

# Exposition on Psalm 51

by St. Augustine

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*St. Augustine's exposition on Psalm 51 emphasizes the importance of penitence, humility, and the hope of God's mercy for sinners.*

**Topics:** "Repentance And Forgiveness", "Gods Mercy"

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## Description

St. Augustine preaches about the repentance and forgiveness of David, emphasizing the need for sincere confession, humility, and a contrite heart before God. He delves into the story of David's sin with Bathsheba, highlighting the consequences of sin, the importance of seeking God's mercy, and the power of true repentance. St. Augustine encourages believers to learn from David's mistakes, to acknowledge their sins, and to seek God's forgiveness with a genuine heart. He emphasizes the transformation from unrighteousness to righteousness through God's mercy and the offering of praises as a sacrifice of righteousness.

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## Transcript

1. Neither must this multitude's throng be defrauded, nor their infirmity burthened. Silence we ask, and quiet, in order that our voice, after yesterday's labour, be able with some little vigour to last out. It must be believed, that your love has met together in greater numbers today for nothing else, but that you may pray for those whom an alien and perverse inclination does keep away. For we are speaking neither of heathens nor of Jews, but of Christians: nor of those that are yet Catechumens, but of many that are even baptized, from the Laver of whom you do no wise differ, and yet to their heart you are unlike. For today how many brethren of ours we think of, and deplore their going unto vanities and lying insanities, to the neglect of that to which they have been called. Who, if in the very circus from any cause they chance to be startled, do immediately cross themselves, and stand bearing It on the forehead, in the very place, from whence they had withdrawn, if they had borne It in heart. God's mercy must be implored, that He may give understanding for condemning these things, inclination to flee them, and mercy to forgive. Opportunately, then, of Penitence a Psalm today has been chanted. Speak we even with the absent: there will be to them for our voice your memory. Neglect not the wounded and feeble, but that you may more easily make whole, whole ye ought to abide. Correct by reproving, comfort by addressing, set an example by living well, He will be with them that has been with you. For now that you have overpassed these dangers, the fountain of God's mercy is not closed. Where you have come they will come; where you have passed they will pass. A grievous thing it is indeed, and exceeding perilous, nay ruinous, and for certain a deadly thing, that witting they sin. For in one way to these vanities does he run that despises the voice of Christ; in

another way, he that knows from what he is fleeing. But that not even of such men we ought to despair, this Psalm does show.

2. For there is written over it the title thereof, A Psalm of David himself, when there came to him Nathan the prophet, when he went in unto Bersabee. Bersabee was a woman, wife of another. With grief indeed we speak, and with trembling; but yet God would not have to be hushed what He has willed to be written. I will say then not what I will, but what I am obliged; I will say not as one exhorting to imitation, but as one instructing you to fear. Captivated with this woman's beauty, the wife of another, the king and prophet David, from whose seed according to the flesh the Lord was to come, Romans 1:3 committed adultery with her. This thing in this Psalm is not read, but in the title thereof it appears; but in the book of Kings 2 Samuel 11:2-17 it is more fully read. Both Scriptures are canonical, to both without any doubt by Christians credit must be given. The sin was committed, and was written down. Moreover her husband in war he caused to be killed: and after this deed there was sent to him Nathan the prophet; 2 Samuel 12:1 sent by the Lord, to reprove him for so great an outrage.

3. What men should beware of, we have said; but what if they shall have fallen they should imitate, let us hear. For many men will to fall with David, and will not to rise with David. Not then for falling is the example set forth, but if you shall have fallen for rising again. Take heed lest you fall. Not the delight of the younger be the lapse of the elder, but be the fall of the elder the dread of the younger. For this it was set forth, for this was written, for this in the Church often read and chanted: let them hear that have not fallen, lest they fall; let them hear that have fallen, that they may rise.

So great a man's sin is not hushed, is proclaimed in the Church. There men hear that are ill hearers, and seek for themselves countenance for sinning: they look out for means whereby they may defend what they have made ready to commit, not how they may beware of what they have not committed, and they say to themselves, If David, why not I too? Thence that soul is more unrighteous, which, forasmuch as it has done it because David did, therefore has done worse than David. I will say this very thing, if I shall be able, more plainly.

David had set forth to himself none for a precedent as you have: he had fallen by lapse of concupiscence, not by the countenance of holiness: thou dost set before your eyes as it were a holy man, in order that you may sin: thou dost not copy his holiness, but dost copy his fall. Thou dost love that in David, which in himself David hated: you make you ready to sin, you incline to sin: in order that you may sin you consult the book of God: the Scriptures of God for this you hear, that you may do what displeases God.

This did not David; he was reprov'd by a Prophet, he stumbled not over a Prophet. But others hearing to their health, by the fall of a strong man measure their weakness: and desiring to avoid what God condemns, from careless looking do restrain their eyes. Then they fix not upon the beauty of another's flesh, nor make themselves careless with perverse simpleness; they say not, With good intent I have observed, of kindness I have observed, of charity I have long looked. For they set before themselves the fall of David, and they see that this great man for this purpose has fallen, in order that little men may not be willing to look on that whereby they may fall.

For they restrain their eyes from wantonness, not readily do they join themselves in company, they do not mingle with strange women, they raise not complying eyes to strange balconies, to strange terraces. For from afar David saw her with whom he was captivated. 2 Samuel 11:2 Woman afar, lust near. What he saw was elsewhere, in himself that whereby he fell. This weakness of the flesh must be therefore minded,

the words of the Apostle recollected, Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body.

Romans 6:12 He has not said, let there not be; but, let there not reign. There is sin in you, when you take pleasure; there reigns, if you shall have consented. Carnal pleasure, especially if proceeding unto unlawful and strange objects, is to be bridled, not let loose: by government to be tamed, not to be set up for government. Look and be without care, if you have nothing whereby you may be moved. But you make answer, I contain with strong resolution. Are you any wise stronger than David? 4.

He admonishes, moreover, by such an example, that no one ought to lift himself up in prosperous circumstances. For many fear adverse circumstances, fear not prosperous circumstances. Prosperity is more perilous to soul than adversity to body. First, prosperity does corrupt, in order that adversity may find something to break. My brethren, stricter watch must be kept against felicity. Wherefore, see ye after what manner the saying of God amid our own felicity does take from us security: Serve ye, He says, the Lord in fear, and exult unto Him with trembling.

In exultation, in order that we may render thanks; in trembling, lest we fall. This sin did not David, when he was suffering Saul for persecutor. When holy David was suffering Saul his enemy, when he was being vexed by his persecutions, when he was fleeing through various places, in order that he might not fall into his hands, he lusted not for her that was another's, he slew not husband after committing adultery with wife. He was in the infirmity of his tribulation so much the more intimate with God as he seemed more miserable.

Something useful is tribulation; useful the surgeon's lancet rather than the devil's temptation. He became secure when his enemies were overthrown, pressure was removed, swelling grew out. This example therefore does avail to this end, that we should fear felicity. Tribulation, he says, and grief I found, and on the name of the Lord I called. 5. But it was done; I would say these words to those that have not done the like, in order that they should watch to keep their uncorruptness, and that while they take heed how a great one has fallen, they that be small should fear.

But if any that has already fallen hears these words, and that has in his conscience any evil thing; to the words of this Psalm let him advert; let him heed the greatness of the wound, but not despair of the majesty of the Physician. Sin with despair is certain death. Let no one therefore say, If already any evil thing I have done, already I am to be condemned: God pardons not such evil things, why add I not sins to sins? I will enjoy this word in pleasure, in wantonness, in wicked cupidity: now hope of amendment having been lost, let me have even what I see, if I cannot have what I believe.

This Psalm then, while it makes heedful those that have not believed, so does not will them that have fallen to be despaired of. Whoever you are that hast sinned, and hesitatest to exercise penitence for your sin, despairing of your salvation, hear David groaning. To you Nathan the prophet has not been sent, David himself has been sent to you. Hear him crying, and with him cry: hear him groaning, and with him groan; hear him weeping, and mingle tears; hear him amended, and with him rejoice.

If from you sin could not be excluded, be not hope of pardon excluded. There was sent to that man Nathan the prophet, observe the king's humility. He rejected not the words of him giving admonition, he said not, Darest thou speak to me, a king? An exalted king heard a prophet, let His humble people hear Christ.

6. Hear therefore these words, and say thou with him: Have pity upon me, O God, after Your great mercy Psalm 50:1. He that implores great mercy, confesses great misery. Let them seek a little mercy of You,

that have sinned in ignorance: Have pity, he says, upon me, after Your great mercy. Relieve a deep wound after Your great healing. Deep is what I have, but in the Almighty I take refuge. Of my own so deadly wound I should despair, unless I could find so great a Physician. Have pity upon me, O God, after Your great mercy: and after the multitude of Your pities, blot out my iniquity. What he says, Blot out my iniquity, is this, Have pity upon me, O God. And what he says, After the multitude of Your pities, is this, After Your great mercy. Because great is the mercy, many are the mercies; and of Your great mercy, many are Your pitying. Thou dost regard mockers to amend them, dost regard ignorant men to teach them, dost regard men confessing to pardon. Did he this in ignorance? A certain man had done some, aye many evil things he had done; Mercy, he says, I obtained, because ignorant I did it in unbelief. 1 Timothy 1:13 This David could not say, Ignorant I did it. For he was not ignorant how very evil a thing was the touching of another's wife, and how very evil a thing was the killing of the husband, who knew not of it, and was not even angered. They obtain therefore the mercy of the Lord that have in ignorance done it; and they that have knowing done it, obtain not any mercy it may chance, but great mercy.

7. More and more wash me from mine unrighteousness Psalm 50:2. What is, More and more wash? One much stained. More and more wash the sins of one knowing. Thou that hast washed off the sins of one ignorant. Not even thus is it to be despaired of Your mercy. And from my delinquency purge Thou me. According to the manner in which He is physician, offer a recompense. He is God, offer sacrifice. What will you give that you may be purged? For see upon whom you call, upon a Just One you call. He hates sins, if He is just; He takes vengeance upon sins, if He is just; you will not be able to take away from the Lord God His justice: entreat mercy, but observe the justice: there is mercy to pardon the sinner, there is justice to punish the sin. What then? Thou ask mercy; shall sin unpunished abide? Let David answer, let those that have fallen answer, answer with David, and say, No, Lord, no sin of mine shall be unpunished; I know the justice of Him whose mercy I ask: it shall not be unpunished, but for this reason I will not that Thou punish me, because I punish my sin: for this reason I beg that Thou pardon, because I acknowledge.

8. For mine iniquity I acknowledge, and my delinquency is before me ever Psalm 50:3. I have not put behind my back what I have done, I look not at others, forgetful of myself, I pretend not to pull out a straw from my brother's eye, when there is a beam in my eye; Matthew 7:5 my sin is before me, not behind me. For it was behind me when to me was sent the Prophet, and set before me the parable of the poor man's sheep. For says Nathan the Prophet to David, There was a certain rich man having very many sheep; but a poor man his neighbour had one little ewe sheep, which in his bosom and of his own food he was feeding: there came a stranger to the rich man, nothing from his flock he took, for the lithe ewe sheep of the poor man his neighbour he lusted; her he slew for the stranger: what does he deserve? But the other being angry does pronounce sentence: then the king, evidently knowing not wherein he had been taken, declared the rich man deserving of death, and that the sheep be restored fourfold. Most sternly and most justly. But his sin was not yet before him, behind his back was what he had done: his own iniquity he did not yet acknowledge, and therefore another's he did not pardon. But the Prophet, being for this purpose sent, took from his back the sin, and before his eyes placed it, so that he might see that sentence so stern to have been pronounced against himself. For cutting and healing his heart's wound, he made a lancet of his tongue....

9. Against You alone have I sinned, and before You an evil thing have I done Psalm 50:4. What is this? For before men was not another's wife debauched and husband slain? Did not all men know what David had done? 2 Samuel 11:4, 15 What is, Against You alone have I sinned, and before You an evil thing have I done. Because You alone are without sin. He is a just punisher that has nothing in Him to be punished;

He is a just reprovor that has nothing in Him to be reproved. That you may be justified in Your sayings, and conquer when You are judged. To whom he speaks, brethren, to whom he speaks, is difficult to understand. To God surely he speaks, and it is evident that God the Father is not judged. What is, And conquer when You are judged? He sees the future Judge to be judged, one just by sinners to be judged, and therein conquering, because in Him was nothing to be judged. For alone among men could truly say the God-Man, If you have found in Me sin, say. John 8:46 But perchance there was what escaped men, and they found not what was really there, but was not manifest. In another place John 14:30 He says, Behold there comes the Prince of the world, being an acute observer of all sins; Behold, He says, there comes the Prince of this world, with death afflicting sinners, presiding over death: for, By the malice of the devil death came into the world. Wisdom 2:24 Behold, He says, there comes the Prince of the world:-- He said these words close upon His Passion:-- and in Me he shall find nothing, nothing of sin, nothing worthy of death, nothing worthy of condemnation. And as if it were said to Him, Why then do You die? He continues and says, But that all men may know that I do the will of My Father; arise, let us go hence. I suffer, He says, undeserving, for men deserving, in order that them I may make deserving of My Life, for whom I undeservedly suffer their death. To Him then, having no sin, says on the present occasion the Prophet David, Against You only have I sinned, and before You an evil thing have I done, that You may be justified in Your sayings, and conquer when You are judged. For Thou overcomest all men, all judges; and he that deems himself just, before You is unjust: Thou alone justly judgest, having been unjustly judged, That hast power to lay down Your life, and hast power again to take it. John 10:18 Thou conquerest, then, when You are judged. All men Thou overcomest, because You are more than men, and by You were men made.

10. For, behold, in iniquities I was conceived Psalm 50:5. As though he were saying, They are conquered that have done what thou, David, hast done: for this is not a little evil and little sin, to wit, adultery and man-slaying. What of them that from the day that they were born of their mother's womb, have done no such thing? Even to them do you ascribe some sins, in order that He may conquer all men when He begins to be judged. David has taken upon him the person of mankind, and has heeded the bonds of all men, has considered the offspring of death, has adverted to the origin of iniquity, and he says, For, behold, in iniquities I was conceived. Was David born of adultery; being born of Jesse, 1 Samuel 16:18 a righteous man, and his own wife? What is it that he says himself to have been in iniquity conceived, except that iniquity is drawn from Adam? Even the very bond of death, with iniquity itself is engrained? No man is born without bringing punishment, bringing desert of punishment. A Prophet says also in another place, No one is clean in Your sight, not even an infant, whose life is of one day upon earth. For we know both by the Baptism of Christ that sins are loosed, and that the Baptism of Christ avails the remission of sins. If infants are every way innocent, why do mothers run with them when sick to the Church? What by that Baptism, what by that remission is put away? An innocent one I see that rather weeps than is angry. What does Baptism wash off? What does that Grace loose? There is loosed the offspring of sin. For if that infant could speak to you, it would say, and if it had the understanding which David had, it would answer you, Why do you heed me, an infant? Thou dost not indeed see my actions: but I in iniquity have been conceived, And in sins has my mother nourished me in the womb.

Apart from this bond of mortal concupiscence was Christ born without a male, of a virgin conceiving by the Holy Ghost. He cannot be said to have been conceived in iniquity, it cannot be said, In sins His mother nourished Him in the womb, to whom was said, The Holy Ghost shall come upon you, and the Virtue of the Highest shall overshadow you. Luke 1:35 It is not therefore because it is sin to have to do with wives that men are conceived in iniquity, and in sins nourished in the womb by their mother; but because that which

is made is surely made of flesh deserving punishment. For the punishment of the flesh is death, and surely there is in it liability to death itself. Whence the Apostle spoke not of the body as if to die, but as if dead: The body indeed is dead, he says, because of sin, but the Spirit is life because of righteousness. Romans 8:10 How then without bond of sin is born that which is conceived and sown of a body dead because of sin? This chaste operation in a married person has not sin, but the origin of sin draws with it condign punishment. For there is no husband that, because he is an husband, is not subject to death, or that is subject to death for any other reason but because of sin. For even the Lord was subject to death, but not on account of sin: He took upon Him our punishment, and so looses our guilt. With reason then, In Adam all die, but in Christ shall all be made alive. 1 Corinthians 15:22 For, Through one man, says the Apostle, sin has entered into this world, and through sin death, and so has passed unto all men, in that all have sinned. Romans 5:12 Definite is the sentence: In Adam, he says, all have sinned. Alone then could such an infant be innocent, as has not been born of the work of Adam.

11. For, behold, truth You have loved: uncertain and hidden things of Your wisdom, You have manifested to me Psalm 50:6. That is, You have not left unpunished even the sins of those whom Thou dost pardon. Truth You have loved: so mercy You have granted first, as that You should also preserve truth. Thou pardonest one confessing, pardonest, but only if he punishes himself: so there are preserved mercy and truth: mercy because man is set free; truth, because sin is punished. Uncertain and hidden things of Your wisdom You have manifested to me.

What hidden things? What uncertain things? Because God pardons even such. Nothing is so hidden, nothing so uncertain. For this uncertainty the Ninevites repented, for they said, though after the threatenings of the Prophet, though after that cry, Three days and Nineve shall be overthrown: Jonah 3:4 they said to themselves, Mercy must be implored; they said in this sort reasoning among themselves, Who knows whether God may turn for the better His sentence, and have pity? Jonah 3:9 It was uncertain, when it is said, Who knows? on an uncertainty they did repent, certain mercy they earned: they prostrated them in tears, in fastings, in sackcloth and ashes they prostrated them, groaned, wept, God spared.

Nineve stood: was Nineve overthrown? One way indeed it seems to men, and another way it seemed to God. But I think that it was fulfilled that the Prophet had foretold. Regard what Nineve was, and see how it was overthrown; overthrown in evil, built in good; just as Saul the persecutor was overthrown, Paul the preacher built. Acts 9:4 Who would not say that this city, in which we now are, was happily overthrown, if all those madmen, leaving their triflings, were to run together to the Church with contrite heart, and were to call upon God's mercy for their past doings?

Should we not say, Where is that Carthage? Because there is not what there was, it is overthrown: but if there is what there was not, it is built. So is said to Jeremiah, Behold, I will give to you to root up, to dig under, to overthrow, to destroy, and again, to build, and to plant. Jeremiah 1:10 Thence is that voice of the Lord, I will smite and I will heal. Deuteronomy 32:39 He smites the rottenness of the deed, He heals the pain of the wound. Physicians do thus when they cut; they smite and heal; they arm themselves in order to strike, they carry steel, and come to cure.

But because great were the sins of the Ninevites, they said, Who knows? This uncertainty had God disclosed to His servant David. For when he had said, before the Prophet standing and convicting him, I have sinned: straightway he heard from the Prophet, that is, from the Spirit of God which was in the Prophet, Your sin is put away from you. 2 Samuel 12:13 Uncertain and hidden things of His wisdom He manifested to him. 12. You shall sprinkle me, he says, with hyssop, and I shall be cleansed Psalm 50:7.

Hyssop we know to be a herb humble but healing: to the rock it is said to adhere with roots. Thence in a mystery the similitude of cleansing the heart has been taken. Do thou also take hold, with the root of your love, on your Rock: be humble in your humble God, in order that you may be exalted in your glorified God. You shall be sprinkled with hyssop, the humility of Christ shall cleanse you. Despise not the herb, attend to the efficacy of the medicine. Something further I will say, which we are wont to hear from physicians, or to experience in sick persons.

Hyssop, they say, is proper for purging the lungs. In the lung is wont to be noted pride: for there is inflation, there breathing. It was said of Saul the persecutor as of Saul the proud, that he was going to bind Christians, breathing slaughter: Acts 9:1 he was breathing out slaughter, breathing out blood, his lung not yet cleansed. Hear also in this place one humbled, because with hyssop purged: You shall wash me, that is, shall cleanse me: and above snow I shall be whitened.

Although, he says, your sins shall have been like scarlet, like snow I will whiten. Isaiah 1:18 Out of such men Christ does present to Himself a vesture without spot and wrinkle. Ephesians 5:27 Further, His vesture on the mount, which shone forth like whitened snow, Matthew 17:2 signified the Church cleansed from every spot of sin.

13. But where is humility from hyssop? Hear what follows: To my hearing You shall give exultation and gladness, and bones humbled shall exult Psalm 50:8. I will rejoice in hearing You, not in speaking against You. You have sinned, why defendest you yourself? You will speak: suffer thou; hear, yield to divine words, lest you be put to confusion, and be still more wounded: sin has been committed, be it not defended: to confession let it come, not to defence. Thou engagest yourself as defender of your sin, you are conquered: no innocent patron have you engaged, your defence is not profitable to you. For who are you that defendest yourself? You are meet to accuse yourself. Say not, either, I have done nothing; or, What great thing have I done? or, Other men as well have done. If in doing sin you say you have done nothing, you will be nothing, you will receive nothing: God is ready to give indulgence, you close the door against yourself: He is ready to give, do not oppose the bar of defence, but open the bosom of confession. To my hearing You shall give exultation and gladness....

14. Turn Thou away Your face from my sins, and all mine iniquities blot out Psalm 50:9. For now bones humbled exult, now with hyssop cleansed, humble I have become. Turn Thou away Your face, not from me, but from my sins. For in another place praying he says, Turn not away Your face from me. He that would not that God's face be turned away from himself, would that God's face be turned away from his sins. For to sin, when God turns not Himself away, he adverts: if he adverts, he animadvert. And all mine iniquities blot out. He is busied with that capital sin: he reckons on more, he would have all his iniquities to be blotted out: he relies on the Physician's hand, on that great mercy, upon which he has called in the beginning of the Psalm: All mine iniquities blot out. God turns away His face, and so blots out; by turning away His face, sins He blots out. By turning towards, He writes them. You have heard of Him blotting out by turning away, hear of Him by turning towards, doing what? But the countenance of the Lord is upon men doing evil things, that He may destroy from the earth the remembrance of them: He shall destroy the remembrance of them, not by blotting out their sins. But here he does ask what? Turn away Your face from my sins. Well he asks. For he himself does not turn away his face from his own sins, saying, For my sin I acknowledge. With reason you ask and well ask, that God turn away from your sin, if you from thence dost not turn away your face: but if you set your sin at your back, God does there set His face. Do thou turn sin before your face, if you will that God thence turn away His face; and then safely you ask, and He hears.

15. A clean heart create in me, O God Psalm 50:10. Create-- he meant to say, as it were begin something new. But, because repentant he was praying (that had committed some sin, which before he had committed, he was more innocent), after what manner he has said create he shows. And a right spirit renew in my inner parts. By my doing, he says, the uprightness of my spirit has been made old and bowed. For he says in another Psalm, They have bowed my soul. And when a man does make himself stoop unto earthly lusts, he is bowed in a manner, but when he is made erect for things above, upright is his heart made, in order that God may be good to him. For, How good is the God of Israel to the upright of heart! Moreover, brethren, listen. Sometimes God in this world chastises for his sin him that He pardons in the world to come. For even to David himself, to whom it had been already said by the Prophet, Your sin is put away, 2 Samuel 12:13 there happened certain things which God had threatened for that very sin. For his son Absalom against him waged bloody war, and many ways humbled his father. 2 Samuel 15:10 He was walking in grief, in the tribulation of his humiliation, so resigned to God, that, ascribing to Him all that was just, he confessed that he was suffering nothing undeservedly, having now an heart upright, to which God was not displeasing. A slanderous person and one throwing in his teeth harsh curses 2 Samuel 16:10 he patiently heard, one of the soldiers on the opposite side, that were with his unnatural son. And when he was heaping curses upon the king, one of the companions of David, enraged, would have gone and smitten him; but he is kept back by David. And he is kept back how? For that he said, God sent him to curse me. Acknowledging his guilt he embraced his penance, seeking glory not his own, praising the Lord in that good which he had, praising the Lord in that which he was suffering, blessing the Lord always, ever His praise was in his mouth. Such are all the upright in heart: not those crooked persons who think themselves upright and God crooked: who when they do any evil thing, rejoice; when they suffer any evil thing, blaspheme; nay, if set in tribulation and scourging, they say from their distorted heart, O God, what have I done to You? Truly it is because they have done nothing to God, for they have done all to themselves. And an upright spirit, renew in my inner parts.

16. Cast me not forth from Your face Psalm 50:11. Turn away Your face from my sins: and cast me not forth from Your face. Whose face he fears, upon the face of the Same he calls. And Your Holy Spirit take not away from me. For in one confessing there is the Holy Spirit. Even now, to the gift of the Holy Spirit it belongs, that what you have done displeases you. The unclean spirit sins do please; the Holy One they displease. Though then thou still implore pardon, yet you are joined to God on the other part, because the evil thing that you have committed displeases you: for the same thing displeases both you and Him. Now, to assail your fever, you are two, thou and the Physician. For the reason that there cannot be confession of sin and punishment of sin in a man of himself: when one is angry with himself, and is displeasing to himself, then it is not without the gift of the Holy Spirit, nor does he say, Your Holy Spirit give to me, but, Take not away from me.

17. Give back to me the exultation of Your salvation Psalm 50:12. Give back what I had; what by sinning I had lost: to wit, of Your Christ. For who without Him can be made whole? Because even before that He was Son of Mary, In the beginning He was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God; John 1:1 and so, by the holy fathers a future dispensation of flesh taken upon Him, was looked for; as is believed by us to have been done. Times are changed, not faith. And with Principal Spirit confirm me. Some have here understood the Trinity in God, Itself God; the dispensation of Flesh being excepted therefrom: since it is written, God is a Spirit. John 4:24 For that which is not body, and yet is, seems to exist in such sort as that it is spirit. Therefore some understand here the Trinity spoken of: In upright Spirit, the Son; in Holy Spirit, Holy Ghost; in Principal Spirit, Father. It is not any heretical opinion, therefore, whether this be so, or whether upright Spirit He would have to be taken of man himself (when He says, An

upright spirit renew in my inner parts), which I have bowed and distorted by sinning, so that in that case the Holy Spirit be Himself the Principal Spirit: which also he would not have to be taken away from him, and thereby would have himself to be confirmed therein.

18. But see what he annexes: With Principal Spirit, he says, confirm Thou me. Wherein confirm? Because You have pardoned me, because I am secure, that what You have forgiven is not to be ascribed, on this being made secure and with this grace confirmed, therefore I am not ungrateful. But I shall do what? I would teach unrighteous men Your ways Psalm 50:13. Being myself of the unrighteous (that is, one that was myself an unrighteous man, now no longer unrighteous; the Holy Spirit not having been taken away from me, and I being confirmed with Principal Spirit). I would teach unrighteous men Your ways. What ways will you teach unrighteous men? And ungodly men to You shall be converted. If David's sin is counted for ungodliness, let not ungodly men despair of themselves, forasmuch as God has spared an ungodly man; but let them take heed that to Him they be converted, that His ways they learn. But if David's deed is not counted for ungodliness, but this is properly call ungodliness, namely, to apostatize from God, not to worship one God, or never to have worshipped, or to have forsaken, Him whom one did worship, then what he says has the force of superabundance, And ungodly men shall to You be converted. So full are you of the fatness of mercy, that for those converted to You, not only sinners of any sort, but even ungodly, there is no cause for despair. Wherefore? That believing on Him that justifies an ungodly man, their faith may be counted for righteousness. Romans 4:5

19. Deliver me from bloods, O God, God of my health Psalm 50:14. The Latin translator has expressed, though by a word not Latin, yet an accuracy from the Greek. For we all know that in Latin, sanguines (bloods) are not spoken of, nor yet sanguina (bloods in the neuter), nevertheless because the Greek translator has thus used the plural number, not without reason, but because he found this in the original language the Hebrew, a godly translator has preferred to use a word not Latin, rather than one not exact. Wherefore then has he said in the plural number, From bloods? In many bloods, as in the origin of the sinful flesh, many sins he would have to be understood. The Apostle having regard to the very sins which come of the corruption of flesh and blood, says, Flesh and blood shall not possess the kingdom of God. 1 Corinthians 15:50 For doubtless, after the true faith of the same Apostle, that flesh shall rise again and shall itself gain incorruption, as He says Himself, This corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal put on immortality. 1 Corinthians 15:53 Because then this corruption is of sin, by the name thereof sins are called. In like manner as both that morsel of flesh and member which plays in the mouth when we articulate words is called a tongue, and that is called a tongue which by the tongue is made, so we call one tongue the Greek, another the Latin; for the flesh is not diverse, but the sound. In the same manner, then, as the speech which is made by the tongue is called a tongue; so also the iniquity which is made by blood is called blood. Heeding, then, his many iniquities, as in the expression above, And all my iniquities blot out, and ascribing them to the corruption of flesh and blood, Free me, he says, from bloods: that is, free me from iniquities, cleanse me from all corruption....Not yet is the substance, but certain hope. And my tongue shall exult of Your righteousness.

20. O Lord, my lips You shall open, and my mouth shall tell of Your praise Psalm 50:15. Your praise, because I have been created: Your praise, because sinning I have not been forsaken: Your praise, because I have been admonished to confess: Your praise, because in order that I might be secured I have been cleansed.

21. Because if You had willed sacrifice, I would have given it surely Psalm 50:16. David was living at that time when sacrifices of victim animals were offered to God, and he saw these times that were to be. Do we

not perceive ourselves in these words? Those sacrifices were figurative, foretelling the One Saving Sacrifice. Not even we have been left without a Sacrifice to offer to God. For hear what he says, having a concern for his sin, and wishing the evil thing which he has done to be forgiven him: If You had willed, he says, sacrifice, I would have given it surely. With holocausts You will not be delighted. Nothing shall we therefore offer? So shall we come to God? And whence shall we propitiate Him? Offer; certainly in yourself you have what you may offer. Do not from without fetch frankincense, but say, In me are, O God, Your vows, which I will render of praise to You. Do not from without seek cattle to slay, you have in yourself what you may kill. Sacrifice to God is a spirit troubled, a heart contrite and humbled God despises not Psalm 50:17. Utterly he despises bull, he-goat, ram: now is not the time that these should be offered. They were offered when they indicated something, when they promised something; when the things promised come, the promises are taken away. A heart contrite and humbled God despises not. You know that God is high: if you shall have made yourself high, He will be from you; if you shall have humbled yourself, He will draw near to you.

22. See who this is: David as one man was seeming to implore; see ye here our image and the type of the Church.

Deal kindly, O Lord, in Your good will with Sion Psalm 50:18. With this Sion deal kindly. What is Sion? A city holy. What is a city holy? That which cannot be hidden, being upon a mountain established. Sion in prospect, because it has prospect of something which it hopes for. For Sion is interpreted prospect, and Jerusalem, vision of peace. You perceive then yourselves to be in Sion and in Jerusalem, if being sure ye look for hope that is to be, and if you have peace with God. And be the walls of Jerusalem built. Deal kindly, O Lord, in Your good will with Sion, and be the walls of Jerusalem built. For not to herself let Sion ascribe her merits: do Thou with her deal kindly, Be the walls of Jerusalem built: be the battlements of our immortality laid, in faith and hope and charity.

23. Then You shall accept the sacrifice of righteousness Psalm 50:19. But now sacrifice for iniquity, to wit, a spirit troubled, and a heart humbled; then the sacrifice of righteousness, praises alone. For, Blessed they that dwell in Your house, for ever and ever they shall praise You: for this is the sacrifice of righteousness. Oblations and holocausts. What are holocausts? A whole victim by fire consumed. When a whole beast was laid upon the altar with fire to be consumed, it was called a holocaust. May divine fire take us up whole, and that fervour catch us whole. What fervour? Neither is there that hides himself from the heat thereof. What fervour? That whereof speaks the Apostle: In spirit fervent. Romans 12:11 Be not merely our soul taken up by that divine fire of wisdom, but also our body; that it may earn their immortality; so be it lifted up for a holocaust, that death be swallowed into victory. Oblations and holocausts. Then shall they lay upon your altar calves. Whence calves? What shall He therein choose? Will it be the innocence of the new age, or necks freed from the yoke of the law?...

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