

Writings of the Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers Regarding Sodom

Extracts from

From: “The Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers”, Philip Schaff (Editor)

Saint Augustin, “What Sins are Trivial and What Heinous is a Matter for God’s Judgment”

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What Sins are Trivial and What Heinous is a Matter for God's Judgment¹

Now it is possible that it might not have been considered a sin to have intercourse with a spouse, not with a view to the procreation of children, which is the great blessing of marriage, but for the sake of carnal pleasure, and to save the incontinent from being led by their weakness into the deadly sin of fornication, or adultery, [or another form of uncleanness which it is shameful even to name](#), and into which it is possible that they might be drawn by lust under the temptation of Satan.

Sins, However Great And Detestable, Seem Trivial When We Are Accustomed To Them²

Add to this, that sins, however great and detestable they may be, are looked upon as trivial, or as not sins at all, when men get accustomed to them; and so far does this go, that such sins are not only not concealed, but are boasted of, and published far and wide; and thus, as it is written, "The wicked boasteth of his heart's desire, and blesseth the covetous, whom the Lord abhorreth." Iniquity of this kind is in Scripture called a cry. You have an instance in the prophet Isaiah, in the case of the evil vineyard: "He looked for judgment, but behold oppression; for righteousness, but behold a cry." Whence also the expression in Genesis: ["The cry of Sodom and Gomorrah is great," because in these cities crimes were not only not punished, but were openly committed, as if under the protection of the law. And so in our own times: many forms of sin, though not just the same as those of Sodom and Gomorrah, are now so openly and habitually practiced, that not only dare we not excommunicate a layman, we dare not even degrade a clergyman, for the commission of them.](#) So that when, a few years ago, I was expounding the Epistle to the Galatians, in commenting on that very place where the apostle says, "I am afraid of you, lest I have bestowed labor upon you in vain," I was compelled to exclaim, "Woe to the sins of men! for it is only when we are not accustomed to them that we shrink from them: when once we are accustomed to them, though the blood of the Son of God was poured out to wash them away, though they are so great that the kingdom of God is wholly shut against them, constant familiarity leads to the toleration of them all, and habitual

¹ Saint Augustin, "What Sins are Trivial and What Heinous is a Matter for God's Judgment", from *The Enchiridion or On Faith, Hope, and Love*, (after 30 September 420 A.D.) Chapter 78, Prof. J. F. Shaw (Translator) (1883), from Augustin: On the Holy Trinity, Doctrinal Treatises, Moral Treatises, (page 512), The Nicene and Post Nicene Fathers, Volume 3, Series 1, Philip Schaff (Editor), The Master Christian Library, Version 5, AGES Digital Software (1997).

² Saint Augustin, "Sins, However Great and Detestable, Seem Trivial When We are Accustomed to Them", from *The Enchiridion or On Faith, Hope, and Love*, (after 30 September 420 A.D.) Chapter 80, Prof. J. F. Shaw (Translator) (1883), from Augustin: On the Holy Trinity, Doctrinal Treatises, Moral Treatises, (page 514), The Nicene and Post Nicene Fathers, Volume 3, Series 1, Philip Schaff (Editor), The Master Christian Library, Version 5, AGES Digital Software (1997).

toleration leads to the practice of many of them. And grant, O Lord, that we may not come to practice all that we have not the power to hinder.” But I shall see whether the extravagance of grief did not betray me into rashness of speech.

On The Sunday Called “Episozomenes,” To Those Who Had Come To Antioch From The Country— Also On The Subject Of Avoiding Oaths³

7. This also happened at Sodom. For when they burned in their lust one towards another, then too the very earth itself was burned up, being kindled by the fire from above. For He designed, that the vengeance of this sin should permanently remain. And observe the mercy of God! Those who had sinned, He caused not to continue burning to the present day, but when they had been for once in flames, He buried them; and burning up the face of the ground, He placed it visibly before all who after should desire to look at these things; and now the sight of the land, through all the generations since, hath given an admonition beyond all lest ye suffer the lot of Sodom!” For preoften, when they hear the Scripture discoursing of these things, are not much terrified; site, and see the whole surface of it disfigured, and have witnessed the effects of the fire, with soil no where visible, but every thing dust and ashes, they come away astonished with the sight, and taking with them a strong lesson of chastity. For truly, the very nature of the punishment was a pattern of the nature of the sin! Even as they devised a barren intercourse, not having for its end the procreation of children, so did God bring on them such a punishment, as made the womb of the land ever barren, and destitute of all fruits! For this reason also He threatened to destroy the dwellings of the swearers, in order that by their punishments, they may make others to be more self-controlled.

ROMANS 1:26, 27⁴

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And next, having reproached the women first, he goes on to the men also, and says, “And likewise also the men leaving the natural use of the woman.” Which is an evident proof of the last degree of corruptness, when both sexes are

³ Saint Chrysostom “On The Sunday Called ‘Episozomenes,’ To Those Who Had Come To Antioch From The Country — Also On The Subject Of Avoiding Oaths”, Homily 19, (11 April 387 A.D.) in *St. Chrysostom: The Homilies on the Statutes, to the People of Antioch*, (Page 792) Rev. W. R. W. Stephens (Translator), in *Chrysostom: On the Priesthood, Ascetic Treatises, Select Homilies and Letters, Homilies on the Statutes*, Volume 9, Series 1, in *The Nicene and Post Nicene Fathers*, Philip Schaff (Editor), The Master Christian Library, Version 5, AGES Digital Software (1997).

⁴ Saint John Chrysostom, “Romans 1:26,27”, Homily 4, in *Homilies of St. John Chrysostom, Archbishop of Constantinople, on the Epistle of St. Paul the Apostle to the Romans* (Pages 614-620) Rev. J. R. Morris, Rev. W. H. Simcox, and George B. Stevens (Translators), in *The Homilies of St. John Chrysostom, Archbishop of Constantinople, on the Epistle of St. Paul the Apostle to the Romans*, Volume 11, Series 1, in *The Nicene and Post Nicene Fathers*, Philip Schaff (Editor), The Master Christian Library, Version 5, AGES Digital Software (1997).

abandoned, and both he that was ordained to be the instructor of the woman, and she who was bid to become an helpmate to the man, work the deeds of enemies against one another. And reflect too how significantly he uses his words. For he does not say that they were enamored of, and lusted after one another, but, “they burned in their lust one toward another.” You see that the whole of desire comes of an exorbitancy which endureth not to abide within its proper limits. For everything which transgresseth the laws by God appointed, lusteth after monstrous things and not those which be customary.

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And see the great confusion which fell out on both side. For not only was the head turned downwards but the feet too were upwards, and they became enemies to themselves and to one another, bringing in a pernicious kind of strife, and one even more lawless than any civil war, and one rife in divisions, and of varied form.

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Again, these same two parts he provoked to war both against themselves and against one another. [For even women again abused women, and not men only.](#) And the men stood against one another, and against the female sex, as happens in a battle by night.

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For in the case of the one the intercourse, even if lawless, is yet according to nature: but this is contrary both to law and nature. For even if there were no hell, and no punishment had been threatened, this were worse than any punishment.

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Or again, if any one threatened to make men travail and be brought to bed, should we not be filled with indignation? But lo! now they that have run into this fury have done more grievously by themselves. For it is not the same thing to change into the nature of women, as to continue a man and yet to have become a woman.

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Now not only did it fail to stir up the womb of the earth to the production of fruits, but made it even useless for the reception of seed. For such was also the intercourse of the men, making a body of this sort more worthless than the very land of Sodom.

1 THESSALONIANS 4:15-17⁵

If any one disbelieves hell, let him consider Sodom, let him reflect upon Gomorrah, the vengeance that has been inflicted, and which yet remains. This is a proof of the eternity of punishment. Are these things grievous? And is it not grievous, when you say that there is no hell, but that God has merely threatened it? when you slack the hands of the people? It is thou who disbelievest that compellest me to say these things it is thou that hast drawn me out into these words. If thou believedst the words of Christ I should not be compelled to bring forward facts to induce belief. But since you have evaded them, you shall be persuaded henceforth, whether willing or unwilling. [For what have you to say concerning Sodom?](#) Would you wish also to know the cause, for which these things were then done? It was one sin, a grievous and accursed one certainly, yet but one. [The men of that time had a passion for boys, and on that account they suffered this punishment.](#)

The Sacred History Of Sulpitius Severus, Book 1⁶

Lot, owing to the size of the household, parted from his uncle, that he might take advantage of more spacious territories in what was then a vacant region, and settled at Sodom. That town was infamous on account of its inhabitants, [males forcing themselves upon males, and it is said on that account to have been hateful to God.](#)

Lot offered them his daughters in place of his guests, but they did not accept the offer, having a desire rather for things forbidden, and then Lot himself was laid hold of with vile designs.

⁵ Saint John Chrysostom, “1 Thessalonians 4:15-17”, Homily 8, in *Homilies of St. John Chrysostom, Archbishop of Constantinople, on the Epistle of St. Paul the Apostle to the Thessalonians* (Page 740) Rev. James Tweed (Translator), in *The Homilies of St. John Chrysostom, Archbishop of Constantinople, on the Epistle of St. Paul the Apostle to the Philippians, Colossians, and Thessalonians*, Rev. John A. Broadus (Editor), Volume 13, Series 1, *Chrysostom, Homilies on Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, Thessalonians, Timothy, Titus, and Philemon*, in [The Nicene and Post Nicene Fathers](#), Philip Schaff (Editor), The Master Christian Library, Version 5, AGES Digital Software (1997).

⁶ Sulpitius Severus (363 – 420 A.D.), “The Sacred History of Sulpitius Severus, Book 1”, Chapters 5 and 6, in Homily 8, in *The Works of Sulpitius Severus* (Pages 153-154) Rev. Alexander Roberts (Translator), in *Sulpitius Severus, Vincent of Lerins, John Cassian*, Volume 11, Series 2, [The Nicene and Post Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church](#), Philip Schaff and Henry Wace (Editors), The Master Christian Library, Version 5, AGES Digital Software (1997).

***How Those Are To Be Admonished Who Praise The Unlawful Things Of Which They Are Conscious, And Those Who, While Condemning Them, In No Wise Guard Against Them*⁷**

(Admonition 32.) Differently to be admonished are they who even praise the unlawful things which they do, and those who censure what is wrong, and yet avoid it not. For they who even praise the unlawful things which they do are to be admonished to consider how for the most part they offend more by the mouth than by deeds. For by deeds they perpetrate wrong things in their own persons only; but with the mouth they bring out wickedness in the persons of as many as there are souls of hearers, to whom they teach wicked things by praising them. They are therefore to be admonished that, if they evade the eradication of evil, they at least be afraid to sow it. They are to be admonished to let their own individual perdition suffice them. And again they are to be admonished that, if they fear not to be bad, they at least blush to be seen to be what they are. For usually a sin, when it is concealed, is shunned; because, when a soul blushes to be seen to be what nevertheless it does not fear to be, it comes in time to blush to be what it shuns being seen to be. *But, when any bad man shamelessly courts notice, then the more freely he perpetrates every wickedness, the more does he come even to think it lawful; and in what he imagines to be lawful he is without doubt sunk ever more and more. Hence it is written, They have declared their sin as Sodom, neither have they hidden it (Isaiah 3:9).* For, had Sodom hidden her sin, she would still have sinned, but, in fear. But she had utterly lost the curb of fear, in that she did not even seek darkness for her sin. Whence also again it is written, The cry of Sodom and Gomorrah is multiplied (Genesis 18:20). For sin with a voice is guilt in act; but sin with even a cry is guilt at liberty.

⁷ Saint Gregory the Great, “How Those Are To Be Admonished Who Praise The Unlawful Things Of Which They Are Conscious, And Those Who, While Condemning Them, In No Wise Guard Against Them”, Chapter 31, in Part 3, *How the Ruler, While Living Well, Ought to Teach and Admonish Those That are Put Under Him*, in *The Book of Pastoral Rule of Saint Gregory the Great, Roman Pontiff, to John, Bishop of the City of Ravenna (594-595 A.D.)*, in *The Book of Pastoral Rule and Selected Epistles of Saint Gregory the Great, Bishop of Rome* (Pages 611-612) Rev. James Barmby (Translator), in *Leo the Great, Gregory the Great, Volume 12, Series 2, The Nicene and Post Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church*, Philip Schaff and Henry Wace (Editors), The Master Christian Library, Version 5, AGES Digital Software (1997).