

## **TREASURE IN VESSELS OF CLAY**

**October 2, 2016**  
**15<sup>th</sup> Sunday after Pentecost**  
**Revision C**

### **Epistle: 2 Corinthians 4:6-15**

Today's Epistle reading is used variously on the 4th Sunday after Pentecost or half of it on Transfiguration Sunday and the other half on the 4th Sunday after Easter.

### **Background for the Church in Corinth**

Paul founded the Church in Corinth about 51 AD toward the end of his Second Missionary Journey and stayed there a year and a half (Acts 18:11). Silas was traveling with Paul at the time along with Luke, Timothy and Andronicus, where all but Paul were of the original Seventy. Luke was left behind to oversee the Macedonian Churches. (Note switch in tenses from "we" to "they" and back to "we" in Acts 16:16, 17:1, 20:6). Silas was left behind in Corinth and was later Bishop of Corinth. (Note that we never hear from Silas again traveling with Paul after he arrived in Corinth, Acts 18:5).

Before Paul arrived in Corinth for an extended stay again in late 55 AD, he wrote four letters to Corinth (two of which are lost) and paid the Church one brief visit. For more details of this see the Epistle lesson for the 14th Sunday after Pentecost. In the interval from 52 to 55 AD, Apollos and the Apostle Peter visited Corinth. Apollos was one of the original Seventy, but must have been back home in Alexandria at the time of Pentecost. He knew only the baptism of John in 53 AD when he came to Ephesus (Acts 18:24-28). Aquila and Priscilla, the overseers Paul left in Ephesus (Acts 18:18-19), straightened Apollos out and also wrote to the Churches in Achaia (Athens and Corinth) to receive Apollos when he arrived (Acts 18:27). Apollos proceeded to help out by vigorously refuting the Jews publicly showing from the Scriptures that Jesus is the Christ (Acts 18:28). In the chapter just prior to our Epistle reading (1 Corinthians 3:8), Paul said that he and Apollos are one; that is, of one mind in the work of establishing the Churches.

The same can be said for the relationship between Paul and Peter. Peter visited Corinth in the early 50's AD on his way to Rome. He obviously made a big impression in Corinth since there were factions that had developed by 55 AD (1 Corinthians 1:12) centered around Paul, Apollos, Peter and none of the above (i.e. Christ)!! On Peter's way to Corinth, Paul met him in Macedonia and together they ordained four bishops:

Olympas	for	Philippi
Jason	for	Thessalonica
Silas	for	Corinth
Herodion	for	Patras (SW Greece)

Copyright © Mark Kern 2002

Thus we can definitely say that Peter and Paul were one in the work also.

From a detailed study of Paul's Missionary Journeys, one can see that Paul worked with at least 60 of the original members of the 70 at some point. For more details, see Appendix A. Many of them like Luke, Timothy, and Titus traveled with him a lot. In addition, Paul had some contact with Peter, John, Andrew and Philip.

### **The Imagery of Gold and Precious Stones**

**The Garden of Eden:** In and around the Garden of Eden, gold and some precious stones are mentioned: bdellium and onyx (Genesis 2:10-13). The implication is that they are just raw materials, however.

**The Ephod:** As part of the ephod or garment worn by Aaron the priest, were two large onyx gem stones with the names of the 12 tribes of Israel engraved on them (Exodus 28:9-12).

**The Breastpiece:** The breastpiece of judgment, actually a pocket or pouch, that contained the Urim and Thummin (meaning "lights and truth") had an embroidered face and held 12 large gems representing the 12 tribes of Israel (Exodus 28:15-21). Aaron continually carried the verdict or judgment of the sons of Israel before the Lord. This verdict was already given on the Altar of Burnt offering as part of Aaron's preparation (Exodus 28:29-30).

**The New Jerusalem::** The light of the New Jerusalem was like a precious stone. The gates were twelve pearls, on which were inscribed the names of the 12 tribes of Israel. The foundations were 12 precious stones on which are written the names of the Twelve Apostles (Revelation 21:10-21).

**The Church Today:** Paul was speaking of building with various materials: gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw. In 1 Corinthians 3:17, the building is said to be the temple of God. Part of the building process is a fire test — this is part of the Word of the Cross (1 Corinthians 3:10-17).

We have a treasure in dirt (clay) vessels (2 Corinthians 4:6-9). The treasure is like the proverbial sword in the fire. The treasure is the light of the knowledge of the Glory of God in the face of Jesus (2 Corinthians 4:6). As we carry our cross, the sword heats up and we begin to take on the image of God (v.4), which is the fire. This process is referred to as deification where we begin to become God-like. The words printed on icons of St. Athanasius reflect this: God became man that man might become god.

There will be tribulations in our lives, but this is just part of the process that refines the gold and cuts the precious stones. As we go on, we die a little more each day to our self-centeredness and death is working in us. The more this happens, the more we are aware of the will of God and grace and thanksgiving abound to the glory of God (2 Corinthians 4:8-15).

The result is that Christians have been a unique people. Consider the First Century writing of an unknown author describing Christians of his day: "For the Christians are

distinguished from other men neither by country, nor language, nor the customs which they observe. For they neither inhabit cities of their own, nor employ a peculiar form of speech, nor lead a life which is marked out by any singularity. The course of conduct which they follow has not been devised by any speculation or deliberation of inquisitive men; nor [are they]...the advocates of merely human doctrines. But, inhabiting Greek as well as barbarian cities, according as the lot of each of them has determined, and following the customs of the natives as to clothing, food, and the rest of their ordinary conduct, they display to us their wonderful and confessedly striking manner of life. They dwell in their own countries, but simply as sojourners. As citizens, they share in all things with others, and yet endure all things as if foreigners. Every foreign land is to them as their native country, and every land of their birth as a land of strangers. They marry ... beget children; but they do not destroy their offspring [literally, “cast away fetuses”]. They have a common table, but not a common bed. They are in the flesh, but they do not live after the flesh. They pass their days on earth, but they are citizens of heaven. They obey the prescribed laws, and at the same time, surpass the laws by their lives. They love all men, and are persecuted by all. They are unknown and condemned; they are put to death and restored to life. They are poor, yet make many rich; they are in lack of all things, and yet abound in all; they are dishonored, and yet in their very dishonor are glorified. They are evil spoken of, and yet are justified; they are reviled, and bless [2 Corinthians 4:12]; they are insulted, and repay the insult with honor; they do good, yet are punished as evil-doers. When punished, they rejoice as though quickened to life; they are assigned by the Jews as foreigners, and are persecuted by the Greeks; yet those who hate them are unable to assign any reason for their hatred” (The Epistle to Diognetus, Chapter 5, The Ante-Nicene Fathers).

### **What Happens to the Earthenware Vessel?**

But yet a very real problem that the Church has had to address over the centuries is: “What happens to the clay vessel?” Gnostics in the First Century quoted Paul as saying that “...flesh and blood cannot inherit the Kingdom of God” (1 Corinthians 15:50). Therefore, they said, the flesh and blood doesn’t matter and only spiritual things matter. The Apostle John vehemently opposed this idea (which was championed by ex-deacon Nicolas of Acts 6:5) regarding the gnostic Nicolaitans (Revelation 2:6, 14-15).

In the same context as the above, Paul stated regarding the resurrection (1 Corinthians 15:52-54):

- The dead will be raised
- We shall be changed
- The corruptible must put on incorruption
- The mortal must put on immortality
- Death will be swallowed up in victory

The Gnostics stated that the resurrection was already past (2 Timothy 2:17-18) and occurred at baptism. Paul vehemently opposed this and even delivered some Gnostics over to Satan (for the destruction of their flesh) in order that they may learn not to blaspheme in this regard (1 Timothy 1:18-20; compare 1 Corinthians 5:1-5).

The Scriptures teach that in the resurrection the righteous will shine forth like the sun (Matthew 13:43, Daniel 12:3) and that we will be like Him (1 John 3:2) who is the firstborn of many brethren (Romans 8:29, Colossians 1:15-18, Revelation 1:5). And when the resurrected Christ appeared to the Apostles in the upper room, He pointed out to them specifically that He was not just spirit but that He retained flesh and bones in His resurrected state (Luke 24:38-39). There was probably something different about the risen Jesus' appearance. The Apostles didn't dare ask the risen Jesus who He was when He appeared to them in Galilee (John 21:12); Luke and Cleopas didn't recognize Him at all for a while on the road to Emmaus (Luke 24:13-31). There was undoubtedly something different when the corruptible put on incorruption and the mortal put on immortality. It was changed (1 Corinthians 15:52-54). But yet it was still recognizable on closer inspection.

### **The Role of the Clay Vessels**

So what is the proper role of our fleshly bodies in this life? Irenaeus (2nd Century) quotes Paul using these words with respect to our fleshly bodies: "Paul declares that we are 'always bearing about in our body the dying of Jesus, that also the life of Jesus Christ might be manifested in our body. For if we who live are delivered into death for Jesus' sake, it is that the life of Jesus may also be manifested in our mortal flesh' [2 Corinthians 4:10-11]. And that the Spirit lays hold of the flesh, he says in the same Epistle: 'That ye are the epistle of Christ, ministered by us, inscribed not with ink, but with the Spirit of the living God, not in tables of stone, but in the fleshly tables of the heart' [2 Corinthians 3:3]. If, therefore, in the present time fleshly hearts are made partakers of the Spirit, what is there astonishing if, in the resurrection, they receive that life which is granted by the Spirit? Of this resurrection the Apostle speaks in the Epistle to the Philippians: 'Having been made conformable to His death, if by any means I might attain to the resurrection which is from the dead' [Philippians 3:11]. In what other mortal flesh, therefore, can life be understood, unless in that substance which is also put to death on account of that confession which is made of God. He, Himself has declared: 'If, as a man, I have fought with beasts at Ephesus, what advantage is it to me if the dead do not rise? For if the dead do not rise, neither has Christ risen. Now, if Christ has not risen, our preaching is in vain, and your faith is in vain. In that case, we are found to be false witnesses for God, since we testified that He raised up Christ. For if the dead do not rise, neither has Christ risen. But if Christ is not risen, your faith is in vain, since ye are yet in your sins. Therefore those who have fallen asleep in Christ have perished. If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are more miserable than all men. But now Christ has risen from the dead, the first-fruits of those that sleep; for as by man [came] death, by man also [came] the resurrection of the dead' " [1 Corinthians 15:13-21].

"In all these passages, as I have already said, these men (i.e. the heretics) must either allege that the apostle expresses opinions contradicting himself with respect to that statement 'Flesh and blood cannot inherit the Kingdom of God' (1 Corinthians 15:50); or on the other hand, they will be forced to make perverse and crooked interpretations of all the passages, so as to overturn and alter the sense of the words: (Against Heresies, Book V, chapter 13, 4).

All this was put into place when the Lord created Adam and Eve. Not only were they created in the Image of God, but the Epistle text states that God commanded light to shine out of

darkness (2 Corinthians 4:6). John Chrysostom (4th Century) comments on this: “And where did He command light to shine out of darkness? In the beginning and in prelude to the creation; for, says He, ‘Darkness was upon the face of the deep. And God said, let there be light, and there was light’ (Genesis 1:2, 3). Then, He said: ‘Let it be, and it was’; but now He said nothing, but Himself became Light for us. For He did not say, ‘has now commanded light’, but ‘has Himself shined’ (v.6). Therefore, neither do we see tangible objects by the shining of this light, but we see God Himself through Christ. For of the Spirit, he says (2 Corinthians 3:18): ‘But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory even as from the Lord Spirit’. And of the Son, (2 Corinthians 4:4): ‘That the light of the Gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine on them.’ And of the Father (2 Corinthians 4:6): ‘He that said Light shall shine out of darkness shined in your hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ’ “.

“For seeing he had spoken many and great things of the unspeakable glory, lest any should say: ‘And how enjoying so great a glory can we remain in a mortal body?’ he said that this very thing is indeed the chief marvel and a very great example of the power of God, that an earthen vessel has been enabled to bear so great a brightness and to keep so high a treasure. None of the things we hold is human!” (Homily viii on 2 Corinthians 4).

“And what is the ‘dying of the Lord Jesus,’ which they bore about? Their daily deaths by which also the resurrection was shown, ‘For if anyone doesn’t believe’, Paul says, ‘that Jesus died and rose again, beholding us every day die and rise again, let him believe henceforward in the resurrection. His life is manifested in our body’ (2 Corinthians 4:10-11). By snatching us out of the perils, that which seems a mark of weakness and being destitute proclaims His resurrection. His power had appeared in that we suffered, but without being overcome. We bear His dying that the power of His life may be made manifest, who did not permit mortal flesh to be overcome by the snowstorm of these calamities” (Homily ix on 2 Corinthians 4).

### **Attempts to Link the Earthen to the Heavenly**

All this is so utterly unfathomable and glorious that there have been attempts in the past to water it down, sometimes by deceit. For example, in the 4th Century, the words of the Nicene Creed were carefully drafted to refute the attempts of the Arian bishops to craft Jesus more in our image rather than vice versa. The words co-essential and consubstantial were used to distinguish the nature of Jesus’ divinity from the nature of Jesus’ flesh — which is the same as ours.

Athanasius of Alexandria (4th Century) put it in these words: “When the Bishops said that the Word must be described as the True Power and image of the Father, in all things exact and like the Father, and as unalterable, and as always, and as in Him without division (for never was the Word not, but He was always, existing everlastingly with the Father, as the radiance of light), Eusebius [an Arian bishop] and his fellows endured indeed, as not daring to contradict, being put to shame by the arguments which were urged against them; but withal they were caught whispering to each other and winking with their eyes [at the Council], that ‘like’, and ‘always’, and ‘power’, and ‘in Him’, were, as before, common to us and the Son and that it was no difficulty to agree to these. As to ‘like’, they said it was written of us, ‘Man is the image and

glory of God' [1 Corinthians 11:7]; 'always', that it was written, 'for we which live are always' [2 Corinthians 4:11]; 'in Him', 'in Him we live and move and have our being' [Acts 17:28]...as to 'power', that the caterpillar and the locust are called 'power' and 'great power' [Joel 2:25], and that it is often said of the people, for instance, 'all the power of the Lord came out of the land of Egypt' [Exodus 12:41]; and there are others also, heavenly ones, for Scripture says, 'the Lord of powers is with us, the God of Jacob is our refuge' [Psalms 46:7]...But the Bishops discerning in this too their dissimulation, and whereas it is written, 'deceit is in the heart of the irreligious that imagine evil' [Proverbs 12:20], were again compelled on their part to collect the sense of the Scriptures, and to re-say ... more distinctly still, namely, that the Son is 'one in essence' with the Father, by way of saying, that the Son was from the Father, and not merely like, but the same in likeness, and of showing that the Son's likeness and unalterableness was different from such copy of the same as is ascribed to us, which we acquire from virtue on the ground of observance of the commandments. For bodies which are like each other may be separated and become at distances from each other, as are human sons relative to their parents ... but since the generation of the Son from the Father is not according to the nature of men, and not only like, but inseparable from the essence of the Father, and He and the Father are one, as He has said Himself [John 8:58, 10:30], and the Word is ever in the Father and the Father in the Word, as the radiance stands towards the light ... therefore the Council, as understanding this, suitably wrote 'one in essence', that they might defeat the perverseness of the heretics, and show that the Word was other than the originated things. For, after thus writing, they at once added, 'they who say that the Son of God is from nothing, or created, or alterable, or a work, or from other essence, these the Holy Catholic Church anathematized' " (Athanasius' Defense of the Nicene Definition. The Nicene and Post Nicene Fathers).

***BEING KIND TO THE UNGRATEFUL***  
***Treasure in Vessels of Clay***

**October 2, 2016**  
**2<sup>nd</sup> Sunday of Luke**  
**Revision F**

Today's Gospel lesson is used for a number of different occasions both in the Eastern and Western Churches. In the East, today's Gospel lesson taken from Matthew 5:33-48 is also used for the Friday and Saturday preceding the Sunday of All Saints (which is the First Sunday after Pentecost). In the West, today's Gospel lesson from Luke is used either for All Saints Day (November 1<sup>st</sup>) or Ash Wednesday, and from Matthew, either for the Eighth Sunday after Epiphany or the Fourth Sunday after Trinity.

**Gospel: Luke 6:27-36, (Matthew 5:33-48)**

**Showing Kindness toward the Ungrateful and the Evil**

The Gospel lesson took place in early 28 AD, or early in Jesus' ministry (where the crucifixion took place in the spring of 30 AD). In Matthew 5:1, the "Sermon on the Mount" is called such because Jesus taught from the side of a mountain. Shortly afterward, Jesus also taught from a "level place" (Luke 6:17) after He had come down from a mountain and He used the same illustrations about the same subjects. Luke 6 is sometimes called "The Sermon on the Plain."

The subject of the Gospel lesson is what has come to be called "the golden rule" of loving one's enemies. It is a subject that is easy to talk about and easy to pay lip service to, but very difficult to do. But as we will see, there are some very good reasons for doing so, for He is instructing us to become like Himself as much as men are able to do.

There are several "golden rules" that exist in our culture. Among them are:

- The golden rule in business: He who has the gold makes the rules
- The golden rule of competition: Do unto others before they do unto you
- God's golden rule from Luke 6:31, "Just as you want men to do to you, you also do to them"

The words of God's golden rule are spoken of as summarizing the entire Law and the Prophets, "Therefore, whatever you want men to do to you, do also to them, for this is the Law and the Prophets" (Matthew 7:12). In this regard, God's golden rule is equivalent to the Greatest Commandment: Love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul and mind and your neighbor

Copyright © Mark Kern 2001

as yourself (Matthew 22:37-39). On the Greatest Commandment also hang all the Law and the Prophets (Matthew 22:40); its words were part of the Mosaic Law (Deuteronomy 6:5, Leviticus 19:18) and it summarizes the Ten Commandments. The Jewish Rabbi Hillel (the grandfather of Gamaliel, Acts 5:34-40, 22:3) also taught this, saying that the golden rule, “contains the whole Law and that all the rest is simply commentary.” In the First Century Synagogue worship, the words of the Greatest Commandment were part of a Creed that was recited every Sabbath (Edersheim, Sketches of Jewish Social Life, pp. 245, 101-104). By this Creed, the synagogue worship pointed to the work of Christ. By following this ourselves, we become like Christ as much as is humanly possible.

From Luke 6 and Matthew 5, there are some very specific aspects of God’s golden rule; some need clarification in terms of today’s culture. All of these are very difficult to do. Both Luke 6:27-36 and Matthew 5:38-48 contain a list of positives (things we should do) followed by a list of negatives (things we shouldn’t).

### **The Positives**

- Love our enemies; do good to those who hate us (Luke 6:27, Matthew 5:44)
- Bless those who curse us; pray for those who spitefully use us and persecute us (Luke 6:28, Matthew 5:44)
- Do not resist an evil person; turn the other cheek (Luke 6:29, Matthew 5:39)
- Give to everyone who asks to borrow. If someone takes your things, don’t ask for them back (Luke 6:30, Matthew 5:42)
- If someone sues you for your cloak, give him your tunic also (Luke 6:29, Matthew 5:40)
- Go out of your way to help; if someone compels you to go one mile, go two (Matthew 5:41)

The Orthodox Study Bible has a good footnote in this regard, “Jesus warned His disciples not to resist violence with more violence (as opposed to strict Old Testament justice standards such as Exodus 21:24). Evil, and the evil person, can be overcome only by good. This keeps us free from anger – from being poisoned by the evil directed against us and its destructive forces – and instructs others through Christian forbearance. It brings both us and our enemy under the yoke of God’s love” (Footnote to Matthew 5:39).

The Old Testament has some things to say about the above 6 items also: regarding the first three, loving one’s neighbors was commanded and having a grudge against anyone was forbidden (Leviticus 19:18). However, there was an exception concerning the Ammonites and Moabites because of how they opposed Israel in the wilderness (Deuteronomy 23:3-6). As a kingdom of priests and a holy nation (Exodus 19:6), Israel was expected to pray for the rest of the world and a third tithe was set aside every third year, in part, for strangers and aliens (Deuteronomy 14:29, 16:11-14, 24:19-21, 26:12). During Israel’s apostasy, this wasn’t followed very well (Isaiah 1:15-17).

**Loans and Borrowing:** Loans were treated much differently in the Mosaic Law than they were after the captivity and during the time of Christ. At the time of Moses, commercial loans were unknown and loans were solely for the purpose of helping a poor brother through a time of

difficulty (due to bad crops, etc.). From this point of view, any charging of interest was forbidden (Exodus 22:25, Leviticus 25:35-37), although interest could be charged to a foreigner (Deuteronomy 23:19-20). During the time of Christ, commercial business ventures were common and a reasonable interest rate for business investment was an allowable practice (Matthew 25:27, Luke 19:23). In this context, the implication is that someone is refusing to pay back a loan. According to Roman Law, the creditor could have the debtor put in prison (Matthew 18:28-30). According to Hebrew law, debtors could be made slaves (Leviticus 25:39, Exodus 22:3). However, debts older than seven years were automatically forgiven under Hebrew Law (Exodus 21:2, Leviticus 25:39-42, Deuteronomy 15:9) as also in the year of Jubilee (Leviticus 25). However, the Lord said, 'Don't put someone in prison and don't make someone a slave; forgive the loan instead' (Compare Matthew 18:32-35). This certainly runs against the grain of modern capitalism, but its emphasis is on spiritual rather than material values.

Should we allow ourselves to be taken advantage of? Our enemy will certainly use this against us. John Chrysostom stated it as follows: "What then? It might be said, 'Ought we not to resist the evil one?' Indeed we ought, but not in this way, but as He has commanded, by giving one's self to suffer wrongfully. For thus you shall prevail over him. For one fire is not quenched by another fire, but fire by water."

"For nothing so restrains wrong doers as when the injured bear what is done with gentleness. And it not only restrains them from rushing onward, but works upon them also to repent for what has gone on before, and, in wonder at such forbearance, to draw back" (Homily XVIII on Matthew 5).

**Lawsuits:** Old Testament lawsuits were much different than modern lawsuits; the closest modern equivalent is a small claims court from where each plaintiff represents his case personally. In the wilderness, Moses heard each case personally until his father-in-law, Jethro, suggested he appoint lower courts to hear minor disputes (Exodus 18:12-27). This Moses did. If these lower courts could not decide a particularly difficult case, it was brought to Jerusalem to the Levitical priest or judge in office then (Deuteronomy 17:8-12). If he had difficulty deciding, he could always inquire of the Lord in the Temple using the Urim and Thummim. Anyone not accepting this decision of the Lord in the Temple was executed (Deuteronomy 17:12).

A lawsuit over a cloak or a tunic (as in our Gospel lesson) was definitely not a major matter to be heard in Jerusalem; but it was a big deal for a poor farmer whose only clothes were the ones he wore. His cloak was also his bed roll and Hebrew Law did not allow one's cloak to be held overnight even if it was given as a security pledge (Deuteronomy 24:10-13). Most poor people wore only three articles of clothing: a loincloth (or under-tunic), a tunic and a cloak. The cloak was usually a thick, rough, blanket-like material and was carried over the shoulders in hot weather. Clothing was expensive, so most poor people owned only what they wore.

In the Gospel lesson, if someone took your cloak (this is illegal according to Hebrew Law), to then give up your tunic also (Luke 6:29) left one very poorly clad. On the other hand, if someone sued you for your tunic, (this is legal and was often done since the cloak couldn't be taken) giving up your cloak as well left you very poorly clad also. Yet this is what the Apostle

Paul tolerated on his various missionary journeys (1 Corinthians 4:11, 2 Timothy 4:13) where he was often very poorly clad.

A good summary of all this is that we are commanded to love our neighbor as our self in an active manner and not just as a theological concept. Regarding the six positive things we should do, from the previous page, John Chrysostom delineated nine steps:

1. Do not begin with injustice (i.e. becoming an evil person yourself)
2. After beginning, do not vindicate yourself with equal retaliation (i.e. turn the other cheek)
3. Be quiet (don't go to court)
4. Give yourself up to suffer wrongfully
5. Give up yet more than the other who did the wrong wishes (let him have the cloak also)
6. Don't hate him
7. Even love him
8. Do him good
9. Entreat God Himself on his behalf

Chrysostom continues: "He also sets up a reward unlike as in the Beatitudes. For He makes no mention of earth (as with respect to the meek) nor of comfort or mercy...nor of the kingdom of Heaven, but of that which was more thrilling than all: our becoming like God in such a way as men might become so. For He said, 'That you may become like your Father which is in Heaven'" (Ibid.).

As an example of this, Chrysostom spoke of the way physicians treat the mentally ill: "For so too the physicians, when they are kicked and shamefully handled by the insane, then most of all they pity them, and take measures for their perfect cure, knowing that the insult comes from the extremity of their disease. Now I bid you also to have the same mind touching them that are plotting against you, and do you so treat them that are injuring you. For it is they above all that are diseased; it is they who are undergoing all the violence. Deliver him then from this grievous insult and grant him to let go his anger, and set him free from that grievous demon of wrath" (Ibid.).

### **The Negatives**

On the negative side, we get no credit for reciprocal love. For example, if we only:

- Love those who love us (Luke 6:32, Matthew 5:46)
- Do good to those who do good to us (Luke 6:33)
- Lend to those from whom we hope to receive back (Luke 6:34)
- Speak to or greet only our brethren (Matthew 5:47)

What credit is that to us? Even sinners and publicans do that (Luke 6:32-34, Matthew 5:46-47). Earlier, Jesus had said, "Unless your righteousness exceeds that of the Scribes and Pharisees, you will by no means enter the kingdom of Heaven" (Matthew 5:20). Both Jesus and John the Baptist referred to the Scribes and Pharisees as a "brood of vipers" (Matthew 12:34, Matthew 3:7); surpassing their righteousness shouldn't be too difficult. To their credit, they did try to

obey the Mosaic Law and the Ten Commandments for the most part or at least gave outward pretense of doing so. Today many people don't even pretend to obey the Ten Commandments. By way of contrast, our society prizes disobedience, and being cunning is considered good.

John Chrysostom categorized people's righteousness in terms of three levels: that of the Scribes and Pharisees (the lowest); that of the publicans and heathen (who love those who love them); and finally that of the Gospel lesson where we are to emulate God and be kind to the unthankful and the evil (Luke 6:35). Chrysostom states: "What then can we deserve, who are commanded to emulate God, and are perhaps in a manner of life, hardly even equal to publicans? For if 'to love those who love us' is the part of publicans and heathen; when we do not even do this (and we do not do it as long as we envy our brothers who are in honor), what penalty will we not incur? We are commanded to surpass the Scribes, but we take our place below the heathen! How then will we behold the Kingdom, pray tell? How will we set foot on that holy threshold, who do not surpass even the publicans? ...Bearing in mind all the things that have been said, let us then show forth great love even towards our enemies..." (Homily XVIII on Matthew 5).