

WRITINGS OF EUSEBIUS OF EMESA

by Eusebius of Emesa

Writings of Eusebius of Emesa (c. AD 360). Eusebius of Emesa was an early church father whose writings have been preserved for the edification of the church.

3 Chapters

Table of Contents

0. Writings of Eusebius of Emesa
1. Homily on the sufferings and death of our Lord
2. On Repentance

Writings of Eusebius of Emesa

Homily on the sufferings and death of our Lord

Eusebius of Emesa, Homily on the sufferings and death of our Lord (1859) pp.215-231 On the Sufferings and Death of our Lord.1 [Translated by S. C. Malan]

BRETHREN, we cannot hold our peace on the sufferings of Christ; we must speak of them; for both the time and place constrain us to do so. For, since He died for us, shall we not tell of His Passion? Yea, rather, we will dwell on it, and proclaim it aloud. He is on the Cross, for thy sake, O sinner; and thou, be at His feet, for thy own sake also. Thou darest not think or say nothing of thy Lord's sufferings; for where He suffered, there Satan died. The traitor is come to look about him; and when come, he is on the alert and ready, not in places unknown, but in a spot which he knows full well. That place is near you. But what is meant by 'near you?' To that very place which you yourselves had shown to others is the traitor come, bringing with him a crowd; as if much people could overrule the power of God! The devil's son is come with swords, that are the wiles of his father who came to Adam as a friend, while he acted by him as an enemy: for he deceived and overcame him like a man that was taken in. And here he hid his guile under a kiss; although he remonstrated when his friendship was doubted. Did he come to betray with a kiss? No; he came not to kiss, but to betray. I resist not, said the Lord; do what thou listed: thou alone art the cause of thy own destruction. That was to the traitor himself; but to those who came to lay hands on Him, He said: What seek ye? They answered: Jesus of Nazareth. And the Lord replied: I am He; I resist you not, I flee not from you; for this very purpose am I come, and to this end was I born. But while He spake they and the traitor fell backwards to the earth; to show that He had come there of His own accord, for if they could not stand His speaking to them, how could they have bound Him against His will? "If ye seek Me," said the Lord, "let these go their way." But Peter, who was the most fervent of all the disciples, comes forward also on this occasion. For at times he stepped rightly before the others; at other times it was very much as he thought best himself. He who knew how to come out of the ship boldly and walk on the water to his Lord, he who believed fervently, nevertheless suddenly fell back. But that was ere he was made a Rock, and ere he had received of the Spirit. For when once he had received the Spirit, he no longer quailed before a maid, nor shook in the wind; but he abode unmoved and faithful in the place in which he was put. Do not find fault with me, brethren, if I gather, one by one, every merit of our Lord; while I endeavour as well as I can, to tell His virtues. I pray you, do not grow weary; for I tell you of the Cross.

Peter drew his sword, which the Lord bade him take with him in order to fulfil every particular dispensation connected with His humanity; according to what S. Luke declares, that this saying should be fulfilled, "He was reckoned among the transgressors a saying which the other Evangelists apply to Christ on the Cross.2 He cut off the servant's ear, well and deservedly; for the ear that hears not, ought not to remain in its

place. But the Lord showed kindness even then to those who laid hands on Him; for although He healed the servant's ear by a miracle, yet He did not hinder their hands from taking Him. Having bound Him they led Him away captive, that the prophecy of Esaias should not come false, which said, that "He was brought as a Lamb to the slaughter." The Jews were pleased at His being taken; and the traitor rejoiced as if he had done a good work.

Peter then follows to see the end, full of doubt and forethought on the denial his Lord had foretold him should take place. He had been told that he would deny Him; and he repelled that, saying, he would never do so. His readiness was both good and becoming; but it was ignorance on his part: for he did not know how far he was about to show himself weak and mean. He follows anxiously and doubting: full of misgivings: his heart beating all the while. He meets the maid, who says to him: "Art thou not a Galilean also?" But Peter denies, and declares he is not. Yet that denial was not without meaning in one who was to be witness of his Lord's Resurrection. For if He who had died, was dead and not alive, then why should Peter think it fitting that he should be crucified with his head downwards for One who was dead? Then Peter moves further, goes from his place, but not from his denial. When about to speak, so troubled is he as to wish to change his language. "Thou art a Galilean, says the maid." Nay; I am not a Galilean, says Peter, with a lip that betrays him. Yet see how he who was thus troubled in his speech by an ignorant maid, afterwards persuaded even Roman orators. But we will presently speak of the Resurrection; meanwhile let us tell more about the Cross. The high priests, servants by birth, sat in council, and the Judge of all stood before them as a servant. The lawyers themselves who had not learned the law, asked Him: Art Thou the Son of God? like the devil, of whom the Lord had said before, that he was their father. "I adjure Thee, said the high priest, tell me if Thou be the Son of the living God." Not that he cared to know it; but he wished to destroy Him. Then they brought the King of the judge before that judge. He stood before him "like a sheep before his shearer," as Esaias says. The judge trembled; not so the accusers. They say: "He maketh Himself a King," that His sentence might be irrevocable. Then the wife of the judge, who had suffered in a dream because of Him, sends a message to her husband; he was better disposed than the rest, he even wished not to kill Him, but to release Him, and he commanded Him to be scourged, in order to allay their fury; thus fulfilling the saying of the prophet: "With His stripes we are healed." But they cried with one voice: "Away with Him, away with Him, and crucify Him that might be fulfilled what was said of the Lord: "He lifted up his voice against Me."

What crime could the Jews bring against Him? What blind man was there that had not received sight, or lame that had not walked? Maybe some of those that had once been healed by Him, were among them who then railed at Him. No doubt many whose tongue He had loosed, cried against Him to please the Jews. I trow that of them was said: "What could be done to My vineyard that I have not done to it? I looked that it should bring forth grapes, and behold, it hath

brought forth wild grapes." Pilate grew weary of denying the Jews their request; but he was overcome by those shameless miscreants. He washed his hand, because he had not soiled it: but they cried, that His blood might be on them and on their children. If what they at first required had not been done, then He would neither have been put to death nor risen again. While they prevailed in their impious intreaties, while they raged in their savage fury, and the judge refused to give way to their wickedness, they brought to pass and fulfilled the truth of the prophet's words who, because he knew beforehand the malice of the Jews, foretold that the Anointed of the Lord should suffer at their hands.

Pilate wished to stop their evil deeds, but he could not.

Jesus went forth out of the city, bearing Himself the Tree of His own Cross; like another Isaac carrying the wood for the sacrifice. Will anyone say that this was done without purpose? The daughters of Jerusalem wept on that occasion, not knowing over whom they would have to weep. "Weep over yourselves and your children," said the Lord, "and not over Me, for I am now fulfilling that which I chose of Mine own free will." And they would weep hitherto if He whom the Jews did away with was not risen again from the dead. But now let us speak with joy of our salvation. Jesus went forth and walked between malefactors; that it might be fulfilled, "He was reckoned among the transgressors." He who only did good, our Saviour and our Lord, went forth among thieves and sinners. And now the day of His crucifixion, was the day of Adam's transgression. God created Adam on the sixth day; and on that day he transgressed. On that day too Jesus became obedient and endured His sufferings at the sixth hour, when Adam tasted of the fruit; that we should overcome in Christ at the same hour that we were overwhelmed in Adam. The Tree of Life in the Garden, is the Tree of the Cross. There was a woman, through whom sin came into the world; here is a virgin who heard Him say: "Behold thy mother." On that day Adam put forth his hand for evil; and Jesus spread His holy arms for our good. Adam drew near to the tree; and Jesus laid His hands and His feet on the Tree to which they were fastened with nails. Adam tasted of the fruit through lust; and Jesus tasted of vinegar mingled with bitter gall. Adam heard this sentence: The earth shall bring forth to thee thorns and thistles. Our Jesus of His own will was crowned with the thorns of Adam. Adam brought down a curse upon himself; but Jesus who is blessed by them that are condemned, was hanged on the Tree as one accursed.

We run as it were in a race; one on the right, the other on the left; for the types given by Moses are complete and realised. For as he went up the mountain at the time when the people of God was fighting with Amalek, and Joshua the Son of Nave, as leader, held out his rod in his hand, he showed beforehand the figure of the Cross, with his arms and his rod. There Hur and Aaron, one on the right hand of Moses, and the other on the left; and here two thieves, one on the right and the other on the left of Jesus. And why thieves? that thou mayest know, O sinner, that His sufferings were for such as thou art. One reviled; but the other blessed. And what didst thou see, O thief, or rather, O thou bringer of glad tidings to us? Neither a sign nor a miracle. He is nailed to

the Cross as well as thou; and He tastes of gall which thou hast not drunk. He is crowned with thorns, which thou hast not worn. Then one reviled and would not learn of his fellow. What seest thou? A Man hanging on the Cross and the scorn of His foes, and thou sayest: "Remember me when Thou comest in Thy kingdom." What! dost thou call Him Lord who is thus hanging on the Cross, sentenced to it by His Judges; and is He a Judge who is thus condemned? Thou didst feel and acknowledge that He was crucified for sinners, and was doing His utmost to give life to those that were lost: for He is the Lamb slain and offered in sacrifice for many. What then dost thou ask, O thou believer, and no longer thief?—That Thou wouldst remember me in Thy kingdom. Thou askest a thing that is far and distant, but I will give it thee at once. Thou hast not been slow in believing; and I will not withhold My grace: today shalt thou be with Me in Paradise. So that he really rose to Paradise, who was about to descend into hell to which he was doomed. And why this day? Because while on this day Adam was driven from Paradise, at this hour the thief opened it and went into it. And from the hour at which Adam ate of the fruit of the garden until he left it, Jesus remained on the Cross, until He fulfilled the spreading of Moses' hands towards heaven. "They pierced My hands and My feet," according to the saying of David. Gall in the cup is offered because of Adam's lust to Him Who is crowned with thorns. In order that the adversary should be put to shame, He carried the conquest of His enemy as far as the Cross, and endured patiently his infamous treatment. But in like manner as the heavens showed the place of the Nativity by means of a brilliant star in the East, so also they made known how they mourned for the sufferings of Christ, by withholding the light of the sun, in order to hide the fury and audacity of His enemies. The light hid itself for three hours, as long as the Sun of Righteousness remained on the Cross and in sufferings; afterwards the sun reappeared, lest they might think night had arrived. But the sun did not shrink from being darkened; it hid itself three hours in order to represent as it were the stay of the Son of Man for three days and three nights in the heart of the earth, and His appearing again. When the heavens withheld their light and gave it back they proclaimed a miracle; and the earth shook at the fight it could not bear. For it was fitting and becoming all creation to bear witness of Him Who was suffering on the Cross. And the bosom and bars of the earth were torn asunder in order to receive Him Who was free among the dead. The types and examples of Joseph the patriarch, as handed down by the ancient Jews, were realised in the Son Who was betrayed to death by them, and dwells for ever with His Father,

Let us then abide by Jesus who endures Agony for our sake. At the foot of His Cross thieves were crucified with Him, as being necessary to the fulfilment of the dispensation, that we might learn how men do die, and how God was separated from him by His will and not without it. Those who were subject to the law of nature had their legs broken, that they should endure death according to that nature. But He who had power to lay down His life and power to take it again in like manner as He took of His own will and not against it, a body out of the Virgin, also of His own accord and not otherwise made on the Cross, a separation between His Spirit and His body. "Father, in Thy hands I commit My

Spirit:" not in the hands of the wicked who, reviled and reproached Him on all sides. This is a great wonder: for He died willingly and not unwillingly; and there need not of necessity be any pain connected with it, for when He will, He gives up His Spirit.

He is then in every respect the One Only-begotten; for as He alone was begotten of the Father, and He alone was born of the Virgin according to the flesh, so also in death, He dies of His own will and not otherwise. Those who heard this could hardly believe it, and they asked; Can a man give up the ghost when he likes, of his own will? So that one of the soldiers who could not believe that He was already dead, made a gash in His side with a spear, and some in wonder said: "Of a truth He was the Son of God." But why did he not pierce with his spear the heart or other parts near it? Because it was where the serpent hid his fangs. For Eve Was taken from Adam's side, and he who wishes to heal the bite of the serpent, must cut the part in which the venom lies. It was therefore fitting and right that one side should be wounded for another; that the saying might come true; "All things concerning Me have an end."

Mark also the day: for when the days of unleavened bread, then also the passover of sufferings; and when the Lamb, then also Him that is without blemish and without spot. If the reckoning of days does not exactly fit, care not for it; for the Church makes no mistake in her reckoning, but the Jews have altered their own. This day was the death of death, and the destruction of sin: this day was the sacrifice offered for the propitiation of our sins, but the shame of our foe. This was the beginning of our life, the signal of victory over the great adversary. But of that death no one doubts; for all admit and confess it. The Gentiles ridicule it; the Jews say: we put Him to death. But they will bear the doom they have brought down upon themselves; while the Church rejoices in Jesus Christ our Lord; to Whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen.

[Footnotes renumbered and moved to the end]

1 Translated from the Armenian. Homil. of S. Severian, ed, Venice, p. 428. [Note to the online edition - sermon 14 from this edition, edited by J. B. Aucher, is not listed in the Clavis Patrum Graecorum 2 among the works of Severian. Sermon 15 is plainly labelled as by Eusebius of Emesa. In the CPG 2, 3531 there is a list of sermons by Eusebius of Emesa extant in Armenian. Sermon 5, De passione is identified as identical with sermons 14 and 15 from the Aucher edition. I have therefore corrected the attribution at the top.] 2 S. Luke and s. Mark alone mention it. Compare s. Luke xxii. 37, with s. Mark xv. 28.

3 This, as everybody knows, has reference to the tradition received in the Eastern and Western Churches respecting the Martyrdom of S. Peter. There is at Rome, outside the gates, on the Appian way, a church dedicated to him, and called Domine quo vadis? the words S. Peter addressed to our Lord whom he is said to have met at the place on which the church is built, when he was fleeing from persecution. There was something inexpressibly solemn about that spot the last time I saw from it the sun set over the beautiful meadows of the Sabines. This text was transcribed by Roger Pearse, 2010. This file and all material on this page is in the public domain - copy freely. The translation is taken from S. C. Malan, Meditations for every Wednesday and Friday in Lent on a prayer of S. Ephraim, London (1859), pp.215-231 Early Church Fathers - Additional Texts

On Repentance

On Repentance (De Paenitentia) Text translated into English from Latin by Google Translate, edited by Roger Pearse, who then released it into the public domain. [Additional Sources: archive.org] The Text¹ 1. Rejecting the arrogance of those who dare to remove repentance from the midst, the brother most worthy of all respect gave us another commandment in which, observing this pride, he stretched out his wise right hand to his brothers to repent. And this word is most useful to men. For no man is without sin. For concerning only one man² is witness given that he committed no sin.³ So we will speak of repentance, both from the Old and from the New Testament. For these are the treasures of the Church.

Now we recommend repentance, not to promote the sin of our brother, (since we do not want to lead the sinner into sin in the hope of repentance), but to endeavour to raise up the fallen. For the despair which is introduced by the adversaries, drives him who has once fallen to wallow in his sins: but the expectation of repentance incites the fallen man to arise and to sin no more.

“But who are we to impose a law on God? If God wants to send away, is there anyone who can prevent it?”⁴ We say, not what they dare to, but what God commands: “Shall he who falls not rise again?”⁵ They contradict God.

“He who falls does not rise again.”

He did not lead you to believe by a thin word, he will lead you to believe by a clear example. For what is so difficult to wash as red? But what is white with us like snow, or like clean wool? But he who founded these things says: If your sins are like colours that cannot be washed away, if you only wash them, they will change into purity in the snow.

“But this remission is not after baptism. For He said, ‘Wash, be clean.’”⁶

Nevertheless this above all, if you had asked us, we could show from the Scriptures, namely, that there is forgiveness and remission after baptism. For it is not necessary to contradict in such a way that we may choose the easy ones: but against those things which appear to be strong, we must rise up with a contrary word. For as long as obstinacy is not removed from the mind, the patient cannot be cured.

2. But there is no room for sweetness in things steeped in salt, so now we bring forth words from the Old Testament; let us compare what they oppose against what is said from the Old. For they say that “if you read to us something from the Old Testament about penance, before the Saviour’s passion, before that sacred blood was shed for us, we say that in the Old Testament sins were forgiven, but in the New because of the passion there will be no forgiveness.” But if we show from the New Testament that after baptism and the participation of the Spirit, that he who has sinned is called back by the grace of repentance, it is clear that there is a place for penitence even after baptism for those who have fallen away, so that what is read in the Old Testament will have strength and authority to build onto repentance. (I speak as if they were present and listening.)

Hence I touch on even more serious matters, so that once we have fallen, having conceived the good hope, we may by no means continue in sin. You did not believe this by the example of proving; believe the oath of God. God says: "As I live, says the Lord."⁷ Now it is appropriate for God to swear this. For since he had no ancestor himself, he swears because of the unbelief of those who abolish repentance. "As I live," says the Lord," but let no one be deterred, since "I do not want the death of the sinner, but rather that he should be converted and live."⁸ He who lives wants you to live. Is it that, even when God swears, he is unworthy to be believed? Do you believe neither word, nor example, nor oath? believe the facts. Nineveh was not overthrown, for she did penance.⁹ The prophet indignantly declared that she had not been overthrown:¹⁰ the ivy had sprouted.

He excuses himself to you, so that you may remember that He is good. But I fear that you will not hear from him: "Is your eye evil, because I am good?"¹¹ Who is described as more wicked than Ahab? (I speak as if to the readers.) Besides the rest of the spoils, having killed the master, he seized the vineyard: he came down to take the inheritance; he came down rejoicing.¹² He came to meet him who would bring sorrow, who would rebuke him, the prophet¹³, indeed, not an enemy, but as if sparing him, he pronounced not his own judgement, but the judgement of God. Accepting the judgement, he puts on his sackcloth and puts off his rulership. For it is written that the prophet himself, who had been sent to pronounce the sentence, will hear from God that what I have said would not happen in his¹⁴ days, because Ahab prayed, fearing the dangers.¹⁵ I am forced to wish for a good cure. The holy David, or holy after sin, transgressed three of the ten commandments in one case. Since we are addressing you, let us speak more clearly. There was adultery, and murder, and lust for another's wife.¹⁶ The righteous man sinned, and God appointed him the judge of his own sin. And since we do not see a beam in our own eye, but we see a speck in a stranger's eye, he sets forth his crime as a stranger's, and says: "There were two men in one city, one rich, the other poor. One was very rich: but only one lamb for the poor, which slept in his arms," (and this was a mystery to his wife!) "It ate with him and drank from his cup. There came," he says, "a guest to the rich man," (indeed rightly called "guest"), evidently David was not used to these. "So the guest came to him: sparing," he said, "to slaughter for the guest one of those he had," he said, "he slaughters the stolen lamb of the poor man." Of course, no matter how hard a man falls, he rises quickly. David bears the matter with difficulty, for David was also fallen. "As the Lord lives, he who did this is worthy of death." He took the decision on himself. When he came out with these things, the prophet declared who that man was. David immediately came to the cure: he saw the wound, he fled to the doctor. "I have sinned," he said, and immediately the doctor was at hand. "And the Lord took away your sin." For what do you want, one sin to be imputed to the holy, or many righteousnesses? He committed sin, but he also committed many righteousnesses. What is just with a just God, not to remember a few, or to forget many? Let there be a set of scales, and according to the measure that we measured, let it be measured out to us. If the sins are many, let him be a sinner: the righteousness are many, let him be righteous. One and one. For all our things are judged from something more abundant. And one white thing is surpassed by another whiter thing; and with a sweet thing, if you compare something else, it is sweeter. Thus also we are righteous as men, not that sin is righteousness. Hence the Son of God is called righteousness: but we are righteous by participation in righteousness. And Moses spoke something with a tongue, which, however, is not included in history.¹⁷ And Abraham is found to have been faithful, and yet there was a time when he was unbelieving.¹⁸ I do not accuse the righteous, but I give glory to

God. I do not want anyone to sin. Enoch was approved by God, says the Scripture, after he had begotten a son.¹⁹ If he is approved by Him afterwards, he can be approved by those who he was not.

3. But let us come to the New Testament, although we will still encounter many things from the Old. For even Manasseh, who had placed idols with fourfold faces in the temple of God, so that wherever anyone entered, they would worship the idols, was recalled from captivity after doing penance. Let's move on to the New. For it is from that, from which they want above all to exclude repentance, that repentance is above all proclaimed. We will ask the Saviour. "Why did you come?" and He answers: "I did not come to save the righteous, but to call sinners," he says, "to repentance."²⁰ Let us learn from him, "What are you carrying on your shoulders?" "A lost sheep," he says. "Upon what is there joy in heaven?" "Over some sinner," he says, "doing penance."²¹ The angels rejoice, and you envy? God receives with joy, and you forbid? Let us take refuge in the good God with greater zeal. There were two, he says, both sons (you cannot tell me that this repentance was of the gentiles: but they were both sons, who had divided the property equally.) The junior consumed what he had: righteous as he was, he fell. But when he had consumed everything, he came to do penance, and hastened to his father, and when he was about to meet his father, he thought what he was going to say to him. "I have sinned," he said, "against you, before heaven." He decided this with himself, and the Good Father did not hide away. He approached to excuse himself: He went to meet him, having honour to him. You only express a wish, and He runs ahead. He begins to speak, and the father receives him. Consider your inmost feelings, and don't give up hope. He accepted him, and said: "Kill the bull, and bring the best robe, and the ring into his hand."²²

All these things are set forth in another judgement: but however I abbreviate, they signify a good encouragement to those who receive, not what I want, but what He says. But if this one is accepted, after he has fed the pigs, after he has consumed everything, you say this is wrong, he is accepted wrongly, and his brother: who rightly objected to him.

4. And the fig tree which was cultivated, and which had not borne fruit for three years, was let go, and was not cut down for the hope of future fruit.²³ The Lord forgives, and you contradict? Is there anyone who steals things that already belong to him? But if God indulges, who is it that contradicts? In any case, let us learn to pray: "Forgive us our sins, for we have also forgiven ourselves."²⁴ You forgive, and God does not forgive? He made you a better doctor! With the measure you have measured, it will be returned to you. Let it go: He lets you go. You, bad as you are, act kindly; does not He who is good do much more so? Jesus deals with sinners, the doctor with the sick. The Pharisees were indignant, the fathers of those who are indignant now. The merciful is not turned away. He entered the house of the Pharisee, by invitation: a sinful woman who was not called came in after him.²⁵ She saw her sin, she went to righteousness: she saw the disease, she went to where the doctor was. She did not come to His face, for she was not so bold, she did not take hold of his hand, for she did not dare: but at the feet, which she washed with tears, she loosened her hair then only for honourable reasons; having revealed herself indecently, she then laid herself open honestly. You have been given an example to take refuge at the feet of Jesus. He returned to the Father, but He says: "I am with you."²⁶ Whenever he pleases, he is near; flee to him confidently, water his feet. And he comes in person, and he leaves in person.

These things which are taken from the New Testament are identical and related to those which are found in the Old. What does John preach? the baptism of repentance. And he teaches in parables, not once, not twice, so that although you are taught often, you learn. Peter denies Him three times, yet He is placed as the foundation. Paul, from being a persecutor, became a preacher. But here is the question. What in fact does he say? "Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am the worst."²⁷ He declares his own crime, in order to show the greatness of His grace. And Peter had spoken, and had obtained the blessing; he had said: "You are the son of the most high God;"²⁸ and when he had heard: "You are the rock," he was ennobled by the announcement. But although he is a rock, he is not as Christ is a rock, but as Peter is a rock. For Christ is truly an unshakable rock. But he became Peter because of the rock. For Jesus bestows his honours, and does not run out, but what he gives, he keeps. He is the light. "You are the light of the world."²⁹ He is a priest, he makes priests. He is the sheep: "Behold, I send you as sheep in the midst of wolves."³⁰ He is a rock, he makes a rock, and he gives him to his servants. For this is the sign of the rich, to have and to give. It is true that those who are rich among us, when they give generously, diminish what they have. For we are not rich, for we possess other people's property. But he is so rich, that no matter how much he has given away, he remains rich, nothing lessened, he covers a perennial source. No matter how much you draw, the flow does not decrease. No, not like a spring, for no example in nature among us can be compared to him. Hence, when we have nothing appropriate, we make use of lesser things, in order that we may somehow know the unknown. Peter denies three times, not so that Peter may fall, but that you too may have comfort. He wept; the tears fell on him who pities us. For he alone reveals everywhere that the intention of the soul was good. "The spirit is indeed willing; but the flesh is weak."³¹ He who invented, knows the invention, and He bears out infirmities, pardoning our offenses.

5. "Remember, Lord," he said, "that we are dust."³² For what is our righteousness? Abraham was truly great. He was so great, seeing that he is earth and ashes. For he, who knows how far there is between God and men, knows himself. Listen to the other Beatitudes. "Blessed are those whose iniquities are forgiven, whose sins are covered."³³ God preaches that they are blessed, and you forbid? If the Scriptures do not say what we wish, must we not obey it as it is written? and these things against us.³⁴ Contention that cuts off hope is not good. But because we promise forgiveness after baptism, (for this is especially common against vice), the Apostle writes in the previous letter to the Corinthians: "Fornication is definitely spoken of among you, and such fornication as is not spoken of even among the Gentiles."³⁵ You have heard the magnitude of the evil, also hear the intensity of the firm judgement: "Gather together," he said, "and by my spirit, in the power of Christ, let him who is of this sort be delivered up to Satan for the destruction of the flesh, that the spirit may be saved."³⁶ He punishes, for he does not reject as an enemy. In the former verse, indeed, he delivered to Satan: in the next verse, however, he writes nothing contrary to the former: "Reaffirm your love for him, so that he who is like this may not perish from excessive sorrow."³⁷ The apostle also solves the insoluble. For he orders such a man to be handed over to Satan, and later writing about the same, and giving forgiveness, he says: "That we may not be surrounded by Satan."³⁸ For if he has seized one of us, then he has already surrounded us. The sheep comes out of the sheepfold, it becomes fodder for the wolves. Enter to escape the trap.

Thus good shepherds, even if a sheep is stolen, at least try to recover the wool. If it is good to take away the dead body's hair, is it worth nothing to rescue the soul from the wolf's mouth? And the

victor is wounded in war, and because of that is not crowned, because he is wounded: but being exhausted by many labours, he received wounds. God does indeed consider the one thing³⁹ is bad, but does He not consider the many things⁴⁰ as good? How many martyrs who at first denied, when the battle resumed again, reversed the defeat? but they denied, not with their heart, but with their tongue. For the flesh is weak. He who denies is cut off; again when he confesses, he is restored. For God does not observe the bad things, indeed he does not count the good things in any place.⁴¹ And when a man was tortured, he generally yielded when he could not bear it, not changing the purpose of his will, but overcome by the struggle. But when he was released and rested, he was restored. Will what was said in that moment be held against him, but the torments will not be counted? But God is the judge, not the impudence of men. Do you dare to prescribe a law to God, who knows weakness, and supplies help, and gives victory? How many are there who, after living a bad life, sustained martyrdom? Because they were lured by desire, will they be deprived of their labours? We are not angels, but men, and we fall and we rise again, and that often at the same hour. "And star differs from star in glory." Why? Indeed, if there is a certain measure of justice, all must be equally righteous: if some shine like the sun, others shine like the moon, and others twinkle like the stars, it is clear that one is surpassed by another; but whoever is surpassed, it is clear that he is guilty of small sins. But if forgiveness were granted to no one who had sinned, there would be a difference in variety.⁴²

6. But since it is necessary to demonstrate that those who have fallen after baptism obtain salvation, I do not speak without fear, lest you should object to the judgement of my mind: for I absolutely desire that those who receive baptism do not sin. But those who have at any time fallen against their will, I do not agree with those who annul their repentance, not wanting us to dwell together on the cross: but what the apostle wants is for us to be buried together with it⁴³, and no longer to live in sin;⁴⁴ I want this very thing. "So I do not reject the grace of God,"⁴⁵ said the Apostle, writing to the Galatians that had received the Spirit. Are you looking for something more obvious than this? But he carries on: "You are so foolish that you began with the Spirit, and now finish with the flesh."⁴⁶ Therefore they had indeed received the Spirit. And again: "I only want to learn from you: Did you receive the Spirit from the works of the law, or from the hearing of faith? You were running well."⁴⁷ See how many privileges they have. Listen to the sins. "Now let's finish with the flesh. You have fallen away from Christ." You saw that they had the Spirit: you heard it, "You have been purged out by Christ"; likewise, "You have fallen from grace." What happens afterwards, giving place to restoration?⁴⁸ "My children, to whom I will give birth again."⁴⁹ He had once given birth to them; but he who has given birth once does not refuse to give birth again for salvation. But if anyone does anything else, with an evil mind, he himself has been wicked.⁵⁰ But men who have received the Spirit, who have run well, have suffered so much, have been in danger, have endured adversities in vain, have fallen and been purged, are yet again regenerated, so that they may again receive the form of God. Is there anything left for you that you oppose to repentance? Who formed us? God. He made us a body, he made us a soul. Does he hate it? Who gave us the medicine of life? Why are readings⁵¹ used? so that we may desist from sins. Why are we watered? so that we may bring forth fruit. What do we pray for? that our sins may be forgiven. Let us put an end to the prayer. To whom is there no repentance? This one: he who does wrong with the intention of repentance, has a habit of evil, and is deprived of repentance. There is hope even after sin, there is healing even after a wound, but the scar remains. Blessed was he that did not even falter: a second blessing, that he was restored to health after the plague. But to God, who

created us in the beginning, then comes down to our weakness, and keeps the purpose, and grants repentance, through him who bestows good things on us, Jesus Christ our Lord, be glory and dominion forever and ever, Amen.

1:

CPG 3530, "Homilia de paenitentia". Greek text edited by E. M. Buytaert, "L'heritage litteraire d' Eusebe d' Emese", Louvain (1949) , p.16*-29* (i.e. in the second half of the book), with an introduction on p.150 f., from Paris BNF grec Coislin 193, f.89 ff. There are also ancient versions in Armenian and Georgian. Translated by Roger Pearse, not from the Greek text, but from the Latin translation given by the Maurist fathers, Julien Garnier and Prudentius Maran, "Sancti Patris Nostri Basili Caesareae Cappadociae Opera Omnia", t. 2 (1722), pp.603-9 (online here); reprinted PG 31:1476-1488. The biblical references are taken from this. The work was often edited under the name of Basil of Caesarea, despite the clear statement in the MS. This translation is placed in the public domain.

2:

I.e. Christ.

3:

Isaiah 53:9.

4:

These seem to be objectors, who say that those who fall into sin after baptism cannot be forgiven by God.

5:

Ps. 40:9.

6: Isaiah 1:16 7: Ezekiel 33:11.

8:

Ezekiel 33:11.

9:

Jonah 3:10.

10:

Jonah 4.

11:

Mt. 20:15.

12:

1 Kings 21:16.

13:

Elijah.

14:

Ahab's.

15:

1 Kings 21:29. God promised to destroy Ahab and his dynasty; but when Ahab repented, the judgment was deferred to the next generation.

16:

2 Samuel 11.

17:

Exodus 4:13-14.

18:

Gen. 5:6, 17:17.

19:

Gen. 5:22.

20:

Cf. Mt. 9:13.

21:

Lk. 15:5-7.

22:

Luke 15:22.

23:

Lk. 13:7.

24:

Mt. 6:12.

25:

Lk. 7:37.

26:

Mt. 28:20.

27:

1 Tim. 1:15.

28:

Mt. 16:16.

29:

Jn. 1:19; Mt. 5:14.

30:

Mt. 10:16.

31:

Mt. 26:41.

32:

Ps. 102:14.

33:

Ps. 31:1.

34:

This doesn't make sense to me.

35:

1 Cor. 5:1.

36:

1 Cor. 5:4.

37:

2 Cor. 2:7-8.

38:

2 Cor. 2:11.

39:

The wound.

40:

The labours.

41:

This again does not make sense to me.

42:

Unable to follow the thought in the last few words.

43:

The cross.

44:

Rom. 6:4.

45:

Gal. 2:21.

46:

Gal. 3:3.

47:

Gal. 5:7.

48:

This did not make sense to me.

49:

Gal. 4:19. The sense is the new birth in Christ.

50:

This does not seem to connect to the surrounding sentences. Does it perhaps mean that refusing to allow repentance is itself wicked?

51:

From the bible.

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