

Eusebius, The Life of Constantine: Helenepolis/Drepana

CHAPTER LXI: His Sickness at Helenepolis, and Prayers respecting his Baptism.

5 AT first he experienced some slight bodily indisposition, which was soon followed by
positive disease. In consequence of this he visited the hot baths of his own city;
and thence proceeded to that which bore the name of his mother. Here he passed some
10 time in the church of the martyrs, and offered up supplications and prayers to God.
Being at length convinced that his life was drawing to a close, he felt the time was
come at which he should seek purification from sins of his past career, firmly
believing that whatever errors he had committed as a mortal man, his soul would be
15 purified from them through the efficacy of the mystical words and the salutary waters
of baptism. Impressed with these thoughts, he poured forth his supplications and
confessions to God, kneeling on the pavement in the church itself, in which he also
now for the first time received the imposition of hands with prayer. After this he
proceeded as far as the suburbs of Nicomedia, and there, having summoned the bishops
to meet him, addressed them in the following words.

"THE time is arrived which I have long hoped for, with an earnest desire and prayer
20 that I might obtain the salvation of God. The hour is come in which I too may have
the blessing of that seal which confers immortality; the hour in which I may receive
the seal of salvation. I had thought to do this in the waters of the river Jordan,
wherein our Saviour, for our example, is recorded to have been baptized: but God, who
knows what is expedient for us, is pleased that I should receive this blessing here.
Be it so, then, without delay: for should it be his will who is Lord of life and
25 death, that my existence here should be prolonged, and should I be destined
henceforth to associate with the people of God, and unite with them in prayer as a
member of his. Church, I will prescribe to myself from this time such a course of
life as befits his service."