

In the Name of the Father, and of the ✠ Son, and of the Holy Ghost.

Sin is no small thing. It alienates from God. It leads to death. Fallen man tries to minimize his sinfulness. Sinners commit sin without concern for the consequences. They reason that because there is no lightning strike when they sin, God must not see, or worse, that God doesn't care. In the days of the Korahite rebellion in the desert, the ground opened and swallowed up the transgressors.

But public perversion, open godlessness, and the desecration of the womb, the murder of unborn children, go on seemingly unchecked. They are not met by the earth opening its jaws. So sinners continue in their sins, thinking that they'll get away with them. They rationalize that other men do worse things, that their sin isn't all that bad by comparison. So they continue in their sin, hearts hardened, dead of soul, absent of conscience.

It is easy to talk about sin in the abstract, when others do things that God has prohibited. It's easy to shake our fingers and wag our heads at them. But Lent is the time in which you are to consider your own sin. It is the time in which you must confess that you have been no better than other sinners. It is the time to come to the horrible realization that God does see your sin, and has promised to punish sin, even the sins men count as small.

So beat your breast, O you who have sinned, and consider the Words of the 38th Psalm, the confession of a sinner, the confession of a man much like you. For in the Psalm David feels the weight of his sin. He confesses: "I will declare my iniquity; I will be in anguish over my sin." And that anguish, the anguish of having sinned, torments both mind and body, because guilt has a physiology: "There is no soundness in my flesh Because of Your anger, Nor any health in my bones Because of my sin."

Perhaps you have felt the same. Perhaps you are haunted by guilt, ashamed of your sin, plagued by the things you have done wrong. Perhaps David's Words have been your words: "I am troubled, I am bowed down greatly; I go mourning all the day long. I am feeble and severely broken; I groan because of the turmoil of my heart. For my iniquities have gone over my head; Like a heavy burden they are too heavy for me. My wounds are foul and festering Because of my foolishness."

The guilt and shame of sin press down hard on the Psalmist. And so should it be with you. Sin should be followed by contrition in you, that is true sorrow for your sins. For although sin ruins families and relationships and earthly lives, although sin brings suffering and hardship and great difficulty, the consequences of sin are also eternal. Every sin you have committed is a sin against God, for every sin is first a sin against God.

So pray with the Psalmist "O LORD, do not rebuke me in Your wrath, Nor chasten me in Your hot displeasure! For Your arrows pierce me deeply, And Your hand presses me down." Repent of your sin. Put away the works of the fallen flesh. Say "No!" to the temptations this world and its prince set before you. Walk not in the ways of sinners, but in the Way of Righteousness, the Way opened to you by Roman spear thrust, the Way brought to you by the Blood and Water that issued forth from the side of the Pierced One.

For to Him David's prophetic Words are well applied, foretelling the shame and suffering and humility of the One who fell bearing the gibbet of the cross. : "when my foot slips, they exalt themselves against me. For I am ready to fall, And my sorrow is continually before me."

David's Words can find no better fulfillment than in the Passion of the Christ: "...My enemies are vigorous, and they are strong; And those who hate me wrongfully have multiplied. Those also who render evil for good, they are my adversaries, because I follow what is good." To His goodness His Saving Word and His miracles testify. To the evil of his adversaries testify the scourge, the crown of thorns, the spikes, and that cruciform instrument of death.

Considering the darkness of Golgotha, the cup that was His to drink, the baptism that He alone could be baptized with, take to heart these Words of David, Words that could well be spoken by the Suffering Servant: "I am feeble and severely broken; I groan because of the turmoil of my heart. Lord, all my desire is before You; And my sighing is not hidden from You. My heart pants, my strength fails me; As for the light of my eyes, it also has gone from me."

And as the disciples flee, as only John and Mary and the women remain, are the Words fulfilled: "My loved ones and my friends stand aloof from my plague, And my relatives stand afar off. Those also who seek my life lay snares for me; Those who seek my hurt speak of destruction, And plan deception all the day long." And as the darkness of death overtakes the true Shepherd King of Israel, David's Words have new meaning: "But I, like a deaf man, do not hear; And I am like a mute who does not open his mouth."

But it is precisely there, in His precious suffering, in His holy and perfect death, that you find mercy. It is there that you find forgiveness. It is because of His Passion that you can pray "In You, O Lord, I hope; You will hear, O Lord my God. Do not forsake me, O Lord! O my God, be not far from me!" And in those Words, Words given by the Holy Spirit through David, there is comfort for you. There is hope for you. Your hope is in Christ, the One who suffered for you, the One who died for you, the One who paid the awful price for your sins.

In Him you can pray "Make hast to help me, O Lord of my salvation", knowing that in His death you have life, for He died for your sins. He bore the weight of the sins of the world, taking them to the cross. In Christ your sins died, and were buried deeply in the earth, never to come forth again. And having atoned for all your sins, having borne the burden, then He did come forth. He burst the bonds of death and rose to new life, that in Him you have life by the remission of all your sins, by the gracious declaration of your holiness through faith in Him.

It is to Him that you can pray with David "Make haste to help me, O Lord, my salvation!" For He has answered your prayer "Do not forsake me, O Lord!" He was forsaken of the Father that you not be forsaken. He was forsaken that you might be received as God's beloved child, the burden of your sin removed, your soul healed by His Holy Wounds. He does not forsake you. He goes in your place. He gives you life.

He heals you with life-giving Water, the Water of the font. There, in that blood-tinged Well of Salvation, you are washed clean. There, in the font, the Spirit that gave David the Words of

Psalm 38 is the same Spirit that fills you. And by that Spirit, the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of the Living God, you receive faith, faith in the One who takes away the sin of the world.

Knowing the goodness and mercy of the Lord, David prayed “O LORD; O my God, be not far from me!” Thanks be to God, He is not a god far away, but a God close at hand. He is the God of Life, the God that places Himself in the hand that places Christ into your mouth. He is the God not far from you, as the Chalice is brought to your lips, and Christ flows into you, filling your soul.

In Christ, your prayer is answered. He has heard you. He has forgiven you. He has not forsaken you. He has redeemed you. And He is with you, here, now, and until that Day when you receive what the Zebedee brothers desired, what saving faith desires – eternal life in heaven with your Lord.

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