

Exposition on Psalm 64

by St. Augustine

St. Augustine's exposition on Psalm 64 emphasizes the strength found in Christ's suffering and the importance of fearing God over man amidst trials and tribulations.

Scripture: Psalm 63:1

Topics: "Spiritual Growth", "Gods Sovereignty"

Description

St. Augustine preaches about the significance of the Lord's Passion in Psalms, emphasizing how the Martyrs drew strength from beholding Christ's suffering and resurrection. He highlights the importance of enduring trials and temptations, acknowledging that tribulations are necessary for spiritual growth. St. Augustine urges believers to seek deliverance from fear of enemies by trusting in God's protection and sovereignty. He reflects on the cunning schemes of those who plotted against Jesus, illustrating how their evil intentions were ultimately thwarted by God's divine plan.

Transcript

1. Though chiefly the Lord's Passion is noticed in this Psalm, neither could the Martyrs have been strong, unless they had beheld Him, that first suffered; nor such things would they have endured in suffering, as He did, unless they had hoped for such things in the Resurrection as He had showed of Himself: but your Holiness knows that our Head is our Lord Jesus Christ, and that all that cleave unto Him are the members of Him the HeadAnd let no one say, that now-a-days in tribulation of passions we are not. For always you have heard this fact, how in those times the whole Church together as it were was smitten against, but now through individuals she is tried. Bound indeed is the devil, that he may not do as much as he could, that he may not do as much as he would: nevertheless, he is permitted to tempt as much as is expedient to men advancing. It is not expedient for us to be without temptations: nor should we beseech God that we be not tempted, but that we be not led into temptation. Matthew 6:13

2. Say we, therefore, ourselves also: Hearken, O God, to my prayer, while I am troubled; from fear of the enemy deliver my soul Psalm 63:1. Enemies have raged against the Martyrs: for what was that voice of Christ's Body praying? For this it was praying, to be delivered from enemies, and that enemies might not have power to slay them. Were they not therefore hearkened to, because they were slain; and has God forsaken His servants of a contrite heart, and despised men hoping in Him? Far be it. For who has called upon God, and has been forsaken; who has hoped in Him, and has been deserted by Him? Sirach 2:10 They were hearkened to therefore, and they were slain; and yet from enemies they were delivered. Others

being afraid gave consent, and lived, and yet the same by enemies were swallowed up. The slain were delivered, the living were swallowed up. Thence is also that voice of thanksgiving, Perchance alive they would have swallowed us up.. ..Therefore for this prays the voice of the Martyrs, From fear of the enemy deliver my soul: not so that the enemy may not slay me, but that I may not fear an enemy slaying. For that to be fulfilled in the Psalm the servant prays, which but now in the Gospel the Lord was commanding. What but now was the Lord commanding? Fear not them that kill the body, but the soul are not able to kill; but Him rather fear ye, that has power to kill both body and soul in the hell of fire. Matthew 10:28 And He repeated, Yea, I say unto you, fear Him. Luke 12:5 Who are they that kill the body? Enemies. What was the Lord commanding? That they should not be feared. Be prayer offered, therefore, that He may grant what He has commanded. From fear of the enemy deliver my soul. Deliver me from fear of the enemy, and make me submit to the fear of You. I would not fear him that kills the body, but I would fear Him that has power to kill both body and soul in the hell of fire. For not from fear would I be free: but from fear of the enemy being free, under fear of the Lord a servant.

3. You have protected me from the gathering together of malignants, and from the multitude of men working iniquity Psalm 63:2. Now upon Himself our Head let us look. Like things many Martyrs have suffered: but nothing does shine out so brightly as the Head of Martyrs; in Him rather let us behold what they have gone through. Protected He was from the multitude of malignants, God protecting Himself, the Son Himself and the Manhood which He was carrying protecting His flesh: because Son of Man He is, and Son of God He is; Son of God because of the form of God, Son of Man because of the form of a servant: having in His power to lay down His life: and to take it again. John 10:18 To Him what could enemies do? They killed body, soul they killed not. Observe. Too little therefore it were for the Lord to exhort the Martyrs with word, unless He had enforced it by example. You know what a gathering together there was of malignant Jews, and what a multitude there was of men working iniquity. What iniquity? That wherewith they willed to kill the Lord Jesus Christ. So many good works, He says, I have shown to you, for which of these will you to kill Me? John 10:32 He endured all their infirm, He healed all their sick, He preached the Kingdom of Heaven, He held not His peace at their vices, so that these same should have been displeasing to them, rather than the Physician by whom they were being made whole: for all these His remedies being ungrateful, like men delirious in high fever raving at the physician, they devised the plan of destroying Him that had come to heal them; as though therein they would prove whether He were indeed a man, that could die, or were somewhat above men, and would not suffer Himself to die. The word of these same men we perceive in the wisdom of Solomon: with death most vile, say they, let us condemn Him; let us question Him, for there will be regard in the discourses of Him; for if truly Son of God He is, let Him deliver Him. Let us see therefore what was done.

4. For they have whet like a sword their tongues Psalm 63:3. Which says another Psalm also, Sons of men; their teeth are arms and arrows, and their tongue is a sharp sword. Let not the Jews say, we have not killed Christ. For to this end they gave Him to Pilate the judge, in order that they themselves might seem as it were guiltless of His death....But if he is guilty because he did it though unwillingly, are they innocent who compelled him to do it? By no means. But he gave sentence against Him, and commanded Him to be crucified: and in a manner himself killed Him; ye also, O you Jews, killed Him. Whence did ye kill Him? With the sword of the tongue: for you did whet your tongues. And when did ye smite, except when you cried out, Crucify, Crucify? Luke 23:21

5. But on this account we must not pass over that which has come into mind, lest perchance the reading of the Divine Scriptures should disquiet any one. One Evangelist says that the Lord was crucified at the sixth

hour, John 19:14 and another at the third hour: Mark 15:25 unless we understand it, we are disquieted. And when the sixth hour was already beginning, Pilate is said to have sat on the judgment-seat: and in reality when the Lord was lifted up upon the tree, it was the sixth hour. But another Evangelist, looking unto the mind of the Jews, how they wished themselves to seem guiltless of the death of the Lord, by his account proves them guilty, saying, that the Lord was crucified at the third hour. But considering all the circumstance of the history, how many things might have been done, when before Pilate the Lord was being accused, in order that He might be crucified; we find that it might have been the third hour, when they cried out, Crucify, Crucify. Therefore with more truth they killed at the time when they cried out. The ministers of the magistrate at the sixth hour crucified, the transgressors of the law at the third hour cried out: that which those did with hands at the sixth hour, these did with tongue at the third hour. More guilty are they that with crying out were raging, than they that in obedience were ministering. This is the whole of the Jews' sagacity, this is that which they sought as some great matter. Let us kill and let us not kill: so let us kill, as that we may not ourselves be judged to have killed.

6. They have bended the bow, a bitter thing, in order that they may shoot in secret One unspotted Psalm 63:4. The bow he calls lyings in wait. For he that with sword fights hand to hand, openly fights: he that shoots an arrow deceives, in order to strike. For the arrow smites, before it is foreseen to come to wound. But whom could the lyings in wait of the human heart escape? Would they escape our Lord Jesus Christ, who had no need that any one should bear witness to Him of man? For Himself knew what was in man, John 2:25 as the Evangelist testifies. Nevertheless, let us hear them, and look upon them in their doings as if the Lord knew not what they devise. The expression he used, They have bended the bow, is the same as, in secret: as if they were deceiving by lyings in wait. For you know by what artifices they did this, how with money they bribed a disciple that clave to Him, in order that He might be betrayed to them, Matthew 26:14-15 how they procured false witnesses; with what lyings in wait and artifices they wrought, in order that they might shoot in secret One unspotted. Great iniquity! Behold from a secret place there comes an arrow, which strikes One unspotted, who had not even so much of spot as could be pierced with an arrow. A Lamb indeed He is unspotted, wholly unspotted, always unspotted; not one from whom spots have been removed but that has contracted not any spots. For He has made many unspotted by forgiving sins, being Himself unspotted by not having sins. Suddenly they shall shoot Him, and shall not fear. O heart hardened, to wish to kill a Man that did raise the dead! Suddenly: that is, insidiously, as if unexpectedly, as if not foreseen. For the Lord was like to one knowing not, being among men knowing not what He knew not and what He knew: yea, knowing not that there was nothing that He knew not, and that He knew all things, and to this end had come in order that they might do that which they thought they did by their own power.

7. They have confirmed to themselves malignant discourse Psalm 63:5. There were done so great miracles, they were not moved, they persisted in the design of the evil discourse. He was given up to the judge: the judge trembles, and they tremble not that have given Him up to the judge: trembles power, and ferocity trembles not: he would wash his hands, and they stain their tongues. But wherefore this? They have confirmed to themselves malignant discourse. How many things did Pilate, how many things that they might be restrained! What said he? What did he? But they have confirmed to themselves malignant discourse: Crucify, crucify. Luke 23:21 The repetition is the confirmation of the malignant discourse. Let us see in what manner they have confirmed to themselves malignant discourse. Your King shall I crucify? They said, We have no king but Cæsar alone. John 19:15 He was offering for King the Son of God: to a man they betook themselves: worthy were they to have the one, and not have the Other. I find not anything in this Man, says the judge, wherefore He is worthy of death. And they that confirmed malignant

discourse, said, His blood be upon us and upon our sons. Matthew 27:25 They confirmed malignant discourse, not to the Lord, but to themselves. For how not to themselves when they say, Upon us and upon our sons? That which therefore they confirmed, to themselves they confirmed: because the same voice is elsewhere, They dug before my face a ditch, and fell into it. Death killed not the Lord, but He death: but them iniquity killed, because they would not kill iniquity....

8. They told, in order that they might hide traps: they said, Who shall see them? Psalm 63:5. They thought they would escape Him, whom they were killing, that they would escape God. Behold, suppose Christ was a man, like the rest of men, and knew not what was being contrived for Him: does God also know not? O heart of man! Wherefore have you said to yourself, Who sees me? When He sees that has made you? They said, Who shall see them? God did see, Christ also was seeing: because Christ is also God. But wherefore did they think that He saw not? Hear the words following.

9. They have searched out iniquity, they have failed, searching searchings Psalm 63:6: that is, deadly and acute designs. Let Him not be betrayed by us, but by His disciple: let Him not be killed by us, but by the judge: let us do all, and let us seem to have done nothing....

10. But what befell them? They failed searching searchings. Whence? Because he says, Who shall see them? that is, that no one saw them. This they were saying, this among themselves they thought, that no one saw them. See what befalls an evil soul: it departs from the light of truth, and because itself sees not God, it thinks that itself is not seen by God....

11. For what follows? There shall draw near a man and a deep heart. They said, Who shall see us? They failed in searching searchings, evil counsels. There drew near a man to those same counsels, He suffered Himself to be held as a man. For He would not have been held except He were man, or have been seen except He were man, or have been smitten except He were man, or have been crucified or have died except He were man. There drew near a man therefore to all those sufferings, which in Him would have been of no avail except He were Man. But if He were not Man, there would not have been deliverance for man. There has drawn near a Man and a deep heart, that is, a secret heart: presenting before human faces Man, keeping within God: concealing the form of God, wherein He is equal with the Father, Philippians 2:6 and presenting the form of a servant, wherein He is less than the Father. For Himself has spoken of both: but one thing there is which He says in the form of God, another thing in the form of a servant. He has said in the form of God, I and the Father are one: John 10:30 He has said in the form of a servant, For the Father is greater than I. John 14:28 Whence in the form of God says He, I and the Father are one?...

12. Arrows of infants have been made the strokes of them Psalm 63:7. Where is that savageness? Where is that roar of the lion, of the people roaring and saying, Crucify, Crucify? Where are the lyings in wait of men bending the bow? Have not the strokes of them been made the arrows of infants? You know in what manner infants make to themselves arrows of little canes. What do they strike, or whence do they strike? What is the hand, or what the weapon? What are the arms, or what the limbs?

13. And the tongues of them have been made weak upon them Psalm 63:8. Let them whet now their tongues like a sword, let them confirm to themselves malignant discourse. Deservedly to themselves they have confirmed it, because the tongues of them have been made weak upon them. Could this be strong against God? Iniquity, he says, has lied to itself; their tongues have been made weak upon them. Behold, the Lord has risen, that was killed....What do you think of Him who from the cross came not down, and

from the tomb rose again? What therefore did they effect? But even if the Lord had not risen again, what would they have effected, except what the persecutors of the martyrs have also effected? For the Martyrs have not yet risen again, and nevertheless they have effected nothing; of them not yet rising again we are now celebrating the nativities. Where is the madness of their raging? To what did they bring those their searchings, in which searchings they failed, so that even, when the Lord was dead and buried, they set guards at the tomb? For they said to Pilate, That deceiver; by this name the Lord Jesus Christ was called, for the comfort of His servants when they are called deceivers; they say therefore to Pilate, That deceiver said when yet living, After three days I will rise again: Matthew 27:63 ...They set for guards soldiers at the sepulchre. At the earth quaking, the Lord rose again: such miracles were done about the sepulchre, that even the very soldiers that had come for guards were made witnesses, if they chose to tell the truth: but the same covetousness which had led captive a disciple, the companion of Christ, led captive also the soldier that was guard of the sepulchre. We give you, they say, money; Matthew 28:12-13 and say ye, while yourselves were sleeping there came His disciples, and took Him away....Sleeping witnesses ye adduce: truly you yourself hast fallen asleep, that in searching such devices hast failed. If they were sleeping, what could they see? If nothing they saw, how are they witnesses? But they failed in searching searchings: failed of the light of God, failed in the very completion of their designs: when that which they willed, nowise they were able to complete, surely they failed. Wherefore this? Because there drew near a Man and a deep heart, and God was exalted....

14. And every man feared Psalm 63:9. They that feared not, were not even men. Every man feared; that is, every one using reason to perceive the things which were done. Whence they that feared not, must rather be called cattle, rather beasts savage and cruel. A lion ramping and roaring is that people as yet. But in truth every man feared: that is, they that would believe, that trembled at the judgment to come. And every man feared: and they declared the works of God....And every man has feared: and they have declared the works of God, and His doings they have perceived. What is, His doings they have perceived? Was it, O Lord Jesus Christ, that You were silent, and like a sheep for a victim wast being led, and did not open before the shearer Your mouth, Isaiah 53:7 and we thought You to be set in smiting and in grief, Isaiah 53:4 and knowing how to bear weakness? Isaiah 53:3 Was it that You were hiding Your beauty, O Thou beautiful in form before the sons of men? Was it that You did not seem to have beauty nor grace? Isaiah 53:2 You bore on the Cross men reviling and saying, If Son of God He is, let Him come down from the Cross. Matthew 27:40 ...This thing they, that would have had Him come down from the Cross, perceived not: but when He rose again, and being glorified ascended into Heaven, they perceived the works of God.

15. The just man shall rejoice in the Lord Psalm 63:10. Now the just man is not sad. For sad were the disciples at the Lord's being crucified; overcome with sadness, sorrowing they departed, they thought they had lost hope. He rose again, even when appearing to them He found them sad. He held the eyes of two men that walked in the way, so that by them he was not known, and He found them groaning and sighing, and He held them until He had expounded the Scriptures, and by the same Scriptures had shown that so it ought to have been done as it was done. For He showed in the Scriptures, how after the third day it behooved the Lord to rise again. Luke 24:46 And how on the third day would He have risen again, if from the Cross He had come down?...Therefore let us all rejoice in the Lord, let us all after the faith be One Just Man, and let us all in one Body hold One Head, and let us rejoice in the Lord, not in ourselves: because our Good is not ourselves to ourselves, but He that has made us. Himself is our good to make us glad. And let no one rejoice in himself, no one rely on himself, no one despair of himself: let no one rely on any man, whom he ought to bring in to be the partner of his own hope, not the giver of the hope.

16. Now because the Lord has risen again, now because He has ascended into Heaven, now because He has showed that there is another life, now because it is evident that His counsels, wherein He lay concealed in deep heart, were not empty, because to this end That Blood was shed to be the price of the redeemed; now because all things are evident, because all things have been preached, because all things have been believed, under the whole of heaven, the just man shall rejoice in the Lord, and shall hope in Him; and all men shall be praised that are right in heart....God is displeasing to you, and you are pleasing to yourself, of perverted and crooked heart you are: and this is the worse, that the heart of God you would correct by your heart, to make Him do what you will have whereas you ought to do what He wills. What then? You would make crooked the heart of God which always is right, according to the depravity of your own heart? How much better to correct your heart by the rectitude of God? Hath not your Lord taught you this, of Whose Passion but now were we speaking? Was He not bearing your weakness, when He said, Sad is My soul even unto death? Matthew 26:38 Was He not figuring yourself in Himself, when He was saying, Father, if it be possible, let there pass from Me this cup? Matthew 26:39 For the hearts of the Father and of the Son were not two and different: but in the form of a servant He carried your heart, that He might teach it by His example. Now behold trouble found out as it were another heart of yours, which willed that there should pass away that which was impending: but God would not. God consents not to your heart, do thou consent to the heart of God.

17. What follows? If there shall be praised all men right in heart, there shall be condemned the crooked in heart. Two things are set before you now, choose while there is time....If of crooked heart you have become, there will come that Judgment, there will appear all the reasons on account of which God does all these things: and you that would not in this life correct your heart by the rectitude of God, and prepare yourself for the right hand, where there shall be praised all men right in heart, will be on the left, where at that time you shall hear, Go ye into fire everlasting, that has been prepared for the devil and his angels. Matthew 25:41 And will there be then time to correct the heart? Now therefore correct, brethren, now correct. Who does hinder? Psalm is chanted, Gospel is read, Reader cries, Preacher cries; long-suffering is the Lord; you sin, and He spares; still you sin, still He spares, and still you add sin to sin. How long is God long-suffering? You will find God just also. We terrify because we fear; teach us not to fear, and we terrify no more. But better it is that God teach us to fear, than that any man teach us not to fear.... You bring forth grain, barn expect thou; bringest forth thorns, fire expect thou. But not yet has come either the time of the barn or the time of the fire: now let there be preparation, and there will not be fear. In the name of Christ both we who speak are living, and you to whom we speak are living: for amending our plan, and changing evil life into a good life, is there no place, is there no time? Can it not, if you will, be done today? Can it not, if you will, be now done? What must you buy in order to do it, what specifics must you seek? To what Indies must you sail? What ship prepare? Lo, while I am speaking, change the heart; and there is done what so often and so long while is cried out for, that it be done, and which brings forth everlasting punishment if it be not done.

Source: <https://sermonindex.net/speakers/st-augustine/exposition-on-psalm-64/>

Grow in Your Walk with Christ

Listen and read messages that will stir your heart for Christ and point you to deeper repentance and devotion.

- 50,000+ Sermons from speakers past and present
- 3,900+ Classic Christian Books freely readable online
- 1,200+ Bible Translations and Commentaries
- Over 450k forum posts — Join our vibrant online Christian forum

www.sermonindex.net