The Confessions (Book VIII)

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The Book describes the third second year of his life, the most momentous of his life, when he underwent the conversion that changed his life. He gives a conversion of others, and the causes of ceiling, he, after a second struggle, finally accepts the Christian faith and the Christian life.

Chapter 1. The Man Given to Divine Things, and Not Entangled in the Lusts of Lust, Consults Simplicianus in Reference to the Reclaiming of His Mind

1. Thus I was being tossed about in the storm, groaning with my heart, and I was pouring out my stream of words when I was finally tossed ashore by your fire, Lord. For I kept saying to you, Lord, how long will you be angry? Remember not our ancient iniquities. I felt that I was being held by them, and I was crying out, Why, why, tomorrow and tomorrow? Why not now? Why not this hour put an end to my shame? I was saying to myself, Tomorrow we will do this, and you too will be there. I was also saying, Yesterday, why not yesterday? I was saying this and I was weeping in the bitterness of my heart, when I heard a voice from a nearby house. It was the voice of a boy or girl, I do not know which, but it was saying, and I was saying to myself, Take and read, take and read. Immediately I was changed by the tone of that voice, and I began to read the first passage I had opened upon when I had first taken up the book of the Apostle. I read in silence the passage on which my eyes first fell: Not in revelling and drunkenness, not in lewdness and lasciviousness, not in quarrelling and envying, but put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh in its concupiscence. I had no desire to read more, nor was there any need to read more. For as soon as I had reached the end of this sentence, it was as if a light of security had flooded my heart, and all the darkness of doubt had fled.

2. Then we go to Vindicianus, and we tell him what has happened. He too rejoices with us, and we tell him what our hope is in your mercy, Lord. We go to Simplicianus, and we tell him of the fruit of our hearts. He also was rejoicing in your grace, and we told him how the vessel you had chosen had been tossed about in the waves of this world, but was now being bailed out because of the wine of your spirit. We told him that we had placed our hope in your mercy, Lord, and we told him how we had begun to sing your hymns, and how we would be inflamed by your spirit to be at peace with your Jerusalem, which we knew you had chosen for your own possession