

**12** For your immortal spirit is in all things.  
<sup>2</sup>Therefore you correct little by little  
 those who trespass,  
 and you remind and warn them of the  
 things through which they sin,  
 so that they may be freed from wickedness  
 and put their trust in you, O Lord.

<sup>3</sup>Those who lived long ago in your holy  
 land

<sup>4</sup>you hated for their detestable practices,  
 their works of sorcery and unholy rites,

<sup>5</sup>their merciless slaughter<sup>a</sup> of children,  
 and their sacrificial feasting on human  
 flesh and blood.

These initiates from the midst of a  
 heathen cult,<sup>b</sup>

<sup>6</sup>these parents who murder helpless  
 lives,

you willed to destroy by the hands of our  
 ancestors,

<sup>7</sup>so that the land most precious of all to  
 you  
 might receive a worthy colony of the  
 servants<sup>c</sup> of God.

<sup>8</sup>But even these you spared, since they  
 were but mortals,  
 and sent wasps<sup>d</sup> as forerunners of your  
 army

to destroy them little by little,  
<sup>9</sup>though you were not unable to give  
 the ungodly into the hands of the  
 righteous in battle,  
 or to destroy them at one blow by dread  
 wild animals or your stern word.

<sup>10</sup>But judging them little by little you gave  
 them an opportunity to repent,  
 though you were not unaware that their  
 origin<sup>e</sup> was evil  
 and their wickedness inborn,

and that their way of thinking would never  
 change.

<sup>11</sup>For they were an accursed race from the  
 beginning,  
 and it was not through fear of anyone that  
 you left them unpunished for their  
 sins.

<sup>12</sup>For who will say, "What have you done?"  
 or will resist your judgment?

Who will accuse you for the destruction of  
 nations that you made?

Or who will come before you to plead as an  
 advocate for the unrighteous?

<sup>13</sup>For neither is there any god besides you,  
 whose care is for all people,<sup>f</sup>  
 to whom you should prove that you have  
 not judged unjustly;

<sup>14</sup>nor can any king or monarch confront  
 you about those whom you have  
 punished.

<sup>15</sup>You are righteous and you rule all things  
 righteously,  
 deeming it alien to your power  
 to condemn anyone who does not deserve  
 to be punished.

<sup>16</sup>For your strength is the source of  
 righteousness,  
 and your sovereignty over all causes you to  
 spare all.

<sup>17</sup>For you show your strength when people  
 doubt the completeness of your  
 power,

<sup>a</sup> Gk *slaughterers*

<sup>b</sup> Meaning of Gk uncertain

<sup>c</sup> Or *children*

<sup>d</sup> Or *hornets*

<sup>e</sup> Or *nature*

<sup>f</sup> Or *all things*

and you rebuke any insolence among those who know it.<sup>a</sup>  
<sup>18</sup> Although you are sovereign in strength, you judge with mildness, and with great forbearance you govern us; for you have power to act whenever you choose.

<sup>19</sup> Through such works you have taught your people that the righteous must be kind, and you have filled your children with good hope, because you give repentance for sins.

<sup>20</sup> For if you punished with such great care and indulgence<sup>b</sup> the enemies of your servants<sup>c</sup> and those deserving of death, granting them time and opportunity to give up their wickedness,

<sup>21</sup> with what strictness you have judged your children, to whose ancestors you gave oaths and covenants full of good promises!

<sup>22</sup> So while chastening us you scourge our enemies ten thousand times more, so that, when we judge, we may meditate upon your goodness, and when we are judged, we may expect mercy.

<sup>23</sup> Therefore those who lived unrighteously, in a life of folly, you tormented through their own abominations.

<sup>24</sup> For they went far astray on the paths of error,

accepting as gods those animals that even their enemies<sup>d</sup> despised; they were deceived like foolish infants.

<sup>25</sup> Therefore, as though to children who cannot reason, you sent your judgment to mock them.

<sup>26</sup> But those who have not heeded the warning of mild rebukes will experience the deserved judgment of God.

<sup>27</sup> For when in their suffering they became incensed at those creatures that they had thought to be gods, being punished by means of them, they saw and recognized as the true God the one whom they had before refused to know.

Therefore the utmost condemnation came upon them.

**13** For all people who were ignorant of God were foolish by nature; and they were unable from the good things that are seen to know the one who exists, nor did they recognize the artisan while paying heed to his works; <sup>2</sup> but they supposed that either fire or wind or swift air, or the circle of the stars, or turbulent water,

<sup>a</sup> Meaning of Gk uncertain

<sup>b</sup> Other ancient authorities lack *and indulgence*; others read *and entreaty*

<sup>c</sup> Or *children*

<sup>d</sup> Gk *they*

or the luminaries of heaven were the gods  
that rule the world.

<sup>3</sup> If through delight in the beauty of these  
things people assumed them to be  
gods,

let them know how much better than  
these is their Lord,  
for the author of beauty created them.

<sup>4</sup> And if people<sup>a</sup> were amazed at their  
power and working,  
let them perceive from them  
how much more powerful is the one who  
formed them.

<sup>5</sup> For from the greatness and beauty of  
created things  
comes a corresponding perception of their  
Creator.

<sup>6</sup> Yet these people are little to be blamed,  
for perhaps they go astray  
while seeking God and desiring to find  
him.

<sup>7</sup> For while they live among his works, they  
keep searching,  
and they trust in what they see, because  
the things that are seen are beautiful.

<sup>8</sup> Yet again, not even they are to be  
excused;

<sup>9</sup> for if they had the power to know so  
much

that they could investigate the world,  
how did they fail to find sooner the Lord of  
these things?

<sup>10</sup> But miserable, with their hopes set on  
dead things, are those  
who give the name “gods” to the works of  
human hands,  
gold and silver fashioned with skill,  
and likenesses of animals,  
or a useless stone, the work of an ancient  
hand.

<sup>11</sup> A skilled woodcutter may saw down a  
tree easy to handle  
and skillfully strip off all its bark,  
and then with pleasing workmanship  
make a useful vessel that serves life’s needs,  
<sup>12</sup> and burn the cast-off pieces of his work  
to prepare his food, and eat his fill.

<sup>13</sup> But a cast-off piece from among them,  
useful for nothing,  
a stick crooked and full of knots,  
he takes and carves with care in his leisure,  
and shapes it with skill gained in idleness;<sup>b</sup>  
he forms it in the likeness of a human  
being,

<sup>a</sup> *Gk they*

<sup>b</sup> Other ancient authorities read *with intelligent skill*

<sup>14</sup> or makes it like some worthless animal,  
giving it a coat of red paint and coloring its  
surface red

and covering every blemish in it with  
paint;

<sup>15</sup> then he makes a suitable niche for it,  
and sets it in the wall, and fastens it there  
with iron.

<sup>16</sup> He takes thought for it, so that it may  
not fall,

because he knows that it cannot help  
itself,

for it is only an image and has need of  
help.

<sup>17</sup> When he prays about possessions and  
his marriage and children,  
he is not ashamed to address a lifeless  
thing.

<sup>18</sup> For health he appeals to a thing that is  
weak;

for life he prays to a thing that is dead;  
for aid he entreats a thing that is utterly  
inexperienced;

for a prosperous journey, a thing that  
cannot take a step;

<sup>19</sup> for money-making and work and success  
with his hands

he asks strength of a thing whose hands  
have no strength.

**14** Again, one preparing to sail and about  
to voyage over raging waves  
calls upon a piece of wood more fragile  
than the ship that carries him.

<sup>2</sup> For it was desire for gain that planned  
that vessel,

and wisdom was the artisan who built it;

<sup>3</sup> but it is your providence, O Father, that  
steers its course,

because you have given it a path in the sea,  
and a safe way through the waves,

<sup>4</sup> showing that you can save from every  
danger,

so that even a person who lacks skill may  
put to sea.

<sup>5</sup> It is your will that works of your wisdom  
should not be without effect;

therefore people trust their lives even to  
the smallest piece of wood,  
and passing through the billows on a raft  
they come safely to land.

<sup>6</sup> For even in the beginning, when arrogant  
giants were perishing,  
the hope of the world took refuge on a raft,  
and guided by your hand left to the world  
the seed of a new generation.

<sup>7</sup> For blessed is the wood by which  
righteousness comes.

<sup>8</sup> But the idol made with hands is accursed,  
and so is the one who made it—  
he for having made it, and the perishable  
thing because it was named a god.

<sup>9</sup> For equally hateful to God are the  
ungodly and their ungodliness;

<sup>10</sup> for what was done will be punished  
together with the one who did it.

<sup>11</sup> Therefore there will be a visitation also  
upon the heathen idols,

because, though part of what God created,  
they became an abomination,  
snares for human souls  
and a trap for the feet of the foolish.

<sup>12</sup> For the idea of making idols was the  
beginning of fornication,  
and the invention of them was the  
corruption of life;

<sup>13</sup> for they did not exist from the beginning,  
nor will they last forever.

<sup>14</sup> For through human vanity they entered  
the world,  
and therefore their speedy end has been  
planned.

<sup>15</sup> For a father, consumed with grief at an  
untimely bereavement,  
made an image of his child, who had been  
suddenly taken from him;  
he now honored as a god what was once a  
dead human being,  
and handed on to his dependents secret  
rites and initiations.

<sup>16</sup> Then the ungodly custom, grown strong  
with time, was kept as a law,  
and at the command of monarchs carved  
images were worshipped.

<sup>17</sup> When people could not honor  
monarchs<sup>a</sup> in their presence, since  
they lived at a distance,  
they imagined their appearance far away,  
and made a visible image of the king  
whom they honored,  
so that by their zeal they might flatter the  
absent one as though present.

<sup>18</sup> Then the ambition of the artisan  
impelled  
even those who did not know the king to  
intensify their worship.

<sup>19</sup> For he, perhaps wishing to please his ruler,  
skillfully forced the likeness to take more  
beautiful form,

<sup>20</sup> and the multitude, attracted by the  
charm of his work,  
now regarded as an object of worship the  
one whom shortly before they had  
honored as a human being.

<sup>21</sup> And this became a hidden trap for  
humankind,  
because people, in bondage to misfortune  
or to royal authority,

bestowed on objects of stone or wood the  
name that ought not to be shared.

<sup>22</sup> Then it was not enough for them to err  
about the knowledge of God,  
but though living in great strife due to  
ignorance,  
they call such great evils peace.

<sup>23</sup> For whether they kill children in their  
initiations, or celebrate secret  
mysteries,  
or hold frenzied revels with strange  
customs,

<sup>24</sup> they no longer keep either their lives or  
their marriages pure,  
but they either treacherously kill one  
another, or grieve one another by  
adultery,

<sup>25</sup> and all is a raging riot of blood and  
murder, theft and deceit, corruption,  
faithlessness, tumult, perjury,

<sup>26</sup> confusion over what is good,  
forgetfulness of favors,  
defiling of souls, sexual perversion,  
disorder in marriages, adultery, and  
debauchery.

<sup>27</sup> For the worship of idols not to be  
named  
is the beginning and cause and end of  
every evil.

<sup>28</sup> For their worshipers<sup>b</sup> either rave in  
exultation,  
or prophesy lies, or live unrighteously, or  
readily commit perjury;

<sup>29</sup> for because they trust in lifeless idols  
they swear wicked oaths and expect to  
suffer no harm.

<sup>30</sup> But just penalties will overtake them on  
two counts:  
because they thought wrongly about God  
in devoting themselves to idols,

<sup>a</sup> *Gk them*

<sup>b</sup> *Gk they*

and because in deceit they swore  
unrighteously through contempt for  
holiness.

<sup>31</sup> For it is not the power of the things by  
which people swear,<sup>a</sup>  
but the just penalty for those who sin,  
that always pursues the transgression of  
the unrighteous.

**15** But you, our God, are kind and true,  
patient, and ruling all things<sup>b</sup> in mercy.

<sup>2</sup> For even if we sin we are yours, knowing  
your power;  
but we will not sin, because we know that  
you acknowledge us as yours.

<sup>3</sup> For to know you is complete  
righteousness,  
and to know your power is the root of  
immortality.

<sup>4</sup> For neither has the evil intent of human  
art misled us,

nor the fruitless toil of painters,  
a figure stained with varied colors,

<sup>5</sup> whose appearance arouses yearning in  
fools,  
so that they desire<sup>c</sup> the lifeless form of a  
dead image.

<sup>6</sup> Lovers of evil things and fit for such  
objects of hope<sup>d</sup>  
are those who either make or desire or  
worship them.

<sup>7</sup> A potter kneads the soft earth  
and laboriously molds each vessel for our  
service,

fashioning out of the same clay  
both the vessels that serve clean uses  
and those for contrary uses, making all  
alike;

but which shall be the use of each of them  
the worker in clay decides.

<sup>8</sup> With misspent toil, these workers form a  
futile god from the same clay—

these mortals who were made of earth a  
short time before  
and after a little while go to the earth from  
which all mortals are taken,  
when the time comes to return the souls  
that were borrowed.

<sup>9</sup> But the workers are not concerned that  
mortals are destined to die  
or that their life is brief,  
but they compete with workers in gold and  
silver,  
and imitate workers in copper;  
and they count it a glorious thing to mold  
counterfeit gods.

<sup>10</sup> Their heart is ashes, their hope is  
cheaper than dirt,  
and their lives are of less worth than  
clay,

<sup>11</sup> because they failed to know the one who  
formed them  
and inspired them with active souls  
and breathed a living spirit into them.

<sup>12</sup> But they considered our existence an idle  
game,  
and life a festival held for profit,  
for they say one must get money however  
one can, even by base means.

<sup>13</sup> For these persons, more than all others,  
know that they sin  
when they make from earthy matter fragile  
vessels and carved images.

<sup>14</sup> But most foolish, and more miserable  
than an infant,  
are all the enemies who oppressed your  
people.

<sup>15</sup> For they thought that all their heathen  
idols were gods,

<sup>a</sup> Or *of the oaths people swear*

<sup>b</sup> Or *ruling the universe*

<sup>c</sup> *Gk and he desires*

<sup>d</sup> *Gk such hopes*

though these have neither the use of their eyes to see with, nor nostrils with which to draw breath, nor ears with which to hear, nor fingers to feel with, and their feet are of no use for walking.

<sup>16</sup>For a human being made them, and one whose spirit is borrowed formed them; for none can form gods that are like themselves.

<sup>17</sup>People are mortal, and what they make with lawless hands is dead; for they are better than the objects they worship, since<sup>a</sup> they have life, but the idols<sup>b</sup> never had.

<sup>18</sup>Moreover, they worship even the most hateful animals, which are worse than all others when judged by their lack of intelligence;

<sup>19</sup>and even as animals they are not so beautiful in appearance that one would desire them, but they have escaped both the praise of God and his blessing.

**16** Therefore those people<sup>c</sup> were deservedly punished through such creatures, and were tormented by a multitude of animals.

<sup>2</sup>Instead of this punishment you showed kindness to your people, and you prepared quails to eat, a delicacy to satisfy the desire of appetite;

<sup>3</sup>in order that those people, when they desired food, might lose the least remnant of appetite<sup>d</sup>

because of the odious creatures sent to them, while your people,<sup>c</sup> after suffering want a short time, might partake of delicacies.

<sup>4</sup>For it was necessary that upon those oppressors inescapable want should come, while to these others it was merely shown how their enemies were being tormented.

<sup>5</sup>For when the terrible rage of wild animals came upon your people<sup>e</sup> and they were being destroyed by the bites of writhing serpents, your wrath did not continue to the end; <sup>6</sup>they were troubled for a little while as a warning, and received a symbol of deliverance to remind them of your law's command.

<sup>7</sup>For the one who turned toward it was saved, not by the thing that was beheld, but by you, the Savior of all.

<sup>8</sup>And by this also you convinced our enemies that it is you who deliver from every evil.

<sup>9</sup>For they were killed by the bites of locusts and flies,

<sup>a</sup> Other ancient authorities read *of which*

<sup>b</sup> Gk *but they*

<sup>c</sup> Gk *they*

<sup>d</sup> Gk *loathed the necessary appetite*

<sup>e</sup> Gk *them*