Exhortation to Repentance

Pseudo-Cyprian (3rd century and later)

SermonIndex.net / Church Fathers

Authorship. These four short works were handed down with Cyprian's writings but are not by him; they come from various unknown authors, mostly of the third century.

Exhortation to Repentance

That all sins may be forgiven him who has turned to God with his whole heart. In the eighty-eighth Psalm: "If his children forsake my law, and walk not in my judgments, and keep not my commandments, I will visit their iniquities with a rod, and their sins with stripes; nevertheless my loving-kindness will I not scatter away from them." Also in Isaiah: "Thus saith the Lord, the Holy One of Israel, When thou shalt turn and mourn, then thou shalt be saved, and shalt know where thou wast." Also in the same place: "Woe unto you, children of desertion, saith the Lord! ye have made counsel not by me, and my covenant not by my Spirit, to add sin to sin." Also in Jeremiah: "Withdraw thy foot from a rough way, and thy face from thirst. But she said, I will be comforted, I am willing; for she loved strangers, and went after them."

Also in Isaiah: "Be ye converted, because ye devise a deep and wicked counsel." Also in the same place: "I am He, I am He that blotteth out thy iniquities, and will not remember them; but do thou remember them, and let us be judged together; do thou first tell thine unrighteousnesses." Also in the same: "Seek the Lord; and when ye shall have found Him, call upon Him. But when He has drawn near to you, let the wicked forsake his ways, and the unrighteous man his thoughts; and let him be converted to the Lord, and mercy shall be prepared for him, because He does not much forgive your sins." Also in the same: "Remember these things, O Jacob and Israel, because thou art my servant. I have called thee my servant; and thou, Israel, forget me not. Lo, I have washed away thy unrighteousness as,... and thy sins as a raincloud. Be converted to me, and I will redeem thee."

Also in the same: "Have these things in mind, and groan. Repent, ye that have been seduced; be converted in heart unto me, and have in mind the former ages, because I am God." Also in the same: "For a very little season I have forsaken thee, and with great mercy I will pity thee. In a very little wrath I turned away my face from thee; in everlasting mercy I will pity thee." Also in the same: "Thus said the Most High, who dwelleth on high, for ever Holy in the holies, His name is the Lord, the Most High, resting in the holy places, and giving calmness of mind to the faint-hearted, and giving life to those that are broken-hearted: I am not angry with you for ever, neither will I be avenged in all things on you: for my Spirit shall go forth from me, and I have made all inspiration; and on account of a very little sin I have grieved him, and have turned away my face from him; and he has suffered the vile

man, and has gone away sadly in his ways. I have seen his ways, and have healed him, and I have comforted him, and I have given to him the true consolation, and peace upon peace to those who are afar off, and to those that are near. And the Lord said, I have healed them; but the unrighteous, as a troubled sea, are thus tossed about and cannot rest. There is no joy to the wicked, saith the Lord."

Also in Jeremiah: "Shall a bride forget her adornment, or a virgin the girdle of her breast? But my people has forgotten my days, whereof there is no number." Also in the same: "For a decree, I will speak upon the nation or upon the kingdom, or I will take them away and destroy them. And if the nation should be converted from its evils, I will repent of the ills which I have thought to do unto them. And I will speak the decree upon the nation or the people, that I should rebuild it and plant it; and they will do evil before me, that they should not hearken to my voice, and I will repent of the good things which I spoke of doing to them." Also in the same: "Return to me, O dwelling of Israel, saith the Lord, and I will not harden my face upon you; because I am merciful, saith the Lord, and I will not be angry against you for ever."

Also in the same: "Be converted, ye children that have departed, saith the Lord; because I will rule over you, and will take you one of a city, and two of a family, and I will bring you into Sion: and I will give you shepherds after my heart, and they shall feed you, feeding you with discipline." Also in the same: "Be converted, ye children who are turning, and I will heal your affliction." Also in the same: "Wash thine heart from wickedness, O Jerusalem, that thou mayest be healed: how long shall there be in thee thoughts of thy sorrows? " Also in the same: "Thus saith the Lord, Does not he that falleth arise? or he that turns away, shall he not be turned back? Because this people hath turned itself away by a shameless vision, and they have persisted in their presumption, and would not be converted."

Also in the same: "There is no man that repenteth of his iniquity, saying, What have I done? The runner has failed from his course, as the sweating horse in his neighing." Also in the same: "Therefore let every one of you turn from his evil way, and make your desires better. And they said, We will be comforted, because we will go after your inventions, and every one of us will do the sins which please his own heart." Also in the same: "Pour down as a torrent tears, day and night give thyself no rest, let not the pupil of thine eye be silent." Also in the same: "Let us search out our ways, and be turned to the Lord. Let us purge our hearts with our hands, and let us look unto the Lord who dwelleth in the heavens. We have sinned, and we have provoked Thee, and Thou hast not been propitiated."

Also in the same: "And the Lord said to me in the days of Josias the king, Thou hast seen what the dwelling of the house, the house of Israel, has done to me. It has gone away upon every lofty mountain, and has gone under every shady tree, and has committed fornication there-and I said, after she had committed all these fornications, Return unto me, and she has not returned." Also in the same: "The Lord will not reject for ever; and when He has made low, He will have pity according to the multitude of His mercy. Because He will not bring low from His whole heart, neither will He reject the children Of men." Also in Ezekiel:

”And the righteous shall not be able to be saved in the day of transgression. When I shall say to the righteous, Thou shalt surely live; but he will trust to his own righteousness, and will do iniquity: all his righteousnesses shall not be remembered; in his iniquity which he has done, in that he shall die. And when I shall say to the wicked, Thou shalt surely die, and he turns himself from his sin, and doeth righteousness and judgment, and restoreth to the debtor his pledge, and giveth back his robbery, and walketh in the precepts of life, that he may do no iniquity, he shall surely live, and shall not die; none of his sins which he hath sinned shall be stirred up against him: because he hath done justice and judgment, he shall live in them.”

Also in the same: ”I am the Lord, because I bring low the high tree, and exalt the low tree, and dry up the green tree, and cause the dry tree to flourish.” Also in the same: ”And thou, son of man, say unto the house of Israel, Even as ye have spoken, saying, Our errors and our iniquities are in us, and we waste away in them, and how shall we live? Say unto them, I live, saith the Lord: if I will the death of a sinner, only let him turn from his way, and he shall live.” Also in the same: ”I the Lord have built up the ruined places, and have planted the wasted places.” Also in the same: ”And the wicked man, if he turn himself from all his iniquities that he has done, and keep all my commandments, and do judgment, and justice, and mercy, shall surely live, and shall not die. None of his sins which he has committed shall be in remembrance; in his righteousness which he hath done he shall live. Do I willingly desire the death of the unrighteous man, saith Adonai the Lord, rather than that he should turn him from his evil way, that he should live? ”

Also in the same: ”Be ye converted, and turn you from all your wickedneses, and they shall not be to you for a punishment. Cast away from you all your iniquities which ye have wickedly committed against me, and make to yourselves a new heart and a new spirit; and why will ye die, O house of Israel? For I desire not the death of him that dieth, saith Adonai the Lord.” Also in Daniel: ”And after the end of the days, I Nabuchodonosor lifted up my eyes to heaven, and my sense returned to me, and I praised the Most High, and blessed the King of heaven, and praised Him that liveth for ever: because His power is eternal, His kingdom is for generations, and all who inhabit the earth are as nothing.” Also in Micah: ”Alas for me, O my soul, because truth has perished from the earth, and among all there is none that correcteth; all judge in blood. Every one treadeth down his neighbour with tribulation; they prepare their hands for evil.”

Also in the same: ”Rejoice not against me, O mine enemy, because I have fallen, but I shall arise: because although I shall sit in darkness, the Lord will give me light: I will bear the Lord’s anger, because I have sinned against Him, until He justify my cause.” Also in Zephaniah: ”Come ye together and pray, O undisciplined people; before ye be made as a flower that passeth away, before the anger of the Lord come upon you, before the day of the Lord’s fury come upon you, seek ye the Lord, all ye humble ones of the earth; do judgment and seek justice, and seek for gentleness; and answer ye to Him that ye may be protected in the day of the Lord’s anger.” Also in Zechariah: ”Be ye converted unto me, and I will be

turned unto you." Also in Hosea: "Be thou converted, O Israel, to the Lord thy God, because thou art weakened by thine iniquities. Take many with you, and be converted to the Lord your God; worship Him, and say, Thou art mighty to put away our sins; that ye may not receive iniquity, but that ye may receive good things."

Also in Ecclesiasticus: "Be thou turned to the Lord, and forsake thy sins, and exceedingly hate cursing, and know righteousness and God's judgments, and stand in the lot of the propitiation of the Most High: and go into the portion of life with the living, and those that make confession. Delay not in the error of the wicked. Confession perisheth from the dead man, as if it were nothing. Living and sound, thou shalt confess to the Lord, and thou shalt glory in His mercies; for great is the mercy of the Lord, and His propitiation unto such as turn unto Him." Also in the same: "How good is it for a true heart to show forth repentance! For thus shalt thou escape voluntary sin." Also in the Acts of the Apostles: "But Peter saith unto him, thy money perish with thee, because thou thinkest to be able to obtain the grace of God by money. Thou hast no part nor lot in this faith, for thy heart is not right with God. Therefore repent of this thy wickedness, and pray the Lord, if haply the thought of thy heart may be forgiven thee. For I see that thou art in the bond of iniquity, and in the bitterness of gall."

Also in the second Epistle of the blessed Paul to the Corinthians: "For the sorrow which is according to God worketh a stedfast repentance unto salvation, but the sorrow of the world worketh death." Also in the same place of this very matter: "But if ye have forgiven anything to any one, I also forgive him; for I also forgave what I have forgiven for your sakes in the person of Christ, that we may not be circumvented by Satan, for we are not ignorant of his wiles." Also in the same: "But I fear lest perchance, when I come to you, God may again humble me among you, and I shall bewail many of those who have sinned before, and have not repented, for that they have committed fornication and lasciviousness." Also in the same: "I told you before, and foretell you as I sit present; and absent now from those who before have sinned, and to all others; as, ill shall come again, I will not spare."

Also in the second to Timothy: "But shun profane novelties of words, for they are of much advantage to impiety. And their word creeps as a cancer: of whom is Hymenaeus and Philetus, who have departed from the truth, saying that the resurrection has already happened, and have subverted the faith of certain ones. But the foundation of God standeth firm, having this seal, God knoweth them that are His. And, Every one who nameth the name of the Lord shall depart from all iniquity. But in a great house there are not only vessels of gold and silver, but also of wood and of clay; and some indeed for honour, and some for contempt. Therefore if any one shall amend himself from these things, he shall be a vessel sanctified for honour, and useful for the Lord, prepared for every good work. Moreover, flee youthful lusts: but follow after righteousness, faith, charity, peace, with them that call upon the Lord from a pure heart. But avoid questions that are foolish and without learning, knowing that they beget strifes. And the servant of the Lord ought not to strive; but to be gentle, docile to all men, patient with modesty, correcting those who resist, lest at any time

God may give them repentance to the acknowledgment of the truth, and recover themselves from the snares of the devil, by whom they are held captive at his will."

Also in the Apocalypse: "Remember whence thou hast fallen, and repent; but if not, I will come to thee quickly, and remove thy candlestick out of its place."

Authorship. These four short works were handed down with Cyprian's writings but are not by him; they come from various unknown authors, mostly of the third century.

Source. English translation: an older public-domain translation as collected in the Writings-Database (HistoricalChristianFaith), mostly from the Ante-Nicene, Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers and similar nineteenth-century editions. SermonIndex has only divided it into chapters and short sections; the wording is the translator's own. Square brackets, Greek or Latin words and footnote-free text are as the source file prints them, and a transcription error may remain. No Greek or Latin text is shown beside it yet, and no modern English version has been made.