

Exposition on Psalm 58

by St. Augustine

The sermon emphasizes the importance of living justly and obeying God's commands, and warns against the consequences of sinning against God.

Topics: "True Justice", "Repentance"

Description

St. Augustine preaches about the importance of hearkening to the words sung, rather than just proclaiming them, emphasizing the need for true justice in actions and deeds, not just in words. He delves into the concept of justice written in the hearts of all men, even before the Law was given, highlighting the innate knowledge of right and wrong. St. Augustine discusses the consequences of sin and the need for repentance, pointing out the hidden punishments and the ultimate fate of sinners. He encourages believers to find joy in tribulations, endure with hope, and see the fruit of righteousness in this life, preparing for the judgment of God.

Transcript

1. The words which we have sung must be rather hearkened to by us, than proclaimed. For to all men as it were in an assemblage of mankind, the Truth cries, If truly indeed justice ye speak, judge right things, you sons of men Psalm 57:1. For to what unjust man is it not an easy thing to speak justice? Or what man if questioned about justice, when he has not a cause, would not easily answer what is just? Inasmuch as the hand of our Maker in our very hearts has written this truth, That which to yourself you would not have done, do not do to another.

Tobit 4:15 Of this truth, even before that the Law was given, no one was suffered to be ignorant, in order that there might be some rule whereby might be judged even those to whom Law had not been given. But lest men should complain that something had been wanting for them, there has been written also in tables that which in their hearts they read not. For it was not that they had it not written, but read it they would not. There has been set before their eyes that which in their conscience to see they would be compelled; and as if from without the voice of God were brought to them, to his own inward parts has man been thus driven, the Scripture saying, For in the thoughts of the ungodly man there will be questioning.

Wisdom 1:9 Where questioning is, there is law. But because men, desiring those things which are without, even from themselves have become exiles, there has been given also a written law: not because in hearts it had not been written, but because you were a deserter from your heart, you are seized by Him that is everywhere, and to yourself within art called back. Therefore the written law, what cries it, to those that

have deserted the law written in their hearts? Romans 2:15 Return ye transgressors to the heart.

Isaiah 46:8 For who has taught you, that you would have no other man draw near your wife? Who has taught you, that you would not have a theft committed upon you? Who has taught you, that you would not suffer wrong, and whatever other thing either universally or particularly might be spoken of? For many things there are, of which severally if questioned men with loud voice would answer, that they would not suffer. Come, if you are not willing to suffer these things, are you by any means the only man?

Do you not live in the fellowship of mankind? He that together with you has been made, is your fellow; and all men have been made after the image of God, Genesis 1:26 unless with earthly coverings they efface that which He has formed. That which therefore to yourself you will not have to be done, do not do to another. For you judge that there is evil in that, which to suffer you are not willing: and this thing you are constrained to know by an inward law; that in your very heart is written.

You were doing somewhat, and there was a cry raised in your hands: how are you constrained to return to your heart when this thing you suffer in the hands of others? Is theft a good thing? No! I ask, is adultery a good thing? All cry, No! Is man-slaying a good thing? All cry, that they abhor it. Is coveting the property of a neighbour a good thing? No! Is the voice of all men. Or if yet you confess not, there draws near one that covets your property: be pleased to answer what you will have.

All men therefore, when of these things questioned, cry that these things are not good. Again, of doing kindnesses, not only of not hurting, but also of conferring and distributing, any hungry soul is questioned thus: you suffer hunger, another man has bread, and there is abundance with him beyond sufficiency, he knows you to want, he gives not: it displeases you when hungering, let it displease you when full also, when of another's hungering you shall have known. A stranger wanting shelter comes into your country, he is not taken in: he then cries that inhuman is that city, at once among barbarians he might have found a home.

He feels the injustice because he suffers; thou perchance feel not, but it is meet that thou imagine yourself also a stranger; and that thou see in what manner he will have displeased you, who shall not have given that, which thou in your country will not give to a stranger. I ask all men. True are these things? True. Just are these things? Just. But hear ye the Psalm. If truly therefore justice ye speak, judge right things, you sons of men. Be it not a justice of lips, but also of deeds. For if you act otherwise than you speak, good things you speak, and ill you judge.

2. But now to the present case let us come, if you please. For the voice is that sweet voice, so well known to the ears of the Church, the voice of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the voice of His Body, the voice of the Church toiling, sojourning upon earth, living amid the perils of men speaking evil and of men flattering. You will not fear a threatener, if you love not a flatterer. He therefore, of whom this is the voice, has observed and has seen, that all men speak justice. For what man does dare not to speak it, lest he be called unjust? When, therefore, as though he were hearing the voices of all men, and were observing the lips of all men, he cried out to them, If truly indeed justice ye speak,-- if not falsely justice ye speak, if not one thing on lips does sound, while another thing is concealed in hearts--judge right things, you sons of men. Hear out of the Gospel His own voice, the very same as is in this Psalm: Hypocrites, says the Lord to the Pharisees, how are you able good things to speak, when you are evil men?....Either make the tree good, and the fruit thereof good: or make the tree evil, and the fruit thereof evil. Matthew 12:33-34 Why will you whiten you, wall of mud? I know your inward parts, I am not deceived by your covering: I know what you hold forth, I

know what you cover. For there was no need for Him, that any one to Him should bear testimony of man: for He knew Himself what was in man. John 2:25 For He knew what was in man, who had made man, and who had been made Man, in order that He might seek man....

3. But now ye do what? Why these things to you do I speak? Because in heart iniquities ye work on earth Psalm 57:2. Iniquities perchance in heart alone? Hear what follows: both their heart hands do follow, and their heart hands do serve, the thing is thought of, and it is done; or else it is not done, not because we would not, but because we could not, Whatever you will and canst not, for done God does count it. For in heart Iniquities ye work on earth. What next? Iniquities your hands knit together. What is, knit together? From sin, sin, and to sin, sin, because of sin. What is this? A theft a man has committed, a sin it is: he has been seen, he seeks to slay him by whom he has been seen: there has been knit together sin with sin: God has permitted him in His hidden judgment to slay that man whom he has willed to slay: he perceives that the thing is known, he seeks to slay a second also; he has knit together a third sin: while these things he is planning, perchance that he may not be found out, or that he may not be convicted of having done it, he consults an astrologer; there is added a fourth sin: the astrologer answers perchance with some hard and evil responses, he runs to a soothsayer, that expiation may be made; the soothsayer makes answer that he is not able to expiate: a magician is sought. And who could enumerate those sins which are knit together with sins? Iniquities your hands do knit together. So long as you knit together, you bind sin upon sin. Loose yourself from sins. But I am not able, you say. Cry to Him. Unhappy man I, who shall deliver me from the body of this death? Romans 7:24 For there shall come the Grace of God, so that righteousness shall be your delight, as much as you delighted in iniquity; and you, a man that out of bonds has been loosed, shall cry out to God, You have broken asunder my bonds. You have broken asunder my bonds, is what else but, You have remitted my sins? Hear why chains they are: the Scripture makes answer, with the chains of his sins each one is bound fast. Proverbs 5:22 Not only bonds, but chains also they are. Chains are those which are made by twisting in: that is, because with sins sins you were knitting together....

4. Alienated are sinners from the womb, they have gone astray from the belly, they have spoken false things Psalm 57:3. And when iniquity they speak, false things they speak; because deceitful is iniquity: and when justice they speak, false things they speak; because one thing with mouth they profess, another thing in heart they conceal. Alienated are sinners from the womb. What is this? Let us search more diligently: for perhaps he is saying this, because God has foreknown men that are to be sinners even in the wombs of their mothers. For whence when Rebecca was yet pregnant, and in womb was bearing twins, was it said, Jacob I have loved, but Esau I have hated? For it was said, The elder shall serve the younger. Hidden at that time was the judgment of God: but yet from the womb, that is, from the very origin, alienated are sinners. Whence alienated? From truth. Whence alienated? From the blessed country, from the blessed life. Perchance alienated they are from the very womb. And what sinners have been alienated from the womb? For what men would have been born, if therein they had not been held? Or what men today would be alive to hear these words to no purpose, unless they were born? Perchance therefore sinners have been alienated from a certain womb, wherein that charity was suffering pains, which speaks through the Apostle, Of whom again I am in labour, until Christ be formed in you. Galatians 4:19 Expect thou therefore; be formed: do not to yourself ascribe a judgment which perchance you know not. Carnal you are as yet, conceived you have been: from that very time when you have received the name of Christ, by a sort of sacrament you have been born in the bowels of a mother. For not only out of bowels a man is born, but also in bowels. First he is born in bowels, in order that he may be able to be born of bowels. Wherefore it has been said even to Mary, For that which is born in you, is of the Holy Spirit. Not yet of Her

It had been born, but already in Her It had been born. Therefore there are born within the bowels of the Church certain little ones, and a good thing it is that being formed they should go forth, so that they drop not by miscarriage. Let the mother bear you, not miscarry. If patient you shall have been, even until you be formed, even until in you there be the sure doctrine of truth, the maternal bowels ought to keep you. But if by your impatience you shall have shaken the sides of your mother, with pain indeed she expels you out, but more to your loss than to hers.

5. For this reason therefore have they gone astray from the belly, because they have spoken false things? Or rather have they not for this reason spoken false things, because they have gone astray from the belly? For in the belly of the Church truth abides. Whosoever from this belly of the Church separated shall have been, must needs speak false things: must needs, I say, speak false things; whoso either conceived would not be, or whom when conceived the mother has expelled. Thence heretics exclaim against the Gospel (to speak in preference of those whom expelled we lament). We repeat to them: behold Christ has said, It behooved Christ to suffer, and from the dead to rise again the third day. Luke 24:46 I acknowledge there our Head, I acknowledge there our bridegroom: acknowledge thou also with me the Bride....

6. Indignation to them after the similitude of a serpent Psalm 57:4. A great thing you are to hear. Indignation to them after the similitude of a serpent. As if we had said, What is that which you have said? There follows, As if of a deaf asp. Whence deaf? And closing its ears. Therefore deaf, because it closes its ears. And closing its ears. Which will not hearken to the voice of men charming, and of the medicine medicated by the wise man Psalm 57:5. As we have heard, because even men speak who have learned it with such research as they were able, but nevertheless it is a thing which the Spirit of God knows much better than any men. For it is not to no purpose that of this he has spoken, but because it may chance that true is even that which we have heard of the asp. When the asp begins to be affected by the Marsian charmer, who calls it forth with certain peculiar incantations, hear what it does....Give heed what is spoken to you for a simile's sake, what is noted you for avoidance. So therefore here also there has been given a certain simile derived from the Marsian, who makes incantation to bring forth the asp from the dark cavern; surely into light he would bring it: but it loving its darkness, wherein coiled up it hides itself, when it will not choose to come forth, nevertheless refusing to hear those words whereby it feels itself to be constrained, is said to press one ear against the ground, and with its tail to stop up the other, and therefore as much as possible escaping those words, it comes not forth to the charmer. To this as being like, the Spirit of God has spoken of certain persons hearing not the Word of God, and not only not doing, but altogether, that they may not do it, refusing to hear.

7. This thing has been done even in the first times of the faith. Stephen the Martyr was preaching the Truth, and to minds as though dark, in order to bring them forth into light, was making incantation: when he came to make mention of Christ, whom they would not hear at all, of them the Scripture says what? Of them relates what? They shut, he says, their ears. Acts 7:57 But what they did afterwards, the narrative of the passion of Stephen does publish. They were not deaf, but they made themselves deaf....For this thing they did at the point where Christ was named. The indignation of these men was as the indignation of a serpent. Why your ears do ye shut? Wait, hear, and if you shall be able, rage. Because they chose not to do anything but rage, they would not hear. But if they had heard, perchance they would have ceased to rage. The indignation of them was as the indignation of a serpent....

8. God has broken utterly the teeth of them in their own mouth Psalm 57:6. Of whom? Of them to whom indignation is as the similitude of a serpent, and of an asp closing up its ears, so that it hears not the voice of men charming, and of medicine medicated by the wise man. The Lord has done to them what? Hath

broken utterly the teeth of them in their own mouth. It has been done, this at first has been done, and now is being done. But it would have sufficed, my brethren, that it should have been said, God has broken utterly the teeth of them.

The Pharisees would not hear the Law, would not hear the precepts of truth from Christ, being like to that serpent and asp. For in their past sins they took delight, and present life they would not lose, that is, joys earthly for joys heavenly....What is, in their own mouth? In such sort, that with their own mouth against themselves they should make declaration: He has compelled them with their mouth against themselves to give sentence. They would have slandered Him, because of the tribute: Matthew 22:17-18 He said not, It is lawful to pay tribute, or, It is not lawful to pay tribute.

And He willed to break utterly their teeth, wherewith they were gaping in order to bite; but in their own mouth He would do it. If He said, Let there be paid to Cæsar tribute, they would have slandered Him, because He had spoken evil to the nation of the Jews, by making it a tributary. For because of sin they were paying tribute, having been humbled, as to them in the Law had been foretold. We have Him, say they, a maligner of our nation, if He shall have bidden us to pay tribute: but if He say, Do not pay, we have Him for saying that we should not be under allegiance to Cæsar.

Such a double noose as it were to catch the Lord they laid. But to whom had they come? To Him that knew how to break utterly the teeth of them in their own mouth. Show to Me the coin, Matthew 22:19 He says. Why do you tempt Me, you hypocrites? Of paying tribute do ye think? To do justice are you willing? The counsel of justice do ye seek? If truly justice ye speak, judge right things, you sons of men. But now because in one way ye speak, in another way judge, hypocrites you are: Why do you tempt Me, you hypocrites?

Now I will break utterly your teeth in your mouth: show to Me the coin. And they showed it to Him. And He says not, it is Cæsar's: but asks Whose it is? In order that their teeth in their own mouth might be utterly broken. For on His inquiring, of whom it had the image and inscription, they said, of Cæsar. Even now the Lord shall break utterly the teeth of them in their own mouth. Now you have made answer, now have been broken utterly your teeth in your mouth. Render unto Cæsar the things which are of Cæsar, and unto God the things which are of God.

Matthew 22:21 Cæsar seeks his image; render it: God seeks His image; render it. Let not Cæsar lose from you his coin: let not God lose in you His coin. And they found not what they might answer. For they had been sent to slander Him: and they went back, saying, that no one to Him could make answer. Wherefore? Because broken utterly had been the teeth of them in their own mouth. Of that sort is also the following: In what power doest Thou these things? I also will ask of you one question, answer me. And He asked them of John, whence was the Baptism of John, from heaven, or of men? So that whatever they might answer might tell against themselves....

9. The Lord displeased that Pharisee, who to dinner had bidden Him, because a woman that was a sinner drew near to His feet, and he murmured against Him, saying, If this man were a prophet, He would know what woman drew near to His feet. Luke 7:39 O thou that art no prophet, whence do you know that He knew not what woman drew near to His feet? Because indeed He kept not the purifying of the Jews, which outwardly was as it were kept in the flesh, and was afar from the heart, this thing he suspected of the Lord. And in order that I may not speak at length on this point, even in his mouth He willed to break utterly the teeth of him. For He set forth to him: A certain usurer had two debtors, one was owing five hundred pence,

the other fifty: both had not wherewithal to pay, he forgave both. Which loved him the more? Luke 7:41-42 To this end the one asks, that the other may answer: to this end he answers that the teeth of him in his mouth may be broken utterly....

10. The jaw-bones of lions the Lord has broken utterly. Not only of asps. What of asps? Asps treacherously desire to throw in their venom, and scatter it, and hiss. Most openly raged the nations, and roared like lions. Wherefore have raged the nations, and the peoples meditated empty things? When they were lying in wait for the Lord. Is it lawful to give tribute to Cæsar, or is it not lawful? Matthew 22:17 Asps they were, serpents they were, broken utterly were the teeth of them in their own mouth. Afterwards they cried out, Crucify, Crucify. Now is there no tongue of asp, but roar of lion. But also the jaw-bones of lions the Lord has broken utterly. Perchance here there is no need of that which he has not added, namely, in the mouth of them. For men lying in wait with captious questions, were forced to be conquered with their own answer: but those men that openly were raging, were they by any means to be confuted with questions? Nevertheless, even their jaw-bones were broken utterly: having been crucified, He rose again, ascended into heaven, was glorified as the Christ, is adored by all nations, adored by all kings. Let the Jews now rage, if they are able. We have also in the case of heretics this as a warning and precedent, because themselves also we find to be serpents with indignation made deaf, not choosing to hear the medicine medicated by the wise man: and in their own mouth the Lord has broken utterly the teeth of them....

11. They shall be despised like water running down Psalm 57:7. Be not terrified, brethren, by certain streams, which are called torrents: with winter waters they are filled up; do not fear: after a little it passes by, that water runs down; for a time it roars, soon it will subside: they cannot hold long. Many heresies now are utterly dead: they have run in their channels as much as they were able, have run down, dried are the channels, scarce of them the memory is found, or that they have been. They shall be despised like water running down. But not they alone; the whole of this age for a time is roaring, and is seeking whom it may drag along. Let all ungodly men, all proud men resounding against the rocks of their pride as it were with waters rushing along and flowing together, not terrify you, winter waters they are, they cannot always flow: it must needs be that they run down unto their place, unto their end. And nevertheless of this torrent of the world the Lord has drunk. For He has suffered here, the very torrent He has drunk, but in the way He has drunk, but in the passage over: because in way of sinners He has not stood. But of Him says the Scripture what? Of the torrent in the way He shall drink, therefore He shall lift up His Head; that is, for this reason glorified He has been, because He has died; for this reason has risen again, because He has suffered....

12. Like wax melted they shall be taken away Psalm 57:8. For you were about to say, all men are not so made weak, like myself, in order that they may believe: many men do persevere in their evil, and in their malice. And of the same fear thou nothing: Like wax melted they shall be taken away. Against you they shall not stand, they shall not continue: with a sort of fire of their own lusts they shall perish. For there is here a kind of hidden punishment, of it the Psalm is about to speak now, to the end of it.

There are but a few verses; be attentive. There is a certain punishment future, fire of hell, fire everlasting. For future punishment has two kinds: either of the lower places it is, where was burning that rich man, who was wishing for himself a drop of water to be dropped on his tongue off the finger of the poor man, whom before his gate he had spurned, when he says, For I am tormented in this flame. Luke 16:24 And the second is that at the end, whereof they are to hear, that on the left hand are to be set: Go ye into fire everlasting, that has been prepared for the devil and his angels.

Matthew 25:41 Those punishments shall be manifest at that time, when we shall have departed out of this life, or when at the end of the world men shall have come to the resurrection of the dead. Now therefore is there no punishment, and does God suffer sins utterly unpunished even unto that day? There is even here a sort of hidden punishment, of the same he is treating now....We see nevertheless sometimes with these punishments just men to be afflicted, and to these punishments unjust men to be strangers: for which reason did totter the feet of him that afterwards rejoicing says, How good is the God of Israel to men right in heart!

But my own feet have been almost shaken, because I have been jealous in the case of sinners, beholding the peace of sinners. For he had seen the felicity of evil men, and well-pleased he had been to be an evil man, seeing evil men to reign, seeing that it was well with them, that they abounded in plenty of all things temporal, such as he too, being as yet but a babe, was desiring from the Lord: and his feet did totter, even until he saw what at the end is either to be hoped for or to be feared.

For he says in the same Psalm, This thing is a labour before me, until I enter into the sanctuary of God, and understand unto the last things. It is not therefore the punishments of the lower places, not the punishments of that fire everlasting after the resurrection, not those punishments which as yet in this world are common to just men and unjust men, and oftentimes more heavy are those of just men than those of unjust men; but some punishment or other of the present life the Spirit of God would recommend to our notice.

Give heed, hear ye me about to speak of that which you know: but a more sweet thing it is when it is declared in a Psalm, which, before it was declared, was deemed obscure. For behold I bring forth that which already ye knew: but because these things are brought forth from a place where you have never yet seen them, it comes to pass that even known things, as if they were new things, do delight you. Hear ye the punishment of ungodly men: Like wax, he says, melted they shall be taken away.

I have said that through their lusts this thing to them is done. Evil lust is like a burning and a fire. Does fire consume a garment, and does not the lust of adultery consume the soul? Of meditated adultery when the Scripture was speaking it says, Shall one bind fire in his bosom, and his garments shall he not burn up? Proverbs 6:27 You bear in your bosom live coals; burned through is your vest; you bear in thought adultery, and whole then is your soul? But these punishments few men do see: therefore them the Spirit of God does exceedingly recommend to our notice.

Hear the Apostle saying, God has given them up unto the lusts of their heart. Romans 1:24 Behold, the fire from the face of which like wax they are melting. For they loose themselves from a certain continence of chastity; therefore even these same men, going unto their lusts, as loose and melting are spoken of. Whence melting? Whence loose? From the fire of lusts. God has given them up unto the lusts of their heart, so that they do those things which beseem not, being filled full of all iniquity....

13. There has fallen upon them fire, and they have not seen the sun. You see in what manner he speaks of a certain punishment of darkening. Fire has fallen upon them, fire of pride, a smoky fire, fire of lust, fire of wrath. How great a fire is it? He upon whom it shall have fallen, shall not see the sun. Therefore has it been said, Let not the sun go down upon your wrath. Ephesians 4:26 Therefore, brethren, fire of evil lust fear ye, if you will not melt like wax, and to perish from the face of God. For there falls upon you that fire, and the sun you shall not see. What sun? Not that which together with you see both beasts and insects, and good men and evil men: because He makes His sun to rise upon good men and evil men. Matthew

5:45 But there is another sun, whereof those men are to speak, And the sun has not risen to us, passed away are all those things as it were a shadow. Therefore we have strayed from the way of truth, and the light of righteousness has not shone to us, and the sun has not risen to us. Wisdom 5:6 ...

14. Before that the bramble brings forth your thorns: as though living, as though in anger, it shall drink them up Psalm 57:9. What is the bramble? Of prickly plants it is a kind, upon which there are said to be certain of the closest thorns. At first it is a herb; and while it is a herb, soft and fair it is: but thereon there are nevertheless thorns to come forth. Now therefore sins are pleasant, and as it were they do not prick. A herb is the bramble; even now nevertheless there is a thorn.

Before that the bramble brings forth thorns: is before that of miserable delights and pleasures the evident tortures come forth. Let them question themselves that love any object, and to it cannot attain; let them see if they are not racked with longing: and when they have attained to that which unlawfully they long for, let them mark if they are not racked with fear. Let them see therefore here their punishments; before that there comes that resurrection, when in flesh rising again they shall not be changed.

For all we shall rise again, but not all we shall be changed. 1 Corinthians 15:51 For they shall have the corruption of the flesh wherein to be pained, not that wherein to die: otherwise even those pains would be ended. Then the thorns of that bramble, that is, all pains and piercings of tortures shall be brought forth. Such thorns as they shall suffer that are to say, These are they whom sometimes we had in derision: Wisdom 5:3 thorns of the piercing of repentance, but of one too late and without fruit like the barrenness of thorns.

The repentance of this time is pain healing: repentance of that time is pain penal. Would you not suffer those thorns? Here be thou pierced with the thorns of repentance; in such sort that thou do that which has been spoken of, Turned I have been in sorrow, when the thorn was piercing: my sin I have known, and mine iniquity I have not covered: I have said, I will declare against me my shortcoming to the Lord, and You have remitted the ungodliness of my heart. Now do so, now be pierced through, be there not in you done that which has been said of certain execrable men, They have been cloven asunder, and have not been pierced through.

Observe them that have been cloven asunder and have not been pierced through. You see men cloven asunder, and you see them not pierced through. Behold beside the Church they are, and it does not repent them, so as they should return whence they have been cloven asunder. The bramble hereafter shall bring forth their thorns. They will not now have a healing piercing through, they shall have hereafter one penal. But even now before that the bramble produces thorns, there has fallen upon them fire, that suffers them not to see the sun, that is, the wrath of God is drinking up them while still living: fire of evil lusts, of empty honours, of pride, of their covetousness: and whatsoever is weighing them down, that they should not know the truth, so that they seem not to be conquered, so that they be not brought into subjection even by truth herself. For what is a more glorious thing, brethren, than to be brought in subjection and to be overcome by truth? Let truth overcome you willing: for even unwilling she shall of herself overcome you....

15. As yet the punishments of the lower places have not come, as yet fire everlasting has not come: let him that is growing in God compare himself now with an ungodly man, a blind heart with an enlightened heart: compare ye two men, one seeing and one not seeing in the flesh. And what so great thing is vision of the flesh? Did Tobias by any means have fleshly eyes? Tobit 4:3-19 His own son had, and he had not;

and the way of life a blind man to one seeing did show. Therefore when you see that punishment, rejoice, because in it you are not.

Therefore says the Scripture, The just man shall rejoice when he shall have seen vengeance Psalm 57:10. Not that future punishment; for see what follows: his hands he shall wash in the blood of the sinner. What is this? Let your love attend. When man-slayers are smitten, ought anywise innocent men to go there and wash their hands? But what is, in the blood of the sinner he shall wash his hands? When a just man sees the punishment of a sinner, he grows himself; and the death of one is the life of another. For if spiritually blood runs from those that within are dead, do thou, seeing such vengeance, wash therein your hands; for the future more cleanly live. And how shall he wash his hands, if a just man he is? For what has he on his hands to be washed, if just he is? But the just man of faith shall live. Romans 1:17 Just men therefore he has called believers: and from the time that you have believed, at once you begin to be called just. For there has been made a remission of sins. Even if out of that remaining part of your life some sins are yours, which cannot but flow in, like water from the sea into the hold; nevertheless, because you have believed, when you shall have seen him that altogether is turned away from God to be slain in that blindness, there falling upon him that fire so that he see not the sun-- then do thou that now through faith see Christ, in order that you may see in substance (because the just man lives of faith), observe the ungodly man dying, and purge yourself from sins. So you shall wash in a manner your hands in the blood of the sinner.

16. And a man shall say, If therefore there is fruit to a just man Psalm 57:10. Behold, before that there comes that which is promised, before that there is given life everlasting, before that ungodly men are cast forth into fire everlasting, here in this life there is fruit to the just man. What fruit? In hope rejoicing, in tribulation enduring. Romans 12:12 What fruit to the just man? We glory in tribulations, knowing that tribulation works patience, but patience probation, but probation hope: but hope confounds not: because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts through the Holy Spirit, that has been given to us. Romans 5:3-5 Does he rejoice that is a drunkard; and does he not rejoice that is just? In love there is fruit to a just man. Miserable the one, even when he makes himself drunken: blessed the other, even when he hungers and thirsts. The one wine-bibbing does gorge, the other hope does feed. Let him see therefore the punishment of the other, his own rejoicing, and let him think of God. He that has given even now such joy of faith, of hope, of charity, of the truth of His Scriptures, what manner of joy is He making ready against the end? In the way thus He feeds, in his home how shall He fill him? And a man shall say, If therefore there is fruit to the just man. Let them that see believe, and see, and perceive. Rejoice shall the just man when he shall have seen vengeance. But if he has not eyes whence he may see vengeance, he will be made sad, and will not be amended by it. But if he sees it, he sees what difference there is between the darkened eye of the heart, and the eye enlightened of the heart: between the coolness of chastity and the flame of lust, between the security of hope and the fear there is in crime. When he shall have seen this, let him separate himself, and wash his hands in the blood of the same. Let him profit by the comparison, and say, Therefore there is fruit to the just man: therefore there is a God judging them in the earth. Not yet in that life, not yet in fire eternal, not yet in the lower places, but here in earth....

17. If somewhat too prolix we have been, pardon us. We exhort you in the name of Christ, to meditate profitably on those things which you have heard. Because even to preach the truth is nought, if heart from tongue dissents; and to hear the truth nothing profits, if a man upon the rock build not. He that builds upon a Rock, is the same that hears and does: Matthew 7:24 but he that hears and does not, builds upon sand: he that neither hears nor does, builds nothing....

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