort us not to be too quick to deny righteousness in ourselves, lest we suggest that we have no faith. He encourages us therefore to live in accordance with the famous saying, “As God wills”.

✧ See the note about “*the righteous*” on Psalm 1:5, and the note on Psalm 30:2.

✠ About “*praise befits the upright*” : Saint Augustine of Hippo shows us that “*the upright*” are those who conform their hearts to the Will of God. When they are disturbed by human frailty, the Divine Tranquillity consoles them. Although they may at first desire something which appears to their benefit, when they recognise that the Lord has a better provision, they embrace His perfect provision. The Lord demonstrated in His earthly service how our lives ought to be lived, which is summarised in His petition, “nevertheless, not as I will, but as You will” (Matthew 26:39). He enables us to know and to follow His straight path. It is thus that we may be “*upright*”, and not be warped but aligned with Him.

✠ About “*praise*” : see the note about “*praise*” on Psalm 8:3.

✠ About “*the upright*” : see the note about “*the upright*” on Psalm 7:11.

2 Confess the LORD on the lyre ;/ on the ten-stringed psaltery chant to Him.

V 2 About “*confess*” : see the note about “*confess*” on Psalm 6:6.

✠ About “*Lord*” : see verses 4, 5, 6, 8, 10, 11, 12, 18, 20, 22 ; see the note about “*Lord*” on Psalm 1:2.

✠ About “*lyre*” : Saint Basil the Great comments that it is necessary that, since we have soiled our bodies through sinning against God, we first cleanse our bodies. Thus, in contrast to the ways in which we have strayed from the Lord, it is for us to act in an opposite manner which is pleasing to the Lord. It is necessary to confess our sin, and to be cleansed and healed. This is, as it were, praising God on the “*lyre*”. Then we will become worthy to play to God on the “*ten-stringed psaltery*”. Cassiodorus affirms the same.

✧ Saint Augustine of Hippo describes the “*lyre*” as having as a base a hollow, drum-like sounding-board with a vaulted back somewhat resembling a tortoise-shell. The strings are stretched across this chamber, and they are plucked. The resonance is given by the cavity. He gives the Latin word *cithara*. He distinguishes between the sounding-board of the “*lyre*” at the bottom, and that of the “*psaltery*” at the top. The one who plays the “*lyre*”, that is, the strings of one’s heart, praises God through all the adversities that are experienced, because of trusting in God.

✧ According to the dictionaries, this word is the closest English word for the Greek κιθάρα, *kithara*. Sometimes translated “*harp*” (which is a relative, of a different shape), this instrument would have been of a triangular or “U” shape, and would have had seven strings, fixed at the top to a crossbar. Another instrument closely related (and also having seven strings) was the φόρμιγξ, *phorminx*, the oldest known Greek stringed instrument. It was used especially in ancient Greece. Modern instruments of this type are found mainly in East Africa. Although Saint Augustine of Hippo does not mention it, the “*lyre*” had two hollow arms projecting out of its base, which were joined by a cross-bar. The strings were stretched from this to the base. What the saint describes (lacking the projecting arms) would be much more like a zither. “*Lyre*” is not a synonym for “*psalterion*”.

✧ See Psalms 42:4 ; 56:9 ; 70:22 ; 80:3 ; 91:4 ; 97:5 ; 107:3 ; 146:7 ; 150:3.

✠ About “*psaltery*” : Saint Basil the Great explains that to be able to play on the “*psaltery*” to the Lord, and to contemplate the higher things, it is necessary first to have been cleansed of our rebellious ways so that we can become ourselves in harmony with the Lord.

✧ Saint Augustine of Hippo reminds us that the sounding-board of the “*psaltery*” is at the top, and that this reminds us to allow our thoughts to be drawn upwards. Thus, with its ten strings, it symbolises the Ten Commandments, the Decalogue, the gifts of Divine wisdom which were given to us. As the Prophet writes, we can at all times praise the Lord together with both instruments. We may do so whether we are passing through adversity or periods of blessing.

✧ According to Cassiodorus, the “*psaltery*” is a *psalterion*, a harp-like musical instrument whose sounding power is at the top, from where descend the ten strings. The strings represent the five senses of the body combined with the five of the spirit, which must all praise the Lord.

✧ This word translates the Greek word ψαλτήριον, *psaltērion*, which means a stringed instrument that is plucked with the fingers, or with a plectrum. Psalmody, as in the words of this psalm itself,

implies the singing of poetry to the accompaniment of this instrument, which is here and in other texts described as having ten strings. This accounts also for the use of the word “*on*”. This word is not a synonym for “*lyre*”.

✧ See Psalms 91:3 ; 143:9 (*ten-stringed psaltery*) ; see also Psalms 48:5 ; 56:9 ; 80:3 ; 107:3 ; 149:3 ; 150:3 ; 151:2 (*psaltery*).

✧ About “*chant*” : see verse 3 ; see also the note about “*chant*” on Psalm 7:18.

3 Sing to Him a new song :/ chant beautifully to Him with a shout of joy ;

V 3 About “*sing*” : see the note about “*sing*” on Psalm 12:6.

✧ About “*new song*”: Saint Augustine of Hippo exhorts us to remove our old song since we have already learnt the new song. Only those who have become new can learn this song. This new song is the sharing in the New Covenant, which is the Kingdom of Heaven. Our lives must be living this new song.

✧ See Psalms 39:4 ; 95:1 ; 97:1 ; 143:9 ; 149:1 ; Isaiah 42:10 ; Romans 6:4 ; 7:6 ; Apocalypse 5:9 ; 14:3.

✧ About “*chant ... joy*” : Saint Augustine of Hippo explains that this phrase shows us how we are to sing this new song. If we try diligently to sing well before human beings, how much more crucial it is that we sing this new song with the method that the Lord Himself gives us so that our singing may be beautiful and pleasing to Him.

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

✧ About “*shout of joy*” : Saint Basil the Great suggests that this shout is an inarticulate sound, similar to the shouts of warriors in combat side-by-side. He exhorts us to sing in harmony, in one mind and heart, and in Divine love.

✧ Saint Augustine of Hippo explains that this is the method of acceptable singing to the Lord. He uses the word “*jubilation*” to describe this singing, meaning a “*shout of joy*”. It is singing from the heart, a song which passes beyond words, just as the Lord is beyond words. The heart is no longer limited nor hemmed in by words or syllables, but it simply makes melody. It may even imply a whoop of joy.

✧ See the note about “*shout of joy*” on Psalm 26:6.

4 for upright is the Word of the LORD,/ and all His works are in faithfulness.

V 4 About “*upright is the Word of the Lord*” : Saint Augustine of Hippo explains that the Lord’s Word is so upright, that it is abhorrent to those who are not upright.

✠ About “*upright*” : see the note about “*upright*” on Psalm 18:9.

✠ About “*Word of the Lord*” : see the note on verse 6.

✠ About “*Word*” : with regard to this word, it is necessary to keep in mind the encounter of Moses with the Lord recorded in 1 Moses 12:7. In 1 Moses 15:1, there is an encounter with the “Word of the Lord”. The “Word of the Lord” is identified with the “Angel of the Lord” repeatedly in chapter 16. According to Saints Athanasius and Hilary of Poitiers, these encounters were revealed by the Holy Spirit as being with the Word of God. The word “angel” means “messenger”, which allows that the Angel of the Lord is the Word of God, since he alone reveals the Father, and the Father always speaks through His Word. This important fact is understood by the Fathers to be related also to the encounter of Moses with the “Angel of the Lord” in the Burning Bush (2 Moses 3:1-6). At that time, the “Angel of the Lord” identified Himself as “the God of your father – the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob”. He declares Himself clearly to be God as He speaks with the Voice of God. Therefore, the “Angel of the Lord” is the “Word of God” who speaks, and who reveals the will of the Father. This term is used in the time of the Old Covenant to refer to the Son of God Himself before He became Man, to the pre-eternal Christ, the Word of God, the One who speaks to people (see Isaiah 9:5). It is He who is “true God of true God”, who reveals the will of the Father. Moreover, during the whole encounter at the Burning Bush which remained unburnt, the Lord prepared us for the coming Incarnation. This is taught by Saints John of Damascus, Athanasius, John Chrysostom, Gregory the Theologian, and Ambrose of Milan. Referring to the continuation of this encounter on Mount Sinai, Saint Gregory of Nyssa shows that in 2 Moses 23:20, “My” refers to the Father, and “Angel” refers to the Son, and that these words were used to distinguish these two Persons.

✧ See the note regarding capitalisation of Divine attributes on Psalm 17:2, 3.

✧ See verse 6 ; see the notes about “*Word*” on Psalms 106:20 ; 118:25 ; see Psalms 118:41, 65, 89, 107, 154 ; 129:5. See the note about “*words*” on Psalm 7:1.

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

✠ About “*all His works are in faithfulness*” : Saint Basil the Great, expounding on these words, points out that all creation is revealing the invisible God to those with the eyes of faith. The heavens and their order are a guide to faith, as they reveal the “Craftsman”. The orderly arrangement of the earth does likewise. The wisdom of God is perceived through tangible, visible things, including ants, gnats, bees and even stones. For instance, the wisdom of the Creator is seen in the structure and functioning of the delicate stinger-apparatus of the bee, just as it is in the order of the heavens. Nothing happens at random, nor by chance ; all is done “*in faithfulness*”. He refers us to Matthew 10:29-30.

✧ Saint Augustine of Hippo explains the Lord's *"faithfulness"* as he refers us to 1 Corinthians 10:13 ; 2 Timothy 2:12. The Lord always delivers what He promises. Whatever good there is in us is His gift.

✧ About *"works"* : see the note about *"works"* (divine) on Psalm 8:4.

✧ About *"faithfulness"* : see the note about *"faithful"* on Psalm 18:8.

5 He loves mercy and fair-judgement ;/ of the mercy of the LORD, the earth is full.

V 5 About *"He loves mercy and fair-judgement"* : Saint Augustine of Hippo explains to us that both *"mercy"* and *"fair-judgement"* are necessary. Both are practiced by the Lord, and both are to be practiced by us likewise. The *"mercy"* which the Lord exercises always involves *"fair-judgement"*, and His *"fair-judgement"* always involves *"mercy"*. *"Mercy"* takes the priority, and *"fair-judgement"* will follow. It is now that the Lord calls for the repentance of those who have strayed. He is patient with them during the process. He always supports repentance. When they return, He forgives them. Indeed, forgiveness is an underlying criterion for understanding and living out these two virtues. He reminds us about the Lord's direction to us in Luke 6:37-38 : *"Forgive, and you will be forgiven ... For with the same measure that you use, it will be measured back to you"*. This very statement about the measures shows that *"mercy"* is involved in the Lord's *"fair-judgement"*. He reminds us also that repentance after the arrival of the Judgement Day is too late, and repentance will be sterile. He proposes that if we were the judge over a rich and a poor person in a case, and it was clear that the rich person was actually in the right, then (in obedience to 3 Moses 19:15) despite any sentimental concern for the poor, we could not collude with the wrong-doing, but be compelled to exercise righteous, *"fair-judgement"*. Otherwise, the poor person could be confirmed in dishonesty. However, afterwards, *"mercy"* could be exercised by mollifying and inclining the rich person to *"mercy"*.

✧ Bishop Diodorus of Tarsus writes that *"mercy and fair-judgement"* are typical of God, who shows mercy (love) to those who put their hope on Him, and He corrects those who depend on themselves.

✧ About *"mercy"* : Saint Basil the Great explains that the Lord, as Judge, compassionately wishes to show mercy. If He sees erring or straying, then as a kind physician He first tries gentle remedies. If He sees prideful and obstinate resistance in us, then as a prudent physician, He takes to surgery to remove the cancerous tumour of pride, in order to save us before it can kill us.

✧ Cassiodorus reminds us that we naturally love that which we frequently practice, and he shows us that the Lord constantly exercises *"mercy"*, as He is forbearing with sinners, as He patiently waits for blasphemers to repent and He demonstrates His kindness (see Matthew 5:45). He does, indeed love *"mercy"*. Cassiodorus urges us constantly to seek this *"mercy"*.

✧ See verses 18, 22 ; see the note about “*mercy*” on Psalm 5:8.

✧ About “*fair-judgement*” : see the note about “*fair-judgement*” on Psalm 1:5.

✧ About “*of the mercy ... full*” : Saint Augustine of Hippo poses the question about whether there is “*mercy*” in Heaven. He answers that there is no need of “*mercy*”, since there is no misery. Indeed, the earth is full of misery, so that the earth is even fuller of the Lord’s “*mercy*” than of the misery.

✧ See Psalm 118:64.

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

6 By the Word of the LORD were the Heavens made firm,/ and by the Spirit of His mouth, all the power of them,

V 6 About this verse : Saint Irenæus of Lyon explains that, as this verse shows, the Father created absolutely all that is (visible, invisible, sensible, intelligible) through His Son, the Word, and through the Holy Spirit. He reminds us that this is the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, above whom there is none other, and who is the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. That this verse reveals the Holy Trinity is pointed out in the writings of many Fathers, from Origen onwards.

✧ Saint Athanasius notes that in the words of this verse we see a glimpse of the Holy Trinity. Saint Athanasius also stresses that the Word refers to the Son of God.

✧ Saint Basil the Great insists that this verse strongly supports the unity of the Holy Trinity. He particularly insists that the Holy Spirit cannot be separated from the Father and the Son, and neither can the Word be separated. All three Persons are One and they act as One. The term “Word” does not refer to random words, nor does the term “Spirit” refer to mere vapour. The “Word” was in the beginning with God (John 1:1), and the Word established all that is. The Holy Spirit, proceeding from the Father, brings forth all His energy and power. The title of the Holy Spirit is evident through the activity of that Spirit. Nothing is made holy except through the action of the Holy Spirit. All three Persons act distinctly, and together, and as unity.

✧ Saint Hilary of Poitiers hastens to stress that the act of creation did not involve a process of deliberation and preparation over time on the part of the Lord, and certainly not an amassing of materials. There was no developing of a formula for creation. However, there could never be anything at all unless the Lord did act. All came into being by the the Breath of the Word of the Divine Mouth.

✧ Saint Augustine of Hippo points out that both the Heavens and the earth are in need of the Lord, because their very being depends upon Him. They could not possibly create themselves nor give themselves stability, and merely take supplementary strength from the Lord. All their being, all their substance, and all their strength come from the Lord. He also stresses the fact that all three

Persons of the Holy Trinity act in everything as one unity. They cannot be separated nor confused. It is crucial that we worship rightly and truly the Holy Trinity.

✧ Saint Jerome explains that in this verse, the Holy Trinity is clearly revealed. He underlines that all three Persons of the Holy Trinity are shown here to be together involved in the creation of all that is.

✧ Bishop Theodoret of Cyrrihus tells us that in the act of creation, no supplementary workers were required, nor was time involved ; but the Father simply speaks by the Word and the Holy Spirit. Bishop Theodoret reminds us of the Scriptural texts : 1 Moses 1:1-6 ; John 1:1-3.

✧ Cassiodorus, who teaches as do the other Fathers, also shows us that the Divine Unity is clearly expressed when the Prophet wrote “His mouth”, rather than the “their mouths” that grammarians might expect in such a sentence.

✧ Saint Clement of Alexandria laments the absurdity that some fall into error, back into paganism, and they worship the celestial bodies and other creatures of God’s making, rather than worshipping the Creator.

✧ See 1 Moses 1:6 ; 1:3-31 ; Nehemiah 9:6 ; Job 33:4 ; Proverbs 3:21 ; Isaiah 45:12 ; Judith 16:14 ; John 1:3 ; Acts 4:24 ; Hebrews 11:3 ; Apocalypse 14:7.

✧ About “*word*” : see the note about “*word*” on Psalm 7:1.

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

✧ About “*the Heavens*” : see the note about “*the Heavens*” on Psalm 2:4.

✧ About “*the Spirit*” : see Psalms 50:13, 14 ; 103:30 ; 118:131 ; 138:7 ; 142:10 ; 147:7.

7 gathering together the waters of the sea just as would a leather-bag,/
 putting the abysses in treasuries.

V 7 About this verse : Metropolitan Bartholomew (Anania) writes that this verse is an allusion to the miracle described in Isaiah 15 (particularly verse 9).

✧ The miracle referred to by the metropolitan and the Prophet Isaiah may be that in 4 Kingdoms 3 (particularly verses 22-23).

✧ About “*gathering ... sea*” : see 1 Moses 1:9 ; Psalm 103:9 ; Job 38:8 ; Wisdom of Sirach 39:17 ; Jeremiah 5:22.

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

✧ About “*leather-bag*” : the Greek word for “*leather-bag*” was used by Homer to mean “*wine-skin*”.

✠ About “*putting ... treasures*” : Saint Basil the Great refers us to Psalm 35:7 in which the abyss is compared with the Lord’s judgements. He explains that if we seem to wish to have questions answered, such as, “why are there wars” ; “why is the life a righteous person short and the life of a sinner long” ; “why does it seem that an unrighteous person thrives while a righteous person is afflicted” ; “why does a sinner seem to live long while a righteous person may die young” ; “why does a child die young” ; “why are there shipwrecks and earthquakes”. If we ask thus, then we must learn to accept the depths of the wisdom of the Lord. These depths are beyond our ability to comprehend ; but the Lord has promised that He will reveal these depths to the believers (Isaiah 45:3). It is once we are deemed worthy to see the Lord face to face (see 1 Corinthians 13:12) that we will be given the ability to comprehend these depths.

✧ Saint Augustine of Hippo explains that this phrase refers to the depths of God Himself. It is the Lord only who knows what to bring out from these depths and when and for what purpose. Saint Augustine of Hippo warns us that we ought never to be complacent about the calmness of the waters of life, and to dare to think that we cannot be touched by any harm. [We dare not so think because it is prideful thinking which removes us from the Lord’s protection.]

✠ About “*abysses*” : this refers to the deepest places, places which are considered to be immeasurably deep (which need not be only under water, but anywhere). It literally means “bottomless” and it may refer to the cosmic deep, an immeasurable space.

✧ See Psalms 35:7 ; 41:8 ; 70:20, 21 ; 76:17 ; 77:15 ; 103:6 ; 105:9 ; 106:26 ; 134:6 ; 148:7 ; Jonah 2:6 (Matins Canticle 6) ; Habakkuk 3:10 (Matins Canticle 4) ; Daniel 3:55 (Matins Canticle 7).

✠ About “*treasures*” : see 5 Moses (Deuteronomy) 32:34 (Matins Canticle 2) ; Psalm 134:7.

8 Let all the earth fear the LORD ;/ let all those dwelling in the world
 shudder because of Him ;

V 8 About this verse : Saint Athanasius gives this paraphrase, “May all living on earth be shaken from their former state, in which they served idols”.

✠ About “*all the earth*” : see the note about “*all the earth*” on Psalm 18:5. See also the note about “*world*” on Psalm 9:9.

✠ About “*the earth*” : see verse 14. See also the note about “*world*” on Psalm 9:9 (“*world*” and “*earth*” sometime appear together in the same verse or psalm, as in this psalm).

✠ About “*fear*” : Saint Augustine of Hippo states emphatically that there is none but the Lord whom we may “*fear*”. We ought not to fear any human being, animal, snake, or the devil. All creation is subject to the one, same Lord who created all.

✧ Cassiodorus reminds us that all things exist in the Lord and under His blessing, and everything He does is for the good. It is we that have been given the responsibility to live and act in the context of creation as His stewards. He reminds that we, however, are weak and prone to sins. It is this exhortation that is directed to us.

✧ See the note about “*fearing*” on Psalm 14:4.

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

✧ About “*shudder*” : see Psalms 95:9 ; 96:4 ; 113:7 ; Habakkuk 3:6 (Matins Canticle 4).

✧ This verb is sometimes translated as “*shake*” ; see the note about “*shaken*” on Psalm 12:5. See also Haggai 2:6.7 ; Ezekiel 38:20 ; Luke 21:18.

9 for He spoke, and they came to be ;/ He commanded, and they were created.

V 9 About this verse : Saint Gregory of Nyssa says that this psalm proclaims Him, who comes upon earth from Heaven. It is He who brought everything from non-being into being. It is He who maintains all things in being.

✧ About “*for He spoke ... were created*” : Saint John of Kronstadt explains to us that when we pray, we must keep in mind the power of the words of this prayer, and not to make any separation between the word itself and the act or fact it expresses. The Word and the Deed of the Lord are indivisible, as expressed in this phrase, and for us it must likewise be so. We praise and thank the Lord, and He receives both. The human body and soul are inseparable as is the human body from the shadow that it casts. When we admit divisions between word and deed, our prayer becomes fruitless because we make an unnatural distinction and separation. We then lack the faith which unites. He reminds us that at Creation, the Word of God called all that is from non-being into being (from nonexistence into existence). The Word of God is the deed and the act, and they are inseparable. Moreover, after bringing things into being, the Lord constantly supports each being. For the one who continually lives in this harmony, great wonders are completely possible [see Mark 16:17-18]. Saint John also exhorts us to avoid being put to shame by falling into trusting in money, food and other things more than in the Lord. Rather, let us shame the devil by our trust in the Lord. He adds that if an earthly king speaks an order and it is accomplished, then by far how much more is this so with the Lord of all Creation ?

✧ Saint Nikolaj (Velimirović) explains that action and word are identical. This is seen everywhere in the Scriptures. What is spoken is most clearly revealed in action.

✧ Metropolitan Bartholomew (Anania) writes that there is a very precise meaning to these words : He spoke, and they (things) have come into existence ; at His command, everything was organised, and some became rational. He cites Saint Basil the Great, who said that creation began with perfect

order, with God reigning in all things visible. Moreover, in the creation of the world God in no way exhausted His creative power : this can be extended endlessly, since all things come into being at the impulse of His will.

✧ See 1 Moses 1:3 ; Judith 16:14 ; Job 37:6 ; Isaiah 46:11 ; Acts 17:24.

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

✧ About “*created*” : this word translates the Greek ἐκτίσθησαν (ektisthēsan) (“*they were created*”), which is complementary to the previous verb, ἐγενήθησαν (egenēthēsan) (they came into being) ; see Psalms 88:13, 48 ; 101:19 ; 103:30 ; 148:5. This verse is repeated in the second part of Psalm 148:5.

10 The LORD disperses the counsels of the nations ;/ He sets at nought the thoughts of the peoples,/ and He sets at nought the counsels of the princes.

V 10 About this verse : Saint Basil the Great exhorts us to turn immediately to the Lord in the face of any threats from anyone. The Lord makes the counsels of the great to be as nothing. For instance, he says, when the persecutors of Christ thought that they were destroying Him upon the Cross, instead, He, the King of Glory, was renewing humanity. In the Resurrection, all the plots and the plans of kings, princes, Pilate, his soldiers, the high-priests and scribes were all brought to nought and all their devices were destroyed.

✧ Evagrius of Pontus likewise explains (with reference to 1 Timothy 2:4) that all plans and propositions and thinking of all sorts and ranks of people which are contrary to God’s will are brought to the test by the Lord. He desires that all come to salvation and Truth.

✧ This verse shows the contrast between the Truth of the Lord and the fallen and deceitful ideas of humans who set themselves apart from Him.

✧ See Nehemiah 4:9; 2 Kingdoms 17:14; Job 5:12; Proverbs 19:21; Luke 1:51.

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

✧ About “*disperses*” : this word, διασκεδάζει (diaskedazei), is used in this psalter to translate several Greek synonyms. See 5 Moses (Deuteronomy) 32:8, 26 ; Psalms 43:12 ; 52:6 ; 88:34 ; 118:126.

✧ About “*counsels*” : see verse 11 ; see the note about “*counsel*” on Psalm 1:1.

✧ About “*nations*” : see verse 12 ; see the note about “*nations*” on Psalm 2:1.

✧ About “*sets at nought*” : see the note about “*setting at nought*” on Psalm 14:4.

✧ About “*thoughts*” : see verse 11 ; see the note about “*thought*” on Psalm 75:11.

✧ About “*peoples*” : see verse 12 ; see the note about “*peoples*” on Psalm 2:1.

✧ About “*princes*” : see the note about “*princes*” on Psalm 23:7.

11 But the counsel of the LORD remains unto the age,/ the thoughts of His heart unto generation and generation.

V 11 About this verse : Saint Augustine of Hippo shows us that the two parts of this verse are actually two different ways of expressing the same subject, and that the repetition is a poetic repetition for the sake of emphasis. Nevertheless, he cautions us not to believe that the Lord ponders matters or takes advice or plans in the manner of human beings. This expression is used simply to help us to begin to comprehend. He refers us to Ephesians 1:4.

✧ About “*counsel*” : Cassiodorus suggests that we interpret “*counsel*” as referring to the preparation for the Incarnation for our salvation of the Son of God. This “*counsel*” is eternal and is never dissolved because the Lord’s victorious Death has removed eternally the destruction brought about by the devil.

✧ See Proverbs 19:21 ; Isaiah 46:10 ; Malachi 3:6 ; Hebrews 6:17 ; 13:8.

✧ About “*counsel*” : see the note on verse 10.

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

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

✧ About “*thoughts of His heart ... generation*” : Both Saint Augustine of Hippo and Bishop Theodore of Mopsuestia suggest that this indicates the irrevocability of the decisions of the Lord.

✧ About “*thoughts*” : see the note on verse 10.

✧ About “*heart*” : see verses 15, 21 ; see the note about “*heart*” on Psalm 4:3.

✧ About “*generation*” : see the note about “*generation*” on Psalm 9:27.

12 Blessed is the nation whose God is the LORD,/ the people whom He chose out as an inheritance for Himself.

V 12 About “*blessed ... nation*” : see Psalm 143:15.

✠ About *"blessed"* : Saint Augustine of Hippo reminds us that all people fundamentally wish to be "happy" [that is to say, living a joyful and peaceful life and having enough to live]. Whether they do good or bad, they wish to escape misery. However, only those who wish to be righteous are those who will come to blessedness. If we wish to be better, then we must seek what is better than we are, and this is to be found within, in our soul [he refers to God whom we meet in our heart]. If we desire God, He has already heard us, and He has already blessed and helped us. He gives Himself to each of us in such a way that we each have a unique and loving and life-giving relationship with Him. It is He who makes us better.

✧ Bishop Theodoret of Cyrrhus tells us that we ought to be careful to call *"blessed"* not merely those who enjoy wealth, but everyone who receives the Lord's blessing and nurture.

✧ See the note about *"blessed"* on Psalm 1:1, and on Psalm 5:13.

✠ About *"nation"* : see the note on verse 10 ; there is a clarification here that *"nation"* and *"people"* are synonymous, in contrast to the modern notion of *"nation"*.

✠ About *"God"* : see the note about *"God"* on Psalm 3:3.

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

✠ About *"people"* : see the note on verse 10.

✠ About *"chose out"* : see Psalms 64:5 ; 77:67, 68, 70 ; 104:26 ; 131:13 ; 134:4.

✠ About *"inheritance"* : Saint Augustine of Hippo explains that through the longing of love and hope, we may claim that God is ours. He is our Salvation. We may lean on Him. God is our possession because He has already made us His possession, His *"inheritance"*, and our blessedness comes from His own blessedness.

✧ See the notes about *"inheritance"* on Psalm 2:8.

13 From Heaven has the LORD attentively looked :/ He has seen all the sons of Men.

V 13 About this verse : Saint Basil the Great reminds us that the Lord is not distant from us, but rather, eternally present. The Lord is constantly watching everything that we are, that we do, that we think. He looks on and at every person, about whom nothing is hidden, including in our hearts. He is aware of everything, and He watches us with loving attention.

✧ Saint Hilary of Poitiers writes that as the Lord looks upon us from Heaven, he does so with love. He adds that this looking involves not only the event of the Incarnation of the Word of God, but also the second advent at the consummation of all things.

✧ Cassiodorus adds that the Lord is not looking merely at our sins. Rather, He is seeing all that is good, and He is ready to forgive the sins, the faults, the failings, the weakness. In His correction of our faults, he urges us on to the good.

✧ About “*Heaven*” : see the note about “*the Heavens*” on Psalm 2:4.

✧ About “*Lord*” : see the note about “*Lord*” on Psalm 1:2.

✧ About “*attentively looked*” : Saint Hilary of Poitiers underlines the loving manner in which the Lord looks upon His creatures, the “*sons of Men*”. He does not look upon us with a view to punishment. Saint Hilary draws our attention to the words of Psalm 50, especially verses 12-14, in which the Prophet-King David asks the Lord to purify, strengthen, and renew him, and he asks for the joy of the Lord’s love.

✧ See verse 14 ; see the note about “*look attentively*” on Psalm 12:4.

✧ Saint Augustine of Hippo writes that from the souls of the righteous, the Lord looks mercifully upon all who would rise to newness of life.

✧ Bishop Theodoret of Cyrrhus refers us to the wording of Psalm 13:2. He adds, with reference to the following two verses, “I said the God of all looks down, he is saying, not as ignorant and anxious to learn, but as judging and sentencing. How could the one who made the soul be ignorant of its movements ? He put *hearts* for ‘reason’, you see”.

✧ See verse 14 ; see also Job 28:24 ; Psalm 13:2 ;

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

14 From His prepared habitation has He attentively looked upon all those dwelling on the earth :

V 14 About “*prepared habitation*” : Saint Augustine of Hippo suggests that this refers to the human nature which He took up. He also reminds us that He looks upon us with mercy.

✧ About “*attentively looked*” : see the note on verse 13.

15 having alone fashioned their hearts,/ understanding all their works.

V 15 The adverbial phrase translated “*alone*” may also suggest the sense of “*especially*” in a case such as this, which would also imply “*each*” regarding the hearts.

✦ Saint John Chrysostom emphasises that it is the Lord alone, who alone created our hearts and perceives all our deeds, who is able to cure our hearts. He alone is able to enter our conscience, to touch our thoughts, and to strengthen our souls. Therefore, even if we are greatly disturbed and troubled by the attacks of others, we cannot be injured by them.

✠ About “*fashioned their hearts*” : Bishop Theodore of Mopsuestia notes that some commentators suggest that “*hearts*” (or souls) may have been created separately from the body. However, he says that in referring to the heart, he refers to the whole creature.

✦ Saint John Chrysostom emphasises that only the Lord, the Knower of Hearts, who created our hearts, can heal our hearts. Without Him, any human attempts to do so are ineffectual. Moreover, when He heals and strengthens our heart, it becomes unshakeable.

✧ Evagrius of Pontus reminds us that contrary to what many believe, the demons do not know our hearts. Rather, it is only the Lord, the Knower of Hearts, who is so aware.

✠ About “*understanding all their works*” : Bishop Theodoret of Cyrrhus asks rhetorically how the Lord, who created us, could ever not understand our thoughts and our deeds.

✠ About “*hearts*” : see the note about “*heart*” on verse 11.

⌘ About “*understanding*” : see the note about “*understanding*” on Psalm 31:1. See the note about “*understand*” on Psalm 2:10.

⌘ About “works” : see the note about “works” (human) on Psalm 9:17.

16 A king is not saved through much power,/ and a giant shall not be saved
in the multitude of his strength ;

V 16 About the first phrase : Metropolitan Bartholomew (Anania) points out that some texts intend the meaning that the army does not save much. [See Judges 7:7.]

✠ About this verse, and verse 17 : Bishop Theodoret of Cyrrihus explains, “We have come to know through experience that one should trust not in strength of body, nor in bravery of spirit, nor in speed of mount, nor in number of subjects. Sennacherib abounded in all of these, all to no avail, and instead he suffered ruin”.

✧ Hesychius, Priest of Jerusalem, emphasises that only help sent from Heaven can help us and save us. He cites both the events with Moses and Pharaoh, and David and Goliath as concrete examples.

✠ About “*saved*” : see the note about “*save*” on Psalm 3:8.

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

17 unreliable is a horse for salvation :/ in the multitude of its power, it shall not be saved.

V 17 About this verse : Arnobius the Younger cites as an example the Canticle of Moses (2 Moses (Exodus) 15:1) in the context of the Exodus from Egypt.

✠ About “*unreliable*” : Metropolitan Bartholomew (Anania) explains that this word means “false”, or “pseudo”, meaning that the horse is strong only in appearance. He refers us to Proverbs 21:31.

✠ See the note by Saint Nikolaj (Velimirović) on Psalm 33:8.

✠ About “*salvation*” : see the note about “*salvation*” on Psalm 3:9.

✠ About “*saved*” : see the note about “*save*” on Psalm 3:8.

18 Behold, the eyes of the LORD are upon those fearing Him/ – those hoping on His mercy –

V 18 About this verse, and verse 17, Bishop Theodoret of Cyrillus explains, “‘Godliness is the provider of all goods’, he is saying. It draws down Divine Providence, and it is an obstacle to the onset of death and need, while bestowing the abundance of good things. Now, it is likely that at the time of that awful siege, the besieged experienced a shortage of necessities ; then they were liberated from that calamity by the overthrow of the enemy”.

✠ Saint Basil the Great reminds us that when we do not trust in ourselves, but hope only on the Lord, we avoid being overcome by grief in the hope that He will provide for us.

✠ About “*Behold ... fearing Him*” : see Wisdom of Sirach 15:19.

✠ About “*fearing*” : see the notes about “*fear*” on Psalms 13:5 ; 14:4.

✠ About “*the eyes of the Lord*” : see the note about “*Your eyes*” on Psalm 5:6.

✠ About “*Lord*” : see the note about “*Lord*” on Psalm 1:2.

✠ About “*hoping on His mercy*” : Saint Augustine of Hippo reminds us that if we seek salvation, it can only come through “*hoping on His mercy*”.

✠ About “*hoping*” : see verses 21, 22. See the note about “*hope*” on Psalm 4:6. See also the notes on Psalm 30:2, 15 ; 32:22.

✠ About “*mercy*” : see the notes about “*mercy*” on Psalms 5:8, 32:5.

19 to rescue their souls from death,/ and to nourish them in famine.

V 19 About this verse : Cassiodorus explains that these two phrases represent two prayers of the faithful person, namely, that the Lord at the Judgement rescue us from death, and the power of the devil ; and that in the meantime, freeing us from the domination of sin, He nourish us with spiritual food.

✠ About “*rescue their souls from death*” : see Job 5:20.

✠ About “*rescue*” : see the note about “*rescue*” on Psalm 6:5.

✠ About “*souls*” : see verse 20 ; see the note about “*soul*” on Psalm 3:3.

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

✠ About “*nourish them in famine*” : see Psalm 36:19 ; Proverbs 10:3.

✠ It is made clear in these verses that victory comes only from the Lord.

20 Our soul waits for the LORD,/ for He is our Helper and Protector ;

V 20 About this verse, verse 21, and verse 22, Bishop Theodoret of Cyrrihus comments, “This is an extreme expression of rashness, and presumptuous, in the view of people of our time, whose hope reaches such a degree as to be bold enough to say, ‘Measure your mercy by my hope ?’ Yet the Lord taught this even in the Holy Gospels : ‘The measure you use will be the measure applied to you’ (Matthew 7:2).

Consequently, let us acquire hope that is perfect and sincere, and keep the rest of our life in accordance with our hope, so as to reap much mercy”.

✧ Cassiodorus reminds us that it is patience that produces faithful testimony, guards the blessings from above, and overcomes adversity through giving thanks.

✠ About “*soul*” : see the note on verse 19.

✠ About “*waits for the Lord*” : see the note about “*waiting for You*” on Psalm 24:3.

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

✠ About “*Helper*” : see the note about “*Helper*” on Psalm 9:10. See also the notes about “*Helper*” on Psalm 17:2, 3.

✠ About “*Protector*” : see the notes about “*Protector*” on Psalm 17:2, 3.

21 for in Him shall our heart be glad,/ and on His holy Name have we hoped.

V 21 About this verse : Arnobius the Yonger emphasises the importance of expressing our gladness in the Lord, since it is He who supports and helps us. He suggests that these words repeat the essence of the first words of this psalm.

✠ About "*shall our heart be glad*" : see Isaiah 66:14 ; John 16:22.

✠ About "*heart*" : see the note about "*heart*" on verse 11.

✠ About "*hoped*" see the note on verse 18.

22 May Your mercy, O LORD, be upon us,/ even as we have hoped on You.

V 22 About this verse : Saint Augustine of Hippo encourages us not to despair of anyone, as long as there is life. He suggests that if we remember what we, ourselves, have been like in the past, then we shall not despair of those who are now what we once were.

✠ About "*mercy*" : see the notes about "*mercy*" on Psalms 5:8, 32:5.

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

✠ About "*hoped*" : Father P Reardon explains that there are two sorts of hope : one is a deceptive confidence (*sheqer*) in man ; the other is a lasting trust (*yachal*) in God.

✧ See the note on verse 18.

O Lord, feed Your people,
who hunger for Your word,
and deliver our spirits from the death of sin ;
that, being filled with Your mercy,
we may be united with the joys
that You impart to the righteous. — Roman
