152 Rope or Cord (*Funis vel Funiculus*)

The cord by which men are tied is double,[[1]](#endnote-1) one of life, the other of death. Wherefore it is read, 2 Kings 8[:2] that David “measured with two lines, one to put to death, and one to save alive.” So, Christ ordered two cords one for living he handed to Peter, Matt. 16[:19]: “And whatsoever you shall bind upon earth, it shall be bound,” etc. Wherefore, Ezech. 40[:3]: “Behold a man … with a line of flax in his hand.” It is delicate and soft in its respect which is from hemp or from grape vines, so every pain inflicted by superiors of the Church is soft and mild in respect of that pain which will be in the future. Wherefore, Bernard,[[2]](#endnote-2) you fear vigils, fasts, and manual labors.

¶ These things are lightly encountered compared to perpetual pains, eternal weeping, and the gnashing of teeth, alone before the eyes of the heart, they make for you something equal to a mat or a cushion, Eccle. 4[:12]: “A threefold cord is not easily broken” because of contrition. Contrition and satisfaction elevate a man, just as when a sick man cannot by himself rise from his bed is suspended by cords whence he may rise. Wherefore, Osee 11[:4]: “I will draw you with the cords of Adam, with the bands of love.” These cords were first ordained because of Adam when in paradise by sinning he became as if sick. And therefore just as the friends of madmen provide for them cords for binding, so God provides for man bonds of penance which if they seem to man hard they put man in memory of his sins just as in the figure it is read, Jer. 38[:10] that extracting “Jeremias the prophet out of the dungeon,” they consulted that they would place for him “old rags” and rotten under his arms and cords so that thus he might easily be extracted.

¶ The second cord which is for killing God gave to the demons for binding those who do not want the first cords, namely, to be bound by penance, but these cords are more properly called ropes or rather iron chains about which in Psal. [118:61]: “The cords of the wicked have encompassed me.” And again, ropes are to be extended into bonds, Wis. 17[:17]: “For they were all bound together with one chain of darkness.” Matt. 22[:13] it is said concerning sinners “Bind his hands and feet and cast him into the exterior darkness.” Where Augustine says in the book *De vera religione,[[3]](#endnote-3)* that by this is to be understood that every facility of working is to be removed from them. Wherefore Chrysostom, *Homilia* 30,[[4]](#endnote-4) before we sin, we have free will if we wish to follow the devil or not, etc. Wherefore it is to be known that much matters between the ropes by which sinners are bound here as between the ropes in which afterwards they are bound. Present ropes are as of a dissolving material. Therefore, they can be loosened in the figure of which Achior bound by these ropes was easily loosened by the sons of Israel and led with them into Bethulia, Judith 6[:9-10]. But in the sign of other ropes Sedechias was blinded and bound by bonds of iron and was led into Babylon, 4 Kings 25[:7]. In the figure that those who do not want to subject themselves to the bonds of penance will be subjected to eternal pain, Jer. 28[:13] it is said “Thus says the Lord: You have broken chains of wood, and you shall make for them chains of iron.”

According to the Philosopher, in the fifth book *De animalibus*, chapter 2,[[5]](#endnote-5) the female of the spider makes as if a rope of her intestines and sends it to the male and thus draws him to herself, so a woman does toward a man. Wherefore, Prov. 7[:16] the foolish woman says, “I have woven my bed with cords.” But these can be ropes. Wherefore, Judic. 16[:7] Sampson bound by seven ropes broke them, to which can be added that which Augustine narrates, *De civitate,* book 18, chapter 17,[[6]](#endnote-6) because by art a magician bound the companions of Ulysses through potions, which potions he avoided by the flower given to him by Mercury, as he related in the great book nine. Because by the flower continually given by God man can escape the potions of concupiscence.

¶ Again, the Philosopher, *De animalibus*, book 8, chapter 6,[[7]](#endnote-7) says that the spider first wraps the little beast which it has caught in its web. Then it sucks the blood until it dies. So, the devil sucks from man when he catches him the moisture of devotion until he dies.

¶ However, how penance dissolves the bond of this is evident in Manasses, king of Judah [2 Paral. 33:11-13] about whom Chrysostom narrates, in the first homily *Super Mattheum,[[8]](#endnote-8)* in the dominion, because in the caldron of Babylon he repented and was restored to his reign. Here note that one can easily tie a knot in darkness, but he cannot easily loosen a knot without a light. So, it is concerning the knot of sin which one easily contracts in darkness, but cannot be loosened without the grace of Christ, [1] John 3[:8]: “For this purpose, the Son of God appeared, that he might destroy the works of the devil.” The figure for this is Gen. 40[:1-23] the butler and the baker dreamed in the night and in the darkness of the prison, but Joseph resolved it in the day and in the light. So, what we perpetuate in the darkness God detects in the light. Wherefore he is in greater peril who is bound out of the common way than he who is in the common way, for the first ones cannot be seen nor if they cry out can others hear them, so they who are bound out of the way, namely, in hell are not seen for compassion nor heard for mercy, Matt. 22[:13]: “Bind his hands and feet, and cast him into the exterior darkness,” but those bound in this life can cry out and be heard.

¶ The figure for this is Dan. 3[:20-50] how Daniel and his companions sent into the furnace cried to the Lord and they were liberated and Act. 12[:7] the angel liberated Peter in the prison.

1. Cf. Rabanus Maurus, *In Libros IV Regum* 2.8 (PL 109:94): Quod autem mensos eos funiculo dixit, funiculum allegorice pro sorte posuit, ex quod funiculo soleant agrorum spatia metiri. Unde scriptum est: «Et sorte divisit eis terram in funiculo distributionis **(Psal. LXXVII)**.» Significat autem quod tam libera dispositione David regiones Moabitarum haeredibus quibus vellet divideret, quam si possessor quilibet agros proprios ad nutum suum ducto hinc inde funiculo dirimeret. «Mensus est autem duos funiculos, unum ad occidendum, et unum ad vivificandum.» Et hoc allegorice dictum significans, quod in sua David potestate habuerit, nullo utique contradicente, quos eorum neci daret contumaces, quibus parceret subjectis. Quod autem David Moab, **[Col.0094D]**qui interpretatur de patre, et Syriam Damasci et caeteras regiones ditioni suae subjugans, fecit tributarias esse, mystice significat quod Christus omnes gentes sub sua dominatione tenens, facit pensum servitutis reddere, dum singulae quaeque nationes in nominis ejus confessione adunatae, devote sensum bonorum operum illi exsolvunt. [↑](#endnote-ref-1)
2. Bernard, *Epistola* 1.12 (PL 182:78): Vigilias times et jejunia, manuumque laborem: sed haec levia sunt meditanti flammas perpetuas. Recordatio deinde tenebrarum exteriorum facit non horrere solitudinem. Si futuram cogitas de verbis otiosis discussionem (Matth. XII, 36), non valde displicebit silentium. Fletus aeternus et stridor ille dentium, ante cordis oculos reductus, pares tibi reddet mattam et culcitram. [↑](#endnote-ref-2)
3. Augustine, *De vera religione* 54.104 (PL 34:168): Et hoc significare arbitror, quod ligantur ei manus et pedes, id est, facilitas omnis aufertur operandi. [↑](#endnote-ref-3)
4. (Pseudo-)Chrysostom, *Opus imperfectum in Mattheum,* Homilia 37, cap. 21:2 (PG 56:835): Nam omnes homines antequam peccemus, liberum quidem habemus arbitrium, si volumus sequi voluntatem diaboli, an non. [↑](#endnote-ref-4)
5. Aristotle, *History of Animals* 5.8, 542a12-17 (Barnes 1:856): The phalangia-that is to say, such of the species as spin webs-perform the operation in the following way: the female takes hold of the suspended web at the middle and gives a pull, and the male gives a counter pull; this operation they repeat until they are drawn in together and interlaced at the hinder ends; for, by the way, this mode of copulation suits them in consequence of the rotundity of their stomachs. [↑](#endnote-ref-5)
6. Augustine, *De civitate Dei* 18:17 (PL 41:573): Hoc Varro ut astruat, commemorat alia non minus incredibilia de maga illa famosissima Circe, quae socios quoque Ulyssis mutavit in bestias, [↑](#endnote-ref-6)
7. Aristotle, History of Animals 9.39, 623a14-17 (Barnes 1:970): Then, when any creature touches the web and the centre is set in motion, it first ties and wraps the creature round with threads until it renders it helpless, then lifts it and carries it off, and, if it happens to be hungry, sucks out the life-juices--for that is the way it feeds; but, if it be not hungry, it first mends any damage done and then hastens again to its quest of prey. [↑](#endnote-ref-7)
8. (Pseudo-)Chrysostom, *Opus imperfectum in Mattheum* Homilia 1, ex cap. 1 (PG 56:626): Liberavitque Dominus Manassen ex omni tribulatione ejus, et reeversus est in Jerusalem in regnum suum, et cognovit Dominum Manasses, dicens: Ipse est solus Deus. [↑](#endnote-ref-8)