

SERVING TWO MASTERS
And the Lamp of the Body
JUSTIFICATION AND FAITH

July 11, 2021
3rd Sunday after Pentecost
Revision E

GOSPEL: Matthew 6:22-33

EPISTLE: Romans 5:1-10

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The Gospel and Epistle lessons of two weeks ago covered the Communion of Saints and the Will of God. Last Sunday we began a series of practical teachings for the Church: Doers of the Law and this series continues for the next several weeks. Today's Gospel and Epistle lessons address another aspect of the basics of the Christian faith: Trust, Faith and the Lamp of the Body. The Church Fathers have had a great deal to say about this subject. The Gospel Lesson is taken from part of what is known as Christ's "sermon on the mount", and is a continuation of the Gospel lesson for Forgiveness Sunday, or the Sunday before Lent.

Today's Gospel lesson about trust is used in Western churches in the United States for the American holiday of Thanksgiving in November. Sometimes it is also used for the 15th Sunday after Trinity. Today's Epistle lesson on Justification by Faith is used in the West for the 3rd Sunday in Lent.

Gospel: Matthew 6:19-34, (Luke 11:33-36, Luke 12:16-34)

The illustrations used in today's Gospel lesson are eyes, masters and trust and our lives are compared to birds and flowers. From the viewpoint of Christian life basics, this answers our questions regarding whom do we look to for illumination, who is our master and in whom do we place our trust. But there are many subtleties involved that can deceive us, and the Church Fathers have had a great deal to say about these matters.

The Eye of the Soul

The Gospel lesson begins by pointing out that the eye is the lamp of the body (Matthew 6:22). From a Christian basics viewpoint, we need to ask ourselves what kind of illumination we are getting. Two kinds of "eyes" are contrasted here, where the "eye" referred to is not necessarily just a physical eye. The first type of eye is described using the Greek word *haplous* and is usually translated "good." The literal meaning of "*haplous*" is "not twisted, not braided but single stranded." This connotation is carried over into verse 24 when Jesus spoke of two masters. If one's eye is directed single-mindedly on the things of God, one's whole body will be full of light. In the parallel account from Luke, the result is that the lamp is set on a lamp stand (not under a basket) that those who come in may see the light (Luke 11:33-34).

The second type of eye is described using the Greek word *poneros* and is usually translated "bad." A more precise definition of "*poneros*" implies bad in the sense of having a hurtful effect. And the hurtful effect is the darkness that fills the body. Note that the Lord said, "If the light that is in you is darkness" (Matthew 6:23). How can light be darkness? This darkness is not just an absence of light, but a tangible darkness as in the powers of darkness (Ephesians 6:12, Colossians 1:13, John 3:19). And whether or not the body is filled with the "light" of darkness depends on what we let in through our eyes. Do we look at things that are true, worshipful, righteous, holy, lovely, of good report, virtuous or praise worthy? (Philippians 4:8). Or do we look at the opposite? Or do we try a little of each and hope for the best?

James, the Lord's brother, addresses a single mindedness in his Epistle. Addressing quarrels in the churches, he speaks of the darkness (i.e., desire for pleasure, lust, murder, covetousness, adultery) as friendship with the world and equates it to enmity with God (James 4:1-10). James uses the term double minded (literally two-souled) to refer to this conflict between the

two masters. Each of the things he refers to (desire for pleasure, lust, etc.) is something that comes into the body via the gateway of the eyes.

John Chrysostom made¹ an analogy between the eye as the lamp of the body and the mind as the lamp of the soul:

“The Lord had spoken of the mind as enslaved and brought into captivity by the lust of the eyes for example (Matthew 5:27-30), and there were not many who could easily discern this. He transfers the lesson, therefore, to things outward and laying before men’s eyes, that by these, the others also might reach their understanding. Thus, if you do not know, He says, what a thing it is to be injured in mind, learn it from the things of the body. For just what the eye is to the body, the same is the mind to the soul. Just as when the eyes are blinded, most of the energy of the other members is gone – their light being quenched – so also when the mind is depraved, your life will be filled with countless evils. For God, He says, gave us understanding, so we might chase away all ignorance, and have the right judgment of things; and that using this as a kind of weapon and light against all that is grievous or hurtful, we might remain in safety. But we betray the gift for the sake of things that are superfluous and useless.”

“‘For with what intent do you desire riches?’ says He. ‘Is it not that you may enjoy pleasure and luxury? Why now, this above all things you will fail to obtain by doing this; it will rather² be just the contrary.’ For if, when our eyes are cut out, we are not able to perceive any pleasant thing because of our injury, much more will this be our case in the perversion and maiming of the mind”.

John Cassian took this a step further and described³ the words of Antony the Great on how a monk might achieve perfection from the deceits and snares of the devil. Antony was addressing communities of believers who had dedicated their lives to a strict adherence to the things of God. Some monks thought one could achieve this by zeal in fasting, vigils, and despising worldly things; others thought withdrawal from the world in solitude or in charity and kindness was the answer. Antony stated, however, that while these things are good, if they lacked discernment or discretion, they could spend their whole life doing this and still be deceived by the devil. This discernment or discretion is what Christ referred to as the eye or the light of the body. Antony gave two examples of this in King Saul and King Ahab.

“All these things which you have mentioned are indeed needful, and helpful to those who are thirsting for God, and desirous to approach Him. But the experience of many people will not allow us to make these the most important of gifts. For often when men are most strict in fasting or in vigils, nobly withdraw into solitude, and when they fulfill all the duties of kindness, yet still we have seen them suddenly deceived. They could not bring the work they had entered into to a suitable close, but brought their exalted fervor and praiseworthy manner of life to a terrible end. We shall be able clearly to recognize what it is, which mainly leads to God, if we trace out with greater care the reason for their downfall and deception. When the works of the above-mentioned virtues were abounding in them, discretion alone was lacking, and this did not allow them to continue to the end. No other reason for their falling off can be discovered. They were not sufficiently instructed

¹ John Chrysostom, Homilies on Matthew, XX, 3-4.

² That is, if one concentrates on pleasure and luxury, one can expect to end up in hell.

³ John Cassian, 2nd Conference of Abbot Moses, I, ii, 2-3.

by their elders to obtain judgment and discretion. Discretion teaches a monk always to walk along the royal road, and does not allow him to be puffed up on the right hand of virtue, i.e., from excess zeal to transgress the bounds of moderation. Nor does it allow him to be enamored by slackness and turn aside to the vices on the left hand, i.e., pretending to control the body and growing slack with a lukewarm spirit. This discretion is termed in the gospel the ‘eye’, and ‘light of the body’. ‘The light of your body is your eye: but if your eye is single, your whole body will be full of light, but if your eye is evil, your whole body will be full of darkness’ (Matthew 6:22-23). Because it discerns all the thoughts and actions of men, it sees all things, which should be done. But if in any man this ‘light’ is ‘evil’, i.e., not fortified by sound judgment and knowledge, or deceived by some error and presumption, it will make our whole body ‘full of darkness’. That is, it will darken all our vision and our actions, as they will be involved in the darkness of vices and the gloom of disturbances. For He says, ‘If therefore the light that is in you is darkness, how great *is* that darkness!’ (Matthew 6:23) For no one can doubt that when the judgment of our heart goes wrong, and is overwhelmed by the night of ignorance, our thoughts and deeds, which are the result of deliberation and discretion, must be involved in the darkness of still greater sins”.

“King Saul was, in the judgment of God, the first to be worthy of the kingdom of His people Israel; but because he was lacking in this ‘eye’ of discretion, his whole body was full of darkness, and he was cast down from the kingdom, being deceived by the darkness of this ‘light’. In error, he imagined that his own offerings were more acceptable to God than obedience to the command of Samuel (1 Samuel 15:1-23). He fell in the same matter in which he had hoped to propitiate the Divine Majesty. Ignorance of this discretion led Ahab, the king of Israel, after a triumph and splendid victory, which had been granted to him by the favor of God, to fancy that mercy on his part was better than the execution of the divine command (1 Kings 20:13-43), which he thought was a cruel rule. Moved by this consideration, he desired to temper a bloody victory with mercy; on account of his indiscriminating clemency, he was rendered full of darkness in his whole body, and condemned to death”.

John Chrysostom put it⁴ in similar terms using the example of the life of the Apostle Paul. Being prudent and discreet in humility is the light that enabled most of Paul’s success.

“It was not by Paul’s miracles that men were made believers. For a man must also be irreproachable in conduct, prudent and discreet in his dealings with others, fearless of danger, and apt to teach. It was by these qualities of his life that the greater part of Paul’s success was achieved. Where there were these, there was no need of miracles. We see he was successful in many such cases, prior to the use of miracles. But, today, we have none of these qualities, and we pretend to command all things. Yet if one of them were separated from the other, it becomes useless. For example, what is the advantage of a man’s being ever so fearless of danger, if his life is open to censure. ‘For if the light that is in you is darkness’, said Christ, ‘how great is that darkness?’ (Matthew 6:23) Again, what is the advantage of a man having an irreproachable life, if he is sluggish and indolent? ‘For, he that does not take his cross, and follow after Me is not worthy of Me’

⁴ John Chrysostom, Homilies on Ephesians, VI, v. 7.

(Matthew 10:38). Also, ‘The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep’ (John 10:11). Again, what is the advantage of being both these, unless a man is at the same time prudent and discreet in ‘knowing how he ought to answer each one?’ (Colossians 4:6) Even if miracles are not in our power, yet both these qualities are in our power. Still however, Paul contributed so much from himself, yet he attributed all to grace. This is the act of a grateful servant. And we would not even have heard of his good deeds, had he not been brought to a necessity of declaring them”.

To illustrate the state of the covetous John Chrysostom made⁵ an analogy to the custom of his day, which used convicted criminals as workers in the mines. The problem is that if the eye of the soul of the covetous has been put out, and all they have is darkness, it is like they are living in a mine. Their state becomes worse than that of criminals working the mines, since the criminals at least get a break after their shift is over.

“It is said that that soil which is impregnated with gold has certain clefts and recesses in those gloomy caverns. The malefactor condemned to labor in that place, takes a lamp and a pick, and enters the mine, and carries with him a flask to drop oil into the lamp, because there is darkness even by day below ground, without a ray of light. When the time of day calls him to his wretched meal, he is ignorant of the time, but his jailor from above strikes violently on the cave, by that clattering sound declares to those who are at work below that it is the end of the day”.

“But there are things more grievous than these in the case of the covetous. In the first place, the covetous have a more stringent jailor, that is, avarice, and so much more stringent in that besides their body he also chains their soul. And this darkness also is more terrible than that below ground. It is not subject to sense, but they produce it within, wherever they go, carrying it about with them. For the eye of their soul is put out, which is the reason why more than anything else Christ calls them wretched, saying, ‘But if the light that is in you is darkness, how great is that darkness’ (Matthew 6:23). The condemned miners have at least a lamp shining, but the covetous are deprived even of this beam of light; and therefore every day they fall into pitfalls. The condemned, when night overtakes them, take a break, that is, the night. But to the covetous, even this time off is blocked by their own avarice; such grievous thoughts they have even at night, since without disturbance from anyone, at full leisure they cut themselves to pieces seeking more wealth”.

“Such are their circumstances in this world. But in the next, there are the intolerable furnaces, the rivers burning with fire, the gnashing of teeth, the chains never to be loosed, the envenomed worm, the gloom with no light, the never-ending miseries. Let us fear them, beloved, the fountain of so great punishments, the insatiate madness, the destroyer of our salvation. For it is impossible at the same time to love both money and your soul. Let us be convinced that wealth is dust and ashes, which it leaves us when we depart, or rather that even before our departure it often darts away from us, and injures us both in regard to the future and in respect to the present life. For before hell fire, and before that punishment, even here it surrounds us with innumerable wars, and stirs up fighting and bickering. For nothing is so apt to cause war as avarice: nothing is so apt to produce beggary, whether it show itself in wealth or in poverty. For in the souls of poor men also this grievous disease arises, and aggravates their poverty even more. For riches and

⁵ John Chrysostom, Homilies on 1 Corinthians, XXIII, 8.

poverty are determined not by the measure of the substance, but by the disposition of the mind; and he rather is the poorest of all, who is always hungering after more and is never able to satisfy this wicked lust”.

The Service of Two Masters

The Lord made the statement that one cannot serve two masters, where the implication is that the two masters are pulling in opposite directions (i.e. Light vs. Darkness). The eye that is “*haplous*” or single minded here becomes important in order that one’s entire body be full of light. Luke’s account (Luke 11:36) adds a phrase suggesting that no part of the body be dark⁶. Note also that by filling the eye with things that are *poneros*⁷ means that we are serving a master who is the Prince of Darkness. In connection with this, He said that one cannot serve God and mammon.

What is Mammon?

Generally “mammon” refers to the things of this world. But Clement of Alexandria extended⁸ this definition to say that “mammon” refers to all the resources of money directed to various pleasures.

“He who makes it his purpose to please men cannot please God, since the multitude chooses not what is profitable, but what is pleasant. But in pleasing God, as a consequence one gets the favor of the good among men. He views with suspicion even a word that produces pleasure, a pleasant movement and act of the mind. ‘For no one can serve two masters, God and mammon’ (Matthew 6:24). This refers not simply to money, but the resources arising from money bestowed on various pleasures. In reality, it is not possible for him who magnanimously and truly knows God, to serve antagonistic pleasures”.

This does not mean that one can never have any pleasure; it is just that our delight should be in the things of God, rather than centered on physical pleasure.

Irenaeus stated⁹ that the term “mammon” comes from the Hebrew (Aramaic) and implies covetousness and an insatiable gullet. Mammon is a thing that really exists, but it is not God, although those who serve mammon like slaves may treat mammon as a god.

“The Lord Himself directed us to ‘render unto Caesar the things that are Caesar’s, and to God the things that are God’s’ (Matthew 22:21); naming indeed Caesar as Caesar, but confessing God as God. In like manner also, He says, ‘You cannot serve two masters’. He Himself interprets, saying, ‘You cannot serve God and mammon’ (Matthew 6:24), acknowledging God indeed as God, but mentioning mammon as a thing also having an existence. He does not call mammon Lord when He says, ‘You cannot serve two masters’; but He teaches His disciples who serve God, not to be subject to mammon, nor to be ruled by it. For He says, ‘He that commits sin is the slave of sin’ (John 8:34). He terms those ‘the slaves of sin’ who serve sin, but does not certainly call sin itself God; thus also He terms those who serve mammon ‘the slaves of mammon’, not calling mammon God. For mammon is, according to the Jewish language, which the Samaritans also use, a *covetous*

⁶ Greek “skotenon” as related to the darkness “skotos.”

⁷ That is, bad in the sense of “hurtful”.

⁸ Clement of Alexandria, *Stromata*, VII, 12.

⁹ Irenaeus, *Against Heresies*, III, viii, 1.

man, and one who wishes to have more than he ought to have. According to the Hebrew, by the addition of a syllable, it signifies one whose gullet is insatiable. Therefore, according to both these things, we cannot serve God and mammon.”

Clement of Alexandria also stated¹⁰ that the issue in choosing between God and mammon involves neither fear of punishment nor the promise of earthly gifts, since both produce mere hirelings. We should desire to seek the good and live according to the likeness of Christ and not according to the love of money, which He calls “mammon”.

“We must have recourse to the word of salvation neither from fear of punishment nor from promise of a gift, but on account of the good itself. Those who do so stand on the right hand of the sanctuary (Matthew 25:32-40, Hebrews 8:1, 1:3); but those who think that by the gift of what is perishable they shall receive in exchange what belongs to immortality are, in the parable of the two brothers, called ‘hirelings’ (Matthew 21:28-31). This sheds some light on the expression ‘in the likeness and image’ (2 Corinthians 3:18), in the fact that some live according to the likeness of Christ, while those who stand on the left hand live according to their own image. To choose by way of imitation differs from the choice of him who chooses according to knowledge, as that which is set on fire differs from that which is illuminated”.

“What does the parable of Lazarus mean, by showing the image of the rich and poor? (Luke 16:19-26) And what does the saying mean, ‘No man can serve two masters, God and mammon?’ (Matthew 6:24), the Lord so terming the love of money. For instance, the covetous, who were invited, did not respond to the invitation to the supper (Luke 14:15-23), not because of their possessing property, but because of their inordinate affection to what they possessed”.

How Does Mammon Affect Us?

Mammon affects us in often very subtle ways, such that our thinking is altered and we are incapable of hearing or understanding what Christ says in the Gospels. For example, many times Christ said that to follow Him meant disposing¹¹ of worldly wealth. The Twelve and the Seventy did this, as did most of the Early Church after Pentecost. John Chrysostom pointed out¹² that the love of wealth can take on a power of its own, and can turn us into incorrigible monsters.

“What is there to hinder us from being saved? Nothing, unless we, ourselves, revolt from Him! And how can we revolt? Hear Him saying, ‘You cannot serve two masters, God and mammon’ (Matthew 6:24). If we serve God, we shall not submit to the tyranny of mammon. Truly a bitterer thing than any tyranny is the desire for riches. It brings no pleasure, but cares, envy, plotting, hatred, false accusations, many impediments to virtue, indolence, wantonness, greediness, drunkenness, which make even free men to be slaves. Actually they become worse than slaves bought with money, because they are slaves not to men, but to the most grievous of the passions, and maladies of the soul. Such a one dares many things displeasing to God and men, dreading lest any should remove from him this dominion. This is a bitter slavery and devilish tyranny! The most grievous thing of all is that when entangled in such evils we are pleased, we hug our chain,

¹⁰ Clement of Alexandria, Stromata, IV, 6.

¹¹ For example, Matthew 19:21-29, Acts 2:45, 4:34-35, Mark 10:21-30, Luke 12:33-34, Mark 8:34-38, Matthew 6:19-21,

¹² John Chrysostom, Homilies on John, LIX, 4.

we dwell in a prison house full of darkness, we refuse to come out to the light, but rivet evil upon ourselves, and rejoice in our sickness. So that we cannot be freed, but are in a worse state than those that work the mines, enduring labors and affliction, but not enjoying the fruit. And what is in truth worse than all, if anyone desires to free us from this bitter captivity, we do not allow it. We are even bothered and displeased, being in a more miserable state than any madmen, since as we are not willing to be delivered from our madness. Was it for this that you were made a man that you might work in these mines, and gather gold? God didn't create you in His Image for this, but that you might please Him, that you might obtain the things to come, that you might join the choir of Angels. Why now do you banish yourself from such a relationship, and thrust yourself into the extreme of dishonor? He, who came by the same spiritual birth pangs with you, is perishing with hunger, and you are bursting with fullness. Your brother goes about with naked body, but you provide garments even for your garments, heaping up all this clothing for the worms".

Jerome wrote¹³ of examples of covetousness and hypocrisy and contrasted this with the love of God and our neighbor. In all this, he encouraged his people to be content with food and clothing. If we turn this around, we serve mammon and not God.

"You must avoid the sin of covetousness, and this not merely by refusing to seize upon what belongs to others, for that is punished by the laws of the state, but also by not keeping your own property, which is no longer yours. 'If you have not been faithful', the Lord says, 'in that which is another man's, who shall give you that which is your own? (Luke 16:12) That which is another man's is a quantity of gold, while that which is our own is the spiritual heritage of which it is said, 'The ransom of a man's life is his riches' (Proverbs 13:8). 'No man can serve two masters, for either he will hate the one and love the other; or else he will hold to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and mammon' (Matthew 6:24). In the language of the Syrians, riches are called mammon. The 'thorns', which choke our faith (Matthew 13:7, 22), are the worrying about our life (Matthew 6:25). Care for the things, which the Gentiles seek after, is the root of covetousness."

"But you will say, 'I am a girl delicately reared, and I cannot labor with my hands. Suppose that I live to old age and then fall sick; who will take pity on me?' Hear Jesus speaking to the Apostles, 'Do not worry about what you shall eat or what you shall put on. Is not the life more than food, and the body more than clothing? Behold the fowls of the air: for they do not sow, neither do they reap nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feeds them' (Matthew 6:25-26). Should clothing fail you, set the lilies before your eyes. Should hunger seize you, think of the words in which the poor and hungry are blessed. Should pain afflict you, read 'Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities', and 'There was given to me a thorn in the flesh, the messenger of Satan to punch me, lest I should be exalted above measure' (2 Corinthians 12:10, 7). Rejoice in all God's judgments; for the psalmist says, 'The daughters of Judah rejoiced because of your judgments, O Lord' (Psalm 97:8). Let these words be always on your lips, 'Naked came I out of my mother's womb, and naked I shall return there' (Job 1:21); and 'We brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out'" (1 Timothy 6:6).

¹³ Jerome, Letter to Eustochium, XXII, 31-32.

“Today you see women cramming their wardrobes with dresses, and yet are unable to overcome the moths. Rarely does one wear out a single dress, while her closet is full, and Christ lies at the door naked and dying (Matthew 25:35-36). When they hold out a hand to the needy they sound a trumpet (Matthew 6:2); when they invite to a love feast¹⁴ they engage a crier. I lately saw the noblest lady in Rome with a band of eunuchs before her in the basilica of the blessed Peter. She was giving money to the poor, a coin apiece; and this with her own hand, that she might be accounted more religious. At that time an old woman, ‘full of years and rags’, ran forward to get a second coin, but when her turn came she received not a penny but a blow hard enough to draw blood from her guilty veins.”

“‘The love of money is the root of all evil’ (1 Timothy 6:10), and Paul speaks of covetousness as being idolatry (Colossians 3:5). ‘Seek first the kingdom of God and all these things shall be added to you’ (Matthew 6:33). The Lord will never allow a righteous soul to perish of hunger. ‘I have been young’, the psalmist says, ‘and now am old, yet I have not seen the righteous forsaken nor his seed begging bread’ (Psalm 37:25). Ravens fed Elijah (1 Kings 17:4, 6). The widow of Zarephath, who with her sons expected to die the same night, went without food herself that she might feed the prophet. He who had come to be fed then turned feeder, for, by a miracle, he filled the empty barrel (1 Kings 17:9-16). Peter says, ‘Silver and gold I don’t have, but what I do have I give you. In the name of Jesus Christ rise up and walk’ (Acts 3:6). But now many, while they do not say it in words, by their deeds declare, ‘Faith and pity I don’t have; but such as I have, silver and gold, these I will not give you’. ‘Having food and clothing, with these we shall be content’ (1 Timothy 6:8). Numberless are the instances in Scripture which teach men to ‘Beware of covetousness’” (Luke 12:15).

One aspect of taking up our Cross has to do with our attachment to worldly goods. John Cassian used¹⁵ a good illustration of this aspect of the Cross to address a problem in a monastic community, where some monks retained their worldly wealth, thinking that this would allow them to be more charitable. Cassian referred to them as double-minded, fearful and lacking faith; they twisted the Scriptures to support their avarice. This applies to the non-monastic also in the sense that many people put too much trust in their wealth.

“Of those who say that they have renounced this world, and afterwards are overcome by lack of faith and are afraid of losing their worldly goods, a charge was given mystically by Moses. ‘If any man is afraid and has a fearful heart, let him not go to war. Let him go back and return home, lest he make the hearts of his brethren as fearful as he himself is timid and frightened’ (Deuteronomy 20:8). What is plainer than this testimony? Does not Scripture clearly prefer that they should not take on even the earliest stages of the monastic profession, rather than by their persuasion and bad example turn others back from the perfection of the Gospel, and weaken them by their faithless terror? And so they are asked to withdraw from the battle and return to their homes, because a man cannot fight the Lord’s battle with a double heart. ‘A double-minded man is unstable in all his ways!’ (James 1:8) And thinking of that Parable in the Gospel, that he who goes out with ten thousand men against a king who comes with twenty thousand, cannot

¹⁴ The love-feast was a meal that either preceded or followed the Eucharist. Because of the problems that occurred at Corinth (1 Corinthians 11:21-22, Jude 1:12), the love-feast was eventually discontinued.

¹⁵ John Cassian, *Institutes of the Coenobia*, VII, 15.

possibly fight (Luke 14:31-32); they should, while he is yet a great way off, ask for peace. That is, it is better not even to take the first step towards renunciation, rather than afterwards to involve themselves in still greater dangers. 'It is better not to vow, than to vow and not pay' (Ecclesiastes 5:4 LXX). It is a good description of us as the one coming with ten thousand and the other with twenty. For the number of sins, which attack us, is far larger than that of the virtues, which fight for us. But 'no man can serve God and mammon' (Matthew 6:24). And 'no man putting his hand to the plow and looking back is fit for the kingdom of God'" (Luke 9:62).

John Chrysostom stated¹⁶ that the root of covetousness is vainglory, which comes from pride. Jesus had to teach this to His disciples in small steps because they were still trying to overcome the passions. The ultimate antidote for covetousness is the contempt for riches.

"After He cast out the disease of vainglory, and not before, then He introduced His teaching on voluntary poverty. Nothing so trains men to be fond of riches, as the fondness for glory. This is why men devise those herds of slaves, swarms of spokesmen, limousines, silver tables, and all the rest of it. This is not to satisfy any wants, nor to enjoy any pleasure, but that they may make a show before the multitude. Before He had only said that we must show mercy; but here He points out how great mercy we must show. It was not possible at the beginning to introduce His teaching on the contempt of riches all at once, because of the tyranny of the passions; He broke it up into small portions, so that it shall become acceptable". Therefore He said first:

1. "Blessed are the merciful;" and after this,
2. "Agree with your adversary;" and after that,
3. "If anyone will sue you at the law and take your coat, give him your cloak also" (Matthew 5:40). His meaning here refers to things that are much greater than clothes.
4. "If you see a lawsuit impending, do this; since to be deficient and to be freed from fighting is better than to possess and to fight."

"But here, supposing no adversary is at law with you, He teaches the contempt of riches itself by itself. He implies that He makes these laws not so much for the sake of those who receive mercy, as for the giver's sake. Even though there is no one injuring us, or dragging us into court, even so we may despise our possessions, giving them to those that are in need. Even here Jesus maintained the place of an adviser rather than a lawgiver, in His sayings on this subject, for it was not yet time to reveal it." That is, Jesus was leading the Twelve along slowly.

John Chrysostom stated¹⁷ that being nailed to earthly things causes us great harm and makes us slaves instead of freemen. We become like a dog chained to a tomb that barks at everything that comes by.

"Though no problems should come up, He said, you will undergo no small harm, in being nailed to the things below, and in becoming a slave instead of a freeman. You will cast yourself out of the heavenly things, and have no power to think on anything lofty, but all about money, usury, loans, gain, and business deals. What could be more wretched than this? Such a person will be worse off than any

¹⁶ John Chrysostom, Homilies on Matthew, XX, 2.

¹⁷ John Chrysostom, Homilies on Matthew, XX, 3.

slave, bringing upon himself a most grievous tyranny, and giving up the chief thing of all, even the nobleness and the liberty of man. No matter how much anyone may speak to him, he will not be able to hear any of those things, which concern him, while his mind is nailed down to money. Bound like a dog to a tomb, by the tyranny of riches, more tightly than by any chain, barking at everything that come near him, he has this one employment continually, to keep from others what he has laid up. What can be more wretched than this?"

John Chrysostom also examined¹⁸ the manner in which mammon affects us by looking closely at the ex-Apostle Judas. Judas went everywhere with Christ for three years and watched Him heal the sick and raise the dead. He was even sent out with the rest of the Twelve to heal the sick and raise the dead himself (Matthew 10:4). But he was also incorrigible as a thief because of his love for money, and this led him to betray his Master and benefactor for 30 pieces of silver (John 12:5-6, Matthew 26:15). Covetousness overcame Judas, and nothing that Jesus said or did could counteract the darkness created by his covetousness. This darkness is an extremely powerful influence and there are many like Judas in every town and in every country, and we are warned not to imitate them.

"Tell me, why did Judas betray Jesus? He called him, when he was a man unmarked and unknown. He made him one of the Twelve, He gave him a share in His teaching, He promised him ten thousand good things, He caused him to work wonders. He was a sharer of the same table, the same journeys, the same company, the same conversation and teaching as the rest. These things were not sufficient to restrain him. For what reason did he betray Him? What did Judas have to charge Him with? Rather, what good did he not receive at His hands? Jesus knew Judas' mind, and still did not cease to do His part. He often said, 'One of you shall betray Me' (Matthew 26:21). He often marked Judas, and yet spared him, and though He knew him to be such a one, yet He did not cast him out of the band. He still bore with him, He still honored him, and loved him, as a true disciple, and as one of the Twelve. Last of all, He took a towel, and with His own hands He washed Judas' polluted feet, and even this did not keep him back. Judas stole the things of the poor, and that Judas might not go on to greater sin, Jesus bore this too. Nothing persuaded Judas. Had he been a beast, or a stone, he might have been changed by these kindnesses towards him, by these wonders, by these teachings. Though He was thus brutalized, yet Jesus still called him, and by wondrous works He drew him to Himself, even though Judas was more senseless than a stone. Yet for none of these things did Judas become better".

"You wonder perhaps at the folly of the traitor; therefore dread the thing that wounded him. He became such from avarice, from the love of money. Cut out this passion, for to these diseases does it give birth; it makes us impious, and causes us to be ignorant of God, though we have received ten thousand benefits at His hands. Cut it out, I entreat you, it is no common disease, it knows how to give birth to a thousand destructive deaths. We have seen his tragedy. Let us fear lest we too fall into the same snares. For this is it written, that we should not suffer the same things. All four Evangelists included it in their Gospels, that they might restrain us. Covetousness does not consist in just the love of a lot of money, but in loving money at all. It is grievous avarice to desire more than we need. Was it hundreds

¹⁸ John Chrysostom, Homilies on Philipians, VI.

of pounds of gold that persuaded Judas? For thirty pieces of silver he betrayed his Lord. Covetousness is not shown just in receiving a lot, but rather in receiving little things. Judas committed a great crime for a little silver”.

“It cannot be that an avaricious man should ever see the face of Christ! This is one of the things that are impossible. It is a root of evils, and if he that possesses one evil thing, falls from glory, where shall he stand who carries with him the root? He who is the servant of money cannot be a true servant of Christ. Christ Himself has declared that the thing is impossible. ‘You cannot serve God and mammon’, and, ‘No man can serve two masters’ (Matthew 6:24), for they lay upon us contrary orders. Christ says, ‘Spare the poor’; mammon says, ‘Even from the naked strip off the things they have’. Christ says, ‘Empty yourself of what you have’; mammon says, ‘Take also what you have not’. Do you see the opposition; do you see the conflict?”

“How can a man easily obey both; he must despise one! This does not need proof. We see continuously that Christ is despised, and mammon is honored? If even the words are painful, how much more painful is the thing itself? But it does not appear so painful in reality, because we are possessed with the disease. If the soul is cleansed of a little of the disease, it can judge right; but when it goes somewhere else, it may be seized by the fever, engaged in the pleasure of the thing, and its perception may not be clear. Christ says, ‘Whoever of you that does not renounce all that he has cannot be My disciple’ (Luke 14:33); mammon says, ‘Take the bread from the hungry’. Christ says, ‘Cover the naked’ (Isaiah 58:7); the other says, ‘Strip the naked’. Christ says, ‘You shall not hide yourself from your own flesh’, (Isaiah 58:7) and those of your own house; mammon says, ‘You shall not pity those of your own seed; though you see your mother or your father in want, despise them’. And mammon is obeyed! He who commands us to be cruel, mad and brutal is listened to rather than He who bids us to be gentle and healthful! Hell, fire and a worm that doesn’t die are appointed for this”.

We might contrast this image of the wealthy as grasping and covetous with Job and Abraham, who were both very wealthy, yet they were in control of their wealth and used it to help others. Abraham is remembered as a “Friend of God” for his hospitality to strangers, where the three strangers turned out to be Christ and two angels (Genesis 18:1-10). Job is remembered for his perseverance under unjust persecution, where prior to his persecution, he had been very actively helping the poor (Job 29:14-17).

Ambrose of Milan referred to¹⁹ the righteous Job is a good example of showing mercy to the poor.

“Do you wonder at the judgment of God in the case of holy Job? Wonder rather at his virtue, in that he could say, ‘I was an eye to the blind, and a foot to the lame. I was a father to the poor, and I searched out the case *that* I did not know’ (Job 29:15-16). Their shoulders were made warm with the skins of my lambs. The stranger didn’t dwell at my gates, but my door was open to everyone that came. Clearly blessed is he from whose house a poor man has never gone with empty hand. Nor again is anyone more blessed than he who is sensible to the needs of the poor, and the hardships of the weak and helpless. In the Day of Judgment he will

¹⁹ Ambrose of Milan, Duties of the Clergy, I, xi, 36-39.

receive salvation from the Lord, Whom he will have as his debtor for the mercy he has shown.”

John Chrysostom also encouraged²⁰ us to honor and accept the poor man, because Christ accepts him also. The poor man does not have the obstacles that a rich man does for entry to the Kingdom of Heaven, and both are welcomed equally at the Lord’s Table.

“Do not be ashamed when called upon by a poor man; if he should draw near, if he should catch your knees, do not shake him off. For these are admirable dogs of the Royal Courts. I do not call them dogs as dishonoring them, but highly commending them. They guard the King’s court; therefore feed them, for the honor passes on to the King. Everything is pride regarding the palaces on earth; but here everything is humility. From these people, you are taught that God does not delight in riches. For their sitting and assembling is an admonition regarding the nature of all men, saying that human things are nothing, that they are shadow and smoke. If God admits rich people, He admits them not that they may continue rich, but that they may be delivered from their encumbrance. For hear what Christ says to them, ‘You cannot serve God and mammon’ (Matthew 6:24); and again, ‘It is hard for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of heaven’; and, ‘It is easier for a camel to go through a needle’s eye, than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of heaven’ (Matthew 19:23, 24). On this account He receives the rich, that they may hear these words, that they may long for the eternal riches, that they may covet things in heaven. God does not refuse to call the poor to His spiritual Table, and make them partakers of that Feast. But the maimed, the lame, the old man that is clothed in rags, comes to partake of that Table with the young and the beautiful, and even with him who is clothed in purple, and whose head is encircled with a crown, and is thought worthy of the spiritual Feast. Both enjoy the same benefits, and there is no difference”.

Serving Mammon Is Idolatry

If one cannot serve God and mammon, the implication is that mammon somehow represents another god. Most people are not conscious of this, and many may think they are being good Christians while they serve mammon.

John Chrysostom stated²¹ that it is impossible for God and mammon to agree. Their aims and objects are so different.

“God has once for all declared it impossible for mammon and God to agree. Do not say, ‘it is possible’. How is it possible that these should agree when the one master is commanding you to acquire by violence, the other to strip yourself of your possessions; the one to be chaste, the other to commit fornication; the one to be drunken and luxurious, the other to keep the belly in subjection? One despises the things that are, the other is riveted to present things; the one admires marble, walls, and roofs, the other treats these with contempt, but honors self-restraint; how is it possible that these should agree?”

“Now He calls mammon ‘a master’ (Matthew 6:24), not because of its own nature, but on account of the wretchedness of them that bow themselves beneath it. So also He calls ‘the belly a God’ (Philippians 3:19), not from the dignity of such

²⁰ John Chrysostom, Homilies on 1 Thessalonians, XI.

²¹ John Chrysostom, Homilies on Matthew, XXI, 2.

a mistress, but from the wretchedness of them that are enslaved. It is worse than any punishment, and it is vengeance on him who is involved in it. For what condemned criminals can be so wretched, as they who have God for their Lord (that is, good Christian people) and desert to this grievous tyranny? This brings them so much harm even in this life. By doing so, their loss is unspeakable; there are lawsuits, annoyances, fighting, hard work, and a blinding of the soul. The most grievous thing of all is that one falls away from the highest blessings; for such a blessing it is to be God's servant."

Chrysostom elaborated²² on how covetousness is idolatry. First, covetousness denies the sovereignty of God and sets the pursuit of wealth above it. Second, it shows contempt for God and draws others away from His service. Third, true worship means doing the will of one's master, whether God or mammon; if one is doing the will of mammon, one is worshipping it.

"Some say that the words, 'the covetous man is an idolater' (Ephesians 5:5), are an exaggeration. However, the statement is not exaggerated, it is true. Because the covetous man apostatizes from God, just as the idolater does. There is a declaration of Christ, which says, 'You cannot serve God and mammon' (Matthew 6:24). If then it is not possible to serve God and mammon, they who serve mammon have thrown themselves out of the service of God; and they who have denied His sovereignty, and serve lifeless gold, it is plain that they are idolaters."

"'But I never made an idol', a man will say, 'nor set up an altar, nor sacrificed sheep, nor poured libations of wine. I came into the church, and lifted up my hands to the Only-begotten Son of God; I partake of the mysteries; I communicate in prayer, and in everything else which is a Christian's duty. 'How then', he will say, 'am I a worshiper of idols?' This is the most astonishing thing of all for those who have 'tasted' the loving-kindness of God, and 'have seen that the Lord is gracious' (Psalm 34:8). Having done this and then to abandon Him who is gracious, and take to themselves a cruel tyrant, and pretend to be serving God, is in reality submitting yourself to the hard and galling yoke of covetousness. Partaking of the mysteries and communicating in prayer speak only of your Master's gifts; it does not speak of what it is our duty to do."

"Tell me, on what basis do we judge a soldier? Is it when he is on duty guarding the king, and is fed by him, and called the king's own, or is it when he is minding his own affairs and interests? If he pretends to be with the king, and to be attentive to his interests, while he is advancing the cause of the enemy, we declare this to be worse than if he breaks away from the king's service, and joins the enemy. If you are showing contempt to God, just as an idolater does, it is not with your own mouth that you do so, but also with the mouths of all those whom you influence with your traitorous behavior. Whenever they say, 'Oh! That Christian, that covetous fellow!', not only is the traitor himself committing outrage by his own act, but he forces those whom he has influenced to use these curse words also. Even if they don't use these words, their reverence for the things of God is affected."

"When we say that the pagan idolater worships idols, he will sometimes say, 'No, but it is Venus, or it is Mars'. And if we say, 'Who is this Venus?', the more modest among them will say, 'It is pleasure'. Or what is this Mars? 'It is wrath'. And in the same way some people worship mammon. If we say, 'Who is

²² John Chrysostom, Homilies on Ephesians, XVIII, vv. 5-6.

this mammon?’ It is covetousness, and this you are worshipping. “I do not worship it’, you will say. Because you don’t bow yourself down? But you are far more a worshiper in your deeds and practices; for this is the higher kind of worship. And that you may understand this, look at the case of God! Who is it that more truly worships Him, they who merely stand up at the prayers, or they who do His will? Clearly enough, these latter! The same also applies to the worshipers of mammon; they who do his will are truly his worshipers. However, they who worship the passions are sometimes free from the passions. One may see a worshiper of Mars sometimes governing his wrath. But this is not true of some of the covetous, who make themselves a slave to their passion.”

Where Can Those Serve Whose Only Gifts Are with Mammon?

Some people have a gift for handling money, investments or managing large accounts. If they don’t have gift for doing things in the Church, where can they serve? Gregory the Great stated²³ that there is a place in the Church even for those who have no spiritual gifts. Even if they are not wise in spiritual things, they can preside over and judge earthly things. The priests should not be weighed down judging earthly matters, but should delegate that to others just as Moses was advised to do by Jethro. The issue is holiness; those who are not able to move in this direction very much can still serve by freeing the priests to seek spiritual things.

“When Christ wanted to restrain us from gluttony, He said, ‘Take heed to yourselves that your hearts aren’t weighted down with carousing, drunkenness, cares of this life, and that Day come upon you unexpectedly’ (Luke 21:34). He even declares the manner of that coming, saying, ‘it will come as a snare on all them that dwell on the face of the whole earth’ (Luke 21:35). Again He says, ‘No man can serve two masters’ (Luke 16:13). Hence Paul withdraws the minds of the godly from consort with the world, ‘No one engaged in warfare for God entangles himself with the affairs of this life, that he may please Him who enlisted him as a soldier (2 Timothy 2:4). To the rulers of the Church he says, ‘If then you should have judgments pertaining to this life, set them to judge who are least esteemed²⁴ in the church (1 Corinthians 6:4); that is, that those persons who have no spiritual gifts should devote themselves to earthly charges. It is as if he had said more plainly, ‘Since they are incapable of penetrating the inmost things, let them at any rate employ themselves externally in necessary things’. Hence Moses, who spoke with God (Exodus 18:17, 18), was judged by the reproof of Jethro, because he devoted himself to the peoples’ earthly affairs. Counsel was given to him too, that he should appoint others for settling earthly quarrels, and he himself should be more free to learn spiritual secrets for the instruction of the people.”

“With what conscience can the overseer of souls find benefit, while engaged himself in earthly cares, which it was his duty to reprove of in others? This is what the Lord, in the wrath of just retribution, said, ‘And it shall be: like people, like priest. So I will punish them for their ways, and reward them for their deeds.’ (Hosea 4:9). The priest is as the people, when one who bears a spiritual office acts as do others, who are still under judgment regarding fleshly pursuits. In the great

²³ Gregory the Great, *The Book of Pastoral Rule*, II, 7.

²⁴ See also John Chrysostom, *Homilies on 1 Corinthians*, XVI, 6. Chrysostom interpreted Paul’s words as saying that it would be better to establish someone who is not wise and of no account in the Church to judge earthly matters in the Church than to have outsiders preside in judgment. By persons “of no account”, Paul does not refer to the Church’s outcasts, but merely finds fault with taking the case before unbelievers.

sorrow of his love, Jeremiah deplores the destruction of the temple, saying, ‘How the gold has become dim! The most excellent color is changed! The stones of the sanctuary are scattered at the head of every street.’ (Lamentations 4:1). By gold, which surpasses all other metals, is expressed the excellence of holiness. The most excellent color expresses the reverence about godliness, which is lovely to all men. The stones of the sanctuary signify persons in the clergy. The streets signify the latitude of this present life. Gold, therefore, becomes dim when a life of holiness is polluted by earthly doings; the most excellent color is changed, when the previous reputation of persons who were living godly lives is diminished. When anyone, after a habit of holiness, mixes himself up with earthly doings, it is as though his color were changed, and the reverence that surrounded him grew pale and was disregarded in the eyes of men. The stones of the sanctuary are poured out into the streets, when those who should have been free to penetrate internal mysteries in the secret places of the tabernacle, seek out the broad ways of secular causes outside. For to this end they were made stones of the sanctuary, that they might appear in the vestment of the high-priest within the holy of holies.”

Worrying About Tomorrow

Jesus went on at length regarding food, clothing and concern about the future. He compared us to the irrational creatures and to grass and lilies. The Gentile nations pursue all these things since they have no other choice. However, the Twelve Apostles, to whom He was speaking, had left behind their jobs, their property and their livelihood. They had started living like the lilies of the field, and they would continue to do so on their missionary journeys the rest of their lives. The Early Church after Pentecost lived this way also, as did all the early monastic communities. There is more to what Jesus said than one might gather from a cursory reading. He said,

“Look at the birds of the air, for they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they? Which of you by worrying can add one cubit²⁵ to his stature? So why do you worry about clothing? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow: they neither toil nor spin; and yet I say to you that even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. Now if God so clothes the grass of the field, which today is, and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, will He not much more clothe you, O you of little faith? Therefore do not worry, saying, ‘What shall we eat?’ or ‘What shall we drink?’ or ‘What shall we wear?’ For after all these things the Gentiles seek. For your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things. But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you. Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about its own things. Sufficient for the day is its own trouble. (Matthew 6:26-34)

In emphasizing the transient nature of food and clothing, Jesus used the illustration of grass being thrown into the oven. This was a reference to bread-baking ovens in ancient times. In order to feed the fire in a stone or brick igloo-shaped oven, dry vegetation and stubble were gathered and thrown in to get it hot. After the oven was hot, and the fire went out, bread dough was put in and the small opening to the oven was closed off until the bread was done. In the hot, dry conditions present in the Middle East, green plants could turn to dry stubble in a matter of a few

²⁵ A cubit was the length from a man’s elbow to his fingertip, or about 18 inches.

days as soon as the roots ran out of moisture. The lilies Jesus referred to had broad leaves and a heavy stalk and thus made good fuel for the bread-baking ovens when they were dry. Compared to eternity, our lives in this flesh are comparable to lilies that are beautiful one day and dry stubble the next.

This illustration of birds and flowers is not an injunction against thoughtful planning and care for one's situation but is directed against the cares of this world. Four times in this Gospel lesson, the Lord said "do not worry" (i.e. do not be anxious) about something as follows:

- One's life: food and drink (Matthew 6:25, 31)
- One's body: clothing (Matthew 6:25, 31)
- Worrying can't add one cubit to one's stature (Matthew 6:27)
- Do not worry about tomorrow (Matthew 6:34)

However, the Gentiles (i.e. pagan foreign nations) do seek after these things as a first priority. Instead, He asks us to seek first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness; and He promised that all these things will be added to us. [This is covered as a separate topic later.] He is simply asking us to trust in His goodness with a simple child-like trust that He will provide. And one can't get much more simple in one's outlook than birds and flowers, who are totally dependent on their day-to-day circumstances for food and nourishment.

John Chrysostom spoke²⁶ about what the term "trouble" meant, when the Lord said, "Sufficient for the day is its own trouble". This "trouble" is heaven-sent as discipline for our sins, and to break us away from our attachment to worrying about the things of this world.

"'Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for sufficient for the day is its own trouble' (Matthew 6:34); that is to say, the bruising of daily life. Is it not enough for you, to eat your bread in the sweat of your face? Why add the further affliction that comes from anxiety, when you are about to be delivered from all this?"

"By 'trouble' here He means, not wickedness, but calamities; much as in another place He said, 'Is there evil in a city, which the Lord has not done?' (Amos 3:6 LXX) He does not mean plunder, injuries, or anything like these, but the natural disasters which come from above. And again He said, 'I make peace, and create evils' (Isaiah 45:7 LXX). He does not speak of wickedness, but of famines, pestilence, and things accounted evil by most men; people generally tend to call these things evil. For example, the priests and prophets of those five Philistine lordships, when they yoked the cows to the ark, they let them go without their calves, and gave the name of 'evil' to those heaven-sent plagues (1 Samuel 6), and the dismay and anguish, which sprang up within them."

"This then is His meaning here also, when He said, 'sufficient for the day is its own trouble'. Nothing so pains the soul, as cares and anxiety. Thus did Paul also, when urging to celibacy, give counsel, saying, 'I want you to be without worldly cares'" (1 Corinthians 7:32).

"But when He said, 'tomorrow will worry about its own things' (Matthew 6:34), He didn't say that the day itself worried about these things, but He spoke to a people, who were imperfect."

²⁶ John Chrysostom, Homilies on Matthew, XXII, 5.

Jerome wrote²⁷ of an incident that occurred in his days concerning one of a number of monks in a monastic community in Egypt. This example serves to illustrate how seriously and literally they considered the Lord's words about the birds and the flowers.

"A brother living at Nitria a few years ago, more thrifty than covetous, and ignorant that the Lord had been sold for thirty pieces of silver, left behind him at his death a hundred pieces of gold which he had earned by weaving linen. As there were about five thousand monks in the neighborhood, living in 5000 separate cells, a council was held as to what should be done. Some said that the coins should be distributed among the poor; others that they should be given to the Church, while others were for sending them back to the relatives of the deceased. However, Macarius, Pambo, Isidore and the rest of those called fathers, speaking by the Spirit, decided that they should be interred with their owner, with the words, 'Your money perish with you' (Acts 8:20). And let no one suppose that this was a cruel act. Such great fear has fallen upon all throughout Egypt, that it is now a crime to leave one gold piece behind".

Consider the Irrational Creatures and the Lilies

The irrational creatures refer to all the animal kingdom except man, and who do not have the ability to reason. The lilies (or grass of the field) that is thrown into the oven refers to thick-stalked plants that dry out during the hot Mid-East summer.

Clement of Alexandria stated²⁸ that it is instructive to observe the irrational creatures, since they don't eat when they're not hungry. All things were made for man, but it is not good to use everything all the time.

"It was chiefly for men's sake that all things were made, yet it is not good to use all things, all the time. For the occasion, the time, the mode, and the intention, refer to what is useful, for one who is rightly instructed. This has influence in putting a stop to a life of gluttony, which wealth is prone to choose. This does not refer to that wealth, which sees clearly, but that abundance which makes a man blind with reference to gluttony. No one is poor regarding necessities, and a man is never overlooked. For there is one God who feeds the fowls, the fishes, and the irrational creatures; and not one thing whatever is lacking to them, though 'they do not worry about their food' (Matthew 6:25). We are better than they, being their lords, and more closely allied to God, as being wiser. And we were made, not that we might eat and drink, but that we might devote ourselves to the knowledge of God. For the just man who eats is satisfied in his soul, but the belly of the wicked shall want, filled with the appetites of insatiable gluttony. Now lavish expense is adapted not for enjoyment alone, but also for social communication. Therefore we must guard against those articles of food, which persuade us to eat when we are not hungry."

John Chrysostom compared²⁹ human physical characteristics with those of the irrational creatures. Man comes out a distant second on all points.

"Are you handsome and beautiful? This is the boast of crows! You are not fairer than the peacock, as regards either its color or its plumage; the bird beats you

²⁷ Jerome, Letter to Eustochium, XX, 33.

²⁸ Clement of Alexandria, The Instructor, II, 1.

²⁹ John Chrysostom, Homilies on Philippians, VII.

in plumage, and far surpasses you in its feathers and in its color. The swan is very good looking, and many other birds, with whom if you are compared you will see that you are nothing. Often worthless boys, unmarried girls, harlots, and effeminate men boast like this. Is this then a cause for haughtiness?”

“Are you rich? What do you have? Gold, silver, precious stones! This is the boast of robbers, murderers, those who work in the mines. That which is the labor of criminals becomes to you a boast! Do you adorn and deck yourself out? We see horses also decked out, and among the Persians camels too. As for men, there are all those who star on stage and screen. Are you not ashamed to boast of these things, if unreasoning animals, slaves, murderers, the effeminate, robbers, and tomb-raiders share this with you?”

“Do you build splendid palaces? Many jackdaws³⁰ dwell in more splendid houses, and have more noble retreats. Have you ever seen how many covetous people have built houses in fields and desert places that end up being retreats for jackdaws?”

“Perhaps you are proud on account of your voice. You can by no means sing with clearer and sweeter tones than the swan or the nightingale. Is it for your varied knowledge of arts? But what is wiser than the bee in this; what embroiderer, what painter, what geometrician, can imitate her honeycomb? Is it for the fineness of your apparel? But here the spiders beat you. Is it for the swiftness of your feet? Again the first prize is with unreasoning animals, the hare, and the gazelle. Have you traveled much? Not more than the birds; they migrate more easily, they have no need of provisions for the way, for their wings are all sufficient for them. Are you clear sighted? Not as the gazelle; not as the eagle. Are you quick of hearing? The donkey is more so. Do you have a good sense of smell? The hound won’t let you surpass him. Are you a good provider? Yet you are inferior to the ant. Do you gather gold? Yet not as the Indian ants!³¹ Are you proud because of your health? Unreasoning creatures are far better than we are both in bodily habit, and in independence; they fear no poverty. ‘Look at the birds of the heaven, that they do not sow, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns’ (Matthew 6:26). ‘And surely,’ He means, ‘God has not created the irrational animals superior to us.’ He, whose proud mind is lifted up above all men, is actually even lower than the irrational creatures with respect to physical characteristics.”

John Chrysostom noted³² that the lilies that surpassed Solomon in beauty are very unimportant, since they are beautiful one day and burned the next. Why did God waste effort making them beautiful? He did this to demonstrate to us, who are the most important part of His Kingdom that He will provide for us.

“The beauty of the flowers surpassed Solomon, not once or twice, but throughout his reign. He, who was more glorious than all kings that ever was, acknowledged his inferiority.”

“Christ instructed us, not to aim at all at such ornament. In the end, after its moment of triumph ‘the flower is cast into the oven’ (Matthew 6:30). If of lowly and worthless things that are of no great use, God has displayed so great care, how

³⁰ A jackdaw is a crow-like bird that lives in towns and villages of Europe and Africa. It builds nests in towers, and often conceals small bright objects in its nests.

³¹ For a recent article on The Indian Gold-Digging “Ants”, see the Appendix to this Study.

³² John Chrysostom, Homilies on Matthew, XXII, 1.

shall He give up on you, of all living creatures the most important? Why then did He make them so beautiful? He did this that He might display His own wisdom and the excellence of His power; that from everything we might learn His glory. For not only ‘the Heavens declare the glory of God’ (Psalm 19:1), but the earth too; and this David declared when he said, ‘Praise the Lord, you fruitful trees, and all cedars’ (Psalm 148:9). Some by their fruits, some by their greatness, some by their beauty, send up praise to Him who made them. This too is a sign of great excellence of wisdom, when even on things that are very unimportant He pours out such great beauty. And what can be of less importance than that which today is, and tomorrow is not? If then to the grass He has given that which it doesn’t need, how shall He not give to you what you do need? That is, the beauty of the lilies doesn’t help in feeding the fire; therefore it is not needed. If that which is the least important of all things, He has lavishly adorned, not for need, but out of great generosity, how much more will He honor you, the most honorable of all things, in matters which are necessary.”

John Chrysostom continued to say³³ that our fear of poverty is irrational in the light of the history of the people of God. There is no record of anyone in the history of mankind who trusted in God yet went hungry. Wealth, on the other hand, usually brings more trouble than poverty.

“Why do you tremble at poverty? Is it because of hunger, thirst or cold? There is no one who is ever destitute in these things! ‘Look at the generations of old, and see; did anyone ever trust in the Lord, and was forsaken; or did anyone hope in Him, and was made ashamed?’” (Psalm 37:25)

“Again, ‘look at the birds of the heaven, that they don’t sow, they don’t reap, they don’t gather into barns; and your heavenly Father feeds them’ (Matthew 6:26). No one can readily point out to us anyone who has perished by hunger and cold. Why then do you tremble at poverty? You cannot say! If you have necessities enough, why do you tremble at it? Is it because you don’t have a multitude of servants? This is happiness; this is freedom from care. Is it because your dishes, couches, and furniture are not made of silver? What greater enjoyment does he have who possesses everything made of silver? The use is the same, whether they are of this or that material. Is it because you are not an object of fear to the many? May you never become so! For what pleasure is it that any should stand in dread of you? Is it because you are afraid of others? ‘If you would like to have no fear of the authority, do that which is good, and you shall have praise from the authorities’ (Romans 13:3). Does anyone say, ‘It is because we are subject to contempt, and apt to be mistreated? It is not poverty but wickedness which causes this; for many poor men have quietly passed through life, while rulers, the rich and the powerful have ended their days more wretchedly than evil doers, bandits and grave-robbers. What poverty brings in your case, wealth does in theirs. What those who might mistreat you do because of your poverty and contemptible estate, they do to the wealthy from envy and the evil eye. This occurs more with the wealthy than with the poor, for envy is a stronger driver to mistreat another. He who envies does everything with all his might, while the despiser often has pity on the despised; his poverty and lack of power has often been the cause of his deliverance.”

³³ John Chrysostom, Homilies on Philippians, II.

The problem most people have with Christ's words encouraging us to live like the birds and the flowers is that we can't believe that people can actually do this. This seems like such a radical departure from how others around us live that we think that it's impossible. However, we become very much like the habitual drunkard who doesn't believe that sobriety exists. John Chrysostom put it³⁴ this way:

"It is clear that not our diligence, but the providence of God, affects everything. Were He to forsake us, no care, anxiety, work, or any other such thing that we might do will ever come to anything, but all will utterly pass away. Let us not suppose His commandments are impossible; for there are many who routinely perform them today. And if we don't happen to know of them, it is nothing marvelous; Elijah also supposed he was alone, but was told, 'I have left for Myself seven thousand men' (1 Kings 19:18, Romans 11:4). It is clear that there are many who show forth the apostolic life; like the 'three thousand' and the 'five thousand' (Acts 2:41, 4:4). And if we don't believe this is true, it is not because there are none who do it, but because we are far from doing it. This is like the drunkard who doesn't believe anyone drinks only water; or convincing the playboy that it is easy to live in virginity; or persuading the extortionist that there are people who readily give up even their own goods as alms. Those who daily melt themselves down with innumerable anxieties will not easily receive this. There are many, who have attained this, and we might show it from those, who have practiced this self-denial in our generation. But for most people, it is enough to learn not to covet, and that almsgiving is a good thing."

Chrysostom continued³⁵ to say that all of our fears are really irrational, and that this really does make sense.

"'Is not the soul more than food, and the body more than the clothing?' (Matthew 6:25) He that has given the greater, how shall He not give the lesser? He that has fashioned the flesh that is fed, how shall He not give the food? He did not simply say, 'Do not worry about what you shall eat', or 'how you shall be clothed'; but He adds, 'Do not worry about the body', since from these He was to make His demonstrations, speaking in the way of comparison."

John Chrysostom stated³⁶ that it is the ungodly, who pose objections to the comparison to birds and flowers. Christ could have made comparison to those who lived as He asked, not worrying about food and clothing, such as Moses, Elijah and John the Baptist. If He did, they would have objected that they have not yet become like these saints. Even the Old Testament spoke of the bee, the ant and the swallow as examples of how to live one's life.

"Some of the ungodly have attacked Christ's illustration. They say that it was improper to speak in terms of strengthening moral principle, and then use the natural advantages of the birds as comparisons. To those animals, they have this by nature. What then shall we say to this? Even though it is theirs by nature, yet possibly we too may attain it by choice. For He didn't say, 'look at how the birds fly', which was something impossible to man. But that they are fed without worrying, is an easy thing to be achieved by us also, if we want. Some have accomplished this in their actions."

³⁴ John Chrysostom, Homilies on Matthew, XXI, 5.

³⁵ John Chrysostom, Homilies on Matthew, XXI, 3.

³⁶ John Chrysostom, Homilies on Matthew, XXI, 4.

“We can admire the consideration of our Lawgiver, in that He might have brought forward His illustration from among Moses, Elijah and John the Baptist, and others like them, who did not worry. In order that He might touch them more to the point, He mentioned the irrational creatures. For had He spoken of those righteous men, objectors might have said, ‘We have not yet become like them’. But by passing them over in silence, and bringing forward the birds of the air, He has cut off from them every excuse, imitating the old Law. The Old Covenant likewise sends us to the bee and to the ant (Proverbs 6:6-8 LXX), to the turtledove and to the swallow (Jeremiah 8:7). This is no small sign of honor, when the same sort of things, which those creatures possess by nature, those we are able to accomplish by an act of our choice. If He takes great care of the birds, which exist for our sakes, much more will He take care of us. If He takes care of the servants, much more will He take care of the master! They do not sow, neither do they reap’ (Matthew 6:26). ‘Does this mean’ said one, ‘that we must not sow?’ He didn’t say, ‘we must not sow’, but ‘we must not worry’; He didn’t say that we shouldn’t work, but that we shouldn’t rack our self with cares. We should be nourished, but not in ‘worrying.’”

“Of this David lays the foundation, saying enigmatically, ‘You open Your hand, and fill every living thing with pleasure’ (Psalm 145:16); and again, ‘To Him that gives to the cattle their food, and to the young ravens that call upon Him’” (Psalm 147:9).

“‘Who then’, it may be said, ‘has not worried?’ Remember Jacob, departing from his father’s house, destitute of all things? Hear him praying, ‘If the Lord gives me bread to eat and clothing to put on?’ (Genesis 28:20), which was not the part of one worrying, but of one seeking everything from God. This the apostles also attained, who left everything, and didn’t worry; also, the ‘five thousand’, and the ‘three thousand’” (Acts 4:4, 2:41).

The Gentiles Seek Luxury; Consider the Twelve Apostles

The Lord said that the Gentiles, or the nations of the world, seek the things of the world as a first priority. But this should not be the case with His people, who are not “of this world” (John 8:23, 1 John 4:5-6). If we seek the kingdom of God as a first priority, our needs will be taken care of.

Clement of Alexandria connected³⁷ a seeking of the things of this world with greed, pride, gluttony and luxury, which cause men to waver from the truth.

“The Scripture says, ‘Do not worry about your life, what you will eat or what you will drink’ (Matthew 6:25). To worry about these things argues greed and luxury. Now eating, considered merely by itself, is a necessity. Whatever is beyond that is superfluous, and the Scripture declares to be of the devil. The connected expression makes the meaning plain. Having said, ‘Seek not what you shall eat, or what you shall drink’ (Matthew 6:31), He added, ‘do not worry about tomorrow’ (Matthew 6:34). Now pride and luxury make men waver from the truth; and the indulging in them, leads away from the truth. Wherefore He says very beautifully, ‘All these things the nations of the world seek after’ (Matthew 6:32). The nations are the foolish and those of loose morals. The things, which He

³⁷ Clement of Alexandria, The Instructor, II, 11.

specifies, are luxury, sensual gratification, rich cooking, dainty feeding and gluttony. We are naturally given to seeking; let us not destroy the faculty of seeking by directing it to luxury, but let us excite it to the discovery of truth. For He says, ‘Seek first the kingdom of God, and the materials of sustenance shall be added to you’” (Matthew 6:33).

Tertullian gave examples³⁸ of things that we consider the “necessities of life”, but are often just excuses for not taking up our Crosses.

“In vain do we flatter ourselves as to the necessities of human maintenance, if we say, ‘I have no means to live’! The Lord gave examples taking away all excuse. For what is it you say? ‘I shall be in need’. But the Lord calls the needy happy (Luke 6:20). ‘I shall have no food’. But ‘think not’, says He, ‘about food’ (Matthew 6:25, 31; Luke 12:22-24); and as an example of clothing we have the lilies (Matthew 6:28-29, Luke 12:27-28). One might say, ‘My work was my subsistence’. No, but ‘all things are to be sold, and divided to the needy’ (Matthew 19:21, Luke 18:22). One might say, ‘But provision must be made for children and posterity’. Yet, ‘No one, putting his hand on the plow, and looking back, is fit for work’ (Luke 9:62). One might say, ‘But I was under contract’. Yet, ‘No one can serve two masters’ (Matthew 6:24, Luke 16:13). If you wish to be the Lord’s disciple, it is necessary that you ‘take your cross, and follow³⁹ the Lord’. Your cross; that is, your own straits and tortures, or your body only, which is after the manner of a cross. Parents, wives, children, will have to be left behind⁴⁰, for God’s sake. Do you hesitate about arts, trades, and about professions, for the sake of children and parents? Even there was it demonstrated to us that both handicrafts and trades are to be left behind for the Lord’s sake. James and John, called by the Lord, left behind both father and ship⁴¹. Matthew was roused up from the tollbooth⁴²; even burying a father was not related to faith (Luke 9:59-60). None of them, whom the Lord chose, said to Him, ‘I have no means to live’. Faith does not fear famine. It knows, likewise, that hunger is to be despised no less, for God’s sake, than every kind of death. If one does not fear for one’s own life; why should one be concerned about adequate food?”

If we consider the example that the Twelve Apostles set, however, we get a much different perspective on what the Lord is saying, and how it is possible to live the Christian life. They had no worldly possessions besides the clothes on their back, and they depended on people they met for everything. John Chrysostom explained⁴³ that what they were giving was labor, and what they were receiving was their due wages from the people they served.

“But perhaps someone may say, ‘not having a moneybag for the journey, neither two coats, a staff, or shoes’ (Matthew 10:9-10), why did He ask the Apostles to do this? He was training them for perfection; earlier He had allowed them not to worry even about the next day. He was about to send them out as teachers to the

³⁸ Tertullian, *On Idolatry*, I, ii, 12.

³⁹ See Matthew 16:24, Mark 8:34, Luke 9:23, 14:27.

⁴⁰ See Matthew 19:27-30, Mark 10:29-30, Luke 14:26. For example, four of the Twelve were married and three had young children when the Lord called them. In leaving everything for God’s sake, they didn’t abandon their wives and children, but just gave up the pleasures of the flesh, living as celibates.

⁴¹ Matthew 4:21-22, Mark 1:19-20, Luke 5:10-11.

⁴² Matthew 9:9, Mark 2:14, Luke 5:27-29.

⁴³ John Chrysostom, *Homilies on Matthew*, XXXII, 7.

whole world. Therefore to men He makes them look like angels (so to speak). By releasing them from all worldly care, He intended that they should be possessed with one care alone, that of their teaching. Or rather He released them even from that, saying, ‘Do not worry about how or what you should speak’” (Matthew 10:19).

“What might seem to be galling, He shows is especially light and easy for them. Nothing makes men so cheerful as being freed from anxiety; especially when, after being freed, they lack nothing. God was present, and His Presence took the place of all things”.

“Next, lest they should say, ‘How are we to obtain our necessary food?’, He did not say just ‘Behold the fowls of the air’; for they were not yet able to realize this commandment in their actions. But He added what came far short of this, saying, ‘For a worker is worthy of his food’ (Matthew 10:10), declaring that they must be nourished by their disciples. This way they won’t look down on those whom they were teaching, as though they were giving everything and receiving nothing at their hands. This also avoids a situation where their disciples might break away, because they were despised by their teachers”.

“After this, in order that they may not say, ‘Do you command us to live by begging?’ and be ashamed of this, He calls the thing a debt, both by calling them ‘laborers’, and by calling what was given, ‘wages’ (Luke 10:7, 1 Timothy 5:18). ‘Do not think’, He said, ‘because the labor is in words, that the benefit conferred by you is small; for the thing involves much work. Whatever they that are taught may give, it is not a free gift, which they give you, but a recompense which they render; ‘for the laborer is worthy of his wages’. He said this, not as declaring the value of the Apostles’ labors, but as both making it a law for them to seek nothing more, and as convincing the givers, that what they do is not an act of liberality, but a debt”.

Seek the Kingdom First; All This Will Be Added

The Lord said, “Therefore do not worry, saying, ‘What shall we eat?’ or ‘What shall we drink?’ or ‘What shall we wear?’ For after all these things the Gentiles seek. For your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things. But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you” (Matthew 6:31-33).

What does it mean to seek the Kingdom of God first? And how will “all these things” be added to us? And what things does He say will be added? There are a number of different aspects to this.

Use of the Things of This World

Clement of Alexandria noted⁴⁴ the practice of Christian women of his day to be fixated on the use of jewels, gold and pearls for personal adornment. They reasoned that they should be able to use the things that God made. Clement argued from the point of view of the Early Church, where everyone had all things in common. It seemed wrong to him for the rich to command extra shares while some poor people don’t have enough to eat. Better, he said, to love our neighbor as ourselves, and to spend money on human beings rather than on jewels and gold.

⁴⁴ Clement of Alexandria, The Instructor, II, 13.

“Children, on seeing fire, rush to it, are attracted by its brightness, but do not understand the danger of touching it. Such is the case with the jewels (amethysts, diamonds, topaz, etc.) which women wear fastened to chains and set in necklaces.”

“And the highly prized pearl has invaded women’s apartments to an extravagant extent. This is produced in an oyster, and is about the size of a large fish’s eye. Women are not ashamed of the great pain it took this little oyster to produce the pearl, when they adorn themselves with it. The Scripture has also called the Word of God a pearl” (Matthew 13:45-46).

“We have heard, too, that the Jerusalem above is walled with sacred stones (Revelation 21:18-21); and we understand that the twelve gates of the celestial city (twelve pearls), by being made like precious stones, indicate the transcendent grace of the apostolic voice⁴⁵. The colors are laid in precious stones, and these colors are precious; while the other parts remain of earthy material. The city of the saints, which is spiritually built, is walled with these symbolically. By that brilliancy of stones is meant the inimitable brilliancy of the spirit, the immortality and holiness of being.”

“But these women, who don’t comprehend the symbolism of Scripture, grasp, in openmouthed wonder, for jewels, saying, ‘Why may I not use what God has exhibited?’ and, ‘I own it, why may I not enjoy it?’ and, ‘For whom were these things made, then, if not for us?’ Such are the utterances of those who are totally ignorant of the will of God. First necessities, such as water and air, He supplies free to all; and what is not necessary He has hid in the earth and water. Ants dig, griffins⁴⁶ guard gold, and the sea hides the pearls. But you busy yourselves about what you don’t need. Behold, the whole heaven is lighted up, and you don’t seek God; but you seek gold, which is hidden, and death row inmates⁴⁷ dig up jewels.”

“You also oppose Scripture, ‘Seek first the kingdom of heaven, and all these things shall be added to you’ (Matthew 6:33). But if all things have been conferred on you, and all things have been allowed to you, yet ‘if all things are lawful, all things are not helpful’” (1 Corinthians 10:23).

“All things are common, and it is not appropriate for the rich to command an undue share. That expression, ‘I possess, and possess in abundance: why then should I not enjoy what I have?’ is suitable neither to the man, nor to society. But more worthy of love is this: ‘I have; why should I not give to those who need?’ One who fulfills the command, ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself’ (Matthew 22:39, Leviticus 19:18), enjoys true luxury and treasured wealth. But that which is squandered on foolish lusts is waste, not expenditure. For God has given to us the liberty of use, but only so far as necessary; and He has determined that the use should be common. And it is monstrous for one to live in luxury, while many are in want. How much more glorious is it to do good to many, than to live sumptuously! How much wiser is it to spend money on human beings, than on jewels and gold! How much more useful is it to acquire good friends, than lifeless ornaments!”

⁴⁵ That is, if the Kingdom of heaven, proclaimed by the Word of God, is the one pearl of great price, then the preaching of the Apostles can be thought of as a pearl also.

⁴⁶ A griffin was a fierce, but legendary, creature that was half eagle and half lion.

⁴⁷ This is a reference to the common practice of using condemned prisoners to work the mines. If the mine caved in and killed some of the workers, it was no big deal since they would have been executed anyway.

To further define the problem of riches, Jesus gave an illustration of camels and needles that has been little understood in our generation. The main gates of most cities in ancient times were huge wooden structures set in an archway and often overlaid with brass for strength and flameproofing. At night, the gates were closed and locked with a bar on the inside and not opened until morning. Travelers that arrived late in the day after the gates were closed were forced to spend the night outside the city unless there was some provision for them to get into the city. Outside the city, law and order did not exist at night and travelers were at the mercy of outlaws. This is still the case today in some third world countries.

To deal with this situation, many ancient cities had a “needle’s eye gate” which was a small, low door beside the main gate. Such a feature existed⁴⁸ on at least one of the gates of Jerusalem and Damascus. A man could fit easily through the “needle’s eye gate”, but a camel, being a large animal, could not fit easily. If the camel’s pack (which could weight up to 1,000 pounds) were removed and the camel were made to kneel, the camel could just barely crawl through the “needle’s eye gate.”

The statement Jesus made, that it is easier for a camel to go through the needle’s eye gate than for a rich man to enter the Kingdom of God, made use of this imagery. Like the camel, the rich man first needs to unload his pack or burden. The Parable of the Sower refers to this pack as “the cares of this world, the deceit of riches, the desire for other things” (Mark 4:19) and the pleasures of life (Luke 8:14). These are things that appeal to our flesh and which can lead us away from God. Some of the early disciples, like Barnabas (one of the Seventy), sold a large amount of property, and brought the entire amount of the sale to the Twelve (Acts 4:34-37). Ananias and Sapphira on the other hand, were caught in the deceit of riches and held back part of the proceeds – and paid dearly (Acts 5:1-10).

This does not mean that no Christian can be rich. The Patriarch Job was very wealthy (Job 1:1-3, 42:12-17), yet the Lord referred to him as a blameless and upright man who had no peers in his righteousness (Job 1:8, 2:3). In Jesus’ illustration, nothing is said about the camel’s pack being loaded back up once the camel is inside. The key here is discerning the deceitfulness of wealth and the strength of its pull on one’s heart. Job was able to let his pack be taken off without remorse. “Naked I came from my mother’s womb and naked I shall return there. The Lord gave and the Lord has taken away. Blessed be the Name of the Lord” (Job 1:21; also Job 2:9-10). Many Christians throughout the ages have been unable or unwilling to continue fighting this pull and have taken oaths of poverty to thrust a sword (so to speak) into the heart of the demon of wealth.

How Are Things Added to Us in This World?

Jesus said, “Seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you” (Matthew 6:31-33). How are material things added, and what are the things that are added?

John Chrysostom summarized⁴⁹ what is added by comparing it to the “hundredfold”, that Jesus spoke of. In other words, the result is the camel’s pack that was put back on once the camel got inside the city.

⁴⁸ G. Christian Weiss, Insight into Bible Times and Customs, Good News Broadcasting Association, Lincoln NE, 1972, pp. 24-25.

⁴⁹ John Chrysostom, Homilies on Matthew, XV, 5.

“Jesus did not limit rewards to things present, but joined with these the other sort of gifts also. For neither in speaking of any spiritual thing does He exclude such as are in the present life; nor again in promising such as are in our life, does He limit his promise to that kind. For He said, ‘Seek the kingdom of God, and all these things shall be added to you’ (Matthew 6:33). And again, ‘Whoever has left houses or brethren, shall receive a hundredfold in this world, and in the future shall inherit everlasting life’” (Matthew 19:29).

Cyprian of Carthage stated⁵⁰ that the Lord has promised that the righteous will not go hungry, even in this life.

“Daily bread cannot be lacking to the righteous man, since it is written, ‘The Lord will not slay the soul of the righteous by hunger’ (Ezekiel 13:19 LXX); and again ‘I have been young and now am old, yet I have not seen the righteous forsaken, nor his seed begging their bread’ (Psalm 37:25). And the Lord moreover promises and says, ‘Do not worry, saying, what shall we eat, or what shall we drink, or how shall we be clothed. For after all these things do the Gentiles seek. And your Father knows that you have need of all these things. Seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you’ (Matthew 6:33). To those who seek God’s kingdom and righteousness, He promises that all things shall be added. Since all things are God’s, nothing will be lacking to him who possesses God, if God Himself is not lacking to him. Thus a meal was divinely provided for Daniel. When he was shut up by the king’s command in the den of lions; in the midst of wild beasts who were hungry, the man of God was fed⁵¹. Thus Elijah in his flight was nourished (1 Kings 17:1-6) by ravens serving to him in his solitude.”

In addressing the faith of the Centurion in Capernaum, Jesus also noted his humility. John Chrysostom stated⁵² that his first priority was the Kingdom of God; as a result health was added to him. On this occasion, Jesus began to point out that the Jews were going to be replaced by the Gentiles in the Kingdom of God.

“Having such great faith, the centurion still accounted himself to be unworthy. Christ however, signifying that he was worthy to have Him enter his house, did much greater things, marveling at him, and giving more than he had asked. He came seeking health of body for his servant, but went away, having received a kingdom. Do you see how the saying had been already fulfilled, ‘Seek the kingdom of heaven, and all these things shall be added to you?’ (Matthew 6:33) Because he exhibited great faith, and lowliness of mind, He both gave him heaven, and added health to him”.

“And not by this alone did He honor him, but also by signifying who will be cast out so that he may be brought in. From this time on, He proceeds to make known to all, that salvation is by faith, not by works of the Law. And this is why not to Jews only, but to Gentiles also the gift shall be offered. Do not think that it has come to pass for the Centurion alone; so it shall be for the whole world’ (Matthew 8:11-12). And this He said, prophesying of the Gentiles, and suggesting

⁵⁰ Cyprian of Carthage, Treatise on the Lord’s Prayer, IV, 21.

⁵¹ Lancelot C. L. Brenton, “Bel and the Dragon, 1:29-40, The Septuagint with Apocrypha, Hendrickson Publishers, Peabody, MA, 01961.

⁵² John Chrysostom, Homilies on Matthew, XXVI, 5.

good hope to them. For in fact there were some following Him from Galilee of the Gentiles. And this He said, on the one hand, not letting the Gentiles despair, on the other, putting down the proud spirits of the Jews. But that His saying might not offend the hearers, nor afford them any handle against Him, He doesn't bring forward prominently what He has to say of the Gentiles. On the occasion of the centurion, He does not use the term 'Gentiles' openly; He does not say, 'many of the Gentiles', but, 'many from East and West'. This was the language of one pointing out the Gentiles, but did not so much offend the hearers, because His meaning⁵³ was under a shadow".

John Chrysostom gave⁵⁴ examples of Abel, Enoch and Noah, who sought the Kingdom of God and had something added to them in this life. We cannot partake of complete ease while we are engaged in combat. But some things are given to us in order that we don't faint from the task ahead.

"The statement, 'not having obtained the promises' (Hebrews 11:39-40), is true. But of what kind of 'promises' is he speaking? Isaac and Jacob received the promises of the land; but Noah, Abel and Enoch, what kind of promises did they receive? Abel was admired, Enoch was translated, and Noah was preserved; but these things came to them for their virtue's sake, and were a foretaste of things to come. From the beginning, God knew that the human race needed much condescension, and He gives us not only the things in the world to come, but also those here. For instance, Christ said to His disciples, 'Whoever has left houses, brethren, sisters, father, or mother, shall receive a hundredfold and shall inherit everlasting life' (Matthew 19:29). And again, 'Seek the kingdom of God, and all these things shall be added to you' (Matthew 6:33). Do you see that these things are given by Him in the way of addition, that we might not faint? For athletes have the benefit of careful attention, when engaged in combat, but do not then enjoy ease, living under rules; yet afterwards they enjoy complete ease. So God also does not grant us here to partake of complete ease. But even here He does give some benefits".

This does not mean that everything is always peaceful and plentiful. The Patriarch Job had a very simple trust in the Lord's provision, yet he lost everything (wealth, family, even health) in a matter of hours (Job 1:12-19; 2:7-8). Yet, the first thing he did when disaster struck (Job 1:20-22) was to shave his head and worship God. [In the ancient Middle East, men shaved their heads and let their beards grow. In our culture, men shave their face and let the hair on their head grow. Job's action, in shaving his head, is equivalent to us getting cleaned up to go to Church]. In doing so, Job humbled himself before God. And in his misery, he sat in the ashes without complaining (Job 2:8-9). This is a very good example of a simple trust in God in the face of adversity. Job's riches were not a joy to him when he had it: "If I had gloated because my wealth was great, this would be an iniquity deserving of judgment, for I would have denied God above" (Job 32:25, 28). Neither did Job grieve when his wealth was gone (Job 1:21).

⁵³ Jews were scattered throughout the world from East to West; thus Jesus' meaning did not immediately offend the Jews, because it wasn't clear to them that He was referring to the Gentiles.

⁵⁴ John Chrysostom, Homilies on Hebrews, XXIII, 3.

Concentrating on Worldly Things Causes Us to Lose Focus

Chrysostom summarized⁵⁵ the power of wealth by pointing out that it has a twofold pull on us:

“Wealth hurts you not only in that it arms robbers against you (Matthew 6:19-20), and in that it darkens your mind in the most intense degree (Matthew 6:23), but also in that it casts you out of God’s service, making you captive of lifeless riches. Both ways do you harm: on the one hand, by causing you to be slaves of what you ought to command; on the other, by casting you out of God’s service, whom above all things, it is indispensable for you to serve”.

Chrysostom continues⁵⁶ by posing a question: What good does it do me to hear all this if I am still possessed by the desire for riches? First, there is power in continually hearing what the Lord says on this matter. Second, consider what kind of desire this really is: to be in grievous bondage and subject to tyranny, to be bound on all sides, to dwell in darkness, to be full of turmoil, to endure work without profit, and to keep your wealth for others and often for your enemies. What kind of desire is this? This is like piling up treasure in the midst of thieves. Isn’t this a situation worth escaping from? Yet people don’t want to escape.

“On the other hand, piling up treasure in heaven, we do not only bury our gold, but plant it. For the same is both treasure and seed; or rather it is more than either of these. For seed does not remain forever; but this abides perpetually. Again, the treasure does not germinate, but this bears you fruits which never die”.

Chrysostom pointed out⁵⁷ that people recognize that earthly trades need careful attention to detail to be mastered properly. But the same people do not necessarily feel that spiritual things need much attention. It’s like we feel that we need to seek out earthly things and that the spiritual things will be added to us, rather than vice versa.

“If anyone wished to learn military affairs, of necessity he must learn the military laws. And if anyone sought to learn navigation or carpentry or anything else, of necessity he must learn the principles of the art. But in spiritual things, many people will not do anything of the kind, although this is a science, which needs much wakeful attention. For that it too is an art, which needs teaching, hear the prophet saying, ‘Come, children, listen to me; I will teach you the fear of the Lord’ (Psalm 34:11). It follows therefore certainly that the fear of God needs teaching. Then he says, ‘What man is he that desires life?’ (Psalm 34:12) He means the life above; and again, ‘Keep your tongue from evil and your lips from speaking guile; depart from evil and do good, seek peace and pursue it’” (Psalm 34:13, 14).

“Do you know who said these things, a prophet, a historian, an apostle, or an evangelist? I will repeat the same statement expressed in other words. ‘Wash and make yourself clean; put away your wickedness from your souls before Mine eyes; learn to do well; seek out judgment. Keep your tongue from evil, and do good; learn to do well’ (Isaiah 1:16, 17). Do you see that virtue needs to be taught? For this one says, ‘I will teach you the fear of the Lord’, and the other, ‘Learn to do well’”.

“If your zeal is spent on things of this life, no account is made for spiritual things. Therefore not even earthly matters turn out according to your wishes, but

⁵⁵ John Chrysostom, Homilies on Matthew, XXI, 1.

⁵⁶ John Chrysostom, Homilies on Matthew, XX, 5.

⁵⁷ John Chrysostom, Homilies on Hebrews, VIII, 10.

there also are many difficulties. For Christ says, ‘Seek the Kingdom of God, and all these things shall be added to you’ (Matthew 6:33). These things, He said, shall be given in the way of addition. But we have inverted the order and seek the earth and the good things which are in the earth, as if those other heavenly things were to be given to us in addition. Therefore we have neither the one nor the other. Let us then wake up and become coveters of the things, which shall be hereafter; for so these also will follow. For he who seeks the things that relate to God, will also attain human blessings.”

Chrysostom also stated⁵⁸ that being riveted to the decaying things of this life is not nearly as pleasant as the life of monks, even though many people perceive the opposite to be the case.

“Nothing so urges men headlong and drives them down precipices, nothing so makes them fail of the things to come, as their being riveted to these decaying things. Nothing so surely makes them enjoy both the one and the other, as their regarding the things to come above everything. ‘Seek the kingdom of God, and all these things shall be added to you’ (Matthew 6:33). Even if the two were not joined, not even in that case ought we to aim at the things of this world. But now in obtaining the heavenly things, we may obtain both; however, some are not so persuaded, but are like senseless stones, and pursue shadows of pleasure. For what is pleasant of the things in this present life? I speak to you today that you may learn that the life of the monks and of them that are crucified to the things of this life, which seems to you to be a wearisome life, is far sweeter, and more to be desired than that which seems to be easy and more delicate.”

Chrysostom also spoke⁵⁹ about the paradoxes of God. If we would like to be truly rich, become poor and leave the state of our wealth to God. This frees us from the slavery of wealth, which are mere trifles compared to eternity. Wealth is not a possession, but a loan, and the tenant of a house is more owner than the landlord. The rich and powerful may try to lord it over their subjects, but it is like children playing “king”. Everything will be overturned someday.

“Consider that the things that you have are but additions, where the principal sum is stored up for the life to come. Despise riches, if you would have riches. If you would be truly rich, become poor. For such are the paradoxes of God. He does not want you to be rich from your own care, but from His grace. Leave these things to Me, He says; make spiritual things your concern, that you may know My power. Flee from that yoke of slavery, which riches impose. As long as you cleave to them, you are poor. When you despise them, you are doubly rich, in that such things shall flow in upon you from every side, and to need little, is to be rich indeed. The king, so long as he wants nothing, differs little from the poor man. For this is poverty: to stand in need of others; and by this argument the king is poor, in so far as he stands in need of his subjects. But he that is crucified to the world wants nothing; for his hands are sufficient for his subsistence, as Paul said, ‘These hands have ministered to my necessities, and to them that were with me’ (Acts 20:34). These are his words who says, ‘As having nothing, yet possessing all things’ (2 Corinthians 6:10). This is he who was thought a god by the inhabitants of Lystra (Acts 14:11-13). If you would obtain worldly things, seek Heaven. If you would enjoy things here, despise

⁵⁸ John Chrysostom, Homilies on Matthew, LXVIII, 3.

⁵⁹ John Chrysostom, Homilies on 1 Timothy, XI, Moral.

Heaven. ‘Seek first the kingdom of God’, He said, ‘and all these things shall be added to you’” (Matthew 6:33).

“Why do you admire these trifles? Why long for things of no real worth? How long is one poor? How long is one a beggar? Raise your eyes to heaven, think of the riches there, and smile at the gold here. Think of how little use it is; that the enjoyment of it lasts but for the present life, and that compared with eternity, the present life is as a grain of sand, or as a drop of water to the boundless ocean. The wealth of this life is not a possession; it is not property; it is a loan for use. When you die, willingly or unwillingly, all that you have goes to others, and they again give it up to others. We are all travelers; and the tenant of the house is more truly the owner of it, for the owner dies, and the tenant lives and still enjoys the house. Only those things, which we have sent before us to the other world, are our own. Our goods here are not our own; we have only a life interest in them; or rather they may even fail us during our lives. Only the virtues of the soul are properly our own, such as almsgiving and charity. Worldly goods are called external things. But let us make them internal. We cannot take our wealth with us when we depart this life, but we can take our charities with us. Let us rather send them before us, that they may prepare for us a place in the eternal mansions” (Luke 16:9).

“Goods are named from use, not from lordship, and are not our own, and possessions are not a property but a loan. Think how many masters every estate has had, and how many it will have! This we should say to our houses and all our goods. Virtue alone is able to depart with us, and to accompany us to the world above. Let us then give up and extinguish that love of wealth, that we may kindle in us affection for heavenly things. Both of these two affections cannot possess one soul. For it is said, ‘Either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other’ (Matthew 6:24). Do you see a man with a long train of attendants, clearing a way along the streets, clothed in silken garments, riding aloft, and stiffening his neck? Don’t be overawed, but smile. As we laugh when we see children playing kings, so laugh at his state, for it is no better than theirs, not even as pleasant, for there is not the same innocence and simplicity as with children, but it becomes ridiculous and contemptible.”

Sometimes we tend to focus our attention on earthly riches to the exclusion of everything else. An illustration might put this in a better perspective. Suppose you were walking along the sidewalk in an unfamiliar neighborhood, and you saw a gold bar lying next to the sidewalk. This one was about 8 by 3 by 2 inches, weighed 400 Troy ounces, and was worth about \$¼ million according to 2006 gold prices. Would you pick it up and take it home, or would you leave it there? Most people could use an extra \$¼ million, and would probably take it home⁶⁰.

Suppose the next day you were walking along the same sidewalk and noticed a dog pile in exactly the same spot that the gold bar was located the day before. Would you pick it up and take it home, or would you leave it there? Most people would express some kind of disgust, and may complain against those who don’t pick up after their pets; but few people would pick it up and take it home.

⁶⁰ It might be wise to inquire who might have lost it, in case some mafia don might want it back!

In perspective, the riches of Christ's grace that we will see at His return make the gold bar seem like the dog pile. If we can get an understanding of the implications of this, we will have a much different approach to life.

Chrysostom also encouraged⁶¹ his people to prepare for their own departure from this life so that they are not caught unprepared like the people of Sodom or the people of Noah's day.

"Do you not see any signs? Not seeing any signs is actually a very great sign. For neither in Noah's time did they see any forecast of that universal destruction, but in the midst of their playing, eating, marrying, doing all things, which they were used to do, they were overtaken by that fearful judgment. And those in Sodom in like manner, living in delight, and suspecting none of what befell them, were consumed by that lightning, which then came down upon them. Considering then all these things, let us prepare for our departure."

"For even if the day of the consummation never overtakes us, the end of each person is at the doors, whether he is old or young; and it is not possible for men after they have departed, either to buy oil any more, or to obtain pardon by prayers, though he has Abraham, Noah, Job, or Daniel entreating for us."

"While we have the opportunity, let us store up for ourselves beforehand much confidence, let us gather oil in abundance, let us move everything important into Heaven, that in the fitting time, and when we most need them, we may enjoy them."

Loving Oneself Rather Than God

In seeking the Kingdom of God first, it is possible to appear to be doing so to men, but in fact to be acting out of our own self-interest. In the 1st Century, the Twelve and the Seventy set an example of fasting and prayer and lived the rest of their lives as celibate, even those who were married. They lived with their wives as brother and sister rather than as husband and wife, because they had left behind the things of this world, which included the pleasures of this world. Some of the 1st Century heretics imitated this life style out of self-interest because it made them appear to men to more holy and dedicated to God. One example of this was Nicolas of Antioch (Acts 6:5), who was strongly condemned by the Apostle John for his approval of unrighteous behavior (Revelation 2:6, 15). The key in seeking the Kingdom of God is in keeping the Lord's commandments also.

Clement of Alexandria spoke⁶² about Christians who may go through the motions and appear to love the Lord, but who are in actuality unfaithful to Him. It is possible for these people to die for their neighbor out of love, but they are really doing it for their own sake. The real key is do they do what He wishes and do they keep His commandments.

"He who has shown himself unfaithful, and revolted to the devil's army, is cheated of his own hope; he doesn't believe what God has commanded. In denying the Lord, he also denies himself. He does not rob his Master of His authority by revolting against Him, but by denying the Savior, he denies life; for 'the light was life' (John 1:4). He does not term such men of little faith, but faithless and hypocrites (Matthew 23:13-29), who have His Name inscribed on them, but deny that they are really believers. But the faithful are called both servant and friend.

⁶¹ John Chrysostom, Homilies on Matthew, XX, 6.

⁶² Clement of Alexandria, Stromata, IV, 7.

So that if one loves himself, he loves the Lord, and confesses to salvation that he may save his soul.”

“It is possible to die for your neighbor out of love, regarding Christ as our neighbor, and yet suffer for your own sake rather than your neighbor. Jesus said, ‘Why do you call me Lord, and not do the things which I say?’ (Luke 6:46) For ‘the people that loves with their lips, but have their heart far away from the Lord’ (Isaiah 29:13), is another people, trust in another, and have willingly sold themselves to another. But those who perform the commandments of the Lord, in every action ‘testify’, by doing what He wishes, and consistently naming the Lord’s Name. They ‘testify’ by deed to Him in whom they trust, that they are those ‘who have crucified the flesh, with its affections and lusts. If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit’ (Galatians 5:24-25). ‘He that sows to his flesh, shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that sows to the Spirit, shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting’” (Galatians 6:8).

Gregory the Great encouraged⁶³ his people not just to give alms, which are a good thing, to offset their sins, but also to guard that they don’t think that the grace of God is for sale through the donation of money.

“Those who already distribute compassionately what they possess are to be encouraged also that they study to keep careful guard. When they redeem by alms the sins they have committed, they may commit others, which will still require redemption. They may suppose that the righteousness of God is for sale, thinking that if they take care to give money for their sins, they can sin with impunity. For the soul is more than food, and the body is more than clothing (Matthew 6:25; Luke 12:23). He who gives food or clothing to the poor, and yet is polluted by iniquity of soul or body, has offered the lesser thing to righteousness, and the greater thing to sin; for he has given his possessions to God, and himself to the devil.”

The Subtle Impact of Mammon on Our Lives

The impact of mammon all around us can creep up on us unexpectedly and without our being aware. We end up thinking that we can help a brother by helping him conceal his sin rather than confessing it. Our focus drifts more to increasing our wealth and that of our family than to obtaining forgiveness for our sins.

John Chrysostom stated⁶⁴ that we need to take responsibility for the subtle encroachment of mammon in our lives and in the lives of those around us. The Prophets and the Apostles continually remind us that we cannot serve God and mammon. Yet we seem to care more for the things that belong to our wives and children than to their person and their salvation. It is like having a wild bear (the passions) loose in our neighborhood, but taking no precautions to avoid being mauled. Zoos take precautions to keep wild animals caged up, while we do not seem concerned that wild animals are loose in the King’s palace, which is our body.

“If you had a brother after the flesh, and if he should perpetrate ten thousand evil deeds, if you labor to conceal his deeds, you yourself will partake of the shame when he is disgraced. But regarding your spiritual brother, when you try to conceal

⁶³ Gregory the Great, The Book of Pastoral Rule, III, 20.

⁶⁴ John Chrysostom, Homilies on Matthew, LIX, 6

his sin, you don't free him from charges, you rather add to him ten thousand charges against him from un-confessed sin."

"“Why he is worthless and incorrigible’, you may say. Then for this reason become his friend, that you may put an end to his being such a one, that you may convert him, that you may lead him back to virtue. ‘But he doesn’t obey’, you will say, ‘neither does he follow advice’. How do you know? Have you admonished him, and attempted to amend him? ‘I have admonished him often’, you will say, ‘both once, and a second time’”.

“Is this often? If you had done this all the time, should you grow weary, and give it up? Do you notice how God is always admonishing us, by the prophets, by the Apostles, by the Evangelists? Have we performed everything, and have we been obedient in all things? By no means! Did He then cease admonishing? Does He not say each day, ‘You cannot serve God, and mammon’ (Matthew 6:24), and with many, the tyranny of wealth yet increases? Does He not cry aloud each day, ‘Forgive, and you shall have forgiveness’ (Luke 6:37), and we become wild beasts more and more? Does He not continually admonish us to restrain desire, and to keep the mastery over wicked lust, and many wallow worse than swine in this sin? But nevertheless, He does not cease speaking.”

“We should not blame others for these things, when we don’t even take account of those closest to us: wife, children, and servants. We care more that our servants may be more in number, that our children may receive a large inheritance from us, and that our wife may have gold ornaments, fine clothing, and wealth. We don’t care at all for them, but for the things that belong to them. This is like seeing a house in a bad state, and the walls giving way; and then to neglect raising the walls, but instead make great fences around it. This is also like seeing a body diseased; instead of taking care of this, we weave gilded clothing for it. This is also like having a wife that was sick; we pay attention to the servants, and the looms, and the vessels in the house, and take care of other things, leaving her to lie and moan.”

“This is being done right now, while our soul is in an evil and wretched state, angry, reviling, lusting wrongly, and full of vainglory. We are dragged down to the earth, and torn by many wild beasts; we neglect to drive away the passions, but we are careful about house and servants. If a bear had escaped from the zoo, we would shut up our houses, and travel in such a way so as not to encounter the wild beast. Now not one wild beast, but many such thoughts are tearing our soul in pieces; we don’t even notice it. In the city we take great care to shut up the wild beasts in cages, not at the senate house, not at the courts of justice, not at the king’s palace, but far off somewhere at a distance, where we keep them chained. But in the case of the soul, where the senate house is, where the King’s palace is, where the court of justice is, the wild beasts are let loose, making a commotion in the mind and the royal throne. Disturbance is everywhere; we are like a city thrown into confusion from being overrun by barbarians. What takes place in us is as though a snake were sitting on a brood of sparrows, and the sparrows, with their feeble cries, were flying about frightened, without having any place to go and end their fears.”

Chrysostom went on⁶⁵ about how we should treat our spouses, our children and our servants or employees. With our wives, we should banish the notion of yours, and mine since our spouse even has power over our bodies. Honoring and preferring our spouses before all others will influence everyone around us by our love. This is one way that we can seek the incorruptible things of the Kingdom of God, and other things of this life will be added to us.

“Teach your wife these lessons, but be very gracious. Above all banish this notion from her soul, of ‘mine and yours’. If she says the word ‘mine’, say to her, ‘What things do you call yours?’ I have nothing of mine own. How then do you speak of mine, when all things are yours?’ Freely grant her the word to speak. This is not the expression of flattery, but of exceeding wisdom. Thus will you be able to restrain her wrath, and put an end to her disappointment. For it is flattery when a man does an unworthy act with an evil intent. Say then, ‘Even I am yours’; this advice Paul gives where he says, ‘The husband has not power over his own body, but the wife’ (1 Corinthians 7:4). If I have no power over my body, but you have, much more have you over my possessions. By saying these things you will have quieted her, you will have quenched the fire, you will have shamed the devil, you will have made her more your slave than one bought with money. Thus, by your own language, teach her never to speak of ‘mine and yours’”.

“Never call her simply by her name, but with terms of endearment, with honor, with much love. Honor her, and she will not need honor from others; she will not want the glory that comes from others, if she enjoys that which comes from you. Prefer her before everyone, on every account, both for her beauty and her discernment, and praise her. You will thus persuade her to listen to no one else, but to scorn the entire world except yourself. Teach her the fear of God, and all good things will flow from this as from a fountain, and the house will be full of ten thousand blessings. If we seek the things that are incorruptible, these corruptible things will follow. ‘For’, He said, ‘seek first His kingdom, and all these things shall be added to you’ (Matthew 6:33). What sort of persons must the children of such parents be like? What will the servants of such masters be like? What will all others who come near them be like? Will not they too eventually be loaded with blessings without number? For generally, servants have their character formed by imitating their master; they love the same objects, which they have been taught to love, speak the same language, and engage with them in the same pursuits. If thus we regulate ourselves, and attentively study the Scriptures, in most things we shall derive instruction from them. And thus we shall be able to please God, and to pass through the whole of this present life virtuously, and to attain those blessings which are promised to those that love Him.”

⁶⁵ John Chrysostom, Homilies on Ephesians, XX.

Appendix

The Indian Gold-Digging “Ants”

Lions called Ants

The fantastic story of the gold digging "ant-lions" of India has a long and complicated history. The source might be the great Hindu (Sanskrit) epic, the *Mahabharata* (with origins around 1000 B.C.E.), which makes reference to ants that excavated gold (Kevan 1992). The earliest surviving European account of gold ants or ant lions as they were called much later is found in the *Historiês Apódexis* of Hêródotos (ca. 430 B.C.E.). Druce (1923) retells the story of these unusually large and vicious "ants":

[The] scene is laid in a northern district of India, where there is a desert in which ants abound in size somewhat less than dogs but larger than foxes. They burrow underground and heap up the sand, which contains gold. The Indians go to the desert to collect this sand, each man provided with three camels harnessed together side by side; that is, on either side a male, and in the middle a female on which he rides. The female must only just have been parted from her recently born young. The Indians being thus equipped set out at such a time that they will arrive at the hottest hour of the day, for during the greatest heat the ants hide underground. They bring with them sacks, which they fill with the sand and then return as fast as they can. For the ants detect them by the smell and pursue them, so that if the Indians do not get a good start while the ants are assembling, not a man could be saved. The male camels in time slacken their pace, but the females mindful of their young hasten on; and in this way the Indians return safely with their gold (pp. 354-355).

This story of giant ants that dig up and fiercely protect their gold passed through various hands, including those of Nearchus (4th century B.C.E.) and Megasthenes (3rd century B.C.E.). Nearchus is quoted as having "seen the skins of ants which dig up gold, as large as the skins of leopards" (Druce 1923, p. 355). According to Druce (1923) the term "ant-lion" appears around the 2nd century B.C.E. In his description of the lions of Arabia, Agatharchides "actually mentions ant-lions by their Greek name and says that in appearance most of them differ in no way from the other lions; and Strabo when describing the coasts adjacent to the Arabian Gulf says that the country abounds with elephants and lions called ants" (pp. 355-356).

Mystery Solved?

Controversy over the real identity of the Indian gold-digging ants (or ant-lions) has continued until the present. Scholars have suggested a variety of animals including dogs, marmots, pangolins, mongooses, and the badger-like ratel (Kevan 1992).

In a 1996 *New York Times* article, Marlise Simons reports the mystery may now be solved. In one of the most inaccessible regions of the Himalayas along the upper Indus River, French ethnologist Michel Peissel and other explorers say they found marmots throwing up gold-bearing soil from deep underground as they dig their burrows. Moreover, the indigenous Minaro people living there say that for generations they have collected gold dust from the marmots' work. So why did Herodotus and other ancient writers describe the furry marmots as ants? Peissel's favored explanation is that confusion set in because in Persian the word for marmot is equivalent to "mountain ant." In addition, marmots are unusually large in the Himalayas, with bushy fur and a large fox-like tail. They have razor-sharp teeth and claws. "They can be ferocious if one tampers with their burrows, which is just what the gold-seekers did," Peissel says (Simons 1996).

While this discovery may explain the centuries-old mystery, Peissel would like to test his findings with a full archeological and geological survey. The area lies on the tense border between Pakistan and India, however, so the political climate may prevent such work. Says Peissel: "It's right in the line of fire of both sides. There was gunfire when we were there. The locals tell us that the marmots are dwindling. The Indian soldiers are constantly taking potshots at them" (Simons 1996).

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For more information, see <http://www.antlionpit.com/golddigging.html>.

JUSTIFICATION AND FAITH

3rd Sunday after Pentecost

Revision E

Epistle: Romans 5:1-11

In today's Epistle lesson, we encounter the rallying cry of the Protestant Reformation: *Justification by Faith*. The word justified is a translation of the Hebrew "*tsadaq*" and the Greek "*dikaioo*" and means to render just, innocent or right. This Old Testament concept of being justified is used today in various Orthodox services. For example: (Psalm 51:4) "Against Thee, Thee only, I have sinned and done what is evil in Thy sight; so that Thou art justified (*tsadaq*) when Thou doest speak and blameless (i.e. clean) when Thou dost judge." (Psalm 143:2) "And do not enter into judgment with Thy servant, for in Thy sight no man living is justified" (*tsadaq*). Yet a time will come when (Isaiah 45:25) "In the Lord all the offspring of Israel will be justified..." (*tsadaq*).

Justification by Faith

The term "Justification by Faith" grew up during the Protestant Reformation, and it is regarded as the act whereby God, by virtue of the sacrifice of Christ, acquits a man of the punishment due to his sins, and in His mercy treats him as though he were righteous. But the use of the term "Justification by Faith" is a relatively modern phenomenon, and was not used in the same way by the Church Fathers. Martin Luther taught that such "Justification by Faith" was granted to men in response to faith alone, and that with it the sinner was imputed with the merits of Christ. As Fr. John Breck pointed out, however, "This interpretation means that our righteousness is little more than a legal fiction. It means that God treats us *as if* we were just or righteous, although He (like us) knows full well that we are not".

By contrast, in the Orthodox tradition "righteousness," is understood more as an expression of love and mercy than as one of divine justice that must be "satisfied." Through the indwelling Holy Spirit, followers of Christ are capable of receiving that divine righteousness as a gift – one that can actually work a transformation in human life by enabling us to pray, to wage spiritual warfare against the passions, and to love both God and other people.

In the Orthodox perspective, there is no thought that we must accumulate merits in order to justify ourselves before God. Nor, on the other hand, is there a denial of the place and importance of good works in Christian life (Ephesians 2:8-10)! Salvation is accomplished by grace in response to faith. But that faith cannot be passive; it must express itself, not merely by confessing Jesus as "personal Lord and Savior", but by feeding, clothing, visiting and otherwise caring for the "least" of Jesus' brethren (Matthew 25:31-46).

In many places affected by the Protestant Reformation, "faith" and "works" were often discussed as separate and exclusive. In Orthodox tradition "faith" and "works" are seen as two sides of the same coin. For more discussion on this, see the Epistle lesson for the 21st Sunday after Pentecost and the Gospel lesson for Meat Fare Sunday in Lent.

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For some more details of this argument, see Appendix B.

What Do the Scriptures Say?

Many of the Protestant Reformers taught that we are justified by faith ALONE. In coming to this conclusion, they noted the following writings of Paul, among others, especially Romans and Galatians:

1. **Romans 3:27-28:** Where *is* boasting then? It is excluded. By what law? Of works? No, but by the law of faith. Therefore we conclude that a man is **justified** by faith apart from the deeds of the law.
2. **Romans 4:1-6:** What then shall we say that Abraham our father has found according to the flesh? For if Abraham was **justified** by works, he has *something* to boast about, but not before God. For what does the Scripture say? "Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness." Now to him who works, the wages are not counted as grace but as debt. But to him who does not work but believes on Him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is accounted for righteousness, just as David also describes the blessedness of the man to whom God imputes righteousness apart from works:
3. **Romans 5:1-2:** Therefore, having been **justified** by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom also we have access by faith into this grace in which we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God.
4. **Galatians 2:16-17:** "knowing that a man is not **justified** by the works of the law but by faith in Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Christ Jesus, that we might be **justified** by faith in Christ and not by the works of the law; for by the works of the law no flesh shall be **justified**."
5. **Galatians 3:11-14:** But that no one is **justified** by the law in the sight of God *is* evident, for "the just shall live by faith." Yet the law is not of faith, but "the man who does them shall live by them." Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the law, having become a curse for us (for it is written, "Cursed *is* everyone who hangs on a tree"), that the blessing of Abraham might come upon the Gentiles in Christ Jesus, that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith.
6. **Galatians 3:23-24:** But before faith came, we were kept under guard by the law, kept for the faith which would afterward be revealed. Therefore the law was our tutor *to bring us* to Christ, that we might be **justified** by faith.
7. **Galatians 5:3-6:** And I testify again to every man who becomes circumcised that he is a debtor to keep the whole law. You have become estranged from Christ, you who *attempt* to be **justified** by law; you have fallen from grace. For we through the Spirit eagerly wait for the hope of righteousness by faith. For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision avails anything, but faith working through love.

Because Paul states this so often, it's easy to conclude that one is justified by Faith alone. But that would be ignoring other parts of the Scripture, such as:

1. **James 2:21-26:** Was not Abraham our father **justified** by works when he offered Isaac his son on the altar? Do you see that faith was working together with his works, and by works faith was made perfect? And the Scripture was fulfilled which says, "Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness." And he was called the friend of God. You see then that a man is **justified** by works, and not by faith only. Likewise, was not

Rahab the harlot also **justified** by works when she received the messengers and sent *them* out another way? For as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also.

2. **Romans 2:12-13:** For as many as have sinned without law will also perish without law, and as many as have sinned in the law will be judged by the law (for not the hearers of the law *are* just in the sight of God, but the doers of the law will be **justified**);
3. **Matthew 12:37-38:** For by your words you will be **justified**, and by your words you will be condemned."
4. **Luke 18:13-14** "And the tax collector, standing afar off, would not so much as raise *his* eyes to heaven, but beat his breast, saying, 'God, be merciful to me a sinner!' "I tell you, this man went down to his house **justified** *rather* than the other; for everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted."
5. **Matthew 25:34-36:** "Then the King will say to those on His right hand, 'Come, you blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world: 'for I was hungry and you gave Me food; I was thirsty and you gave Me drink; I was a stranger and you took Me in; I *was* naked and you clothed Me; I was sick and you visited Me; I was in prison and you came to Me.'
6. **Ephesians 2:10:** For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them”

We might note that when Paul discusses Justification by Faith, he is contrasting this with justification by keeping the Mosaic Law. And Paul is correct in saying what he did. But Paul doesn't mean that once we are justified by Faith, we never again need to demonstrate our Faith. Therefore he also said, “for not the hearers of the Law *are* just in the sight of God, but the doers of the Law will be justified” (Romans 2:13). Similarly on Judgment Day, it will be those who fed, clothed and visited “the least of those My brethren” (Matthew 25:35-40) who will be saved, not just those who had faith, but did nothing. This is why Orthodox tradition sees Faith and Works as two sides of the same coin.

John Chrysostom stated⁶⁶ that the just shall live not only in this age, but also in the age to come. While some people will be saved, they will suffer loss in the age to come (1 Corinthians 3:12-15). The righteousness we attain is not our own; it is a gift of God; therefore we do not attain it by our own labor. The just lived by Faith also in the Old Testament, as Paul illustrated from the examples of Rahab and Abraham.

“He who has become just shall live, not for the present life only, but for that which is to come. Paul hints not only this, but also another thing along with this, namely, the brightness and gloriousness of such a life. It is possible to be saved, yet not without shame (many are saved, yet by the royal humanity are released from punishment); that no one may suspect this upon hearing of safety, Paul also adds righteousness. This is not our own righteousness, but that of God; Paul hints also the abundance of it and the ease of attaining it. We do not achieve it by work and labor, but we receive it by a gift from above, contributing one thing only from our own store, ‘believing’. Since Paul’s statement did not seem credible if the adulterer, homosexual, grave-robber and magician are not only suddenly freed from punishment but become just, and with the highest righteousness, Paul confirms his

⁶⁶ John Chrysostom, Homilies on Romans, II, v. 17.

assertion from the Old Testament. First with a short sentence, Paul lays open a vast sea of histories to one who has a capacity for seeing them. After having said, ‘from faith to faith’ (Hebrews 11:27-31), he sends the listener back to the dispensations of God, which took place thus in the Old Testament. When writing to the Hebrews, he explains with his usual great wisdom, showing that both the just and the sinners were justified in that way even then; therefore he made mention both of the harlot (Rahab) and of Abraham. But then here, after having just hinted at it (for he was running on to another pressing subject in Hebrews 12), he again confirms what he had said from the Prophets. It is not in the nature of things for him who is to live, to live otherwise except by faith; for ‘the just shall live by faith’ (Habakkuk 2:4), speaking about the life to come. Since what God gives transcends reasoning entirely, it is reasonable that we need faith.”

Justification by Faith: Some Definitions

Paul wrote, “Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom also we have access by faith into this grace in which we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God” (Romans 5:1-2).

The term “faith”, however, has come to mean something a little different than it did in the Old Testament and in the First Century. And this is reflected in the English translations of the Bible today. Listed below are some of the Greek words translated “faith” and their related words:

GREEK WORD	DEFINITION	STRONG’S REF.#
Peitho	To convince, to rely upon	3982
Pistis	from peitho: persuasion, credence	4102
Pistos	from peitho: trustworthy	4103
Pisteuo	from pistis: to have faith	4100
Pistikos	from pistis: genuine, trustworthy	4101
Pistoo	from pistos: to assure	4104

These words are translated into English at various places, *to have faith, to believe, to trust*. But the root word of them all is “*peitho*” which implies faith, belief and trust based upon being convinced. For example, even the demons have faith – and tremble (James 2:19). They have been thoroughly convinced long ago.

If one were to flip through English language Bibles, one would find that the English word faith is used much more often in the New Testament than trust. In the Old Testament, the opposite is true. Listed below are some of the Hebrew words that are commonly translated faith, belief and trust:

HEBREW WORD	DEFINITION	STRONG’S REF.#
Aman	to build up, support, trust	539
Emuwn	from aman: established, trusty	529

Emunah	from emuwn: firmness, security	530
Chacah	to flee suddenly for protection	2620
Machaceh	from chacah: a shelter	4268
Batach	to hurry for refuge	982
Mibtach	from batach: a refuge, security, assurance	4009

The first three of the above words are commonly translated “to believe” and “to have faith;” the last four are translated “to trust.”

Thus, in both New and Old Testaments, the concepts of “faith,” “belief” and “trust” are interwoven and have their root meaning in trust and security based upon something convincing or established. In the Old Testament, the concept of trust goes further and includes words related to shelter, protection and refuge.

In both Old and New Testament times, the people of God have had a covenant relationship with their Lord. For example, the Lord said, “If you will indeed obey My voice and keep My covenant, then you shall be My own special treasure among all the peoples, for all the earth is Mine” (Exodus 19:5). Following this, the Lord went on to detail the Ten Commandments which can be summarized as “Love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul and strength, and your neighbor as yourself” (Deuteronomy 6:5; Leviticus 19:18).

A similar covenant exists in the New Testament (Hebrews 8:8-13) and the same basic commandments apply: “Love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul and strength and your neighbor as yourself” (Matthew 22:36-39; Mark 12:30-31; Luke 10:27). The difference now is that the Mediator of the covenant has come and died (Hebrews 9:15), meaning we are justified by His blood (Romans 5:9), and He has left the Holy Spirit (John 7:39; Romans 5:5). The cup of the Lord’s Supper is called “**The New Testament in My Blood**” (1 Corinthians 11:25, Luke 22:20). He has also put His Law into our minds and written them on our hearts (Hebrews 8:10). Because of this covenant relationship, trust, shelter, protection and refuge exist – which brings us back to the Gospel illustration of the birds and the flowers (Matthew 6:26-30).

This covenant relationship is so strong that tribulation just generates additional strength. From Romans 5:3, translating literally from the Greek, “tribulation (in the sense of pressure) works cheerful endurance, cheerful endurance works proof and proof works a confident expectation (or hope).” From the Greek word study on faith, faith has its root in being convinced and implies trust. And it is tribulation (i.e. the pressure of daily life) that generates the proof and the convincing that the Lord is good and that He can be trusted. This is why we glory in our tribulations (Romans 5:3), because it deepens our trust and increases our faith.

Therefore, faith, belief, trust becomes a real world, tangible experience. And justification by faith becomes a covenant relationship and not just a theological abstraction. Next week’s Gospel lesson of the Centurion serves as a good example of this faith, belief, trust.

To put the faith, belief, trust Paul is speaking of in context; the phrase “justified by faith” (Romans 5:1) comes as a summary of Romans chapter 4. There faith is described as follows:

- Belief is accounted for righteousness. “Abraham believed God and it was reckoned to him as righteousness” (Romans 4:3, 5).
- Works (or earning one’s way) generates further debt, not grace (Romans 4:4).
- Paul quotes David as describing “the blessedness of the man to whom God imputes righteousness without works” (Romans 4:6-8, Psalm 32:1-2).
- This blessedness came to Abraham before his circumcision: therefore it applies to both Jews and Gentiles (Romans 4:9-12).
- The promises made to Abraham also apply to those who are of the faith of Abraham (Romans 4:13-16).

Faith: the Gift of God

If we are “Justified by Faith”, we might ask, “What is Faith?” Paul said, “For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; *it is* the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast” (Ephesians 2:8-9). Thus salvation comes through faith, which itself is a gift we receive from God.

John Chrysostom commented⁶⁷ that had Christ not come, had He not called us, we would not have been able to believe! The work of faith itself is not our own. Faith alone was not enough to save us. We are His workmanship, and we have been created specifically for good works. No one is justified by works, in order that the grace and loving kindness of God may be shown. Our regeneration is in reality a second creation; we have been brought from non-existence into being. As to what we were before, that is, the old man, we are dead. God prepared this beforehand that we should walk in good works, not merely that we should begin.

“In order that the greatness of the benefits given to us may not raise us too high, observe how he brings us down: ‘By grace we have been saved, through faith’ (Ephesians 2:8). Then on the other hand, that our freewill might not be impaired, he adds also our part in the work and adds, ‘and that not of ourselves’”.

“He means that neither is faith ‘of ourselves’. Because had He not come, had He not called us, how had we been able to believe? For ‘how shall they believe, unless they hear?’ (Romans 10:14) So that the work of faith itself is not our own! ‘It is the gift of God’; it is ‘not of works’”.

“Was faith then, you will say, enough to save us? No; but God has required this, lest He should save us, barren and without work at all. His expression is that faith saves, but it is because God so wills, that faith saves. Since how, tell me, does faith save without works? This itself is the gift of God.”

“That he may excite in us proper feeling regarding this gift of grace, he said, ‘That no man should glory’ (Ephesians 2:9). ‘What then?’ said a man, ‘Has He Himself hindered our being justified by works?’ By no means! But no one is justified by works, in order that the grace and loving kindness of God may be shown. He did not reject us as having works, but exclusive of works He has saved

⁶⁷ John Chrysostom, Homilies on Ephesians, IV, v. 8.

us by grace; so that no man from now on may have anything to boast of. And then, lest when you hear that the whole thing is accomplished not by works but by faith, you might become idle, observe how he continues, ‘For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them’” (Ephesians 2:10).

“Observe the words he uses. He alludes to the regeneration, which is in reality a second creation. We have been brought from non-existence into being. As to what we were before, that is, the old man, we are dead. What we have now become, we were not before. Truly then this is a work of creation, and more noble than the first. From that one, we have our being; but from this last, we have, over and above, our wellbeing.”

“‘God prepared this beforehand that we should walk in them’. Not merely that we should begin, but that we should walk in them, for we need a virtue, which shall last throughout our life, and be extended on to our dying day. If we had to travel a road leading to a royal city, and then when we had passed over the greater part of it, we were to get tired and sit down near the very end, it would be of no use to us. This is the hope of our calling; for ‘for good works’ he says. Otherwise it would profit us nothing.”

It is by faith, rather than by observing rituals, so that both Jews and Gentiles can be united in one Body, the Church, as true heirs of Abraham, who himself was accepted because of his ardent faith (Romans 4:16). It involves a new birth into a new race: whoever receives Christ and believes on Him becomes born of God (John 1:12-13). All boasting is excluded, as all people, like Abraham, are justified by faith.

John Chrysostom also spoke about⁶⁸ the Jewish reaction to “Justification by Faith”. The Jews who believed tended toward boasting; those who didn’t were very confused about it. The confusion centered on how it was possible to be saved without works and how Gentiles could enjoy the same blessings as Jews. This does not make the Law void, but Faith establishes the Law. Similarly, the Law bore witness to the Faith. The purpose of the Law was to make men righteous, but it had no power to do that; but Faith accomplished that. Following our infusion with grace and our justification, we need to show a life worthy of the gift.

“Paul calls the Faith also a Law, delighting to keep the same name, and so diminish the seeming novelty. But what is the ‘Law of faith?’ It is, being saved by grace! Here he shows God’s power, in that He has not only saved, but has even justified, and led them to boasting (Romans 3:27), and this too without needing works, but looking for faith only. In saying this he attempts to bring the Jew who has believed to act with moderation, and to calm him that has not believed, in such way as to draw him on to his own view. He that has been saved, if he is high-minded in that he abides by the Law, will be told that he himself has stopped his own mouth, himself has accused himself, himself has renounced claims to his own salvation, and has excluded boasting. He who has not believed, being humbled by these same means, will be capable of being brought over to the Faith. Notice how great faith’s preeminence is! It has removed us from the former things, not even allowing us to boast of them?”

⁶⁸ John Chrysostom, Homilies on Romans, VII, vv. 27-31.

“‘Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law’ (Romans 3:28). When Paul had shown that by faith the Gentiles were superior to the Jews, then he goes on with great confidence to speak about it also, and what seemed to annoy he again heals up. These two things were what confused the Jews! (1) If it were possible for men, who with works were not saved, can they be saved without works? (2) Is it right that the uncircumcised can enjoy the same blessings as the Jews, who had been nurtured in the Law for so long a period? This second item confused them more by far than the first. On this ground having proved the former, he goes on to the second, which perplexed the Jews so much, that they even complained on account of this position to Peter after they believed (Acts 10:43). What does Paul say then? ‘Therefore we conclude, that by faith a man is justified’ (Romans 3:28). Paul does not say, ‘a Jew’, or one under the Law, but after leading forth his discourse into a large room, and opening the doors of faith to the world, he says ‘a man’. Then having taken occasion from this, he meets an objection not set down. Since it was likely that the Jews, upon hearing that faith justifies every man, would feel offended, he goes on, ‘Is He the God of the Jews only?’” (Romans 3:29-30)

“Paul continues, ‘Do we then make void the law through faith? God forbid: yea, we establish the law’ (Romans 3:31). Do you see his varied and unspeakable judgment? The bare use of the word ‘establish’ shows that it was not then standing, but was worn out. Note also Paul’s exceeding power, and how superabundantly he maintains what he wishes. He shows that the Faith, so far from doing any disparagement to the ‘Law’, even assists it, as it on the other hand paved the way for the Faith. As the Law itself before bore witness to the Faith (Paul said⁶⁹, ‘being witnessed by the Law and the Prophets’), so here Paul establishes that. And how did it get established? What was the object of the Law and what was the scope of all its ordinances? Why, to make man righteous? But this it had no power to do this. ‘For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God’ (Romans 3:23); but faith, when it came, accomplished it. For when a man is once a believer, he is immediately justified. The intention then of the Law was established by Faith, and all the ordinances that the Law aims for have been brought to a consummation. Consequently Faith has not disannulled the Law, but perfected it. Paul demonstrated three points: (1) that without the Law it is possible to be justified; (2) that this the Law could not effect; and (3) faith is not opposed to the Law. Since the chief cause of perplexity to the Jews was this, that the faith seemed to be in opposition to the Law, Paul shows more than the Jew wishes, that so far from being contrary to the Law, Faith is even in close alliance and cooperation with it, which was what the Jews especially longed to hear proven.”

“Since after this grace, whereby we were justified, there is need also of a life suited to it, let us show an earnestness worthy of the gift. And show it we shall, if we keep love, the mother of good deeds, with earnestness. Now love is not just words, or mere ways of speaking to men, but a taking care of them, and a putting forth of itself by works. For example, relieving poverty, lending one’s aid to the sick, rescuing from dangers, standing by them that are in difficulty, weeping with them that weep, and rejoicing with them that rejoice” (Romans 12:15).

⁶⁹ i.e. Romans

Leo the Great, Pope of Rome, stated⁷⁰ that the proper way to worship God is from that which we have received from Him, and chief among these is the Peace of God. This is one of His best gifts and in it is summed up nearly all the Commandments. In His Peace, we are justified by Faith and we wish what He wishes and refuse what He forbids. In His Peace, those who are born of God gain the brightness of their Maker's likeness and display in themselves Him Who begat them! They who have peace with God and are always saying to the Father with their whole hearts 'thy will be done'; they can be overcome in no battles, nor can be hurt by any assaults. Nothing can destroy this, and He will finish all our wars for us.

"The Spirit can in no other way be rightly worshipped, except by offering Him that which we received from Him. But in the treasures of the Lord's bounty what can we find so suitable to the honor of the present feast as the peace, which at the Lord's nativity was first proclaimed by the angel-choir? That it is which brings forth the sons of God, the nurse of love and the mother of unity. The proper work and special office of the rest of the blessed and our eternal home is to join to God those whom it removes from the world. Paul therefore incites us to this good end in saying, 'Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ' (Romans 5:1). In this brief sentence are summed up nearly all the commandments; for where true peace is, there can be no lack of virtue. But what is it to have peace towards God, except to wish what He bids, and not to wish what He forbids? If human friendships seek out equality of soul and similarity of desires, and difference of habits can never attain to full harmony, how will he be partaker of divine peace, who is pleased with what displeases God and desires to get delight from what he knows to be offensive to God? That is not the spirit of the sons of God; such wisdom is not acceptable to the noble family of the adopted. That chosen and royal race must live up to the dignity of its regeneration, must love what the Father loves, and in nothing disagree with its Maker, lest the Lord should again say: 'I have begotten and raised up sons, but they have scorned Me. The ox knows his owner, and the donkey his master's crib: *but* Israel does not know, my people do not consider'" (Isaiah 1:3).

"The mystery of this boon is great, dearly beloved, and this gift exceeds all gifts that God should call man son, and man should name God Father: for by these terms we perceive and learn the love which reached so great a height. If in earthly families those who are born of noble parents are lowered by the faults of evil intercourse, and unworthy offspring are put to shame by the brilliance of their ancestry; to what end will they come who through love of the world do not fear to be outcast from the family of Christ? But if it gains the praise of men that the father's glory should shine again in their descendants, how much more glorious is it for those who are born of God to regain the brightness of their Maker's likeness and display in themselves Him Who begat them? As the Lord said, 'Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven' (Matthew 5:16). We know indeed that 'the whole world lies in wickedness' (1 John 5:19), and that by the stratagems of the Devil and his angels, numberless attempts are made either to frighten man in his struggle upwards by adversity or to spoil him by prosperity. But 'He who is in us is greater than he who is in the world' (1 John 4:4), and they who have peace with God and are always

⁷⁰ Leo the Great, Sermons, XXVI, 3-4.

saying to the Father with their whole hearts ‘Your will be done’ (Luke 11:2) can be overcome in no battles, can be hurt by no assaults. For accusing ourselves in our confessions and refusing consent to our fleshly lusts, we stir up against us the enmity of him who is the author of sin. By accepting His gracious service, we secure a peace with God that nothing can destroy, in order that we may not only surrender ourselves in obedience to our King but also be united to Him by our free-will. For if we are like-minded, if we wish what He wishes, and disapprove what He disapproves, He will finish all our wars for us. He Who gave the will, will also give the power; so that we may be fellow-workers in His works, and with the exultation of Faith may utter that prophetic song. ‘The Lord *is* my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear? The Lord *is* the strength of my life; of whom shall I be afraid?’” (Psalm 27:1)

Leo the Great continued to say⁷¹ that when Christ spoke of Peacemakers in the Beatitudes, He was referring to those who have the Peace of God and who are justified by Faith. This is also spoken of throughout the Scriptures. Friendships and even the most elevated like-mindedness have nothing to do with the Peace of God.

“Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God’ (Matthew 5:9). This blessedness does not belong to any and every kind of agreement and harmony, but to that of which Paul speaks: ‘We have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ’ (Romans 5:1). The Prophet David speaks of this also: ‘Great peace have those that love Your Law, and nothing causes them to stumble’ (Psalm 119:165). This peace even the closest ties of friendship and the exact likeness of mind do not really gain, if they do not agree with God’s will. Similarly with bad desires, leagues in crimes, and associations of vice; they cannot merit this peace. The love of the world does not consort with the love of God, nor does he enter the alliance of the sons of God who will not separate himself from the children of this generation. Those who are in mind always with God, ‘endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace’ (Ephesians 4:3), never dissent from the eternal Law, uttering that prayer of faith, ‘Your will be done as in heaven so on earth’ (Luke 11:2). These are ‘the peacemakers’; these are thoroughly of one mind, and fully harmonious, and are to be called ‘heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ’ (Romans 8:17). This shall be the record of the love of God and the love of our neighbor, that we shall suffer no calamities, be in fear of no offense, but all the strife of trial ended, rest in God’s most perfect peace.”

So we find that works are still important, and are necessary as the results of our calling by God; the transformation of our lives is the purpose of our salvation (Ephesians 2:10). Each person will receive rewards according to his deeds (Romans 2:6-8). Like the slaves who were given the five talents and the two talents, more of the “exceeding riches” (Ephesians 2:7) are stored up for those whose hearts are bent on doing good works to the utmost. As we participate with the Body of Christ in worshipping our Lord, we are given more insight into the “cloud of witnesses” (Hebrews 12:1) that surrounds us and we are motivated to imitate them in their works.

⁷¹ Leo the Great, Sermons, XCV, 9.

Chrysostom also pointed out⁷² that while Christ has made us partakers of the mysteries of His grace, we couldn't understand any of this without the Holy Spirit. Once we learn it directly from the Holy Spirit, all questions and arguments cease.

“Vast are the mysteries and secrets of which Christ has made us partakers. It is not possible for us to understand these, other than by being partakers of the Holy Spirit, and by receiving abundant grace. It is for this reason that Paul prays, ‘The Father of glory’ (Ephesians 1:17), that is, He that has given us vast blessings, for he constantly addresses Him according to the subject he is on, for instance, ‘The Father of mercies and God of all comfort’” (2 Corinthians 1:3).

“We need to raise our understanding, for it is not possible otherwise to understand these things. ‘The natural man does not receive the things of the Spirit of God; for they are foolishness to him’ (1 Corinthians 2:14). So then, there is need of spiritual ‘wisdom’, that we may perceive spiritual things, that we may see hidden things. That Spirit ‘reveals’ all things and He will set forth the mysteries of God. Now the knowledge of the mysteries of God, the Spirit alone comprehends, who also searches the deep things of Him. Note that it is not said, ‘that Angel, or Archangel, or any other created power’, may confer upon you a spiritual gift. And if this is really revelation, then all arguments are consequently vain, for he that has learned God, and knows God, shall no longer dispute concerning anything. He will not say, ‘This is impossible, and that is possible’, and ‘How did the other thing come to pass?’ If we learn God, as we ought to know Him; if we learn God from Him from whom we ought to learn Him, that is from the Spirit Himself; then shall we no longer dispute concerning anything.”

Chrysostom suggested⁷³ that we imitate the Apostles in their humility and don't think that anything that we do is great. For all we have and are able to do is from the graciousness of God.

“As the Apostles went about into the country and the cities, observe both the simplicity of the Gentiles, and the maliciousness of the Jews. By their actions the Gentiles showed that they were worthy to hear; they honored them from the miracles only. The Gentiles honored them as gods, the Jews persecuted them as pestilent fellows. The Gentiles not only welcomed the preaching, but said, ‘The gods, in the likeness of men, have come down to us’. But the Jews were offended. The Gentiles ‘called Barnabas, Jupiter; and Paul, Mercury’ (Acts 14:11, 12). I suppose Barnabas was a man of dignified appearance. Here was a new sort of trial, from unrestrained zeal of their followers, and no small one. But this also shows the virtue of the Apostles, and how on all occasions they ascribe everything to God. Let us imitate them; let us think nothing our own, seeing even faith itself is not our own, but is more God's than ours. ‘For by grace are you saved through faith; and this not of ourselves; it is the gift of God’ (Ephesians 2:8). Let us not think great things of ourselves, or be puffed up, being as we are, men, dust and ashes, smoke and shadow. Why would we think great things of ourselves? If we give alms, even lavishing our substance, think, what if God had chosen not to make you rich? Think of those that are impoverished; think how many have given not their substance only, but their bodies also; and after their numberless sacrifices, have still felt that they

⁷² John Chrysostom, Homilies on Ephesians, III, vv. 21-22.

⁷³ John Chrysostom, Commentary on Acts, XXX

were miserable creatures! We give for ourselves; Christ gave not for Himself, but for us. We just paid a debt; Christ owed us nothing. See the uncertainty of the future, and ‘do not be haughty but fear’ (Romans 11:20); do not lessen your virtue by boastfulness. If we want to do something truly great, never let a conjecture of your attainments as being great enter your mind.”

Chrysostom also pointed out that Paul reminded⁷⁴ the Corinthians that their sanctification came not from their deeds but from the grace of God as they answered His call. Our faith is not completely ours since we obeyed a call.

“What is Sanctification? Answer: the Laver, the Purification! Paul reminded them of their own uncleanness, from which he had freed them; and so persuades them to lowliness of mind. They had been sanctified not by their own good deeds, but by the loving-kindness of God.”

“We are ‘called to be Saints’ (1 Corinthians 1:2). Even this, to be saved by faith, is not of ourselves; for we did not first draw near, but were called; so that not even this small matter is ours altogether. However, though you had drawn near, accountable as you are for innumerable wickedness, not even so would the grace be yours, but it is God’s. Paul said, ‘By grace have you been saved through faith, and this not of yourselves’ (Ephesians 2:8). Not even the faith is yours altogether; for you were not first with your belief, but obeyed a call.”

Further Commentary by the Church Fathers

The Church Fathers have noted that Paul God’s part and our part in the work of salvation. It is critical that we account for both and not focus on just one to the exclusion of the other. Paul also notes that we are justified just like Abraham, and those of Faith are children of Abraham. As sons of God, we have been given gifts; these gifts are so sure that we can rejoice as if they were already present.

John Chrysostom stated⁷⁵ that Paul everywhere described God’s part and our part. God’s part is numerous and diverse; we brought only faith as our contribution. The point is not just forgiveness of sins, but that we might receive countless benefits. This reconciliation is not just temporary, but is intended to be permanent so long as we want it.

“Consider how Paul everywhere sets down these two points: His part and our part. On His part, however, there are things varied, numerous and diverse. He died for us, further reconciled us, brought us to Himself, and gave us grace unspeakable. But we brought faith only as our contribution. And so he says ‘through Whom also we have access by faith into this grace in which we stand’ (Romans 5:2). This grace is the being counted worthy of the knowledge of God, the being forced from error, the coming to knowledge of the Truth, the obtaining of all the blessings that come through Baptism. For the end of His bringing us near was that we might receive these gifts. It was not only that we might have simple remission of sins, that we were reconciled; but that we might receive also countless benefits.”

⁷⁴ John Chrysostom, Homilies on 1 Corinthians, I, 1-2.

⁷⁵ John Chrysostom, Homilies on Romans, IX,

“And if He reconciled us when we were in open war with Him, it is reasonable that we should stay in a state of reconciliation, and give to Him this reward that He may not seem to have reconciled unfeeling creatures to the Father.”

Cyprian of Carthage showed⁷⁶ how we are justified just like Abraham. “Abraham believed God and it was accounted to him for righteousness” (Galatians 3:6), which means that Abraham was justified (Galatians 3:8). The way this worked is Melchizedek the priest offered bread and wine, and blessed Abraham (Genesis 14:18-20). This prefigured Christ, our High Priest, offering bread and wine (His Body and Blood) and blessing us. The bottom line is that those who are of faith are the children of Abraham, and Melchizedek showed that the Gentiles would be justified also.

“In the priest Melchizedek we see prefigured the sacrament of the sacrifice of the Lord, ‘Melchizedek king of Salem brought out bread and wine; he *was* the priest of God Most High’ (Genesis 14:18). He was a priest of the Most High God, and blessed Abraham. That Melchizedek bore a type of Christ, the Holy Spirit declares in the Psalms, saying from the person of the Father to the Son: ‘I have begotten Thee from the womb before the morning. The Lord swore, and will not relent, “You *are* a priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek”’ (Psalm 110:3-4 LXX). Where Melchizedek was a priest of the Most High God; he offered wine and bread; and he blessed Abraham. Who is more a priest of the most high God than our Lord Jesus Christ, who offered a sacrifice to God the Father, and offered that very same thing which Melchizedek had offered, that is, bread and wine, namely His body and blood? With respect to Abraham, that blessing by Melchizedek belonged to our people. If Abraham believed in God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness, assuredly whoever believes in God and lives in faith is found righteous, and already is blessed in faithful Abraham, and is set forth as justified. The Apostle Paul proves this when he says, “‘Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness’. Therefore know that *only* those who are of faith are sons of Abraham. And the Scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, preached the Gospel to Abraham [2000 years earlier], *saying*, “In you all the nations shall be blessed”. So then those who *are* of faith are blessed with believing Abraham’ (Galatians 3:6-9). In the Gospel we find that it is possible to raise up “‘children of Abraham from stones”, that is, are gathered from the Gentiles’ (Matthew 3:9). And when the Lord praised Zacchaeus, He said ‘Today salvation has come to this house, because he also is a son of Abraham’ (Luke 19:9). In Genesis, therefore, the benediction, with respect to Abraham by Melchizedek the priest, might be duly celebrated, the figure of Christ’s sacrifice precedes, namely, as ordained in bread and wine. This thing the Lord completed and fulfilled, offering bread and the cup mixed with wine; so He who is the fullness of truth fulfilled the truth of the image prefigured by Melchizedek.”

Chrysostom gave⁷⁷ an example. The gifts that God gives are so sure that not only can we rest assured that we will receive them, but we can rejoice in them as if they were already present, even though we won’t see them until the Lord returns.

⁷⁶ Cyprian of Carthage, Epistles, LXII, 4.

⁷⁷ John Chrysostom, Homilies on Romans, IX,

“A person has acquired rule, glory and authority, yet he does not stand therein continuously, but is speedily cast out of it. Or if a man does not take it from him, death comes and is sure to take it from him. God’s gifts are not like this; for neither man, occasion, crisis of affairs, nor even the devil, nor can death come and cast us out of them. But when we are dead we then more strictly speaking have possession of them, and keep going on enjoying more and more. And if you feel in doubt about those to come; consider those now present and what you have already received, by analogy believe in the other also. This is why Paul says ‘And we rejoice in hope of the glory of God’ (Romans 5:2) that you may learn what kind of soul the faithful ought to have”.

For it is not only for what has been given, but for what is to be given, that we ought to be filled with confidence, as though it were already given. One ‘rejoices’ in what is already given. Since then the hope of things to come is even as sure and clear as that which is already given, he says that in that also we in like manner ‘rejoice’. If it contributes to God’s glory, it will certainly come to pass, though it may not for our sakes, yet for Him it will. Why do I say that the blessings to come are worthy of being gloried in? Even the evils of this time present are able to brighten up our countenances, and make us find in them our rest.

Tribulation Produces Perseverance

Paul stated, “And not only *that*, but we also glory in tribulations, knowing that tribulation produces perseverance; and perseverance, character; and character, hope” (Romans 5:3-4).

The demons recognized Paul as a supreme adversary to their objectives, and they harassed him in an extraordinary manner following his conversion. The Patriarch Job also had an extraordinary struggle with the demons as they harassed him. It is instructive to look at both the struggles of Job and Paul in more detail to better understand what Paul is saying here.

What Paul accomplished after his conversion, but before his missionary journeys was the large scale elimination of sin in his life. If we don’t hurt ourselves with sin, no tribulation can hurt us either. A key component of this is being always thankful for anything the Lord gives us, whether good or bad. Thankfulness in the face of persecution testifies to the impotence of the persecutors. Tribulation is useful in our lives; living an easy luxurious life opens us up to be swayed to sin; this is not possible for someone who is afflicted.

John Chrysostom stated⁷⁸ that no kind of tribulation can hurt us so long as we don’t hurt ourselves with sin. The people who are hurt the most by calamities of any sort are the ones who are bothered by sin the most. Consider Cain, Philip’s wife Herodias and Joseph’s brothers! They are pitiful compared to Abel, John the Baptist and Joseph. The demons could not overthrow Job, who lived before the Law, or Paul, who was subjected to so many sufferings. Paul summarized this very well when he said, “I rejoice in my sufferings”.

“Neither loss of money, slander, railing, banishment, diseases, tortures, nor that which seems more formidable than all, namely death, harms those who suffer them. Rather these add to our profit. I will prove the reverse, showing that they

⁷⁸ John Chrysostom, To Prove That No One Can Harm the Man Who Does Not Injure Himself, 5.

who are most injured, insulted, and suffer the most incurable evils are the persons who do these things. What could be more miserable than the condition of Cain, who dealt with his brother in this fashion? What could be more pitiful than that of Phillip's wife who beheaded John; or Joseph's brothers who sold him into slavery, and transported him into exile; or the devil who tortured Job with such great calamities? Not only on account of his other iniquities, but at the same time for this assault he will pay no trifling penalty. Do you see how here the argument has proven even more than was proposed, showing that those who are insulted not only sustain no harm from these assaults, but that the whole mischief recoils on the head of those who contrive them? Wealth, freedom, life in our native land or the other things which I have mentioned do not constitute the virtue of man, but only right actions of the soul. When the harm is directed against these things, human virtue itself is in no wise harmed. What then? Suppose someone does harm the moral condition of the soul? Even then if a man suffers damage, the damage does not come from another but proceeds from within, and from the man himself. 'How so'? You say. When anyone is beaten by another, or deprived of his goods, or endures some grievous insult, or utters a blasphemous speech, he certainly sustains a damage thereby, and a very great one. Nevertheless it does not proceed from him who has inflicted the insult, but from his own littleness of soul. No man if he is infinitely wicked could attack anyone more wickedly or more bitterly than that revengeful demon that is implacably hostile to us, the devil. Yet this cruel demon did not have power to upset or overthrow Job, who lived before the Law, and before the time of grace, although he discharged so many and such bitter weapons against him from all quarters. Such is the force of nobility of soul! What shall I say of Paul? Did he not suffer so many distresses that even to make a list of them is no easy matter? He was put in prison, loaded with chains, dragged here and there, scourged by the Jews, stoned, lacerated on the back not only by thongs, but also by rods, he was immersed in the sea, oftentimes beset by robbers. He was involved in strife with his own countrymen, continually assailed both by foes and by acquaintance, subjected to countless intrigues, struggling with hunger and nakedness, undergoing other frequent and lasting mischances and afflictions. He was dying every day; but yet, although subjected to so many and such grievous sufferings, he not only uttered no blasphemous word, but rejoiced over these things and gloried in them. One time he said, 'I now rejoice in my sufferings for you, and fill up in my flesh what is lacking in the afflictions of Christ, for the sake of His body, which is the church' (Colossians 1:24); and then again 'not only *that*, but we also glory in tribulations, knowing that tribulation produces perseverance' (Romans 5:3). If then he rejoiced and gloried when suffering such great troubles what excuse will we have, and what defense will we make if we blaspheme when we do not undergo the smallest fraction of what Paul endured."

Athanasius of Alexandria encouraged⁷⁹ us all to be always thankful to the Lord. Job, David, Paul and the Hebrew captives returning from Babylon did this both during times of prosperity and during times of affliction. Athanasius did this himself during his persecution by

⁷⁹ Athanasius of Alexandria, Festal Letters, III, 5.

the Arians. Believers are strong when they are thankful because their thankfulness in the face of persecution testifies to the impotence of the persecutors.

“The faithful and true servants of the Lord, knowing that the Lord loves the thankful, never cease to praise Him, ever giving thanks to the Lord. Whether the time is one of ease or of affliction, they offer up praise to God with thanksgiving, not reckoning these things of time, but worshipping the Lord, the God of times. Thus of old time, Job, who possessed fortitude above all men, thought of these things when in prosperity; and when in adversity, he patiently endured, and when he suffered, gave thanks. The humble David, in the time of affliction sang praises and said, ‘I will bless the Lord at all times; His praise *shall* continually *be* in my mouth’ (Psalm 34:1). The blessed Paul, in all his Epistles, ceased not to thank God. In times of ease, he failed not, and in afflictions he gloried, ‘knowing that tribulation produces perseverance; and perseverance, character; and character, hope. Now hope does not disappoint’ (Romans 5:3-5). Let us, being followers of such men, pass no season without thanksgiving, but especially now, when the time is one of tribulation. The heretics excite this against us, but we will we praise the Lord, uttering the words of the saints: ‘All this has come upon us; but we have not forgotten You, nor have we dealt falsely with Your covenant. Our heart has not turned back, nor have our steps departed from Your way’ (Psalm 44:17-18). Like the Jews at that time⁸⁰, although suffering an assault from the tabernacles of the Edomites (Psalm 83:4-7), and oppressed by the enemies of Jerusalem, did not give up, but all the more sang praises to God. So we, my beloved brethren, though hindered from speaking the word of the Lord, will the more proclaim it, and being afflicted, we will sing Psalms (James 5:13), in that we are accounted worthy to be despised, and to labor anxiously for the truth. Moreover, being grievously vexed, we will give thanks. The blessed Apostle Paul, who gave thanks at all times, urges us in the same manner to draw near to God saying, ‘Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God’ (Philippians 4:6). Being desirous that we should always continue in this resolution, he says, ‘Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, in everything give thanks; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you’ (1 Thessalonians 5:16-18). He knew that believers are strong while employed in thanksgiving, and that rejoicing they pass over the walls of the enemy, like those saints who said, ‘For You will light my lamp; The Lord my God will enlighten my darkness. For by You I can run against a troop, by my God I can leap over a wall’ (Psalm 18:29-30). At all times let us stand firm, but especially now, although many afflictions overtake us, and many heretics are furious against us.”

John Chrysostom pointed out⁸¹ why Paul said that tribulation in our lives is a good thing. It’s not just that they prepare a reward for us at the Resurrection, but they also produce perseverance in this life; therefore, we glory in our tribulation as Paul says.

“What Paul said had an appearance of being strange and paradoxical. If a person who is struggling in famine, is in chains and torments, is insulted and abused, yet ought to glory, Paul next goes on to confirm this. What is more, he

⁸⁰ That is, during the time of David when many nations gathered against him.

⁸¹ John Chrysostom, Homilies on Romans, IX, v. 3.

says tribulations are worthy of being gloried in, not only for the sake of the things to come, but for the things present in themselves. For tribulations are in their own selves a good thing. How so? It is because they anoint us for patiently waiting. Therefore, after saying we glory in tribulations, Paul added the reason, in these words, ‘Knowing that tribulation produces perseverance’ (Romans 5:3). Notice the argumentative spirit of Paul, how he gives their argument an opposite turn. For since it was tribulations above all that made them give up the hope of things to come, and which cast them into despondency, he says that these are the very reasons for confidence, and for not being despondent about the things to come. For ‘tribulation produces perseverance’.”

Chrysostom also pointed out⁸² the usefulness of tribulation for people in general. It is like we are schoolboys who need a strict schoolmaster. Living an easy luxurious life opens us up to be swayed to sin; this is not possible for someone who is afflicted. To point this out in the city of Antioch, Chrysostom points out where all the evil comes from in Antioch.

“In the case of the soul, that which leads an easy, luxurious life, has its impulses quickly swayed to sin. Such a soul is next-door neighbor to folly, pleasure, vainglory, envy, plotting, and slander. Notice this great city of ours⁸³, what a size it is! Where do the evils come from? Is it not from those who are rich? Is it not from those who are in enjoyment? Who are the ones that ‘drag’ men ‘into court?’ Who are those that squander property? Is it those who are wretched and outcasts, or those who are inflated with themselves and in enjoyment? It is not possible that evil can happen from a soul that is afflicted (James 2:5-7). Paul knew the advantage of this; therefore he said, ‘We glory in tribulation, knowing that tribulation produces perseverance; and perseverance, character; and character, hope. Now hope does not disappoint’ (Romans 5:3-5). Then let us not sink in our afflictions, but in all things give thanks, that so we may get great gain, that we may be well-pleasing to God, who permits afflictions. A great good is affliction; and we learn this from our own children. For without afflictions a boy would learn nothing useful. But we more than they, need affliction. If with boys, when the passions are as yet quiet, chastisement benefits them, how much more us, especially possessed as we are by so many! We ought to have schoolmasters rather than them, since the faults of children cannot be great. Our schoolmaster is affliction! Let us then not draw it down willingly upon ourselves, but when it comes let us bear it bravely, being, as it is, always the cause of numberless good things. In doing so we may both obtain grace from God, and the good things that are laid up for them that love Him.”

The Struggles of Job

⁸² John Chrysostom, Commentary on Acts, XLII, v. 41.

⁸³ That is, Antioch.

During most of his life, Job was a very wealthy man and was also a prophet⁸⁴. Yet we don't remember him today, nearly 4000 years later, for that part of his life. Instead we remember him today for that part of his life where he had excruciating struggles⁸⁵.

Job lived in the land of Uz⁸⁶, was a descendant of Esau and he lived in what was later called Mt. Seir (Genesis 36:1-8), on the borders of Idumea and Arabia (Job 42:17) southeast of the Dead Sea, during the years that Israel was in Egypt. According to tradition⁸⁷, after the death of his father, Zerah, Job traveled to Egypt to marry Rahme⁸⁸, the daughter of Ephraim and granddaughter of Joseph, who was second in command to Pharaoh. It was Rahme who had inherited Joseph's "Robe of Beauty" (Genesis 37:3) that Jacob had made for him. After returning to his home country, Job became a prophet to his countrymen, and was later the governor of that region. Israel passed by Mt. Seir⁸⁹ during the Conquest of Canaan (Deuteronomy 2:4-6), where the descendants of Esau still lived.

Israel at this time consisted of just the extended family of Jacob (i.e. Israel), and they are all in Egypt. The discussion of Job with his friends shows that the knowledge of God at this time was rather widespread, both to the North and South.

Job's ordeals began with the Lord pointing out to Satan that Job was unique on the earth, "a blameless and upright man, fearing God and turning away from evil" (Job 1:8). In his day, Job was unsurpassed in righteousness. Job even offered prayers and offerings for his ten children, consecrating them just in case they had sinned in their heart (Job 1:6). Satan felt that if Job were poor and destitute, he would curse God to His face (Job 1:11).

Satan recognized Job's godliness, just as he recognized that of Christ (Matthew 4:1-10), but he doesn't believe anything that God says. Instead Satan felt that all Job's righteousness could be attributed to the Lord's physical blessings in his life. Satan didn't allow for the possibility that Job would actually *want* to love God. So, the Lord allowed Satan to take away all Job's possessions in sifting him. Similarly, Satan asked to sift Peter just prior to the Crucifixion. Peter offered to fight, and didn't realize that he was no match for Satan without the Holy Spirit.

⁸⁴ Consider Job's words, "For I know *that* my Redeemer lives, and He shall stand at last on the earth; And after my skin is destroyed, this *I know*, that in my flesh I shall see God" (Job 19:25-26). If there is no Scripture yet, and Moses won't be born for another 200 years or so, how did Job know this in order to say this so emphatically? Job seems to have had a very close relationship with God, and he seems to be one of the first of the Prophets.

⁸⁵ According to <https://oca.org/saints/lives/2017/05/06/101301-righteous-job-the-long-suffering>, Job's time of affliction lasted for 7 years.

⁸⁶ Uz was adjacent to Mt. Seir, the later home of the descendants of Esau. At one time, the people of Mt. Seir also occupied Uz

⁸⁷ Keil and Delitzsch, Commentary on the Old Testament, v. 4, Hendrickson Publishers, Peabody MA, 1996, p. 708.

⁸⁸ We may presume that he had met Rahme and Joseph (Genesis 50:23) in traveling to Egypt to buy food, as many people had to do (Genesis 42:5).

⁸⁹ In Arab tradition, all the territory around Mt. Seir is still referred to as the "Land of Job". Job's tomb is located near the town of Nawa. The growth of legends has probably increased the boundaries of the "Land of Job", but this enduring tradition attests to the extraordinarily charismatic character of Job himself. For details of this, see Keil and Delitzsch, Commentary on the Old Testament, v. 4, Hendrickson Publishers, Peabody MA, 1996, p. 708-715.

The way Job's sifting happened is first the Sabeans⁹⁰ attacked and took all Job's oxen and donkeys, killing Job's herdsmen in the process (Job 1:14-15). Second, fire fell from heaven and burned up all the sheep, killing the shepherds with the sheep (Job 1:16). Third, the Chaldean raiders came and took all Job's camels, killing the keepers who were defending. Lastly, while Job's children were having a feast at the house of the oldest son "on his day" (probably his birthday, Job 1:4) a great wind (perhaps a tornado) came from across the wilderness, collapsing the house on top of them and killing them all (Job 1:18-19). Today's insurance industry would refer to the second and fourth as "acts of God" even though their source is an act of Satan.

Job's response to all this was to prepare himself to worship the Lord saying, "Naked I came from my mother's womb and naked I shall return there. The Lord gave and the Lord has taken away. Blessed be the Name of the Lord" (Job 1:21). Meanwhile, the Lord pointed out to Satan that Job held fast to his integrity "even though you incited Me against him"⁹¹ to ruin him without cause" (Job 2:3). When the Lord pointed out Job's righteousness, Satan challenged the Lord's judgment (Job 2:3-5). Satan was allowed to afflict Job with every evil imaginable (Job 1:13-19, 2:7-13). Yet Job's words were "Blessed be the Name of the Lord" (Job 1:21).

All these were "messengers from Satan" (compare 2 Corinthians 12:7) and the next was a severe physical one: skin boils from the sole of his foot to the crown of his head (Job 2:7). Now destitute and unable to afford any medical attention, Job's only medical alternative was scrapping the pus off his skin with a piece of broken pottery. Completely disfigured by these diseases, Job's wife advised him: "Just say some word against the Lord, and die!" (Job 2:9 LXX). When three of his friends came to see him after hearing of his adversity, they didn't even recognize him at first because of his disfigurement. When they did, they openly wept (Job 2:11-12 LXX). Following this, they sat down with him for seven days without saying a word, for they saw that his affliction was dreadful and very great (Job 2:13 LXX). For Job, it was so bad he wished he had never been born (Job 3:1).

Following this week of silence the last messenger came: the inquisition. Job's three friends thought that Job had some secret sin that brought all this evil down on his own head. Eliphaz, king of the Temanites⁹², suggested that those who plow iniquity and sow trouble harvest it. When can he remember the pure in heart ever being utterly destroyed? (Job 4:7-8 LXX). Bilhad, sovereign of the Shuhites⁹³, suggested that perhaps Job's sons had sinned and had gotten their just reward. If Job were pure and true, God would listen to his supplication, and would restore to him the habitation of righteousness. After all, God will not reject a man of integrity nor will he receive any gift of the ungodly (Job 8:4, 6, 20 LXX). Job claimed he was innocent. Zophar, king of the Mineans⁹⁴, suggested that the Lord knows false men without investigating their circumstances. "If you have made your heart pure and lifted up your hand to Him (that is, in prayer); if iniquity is in

⁹⁰ This is the Kingdom of Sheba (the Sabeans), from which the Queen of Sheba came (1 Kings 10:4). Their territory approximates what is Yemen today. The LXX translates "Sabeans" as spoilers.

⁹¹ We note here that Satan still doesn't believe anything that God says, even though he had just been schooled in how correct the Lord's words were concerning Job.

⁹² Teman was the Southern portion of Idumaea.

⁹³ The Shuhites were descendants of Shuah, the son of Abraham by Keturah. His descendants were an Arab tribe west of the Euphrates.

⁹⁴ The Mineans were part of the Kingdom of Sheba (the Sabeans), from which the Queen of Sheba came (1 Kings 10:4). Their territory is in Yemen today.

your hand, put it far away and do not let unrighteousness lodge in your tents (Job 11:4, 11-14 LXX). The effect of all this on Job was that “the tents of the destroyers prosper while the just and blameless man is a joke (Job 12:4, 6).

This last messenger from Satan was perhaps the cruelest and the most difficult to deal with. After all, there was ample evidence all around Job that it was true! Chrysostom commented⁹⁵ that “the reproaches of Job’s friends appeared worse than the worms and the sores. There is nothing more intolerable to those in affliction than a word capable of stinging the soul”. This is exactly what the “messengers of Satan” seek to convince us of also: that God is not faithful, that He doesn’t care about us and that we should only trust in what we can see.

Job’s Persecution Was His Glory

Paul reminds us that the usefulness of our “thorns in the flesh” or “messengers of Satan” are that we don’t get exalted above measure (2 Corinthians 12:7). After all, we are to bear our crosses as our Lord bore His (Mark 8:34-37), and as He humbled Himself to death on the Cross, so should we. The Lord told Paul, and He tells us, “My grace is sufficient for you for My strength is made perfect in weakness” (2 Corinthians 12:9). Going through all he went through, it’s hard to imagine the Lord’s grace being sufficient for Job; but it was. Paul also said, “God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will also make the way of escape, that you may be able to bear it” (1 Corinthians 10:13).

The Lord saw His Cross, which itself was a messenger of Satan, as His Glory (John 12:23). Job wasn’t aware of what was going on in heaven between the Lord and Satan, but eventually He realized that his ordeal was for his glory also. As a result, Job was rewarded both in this life and in the age to come (Job 42:10-17, James 5:11). Instigating and organizing Job’s crosses and our crosses is Satan, just as he organized Jesus’ Cross (1 Corinthians 2:7-8). Job grew spiritually because of all the evil that he had to bear. Obviously Jesus’ and Job’s Crosses did them no permanent harm.

In the life of Job, there was a larger event that was taking place: the building of Job’s faith, and the proving to Satan that he is impotent in overthrowing the things God has established. The same is true in our lives.

Job was a forerunner for Christ regarding suffering and patience (James 5:10-11). He grew spiritually because of all the evil (the Cross) that he had to bear, and he was rewarded for his efforts both in this life and in the age to come (Job 42:1-17).

The reproaches that Job received from the Lord (Job 38:1-23) had to do with his limited understanding of the Godhead that had existed prior to Creation and that had created the world. The Lord never questioned Job’s righteousness, and He said that what Job had spoken was right, and that his friends had not done so (Job 42:7-8). But Job still had to learn more about the majesty of God, as we all do. When Christ came as the ultimate intercessor, His Divinity was veiled by His flesh, and people didn’t have the weakness in understanding God that Job had.

⁹⁵ John Chrysostom, Homilies on 2 Corinthians, XII, 3.

Speaking from the Lord's perspective, Paul said to give thanks for all things, not just those that we consider blessings. Sometimes, such as during the life of Job, there were things going on that Job had no knowledge of. The Lord had pointed out to Satan Job's righteousness but Satan had challenged the Lord's judgment (Job 1:8-11, 2:3-5). Satan was allowed to afflict Job with every evil imaginable such that Job was destitute and in great pain (Job 1:13-19, 2:7-13). Yet Job's words were "Blessed be the Name of the Lord" (Job 1:21).

Chrysostom encourages⁹⁶ us to give thanks even for hell itself, which can be seen as a bridle on our heart.

"Surely it is a thing beneficial to those who listen to it, when the dread of hell is laid like a bridle on our hearts. Let us therefore give thanks not only for blessings which we see, but also for those which we don't see and for those which we receive against our will. For many are the blessings He bestows upon us without our desire, without our knowledge".

In this regard, we need to remember how the story of Job ended. Job benefited greatly from his affliction both in this world and in the age to come (Job 42:10-17, James 5:10:11).

Chrysostom continued to encourage⁹⁷ us to give thanks for all the misfortunes that afflict us. An increase in thanksgiving is the antidote to our sifting by the Evil One.

"Whenever poverty, sickness or disasters affect us 'then let us increase our thanksgiving; thanksgiving, I mean, not in words, but in deeds and in works, in mind and in heart'. Chrysostom reminds us of the words of our Lord and of the Prophet Isaiah, 'What man is there among you who, if his son asks for bread, will give him a stone? If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father, who is in heaven, give good gifts to those who ask Him' (Matthew 7:9, 11). 'Can a woman forget her nursing child and have no compassion on the son of her womb? Even these may forget you but I will not forget you'" (Isaiah 49:15).

Chrysostom also pointed out⁹⁸ that it is possible to give thanks only from fear, which is not a great thing; it is also possible to give thanks even when in sorrow, which is a great thing. In this regard, he quoted Job, 'The Lord gave; the Lord has taken away' (Job 1:21). Not only has the Lord given, but He has also made us strong enough to receive.

"Consider an example, 'If some low person were to become king, he has it in his power to give a governorship to whomever he will. This is the extent of his power, to give the dignity; he cannot make the person fit for the office, and oftentimes the honor makes one so preferred even ridiculous. If, however, he has both conferred on someone the dignity and also made him fit for the honor and equal to the administration, then indeed the thing is an honor. Christ has not only given us the honor, but has also made us strong enough to receive it'"

⁹⁶ John Chrysostom, Homilies on Ephesians, XIX, v. 18.

⁹⁷ John Chrysostom, Homilies on Ephesians, XIX, vv. 18-21.

⁹⁸ John Chrysostom, Homilies on Colossians, II, v. 12.

John Chrysostom stated⁹⁹, “If you give thanks when you are in comfort and in affluence, in success and in prosperity, there is nothing great, nothing wonderful in that. Compare this to a man giving thanks when he is in afflictions, in anguish, in discouragement”. As an example, one might recall Paul and Silas, broken and bleeding and sitting in a Philippian jail, but praying and singing hymns to God – at midnight (Acts 16:23-25).

Gregory the Theologian stated¹⁰⁰ that Job’s entire ordeal was for the revealing of his righteousness. This was also true of Christ’s ordeal at the Cross.

“What then of Him who answered Job out of the whirlwind and cloud, Who is slow to chastise and swift to help, Who does not allow the rod of the wicked to come into the lot of the righteous, lest the righteous should learn iniquity? At the end of the contests He declares the victory of the athlete in a splendid proclamation and lays bare the secret of his calamities. ‘Do you think that I have dealt with you for any other purpose than the revealing of your righteousness?’ This is the balm for his wounds; this is the crown of the contest; this is the reward for his patience. Perhaps his subsequent prosperity was small, great as it may seem to some, and ordained for the sake of small minds, even though he received again twice as much as he had lost”.

Ezekiel referred to Job as a model of intercession for his people, along with Noah and Daniel. This is a result of Job’s righteousness, where the Lord directed Job to intercede in prayer for his inquisitors and offer up sacrifices for them (Job 42:7-8). Similarly, Christ does the same for us (Hebrews 7:24-28). Ezekiel wrote:

“The word of the Lord came to me, saying, Son of man, if a land shall sin against me by committing a trespass, then will I stretch out my hand upon it, and will break its staff of bread, and will send famine on it, and cut off from it man and beast. Though these three men should be in the midst of it, Noah, Daniel, and Job, they *alone* should be delivered by their righteousness” (Ezekiel 14:13-14 LXX).

Paul stated, “For the Word of the Cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved, it is the Power of God” (1 Corinthians 1:18). The Cross is Wisdom, as Paul said: “We speak the Wisdom of God in a mystery, the hidden wisdom which God ordained before the ages for our glory.” This wisdom “none of the rulers of this age knew; for had they known, they would not have crucified the Lord of Glory” (1 Corinthians 2:7-8).

As Jesus went to His Cross, His disciples tried to prevent Him. When Peter cut off the ear of Malchus, the servant of the high priest, Jesus rebuked him. “Put your sword into the sheath. Shall I not drink the cup which My Father has given Me?” (John 18:11) “Do you think that I cannot now pray to My Father, and He will provide Me with more than twelve legions of angels?” (Matthew 26:53) A year earlier as Jesus spoke of His Cross, Peter said, “Far be it from You, Lord; this shall not happen to You!” But He turned and said to Peter, “Get behind Me, Satan! You are an offense to Me, for you are not mindful of the things of God, but the things of men” (Matthew 16:22-23).

⁹⁹ John Chrysostom, Homilies on Ephesians, XIX.

¹⁰⁰ Gregory Nazianzen, Oration On the Great Athanasius, XXI, 18.

Commentary by Various Church Fathers on Job

John Chrysostom noted¹⁰¹ what occurred with the Patriarch Job: the reason that we count him blessed. It was his singular lack of covetousness! All his wealth was gone in a day, yet he had no sense of covetousness over losing it! Satan tried to use the loss of wealth as a lever to get Job to curse God, but he found out that Job did not serve God for the wealth. The same is true with us; God may keep carnal things away from us until we begin to set a higher value on spiritual things.

“Tell me when do we account Job blessed? When he had so many camels, flocks and herds, or when he uttered that saying: ‘The Lord gave, the Lord has taken away?’ (Job 1:21 LXX) Therefore the demons also cause us losses, not that they may take away our goods only, for they know that is nothing, but that through them they may compel us to utter some blasphemy. So in the case of the blessed Job too, Satan did not strive after this only, to make Job poor, but also to make him a blasphemer. When he had stripped him of everything, observe what he says to him through his wife, ‘How long will you hold out? Say some word against the Lord, and die’ (Job 2:9 LXX). The accursed one had stripped him of everything. But this is not what Satan was striving for; for he had not yet accomplished his goal. He was striving to deprive Job of God’s help: for this cause he deprived Job of his goods also. If Satan didn’t accomplish this, Job not only has not been injured at all, but has even been benefited. You see that even that wicked demon knows how great is the loss in this matter?”

“We see him plotting the treachery through Job’s wife. Notice this, husbands, as many as have wives that are fond of money, and compel you to blaspheme God. Remember Job! But let us see Job’s great moderation, how he silenced her. ‘You have spoken like one of the foolish women. If we have received good things of the hand of the Lord, shall we not endure evil things?’ (Job 2:10 LXX) Truly ‘evil company corrupts good habits’ (1 Corinthians 15:33), at all times, but particularly in calamities: then they who give evil advice have strength. If the soul is of itself prone to impatience, how much more, when there is also an adviser. A wife can be a great good, and also a great evil. Because a wife is a great good, observe from what point Satan wishes to break through the strong wall. The depriving Job of his property did not break him; the loss has produced no great effect. Therefore Satan said, ‘If You touch his bone and his flesh, he will surely curse You to Your face!’ (Job 2:5 LXX) You see where he was aspiring. If then we bear losses thankfully, we shall recover even these things; and if we should not recover them, our reward will be greater. When Job had wrestled nobly, then God restored to him these things also. When He had shown the devil, that it is not for these things that Job serves Him, then He restored them also to him.”

“When God sees that we are not riveted to things of this life, then He gives them to us. When He sees that we set a higher value on spiritual things, then He also bestows on us carnal things. But not first, lest we should break away from spiritual things: and to spare us He does not give carnal things, to keep us away from them, even against our will.”

¹⁰¹ John Chrysostom, Homilies on Hebrews, XX, 8-9.

Chrysostom also noted¹⁰² that God will protect the household that is generous with their possessions, just like he did with the Patriarch Job. It is not possible that that a house established by almsgiving should suffer any calamity and Job was a model for that kind of life. Satan complained to God that He had hedged Job in and that Satan didn't dare attack Job. When God did allow Satan to persecute Job, the result was that Job's substance was doubled, his reward increased, his righteousness enlarged, his crown was splendid, his prize glorious.

"If you do not deserve wealth, nor seek to increase your present possessions, your burden will be light. To get riches is much more laborious than to take care of them. If therefore you cut off this one thing, accumulating, and supply the needy out of your substance, God will hold over you His protecting hand. If we say this from a real desire to preserve our children, and are not, under this pretense, possessed with covetousness, He who searches the heart knows how to secure their riches, even He who commanded you to bring up children."

"It is not possible that a house established by almsgiving should suffer any calamity. If it should be unfortunate for a time, in the end it will prosper. This will be more than spear and shield to the entire household. Listen to what the devil said concerning Job: 'Have not you made a hedge about him and about his house, and about all that he has on every side?' (Job 1:10). Why? Listen to Job himself saying, 'I *was* eyes to the blind, and I *was* feet to the lame. I *was* a father to the poor, and I searched out the case *that* I did not know. I broke the fangs of the wicked, and plucked the victim from his teeth' (Job 29:14-17). He who does not turn away from the calamities of others, will not suffer even in his own misfortunes, because he has learned to sympathize; so he who will not bear the grief of sympathy, will learn all sorrow in his own person. In the case of a bodily disease, when the foot is hurt, if the hand does not sympathize by cleaning the wound, washing away the discharge, and applying a bandage, it will suffer the same disease of its own. So she who will not serve another when she is not herself afflicted, will have to bear sufferings of her own. He that will not relieve others will be a sufferer himself. 'You have hedged him in', said Satan, 'within and without', and I dare not attack him! But Job suffered afflictions, you say. True. But those afflictions were the occasion of great good. His substance was doubled, his reward increased, his righteousness enlarged, his crown was splendid, his prize glorious. Both his spiritual and temporal blessings were increased. He lost his children, but he received, not these restored, but others in their place, and the ones he lost, were safely preserved for the Resurrection. Had his children just been restored, the number would have been diminished; but now having been given others in their place, he will present them also at the Resurrection. All these things happened to him, because of his openhandedness in almsgiving. Let us then do likewise, that we may obtain the same rewards by the grace and loving kindness of our Lord Jesus Christ."

Chrysostom further noted¹⁰³ the life of Job, where Job was justified not because he suffered, but because he endured his suffering humbly and thankfully. Job sets the standard for us; anyone who suffers less than Job and complains against God is condemned by Job's testimony.

¹⁰² John Chrysostom, Homilies on 2 Timothy, VII, Moral.

¹⁰³ John Chrysostom, Homilies on 2 Timothy, IX, Moral.

“How can we suffer for Christ, you ask? If someone accuses you falsely, not on account of Christ, yet if you bear it patiently, if you give thanks, if you pray for him, all this you do for Christ. But if you curse him, if you utter discontent, if you attempt to revenge it, though you aren’t able, it is not for Christ’s sake. You will suffer loss, and will be deprived of your reward on account of your intention. We have the choice with our own minds. For instance, great were the sufferings of Job, yet he suffered with thankfulness; and he was justified, not because he suffered, but because in suffering he endured it thankfully. No one ever suffered like Job. If another under lighter sufferings curses the whole world, and complains against God, he is condemned and sentenced, not because he suffered, but because he blasphemed. He didn’t blaspheme from any necessity; since if necessity were the cause, Job too must have blasphemed. Since Job, who suffered more severely than anyone, did no such thing, blasphemy is not caused by necessity, but from the man’s weakness of purpose. We need therefore strength of soul, and nothing will then appear distressful; but if our soul is weak, we find a grievance in everything.”

Just as Christ’s Cross was instigated and organized by Satan, so are ours. This was vividly documented regarding the Patriarch Job. The Lord described Job as the epitome of a righteous man (Job 1:8, 2:3). Yet Satan challenged the Lord to allow him (Satan) to introduce hardship to Job’s life (Job 1:9-19, 2:4-9) to prove Job wasn’t as good as the Lord said he was. Satan did the same with the Apostle Peter, demanding to sift him like wheat (Luke 22:31), after which Peter denied the Lord three times (Luke 22:34, 54-62), before he repented (Luke 22:32, 24:34, Mark 16:7). Note that the Lord prayed for Peter that his faith should not fail and when he returned, that he should strengthen his brethren (Luke 22:32). To this day, the accuser of our brethren (Satan) continues to accuse us before God day and night (Revelation 12:10) and to demand to sift us like wheat, thus creating our crosses as he created Christ’s.

Clement of Alexandria stated¹⁰⁴ that Job attained a state of true spirituality and knowledge as a result of his ordeal:

“The soul, which has chosen the best life, exchanges earth for heaven. He attains the life that is from God and righteousness. With reason therefore, Job, who had attained to knowledge, said, ‘Now I know that You can do all things; and nothing is impossible to You. Who tells me of what I know not, great and wonderful things with which I was unacquainted? I felt myself vile, considering myself to be earth and ashes’ (Job 30:19). He who, being in a state of ignorance, is sinful, ‘is earth and ashes’; while he who is in a state of knowledge, being assimilated as far as possible to God, is already spiritual, and so elect”.

John Chrysostom stated¹⁰⁵ that the ability to perceive ourselves through God’s eyes is no small part of true wisdom, and truly knows ourselves:

“This is no small part of true wisdom, to be able to perceive what we really deserve. He best knows himself, who accounts himself to be nothing. Thus we see that both David and Abraham, when they were come up to the highest pitch of virtue, then best fulfilled this; and would call themselves, the one, ‘earth and ashes’

¹⁰⁴ Clement of Alexandria, *Stromata*, IV, 26.

¹⁰⁵ John Chrysostom, *Homilies on Matthew*, XXV, 5.

(Genesis 18:27), the other, ‘a worm’ (Psalm 2:7); all the saints too, like these, acknowledge their own wretchedness. So that he surely who is lifted up in boasting, is the very person to be most ignorant of himself. Therefore in our common practice we tend to say of the proud, ‘he doesn’t know himself’, ‘he is ignorant of himself’.

In contrast to the humility and righteousness of Job, Chrysostom stated¹⁰⁶ that arrogance truly abases us. Similarly the Lord said, “For whoever exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted” (Luke 14:11, 18:14, Job 22:29):

“Most utterly does arrogance abase! This abased Pharaoh. He said, ‘I don’t know the Lord’ (Exodus 5:2), and he became inferior to flies, frogs and locusts; and after that with his arms and horses he was drowned in the sea. In direct opposition to him, Abraham said, ‘I am dust and ashes’ (Genesis 18:27), and prevailed over countless barbarians. Having fallen into the midst of the Egyptians, he returned, bearing a trophy more glorious than Pharaoh (Genesis 12:16-20), and, clinging to this virtue, grew from there to be a ‘friend of God’ (2 Chronicles 20:7, James 2:23). Therefore he is celebrated everywhere, therefore he is crowned and proclaimed; but Pharaoh is both earth and ashes, and if there is anything else more vile than these. For nothing does God so abhor as arrogance”.

Job’s Reward for His Righteousness

It was just after Job finished praying for his friends, those who had just finished their inquisition against him, that Job was rewarded for his faithfulness. This models Christ, who was also rewarded for His ordeal on the Cross and in the tomb (Philippians 2:5-11). Similarly God promised to the nation of Israel rewards after they went through the affliction of the Exile (Isaiah 61:7). Job’s losses were restored to twice what he had before in this life. All his brothers and sisters, who had distanced themselves from him during his ordeal, now came and feasted with him, rejoicing in his new-found prosperity (Job 42:10-11). Job did not reject them, even though they had considered him to be forsaken of God during his ordeal. Understanding his situation no longer required faith, so it was easy for them to rejoice with him.

In describing Job’s rewards, four different animals are mentioned, where large numbers of these were a measure of wealth. Sheep were used for food and clothing (milk, cheese, wool), while oxen were used as “tractors” for plowing the fields and treading the grain at harvest. Female donkeys were used as “pickup trucks” for the transport of people and supplies to the fields, while camels were used as “large trucks” to carry heavy loads to the large cities and to the seaports.

Part of Job’s rewards was an additional ten children, replacing the ones lost at the beginning of his suffering. These children were born to Job’s second wife, an Arabian woman (Job 42:17 LXX), where we can presume that Job’s first wife, Rahme, died of old age, since Job lived to be 240 years old. Only one of his seven sons is mentioned, but his three daughters are mentioned by name as being outstanding. “And there were not found in comparison with the daughters of Job, fairer *women* than they in all the world; and their father gave them an inheritance among their brethren” (Job 42:15 LXX).

¹⁰⁶ John Chrysostom, Homilies on Matthew, LXV, 6.

Job's daughters' names are Jemimah (from Arabic *jemame*, a dove), Keziah (from Hebrew cassia, meaning cinnamon) and Keren-Happuch (from Hebrew *Qeren Happuk* meaning a horn of antimony, used for makeup). Their names probably imply something about their beauty. Jemimah may have had innocent and attractive eyes like a dove. Keziah may have carried an appealing sense of smell like cinnamon. And Keren-Happuch may have had her beauty made more attractive by the use of makeup of some kind.

For Job to give them an inheritance along with their brothers indicates something outstanding about his daughters. It was customary for only a man's sons to have a share in his inheritance, not his daughters, since a daughter shared in her husband's inheritance. If a man had no sons, then his daughters might obtain his inheritance, but even this was not automatic, as was illustrated by the daughters of Zelophehad (Numbers 27:1-11). Because Job's sons did not object to the distribution of part of his inheritance to their sisters, one can surmise that the sons were not greedy and that there was considerable harmony within Job's family.

Job's blessing, where he saw his children's children to four generations, is another analogy to Christ, where Christ's "seed" is the Church. Isaiah spoke of how Christ would be despised (Isaiah 53:3), would be wounded for us (Isaiah 53:5) and would be slaughtered like a lamb (Isaiah 53:7). Following this, Isaiah said,

"He made His soul an offering for sin, after it pleased the Lord to bruise Him; He put *Him* to grief. When You make His soul an offering for sin, He shall see *His* seed, He shall prolong *His* days, and the pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in His hand" (Isaiah 53:10).

The Struggles of Paul

Paul's struggles were different from Job's struggles, but they lasted his entire Christian life, from the time of his conversion on the Road to Damascus (in c. 34 AD) to his beheading at the hands of the Emperor Nero (in c. 67 AD). Paul described an overview of his struggles as follows:

"Are they Hebrews? So *am* I. Are they Israelites? So *am* I. Are they the seed of Abraham? So *am* I. Are they ministers of Christ? -- I speak as a fool -- I *am* more: in labors more abundant, in stripes above measure, in prisons more frequently, in deaths often. From the Jews five times I received forty *stripes* minus one. Three times I was beaten with rods; once I was stoned; three times I was shipwrecked; a night and a day I have been in the deep; *in* journeys often, *in* perils of waters, *in* perils of robbers, *in* perils of *my own* countrymen, *in* perils of the Gentiles, *in* perils in the city, *in* perils in the wilderness, *in* perils in the sea, *in* perils among false brethren; in weariness and toil, in sleeplessness often, in hunger and thirst, in fasting often, in cold and nakedness -- besides the other things, what comes upon me daily: my deep concern for all the churches. Who is weak, and I am not weak? Who is made to stumble, and I do not burn with indignation? If I must boast, I will boast in the things which concern my infirmity. The God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who is blessed forever, knows that I am not lying. In Damascus the governor, under Aretas the king, was guarding the city of the Damascenes with a garrison, desiring to arrest me; but I was let down in a basket

through a window in the wall, and escaped from his hands” (1 Corinthians 11:22-33).

Paul’s Dealing with the Jewish Zealots

Paul wrote all his letters to the Corinthians in c. 55 AD. Following the above account, Paul was harassed by the legions of Satan in additional ways. The following covers the events following his 3rd Missionary Journey, where he spent about 4 years in some form of lock-up, where the Jewish Zealots were constantly trying – unsuccessfully -- to murder him. Paul’s opponent during this time was the same as Job’s opponent, namely Satan and his legions of demons. Paul opposed these demons the same way that Job did; that is, by a steady walk with God and a trust in God to deliver him when He saw fit. To understand Paul’s struggles better, we need to understand the political climate in Jerusalem.

There was a small group of loosely organized fanatics who hated Roman rule, and who were later called the Zealot Political Party. The Apostle Simon the Zealot may have been associated with this group before he was called as an Apostle. Their basic philosophy was “Better dead than Roman”, and they used any means possible to achieve their goals. As Jews, circumcision represented their national identity, so the Zealots insisted on maintaining this identity. Because Paul – and James, the Bishop of Jerusalem – stated that circumcision was not necessary, both Paul and James became enemies of the Zealots. The Zealots weren’t particularly righteous; only when it suited them. During the Siege of Jerusalem by the Romans, the Zealots ruled Jerusalem and murdered anyone who opposed them¹⁰⁷. They even piled the bodies of the dead inside the Temple – quite contrary to the Mosaic Law! Understanding the aims of the Zealots makes it much clearer why Paul struggled against the Judaizers everywhere he went. To see how this played out in Paul’s life, we need to do a brief survey of Paul’s interaction with the Jewish Zealots in Luke’s account (Acts 21 to 28).

After Paul finished his 3rd Missionary Journey and before he arrived in Jerusalem, the disciples at Tyre warned Paul not to go up to Jerusalem (Acts 21:4). A few days later, Paul stayed with Philip the Evangelist at Caesarea; while there, the Prophet Agabus came from Jerusalem (Acts 21:10-11) and also warned Paul that the Jews at Jerusalem will bind him and deliver him over to the Gentiles (like they did to Christ). At this time, Paul had been keeping a vow (Acts 18:18) according to the Mosaic Law; as the final part of the vow, he was to be purified in Jerusalem with some animal sacrifices (Acts 21:21-26). When the seven days of Paul’s purification were almost ended, the Jewish Zealots from Asia – Paul’s primary enemies on all his missionary journeys – created a riot with the intent to kill Paul (Acts 21:27-31). Paul was rescued only by the Chiliarch¹⁰⁸ in Jerusalem who initially thought Paul was some Egyptian assassin that he was hunting for (Acts 21:32-38) due to the violent reaction created by the Zealots.

To further define the situation for the benefit of the Chiliarch, Paul asked him for permission to speak to the mob from the steps in front of the Temple (Acts 21:39-22:21). The

¹⁰⁷ For an insight into what the Zealots were like during the siege of Jerusalem, see Josephus, Wars of the Jews, IV, vi, 3.

¹⁰⁸ A Chiliarch was a commander of 1000 soldiers; that is, he had 10 Centurions, each with their squads of 100 soldiers, under his command.

Chiliarch gave Paul permission and Paul proceeded to speak to them in Hebrew – which the Chiliarch probably didn't understand. When the mob heard Paul speaking in Hebrew, they all suddenly kept very quiet, which astonished the Chiliarch, since they had just been rioting! Paul spoke of his conversion on the Road to Damascus and his life prior to that as a persecutor of Christians. No one had any problem with that, and they all kept silent. But when Paul stated that God in a vision had sent him to the Gentiles, the riot started all over again, and he had to be rescued by the Chiliarch again (Acts 22:22-24). The Chiliarch bound Paul and intended to examine him under scourging – literally beating the truth out of him – until he found out that Paul was a Roman citizen. It was illegal under Roman law for the Chiliarch to even have bound Paul, and severe penalties were in place for anyone who abused the rights of Roman citizens. So, the Chiliarch ordered the chief priests and the entire Sanhedrin to be present the next day and for Paul to address them (Acts 22:24-30).

The setting here is probably outdoors, but close to the barracks where Paul was being held. This did not occur on an elevated position like Paul's previous address, but on ground level, where there were a number of people around Paul. Paul began his address with one sentence before he was interrupted. "Men *and* brethren, I have lived in all good conscience before God until this day" (Acts 23:1). At this, the high priest Ananias publicly commanded (probably) one of the Zealots to strike Paul on the mouth. Everything now is probably being spoken in Greek, since the Chiliarch understood what was happening. Paul replied to the high priest (without knowing who he was), "God will strike you, *you* whitewashed wall! For you sit to judge me according to the Law, and do you command me to be struck contrary to the Law?" (Acts 23:3). From this it was obvious to Paul that nothing would happen here to correspond to the Mosaic Law. This was an assembly that was completely lawless and apostate.

To further illustrate how lawless the Jewish leaders were, Paul had noticed that some present were Pharisees and others were Sadducees, where the Pharisees believe in the resurrection of the dead and the Sadducees don't. So Paul cried out in the council, "Men *and* brethren, I am a Pharisee, the son of a Pharisee; concerning the hope and resurrection of the dead I am being judged!" (Acts 23:6) The Pharisees immediately spoke up, "We find no evil in this man; but if a spirit or an angel has spoken to him, let us not fight against God" (Acts 23:9). This created a great dissension; the Chiliarch, "fearing lest Paul might be pulled to pieces by them, commanded the soldiers to go down and take him by force from among them, and bring *him* into the barracks" (Acts 23:10). Thus, Paul created a riot between the Pharisees and the Sadducees.

"When it was day, some of the Jewish Zealots banded together and bound themselves under an oath, saying that they would neither eat nor drink till they had killed Paul. Now there were more than forty who had formed this conspiracy. They came to the chief priests and elders, and said, 'We have bound ourselves under a great oath that we will eat nothing until we have killed Paul. Now you, therefore, together with the council, suggest to the commander that he be brought down to you tomorrow, as though you were going to make further inquiries concerning him; but we are ready to kill him before he comes near'" (Acts 23:12-15).

Paul's sister lived in Jerusalem, and her young son (probably a teenager) heard the forty men talking about their plot: who was going to do what and where. They probably had several backup plans in case the first one didn't unfold right. The young man went to the barracks and

told Paul; Paul in turn asked one of the centurions to take the young man to the Chiliarch “for he has something to tell him” (Acts 23:17). Paul didn’t want any of the Roman soldiers to know the details in case the conspiracy went beyond just the Jewish Zealots. The young man told the Chiliarch privately what he had heard, and the Chiliarch told him to “tell no one that you have revealed these things to me” (Acts 23:22).

We see the intense plotting of the Zealots against Paul, and how they drew the chief priests along with their plots. This was not an isolated event, but a continuous mode of thinking. Three years later in c. 62 AD, they did the same thing to Bishop James and murdered him in front of the Temple. Eusebius the Church Historian stated¹⁰⁹ that the murder of Bishop James was the last straw! Right after that the Romans came and laid siege to Jerusalem. The persons who were really on trial here were the chief priests and the Zealots. It was the Lord Himself who was about to pass sentence¹¹⁰ on them!

As soon as the Chiliarch heard the testimony of Paul’s young nephew, he called two centurions to prepare:

- 200 soldiers
- 70 horsemen
- 200 spearmen
- Prepare to go to Caesarea at the 3rd hour of the night¹¹¹ (about 9 PM)
- Prepare a horse for Paul to ride on (since Paul was a Roman citizen)
- Bring Paul to Felix the Governor
- The Chiliarch wrote a letter to Felix explaining the urgency of the situation. In the letter, the Chiliarch mentioned that he commanded Paul’s accusers to bring their charges against Paul to Felix (Acts 23:23-30).

It may be surprising that the Chiliarch, Claudius Lysias, reacted so quickly. But the Roman authorities were accustomed to dealing with treachery from the Jewish Zealots. The emperors in Rome counted on the governors in frontier states to guard against insurrection and to deal with it quickly and harshly. From everything that the Chiliarch heard and saw, the Zealots were plotting their usual insurrection again.

Five days later Ananias the high priest came down with the elders and a hired orator *named* Tertullus to give evidence to the governor against Paul. Tertullus gave a very smooth presentation in buttering up Felix, thanking him for his good work in governing, and portraying Paul as an insurrectionist that they were trying to rid the world of according to their Law. And all the Jews present assented, maintaining that these things were so (Acts 24:1-9).

Then Paul was allowed to speak, and he painted a much different picture. He was in Jerusalem to worship and to bring alms, not to start an insurrection. He had only been there 12 days, hardly enough time to start an insurrection. On the other hand, those who started the riot weren’t even present. Paul summarized, “Concerning the resurrection of the dead I am being

¹⁰⁹ Eusebius of Caesarea, Church History, II, xxiii, 19.

¹¹⁰ For an insight into what the Zealots were like during the siege of Jerusalem, see Josephus, *Wars of the Jews*, IV, vi, 3.

¹¹¹ See for example <http://www.torahcalendar.com/HOUR.asp>.

judged by you this day” (Acts 24:10-21). Thus, Paul made this dispute not a political issue but a religious issue, which the Romans didn’t care about. Felix adjourned the proceedings, saying that he will make a decision when Lysias the Chiliarch comes down to Caesarea. Actually, Felix was hoping for a bribe from Paul to set him free; but Paul didn’t budge. Since no bribe came, Felix left Paul bound as a favor to the Jews when he was succeeded by Porcius Festus.

The Jews asked Festus if Paul could be brought to Jerusalem to be judged. Their idea was to ambush Paul along the road and overpower the Roman soldiers. About 6 years later, this same technique was used by the Jewish Zealots to massacre an entire Roman legion and start the 1st Jewish-Roman war, which resulted in the destruction of Jerusalem. Festus resisted the Jewish plan¹¹² and invited them to Caesarea to accuse Paul; but then in Caesarea, Festus asked Paul if he was willing to be judged by him in Jerusalem. Paul, having seen the treachery of the Zealots, and knowing that this would be a disaster, appealed to be judged by the emperor in Rome, which was a right of every Roman citizen. This began a long and harrowing trip to Rome, where Paul had already been in captivity for two years now.

Paul’s Journey to Rome

Before beginning the trip to Rome, Paul was examined by King Herod Agrippa¹¹³ and his wife Bernice in Caesarea. John Chrysostom pointed out¹¹⁴ what the results were of Paul’s two years of captivity in Judea. Every ruler in the area pronounced sentence against the Jews and they openly made a show and a parade of it. The evil design and plotting of the Jews was exposed for what it was. The whole thing was so dramatic that everyone wanted to listen to Paul. The result was that Festus and King Agrippa proclaimed Paul’s innocence before the whole city, which greatly embarrassed the Jews present. Chrysostom also noted¹¹⁵ how Paul turned from being the defendant to being the Teacher. He even exhorted King Agrippa to repent! Paul spoke both to the soldiers (the small) and to the rulers (the great). King Agrippa was not offended and was almost persuaded. Paul actually gloried in his chains! Chrysostom further noted¹¹⁶ the results of Paul’s two years in captivity in Judea: The Jews became the heralds of both their own wickedness and Paul’s virtue. Paul was carried off to Rome with more renown, free of all suspicion, than if he had gone there by himself.

Paul set off for Rome “when the Fast was already over” (Acts 27:9). Traveling with Paul were Aristarchus¹¹⁷ and Luke, both members of the original Seventy Apostles.

¹¹² Festus just couldn’t be as boldfaced in accepting a bribe as the Jewish leaders wanted him to be.

¹¹³ King Herod Agrippa II was the last of the Herod family to reign as king. He was the brother of Bernice, but they lived as husband and wife. Emperor Claudius had given him the right of superintending the Temple in Jerusalem and appointing the high priest. He spent large amounts of money beautifying Jerusalem, but his appointing and deposing of the high priests caused him to be disliked among the Jews. In 66 AD, the Jews expelled him and Bernice from Jerusalem; he responded by sending 2000 troops to support Vespasian, and himself accompanied Titus on some of his campaigns during the First Jewish-Roman War. He supplied some information to the historian Josephus for his history “Antiquities of the Jews”.

¹¹⁴ John Chrysostom, Commentary on Acts, LI, Recapitulation.

¹¹⁵ John Chrysostom, Commentary on Acts, LII, Recapitulation.

¹¹⁶ John Chrysostom, Commentary on Acts, LII, Recapitulation.

¹¹⁷ Aristarchus lived very much like John the Baptist, wearing a garment of animal skin, a leather belt and eating locusts and wild honey (Matthew 3:4, Mark 1:6). Thus Aristarchus was a very visible companion for Paul. See The Great Synaxaristes of the Orthodox Church, translated and published by Holy Apostles Convent,

Storms and bad weather in the Mediterranean are not understood well in other parts of the world. On the Mediterranean, there is a “sailing season” typically from April to October and there is a “no sail season” typically from December to February. During the summer the weather is generally pleasant, where it rarely rains and the seas are free from violent storms; during the winter the opposite is the case¹¹⁸. Paul’s Journey to Rome took place during the winter when violent storms can appear suddenly and unexpectedly. Figure 5 shows the route taken by the ships that Paul was on.

John Chrysostom pointed out¹¹⁹ that Aristarchus and Luke were present on the journey to Rome, and that the journey was very wearing on Paul because of his chains. God allowed the sailors to do their own thing, sailing in mid-winter, in order that the miracle of their survival would be greater.

“Because the harbor was not suitable on the Eastern side of Crete to spend the winter in, the majority advised to set sail from there in order to reach Phoenix, a harbor of Crete opening toward the southwest and northwest, *and winter there*. When the south wind blew softly, supposing that they had obtained *their* desire, putting out to sea, they sailed close by Crete. But not long after, a tempestuous head wind arose, called Euroclydon¹²⁰. So when the ship was caught, and could not head into the wind, we let *her* drive. And running under *the shelter of* an island called Clauda, we secured the skiff with difficulty. When they had taken it on board, they used cables to undergird the ship¹²¹; and fearing lest they should run aground on the Syrtis Sands¹²², they struck sail and so were driven. And because we were exceedingly tempest-tossed, the next *day* they lightened the ship. On the third *day* we threw the ship’s tackle overboard with our own hands. Now when neither sun nor stars appeared for many days, and no small tempest beat on *us*,

Buena Vista CO, 2005, April 14. The term “locusts” refers not to an insect, but to the bean of the “locust tree”, which was ground into flour. The “locust tree” is similar in nature to a carob tree. See http://www.sierrapotomac.org/W_Needham/BlackLocust_060515.htm.

¹¹⁸ For example, in December 2010, the 90,000-Ton cruise liner “Brilliance of the Seas”, was carrying over 2000 passengers and a crew of over 800, and experienced huge waves from a Mediterranean storm. Witnesses said that waves crashed over the 10th floor windows of the 12-deck ship. The ship listed violently and many people were injured as they were tossed around like rag dolls. By contrast, the wood-hulled ship that Paul was on carried 276 including crew and passengers (Acts 27:23) crowded onto a ship about 60 feet long. Most of these 276 people were probably oarsmen (usually slaves) who rowed from the hold of the ship; many ships had both a galley of rowers and a sail. All the cargo was kept above deck, some at the bow, and some at the stern.

¹¹⁹ John Chrysostom, Commentary on Acts, LIII, vv. 1-11.

¹²⁰ From <http://www.keyway.ca/htm2005/20050506.htm>, a Euroclydon, also known as a gregale (i.e. a “Greece gale”) is a strong wind system that blows down from Europe into [The Mediterranean Sea](#), mostly in autumn and winter.

¹²¹ Cables to undergird the ship were used to hold the ship together in very rough weather so that planks did not come off and cause the ship to sink.

¹²² The Syrtis Sands are on the North coast of Africa. “The Syrtis Sands were greatly feared by sailors because of their shifting sandbars and treacherous shallows. They had a horrible reputation as a sailors’ graveyard and saying the name alone struck terror in those who heard it. For more information, see <http://sarpimentel.wordpress.com/2011/09/05/the-syrtis-sands/> If the wind was blowing from the North or Northeast, it would blow them South onto the African coast. Having a compass on board, they wanted to head west to avoid crashing onto the African coast.

all hope that we would be saved was finally given up. But after long abstinence from food¹²³, then Paul stood in the midst of them and said, ‘Men, you should have listened to me, and not have sailed from Crete and incurred this disaster and loss. And now I urge you to take heart, for there will be no loss of life among you, but only of the ship. For there stood by me this night an angel of the God to whom I belong and whom I serve, saying, ‘Do not be afraid, Paul; you must be brought before Caesar; and indeed God has granted you all those who sail with you. Therefore take heart, men, for I believe God that it will be just as it was told me. However, we must run aground on a certain island’” (Acts 27:12-26).

John Chrysostom pointed out¹²⁴ that Paul continued his boldness in speaking to the ship’s crew. At first they didn’t listen; then when they were in really bad straits Paul emphasized that he was right on when he warned them earlier. Then he tells them exactly what was going to happen next, and they are receptive to him this time.

Figure 5
Map of Paul’s 4th Missionary Journey to Rome¹²⁵

¹²³ This two-week abstinence from food may not have been entirely voluntary due to mass seasickness and mass vomiting. If the ship was so tossed about that no one had any hope of being saved, everyone was likely so seasick that they couldn’t eat anything and keep it down even if they wanted to.

¹²⁴ John Chrysostom, *Commentary on Acts*, LIII, vv. 12-26.

¹²⁵ © Bible History Online <http://www.bible-history.com>. Other maps also available.



“Paul advised them to remain at Fair Haven on Crete (Acts 27:10), and he foretold the disaster that would come of it if they didn’t listen; but they, being in a hurry, and not liking the place, wished to winter at Phoenix¹²⁶. Note the providential ordering of the events: first, ‘When the south wind blew softly¹²⁷, supposing that they had obtained their desire’, they hoisted anchor, and came out of the harbor; then when the wind bore down upon them, they gave way to it driving them¹²⁸, and were with difficulty saved.”

“After so great a storm Paul does not speak insultingly to the crew, but as wishing that at any rate he might be believed for the future. He states what had taken place for a testimony to the truth of what was about to be said by him. He foretells two things; both that they must be cast upon an island, and that though the ship would be lost, those who were in it should be saved — which thing he spoke not of conjecture, but of prophecy — and that he ‘must be brought before Caesar’

¹²⁶ Phoenix was a sheltered harbor on the other side of Crete from where they were. In trying to get there, they were blown out to sea by the storm.

¹²⁷ A gentle wind out of the South would have kept them close to the Southern shore of Crete, where Phoenix was located. However, once they were out of port, the wind changed direction suddenly and the storm came up.

¹²⁸ That is, they let the wind drive them wherever it would to ride out the storm. This usually meant hoisting a smaller sail to maintain better control and to avoid having the main sail torn to shreds.

(Acts 27:24). What he says, ‘God has given you all’, is not spoken boastfully, but in the wish to win those who were sailing in the ship. Paul spoke thus not that they might feel themselves bound to him, but that they might believe what he was saying. This is as much as to say that they are worthy indeed of death, since they would not listen to Paul; however, this is done out of favor to Paul.”

“Now when the fourteenth night had come, as we were driven up and down in the Adriatic Sea, about midnight the sailors sensed that they were drawing near some land. And they took soundings and found *it* to be twenty fathoms; and when they had gone a little farther, they took soundings again and found *it* to be fifteen fathoms. Then, fearing lest we should run aground on the rocks, they dropped four anchors from the stern, and prayed for day to come. And as the sailors were seeking to escape from the ship, when they had let down the skiff into the sea, under pretense of putting out anchors from the prow, Paul said to the centurion and the soldiers, ‘Unless these men stay in the ship, you cannot be saved’. Then the soldiers cut away the ropes of the skiff and let it fall off. And as day was about to dawn, Paul implored *them* all to take food, saying, ‘Today is the fourteenth day you have waited and continued without food, and eaten nothing. Therefore I urge you to take nourishment, for this is for your survival, since not a hair will fall from the head of any of you’. And when he had said these things, he took bread and gave thanks to God in the presence of them all; and when he had broken *it* he began to eat. Then they were all encouraged, and also took food themselves. And in all we were 276 persons on the ship. So when they had eaten enough, they lightened the ship and threw out the wheat¹²⁹ into the sea. When it was day, they did not recognize the land; but they observed a bay with a beach, onto which they planned to run the ship if possible. And they let go the anchors and left *them* in the sea, meanwhile loosening the rudder ropes; and they hoisted the mainsail to the wind and made for shore. But striking a place where two seas met, they ran the ship aground; and the prow stuck fast and remained immovable, but the stern was being broken up by the violence of the waves. And the soldiers’ plan was to kill the prisoners, lest any of them should swim away and escape. But the centurion, wanting to save Paul, kept them from *their* purpose, and commanded that those who could swim should jump *overboard* first and get to land, and the rest, some on boards and some on *parts* of the ship. And so it was that they all escaped safely to land” (Acts 27:27-44).

John Chrysostom noted¹³⁰ that while the centurion believed Paul, the sailors did not and tried to escape in the lifeboat. Paul spoke up to the centurion since the sailors were needed in order to maneuver the ship onto the beachhead. The rest of the crew was sufficiently impressed with what Paul said that they began eating when he did.

“The sailors were about to escape in the lifeboat, having no faith in what Paul said. But the centurion did believe Paul, for Paul said, if these flee, ‘you cannot be saved’. Paul said this, not for his own benefit, but that he might restrain them, and the prophecy might not fall to the ground. Notice how as in a church they are instructed by the calmness of Paul’s behavior, and how he saved them out of the midst of the dangers. It is of providential ordering that Paul is disbelieved, that after proof of the facts, he might be believed, which accordingly was the case. Paul exhorted them again to take some food, and they do as he asks them; he takes some

¹²⁹ This ship had come from Alexandria heading for Rome, where Egypt is the breadbasket for Rome. At various times, Rome became desperate for wheat shipments from Egypt and had no other ready source.

¹³⁰ John Chrysostom, Commentary on Acts, LIII, vv. 27-33.

first, to persuade them not by word, but also by act, that the storm did them no harm, but rather was a benefit to their souls.”

John Chrysostom wondered¹³¹ how the crew of the ship could go without food for 14 days; he concluded that they were so consumed by fear of dying that they couldn’t eat. Seasickness may have been involved also. The result is a great wonder that all hands were saved in spite of the rough conditions on the Adriatic.

“How did the ship’s crew go without food for fourteen days, having taken nothing? How did they bear it? Their fear possessed them, and did not let them fall into a desire of food, being, as they were, at the point of extreme jeopardy, so that they had no care for food.”

“They made towards shore having given the rudder-handles to the wind; often they don’t do it in this way. They were carried along, having loosened the rigging, i.e. the sails. ‘Falling into a place where two seas met, they ran the ship aground; and the bow stuck fast, and remained unmovable, but the stern was broken with the violence of the waves’ (Acts 27:40-41); for when there is a strong wind, this is the consequence; the stern bearing the brunt of the storm. The soldiers wanted to kill the prisoners, lest any of them should swim out, and escape (Acts 27:42). Again the devil tries to hinder the prophecy; the soldiers wanted to kill some, but the centurion didn’t allow them that he might save Paul, so much was the centurion attached to him.”

“Notice what good came of the storm! The storm did not come upon them because they were forsaken by God. This happened because of the season of the year; but the wonder is greater, that at such a season they were saved from the midst of the dangers, both Paul, and for his sake the rest, and this too in the Adriatic Sea. There were 276 souls in all; this is no small matter, if indeed they believed. The voyage was at a bad time of year. It is natural to suppose they would ask the reason why they were sailing at this time of year, and would learn why. The voyage was so protracted in that it afforded Paul an opportunity for teaching.”

Shipwreck on Malta

“Now when they had escaped, they then found out that the island was called Malta. And the natives showed us unusual kindness; for they kindled a fire and made us all welcome, because of the rain that was falling and because of the cold” (Acts 28:1-2).

The time of year when the shipwreck occurred was probably late December. Everyone left Malta three months after they had arrived on an Alexandrian ship that had spent the winter in a Maltese harbor (Acts 28:11). Since the sailing season starts in early April, this suggests that the shipwreck occurred in late December or early January.

Late December and early January on Malta can be cold and wet, since most of the annual rainfall occurs during the winter, spurred by the polar jet stream¹³². About half the days of December and January are rainy days, while little rain falls in the summer. Malta has a steady,

¹³¹ John Chrysostom, *Commentary on Acts*, LIII, vv. 27-44.

¹³² http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mediterranean_climate

predictable climate due to its proximity to the ocean. Temperatures in December and January average in the low 60's during the day and in the high 40's at night. Since the shipwreck occurred at daybreak (Acts 27:39-43), the temperature was probably in the high 40's and it was raining (Acts 28:2). Since everyone coming out of the water was soaking wet, keeping warm was difficult with the weather in the high 40's. They were very grateful for the hospitality shown by the people of Malta.

In order to dry the clothes of 276 people who came off the shipwreck, there was probably a large fire, or several fires for people to crowd around to get warm and to let their clothes dry. So it was natural for everyone to help gather wood to burn. In the 1st century, Malta was considerable more forested than it is today, so plenty of brushwood was available.

But when Paul had gathered a bundle of sticks and laid *them* on the fire, a viper¹³³ came out because of the heat, and fastened on his hand. So when the natives saw the creature hanging from his hand, they said to one another, 'No doubt this man is a murderer, whom, though he has escaped the sea, yet justice does not allow him to live'. But he shook off the creature into the fire and suffered no harm. However, they were expecting that he would swell up or suddenly fall down dead. But after they had looked for a long time and saw no harm come to him, they changed their minds and said that he was a god" (Acts 28:3-6).

The Greek word *echidna* does not define the exact species of snake, only that it was an adder or a viper. The most likely candidate is the European asp¹³⁴, which has a very strong venom, and the reaction of people to bites from the European Asp is very much like what the Maltese were expecting to happen to Paul (Acts 28:5).

John Chrysostom stated¹³⁵ that Paul was allowed to be bitten by the snake for the benefit of the Malta natives, so that they would recognize who he really was. All they could see is Paul wearing chains; they couldn't recognize that Paul was a man of God until they saw this.

"Well also was this permitted, that they should both see the thing and utter the thought that he must have been a murderer, in order that, when the result ensued, there might be no disbelieving the miracle. Notice their good feeling towards the distress of Paul and the others, in saying what they did (not aloud, but) among themselves. Notice also the natural judgment clearly expressed even among barbarians, and how they do not condemn without assigning a reason. They watch Paul carefully, that they may wonder the more. But Paul just calmly shook off the beast into the fire, and felt no harm. They expected him to fall down dead; having seen that nothing of the kind happened to him, they said, He is a god. Again just as earlier (Acts 14:11), another excess on the part of these men."

¹³³ Many snakes hide from the cold weather in the winter.

¹³⁴ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Vipera_aspis. The venom of the European Asp causes rapidly spreading acute pain, followed by edema (swelling) and discoloration at the site of the bite. Severe hemorrhagic necrosis (dead tissue) may occur within a few hours. Vision may be severely impaired, most likely due to degradation of blood and blood vessels in the eyes. Also the European Asp is rather short (about 2 feet long); therefore the Maltese natives saw the (short) snake hanging from Paul's hand (Acts 28:4).

¹³⁵ John Chrysostom, Commentary on Acts, LIV, vv. 3-6.

John Chrysostom compared¹³⁶ the Jews that Paul left behind in Judea with the barbarians on Malta. The Jews had seen many miracles by the Apostles, yet they persecuted them. The Maltese had seen none of this, yet they were kind to them. The Maltese also had some sense of Providence, more so even than the philosophers, for they believed that God was present everywhere. The Maltese were kind simply because the people from the ship were unfortunate. Then the Maltese were greatly stunned that Paul didn't die from the snake bite.

“The Jews beheld all the many miracles the Apostles did, yet they persecuted and harassed Paul; but the barbarians, who had seen none of these, merely on the ground of his misfortune, were kind to him. ‘No doubt’, they say, ‘this man is a murderer’ (Acts 28:4). They do not simply pronounce their judgment, but say, ‘No doubt’, i.e. as anyone may see ‘and vengeance’, they say, ‘does not allow him to live’. Notice that they held the doctrine of Providence, and these barbarians were far more philosophic than the philosophers, who don't allow the benefit of Providence to extend to things ‘below the moon’. By contrast these barbarians suppose God to be present everywhere, and that although a guilty man may escape many a danger, he will not escape in the end. They do not attack Paul immediately, but for a time respect him on account of his misfortune. They do not openly proclaim what they think, but speak it ‘among themselves: a murderer’; for the chains led them to suspect this. ‘They showed no small kindnesses, and yet some of them were prisoners. Let those be ashamed that say, ‘Do not do good to those in prison’; let these barbarians shame us; for they didn't know who these men were, but simply because they were in misfortune, they were kind. This much they perceived: that they were human beings, and therefore they considered them to have a claim upon their humanity. ‘For a great while, they expected that Paul would die from the snake bite’ (Acts 28:6). But when he shook his hand, and flung off the snake into the fire, then they saw and were astonished. The miracle did not take place suddenly, but the men watched Paul a long length of time; so plainly was there no deceit, no haste here.”

In that region there was an estate of the leading citizen of the island, whose name was Publius, who received us and entertained us courteously for three days. And it happened that the father of Publius lay sick of a fever and dysentery. Paul went in to him and prayed, and he laid his hands on him and healed him. So when this was done, the rest of those on the island who had diseases also came and were healed. They also honored us in many ways; and when we departed, they provided such things as were necessary” (Acts 28:7-10)

John Chrysostom pointed out¹³⁷ how Publius with compassion received the shipwreck victims; in doing so he brought down the grace of God upon himself at the hand of Paul. All 276 victims of the shipwreck received great kindness because of Paul. Everyone on Malta believed in God as a result of this shipwreck.

“Notice another hospitable man, Publius, who was both rich and of great possessions; he had seen nothing, but purely out of compassion for their misfortune, he received them, and took care of them. So that he was worthy to receive kindness; therefore Paul as a payment for his receiving them healed him. Notice how when

¹³⁶ John Chrysostom, Commentary on Acts, LIV, Recapitulation.

¹³⁷ John Chrysostom, Commentary on Acts, LIV, vv. 7-10.

they were free from the storm, they did not become more negligent; but what a liberal entertainment was given to them for Paul's sake. Three months they were on Malta; all of them were provided with sustenance. Notice how all this is done for the sake of Paul, to the end that the prisoners should believe, and the soldiers, and the centurion. Even if they had hearts of stone, yet from the advice they heard him giving, from the prediction they had heard him making, from the miracles they knew him to have done, and from the sustenance they by his means enjoyed, they must have got a very high notion of him. Notice that when the judgment is right, and not preoccupied by some passion, it immediately gets the right judgment, and gives sound verdicts."

If Paul had visited Malta on one of his missionary journeys, he could not have done a better job of leading the people of Malta – and the crew of the ship and the soldiers – to faith in Christ. As we will see, this provided a major impetus to Paul's life in Rome for the next two years as word of Paul as a benefactor to everyone spread throughout Rome.

John Chrysostom noted¹³⁸ that Publius willingly lodged all 276 people; Paul recognized his good will and repaid him by healing his father. After the others were healed, it is apparent that Paul was able to invest time in teaching everyone on the island for three months. All the new converts responded by supplying the ship with everything that was needed.

"Publius lodged all 276 persons courteously for three days (Acts 28:7). Consider how great the gain of his hospitality: not as of necessity, not as unwilling, but as reckoning it a gain he lodged them for three days. When Paul repaid him by healing his father, he naturally honored Paul much more, when the others also received healing. It was not that Paul received wages for doing what he did, God forbid; but as it is written, 'The worker is worthy of his food' (Matthew 10:10). 'When we departed, they loaded us with such things as were necessary' (Acts 28:10). It is plain that having thus received them, they also received the word of the preaching. It is not to be supposed, that during an entire three months they would have had all this kindness shown them, if these persons hadn't believed strongly, and thus exhibited the fruits of their conversion. From this we may see a strong proof of the great number there was of those that believed. This was enough to establish Paul's credit with his fellow voyagers. Notice how in this whole voyage they nowhere touched at a city, but were cast on an island, and spent the entire winter there. Paul's fellow-voyagers were under training for their faith. 'And after three months we departed in a ship of Alexandria, which had wintered in the isle, whose sign was Castor¹³⁹ and Pollux' (Acts 28:11). Probably this was painted on the ship; so addicted were they to their idols.

Finally Arriving in Italy

"After three months we sailed in an Alexandrian ship whose figurehead was the Twin Brothers, which had wintered at the island. And landing at Syracuse, we stayed three days. From

¹³⁸ John Chrysostom, *Commentary on Acts*, LIV, Recapitulation.

¹³⁹ Castor and Pollux are known in Greek and Roman mythology as the Twin Brothers, who were supposedly conceived when Zeus raped Leda, the wife of Tyndareus.

there we circled round and reached Rhegium. And after one day the south wind¹⁴⁰ blew; and the next day we came to Puteoli, where we found brethren, and were invited to stay with them seven days. And so we went toward Rome. And from there, when the brethren heard about us, they came to meet us as far as Appii Forum and Three Inns¹⁴¹. When Paul saw them¹⁴², he thanked God and took courage. Now when we came to Rome, the centurion delivered the prisoners to the captain of the guard; but Paul was permitted to dwell by himself with the soldier who guarded him” (Acts 28:11-16).

John Chrysostom noted¹⁴³ how word of what Paul had done preceded him like a royal ovation. From the brethren who came to meet him Paul took courage. Once in Rome, the fact that Paul was allowed to live by himself is proof that he was held in great admiration, even though he still wore chains.

“Already the preaching has reached Sicily! Notice how it has progressed even to those lands. At Puteoli they found some brethren; others also came to meet them. Such was the eagerness of the brethren; it didn’t bother them at all, that Paul was in chains. But notice also how Paul himself was affected after the manner of men. For it says, ‘When Paul saw them, he thanked God and took courage’ (Acts 28:15). Although he had worked so many miracles, nevertheless even from sight he received a wave of confidence. From this we learn, that he was comforted after the manner of men. And when we came to Rome, ‘Paul was permitted to dwell by himself with the soldier who guarded him’ (Acts 28:16). Permission was given to a prisoner to dwell by himself! This is no slight proof that Paul was held in much admiration; it is clear they did not number him among the rest.”

John Chrysostom pointed out¹⁴⁴ that when the travelers got to Puteoli in Italy, brethren met them there and they stayed seven days. The centurion in charge, now probably a Christian, felt comfortable doing this. When they got to Rome, Paul was allowed to live by himself; the soldier stationed with him was there to prevent plots by the Jews from developing.

“Notice them staying a while, before they hurried onwards. ‘When the brethren heard about us, they came to meet us as far as Appii Forum and Three Inns’ (Acts 28:15); they did not fear any danger. Paul therefore was now so much respected, that he was even permitted to stay by himself; for if even before this they used him kindly, much more would they now. ‘The soldier that kept him’ (Acts 28:16) was there that it might not be possible for any plot to be laid against him there either, for there could be no raising of a riot now like there was in Jerusalem. So that in fact they were not keeping Paul in custody, but guarding him, so that nothing unpleasant should happen. It was not possible now, in so great a city, and with the Emperor there, and with Paul’s appeal, for anything to be done contrary to

¹⁴⁰ The “south wind”, that is, the wind out of the South, means that it was now springtime, and the sailing season had arrived along with good weather that would last all summer.

¹⁴¹ The Appii Forum is almost 50 miles South of Rome, so this was quite a hike.

¹⁴² The implication is that Paul knew these brethren, even though he had never been to Rome before. From his Epistle to Rome, written about 5 years earlier, Paul addressed eighteen of the Seventy Apostles plus Mary Magdalene (Romans 16). Paul and Peter had sent these brethren to Rome to help out with problems they faced regarding heresy. For details, see Mark Kern, *Simon Magus the Heresiarch*, St Athanasius Press, 2004.

¹⁴³ John Chrysostom, *Commentary on Acts*, LIV, vv. 11-16.

¹⁴⁴ John Chrysostom, *Commentary on Acts*, LIV, Recapitulation.

order. So surely it is the case, that always through the things which seem to be against us, all things turn out for us.”

“And it came to pass after three days that Paul called the leaders of the Jews together. So when they had come together, he said to them, ‘Men *and* brethren, though I have done nothing against our people or the customs of our fathers, yet I was delivered as a prisoner from Jerusalem into the hands of the Romans, who, when they had examined me, wanted to let *me* go, because there was no cause for putting me to death. But when the Jews spoke against *it*, I was compelled to appeal to Caesar, not that I had anything of which to accuse my nation. For this reason therefore I have called for you, to see *you* and speak with *you*, because for the hope of Israel I am bound with this chain’. Then they said to him, ‘We neither received letters from Judea concerning you, nor have any of the brethren who came reported or spoken any evil of you. But we desire to hear from you what you think; for concerning this sect, we know that it is spoken against everywhere’. So when they had appointed him a day, many came to him at *his* lodging, to whom he explained and solemnly testified of the kingdom of God, persuading them concerning Jesus from both the Law of Moses and the Prophets, from morning till evening. And some were persuaded by the things which were spoken, and some disbelieved. So when they did not agree among themselves, they departed after Paul had said one word: ‘The Holy Spirit spoke rightly through Isaiah the prophet to our fathers, saying, ‘Go to this people and say: “Hearing you will hear, and shall not understand; and seeing you will see, and not perceive; for the hearts of this people have grown dull. Their ears are hard of hearing, and their eyes they have closed, lest they should see with *their* eyes and hear with *their* ears, lest they should understand with *their* hearts and turn, so that I should heal them”’. Therefore let it be known to you that the salvation of God has been sent to the Gentiles, and they will hear it!’ And when he had said these words, the Jews departed and had a great dispute among themselves (Acts 28:17-29).

John Chrysostom noted¹⁴⁵ a complete turnaround of the Apostle Paul in Rome. Here the Jews don’t dare start a riot. When Paul spoke to them, he taunted them by saying that the Gentiles will receive what they rejected. We need to consider the examples of Moses, Aaron, Cain, Abel, the Three Youths in the fire, Daniel, Adam and Judas. Nothing anyone does to us will hurt us; the only thing we need to be concerned about is what we do to ourselves.

“When Paul called the Jews together (Acts 28:17) and spoke to them; they departed contradicting each other. They are even taunted by Paul, yet they dare not say anything, for it was not permitted them to deal with his matter any way they wanted like at Jerusalem. This is a marvelous thing; not by the things which seem to be for our security, but by their very opposites, all comes together for us. We need to understand this! Consider how Pharaoh commanded the infants to be thrown into the river (Exodus 1:22). Unless this had happened, Moses would not have been saved, and he would not have been brought up in the palace. When he was safe with his parents, he was not honored; when he was exposed to the river, then he was honored. God did this to show His riches of resource. The Jews threatened Moses, saying, ‘Do you intend to kill me as you killed the Egyptian?’ (Exodus 2:14); this too was profitable to Moses. It was God’s providence, in order that he should see that vision in the desert, in order that the proper time should be completed, that he should learn philosophy in the desert, and there live in security.

¹⁴⁵ John Chrysostom, Commentary on Acts, LIV, Recapitulation.

In all the plotting of the Jews against him the same thing happened; then he became more illustrious. In the case of Aaron; Korah rose up against him, and thereby made him more illustrious (Numbers 16:1-19). This happened that his ordination should be unquestionable and that he might be held in admiration for the future also from the plates of brass (Numbers 16:37-40). Let us go over the same examples from the beginning. Cain slew his brother, but in this he rather benefited him. Listen to the Scripture, 'The voice of your brother's blood cries out to Me from the ground' (Genesis 4:10); and again in another place, 'To the blood of sprinkling that speaks better things than *that of Abel*' (Hebrews 12:24). God freed Abel from the uncertainty of the future; He increased his reward; we have all learned by this what love God had for him. How was he injured? Not at all; he just received his end sooner. What do they gain who live longer? Nothing; having good days does not depend on living many years or few years, but in using life properly. The Three Children were thrown into the furnace, and through this they became more illustrious (Daniel 3); Daniel was thrown into the lions' den, and because of this he was made more renowned (Daniel 6). Trials in every case bring forth great good even in this life, much more in the life to come. Regarding malice, however, the case is the same as if a man should try to fight a fire having nothing more than a stick; the stick may beat the fire, but it only makes the fire brighter, and the stick gets consumed. The malice of the wicked becomes food and an occasion to make virtue more splendid. God turns the unrighteousness to good account, and our character shines forth all the more. When the devil works anything of this kind, he makes those more illustrious that endure. How then was this not the case with Adam, but, on the contrary, he became more disgraced? In this case of all others God turned the malice of that wicked one to good account. If Adam was the worse for it, it was he that injured himself. It is the wrongs that are done to us by others that become the means of great good to us, not so the wrongs which are done by ourselves. When we are hurt by others, we grieve; but not so when we hurt ourselves. Therefore God shows that he who suffers unjustly at the hands of another gets renowned, but he who injures himself, receives hurt. Besides, the whole thing there was Adam's own doing. Why did he do what the woman said? (Genesis 3:6) When she counseled him contrary to God, why didn't he repel her? He was assuredly himself the cause. Otherwise if the devil was the cause, at this rate all that are tempted ought to perish; but if all do not perish, the cause of our destruction rests with ourselves. 'But', you will say, 'all that are tempted ought at that rate to succeed'. No; for the cause is in ourselves. 'At that rate it ought to follow that some perish without the devil having anything to do with it'. Yes; and in fact many do perish without the devil's being concerned in it. Surely the devil does not bring about all our evil doings. Much comes also from our own sluggishness by itself; and if the devil is anywhere concerned as a cause, it is from our offering the occasion. When did the devil prevail in Judas' case? When 'Satan entered him' (John 13:27), you will say. Yes, but listen to the cause; it was because 'he was a thief, and had the money box; and he used to take what was put in it' (John 12:6). It was he that himself gave the devil a wide room for entering into him; so then it is not the devil that begins our downfall, it is we that receive and invite him. 'But', you will say, 'if there were no devil, the evils would not have

become great'. True, but then our punishment would be more severe; as it is, beloved, our punishment is milder; whereas if we had done the evils of ourselves, the chastisements would be intolerable. If Adam, without any counsel, had committed the sin he did, who would have snatched him out of the dangers? 'But he would not have sinned', you will say. We can't really say this! Adam had so little solidity, that he was ready for foolishness, receiving such advice as he did; much more would he without any counsel have become what he did become. What devil incited the brethren of Joseph to envy? If we are watchful brethren, the devil becomes to us the cause even of renown."

Chrysostom also pointed out¹⁴⁶ that Paul's words to the Jews in Rome were of a forgiving nature. He only did what he did to escape the danger in Jerusalem, and he was bound with his chains for their sake. The Roman Jews apologized for their counterparts in Jerusalem, and wanted to hear directly from Paul, since Christianity was spoken against everywhere. Many of the Roman Jews were convinced and Paul brought forward Isaiah's words to help confirm them in the Faith.

"Notice how Paul, in speaking with the Jews in Rome, details the charges of the Jews in Jerusalem against him. Thus he explained that he 'was constrained to appeal to Caesar', so that his whole speech is of a forgiving nature. Paul didn't accuse them of anything; he only did this that he might escape the danger. He explained that it is for your sakes 'that I am bound with this chain' (Acts 28:20). So far am I, he says, from any hostile feeling towards you. Then the Jews in Rome were so subdued by his speech that they too apologized for those of their own nation (Acts 28:21). But they wanted to hear from Paul himself, 'We desire to hear from you what you think; for concerning this sect, we know that it is spoken against everywhere' (Acts 28:22). Paul spoke to them for an entire day and 'some were persuaded by the things which were spoken, and some disbelieved' (Acts 28:24). They didn't say, we speak against it, but 'it is spoken against'. When they didn't agree among themselves, they departed after Paul had spoken one word from the Prophet Isaiah regarding the Gentiles (Acts 28:25-27). When they departed, opposed to each other, then Paul reproached them, in order to confirm those that believed. No wonder then if the unbelieving Jews contradicted; this was foretold from the first."

Chrysostom further noted¹⁴⁷ that the Jews in Rome were different than those in Jerusalem. They actually wanted to hear what Paul had to say! However they still tried to exonerate the Jews in Jerusalem, even though they knew that they were very much in the wrong. Paul does not try to impress them with miracles, but he speaks to them entirely from the Law and the Prophets, and he puts them to silence. He even shows them from the Prophets that God foretold that they wouldn't believe. It was the Providence of God that Paul should go to Jerusalem and speak to them as a Jew to his fellow Jews. When Paul finished speaking to the Jews in Rome (c. 60 AD), this was the beginning of his two years in Rome under house-arrest. As Paul began his captivity in Rome, it was just six years until the Judgment of God would fall on Judea for their apostasy.

"Notice the Jews in Rome speaking more mildly to Paul. 'We desire to hear from you what you think' (Acts 28:22), they said, and wish to exonerate those at

¹⁴⁶ John Chrysostom, Commentary on Acts, LV, vv. 18-27.

¹⁴⁷ John Chrysostom, Commentary on Acts, LV, Recapitulation.

Jerusalem. Whereas they ought to accuse them, they plead for them; by the very fact of their exonerating them, they do in fact accuse them. This was a proof that they knew themselves exceedingly in the wrong. Had they been confident, they would not have done this, so that Paul should not be able to make out his story in his own way; and besides they shrank from coming. They knew about Christianity (this sect) ‘that it is spoken against everywhere’ (Acts 28:22). True! But people are also everywhere persuaded (as, in fact, here), ‘some were persuaded by the things which were spoken, and some disbelieved’ (Acts 28:24). Notice again how not by miracles but by the Law and the Prophets Paul puts them to silence, and how we always find him doing this. Paul could have done signs; but then it would no longer have been a matter of faith. In fact, this itself was a great sign, his speaking from the Law and the Prophets. That we may not think it strange that they didn’t believe, Paul introduced the prophecy which said ‘Hearing you will hear, and shall not understand’, more now than then; ‘and seeing you will see, and not perceive’ (Acts 28:26), more now than then. This is not spoken for the believers, but for the unbelievers. Was it contrary to the prophecy that those believed? No! The prophecy was addressed to the unbelieving people. Paul did not say this to insult them, but to remove the offense. ‘Therefore let it be known to you that the salvation of God has been sent to the Gentiles, and they will hear it!’ (Acts 28:28). Why did Paul bother to speak to them? Didn’t Paul know this? Yes, but that they might be persuaded, and that he might exonerate himself, and give no one a handle against him. The unbelieving were those that withdrew. Notice how they do not now form plots against him. In Judea they had a sort of tyranny. Then why did the Providence of God order that Paul should go there, when the Lord had said, ‘Make haste and get out of Jerusalem quickly, for they will not receive your testimony concerning Me?’ (Acts 22:18) That both the wickedness of the Jews in Jerusalem might be shown and Christ’s prophecy made good. They would not endure to hear Paul! All might learn that Paul was ready to suffer all things, and that the event might be for the consolation of those in Judea; for there also the brethren were suffering many grievous evils. If while preaching the Jewish doctrines, Paul suffered thus, had he preached the doctrines of the glory of Christ, how would they have endured him? While ‘purifying himself’ (Acts 21:26) he was intolerable to them; how should he have been tolerable to them while preaching what he taught elsewhere? First Paul called the Jews; then having shown them the facts he goes to the Gentiles (Acts 13:42-48, 18:6-7). Notice that it is not Paul that they disbelieve, but God. But God foreknew this from the beginning.”

Hope Does Not Disappoint

Paul stated, “Now hope does not disappoint, because the love of God has been poured out in our hearts by the Holy Spirit who was given to us. For when we were still without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly. For scarcely for a righteous man will one die; yet perhaps for a good man someone would even dare to die. But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us” (Romans 5:5-8).

Hardship and tribulation are not our enemies, but they are part of our hope, where our hope is not human hope. Their effect is to strip away all the useless and worthless things in our life and focus our attention on God. Before we even begin our labors, we have been given the greatest Gift that God could give us. Our reward therefore, will be quite out of proportion to all of our efforts. As a result, it is quite natural for us to be happy under tribulation, when we see what the real effect is on our lives. Since God's grace always works in us what is good, we need to be ready to receive this. When get to this point, we neither desire what is forbidden nor disregard what is commanded because we are so fixed on Divine Love and grateful for all He has given us.

Cyprian of Carthage pointed out¹⁴⁸ from the Scriptures how hardship and tribulation are directed by God to prove our Faith. When we are criticized in the Name of Christ, we can be happy because the majesty and power of Christ rests upon us. We do not need to fear anything that comes against us, because our hope consists in that war against the demons itself. By that conflict the righteous attain to their reward and eternal salvation.

“Moses wrote, ‘The Lord your God tries you, that He may know if you love the Lord, your God with all your heart, and with all your soul’ (Deuteronomy 13:1-3). Solomon followed with: ‘As a furnace tests a potter’s vessel, so the test of a man is in the way he reasons’ (Ecclesiasticus 27:5). Paul testifies similar things, ‘We rejoice in hope of the glory of God. And not only *that*, but we also glory in tribulations, knowing that tribulation produces perseverance; and perseverance, character; and character, hope. Now hope does not disappoint, because the love of God has been poured out in our hearts by the Holy Spirit who was given to us’ (Romans 5:2-5). And Peter lays it down, ‘Beloved, do not think it strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened to you; but rejoice to the extent that you partake of Christ’s sufferings, that when His glory is revealed, you may also be glad with exceeding joy. If you are reproached for the name of Christ, blessed *are you*, for the Spirit of glory and of God rests upon you. On their part He is blasphemed, but on your part He is glorified’” (1 Peter 4:12-14).

“John proves this, ‘He who is in you is greater than he who is in the world’ (1 John 4:4). In the Psalms: ‘The Lord *is* on my side; I will not fear. What can man do to me?’ (Psalm 118:6). Again: ‘Some *glory* in chariots, and some in horses: but we will glory in the name of the Lord our God. They are overthrown and fallen: but we are risen, and have been set upright’ (Psalm 20:7-8). Even more strongly the Holy Spirit teaches that the army of the demons is not to be feared; if our enemy should declare war against us, our hope consists rather in that war itself. By that conflict the righteous attain to the reward of the divine abode and eternal salvation. ‘Though an army should set itself in array against me, my heart shall not be afraid: though war should rise up against me, in this am I confident. One thing have I asked of the Lord, this will I earnestly seek: that I should dwell in the house of the Lord, all the days of my life’ (Psalm 27:3-4). The Holy Scripture declares that we are rather multiplied and increased by afflictions, ‘But as they humbled them, by so much they multiplied, and grew exceedingly strong; and the Egyptians greatly abhorred the children of Israel’ (Exodus 1:12). And divine protection is promised

¹⁴⁸ Cyprian of Carthage, Treatises, XI, 9-10.

to our sufferings, ‘Do not fear any of those things which you are about to suffer’” (Revelation 2:10).

John Chrysostom stated¹⁴⁹ that our hope is not human hope, but depends on the sureness of God who lives forever. The proof of this can be seen in the blessings we have already been given. We have been given the greatest possible gift that could be given: namely the Holy Spirit; and not just given, but poured out in our hearts. We are like angels, not men, and sons of God and brethren of Christ. After we finish our labors here in this age, we will receive great crowns. If God had not intended to give us the crowns after our labors, He would never have given us such great gifts before our labors began. This all comes from His love for mankind.

“We have hope, but not mere human hope, which often slips away, and puts him that hoped to shame; when someone, who was expected to patronize him, dies, or is altered though he lives. No such lot is ours: our hope is sure and unmovable. He Who has made the promise lives forever, and we that are to be the enjoyers of it, even should we die, for we shall rise again. There is absolutely nothing which can put us to shame, as having been elated at random, and to no purpose, upon unsound hopes. Having sufficiently cleared them of all doubtfulness by these words of his, Paul does not pause. He urges again the time to come, knowing that there were men of weaker character, who looked for present advantages, and were not satisfied with these mentioned. He offers a proof for them in blessings already given. In case any should say, ‘But what if God is unwilling to give them to us?’ That He can, and that He abides and lives, we all know: but how do we also know, that He is willing to do it? From the things which have been done already! ‘What things done?’ The Love which He has shown for us! ‘In doing what?’ some may say. In giving the Holy Spirit! Therefore after saying ‘hope does not disappoint’ (Romans 5:5),” he goes on to the proof of this, as follows:”

“‘Because the love of God is,’” he does not say ‘given’, but ‘poured out in our hearts by the Holy Spirit who was given to us’, thus showing the profusion of it. That gift then, which is the greatest possible gift, He has given. He did not give heaven, earth or sea, but what is more precious than any of these. He has rendered us Angels instead of men, and sons of God and brethren of Christ. What is this gift? The Holy Spirit! Had He not been willing to present us after our labors with great crowns, He would never have given us such mighty gifts before our labors began. The warmth of His Love is made apparent by this, that it is not gradually and little by little that He honors us; but He has shed abroad the full fountain of His blessings, and this too before our struggles begins. And so, if you are not exceedingly worthy, don’t be despondent; you have that Love of your Judge as a mighty pleader for you. This is why Paul himself said, ‘hope does not disappoint’ (Romans 5:5); he has ascribed everything not to our well-doing, but to God’s love.”

John Cassian wrote¹⁵⁰ that God’s grace always works in us what is good. His grace sometimes visits the careless, the indifferent and the unworthy. As we are stirred by what He excites, we are sometimes caught up into an ecstasy where we become oblivious of the fact that we are still in the flesh.

¹⁴⁹ John Chrysostom, Homilies on Romans, IX, vv. 4-5

¹⁵⁰ John Cassian, Conference of Abbot Daniel, I, iv, 5.

“It is clearly shown that God’s grace and mercy always work in us what is good; when it forsakes us, the efforts of the worker are useless; however earnestly a man may strive, he cannot regain his former condition without His help. This saying is constantly fulfilled in our case: that it is ‘not of him that wills or runs but of God which has mercy’ (Romans 9:15). This grace on the other hand sometimes does not refuse to visit even the careless and indifferent with that holy inspiration and with an abundance of spiritual thoughts. It inspires the unworthy, arouses those who are asleep, enlightens those who are blinded by ignorance, and mercifully reproves us and chastens us, shedding itself abroad in our hearts. We are stirred by the compunction which He excites, and impelled to rise from the sleep of sloth. We are often filled by His sudden visitation with sweet odors, beyond the power of human composition. Sometimes the soul is so ravished with these delights, and caught up, as it were, into an ecstasy of spirit, that it becomes oblivious of the fact that it is still in the flesh.”

John Chrysostom encouraged¹⁵¹ everyone to be grateful for tribulation of any kind. If we are grateful for evil brought against us, our gratitude becomes good deeds of a free choice, and we receive a reward similar to the Apostles. If we rage and blaspheme against the evil, we don’t make the calamity any lighter; we just make its wave more troublesome. The key to all this is to remember the love that God has for us. All the greatest of the saints ceased not to give thanks even while they were undergoing great difficulty. But scorning all our difficulties, we will fly to heaven, and will have affections no way inferior to those of its inhabitants.

“He who is altered by tribulation, is much more likely to be affected in this way by absence of difficulty. If we fail even when splinted, (this is what affliction is), much more will we fail when the bandage is removed. If so when braced up, we are altered, much more when in a state of seizure. How are we to keep from being so altered by tribulation? Think about it! If we know that, wish it or not, we will have to bear the thing inflicted, if we do it with a thankful spirit, we will gain very greatly thereby. But if we are indignant at it, and rage and blaspheme, we will not make the calamity lighter, but we will render its wave more troublesome. By feeling this way, let us turn what is necessary into a matter of our own choice. What I mean is this — suppose one has lost his own son, another has lost all his property. We don’t have to be undone from what has taken place. We can gain fruit from the misfortune by bearing the circumstance nobly. If instead of using blasphemous words, we were to offer up words of thanksgiving to the Lord, evils brought upon us against our will become to us the good deeds of a free choice. Have we seen a son taken prematurely away? Say, ‘the Lord has given, the Lord has taken away’. Do we see our fortune exhausted? Say, ‘naked came I out of my mother’s womb, and naked shall I return there’ (Job 1:21). Do we see evil men faring well, and just men struggling and undergoing difficulties without number? Do we not know where to find the cause? Say, ‘I became even as it were a beast before You. Yet I am ever with You’ (Psalm 73:22). If we search out the cause, consider that He has fixed a day in which He will judge the world, and so we will throw off all perplexity; for then every man will meet his just reward, even as Lazarus and the rich man (Luke 16:20-26). Remember the Apostles, for they too rejoiced at being

¹⁵¹ John Chrysostom, Homilies on Romans, IX, v. 11.

scourged, at being driven about and undergoing numberless sufferings, because they were ‘counted worthy to suffer shame for His Name’s sake’ (Acts 5:41). If we are sick, bear it nobly, and consider ourselves indebted to God for it; we shall receive the same reward as the Apostles. But how, when in feebleness and pain, are we to be able to feel grateful to the Lord? We will if we love Him sincerely. If the Three Children who were thrown into the furnace, and others who were in prisons, and in countless other evils, ceased not to give thanks, much more will they who are in a state of disease, be able to do this. For there is not, assuredly there is not, anything which vehement desire does not get the better of. But when the desire is even that of God, it is higher than anything; neither fire, the sword, poverty, infirmity, death, nor anything else of the kind appears dreadful to one who has gotten this love. But scorning them all, we will fly to heaven, and will have affections no way inferior to those of its inhabitants, seeing nothing else, neither heaven, earth nor sea, but gazing only at the one Beauty of that glory. Neither the vexations of this present life will depress us, nor will the things which are good and pleasant elate us or puff us up.”

John Cassian further stated¹⁵² that as we progress in the grace of God, we recognize that the Law of Moses is trivial. Sin has no dominion over us because of the love of God in our hearts. We neither desire what is forbidden nor disregard what is commanded because we are so fixed on Divine Love.

“Whoever climbs the height of evangelical perfection is raised by the merits of such virtue above every Law, and disregarding as trivial all that is commanded by Moses. He recognizes that he is only subject to the grace of the Savior, by whose aid he knows that he attained to that most exalted condition. Therefore, sin has no dominion over him, ‘because the love of God has been poured out in our hearts by the Holy Spirit who was given to us’ (Romans 5:5), shuts out all care for everything else. He can neither desire what is forbidden, or disregard what is commanded, as its whole aim and all its desire is ever fixed on divine love. To such an extent it is not caught by the delights of worthless things, and it actually does not take advantage of those things which are permitted.”

Christ Died for the Ungodly

Paul said, “For when we were still without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly. For scarcely for a righteous man will one die; yet perhaps for a good man someone would even dare to die. But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us” (Romans 5:5-8).

The Church was not in a good state when Christ took her as His bride: unclean, blemished, unsightly, and worthless. Yet Christ didn’t loathe her for her deformity! Instead He gave Himself up for her even in her deformity as if she were wonderfully beautiful. As enemies of God and appointed to die, we were totally lost. Fortunately for us, the enormity of our sin was not as great as the righteousness of Him Who died for us.

¹⁵² John Cassian, 1st Conference of Abbot Theonas, III, xxi, 33.

Cyril of Jerusalem pointed out¹⁵³ some things regarding the death of Christ. We were enemies of God and we were appointed to die. He could either destroy all men or cancel the sentence. Instead, in His wisdom, He preserved the truth of His sentence and the exercise of His loving kindness by His death on the Cross. The enormity of our sin was not as great as the righteousness of Him Who died for us.

“Christ endured all things and made peace through the Blood of His Cross, for things in heaven, and things in earth (Colossians 1:20, Hebrews 12:2). We were enemies of God through sin, and God had appointed the sinner to die. One of two things needed to happen: either God, in His truth, should destroy all men, or in His loving-kindness He should cancel the sentence. But behold the wisdom of God; He preserved both the truth of His sentence, and the exercise of His loving-kindness. Christ Himself bore our sins in His own body on the tree, that we, having died to sins, might live for righteousness (1 Peter 2:24). Of no small account was He who died for us; He was not a literal sheep; He was not a mere man; He was more than an Angel; He was God made man. The transgression of sinners was not as great as the righteousness of Him who died for them; the sin which we committed was not as great as the righteousness which He wrought who laid down His life for us. He laid it down when He pleased, and took it again when He pleased. He did not lay down His life as overcome by violence; He did not yield up the spirit against His will. He cried to the Father, ‘Father, into Your hands I commit My spirit’ (Luke 23:46), that I may take it again. Having said these things, He yielded up His spirit (Matthew 27:50); but not for any long time, for He quickly rose again from the dead.”

John Chrysostom stated¹⁵⁴ that the Church was in a very sad state when Christ took her as His bride: unclean, blemished, unsightly, and worthless. Yet Christ didn’t loathe her for her deformity! Instead He gave Himself up for her even in her deformity as if she were wonderfully beautiful. He took her, arrayed her in beauty, and washed her, sanctifying her having cleansed her by the washing of water with the Word. She became glorious, having no spot, wrinkle, or any such thing, because she is God’s fashioning.

“Paul stated, ‘Christ gave Himself for her, that He might sanctify and cleanse her with the washing of water by the word’ (Ephesians 5:26). So then she was unclean; so then she had blemishes; so then she was unsightly; so then she was worthless! Whatever kind of wife you shall take, yet you shall never take such a bride as the Church, when Christ took her, nor one so far removed from you as the Church was from Christ. Yet for all that, He did not abhor her, nor loathe her for her surpassing deformity. Do you want to hear her deformity described? Listen to what Paul said, ‘For you were once darkness’ (Ephesians 5:8). Did you see the blackness of her hue? What is blacker than darkness? Look again at her boldness, ‘we ourselves were also once foolish, disobedient, deceived, serving various lusts and pleasures, living in malice and envy, hateful and hating one another’ (Titus 3:3). What am I saying? She was both foolish, and of an evil tongue; and yet notwithstanding, though so many were her blemishes, yet He still gave Himself up for her in her deformity, as for one in the bloom of youth, as for one dearly beloved,

¹⁵³ Cyril of Jerusalem, Catechetical Lectures, XIII, 33.

¹⁵⁴ John Chrysostom, Homilies on Ephesians, XX, vv. 26-27.

as for one of wonderful beauty. It was in admiration of this that Paul said, ‘For scarcely for a righteous man will one die; yet perhaps for a good man someone would even dare to die. But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us’ (Romans 5:7-8). Though it was such as this, He took her, He arrayed her in beauty, and washed her, and refused not even to give Himself for her. ‘That He might sanctify and cleanse her with the washing of water by the word, that He might present her to Himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but that she should be holy and without blemish’” (Ephesians 5:26-27).

“‘By the washing of the laver’, He washed her uncleanness. ‘By the word’, he said. What word? ‘Baptizing in the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit’ (Matthew 28:19). Not simply has He adorned her, but He has made her ‘glorious, having no spot, wrinkle, or any such thing’ (Ephesians 5:27). Let us then also seek after this beauty ourselves, and we shall be able to create it. Don’t seek at your wife’s hand, things which she is not able to possess. Notice that the Church had all things at her Lord’s hands? By Him she was made glorious, by Him she was made pure, by Him she made without blemish? Don’t turn your back on your wife because of her deformity. Listen to the Scripture, ‘The bee is small among winged creatures, but her fruit is first among sweet things’ (Ecclesiasticus 11:3). She is of God’s fashioning. You don’t criticize her, but Him that made her; what can the woman do? Don’t praise her for her beauty. Praise, hatred and love based on personal beauty belong to unrestrained souls. Seek for beauty of soul. Imitate the Bridegroom of the Church.”

Reconciled to God

Paul said, “Much more then, having now been justified by His blood, we shall be saved from wrath through Him. For if when we were enemies we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, much more, having been reconciled, we shall be saved by His life. And not only *that*, but we also rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received the reconciliation” (Romans 5:9-11).

Reconciliation with God is totally unlike reconciliation in this world. We are like an infant in the womb now, unable to comprehend what things will be like at the Second Coming of Christ. Even if we turn away from God, He still pursues us to call us home. We can either stay where we are and suffer the consequences of our sin, or we can leave that place or enter His promise. In doing this, the key attribute we need to acquire is mercy toward our fellow man. If we can do this, we will also be grateful for all that the Lord has done for us. The people of God have not always done this; at times the people of God have only been interested in what benefits them. Christ Himself set a counter example by not deserting His followers, but instead going to the Cross for them.

John Chrysostom outlined¹⁵⁵ what reconciliation with God is all about by comparing it with life in this world now. Events following the Resurrection will be so much more spectacular than our life today that we can’t even compare them. But if the wealthy and powerful in this life

¹⁵⁵ John Chrysostom, Exhortation to Theodore After His Fall, I, 13.

exult with delight in what they have, how much better will it be for us after the Resurrection? We are like an infant in the womb now, and we can't even comprehend what things will be like then. We are experiencing captivity now, where the point is that we might be called back to our home after we have fallen into sin. God pursues all men who have turned away from Him, that we might be reconciled back to His Kingdom. We need to respond to His pursuit and come home.

“The things that will follow the Resurrection of the dead, what language can describe to us: the pleasure, the profit, and the joy of being in the company of Christ? When the soul has returned to the proper condition of nobility, and is able with much boldness to behold its Master, it is impossible to say what great pleasure it derives therefrom. There will be great gain, rejoicing not only in the good things actually in hand, but in the persuasion that these things will never come to an end. All that gladness then cannot be described in words, nor grasped by the understanding. But in a dim kind of way, as one indicates great things by means of small ones, I will endeavor to make it clearer. Let us scrutinize those who enjoy the good things of the world in this present life, I mean wealth, power and glory. Exulting with delight, they reckon themselves as no longer being upon the earth, and this although the things which they are enjoying are acknowledged not to be really good, and do not stay with them, but take to flight more quickly than a dream. Even if they should last for a little time, their favor is displayed within the limits of this present life, and cannot accompany us further. Now if these things uplift those who possess them to such a pitch of joy, what do you suppose is the condition of those souls which are invited to enjoy the countess blessings in Heaven which are always securely fixed and stable? Not only this, but also in their quantity and quality they excel present things to such an extent as never entered even the heart of man (Isaiah 64:4, 1 Corinthians 2:9). At the present time like an infant in the womb, even so do we dwell in this world confined in a narrow space, and unable to behold the splendor and the freedom of the world to come. But when the time of travail arrives and the present life is delivered at the day of judgment of all men whom it has contained, those who have been miscarried go from darkness into darkness, and from affliction into more grievous affliction. But those which are perfectly formed and have preserved the marks of the royal image will be presented to the king, and will take upon themselves that service which angels and archangels minister to the God of all.”

“Anyone who has committed fornication, God calls back again. For the captivity we experienced was not so much by way of vengeance as for the purpose of conversion and amendment; if God had wished to punish us out-right He would not again have brought us back to our home. He would not have established our city and our temple in greater splendor than before: ‘For the final glory of this house’ He said ‘shall exceed the former’ (Micah 4:1-2, Isaiah 2:2). Now if God did not exclude from repentance her who had many times committed fornication, much more will He embrace my soul, which has now fallen for the first time. For certainly there is no lover of corporeal beauty, even if he be very frantic, who is so inflamed with the love of his mistress as God longs after the salvation of our souls. This we may perceive from the divine Scriptures. Notice, both in the introduction of Jeremiah, and many other places of the prophets, when He is despised and condemned, how He again hastens forward and pursues the friendship of those who

turn away from him (Jeremiah 3:2, 12). He Himself also made clear in the Gospels, ‘O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the one who kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to her! How often I wanted to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under *her* wings, but you were not willing!’ (Matthew 23:37) Paul said ‘God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not imputing their trespasses to them, and has committed to us the word of reconciliation. Now then, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were pleading through us: we implore *you* on Christ's behalf, be reconciled to God’ (2 Corinthians 5:19-20). Consider that this has now been said to us. It is not merely lack of faith, but also an unclean life which is sufficient to work enmity with God. ‘Because the carnal mind *is* enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, nor indeed can’ (Romans 8:7). Let us then break down the barrier, chop it in pieces and destroy it, that we may enjoy the blessed reconciliation, that we may become again the fondly beloved of God.”

Chrysostom also compared¹⁵⁶ our life today with that of Israel at the Exodus: If we stay in Egypt – which is analogous to sin – we will suffer with the Egyptians. We need to leave that place. Yet this is not enough; we must also enter the promise, and we have Joshua and Caleb as our models. The journey will not be difficult with the Lord’s help; it is a narrow way and is impassible. But if the impossible has become possible, much more will the difficult be easy.

“Wherefore He sent us, not Moses from the wilderness, but His Son from Heaven. If then, after He has come, we stay in Egypt, we will suffer with the Egyptians; but if leaving that land we go up with the spiritual Israel, we shall see all the miracles.

Yet not even this suffices for salvation. We must not only be delivered out of Egypt, but we must also enter into the promise. The Jews, as Paul said, both went through the Red Sea (1 Corinthians 10:1-4), ate manna, and drank spiritual drink; but nevertheless, they all perished.

Lest the same befall us also, let us not be slow, neither draw back. If we hear wicked spies bringing up an evil report against the straight and narrow way, and uttering the same kind of talk as those spies of old, let not the multitude, but Joshua, be our pattern, and Caleb the son of Jephunneh. We should not give up, until we have attained the promise, and entered into the Heavens.

Don’t account the journey to be difficult. ‘For if when we were enemies we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, much more, having been reconciled, we shall be saved by His life’ (Romans 5:10). ‘But this way’, Christ said, ‘is straight and narrow’ (Matthew 7:13-14). Well, but the narrow way, through which you have come, is not straight and narrow only, but even impassable, and full of savage wild beasts. Since there was no passing through the Red Sea, unless that miracle had been done, so neither could we, abiding in our former life, have gone up into Heaven, but only by baptism intervening. Now if the impossible has become possible, much more will the difficult be easy.”

¹⁵⁶ John Chrysostom, Homilies on Matthew, XXXIX, 4.

Chrysostom further stated¹⁵⁷ that mercy is so important in the eyes of God that it is a protector of those who labor at it. The gates of heaven open to mercy as if a Queen were entering; mercy makes men like God. Mercy is winged and buoyant, like a dove covered with silver and gold. Compared to mercy, other birds are like crows. God would rather have mercy than sacrifice.

“Mercifulness is a most excellent art, and a protector of those who labor at it. For it is dear to God, and ever stands near Him readily asking favor for whomever it will, if only it isn’t wronged by us; and it is wronged, when we do it by extortion. So, if it is pure, it gives great confidence to those who offer it up. It intercedes even for those who have offended, so great is its power, even for those who have sinned. It breaks the chains (Philippians 1:12-17), disperses the darkness (Matthew 6:23), quenches the fire, kills the worm (Mark 9:44-48), drives away the gnashing of teeth (Matthew 25:30). The gates of heaven open to it with great security, like when a Queen is entering; no one of the guards stationed at the doors dares to inquire who she is, and from where, but all immediately receive her; so also with mercifulness. For she is truly a queen indeed, making men like God. For, he says, ‘be merciful, just as your Father also is merciful’ (Luke 6:36). She is winged and buoyant, having golden pinions, with a flight which greatly delights the angels. There, it is said, ‘Though you lie down among the sheepfolds, *You will be* like the wings of a dove covered with silver, and her feathers with yellow gold’ (Psalm 68:13). As some dove, golden and living, she flies, with gentle look, and mild eye. Nothing is better than that eye. The peacock is beautiful, but in comparison to her, is like a crow. So beautiful and worthy of admiration is this bird. She continually looks upwards; she is surrounded abundantly with God’s glory: she is a virgin with golden wings, decked out, with a fair and mild countenance. She is winged, and buoyant, standing by the royal throne. When we are judged, she suddenly flies in, and shows herself, and rescues us from punishment, sheltering us with her own wings. God would have her rather than sacrifices (Matthew 9:12). Much does He discourse concerning her; so He loves her. ‘The Lord watches over the strangers; He relieves the fatherless and widow; but the way of the wicked He turns upside down’ (Psalm 146:9). God wishes to be called from her. ‘The Lord *is* gracious and full of compassion, slow to anger and great in mercy. The Lord *is* good to all, and His tender mercies *are* over all His works’ (Psalm 145:8-9). For unless she had pitied us, all things would have perished. ‘When we were enemies we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son’ (Romans 5:10). She ‘reconciled’ us; she wrought innumerable blessings; she persuaded the Son of God to become a slave, and to empty Himself of His glory (Philippians 2:7). Let us earnestly emulate her by whom we have been saved; let us love her, let us prize her before and apart from wealth; let us have a merciful soul. Nothing is so characteristic of a Christian, as mercy.”

Yet Chrysostom warned¹⁵⁸ that we often don’t show our gratitude toward God for all He has done for us. He wants to obtain our friendship, but we are more interested in the friendship of men. This should call for mourning since we become little different from His enemies.

¹⁵⁷ John Chrysostom, Homilies on Hebrews, XXXII, 7.

¹⁵⁸ John Chrysostom, Homilies on Hebrews, XXIII, 7.

“Christ is infinitely rich; and yet He desires and earnestly tries to obtain our friendship; we do not respond in kind. What am I saying, ‘do not try’? We do not wish to obtain the good things as He wishes it. And what He has done shows that He wishes it more than we do. He, for our sake, gave even His own Son. Let us make use of the love of God as we ought; let us reap the fruits of His friendship. For ‘You are My friends if you do whatever I command you’ (John 15:14). How wonderful! His enemies, who were at an infinite distance from Him, whom in all respects He excels by an incomparable superiority, these He has made His friends and calls them friends. What then should one not choose to suffer for the sake of this friendship? For the friendship of men we often incur danger, but for that of God, we do not even give up money. Our condition does indeed call for mourning, tears, wailings, loud lamentation and beating of the breast. We have fallen from our hope, we are humbled from our high estate, we have shown ourselves unworthy of the honor of God; even after His benefits we are become unfeeling and ungrateful. The demons have stripped us of all our good things. We were counted worthy to be sons; we His brethren and fellow-heirs are come to differ nothing from His enemies that insult Him.”

Chrysostom also pointed out¹⁵⁹ that some of the shepherds of Israel only pay attention to the things that benefit themselves. Christ Himself set a counter example by not deserting His followers, but instead going to the Cross for them. His enemies criticized Him for being unsupported by the testimony of others; however, after John the Baptist spoke, and God the Father spoke from heaven and after thousands of incredible miracles, their mouths were stopped sufficiently that they quit saying this.

“Christ noted two kinds of spoilers: one, the thief who kills and steals; the other, one who does not do these things, but who when they are done does not pay attention or hinder them. The first is like Theudas and those like him (Acts 5:36); the second is like the teachers of the Jews, who neither cared for nor thought about the sheep entrusted to them. Ezekiel of old rebuked them, ‘Son of man, prophesy against the shepherds of Israel, prophesy, and say to the shepherds, Thus says the Lord God; “O shepherds of Israel, do shepherds feed themselves? Do not the shepherds feed the sheep?”’ (Ezekiel 34:2, LXX) But they did the contrary, which is the worst kind of wickedness, and the cause of all the rest. Therefore he said, ‘Behold, you feed on the milk, clothe yourselves with the wool, and slay the fat: but you don’t feed My sheep. The weak one you have not strengthened, the sick you have not cherished, the bruised you have not bound up, the stray one you have not turned back, and the lost you have not sought; and the strong you have wearied with labor’ (Ezekiel 34:3-4). Paul also has declared, ‘for all seek their own, not the things which are of Christ Jesus’ (Philippians 2:21); and again, “Let no one seek his own, but each one the other's well-being’ (1 Corinthians 10:24). Christ distinguished Himself from those who came to spoil, by saying, “I have come that they may have life, and that they may have *it* more abundantly’ (John 10:10). He also distinguished Himself from those who didn’t care if the sheep were carried away by wolves, by never deserting them, but even laying down His life for them, that the sheep might not perish. When they desired to kill Him, He neither altered

¹⁵⁹ John Chrysostom, Homilies on John, LX, 1.

His teaching, nor betrayed those who believed on Him, but stood firm, and chose to die. Therefore He continually said, 'I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd gives His life for the sheep' (John 10:11). His words appeared to be unsupported by testimony. (The, 'I lay down My life' was not long after proven, yet the, 'that they may have life, and that they may have *it* more abundantly', was to come to pass after their departure to the life to come.) So what does Christ do? He proves one from the other; by giving His mortal life, He proves that He gives life immortal. As Paul said, 'For if when we were enemies we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, much more, having been reconciled, we shall be saved by His life' (Romans 5:10). And again in another place, 'He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things?' (Romans 8:32) But why do they not now bring against Him the charge which they did before, when they said, 'You bear witness of Yourself; Your witness is not true?' (John 8:13) Because He had often stopped their mouths and because His boldness towards them had been increased by His miracles."

Appendix B¹⁶⁰ God's "Righteousness"

A Roman Catholic friend (and a good theologian) recently asked me whether the Greek Fathers of the Church understand the term "righteousness" in a forensic sense. He was referring to a Protestant doctrine that holds that God does not "make" us righteous; He "declares" or "counts" us righteous. That is, God imputes righteousness to us, while we remain in a state of sinfulness; Luther would say, at once justified and sinful. Reading, for example, St Paul's letter to the Romans, my friend asked, do the Eastern Fathers also read the notion of "righteousness" forensically? Well no, I thought. But then I had to formulate something of the reason why. After a lot of stumbling, this is what I passed on to him.

The Protestant notion of "imputation," (as I understand it) grew out of the conviction that we are inherently (by nature) incapable of making ourselves righteous; we cannot become truly just on the basis of our own good deeds or merits. This states that insofar as the qualities of justice and righteousness are attributable to us, we should understand that God imputes them to us as an expression of His mercy. This God does so that we can re-enter the realm of His righteousness, His holiness, and thus be saved from the consequences of sin, which is (eternal) death. This interpretation, however, as many people have pointed out, means that our righteousness is little more than a legal fiction. God treats us as if we were just or righteous, although He (like us) knows full well that we are not¹⁶¹.

The difference between this notion and the Orthodox perspective is well illustrated by our respective interpretations of Romans 5:12. In the West, at least in the popular mind, the debate was long polarized between Catholic emphasis on salvation through "works-righteousness," and Protestant insistence on "justification by faith (alone!)." The presupposition underlying both views is that we inherit Adam's guilt, which resulted from his sinful disobedience to the divine commandment¹⁶².

Augustine seemed convinced that the guilt resulting from Adam's sin is transmitted through the sexual act, from generation to generation, like some deleterious gene. This "original sin" must be removed if we are to be saved from death, to share in eternal life. The question as to how this is accomplished has received many different answers. Medieval Catholic piety held that this occurs through infused grace, which confers upon us the power to perform righteous deeds and thereby actually to become or be made righteous. This enables us to build up a "treasury of merits," the term "merit" being understood as a gift of divine grace rather than our own accomplishment (Council of Trent, 1547). The popular notion that we are saved only if our merits outweigh our sins on the scales of divine justice is usually attributed to Roman Catholics. It is shared, nevertheless, by many Orthodox, who have failed to appreciate the fullness of God's grace, both in enabling us to perform good works and in forgiving us fully when we sincerely repent of our sins¹⁶³.

¹⁶⁰ Very Rev. John Breck, God's "Righteousness", *Life in Christ*, September 2006, Article # 1, <http://www.oca.org>.

¹⁶¹ D. Guthrie, *New Testament Theology* (Inter-Varsity Press, 1981, pp. 498-504) discusses various Protestant approaches to this question, including the distinction between "imparted" and "imputed" righteousness.

¹⁶² Modern dialog between Catholics and Protestants has gone beyond this focus on inherited guilt and is concerned more with the meaning of "justification."

¹⁶³ The common view of merits as a means by which we put God in our debt (never sanctioned as dogma), together with the idea of inherited guilt, has been treated well and in detail in recent Catholic reflection. The Catechism

To the Greek Fathers, what we inherit from Adam is not his sin and consequent guilt, but mortality¹⁶⁴. From Adam (understood, really, as an archetype), we “inherit” the sting of death. Death has spread to all of humanity, as an inevitable consequence of our fallen nature; yet each of us, under the threat of death, rebels personally against God, the Author of Life. This means that our guilt is our own; we bring it upon ourselves. (A sign in our local marina declares: “You are responsible for your wake!” How true...)

Greek patristic tradition generally interprets Paul’s words as “righteousness,” rather than as “justice” in the forensic sense. That is, the term refers first to God’s own quality of righteousness, understood more as an expression of love and mercy than as one of divine justice that must be “satisfied.” Through the indwelling Holy Spirit, followers of Christ are capable of receiving that divine righteousness as a gift – one that can actually work a transformation in human life by enabling us to pray, to wage spiritual warfare against the passions, and to love both God and other people. Human nature remains “fallen”; but the Spirit leads the human person on a pathway of sanctification.

In the Eastern perspective, there is no thought that we must accumulate merits in order to justify ourselves before God, although our faithful often seem (as evidenced in Confession) to feel that if we are to be saved, our good works must outweigh our sins. Nor, on the other hand, is there a denial of the place and importance of good works in Christian life (Ephesians 2:8-10!). Salvation is accomplished by grace in response to faith. But that faith cannot be passive; it must express itself, not merely by confessing Jesus as “personal Lord and Savior,” but by feeding, clothing, visiting and otherwise caring for the “least” of Jesus’ brethren (Matthew 25:31-46).

What we are saved from is the key issue here. Rather than view salvation primarily as a forensic liberation from guilt through imputed or imparted righteousness, we should see it as incorporation, by baptism, into Christ’s death and resurrection, such that we “die and rise” with Him. Thus we are saved from Death. We are freed from this ultimate consequence of sin and guilt – but only as a divinely bestowed gift of God’s ineffable love, expressed in the suffering death of His Son, a gift to which we respond with faith that issues in love. That response, through the action of the indwelling Spirit, enables us finally to share in Christ’s own resurrection and glorification, attaining what the Greek Fathers¹⁶⁵ call *theōsis* or “deification” (which means existential participation in God’s life, and not ontological confusion between God and His human creatures).

of the Catholic Church (§ 404-409), for example, makes an important distinction between original sin as a “deprivation of original holiness and justice” – which renders human nature “subject to ignorance, suffering and the dominion of death, and inclined to sin” – and personal faults for which each of us is responsible. In this perspective, “original sin” is close to the Orthodox understanding of “fallen human nature.”

¹⁶⁴ E.g., John Chrysostom, *Homilies on Romans*, X, v. 19; Maximus the Confessor, *Quaest. Ad Thal.* (PG 90:408). An excellent summary of this issue can be found in J. Meyendorff, *Byzantine Theology*, Fordham University Press, 1974, pp. 143-146.

¹⁶⁵ “Communion in the risen body of Christ; participation in divine life; sanctification through the energy of God, which penetrates true humanity and restores it to its ‘natural’ state, rather than justification, or remission of inherited guilt – these are at the center of Byzantine understanding of the Christian Gospel.” J. Meyendorff, *Byzantine Theology*, p. 146.

Good works should thus be understood to be a response rather than a means to salvation. And God's righteousness should be seen as a gift of loving, merciful, saving grace, rather than as a forensic tool, wielded in the service of divine judgment.

PAUL'S WORK AMONG THE CHURCHES

July 11, 2021
16th Sunday after Pentecost
Revision C

Epistle: 2 Corinthians 6:1-10

In the West, today's Epistle Reading is used either on Ash Wednesday (the beginning of Lent) or on All Saints Day (i.e. November 1st or the day after All Hallows Eve). In the Orthodox Church, this Reading is also used for the Feast Day of the Martyr Euphemia on September 16th and for the commemoration of the Miracle of the Martyr Euphemia on July 11th.

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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

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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 details on this, see the Epistle lesson for the 14th Sunday after Pentecost. In the interval from 52 to 55 AD, the Apostles Apollos and Peter visited Corinth. Apollos was one of the original Seventy, but must have been 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). Paul said that he and Apollos are one, that is, of one mind in the work of establishing the Churches (1 Corinthians 3:8).

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 for the following cities:

Olympas	Philippi
Jason	Thessalonica
Silas	Corinth
Herodion	Petras (SW Greece)

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

From a detailed study of Paul’s Missionary Journeys, it is apparent that Paul worked with at least 60 of the original members of the Seventy at some point. 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.

Epistle: 2 Corinthians 6:1-10

The Epistle lesson begins with a quote from Isaiah, where the Father is speaking to the Son, His Servant. The full text is shown below, and the part that Paul quoted is highlighted:

“And now thus says the Lord that formed Me from the womb to be His own servant, to gather Jacob to Him and Israel. I shall be gathered and glorified before the Lord, and My God shall be My strength. And He said to Me, ‘It is a great thing for You to be called My Servant, to establish the tribes of Israel and to recover the dispersion of Israel. Behold I have given You for the covenant of a race, for a light of the Gentiles, that You should be for salvation to the end of the earth’”.

“Thus says the Lord that delivered You, the God of Israel, ‘Sanctify Him that despises His life, Him that is abhorred by the Gentiles that are the servants of

princes: Kings shall behold Him, and princes shall arise and shall worship Him, for the Lord's sake. For the Holy One of Israel is faithful and I have chosen You".

"Thus says the Lord, **'In an acceptable time I have heard You and in a day of salvation I have helped You.** And I have formed You, and given You for a covenant of the Gentiles, to establish the earth and to cause to inherit the desert heritages'" (Isaiah 49:5-8 LXX).

Thus Isaiah stated that God the Father spoke of His Son, His Servant. He says that His Son will be the New Covenant, and will be a light for the Gentiles. He will gather Israel and will be glorified before the Father; princes shall worship Him. The Holy One of Israel was faithful in that He despised His life in going willingly to the Cross.

An Acceptable Time

The term "Acceptable Time" is also called a favorable opportunity, a time of the Gift, a time of grace and a day of salvation. This acceptable time especially applies to the Gentiles, who are given an amazing opportunity to come out of darkness. This acceptable time will not last forever, but comes to a close with the end of the age. Each of have this window for doing something worthwhile; if we pass it up, we may lose this golden opportunity.

The time when the Lord's Servant is a light to the Gentiles is called an acceptable time. It is a time when pardon is available freely and easily. John Chrysostom called¹⁶⁶ it a "favorable opportunity". He calls it a time of the Gift, a time of the Grace,

"When it is appointed not that an account should be required of our sins, nor a penalty exacted. Besides being delivered, we also enjoy ten thousand good things, righteousness, sanctification and all the rest."

Giving an example, he stated: "For in the case of monarchs here below, at the time of their festivals, and when they appear in the dress of Consuls, he who brings a small offering receives large gifts. But on the days in which they sit in judgment, much strictness, much sifting is required. Let us too, therefore, strive for the mastery in the time of this Gift. It is a day of Grace, of Grace divine; where with ease even we shall obtain the crown".

Clement of Alexandria stated¹⁶⁷ that the timing of both the Gospel and the Law and the Prophets was perfect for all men, that all might come out of darkness.

"The proclamation of the Gospel came at the proper time, just as at the proper time the Law and the Prophets were given to the Barbarians¹⁶⁸, and Philosophy to the Greeks, to prepare their ears for the Gospel. 'Therefore', says the Lord who delivered Israel, 'in an acceptable time I have heard you, and in a day of salvation I have helped you. I have given you for a Covenant to the nations; that you might establish the earth, and cause to inhabit the desert inheritance; saying to those in bonds, come out; and to those that are in darkness, show yourselves' (Isaiah

¹⁶⁶ John Chrysostom, Homilies on 2 Corinthians, XII, 1.

¹⁶⁷ Clement of Alexandria, Stromata, VI, 6.

¹⁶⁸ Many Gentile nations were aware of the Mosaic Law, and some actually incorporated it into their laws and philosophy.

49:8-9 LXX). If the ‘prisoners’ are the Jews, of whom the Lord said, ‘Come out from bonds, you that want’, meaning the voluntary bound, and who have taken on tough burdens by human injunction. It is plain that ‘those in darkness’ are those who have the ruling faculty of the soul buried in idolatry.”

“To those who were righteous according to the Law (i.e. the Jews), faith was lacking. The Lord, in healing them, said, ‘Your faith has made you well’ (Matthew 9:22). But to those that were righteous according to philosophy (i.e. the Gentiles who had a heart for God), not only faith in the Lord, but also the abandonment of idolatry, was necessary. On the revelation of the truth, they also repented of their previous conduct.”

Justin Martyr stated¹⁶⁹ that the New Covenant applied to the illumined Gentiles, who are Christ’s inheritance, where Christ is the Covenant of God. This was the acceptable time and the day of salvation

“If the Law was able to enlighten the nations and those who possess the Law, what need would there be of a New Covenant? But since God announced beforehand that He would send a New Covenant, and an everlasting Law and Commandment, we will not understand this of the old Law and its adherents, but of Christ and His disciples, namely us Gentiles, whom He has illumined. He says, ‘Thus said the Lord, In an acceptable time I have heard You, and in a day of salvation I have helped You, and I have given You for a Covenant of the people, to establish the earth, and to inherit the desert inheritance.’ (Isaiah 49:8 LXX) What, then, is Christ’s inheritance? Is it not the Gentiles? What is the Covenant of God? Is it not Christ? As He says, ‘You are My Son; this day I have begotten You. Ask of Me, and I shall give You the Gentiles for Your inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for Your possession’” (Psalm 2:7-8 LXX).

John Chrysostom emphasized¹⁷⁰ that the Throne of Grace is still there and we may approach boldly; that is with no evil conscience and no doubt. The Throne of Grace will not remain such forever.

“How is it that we should ‘come boldly to the throne of grace’? (Hebrews 4:16) Now it is a throne of Grace, not a throne of Judgment. Therefore we should approach boldly, ‘that we may obtain mercy’, just as we are seeking. Now is a time of royal generosity.”

“‘We may find grace to help in time of need for help in due season’. He well said, ‘for help in time of need’. If you approach now, he means, you will receive both grace and mercy, for you approach ‘in due season’; but if you approach then, no longer will you receive it. Then the approach is unseasonable, for it is not then ‘a throne of Grace’. Till that time He sits granting pardon, but when the end has come, then He rises up to judgment. It is said, ‘Arise, O God, judge the earth’ (Psalm 82:8). ‘Let us come boldly’, having no ‘evil conscience’, that is, not being in doubt, for such a one cannot ‘come with boldness’. On this account it is said, ‘I have heard you in an accepted time and in a day of salvation have I helped you’ (2

¹⁶⁹ Justin Martyr, *Dialogue with Trypho*, 122.

¹⁷⁰ John Chrysostom, *Homilies on Hebrews*, VII, 6.

Corinthians 6:2). Now is the grace of God for those to find repentance who sin after baptism.”

“When you hear of a High Priest, He stands; he leads to the throne; He does not sit. For Christ to be made High Priest is not of nature, but of grace, condescension, and humiliation. Thus is it seasonable for us now to say, ‘Let us draw near’ asking ‘boldly’; let us only bring Faith and He gives all things. Now is the time of the gift; let no man despair of himself. Then will be the time of despairing, when the bride chamber is shut, when the King has come in to see the guests, when they who shall be accounted worthy shall have received as their portion the Patriarch’s bosom. Now it is not yet so! The spectators are still assembled; the contest is still ongoing; the prize is still in suspense.”

Athanasius of Alexandria, in his annual Paschal Letters, compared¹⁷¹ the proclamation in Israel with the silver trumpets that announced the Feast Days to the “acceptable time” that Paul mentioned. Like them, we are being called together to a wonderful event, like a Sabbath, to receive the blessings of God.

“As a good physician, Christ exhorts us to obedience in season — the only season in which we may be healed — just as the Father sent Him seasonably, saying, ‘In an acceptable time I have heard You, and in the day of salvation I have helped You’” (Isaiah 49:8).

“Paul urges us to note this season, saying, ‘Behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation’ (2 Corinthians 6:2). At set seasons He called Israel to the Levitical feasts by Moses, saying, ‘Three times in a year you shall keep a feast to Me’ (Exodus 23:14), one of which, my beloved, is that now at hand (Pascha). The trumpets of the priests sounded, urging its observance; as the Psalmist commanded, ‘Blow with the trumpet in the new moon, on the Sabbath Day of your feast!’ (Psalm 81:3, Numbers 10:8). Since the Law required us to blow the trumpets both on the new moons, and on the Sabbath Days, He made a Sabbath day of that in which the light of the moon was beginning; which was then a type of the revealing of Christ, the Light of the world. At one time, the trumpets called to the feasts; at another time to fasting and to war. This was done with solemnity, not by chance; this sound of the trumpets was appointed, so that every man should come to what was proclaimed. When God was revealed to Moses, ‘The Lord spoke to Moses, saying, Make two silver trumpets; and they shall be for you to call the congregation’ (Numbers 10:1-2). These things were to be observed so long as the shadow lasted, the whole being appointed for use, ‘till the time of reformation’ (Hebrews 9:10). ‘If you shall go out to battle in your land against your enemies that rise up against you, then you shall proclaim with the trumpets, and you shall be remembered before the Lord, and be delivered from your enemies’ (Numbers 10:9). Not only in wars did they blow the trumpet, but there was a festal use of the trumpet also. ‘In the day of your gladness, and in your appointed feasts, at the beginning of your months, you shall blow the trumpets’ (Numbers 10:10). Let no man think it is a light and contemptible matter, if he hears the command of the Law respecting trumpets; it is a wonderful and awesome thing. Beyond any other voice or instrument, the trumpet is awakening and awe-inspiring; so Israel received

¹⁷¹ Athanasius of Alexandria, Festal Letters, I, 1-2.

instruction by these means, because Israel was then just a child (spiritually). In order that the proclamation should not be thought merely human, but superhuman, its sounds resembled those which were uttered when they trembled at Mount Sinai (Exodus 19:16); they were reminded of the Law that was then given them, and they kept it.”

Gregory the Great, Pope of Rome, stated¹⁷² that one aspect of the acceptable time is the opportunity to do good while we have a healthy body. If we miss this opportunity and turn the grace of God into iniquity, we may never have the same opportunity. Instead we may end up just giving our wealth to demons, and be unable later when we desire to do good.

“Differently to be admonished are the whole and the sick. The whole are to be admonished that they employ the health of the body for the health of the soul. If they turn the grace of soundness to the use of iniquity, they may be made worse by the gift, and afterwards merit severer punishment, in that they don’t fear to misuse the more bountiful gifts of God. The whole are to be further admonished that they don’t despise the opportunity of winning health forever. For it is written, ‘Behold now is the acceptable time, behold now is the day of salvation’ (2 Corinthians 6:2). They are to be admonished lest, if they will not please God when they may, they may be not able when they want to when it is too late. This is why Wisdom deserts those whom she called before, but who refused too often, saying, I have called, and you refused; I have stretched out my hand, and no one regarded; you have disdained all my counsel, and accepted none of my reproof. I will also laugh at your calamity; I will mock when your terror comes (Proverbs 1:24-27). ‘Then shall they call on me, and I will not listen; they will seek Me diligently, but they will not find me’ (Proverbs 1:28). When health of body, received for the purpose of doing good, is despised, it is realized, after it is lost, how precious was the gift. At the end it is fruitlessly sought, having been enjoyed unprofitably when granted at the proper time. Solomon said it well, ‘Don’t give your honor to others and your years to the cruel one, lest strangers be filled with your wealth, and your labors end up in the house of a stranger, and you mourn at the end, when your flesh and your body are consumed (Proverbs 5:9-11). For who are strangers from us but malignant spirits, who are separated from the lot of the heavenly country? What is our honor but that, though made in bodies of clay, we are yet created after the image and likeness of our Maker? Who else is cruel but that apostate angel, who has both struck himself with the pain of death through pride, and though lost, has not ceased to bring death on the human race? He therefore gives his honor to strangers who, being made after the image and likeness of God, devote the seasons of his life to the pleasures of malignant spirits. He also surrenders his years to the cruel one who spends the space of life accorded him after the will of the domineering adversary. If anyone has received a healthy body or wisdom of the mind, yet labors not in the practice of virtues but in the perpetration of vices, he by no means fills his own house, but fills the houses of strangers with his wealth. That is, he multiplies the deeds of unclean spirits, and indeed so acts, in his luxuriousness or his pride, as even to increase the number of the lost by the addition of himself.”

¹⁷² Gregory the Great, Book of Pastoral Rule, III, 12.

Gregory the Theologian stated¹⁷³ that the accepted time is every present moment and it will vary from one person to another. We should be cautious to take advantage of the acceptable opportunities we have, and we should focus on real and lasting values.

“I know of three classes among the saved; the slaves, the hired servants, and the sons. If you are a slave, be afraid of the whip; if you are a hired servant, look only to receive your wages; if you are a son, revere Him as a Father, and work that which is good, because it is good to obey a Father. Even though no reward should come of it for you, this is itself a reward, that you please your Father. Let us take care not to despise these things. How absurd it would be to grasp for money and throw away health; to be lavish about cleansing the body, but economical about cleansing of the soul; to seek freedom from earthly slavery, but not to care about heavenly freedom! It would be equally absurd to make every effort to be splendidly housed and dressed, but to never think how you yourself may become very precious; and to be zealous to do good to others, without any desire to do good to yourself. If good could be bought, you would spare no money; but if mercy is freely at your feet, you despise it for its cheapness. Every time is suitable for your baptism, since any time may be your death. With Paul I shout to you with that loud voice, ‘Behold now is the accepted time; behold now is the day of salvation’ (2 Corinthians 6:2). This Now does not point to any one time, but is every present moment. Again ‘Awake, you that sleep, and Christ shall give you light’ (Ephesians 5:14), dispelling the darkness of sin. Again, ‘In the night hope is evil, and it is more profitable to be received in the morning’” (Isaiah 28:19 LXX).

Receiving the Grace of God in Vain

Paul stated, “We then, as workers together with Him also plead with you not to receive the grace of God in vain. For He says, ‘In an acceptable time I have heard you, and in the day of salvation I have helped you’ (Isaiah 49:8). Behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation” (2 Corinthians 6:1-2). What does Paul mean by receiving the grace of God in vain?

John Cassian stated¹⁷⁴ that every man has the ability to choose between good and evil, and angels versus demons are right there to help us go in the direction we want to pursue. Paul encouraged Timothy to choose the good and he did; Peter encouraged Simon Magus to choose the good also, but he didn’t.

“It cannot be doubted that there are by nature some seeds of goodness in every soul, planted by the kindness of the Creator. But unless these are quickened by the assistance of God, they will not be able to attain an increase of perfection. As Paul says, ‘Neither he who plants is anything, nor he who waters, but God who gives the increase’ (1 Corinthians 3:7). Freedom of the will is to some degree in a man’s own power. This is very clearly taught in the book termed the Shepherd¹⁷⁵, where two angels are said to be attached to each one of us, i.e., a good and a bad

¹⁷³ Gregory Nazianzen, *Oration on Holy Baptism*, XL, 13.

¹⁷⁴ John Cassian, *3rd Conference of Abbot Chaeremon*, II, xiii, 12.

¹⁷⁵ *The Shepherd*, written by the Apostle of the Seventy, Hermas. See Roberts and Donaldson, ed., *Ante-Nicene Fathers*, Volume 2,

one, while it lies at a man's own option to choose which to follow. The will always remains free in man, and can either delight in or neglect the grace of God. Paul would not have commanded, 'Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling' (Philippians 2:12), had he not known that it could be advanced or neglected by us. But that men might not fancy that they had no need of Divine aid for the work of Salvation, he adds, 'For it is God who works in you both to will and to do for His good pleasure' (Philippians 2:13). Therefore he warns Timothy, 'Do not neglect the gift that is in you' (1 Timothy 4:14); and again: 'Therefore I remind you to stir up the gift of God which is in you' (2 Timothy 1:6). In writing to the Corinthians he exhorts and warns them not to show themselves unworthy of the grace of God through their unfruitful works, saying, 'We plead with you not to receive the grace of God in vain' (2 Corinthians 6:1). The reception of saving grace was of no profit to Simon doubtless because he had received it in vain; for he would not obey the command of the blessed Peter who said, 'Repent of your wickedness, and pray God if perhaps the thought of your heart may be forgiven you; for I see that you are poisoned by bitterness and bound by iniquity'" (Acts 8:22-23).

Athanasius of Alexandria stated¹⁷⁶ that we ought no longer to live to ourselves, but, as servants to the Lord. We should not receive the grace in vain, as the time is especially an acceptable one, and the day of salvation has dawned, even the death of our Redeemer.

John Chrysostom noted¹⁷⁷ that Paul made the situation urgent for the Corinthians in that not only is the time short, but also this is the only season for salvation. They needed to develop a zeal worthy of the grace they had been given. If someone had been freed from his sins, and yet made a friend wallow in what he had been freed from, he had received the grace of God in vain.

"Paul urged the Corinthians not only from the greatness of the blessings they received and His loving kindness, but also from the shortness of the time. Therefore he said elsewhere, 'For now our salvation is nearer' (Romans 13:11); and again, 'The Lord is at hand' (Philippians 4:5). But here he does something more. Not only is the remainder of the time short, but also this is the only season for salvation available."

"'Look!' Paul said, 'Now is the acceptable time; now is the day of salvation!' (2 Corinthians 6:2) Let us not let the favorable opportunity slip away but display a zeal worthy of the grace. Therefore we press forward, knowing both the shortness and the suitableness of the time. He also said, 'We are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were pleading through us: we implore *you* on Christ's behalf, be reconciled to God' (2 Corinthians 5:20). It is even with God that he speaks of working together; 'we are God's fellow-workers' (1 Corinthians 3:9), in this way to save men. When pleading, Paul advances God's just claims; namely, that He gave His Son, the Righteous One 'Who knew no sin *to be* sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him' (2 Corinthians 5:21), thus displaying such goodness."

"We plead that you would receive the benefit and not reject the gift. Be persuaded therefore by us, and 'receive not the grace in vain' (2 Corinthians 6:1).

¹⁷⁶ Athanasius of Alexandria, Festal Letters, VI, 4.

¹⁷⁷ John Chrysostom, Homilies on 2 Corinthians, XII, 1.

Paul didn't want them to think that just believing on Him that calls by itself is 'reconciliation with God'; therefore he added these words 'receive not the grace in vain', repaying that earnestness which respects the life we receive. One who has been freed from sins and yet made a friend to wallow in the former things, has returned to enmity with God, and has 'received the grace in vain' with respect to eternal life. We reap no benefit from 'the grace' towards salvation, if we live impurely. We are even harmed, having this greater aggravation of our sins, in that after such knowledge and such a gift we have gone back to our former vices. This however he does not mention yet, that he may not make his work harsh, but says only that we reap no benefit. Paul then reminded the Corinthians of a prophecy, urging and compelling them to rouse themselves in order to lay hold of their own salvation. 'At an acceptable time I listened to you, and in a day of salvation I helped you. Look! Now is the acceptable time; now is the day of salvation'" (2 Corinthians 6:2).

Giving No Offense to Anyone

Being zealous to receive the grace of God during the acceptable time is good; but being zealous could also offend people. Out of kindness to others, we need to be aware of others' feelings and sensitivities. Paul stated, "We give no offense in anything, that our ministry may not be blamed. But in all things we commend ourselves as ministers of God" (2 Corinthians 6:3-4).

Gregory the Great, Pope of Rome, writing to the Emperor's sister, Theoctista, encouraged¹⁷⁸ her to not to be bothered by the murmuring of foolish men since her witness is in heaven. If there is any way to avoid offending anyone, we ought to do it to avoid any association with sin on our part. Gregory illustrated this with two examples involving the Pharisees. This may mean going considerably out of our way and associating with surly men, but we should do it anyway.

"As often as you hear foolish men speaking derogatory of you, you shouldn't be touched by even the least sadness of heart. This murmuring of foolish men cannot be pacified by quiet reason, I hold it to be sin if the doing of what can be done is neglected. When we appease insane minds, and bring them back to a healthy state, we ought by no means to cause them offense. There are some offenses that should be altogether despised; but there are others which, when they can be avoided without guilt, should be considered. We learn this from the preaching of the Gospel. The Truth said, 'Not what goes into the mouth defiles a man; but what comes out of the mouth, this defiles a man' (Matthew 15:11). The disciples replied, 'Do You know that the Pharisees were offended after they heard this saying?' (Matthew 15:12). Immediately Christ replied, 'Every plant which my heavenly Father has not planted shall be rooted up. Let them alone; they are blind leaders of the blind' (Matthew 15:13-14). Yet, when tribute was demanded, He first gave a reason why tribute should not be paid, then added, 'Lest we should offend them, go to the sea, cast in a hook, take the fish that comes up first; and when you have opened his mouth, there you shall find a silver

¹⁷⁸ Gregory the Great, Epistle to Theoctista, XI, 45.

tetradrachm¹⁷⁹. Take that, and give it to them for Me and for you' (Matthew 17:27). Why is it that to some who were offended it is said, 'Let them alone; they are blind, and leaders of the blind'; and that to others, lest they should be offended, tribute is paid by the Lord, even though not due? Why is it that He allowed one offense to remain, but forbade another to be caused? He was teaching us on the one hand to despise offenses which implicate us in sin, but on the other to mitigate in all ways those who we can appease without sin?"

"Therefore your Excellency, with God protecting you, He may quietly deflect the offenses of bad men. The chief of these bad men you should of your own accord call in to speak to you privately and give them reasons, and anathematize certain wrong points, which they suppose to be held by you. If they suspect such anathema to be insincere, you should confirm it even by an oath, affirming that you do not hold, and never have held, those points. Don't let it seem beneath you to satisfy them in such a way; don't let there be in your mind any feeling of contempt against them on account of your imperial race. For we are all brethren created by the power of one Emperor, and redeemed by His blood. So we ought not in anything to despise our brethren, however poor they are."

John Chrysostom stated¹⁸⁰ that the Apostles differed from us only in their will and purpose. They were careful not to offend anyone, yet they went beyond the Commandments in humility.

"The Apostles were partakers of the same nature as us; they differed in their will and purpose. So it was that they attracted the great grace that they did. See how many things they ordered by their own knowledge of grace. 'That we don't give offense' to those who wish to take offense, and, 'That our ministry be not blamed' (2 Corinthians 6:3). They had an irreproachable life and also condescension. Paul went beyond the commandments of Christ and on the other hand was the humblest of all. 'I have become all things to all men', he said, 'that I might by all means save some'" (1 Corinthians 9:22).

Leo the Great, speaking about the beginning of Lent, stated¹⁸¹ that the struggle between our two natures (flesh and spirit) must accompany our fasting. When we do this we will not offend anyone.

"As we are about to enter on those mystic days, which are dedicated to the benefits of fasting, let us take care to obey the Apostle's precepts, cleansing 'ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit' (2 Corinthians 7:1), that by controlling the struggles that go on between our two natures, the spirit, which if it is under the guidance of God, should be the governor of the body, and may uphold the dignity of its rule. Thus we will give offense to no one; nor will we be the target of reproof by anyone. If the conduct of those that fast is at variance with the standard of perfect purity, we shall be rightly attacked with rebukes; through our own fault ungodly tongues will arm themselves to do harm to the Faith. Our fast does not consist in just abstinence from food, nor is it profitable for dainties to be

¹⁷⁹ A silver tetradrachm (Greek: stater) was the same weight as the Hebrew Shekel. See Merrill Unger, Unger's Bible Dictionary, Moody Press, Chicago, 1967, p. 725.

¹⁸⁰ John Chrysostom, Commentary on Acts, XLIII, v. 16.

¹⁸¹ Leo the Great, Pope of Rome, Sermons, XLII, 2.

withdrawn from our bodily appetites, unless the mind is recalled from wrong-doing and the tongue restrained from slandering. This is a time of gentleness and long-suffering, of peace and tranquility, when all the pollutions of vice are to be eradicated and continuance of virtue is to be attained by us.”

Ambrose of Milan gave¹⁸² some practical considerations in dealing with people to avoid offending them. One basic principle is to do nothing to advance one’s own cause that puts someone else down. Injustice, real or perceived, is quick to cause offense, and equity should be a characteristic of the Church. Priests should not show favoritism to rich or poor to avoid giving offense; if they have difficulty with this, they should avoid judgment completely. On the other hand, where there is a danger to the whole Church, it is a great sin for a priest to pretend that he saw nothing.

“We must strive to win many by kindness and by the duties that we can do, and to preserve the favor already shown us. People will with good reason forget the benefits of former times if they are now bothered by some great wrong. It often happens that those one has shown favor to are driven away, if one decides in some unworthy way to put another before them. It is appropriate, however, for a priest to show favor in his kindnesses to the other clergy just as he would to parents.”

“If anyone is disobedient to his bishop and wishes to exalt himself and overshadow his bishop’s merits by a pretentious appearance of learning, humility or mercy, he is wandering from the truth in his pride. The rule of truth is to do nothing to advance one’s own cause whereby another loses ground, nor to use whatever good one has to the disgrace or blame of another.”

“Never protect a wicked man, nor allow sacred things to be given over to an unworthy man; on the other hand, do not harass and press a man whose fault is not clearly proven. Injustice quickly gives offense in every case, but especially in the Church, where equity ought to exist, where like treatment should be given to all. We should not let a powerful person claim more, or a rich man appropriate more. Whether we are rich or poor, we are one in Christ. Let him that lives a holier life claim nothing more for himself; for he ought rather to be the more humble for it.”

“In giving judgment let us have no respect for persons. Favor must be put out of sight, and the case must be decided on its merits. Nothing is so great a strain on another’s good opinion, as our giving away the cause of the weaker to the more powerful in cases that comes before us. The same happens if we are hard on the poor, while we make excuses for the rich man when he’s guilty. Men are ready enough to flatter those in high positions. If you are afraid of giving offense, then do not undertake to give judgment. If you are a priest, do not urge a decision; it is OK for you to be silent in the matter. If it is a financial matter, it is always good to be on the side of equity. But in the cause of God, where there is danger to the whole Church, it is no small sin to act as though one saw nothing.”

John Chrysostom stated¹⁸³ that Paul was careful even in the use of spiritual gifts not to offend anyone, which contrasted with some in Corinth who were puffed up over their gifts.

¹⁸² Ambrose of Milan, *On the Duties of the Clergy*, II, xxiv, 121, 123-125.

¹⁸³ John Chrysostom, *Homilies on 2 Corinthians*, XII, 2.

“Observe when it is that Paul mentioned the help of the Holy Spirit: after he had listed many things that he did himself, such as tribulations, distresses, stripes, imprisonments, tumults, sleeplessness, fasting. Moreover, he seems to me to be saying another thing. ‘We have been filled with the abundance of the Spirit and also we give proof of our Apostleship in that we have been counted worthy of spiritual gifts.’ If this is grace also, yet still he himself, by his good works and his labors, attracted that grace. We can also say that besides this, he shows that in his use of the gifts of the Spirit he gave no offense. This is in contrast to those who received the gift of tongues among the Corinthians and were puffed up. It is possible for one even in receiving a gift of the Spirit, not to use it right. ‘But we are not like this,’ he said, ‘but in the Spirit also, that is, in the spiritual gifts, we have been blameless’” (2 Corinthians 6:3).

Paul’s Hardships: Those Imposed on Him

Paul had to endure a great deal of hardships such as in Table 1, where these were the hardships imposed on him. The occasions for these hardships are listed in Table 2. There are other hardships that he imposed on himself that we will cover next. Paraphrasing John Chrysostom¹⁸⁴, for Paul to bear one or two things is no great matter, but Paul was inflicted with snow storms of trials. Every one of these was intolerable by itself; but when both all, and all at once, attack, consider what a soul is required to put up with it.

Table 1
Definitions of the Difficulties Imposed on Paul

Difficulty	Strong	Greek	References
Tribulations, in the sense of pinching or compression	2347	thlipsis	Revelation 7:14, Philippians 1:17, James 1:27, Acts 20:23
Forced necessity as from violence or torture	318	anagke	Romans 13:5, Hebrews 7:12, 2 Corinthians 9:7
Distress as in narrowness or lack of room	4730	stenochoria	Romans 2:9
Stripes as in wounds	4127	plege	Revelation 9, 11, 13, 15, 16, 18; Acts 16:23, 33
Imprisonment, including guards and watches	5438	phulake	Acts 12:4-17, Mark 6:48
Instability, including riots	181	akatastasia	Luke 21:9, James 3:16, 1 Corinthians 14:33

Thlipsis or tribulation is the same word used for “those who came out of the Great Tribulation” at the end times (Revelation 7:14). In this context, it implies a hounding, where everyone is after you to capture or kill you. Orphans and widows can also experience this in their poverty trying to support themselves (James 1:27).

Anagke is a necessity that is forced on us, such as from obedience to governments (Romans 13:5). At the Advent of Christ there was a necessity, *anagke*, for a change in the Law (Hebrews 7:12); similarly we are encouraged not to give alms of necessity, *anagke*, but out of cheerfulness (2 Corinthians 9:7).

¹⁸⁴ John Chrysostom, Homilies on 2 Corinthians, XII, 2.

Stenochoria refers to a distress that comes from a closed-in situation. The only place in the New Testament where the use of *stenochoria* helps clarify its meaning is where Paul describes the Last Judgment: there will be tribulation, *thlipsis*, and distress, *stenochoria*, on every soul that does evil (Romans 2:9).

Plege refers to the wounds that come from whipping or beating and can include the whipping process. The “plagues” that come in the Last Days are stripes, *plege*, on the enemies of God (Revelation 9, 11, 13, 15, 16, 18) where the English word “plague” was taken directly from the Greek word. In Philippi, Paul was inflicted with many stripes, *plege*, and the converted jailor afterward washed these stripes (Acts 16:23, 33).

Phulake refers to confinement in prison, complete with guards and watches throughout the night. Peter was in prison, *phulake*, chained between two guards, with other guards watching the doors (Acts 12:4, 5, 6, 17). Jesus came walking on the Sea of Galilee during the 4th watch, *phulake*, of the night (Mark 6:48).

Akatastasia refers to riots, disturbance, disorder and confusion. There will be wars and riots, *akatastasia*, prior to the 2nd Coming of Christ (Luke 21:9), since envy and self-seeking lead to riots, *akatastasia*, and every evil thing (James 3:16). Yet God is not the author of riots, *akatastasia*, but of peace (1 Corinthians 14:33).

Table 2
Times When Some of Paul’s Hardships Occurred

Difficulty	Strong	References
Tribulations, in the sense of pinching or compression	2347	In Asia (2 Corinthians 1:8); Pisidia (Acts 13:50); Iconium (Acts 14:5); Lystra (Acts 14:19); Philippi (Acts 16:23); Jerusalem (Acts 20:23)
Forced necessity as from violence or torture	318	Forced to leave Pisidia (Acts 13:50, Iconium (Acts 14:5), Lystra (Acts 14:20), Philippi (Acts 16:39), Thessalonica (Acts 17:10). Appeal to Caesar (Acts 25:11). Murder Plots (Acts 9:29, 23:12).
Distress as in narrowness or lack of room	4730	In Iconium (Acts 14:5); Lystra (Acts 14:19); Philippi (Acts 16:24); Jerusalem (Acts 21:31); Rome (Acts 28:16)
Stripes as in wounds	4127	In Philippi (Acts 16:23); Many other times (2 Corinthians 11:23)
Imprisonment, including guards and watches	5438	In Philippi (Acts 16:23); Jerusalem (Acts 21:31); Rome (Acts 28:17).
Instability, including riots	181	Riots in Philippi (Acts 16:22), Thessalonica (Acts 17:5), Berea (Acts 17:13), Ephesus (Acts 20:28-41), Jerusalem (Acts 21:27)

John Chrysostom was totally impressed¹⁸⁵ with the life of the Apostle Paul. With all the extreme hardships Paul had to put up with, one might think that Paul would prefer to retire from action to be with the Lord. But Paul chose to continue in the flesh longer, even with the hardship, for the sake of his Churches and his brethren.

“Nothing can be more blessed than the spirit of Paul, for the reason that nothing is nobler. We all shudder at death, some by reason of our many sins, and others from love of life or cowardice. While we all shudder at death, Paul prayed for it, saying, ‘To depart is far better’ (Philippians 1:23). However, when he was about to depart from earth to heaven, and to be with Christ, he does not choose it. Why didn’t he immediately seize it? What is Paul saying?”

¹⁸⁵ John Chrysostom, Homilies on Philippians, IV, vv. 22-26

“Paul lived an exceeding tough life, ‘in watching, in shipwrecks, in hunger and thirst, and nakedness, in cares and anxiety. ‘With the weak’ he was ‘weak’, and for those who ‘were made to stumble’ he ‘burned with indignation’ (2 Corinthians 11:25-29). Five times he received 39 stripes, three times was he beaten with rods, once was he stoned, a night and a day he has been in the deep, in many, many perils (2 Corinthians 11:24-26). His grief was really severe, and still he desired this perishing life! If none of these things had happened to him, but he still had his success, shouldn’t he hurry to some harbor, from fear of the uncertain future? What trader, whose vessel is full of untold wealth, when he is able to return to port and be at rest, would prefer to be still at sea? What wrestler, when he might be crowned, would prefer to contend? What boxer, when he might put on his crown, would choose to enter again into the contest, and offer his head to wounds? What general is there, who when he might end the war with good report and trophies, and refresh himself with the king in the palace, would choose still to labor, and to stand in battle array? How then does Paul, who lived such a tough life, wish to still remain here? Did he not say that he had concern that having preached to others, he himself should become disqualified?” (1 Corinthians 9:27) If for no other cause, yet surely for this, he ought to desire his release.”

“That spirit of Paul; nothing was ever like it, nor ever will be! He feared the future, he was surrounded by innumerable dreadful things, and he does not ask to be with Christ. For Christ’s sake, he asked to be allowed to make the plot which he planted bear more fruit (1 Corinthians 3:9). Paul declared that he didn’t seek ‘his own profit’ (1 Corinthians 10:33), but his neighbor. He stated, ‘I could wish that I myself were anathema from Christ for my brethren’ (Romans 9:3). Paul chose that part, with pleasure harming himself by this delay, that they may be saved. ‘Who can utter Your mighty acts, O Lord’ (Psalm 106:2), because You revealed such a man to the world?”

John Chrysostom pointed out¹⁸⁶ that Paul’s trials demonstrated the weapons of God and that the power was of God and not of him. This is clear evidence of the Resurrection. One of the reasons Paul detailed this was out of love for the Corinthians so that they might develop more respect for what he had done.

“Paul detailed his own afflictions, showing that the thing was a great good, and called those things ‘weapons’, for he said, ‘as chastened and not killed’ (2 Corinthians 6:9). He personally represented God’s abundant care and power, for he said, ‘that the exceeding greatness of the power may be of God, and not of us’ (2 Corinthians 4:7). As Paul recounted his labors, saying, ‘We always bear about His dying’, this is a clear demonstration of the Resurrection, ‘that the life of Jesus may be demonstrated in our body’ (2 Corinthians 4:10). This is further demonstrated by the things that he was made partaker of, and by what he had been entrusted with. ‘We are ambassadors on behalf of Christ as though God were entreating by us’ (2 Corinthians 5:20), and by the things that he is delivering, namely, ‘not the letter, but the Spirit’ (2 Corinthians 3:6). Paul was entitled to respect not only on this account, but also for his trials, for, ‘Thanks be to God’, he said, ‘who always leads us in triumph in Christ’ (2 Corinthians 2:14). Paul

¹⁸⁶ John Chrysostom, Homilies on 2 Corinthians, XIII, 1

proceeded to rebuke the Corinthians as not being very grateful towards himself (2 Corinthians 6:11-12). He does not immediately come to this, but discusses other things first. Even if he that rebukes is entitled to respect from his own good deeds, yet still, when he displays the love that he bears towards those who are censured, he makes his speech less offensive. Therefore Paul steps out of the subject of his own trials and passes on to speaking of his love; in this way he touches them deeper.”

John Chrysostom noted¹⁸⁷ the life of Jesus compared to the life of Paul after his conversion: they both faced considerable persecution. If we intend to follow the Master, we can expect the same kind of life if we wish to be worthy of Him.

“Jesus was a continual fugitive, sometimes in Galilee, and sometimes in Judea, and His trial was great, even from the swaddling clothes. When He was a young child, did not His mother take Him and go down into Egypt? For all these reasons Paul says, ‘Looking to Jesus the Author and Finisher of our Faith who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God’” (Hebrews 12:2).

“Let us look to Christ then, and also to the sufferings of His disciples, reading the writings of Paul; for if the sufferings of those near us arouse us, what zeal those of our Master will give us! What will they not work in us!”

“Paul expressed the whole by the word ‘Contradiction’; that is, the punches on the cheek, the laughter, the insults, the reproaches, the mockeries. Not these only, but also the things which happened to Him during His whole life of teaching.”

“Truly great consolations are both the sufferings of Christ, and those of the Apostles. He so well knew that this is the better way of virtue, as even to go that way Himself, even though He had no need to do so. He knew so well that tribulation is expedient for us, and that it becomes rather a foundation for repose. Hear Him saying, ‘He who does not take his cross and follow after Me is not worthy of Me’ (Matthew 10:38). If you are a disciple, He means, imitate the Master; for this is being a disciple. If He went by the path of affliction, and you go by that of ease, you no longer take the same path, but another. How shall you be a disciple, not following the Master? This Paul also says, ‘We are weak, but you are strong; we are despised, but you are honored’ (1 Corinthians 4:10). How is it reasonable, he means, that we should be striving after opposite things, and yet that you should be disciples and we teachers?”

Paul’s Hardships: Those He Imposed on Himself

Paul mentioned many aspects of his ministry using just a few words, and the meaning of these few words may not be immediately obvious. We will take each of these aspects one at a time. Some of the Church Fathers have pointed out that there is an order to these aspects of Paul’s ministry. Paul is not just blowing his own horn; he is telling us where to start in order to acquire these virtues.

¹⁸⁷ John Chrysostom, Homilies on Hebrews, XXVIII, 6.

Paraphrasing John Chrysostom¹⁸⁸, Paul imposed a very high standard on himself: fasting, purity, knowledge (i.e. the wisdom of God), etc. He was straightforward with the word of truth, neither being deceitful nor trying to adulterate it. The power of God had been obvious in their midst. Shortly before coming to Corinth the first time, “God worked unusual miracles by the hand of Paul, so that even handkerchiefs and aprons were brought from his body to the sick, and the diseases left them and the evil spirits went out of them” (Acts 19:11-12). Rather than being weakened by his trials, the weapons of righteousness made him even stronger.

Bearing dishonor is indeed a great thing; but to partake of honor requires an exceedingly great soul, that he who enjoys it may not be thrown and break his neck. In contrast, the Jewish leaders had difficulty in this regard. Jesus rebuked them saying, “How can you believe, who receive honor from one another, and do not seek the honor that comes from the only God?” (John 5:44). Too much honor can deter even a good man from following what he knows is right. Because of this, Paul was “unknown”; or rather, some people refused to know him at all.

Paul asked whether there was an evil report of his work or a good report, and this even during afflictions. Some may have thought he was a deceiver, yet he remained true to his calling. Not only did he bear those things nobly which happen to the body, the afflictions and all that he enumerated, but those also which touch the soul. As an example, Chrysostom spoke¹⁸⁹ of Job, to whom the reproaches of his friends appeared worse than the worms and the sores. There is nothing more intolerable to those in afflictions than a word capable of stinging the soul.

Paul Imposed the Following on Himself:	
in much patience	in long-suffering
in labors	in kindness
in sleeplessness	in the Holy Spirit
in fasting	in sincere love
in purity	in the word of truth
in knowledge	in the power of God
He Met These Challenges:	
through the weapons of righteousness for both the left and the right hand	
through honor and dishonor	
through evil report and good report	
Yet He Had Been Characterized:	
as a deceiver, yet true	as sorrowful, yet rejoicing
as unknown, yet well known	as poor, yet enriching many
as dying, yet alive	as having nothing, yet possessing all things
as chastised, yet not killed	

In many places, Paul was under a sentence of death, condemned and chastised, which was also a matter of dishonor. He was stoned and left for dead in Lystra (Acts 14:19); he barely escaped from Antioch of Pisidia (Acts 13:50), and Iconium (Acts 14:5). As far as those who plotted against

¹⁸⁸ John Chrysostom, Homilies on 2 Corinthians, XII, 2.

¹⁸⁹ John Chrysostom, Homilies on 2 Corinthians, XII, 3.

him were concerned, he died; and this is what many supposed. But by God's aid, he escaped the dangers.

To those that were outside the Church and knew he was still alive, Paul was suspected of being in despair. But he gave paid no attention to them and had his pleasure to the full because of his hope. While he was constantly lacking in basic necessities: food, clothing, shelter (1 Corinthians 4:11), yet he was making many rich with treasure in heaven.

Paul inspired a great loyalty among many in the Churches. The Galatians were described as receiving him as an angel of God and were ready to pluck their own eyes out and give them to him (Galatians 4:14-15). Priscilla and Aquila risked their own necks for him (Romans 16:4). Remembering the miracles that Paul performed and realizing that he was accompanied by the power of God, one can truly say that he may have had nothing in worldly possessions, yet he did possess all things.

Clement of Alexandria stated¹⁹⁰ that the point of Paul's self-imposed hardships was that he and others with him were the temples of God, purified 'from all filthiness of the flesh and of the spirit' (2 Corinthians 7:1). 'And I will receive you; and I will be to you for a Father, and you shall be to Me for sons and daughters, said the Lord Almighty' (2 Corinthians 6:17-18). 'Let us then', he says, 'perfect holiness in the fear of God' (2 Corinthians 7:1). Though fear generates pain, 'I rejoice', he says, 'not that you were made sorry, but that your sorrow led to repentance. For you were made sorry in a godly manner, that you might suffer loss from us in nothing. For godly sorrow produces repentance leading to salvation, not to be regretted; but the sorrow of the world produces death' (2 Corinthians 7:9-10).

Much Patience

Paul imposed much patience on himself. Patience is an asset to the man of God far more than one might imagine. John Cassian noted¹⁹¹ that evil cannot be brought on the man of God who has patience by another man unless the man of God becomes slothful or feeble of heart. Paul calls fortunate circumstances those "on the right hand" and misfortune, those "on the left hand". Both become the weapons of righteousness to the man who is patient, since a man is more easily overcome by prosperity than by misfortune.

"The patience of Job did not bring any gain to the devil; it made Job a better man as a result of his temptations, by enduring them bravely. Judas was not granted freedom from eternal punishment, even though his act of betrayal contributed to the salvation of mankind. We must not regard the result of the deed, but the purpose of the doer. We should always cling to this assertion; that evil cannot be brought upon a man by another, unless a man has admitted it by his sloth or feebleness of heart. Paul confirms this opinion, 'But we know that all things work together for good to them that love God' (Romans 8:28). By saying, 'All things work together for good', he includes everything alike, not only things fortunate, but also those which seem to be misfortune."

"Things, which are considered fortunate, are called the ones 'on the right hand', which Paul designates by the terms honor and good report. Those which are

¹⁹⁰ Clement of Alexandria, *Stromata*, IV, 21.

¹⁹¹ John Cassian, *Conference of Abbot Theodore*, I, vi, 9.

counted misfortunes, which he clearly means by dishonor and evil report, he describes as ‘on the left hand’ (2 Corinthians 6:7). Both become to the perfect man ‘the weapons of righteousness’, if when they are brought on him, he bears them bravely. As he fights with these weapons, with which he seems to be attacked, he is protected by them as by bow, sword and shield against those who bring these things upon him. He secures the advantage of his patience and goodness, and obtains a grand triumph of steadfastness by means of those weapons of his enemies, which are hurled against him. He must not be elated by success or cast down by failure, but march straightforward on the king’s highway, and not swerve from that state of tranquility as it were to the right hand, when joy overcomes him. He must also not let himself be driven to the left hand, when misfortunes overwhelm him, and sorrow governs him. ‘Much peace have they that love Your Law, and to them there is no stumbling block’ (Psalm 119:165 LXX). Of those who shift about according to the character and chances that happen to them, we read, ‘But a fool will change like the moon’ (Ecclesiasticus 27:11 LXX). Just as it is said of men who are perfect and wise, ‘To them that love God all things work together for good’ (Romans 8:28), so of those who are weak and foolish it is declared that ‘everything is against a foolish man’ (Proverbs 14:7 LXX), for he gets no profit out of prosperity, nor does adversity make him any better. It requires as much goodness to bear sorrows bravely, as to be moderate in prosperity; one who fails in one of these, will not bear up under the other. A man can be more easily overcome by prosperity than by misfortunes. Misfortunes restrain men against their will and make them humble and through wholesome sorrow cause them to sin less, and make them better. Prosperity puffs up the mind with soothing but pernicious flatteries and, when men are secure in the prospect of their happiness, dashes them to the ground with a greater destruction.”

Labors

By “labors”, Paul was referring to the kind of work that a person does for the kingdom of God. Ambrose of Milan spoke¹⁹² of a man’s labors as his life’s work for which he receives a crown at the Lord’s return. As an example, he mentioned Moses, who spoke when he was silent and who labored when he was at ease.

“When can the upright man be alone, since he is always with God? When is he left forsaken who is never separated from Christ? ‘Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? I am confident that neither death nor life nor angel shall do so’ (Romans 8:35, 38). When can he be deprived of his labor, who never can be deprived of his merits, wherein his labor receives its crown? By what places is he limited to whom the whole world of riches is a possession? By what judgment is he confined, who is never blamed by anyone? He is ‘as unknown yet well known, as dying and behold he lives, as sorrowful yet always rejoicing, as poor yet making many rich, as having nothing and yet possessing all things’ (2 Corinthians 6:9-10). The upright man regards nothing but what is consistent and virtuous. Although he seems poor to another, he is rich to himself, for his worth is taken not at the value of the things which are temporal, but of the things which are eternal.”

¹⁹² Ambrose of Milan, *Duties of the Clergy*, III, i, 7, 2.

“Moses knew that he was not alone when he was alone and that he was least at leisure when he was at leisure. When silent, he was crying out as he parted the Red Sea (Exodus 14:16); when he stood at ease, he was fighting; not merely fighting but triumphing over enemies, whom he had not come near. So much was he at ease, that others held up his hands; yet he was no less active than others, for he with his hands at ease was overcoming the enemy, whom they that were in the battle could not conquer (Exodus 17:11-13). Thus Moses spoke in his silence and in his ease labored hard. His labors were greater than his times of quiet, who received the whole Law, being on the mountain for forty days (Exodus 24:17-18). In that solitude there was One not far away to speak with him. David says, ‘I will hear what the Lord God will speak in me’ (Psalm 86:8 OSB LXX). How much greater a thing is it for God to speak with anyone, than for a man to speak with himself!”

Sleeplessness, Watching and Vigils

Paul stated that he was involved often in watching and fasting (2 Corinthians 11:27). The Lord Himself often spent most of the night in prayer (Matthew 14:23-25), just like He did in the Garden of Gethsemane prior to the Crucifixion (Matthew 26:36-45).

Athanasius of Alexandria spoke¹⁹³ of Pascha as a time for fasting and watchfulness in prayer, and not a time for delights of the belly like the heathen. It is a time for exercise and the practice of temperance as we contend with one another in observing the purity of the fast.

“When we come to the Paschal Feast, no longer come as to old shadows, neither as to common feasts, but let us hasten as to the Lord, Who is Himself the feast (1 Corinthians 5:7). Do not look on it as an indulgence and delight of the belly, but as a revealing of virtue. For the feasts of the heathen are full of greediness, and utter indolence, since they consider they celebrate a feast when they are idle; and they work the works of perdition when they feast. But our feasts consist in the exercise of virtue and the practice of temperance; prophetic word testifies in a certain place, saying, ‘The fast of the fourth, the fifth, the seventh, and the tenth month shall be to the house of Judah for gladness, rejoicing, and for cheerful feasts’ (Zechariah 8:19). Since this occasion for exercise is set before us and the prophetic voice has gone out that the feast shall be celebrated, let us give all diligence to this good proclamation. Like those who contend on the race course, let us vie with each other in observing the purity of the fast (1 Corinthians 9:24-27), by watchfulness in prayers, by study of the Scriptures, by distributing to the poor, and let us be at peace with our enemies. Let us bind up those who are scattered abroad, banish pride, and return to lowliness of mind, being at peace with all men, and urging the brethren to love. The blessed Paul was often engaged in fasting and watching, and was willing to be accursed for his brethren (Romans 9:3). Blessed David, having humbled himself by fasting, used boldness, saying, ‘O Lord my God, if I have done this, if there is wrongdoing in my hands, if I dealt back evil to those dealing evil to me, then may I fall empty because of my enemies’ (Psalm 7:4-5 OSB LXX). If we do these things, we shall conquer death; and receive a guarantee (Ephesians 1:13-14) of the kingdom of heaven.”

¹⁹³ Athanasius of Alexandria, Festal Letters, XIV, 5.

John Cassian noted¹⁹⁴ that all our efforts at fasting, watching, and dumping worldly pursuits will not help us if we don't root out anger from our life.

"The athlete of Christ ought to root out the feeling of wrath thoroughly. A sure remedy for this disease, in the first place, is making up our mind that we ought never to be angry at all, whether for good or bad reasons. If the main light of our heart has been darkened by its shadows with anger, we shall immediately lose the light of discernment, the security of good counsel, our uprightness, and the temperate character of righteousness. Next, the purity of our soul will be clouded, such that it cannot possibly be made a temple for the Holy Spirit while the spirit of anger resides in us. Lastly, we should never pray or pour out our prayer to God while we are angry. Above all, having before our eyes the uncertain condition of mankind, we should realize daily that we are soon to depart from the body. Our continence and chastity, our renunciation of all our possessions, our contempt of wealth, our efforts in fasting and vigils will not help us at all, if solely on account of anger and hatred, eternal punishments are awarded to us by the judge of the world."

Fasting

Fasting has been proscribed as a part of the life of the people of God since the days of Moses¹⁹⁵. There are short (one-day) fasts and longer fasts for various reasons. The Pharisees fasted twice a week (Luke 18:12) on a Monday and a Thursday to remember Moses climbing Mt. Sinai twice to receive the Law. Even some of the Gentiles fasted as part of their religious activities. Like other people of God, Paul fasted often (2 Corinthians 11:27). The Twelve and later Paul took to heart the Lord's words, "this kind does not go out except by prayer and fasting" (Matthew 17:21).

Besides keeping the appointed fast days such as the Day of Atonement (Acts 27:9), Paul and Barnabas fasted and prayed over the ordination of presbyters (Acts 14:21-23). As the Lord instructed (Matthew 6:16-18), Paul did not trumpet his fasting to sound spiritual, but we get hints that he did it a lot (2 Corinthians 6:5, 11:27).

Jerome described¹⁹⁶ the history of fasting among the people of God. Adam (not eating meat), Moses, Elijah, Daniel, David, Samson, Samuel, Anna, John the Baptist and Cornelius all benefited greatly from some type of fasting. Others who refused to fast were led away into ungodliness. The pattern here seems to be that those who are willing to deprive themselves for a greater purpose are rewarded in some way.

One of the points of fasting is to subdue the fleshly desires. In the Mosaic Law, the Hebrew word *tsoom* (meaning "to cover the mouth" or to fast) is not used at all. Instead the people were instructed to "humble their souls" at the Day of Atonement. Fasting was just a means of doing so (see Ezra 8:21, Daniel 9:3, 10:12).

¹⁹⁴ John Cassian, *Institutes of the Coenobia*, VII, 22.

¹⁹⁵ For more details on the history of fasting among the people of God, see the Study for the 4th Sunday of Lent.

¹⁹⁶ Jerome, *Against Jovinianus*, II, 15-16.

There were times when the Lord's people just went through the motions of fasting and made it look like they were humbling their souls (Joel 2:12-18, Jeremiah 14:10-12). The fast, which the Lord chooses, includes "loosening the bonds of wickedness, freeing the oppressed, feeding the hungry, housing the homeless, and clothing the naked (Isaiah 58:3-8). This sounds much like the Lord's words in the Gospel relating to the Last Judgment (Matthew 25:31-46). Thus the fast that the Lord chooses prepares us for Judgment Day.

Purity of Heart

Paul also imposed on himself purity of heart. John Cassian summarized¹⁹⁷ purity of heart as our immediate goal in our journey to the Kingdom of God. The Kingdom of God is the end of our way of life, but without purity of heart, we won't get there. Paul calls purity of heart "sanctification", and it is something we must continually focus on with all our strength.

"The end of our way of life is the kingdom of God. But we must ask what is our immediate; for if we don't discover it, we shall wear ourselves out to no purpose. A man who is traveling in a wrong direction has all the trouble and gets none of the good of his journey. The end of our profession indeed is the kingdom of God; but the immediate aim or goal, is purity of heart, without which no one can gain that end. Fixing our gaze then steadily on this goal, as if on a definite mark, let us direct our course as straight towards it as possible. If our thoughts wander somewhat from this, let us revert to our gaze upon it, and check them accurately as by a sure standard, which will always bring back all our efforts to this one mark, and will show if our mind has wandered ever so little from the direction marked out for it."

"That our end is eternal life, Paul declares, 'You have your fruit to holiness, and the end, everlasting life' (Romans 6:22). Purity of heart, which is our immediate goal, Paul calls 'sanctification' (1 Thessalonians 4:3-4). Of which goal he teaches us, 'Forgetting those things which are behind and reaching forward to those that are ahead, I press toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus' (Philippians 3:13-14). With this aim, with which I forget those things that are behind, i.e., the faults of earlier life, I strive to reach as the end the heavenly prize. Whatever then can help to guide us to purity of heart, we must follow with all our might, but whatever hinders us from it, we must shun as a dangerous and hurtful thing. For this we endure all things, for this we make light of our kinsfolk, our country, honors, riches, the delights of this world, and all kinds of pleasures, in order that we may retain a lasting purity of heart. When this object is set before us, we shall always direct our actions and thoughts straight towards the attainment of it. If it is not constantly before our eyes, it will not only make all our work vain and useless, and force them to be endured to no purpose and without any reward, but it will also excite all kinds of thoughts opposed to one another. For the mind, which has no fixed point to which it may return, is sure to wander about from hour to hour. Those things which come to it from outside will constantly change it into that state which first offers itself."

¹⁹⁷ John Cassian, 1st Conference of Abbot Moses, I, 1, 4-5.

Knowledge

The spiritual knowledge that Paul was referring to comes solely from purity of heart, and it is not necessarily related to worldly wisdom or even a great knowledge of the Scriptures. John Cassian described¹⁹⁸ the means to acquiring spiritual knowledge: first one must obtain purity of heart. Spiritual knowledge comes from the Holy Spirit; but the Holy Spirit will not dwell in a body subject to sin. Some people have a show of knowledge, and even know the Scriptures well. But their knowledge is false.

“Men who only possess skill in public speaking cannot penetrate to the heart of Scripture and the mysteries of its spiritual meanings. True knowledge is only acquired by true worshippers of God; and certainly this people does not possess it to whom it is said, ‘Hear, O, foolish and senseless people; you who have eyes but don’t see, and have ears, but don’t hear’ (Jeremiah 5:21 LXX). Again, ‘Because you have rejected knowledge, I also will reject you from acting as My priest’ (Hosea 4:6). In Christ ‘all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge are hidden’ (Colossians 2:3). The man, who has scorned finding Christ, or blasphemes Him with impious lips when he finds Him, or defiles the Faith by his impure deeds, has not acquired spiritual knowledge. ‘The Spirit of God doesn’t dwell in a body that is subject to sin’ (Wisdom 1:4-5 LXX). There is then no way of arriving at spiritual knowledge but the way described by Hosea, ‘Sow for yourselves righteousness; gather in for the fruit of life. Enlighten yourselves with the light of knowledge’ (Hosea 10:12 LXX). First we must sow righteousness; i.e., by works of righteousness we must extend practical perfection. Next we must reap the hope of life; i.e., by the expulsion of carnal sins we must gather the fruits of spiritual virtues; and so we shall succeed in enlightening ourselves with the light of knowledge. The Psalmist says, ‘Blessed are the blameless in the way, who walk in the law of the Lord. Blessed are they that search out his testimonies’ (Psalm 119:1-2 LXX). He does not say in the first place, ‘Blessed are they that seek His testimonies’, and afterwards add, ‘Blessed are they that are blameless in the way’. But he begins by saying, ‘Blessed are they that are blameless in the way’; and by this clearly shows that no one can properly come to seek God’s testimonies unless he first walks blameless in the way of Christ by his practical life. The impure cannot attain spiritual knowledge, but have what is falsely so called. Paul speaks of this, ‘O Timothy! Guard what was committed to your trust, avoiding the profane *and* idle babblings and contradictions of what is falsely called knowledge’ (1 Timothy 6:20). Regarding those then who seem to acquire some show of knowledge or regarding those who while they devote themselves diligently to reading the sacred volume and to committing the Scriptures to memory, yet don’t forsake carnal sins, it is well said in Proverbs, ‘Like a golden ring in a swine’s snout so is a lovely woman who lacks discretion’” (Proverbs 11:22).

John Cassian proceeded¹⁹⁹ to state that there is something to the order of the virtues as Paul listed them. Paul is not just blowing his own horn, but is telling us where to start in order to acquire these virtues: which follows what and which gives birth to what.

¹⁹⁸ John Cassian, 1st Conference of Abbot Nesteros, II, xiv, 16.

¹⁹⁹ John Cassian, 1st Conference of Abbot Nesteros, II, xiv, 16.

“When Paul wanted not merely to draw up a list of his own virtues, but rather to describe their order, that he might explain which follows what, and which gives birth to what, after some others he proceeds, ‘In watching, in fasting, in chastity, in knowledge, in long suffering, in gentleness, in the Holy Spirit, in love unfeigned’ (2 Corinthians 6:5-6). By this enumeration of virtues he meant to teach us that we must come from watching and fasting to chastity, from chastity to knowledge, from knowledge to long suffering, from long suffering to gentleness, from gentleness to the Holy Spirit, from the Holy Spirit to the rewards of love unfeigned. When you have come in this order to spiritual knowledge, you will certainly not have barren or idle learning, but what is vigorous and fruitful. The seed of the word of salvation which has been committed by you to the hearts of your hearers will be watered by the plentiful showers of the Holy Spirit that will follow. As Isaiah promised, ‘He will give the rain for your seed with which you sow the ground, and bread of the increase of the earth; it will be fat and plentiful’” (Isaiah 30:23).

Long Suffering and Kindness

Paul said, “We give no offense in anything, that our ministry may not be blamed. But in all things we commend ourselves as ministers of God: by purity, by knowledge, by longsuffering, by kindness” (2 Corinthians 6:3-4, 6).

Gregory the Theologian encouraged²⁰⁰ us to imitate the mercy of God in all our dealings with our fellow man. He is very long-suffering for all our misdeeds and extremely kind to us in spite of all the things we do.

“Having so many examples let us imitate the mercy of God, and not desire to learn from ourselves how great an evil is retaliation of sin. You see the sequence of goodness. First it makes laws, then it commands, threatens, reproaches, holds out warnings, restrains, threatens again, and only when forced to do so strikes the blow, but this little by little, opening the way to amendment. Let us then not strike suddenly, for it is not safe to do so, but being self restrained in our fear let us conquer by mercy. Let us make them our debtors by our kindness, tormenting them by their conscience rather than by anger. Let us not dry up a fig tree which may yet bear fruit, nor condemn it as useless and hindering the ground, when possibly the care and diligence of a skillful gardener may yet heal it (Luke 13:7-9). Do not let us so quickly destroy so great and glorious a work through what is perhaps the spite and malice of the devil. But let us choose to show ourselves merciful rather than severe, and lovers of the poor rather than of abstract justice. Let us not make more account of those who would stir us up than of those who would restrain us, considering, if nothing else, the disgrace of appearing to contend against beggars, who have this great advantage that even if they are in the wrong, they are pitied for their misfortune.”

²⁰⁰ Gregory of Nazianzen, “Letter to Theodore”, Miscellaneous Letters, III, 7, Ep. 77.

The Holy Spirit

When Paul spoke of “By the Holy Spirit”, he was referring to a whole range of activities of the Holy Spirit such as is recorded in Acts. John Chrysostom noted²⁰¹ that the Gospels are generally a history of what Christ did, while the Acts are a history of what the Holy Spirit did.

“The Gospels are a history of what Christ did and said; but the Acts are a history of what ‘the Comforter’ said and did. The Holy Spirit did many things in the Gospels also; just as Christ in the Acts still works in men as He did in the Gospels. In the Gospels the Spirit worked through the Temple, now through the Apostles. Then, He came into the Virgin’s womb, and fashioned the Temple; now, into Apostolic souls. Then He came in the likeness of a dove; now, in the likeness of fire. Why? In the Gospels He showed the gentleness of the Lord, but in the Acts He began taking vengeance also, to put them in mind of the judgment. When there was need for forgiveness, there was need for much gentleness; but now that we have obtained the gift, it is a time for judgment and examination. Why does Christ say, ‘You shall be baptized’ (Acts 1:5), when there was no water in the upper room? Because the more essential part of Baptism is the Spirit, through Whom the water has its operation. In the same manner our Lord is said to be anointed, not that He had ever been anointed with oil, but because He had received the Spirit. We do in fact find them receiving a baptism with water, and a baptism with the Spirit, and these at different moments. In our case both take place under one act, but then they were divided. In the beginning they were baptized by John; if harlots and publicans went to that baptism, much rather would they who thereafter were to be baptized by the Holy Spirit. Christ had already spoken much to the Apostles concerning the Spirit, that they should not imagine It to be an impersonal Energy or Operation. That the Apostles might not say that they were always having it held out to them in promises (John 14:15, 16), He added, ‘not many days hence’ (Acts 1:5). He did not explain when, that they might always watch; but, that it would soon take place, He told them, that they might not faint. Yet the exact time He refrained from adding, that they might always be vigilant.”

Gregory Thaumaturgus stated²⁰² that Paul was defining the Trinity in describing the work of God. That is, the Holy Spirit, the Word of Truth (the Son) and the Power of God (the Father). We on the other hand, are the Temple of God and the Holy Spirit dwells in us (1 Corinthians 6:19). The Holy Spirit in turn gives different gifts to each person.

John Chrysostom noted²⁰³ that the Holy Spirit would not have come to take up residence in our human bodies, unless sins had first been remitted.

Cyril of Jerusalem encouraged²⁰⁴ people to take advantage of the opportunities during Lent in order to receive grace more abundantly. Forgiveness is given equally to all, but the Holy Spirit is given in proportion to each man’s faith and labor.

²⁰¹ John Chrysostom, Commentary on Acts, I, vv. 1-2.

²⁰² Gregory Thaumaturgus, “A Sectional Confession of Faith”, Dubious or Spurious Works, II, 21.

²⁰³ John Chrysostom, Commentary on Acts, XIII, v. 32.

²⁰⁴ Cyril of Jerusalem, Catechetical Lectures, I, 5.

“The present is the season of confession; confess what you have done in word or in deed, by night or by day. Confess in an acceptable time, and in the day of salvation (2 Corinthians 6:2) receive the heavenly treasure. Devote your time to the Exorcisms; be persistent at the Catechizing, and remember the things that are spoken, for they are spoken not for your ears only, but that by faith you may seal them up in the memory. Blot out from your mind all earthly care, for you are running for your soul. In utterly forsaking the things of the world little are the things, which you are forsaking; great is what the Lord is giving. Forsake things present, and put your trust in things to come. Have you been so busy in vain about the world, and have you not forty days to be free for prayer (that is, during Lent), for your own soul’s sake? Be still, and know that I am God, (Psalm 46:10). Excuse yourself from speaking many idle words; don’t backbite or lend a willing ear to backbiters, but rather be prompt to prayer. Show in ascetic exercise that your heart has the nerve to persevere. Cleanse your vessel, that you may receive grace more abundantly. Though remission of sins is given equally to all, the communion of the Holy Spirit is bestowed in proportion to each man’s faith. If you have labored little, you receive little; but if you have worked much, the reward is great.”

Jerome noted²⁰⁵ of old, ‘My Spirit shall not abide in those men, because they are flesh’ (Genesis 6:3). The Apostle Paul, speaking of the corrupt doctrine and works of the Jews²⁰⁶, says, ‘I did not immediately confer with flesh and blood’ (Galatians 1:16). To the Saints, who, of course, were in the flesh, he says, ‘But you are not in the flesh, but in the spirit, if the Spirit of God dwells in you’ (Romans 8:9). By denying that they were in the flesh, who clearly were in the flesh, he condemned not the substance of the flesh but its sins.

John Chrysostom stated²⁰⁷ that the appointment of Teachers (Bishops) and Priests was done among the Apostles by the Holy Spirit and without human passion. This is part of what Paul meant in saying “By the Holy Spirit”, and the Twelve did this even before they received the Holy Spirit at Pentecost.

“The office of a Teacher and of a Priest is of great dignity, and to bring forward one that is worthy requires a divine election. So it was of old, and so it is now, when we make a choice without human passion, not looking to any temporal consideration, swayed neither by friendship or enmity. Though we are not partakers of so great a measure of the Spirit as the Apostles, yet a good purpose is sufficient to draw to us the election of God. The Apostles, when they elected Matthias, had not yet received the Holy Spirit, but having committed the matter to prayer, they chose him into their number. They didn’t look to human friendships. So now it ought to be with us. But we have advanced to the extreme of negligence; and even what is clearly evident, we let pass. When we overlook what is clear, how will God reveal to us what is unseen? As it is said, ‘If you have not been faithful in that which is little, who will commit to you that which is great and true?’ (Luke

²⁰⁵ Jerome, “To Pammachius Against John of Jerusalem”, 28, Treatises.

²⁰⁶ We sometimes think that Paul “not conferring with flesh and blood” refers to his not conferring with the other Apostles. Jerome interprets Paul’s words differently, saying that they refer to the Jewish leaders who had sent Paul to Damascus.

²⁰⁷ John Chrysostom, Homilies on 1 Timothy, V, vv. 18-19.

16:11) When nothing human was done, the appointment of Priests was by prophecy. What is 'by prophecy'? By the Holy Spirit! For prophecy is not only the telling of things future, but also of the present. It was by prophecy that Saul was discovered and chosen 'hidden among the equipment' (1 Samuel 10:22). For God reveals things to the righteous. So it was said by prophecy, 'Separate for me Barnabas and Saul' (Acts 13:2). In this way Timothy was chosen, concerning whom Paul speaks of prophecies in the plural; when he ordained him, as he himself says in his Epistle, 'Do not neglect the gift that is in you' (1 Timothy 4:14). Therefore to elevate him, and prepare him to be sober and watchful, he reminds him by whom he was chosen and ordained, as if he had said, 'God has chosen you. He gave you your commission; this was not done by human vote. Do not therefore abuse or bring into disgrace the appointment of God'".

Leo the Great stated²⁰⁸ that prayer, fasting and almsgiving are the things that were handed down from the Apostles that are most characteristic of Christianity. They bring other virtues into focus, display the image of God and unite us inseparably with the Holy Spirit.

"There are three things which most belong to Christian actions: namely prayer, fasting, and almsgiving. In doing these things, while every time is accepted, yet they ought to be more zealously observed, since we have received them as hallowed by tradition from the Apostles. As the Day of Atonement comes around again to us, we have the opportunity according to the ancient practice to give more diligent heed to those three things. By prayer we seek to propitiate God, by fasting we extinguish the lusts of the flesh, and by alms we redeem our sins. At the same time the image of God is throughout renewed in us, if we are always ready to praise Him, unfailingly intent on our purification and unceasingly active in cherishing our neighbor. This threefold round of duty brings all other virtues into action; it attains to the image and likeness of God and unites us inseparably with the Holy Spirit. This happens because in prayer faith remains steadfast; in fasting life remains innocent; in almsgiving the mind remains kind. On Wednesday and Friday therefore let us fast: and on Saturday let us keep vigil with the most blessed Apostle Peter, who will come to aid our supplications and fast and alms with his own prayers."

Unfeigned Love

Paul stated, "We give no offense in anything, that our ministry may not be blamed. But in all things we commend ourselves as ministers of God...by longsuffering, by kindness, by the Holy Spirit, by unfeigned love" (2 Corinthians 6:3-4, 6). Many times we see love that expects something in return or love that is limited to times and circumstances. Paul is stating that his service to his Churches goes way beyond this.

John Chrysostom stated²⁰⁹ that unfeigned love was the cause of all those good things we find in the Apostle Paul. This made him what he was; this caused the Spirit also to abide with him, by Whose aid all things were done so spectacularly by him.

²⁰⁸ Leo the Great, Pope of Rome, Sermons, XII, 4.

²⁰⁹ John Chrysostom, Homilies on 2 Corinthians, XII, 2.

Cyprian of Carthage encouraged²¹⁰ the righteous Cornelius in exile to maintain his love for the brethren, since love is our heavenly weapon and defense. Because of this we should be constant in fasting, watching and prayer.

“We earnestly exhort as much as we can, dearest brother, for the sake of the mutual love by which we are joined one to another. We are instructed by the providence of the Lord, who warns us, and we are admonished by the wholesome counsels of divine mercy, that the day of our struggle is already approaching. We should not cease to be instant with all the people in fasting, in watching, in prayers. Let us be urgent, with constant groaning and frequent prayers. These are our heavenly weapons, which make us to stand fast and to persevere bravely. These are the spiritual defenses and divine weapons which defend us. Let us remember one another in concord and unanimity. Let us on both sides always pray for one another. Let us relieve burdens and afflictions by mutual love, that if any one of us, by the swiftness of divine condescension, shall go home first, our love may continue in the presence of the Lord, and our prayers for our brethren and sisters not cease in the presence of the Father’s mercy. I bid you, dearest brother, ever heartily farewell.”

John Cassian stated²¹¹ that bodily exercise, such as fasting, is profitable for a little but the love of the brethren will continue forever in true unfeigned love. Bodily ascetic practices produce a beginning of progress, but not the perfection of love, which is needed to overcome the wickedness of men.

“Paul clearly spoke, when he said that ‘bodily exercise profits a little, but godliness (by which he certainly means love) is profitable for all things, having the promise of this present life and of that which is to come’ (1 Timothy 4:8). This clearly shows that bodily exercise won’t be practiced for all time, and by itself cannot possibly confer the highest state of perfection on the man who slaves at it. For the term ‘for a little’ may mean either of the two things: (1) It may refer to the shortness of the time, because bodily exercise cannot possibly continue with man both in this life and in the world to come. (2) It may refer to the smallness of the profit which results from exercising the flesh. Bodily ascetic practices produce some sort of beginning of progress, but not the actual perfection of love, which has the promise of this present life and of that which is to come. Therefore we judge that the practice of works is needed, because without them we cannot climb the heights of love. Works of faith and mercy are needed in this life while these inequalities and differences of conditions still prevail. We don’t expect them to be performed unless a large proportion of poor, needy, and sick folk abound, which is brought about by the wickedness of men. This refers to those who have grasped and kept for their own use those things which were granted to all by our Creator. As long as this inequality lasts in this world, this sort of work will be needed and will be useful to the man that practices it, as it brings to a good purpose the reward of an eternal inheritance. But it will come to an end in the life to come, where equality will reign, when there will be no longer inequality. All men will someday pass from these manifold practical works to the love of God, and contemplation of

²¹⁰ Cyprian of Carthage, Epistle to Cornelius in Exile, LVI, 5.

²¹¹ John Cassian, 1st Conference with Abbot Moses, I, 1, 10.

heavenly things in continual purity of heart. Those men, who are urgent in devoting themselves to knowledge and purifying the heart, have chosen to give themselves up with all their might, committing themselves, while they are still in the flesh, to that duty, in which they are to continue, when they have laid aside corruption. When they come to that promise of the Lord, they will know, ‘Blessed are the pure in heart for they shall see God’” (Matthew 5:8).

The Word of Truth

Paul stated, “We give no offense in anything, that our ministry may not be blamed. But in all things we commend ourselves as ministers of God...by kindness, by the Holy Spirit, by sincere love, by the word of truth, by the power of God (2 Corinthians 6:3-4, 6-7). What are the implications of the “Word of Truth”?

Jesus had said, “I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me” (John 14:6). Thus the Truth is a person and we are His offspring. “Of His own will He brought us forth by the word of truth, that we might be a kind of first fruits of His creatures” (James 1:18). As the first fruits of Christ, the Church is connected to Christ as a body is connected to a head (Colossians 1:18). Thus the Church is referred to as “the pillar and ground of the truth” (1 Timothy 3:15). As the Church preaches, she proclaims the Truth.

The Truth is also the teachings of the Church, as being the teachings of Christ. Paul stated, “Be diligent to present yourself approved to God, a worker who does not need to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth” (2 Timothy 2:15). “Since we have purified our souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit in sincere love of the brethren, we love one another fervently with a pure heart” (1 Peter 1:22). As we obey the Truth, we are armed with the Truth. We “stand therefore, having girded our waist with truth, having put on the breastplate of righteousness” (Ephesians 6:14). Of this Paul had said, “In Him you also trusted, after you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation; in whom also, having believed, you were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise” (Ephesians 1:13).

Clement of Alexandria stated²¹² that some people are given the gift to teach, expressing themselves verbally, while others are given the gift to study, expressing themselves in writing. One acts more like a herald while the other acts more like a messenger; both can expect a return for their effort. One proclaims the Word of Truth, the other divides the Word of Truth.

“Christ showed Himself, out of His abundance, dispensing goods to His servants according to their ability, that they may increase them by activity. He approved those that had increased His money, those faithful in little, and commanded them to have charge over many things, as He welcomed them into the joy of the Lord. But the servant with one talent hid the money, where He expected him to lend it out at interest; the servant gave it back as he had received it, without increase. He called this servant ‘wicked and lazy’; the useless servant ‘shall be cast into outer darkness’ (Matthew 25:26-30). Regarding this, Paul said, ‘Be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus. The things which you have heard from me among many witnesses, commit these to faithful men, who will be able to teach others’ (2 Timothy 2:1-2). Again, ‘Be diligent to present yourself approved to God, a worker

²¹² Clement of Alexandria, *Stromata*, I, 1.

who does not need to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth' (2 Timothy 2:15). If those who teach and those who study both proclaim the Word — the one by writing, the other by speech — are not both to be approved, making faith active by love? It is the business of some to lay out the word at interest, and of others to test it. There is that species of knowledge which is characteristic of the herald, and that which is characteristic of a messenger, and it is useful in whatever way it operates, both by the hand and tongue. 'He who sows to the Spirit will of the Spirit reap everlasting life. Let us not grow weary while doing good' (Galatians 6:8-9). Divine Providence confers the impulse towards the truth, a movement of inquiry, a trace of knowledge; it gives the means of salvation. Those who have been rightly reared in the words of truth, and received provision for eternal life, wing their way to heaven.

Athanasius of Alexandria had²¹³ to fight for the Truth much of his life against the Arians, very much like Paul on his various missionary journeys. Athanasius spoke of singing Psalms when afflicted just like Paul (Acts 16:25) because the Lord considered him worthy to labor for the Truth. In our labor for the Truth, the Paschal Feast represents sincerity and truth, whereas heretics are strangers to the truth. Our struggles for truth are similar to the struggles of Israel at the time of the Exodus.

"The Jews at that time, although suffering an assault from the Edomites, and oppressed by the enemies of Jerusalem, did not give themselves up, but all the more sang praises to God. Similarly we, though hindered from speaking the word of the Lord, will the more proclaim it, and being afflicted, we will sing Psalms (James 5:13), in that we are accounted worthy to be despised, and to labor anxiously for the truth. Being grievously vexed, we will give thanks. Paul, who gave thanks at all times, urges us in the same manner to draw near to God saying, 'Let your requests, with thanksgiving, be made known to God' (Philippians 4:6). Being desirous that we should always continue in this resolution, he says, 'At all times give thanks; pray without ceasing' (1 Thessalonians 5:17-18). He knew that believers are strong while employed in thanksgiving, and that rejoicing they pass over the walls of the enemy, like those saints who said, 'Through You shall I be delivered from a troop; and by my God I will pass over a wall'" (Psalm 18:29 LXX).

"At all times let us stand firm, but especially now, although many afflictions overtake us, and many heretics are furious against us. Let us celebrate with thanksgiving the holy feast of Pascha which now draws near to us, 'girding up the loins of our minds' (1 Peter 1:13), like our Savior Jesus Christ, of Whom it is written, 'Righteousness shall be the belt of His loins, and faithfulness the belt of His reins' (Isaiah 11:5). Each one of us having in his hand the staff which came out of the root of Jesse, and our feet shod with the preparation of the Gospel of peace (Ephesians 6:15), let us keep the feast as Paul said, 'Not with the old leaven, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth' (1 Corinthians 5:8). We reverently trust that we are reconciled through Christ, and do not depart from faith in Him. Nor do we defile ourselves together with heretics, and strangers to the truth, whose conversation and whose will degrade them. We rejoice in afflictions, we break through the furnace of iron (Deuteronomy 4:20) and darkness, and pass,

²¹³ Athanasius of Alexandria, Festal Letters, III, 5.

unharméd, over that awesome Red Sea. Thus when we look upon the confusion of heretics, we shall, with Moses, sing that great song of praise, ‘We will sing to the Lord, for He has triumphed gloriously!’ (Exodus 15:1) Thus, singing praises, and seeing that the sin which is in us has been cast into the sea, we pass over to the wilderness. Being first purified by the fast of forty days, by prayers, fasting, discipline, and good works, we shall be able to eat the holy Passover in Jerusalem.”

John Chrysostom stated²¹⁴ that the things of the Old Testament were a fore shadow and a type, which all pointed to the Lord’s Supper, which is the truth that sets the world free.

“‘As they were eating, Jesus took bread, and broke it’ (Matthew 26:26). Why can it have been that He ordained this sacrament then, at the time of the Passover? That you might learn from everything, both that He is the lawgiver of the Old Testament, and that the things contained therein are a fore shadow of these things. Therefore, I say, where the type is, there He puts the truth.

But the evening is a sure sign of the fullness of times, and that the things had now come to the end.

He gave thanks, to teach us how we ought to celebrate this sacrament, to show that He comes to the passion willingly, and to teach us whatever we may suffer to bear it thankfully, also suggesting good hope. If the type was a deliverance from such bondage, how much more will the truth set free the world, and how much more will He be delivered up for the benefit of our race. I would add that He didn’t appoint the sacrament before this, but He appointed it when the rites of the Law were about to cease. Thus the chief of the feasts He brings to an end, moving them to another most awesome table, as He said, ‘Take, eat, This is my body, Which is broken for you’” (1 Corinthians 11:24).

The Power of God

Paul stated “that the excellence of the power may be of God and not of us” (2 Corinthians 4:7). We have a need for humility in our relationship with God; we need to let Him work things out as He wills. Paul did this with great humility, and the result was outstanding miracles, where even handkerchiefs and aprons were taken from Paul’s body to heal the sick (Acts 19:10-20) in a demonstration of the power of God.

John Chrysostom stated²¹⁵ that Paul’s life after his conversion truly exhibited the power of God, but there was more to it than just that. While the power he exhibited was beyond human diligence, it was the blamelessness of his life that brought everything about. The power without the blamelessness would not have attracted believers; similarly the blamelessness without the power would not have done much either. But the combination was potent!

“Paul stated, ‘I was made a minister, according to the gift of that grace of God, which was given to me by the effective working of His power’ (Ephesians 3:7). He had said, ‘I am a prisoner’ (Ephesians 3:1); but now he says, that all is of God, ‘according to the gift of His grace’; for according to the power of the gift is the dignity of this privilege. But the gift would not have been enough, had it not also implanted in him power.”

²¹⁴ John Chrysostom, Homilies on Matthew, LXXXII, 1

²¹⁵ John Chrysostom, Homilies on Ephesians, VI, v. 7, Moral.

“It was a work of mighty power and such as no human diligence was equal to. Paul brought three qualifications to the preaching of the word: a zeal that was fervent and bold, a soul ready to undergo any possible hardship, and knowledge and wisdom combined. His love of difficult projects, his blamelessness of life, would have done nothing, had he not also received the power of the Spirit. Look at it as seen first in himself, or rather hear his own words, ‘That our ministry might not be blamed’ (2 Corinthians 6:3). Again, ‘For our exhortation is not of error, nor of uncleanness, nor in deceit, nor a cloak of covetousness’ (1 Thessalonians. 2:3, 5). Thus you have seen his blamelessness.”

“Again, ‘We take thought for things honorable, not only in the sight of the Lord, but also in the sight of men’ (2 Corinthians 8:21). Besides these, ‘I affirm, by the boasting in you, which I have in Christ Jesus our Lord, I die daily’ (1 Corinthians 15:31). Again, ‘Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, anguish, or persecution?’ (Romans 8:35) Again, ‘We give no offense in anything, in much patience, in afflictions, in necessities, in distresses, in stripes, in imprisonments, in watching’ (2 Corinthians 6:3- 5). Then again, his prudence and management, ‘To the Jews I became as a Jew, to those that are without Law as without Law, to them that are under the Law as under the Law’ (1 Corinthians 9:20-21). He shaved his head also, (Acts 21:24-26). But the crown of all is in the power of the Holy Spirit. ‘I will not dare to speak’, he said, ‘of any of those things which Christ has not accomplished through me’ (Romans 15:18). Again, ‘What is it in which you were inferior to other churches?’ (2 Corinthians 12:13) Again, ‘In nothing was I behind the most eminent apostles, though I am nothing’ (2 Corinthians 12:11). Without these things, the work would have been impossible.”

“It was not then by his miracles that men were made believers; nor was it upon the ground of these that he claimed his high calling, but upon those other grounds. A man must be both irreproachable in conduct, prudent and discreet in his dealings with others, regardless of danger, and apt to teach. It was by these qualifications that the greater part of his success was achieved. Where there were these, there was no need of miracles.”

Paul Met These Challenges in Different Ways

Paul’s ministry had an enormous impact on everyone who had contact with him. Unusual miracles accompanied him everywhere, such that a cottage industry even developed, with Jewish exorcists casting out demons by “the Jesus whom Paul preaches” (Acts 19:11-17). But yet Paul did not maintain a high profile and a high consumption lifestyle, even though he had ample reason and opportunity like many evangelists today. Instead Paul humbly worked with his hands at his tent-making trade to provide financial support for himself and those who were traveling with him. Thus he worked six days a week and taught in the synagogue on the Sabbath and in the evening (Acts 17:2, 18:3-4). As he was hounded from city to city (Acts 14:19, 17:13), this left him no time at all to defend himself from the false charges that were spread around about him. He had to depend entirely on the working of the Holy Spirit to accomplish what he did.

By the Weapons of Righteousness

Paul stated, “But in all *things* we commend ourselves as ministers of God by the weapons of righteousness on the right hand and on the left” (2 Corinthians 6:7). The Greek word *hoplon* means a weapon, implement or tool. Paul also wrote to the Ephesians encouraging them to put on the whole armor of God (Ephesians 6:11), where the Greek word there is *panoplia* (i.e. *pas* + *hoplon*), meaning all or every weapon, implement or tool. What Paul meant by this is not immediately obvious.

John Cassian gave²¹⁶ a very good and detailed summary of what Paul meant by the right hand and the left hand. He defined things on the right hand as spiritual achievements, while things on the left hand are spiritual trials, where some examples are shown in Table 1. Cassian used the term “ambidextrous” to refer to a man who could benefit equally well from either things on the right or things on the left. The Patriarchs Job and Joseph are good examples of “ambidextrous” men. The result of being “ambidextrous” is the acquisition of the weapons of righteousness.

“Ehud was described as being ambidextrous ‘equally adept with both of his hands’ (Judges 3:15 OSB LXX). We also can spiritually acquire this power, if by making a proper use of those things which are fortunate, and which seem to be ‘on the right hand’, as well as of those which are unfortunate and as we call it ‘on the left hand’. We can make them both belong to the right side, so that whatever turns up proves in our case, ‘the weapons of righteousness’ (2 Corinthians 6:7). The inner man consists of two parts, like two hands; none of the saints can do without what we call the left hand; by means of it the perfection of virtue is shown, where a man by skillful use can turn both hands into right hands. To make this clearer, the saint has for his right hand his spiritual achievements, and for his left hand, his spiritual failings (such as in Table 1). Anyone who is not puffed up through vainglory by any of those things on the right hand, and who struggles manfully against those on the left hand, and does not yield to despair, but rather seizes the armor of patience to practice himself in virtue — this man can use both hands to fight. In each action he proves triumphant and carries off the prize of victory from that condition on the left hand as well as that on the right.”

“Blessed Job was rewarded for a victory on the right hand. He was the father of seven sons and walked as a rich and wealthy man, yet offered daily sacrifices to the Lord for their purification, in his anxiety, that they might prove dear to God rather than dear to himself. He did this when his gates stood open to every stranger, when he was ‘feet to lame and eyes to blind’ (Job 29:15), when the shoulders of the suffering were kept warm by the wool of his sheep (Job

Table 1
Definition of Things on the Right and Left Hands

Right Hand	Left Hand
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²¹⁶ John Cassian, Conference of Abbot Theodore, I, vi, 10.
See also Gregory the Great, Pope of Rome, Book of Pastoral Rule, II, 3.
John Chrysostom, Homilies on 2 Corinthians, XII, 2-3.
John Cassian, Institutes of the Coenobia, XI, 4.
John Cassian, 2nd Conference of Abbot Moses, I, ii, 16.

Spiritual Achievements	Spiritual Trials
Overcome desires and passions	Entangled in the labor of temptation
Free from all attacks of the devil	Inflamed with the heat of desire of lust
Easily rejects and cuts off all carnal sins	Set on fire by emotion towards rage and anger
Regards all earthly things as vain shadows	Overcome by being puffed up with pride
Longs for the future and actually sees it clearly	Loss of all spiritual warmth
Effectually fed on spiritual contemplations	Oppressed by a sorrow that works death
Heavenly mysteries are more brightly laid open	Shaken to pieces by the contrivances and attacks of accidental circumstances
Prayers to God with great purity and readiness	Grows indifferent with an unreasonable grief
Inflamed with fervent spirit; can pass with the utmost readiness of soul to things invisible and eternal, so as scarcely to believe that one any longer remains in the flesh	Forsaken by good thoughts; psalms, prayer, readings are uninteresting; all virtuous exercises seem by an intolerable and horrible loathing to have lost their savor

31:20), when he was a father to orphans and a husband to widows (Job 29:12), when he did not even in his heart rejoice at the fall of his enemy. With still greater virtue he triumphed over adversity on the left hand, when deprived in one moment of his seven sons he was not as a father overcome with grief, but as a true servant of God rejoiced in the will of his Creator. Instead of being a wealthy man he became poor, naked instead of rich, pining away instead of strong, despised and contemptible instead of famous and honorable. Yet he preserved his fortitude of mind unshaken, when robbed of all his wealth, and he took his place on the dunghill. Like some stern executioner of his own body, he scraped with a potsherd the pus that broke out, plunging his fingers deep into his wounds and dragging out on every side masses of worms from his limbs. In all this he never fell into despair and blasphemy or murmured against his Creator.”

“Job was not overcome by such a weight of bitterness. The cloak, his only remaining possession, which was saved from destruction by the devil only because he was clothed with it, he tore off; he covered his nakedness with it, which he voluntarily endured. The hair of his head, which was the only thing of his former glory left untouched, he shaved and threw to his tormentor. In addition, he mocked his savage foe with that celestial cry of his, ‘If we have received good at the hand of the Lord, should we not also receive evil? Naked I came out of my mother’s womb, and naked I shall return there. The Lord gave and the Lord has taken away; as it has pleased the Lord, so is it done; blessed be the name of the Lord’ (Job 1:21, 2:10).

Joseph was also ‘ambidextrous’; in prosperity he was very dear to his father, affectionate to his brethren, acceptable to God. In adversity he was chaste, and faithful to the Lord. In prison he was kind to the prisoners, forgetful of wrongs, generous to his enemies; to his brethren who were envious of him and as far as lay in their powers, his murderers, he proved not only affectionate but actually generous” (Genesis 42-45).

“These men then and those who like them are rightly called ambidextrous. They can use either hand as the right hand, and passing through those things which Paul enumerates can fairly say, ‘Through the weapons of righteousness on the right hand and on the left, through honor and dishonor, through evil report and good report etc.’” (2 Corinthians 6:7-8).

“We shall then be ambidextrous, when neither abundance nor lack affects us, and when abundance does not entice us to the luxury of a dangerous carelessness, while lack of goods does not draw us to despair, and complaining. Giving thanks to God in either case alike, we gain one and the same advantage out of good and bad fortune. Paul, that truly ‘ambidextrous’ man, the teacher of the Gentiles, testifies for himself, ‘For I have learned in whatever state I am, to be content. I know both how to be brought low and I know how to abound. Everywhere and in all things I have learned both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need. I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me’” (Philippians 4:11-13).

John Chrysostom spoke²¹⁷ to the people of Antioch during their fast²¹⁸ that they are sailors, soldiers, farmers, travelers and wrestlers. As sailors we ride the waves of extravagant desires; as soldiers we put on the spiritual armor of God; as farmers we cultivate our souls, cutting away thorns and producing much fruit; as travelers we are on the path that leads to heaven; and as wrestlers we strip ourselves of worldly entanglements.

“When the winter is over and the summer is appearing, the sailor takes his vessel out to the deep; the soldier polishes his armor, and makes ready his horse for battle; the farmer sharpens his sickle; the traveler boldly undertakes a long journey, and the wrestler strips himself for the contest. So too, when the fast makes its appearance, like a kind of spiritual summer, let us as soldiers polish our weapons; as farmers let us sharpen our sickle; as sailors let us order our thoughts against the waves of extravagant desires; as travelers let us set out on the journey towards heaven; and as wrestlers let us strip for the contest. For the believer is at once a farmer, a sailor, a soldier, a wrestler, and a traveler. Paul said, ‘We do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers. Put on therefore the whole armor of God’ (Ephesians 6:12-13). Have you observed the wrestler? Have you observed the soldier? If you are a wrestler, it is necessary for you to engage in the conflict naked. If a soldier, it behooves you to stand in the battle line armed at all points. How then are both these things possible, to be naked, and yet not naked; to be clothed, and yet not clothed! Divest yourself of worldly business, and you have become a wrestler. Put on the spiritual armor, and you have become a soldier. Strip yourself of worldly cares, for the season is one of wrestling. Clothe yourself with the spiritual armor, for we have a heavy warfare to wage with demons. Therefore we need to be naked, so as to offer nothing that the devil may take hold of, while he is wrestling with us; and to be fully armed at all points, so as on no side

²¹⁷ John Chrysostom, *Homilies on the Statues*, III, 7.

²¹⁸ There had been a riot in Antioch, where statues of the Emperor and his wife were pulled down and dragged through the streets. The Emperor was about to send several Roman legions to massacre Antioch as punishment, and the Bishop of Antioch had gone to Rome to try to dissuade him. Meanwhile the people of Antioch were fasting and praying for mercy.

to receive a deadly blow. Cultivate your soul. Cut away the thorns. Sow the word of godliness. Propagate and nurse with much care the fair plants of divine wisdom, and you have become a farmer. Paul says to you, ‘The hard-working farmer must be first to partake of the crops’ (2 Timothy 2:6). He himself practiced this art. Therefore he said, ‘I planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the increase’ (1 Corinthians 3:6). Sharpen your sickle, which you have blunted through gluttony — sharpen it by fasting. Lay hold of the pathway which leads towards heaven; rugged and narrow as it is, lay hold of it, and continue on your journey. How may you be able to do these things? By subduing your body, and bringing it into subjection. For when the path grows narrow, the corpulence that comes from gluttony is a great hindrance. Keep down the waves of unregulated desires. Repel the tempest of evil thoughts. Preserve the boat; display much skill, and you have become a pilot. We have the fast for a groundwork and instructor in all these things.”

By Honor and Dishonor

Paul stated, “But in all *things* we commend ourselves as ministers of God by honor and dishonor” (2 Corinthians 6:8). John Chrysostom stated²¹⁹ that where God is honored, there is nothing evil; as, on the contrary, where He is not honored, there is nothing good. But there is more to Paul’s reference to honor and dishonor than just this.

Chrysostom also spoke²²⁰ of honor and dishonor from the worldly and from the godly point of view. The worldly man seeks honor and may or may not get it. The godly man doesn’t seek honor, and has his joy in dishonor, yet may receive honor anyway. The latter produces the greatest enjoyment.

“The Apostles were scourged, and they rejoiced; they were bound, and they gave thanks; they were stoned, and they preached. This is the joy I too would like to have; its origin comes from nothing bodily, but from spiritual things. It is not possible for him who joys after the fashion of the world, to rejoice also after a godly sort; for everyone who joys after the world’s fashion, has his joy in riches, luxury, honor, power, and arrogance. But he who rejoices after the mind of God, has his joy in dishonor for God’s sake, in poverty, want, fasting, and humbleness of mind. Do you see how opposite are the grounds for joy? To go without joy in this life, is to be without grief also; and to be without grief here, is to go without pleasure too. These are the things which produce real joy, since the others are joy in name only, but on the whole they consist of pain. What misery the arrogant man endures! He is cut short in the midst of his arrogance, calling down on himself numberless insults, hatred, enmity, spite, and many an evil eye! If he is insulted by greater men, he grieves; if he cannot make his stand against everybody, he is embarrassed. Whereas the humble man lives in much enjoyment, expecting honor from no one; if he receives honor, he is pleased, but if not, he is not grieved. He takes it contentedly that he is honored; but above all, no one dishonors him. Now not to seek honor, and yet to be honored, this is great enjoyment. But vice versa, it is just the reverse; he seeks honor, and is not honored. The pleasure that the honor gives

²¹⁹ John Chrysostom, Commentary on Acts, XVIII, v. 25.

²²⁰ John Chrysostom, Commentary on Acts, XVI, vv. 6-7.

is not the same to him who seeks it, as it is to him who doesn't seek it. The one, however much he receives, thinks he has received nothing; the other, though you give him ever so little, takes it as though he had received everything."

Thus the godly man can benefit from either honor or dishonor. He benefits from honor when he does well in times of peace; he benefits from dishonor if he bears up well when everyone is against him.

Chrysostom further stated²²¹ that virtue living in a pious soul is not perturbed by worldly concerns such as honor and dishonor. The Apostles experienced this throughout their lives. As a rock he stands unmoved by either raging seas or perfect calm. Dishonor has no effect since the world has been crucified to him.

"Nothing can obtain the mastery over virtue; not wealth or poverty, dominion or subjection, preeminence in affairs, disease, contempt or abandonment. But having left all these things below on the earth, it hurries towards Heaven. Only let the soul be noble, and nothing can hinder it from being virtuous. When he who works is vigorous, nothing external can hinder him. In the arts, when the craftsman is experienced and persevering, thoroughly acquainted with his art, if disease overtakes him, he still has his ability; if he becomes poor, he still has it; whether he has his tools in his hand or not, whether he works or not, he doesn't lose his art at all, for the science of it is still contained within him. Thus too the virtuous man, who is devoted to God, displays his art, if you cast him into wealth or into poverty, into disease or into health, into dishonor or into great honor."

"The Apostles were always working 'by honor and dishonor, by good report and evil report' (2 Corinthians 6:8). A true athlete is prepared for everything; such is also the nature of virtue. If you say, 'I am not able to preside over many; I ought to lead a solitary life', you insult virtue. Virtue can make use of every state, and shine through all. Only do this through the soul and not through the flesh! Is there a famine or is there abundance? It shows forth its own strength, as Paul said, 'I know how to abound, and how to be in want' (Philippians 4:12). He worked for two years in Ephesus (Acts 19:10) and was not ashamed. Did he have to undergo hunger? He didn't sink under it or waver. Did he have to bear death? He didn't become dejected; in everything he exhibited his noble mind. Let us imitate him and we shall have no cause of grief! Nothing will have power to grieve such a one. Suppose a good man has a wife, children, riches, and great honor; with all these things he remains virtuous. Take them away and again he will be virtuous, neither overwhelmed by his misfortunes, nor puffed up by prosperity. As a rock stands equally unmoved in the raging sea and in calm, neither broken by the waves nor influenced at all by the calm, thus too the solid mind stands firm both in calm and in storm. What can disturb the pious soul? Can death? This is the beginning of a better life. Can poverty? This helps her on toward virtue. Can disease? She doesn't pay attention to its presence. She regards neither ease, nor affliction; having dealt with it earlier, she has afflicted herself. Can dishonor? The world has been crucified to her. Can the loss of children? She doesn't fear it, when she is fully persuaded of the Resurrection. What then can surprise her? None of all these

²²¹ John Chrysostom, Homilies on Philippians, XII, v. 17.

things! Does wealth elevate her? By no means, she knows that money is nothing. Does glory? She has been taught that ‘all flesh is grass, and all the glory of man as the flower of grass’ (Isaiah 40:6 LXX). Does luxury? She has heard Paul say, ‘She who lives in pleasure is dead while she lives’ (1 Timothy 5:6). The pious soul is neither inflamed nor cramped; what can equal such health as this?”

By Evil Report and Good Report

Paul stated, “In all things we commend ourselves as ministers of God: by the power of God, by the armor of righteousness on the right hand and on the left,⁸ by honor and dishonor, by evil report and good report” (2 Corinthians 6:4, 7, 8).

John Chrysostom pointed out²²² that the blameless lives of the Apostles stopped the mouths of their enemies. To attack them, their enemies created false and evil reports about their preaching, calling them deceivers and imposters. We would do well to imitate Paul since we are also lights in the world.

“Might not Paul’s enemies speak evil of his life without a cause from envy, especially since they were heathen? One wouldn’t expect this since even they reverence a man of blameless life. Why then does Paul say, speaking of himself, ‘Through evil report and good report?’ (2 Corinthians 6:8) It was not his life that they attacked, but his preaching. Therefore he says, ‘through evil report’. The Apostles were slandered as deceivers and impostors, on account of their preaching, and this because their enemies could not attack their moral character and their way of life. Why did no one say of the Apostles that they were fornicators, unclean, or covetous persons, but that they were deceivers, which relates only to their preaching? It has to be that their lives were irreproachable! This is clear!”

“Therefore let us too live this way, and no enemy, no unbeliever, will be able to speak evil of us. He, whose life is virtuous, is revered even by them. For truth stops the mouths even of enemies.”

“Let us then so live, that the name of God is not blasphemed. Let us not, on the one hand, look to human reputation; nor on the other hand, subject ourselves to an evil report, but on both sides let us observe moderation. Paul said, ‘Among whom you shine as lights in the world’ (Philippians 2:15). On this account He left us here, that we may be as luminaries, that we may be appointed teachers of others; that we may be as leaven. He desires us to converse as angels among men, as men with children, as spiritual men with natural men, that they may profit by us, that we may be as seed, and may bring forth much fruit. There would be no need of words, if we so shone forth in our lives; there would be no need of teachers, if we exhibited proper works. There would be no heathen, if we were such Christians as we ought to be. If we kept the commandments of Christ, if we allowed injury, if we allowed advantage to be taken of us, if being reviled we bless, if being persecuted we endure (1 Corinthians 4:12). If this were the general practice among us, no one would be so brutal as not to become a convert to godliness. To show this, Paul was but one man, yet how many did he draw after him? If we were all such as he, how many worlds might we not have drawn to us?”

²²² John Chrysostom, Homilies on 1 Timothy, X, v. 7.

Ambrose of Milan compared²²³ the evil report and good report that Paul mentioned to the lives of Abraham, Job and David. The most important point is to be pleasing to Christ.

“Paul teaches us how to dung it, saying, ‘I count all things but dung, that I may gain Christ’ (Philippians 3:8), and he, through evil report and good report, attained to pleasing Christ. He had read that Abraham, when confessing himself to be but dust and ashes, in his deep humility found favor with God. He had read how Job, sitting among the ashes, regained all that he had lost (Job 42:10). He had heard in the utterance of David, how God ‘raises the poor out of the dust, and lifts the needy out of the dunghill’ (Psalm 113:7).

Paul Was Characterized in Many Strange Ways

If Paul’s ministry was creating an enormous impact on everyone who had contact with him, and his enemies were attacking his ministry by calling him a deceiver, one can expect that there would be many strange ways that people perceived him. If he was hounded from city to city (Acts 14:19, 17:13), how was he characterized both to those who didn’t know him well and to those who did?

As a Deceiver, Even Though He Was True

A good example of what Paul was saying can be illustrated by Gregory the Great, writing to the Emperor’s sister, Theoctista. Gregory stated²²⁴ that Christians can expect slander from the world. The enemies of God create an evil report on Christians since they cannot attack their righteous conduct. God allows this as a check on pride that might spring up in the hearts of Christians. If Christ Himself and the Apostle Paul were called deceivers, yet they were true, it is logical that we might experience this also.

“Seeing then that we know from the witness of Scripture that in this life the good cannot be without the bad, your Excellency ought by no means to be disturbed by the voices of fools. There is then sure confidence in Almighty God, when for well-doing any adversity is given us in this world in order that a full reward may be reserved for us in the eternal retribution. The Truth says, ‘Blessed shall you be when men shall say all manner of evil against you falsely for My Name’s sake’ (Matthew 5:11). For our consolation He cited as an example His own reproaches, saying, ‘If they have called the Master of the house Beelzebub, how much more those of his household’” (Matthew 10:25).

“There are many who perhaps praise the life of the good more than they ought. Lest any pride should creep in from praise, Almighty God allows bad men to break out into slander and rebuke, in order that, if any sin springs up in the heart from the mouth of them that praise, it may be choked by the mouth of them that revile. Paul testifies that he continues in his preaching ‘through evil report and good report’ (2 Corinthians 6:8); saying also, ‘As deceivers and yet true’. If then there were such as laid an evil report on Paul, and called him a deceiver, what Christian now should account it a hard thing in behalf of Christ to hear injurious words? We know of how great virtue was the precursor of our Redeemer (i.e. John the Baptist), who in the Scriptures is called not only more than a prophet, but even

²²³ Ambrose of Milan, Two Books Concerning Repentance, II, 1, 4.

²²⁴ Gregory the Great, Pope of Rome, Epistle to Theoctista, XI, 45.

an angel²²⁵. As the history of his death testifies, after his death his body was burned by his persecutors²²⁶. Why do we say these things of holy men? Let us speak of the Holy of Holies Himself, that is of God Who was made man for us, Who before His death heard the injurious charge that He had a demon, and after His death was called a deceiver by His persecutors. They said, ‘We know that that deceiver said, After three days I will rise again’ (Matthew 27:63). How much, then, must we sinners bear from the tongues and hands of wicked men, we who are to be judged at the coming of the eternal Judge, if He Who will come as Judge endured so much both before and after His death?”

John Chrysostom stated²²⁷ that the demons lay snares especially for Christians who exhibit a blameless life. They may try to paint us as deceivers as we let our light shine, and they will trumpet this if we fall into sin. But generally the heathen will admire a virtuous life.

“Let us too live like the Apostles Paul and Timothy, and no enemy, no unbeliever, will be able to speak evil of us. For he whose life is virtuous, is revered even by them. For truth stops the mouths even of enemies.”

“Paul stated regarding prospective Bishops, ‘He must have a good report among those who are outside (the Church); lest he fall into reproach and the snare of the demons’ (1 Timothy 3:7). But how does he ‘fall into a snare?’ He does this by falling often into the same sins as those who are outside the Church. If he is like this, the evil one soon lays another snare for him, and they soon cause his destruction. But if he has a good report from his enemies, much more will he have it from his friends. It is not likely that he, whose life is blameless, should have an evil report on his life. We may infer this from the words of Christ; ‘Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father in Heaven’ (Matthew 5:16). But what if one is falsely accused, and slandered from peculiar circumstances? This is a possible case; but such accusations ought not to be supported within the Church. Therefore it is said he should have ‘a good report’, for your good works are to shine. No one will say that the sun is dark, not even the blind, for he will be ashamed to oppose the opinion of everyone; so him that is of remarkable goodness, no one will blame. On account of his teaching, the heathen will often slander a good man; yet they will not attack his virtuous life, but will join with others in admiring and revering it.”

As Unknown, Even Though He Was Well Known

Being unknown and well-known at the same time may seem like a logical impossibility. John Cassian noted²²⁸ that Christians can very easily be both unknown and well-known at the same time. They may be unknown regarding worldly pursuits, and yet well-known for their love for one another.

²²⁵ In Malachi 3:1, the Forerunner (John) is called a messenger or angel, where the word can be translated either way.

²²⁶ See Theodoret, *Ecclesiastical History*, II, c. 6. The burned body of John the Baptist was taken by his disciples at night and buried.

²²⁷ John Chrysostom, *Homilies on 1 Timothy*, X, v. 7.

²²⁸ John Cassian, *1st Conference of Abbot Joseph*, II, xvi, 6.

“Never forget these words of the Lord, ‘By this shall all men know that you are My disciples, that you love one another’ (John 13:36). By this, as by a special mark, Christ willed that the flock of His sheep should be known in this world, and be separated from all others by this stamp, so to speak.”

John Chrysostom stated²²⁹ that Paul’s words, “As unknown and yet well-known” refer back to his words, “By honor and dishonor” (2 Corinthians 6:8-9). By some people (the Christians), the Apostles were well-known and much sought after. Others (the Jews and the heathen) preferred not to know them at all.

As Dying, and Behold We Live

Paul had written earlier in this letter to Corinth, “We are hard pressed on every side, yet not crushed; we are perplexed, but not in despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed -- always carrying about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our body. We, who live, are always delivered to death for Jesus' sake; that the life of Jesus also may be revealed in our mortal flesh” (2 Corinthians 4:8-11).

Regarding Paul’s concern for the Corinthian Church, he said, “I affirm, by the boasting in you, which I have in Christ Jesus our Lord, I die daily” (1 Corinthians 15:31). Paul thought the world of the love that the Corinthians had for one another, and he boasted of this to others even though the Corinthians had many problems. Later Paul stated regarding all his efforts, besides weariness, watching, hunger, fasting, “besides these other things, what comes upon me daily: my deep concern for all the Churches” (2 Corinthians 11:27-28). Thus one aspect of Paul’s reference to dying is an inward death.

John Chrysostom, speaking to the people of Antioch after the riot over the statues²³⁰, where people feared Roman retaliation, encouraged²³¹ the people to focus on righteousness instead of focusing on avoiding death.

“If we do not wish to live so as to please God, it is better to die. Otherwise what is the gain? What more will we have? Every day we see the same sun, the same moon, the same winter, the same summer, the same course of things. ‘That which has been is what will be. That which is done is what will be done; and there is nothing new under the sun’ (Ecclesiastes 1:9). Let us not then pronounce those happy, who are alive, and bewail the dead, but let us weep for those who are in their sins, whether they are dead or alive. On the other hand, let us call those happy in whatever condition they are, who are in a state of righteousness. We fear and lament ‘one’ death; but Paul, who was dying daily (1 Corinthians 15:31), was so far from shedding a tear on that account, that he rejoiced and exulted even though dying!”

²²⁹ John Chrysostom, Homilies on 2 Corinthians, XII, 4.

²³⁰ This series of homilies were addressed to the people of Antioch after a popular uprising tore down the statues of the Emperor and his wife, and dragged them through the city. The people were expecting a Roman Division to massacre the city to put down the revolt.

²³¹ John Chrysostom, Homilies on the Statues, VI, 8.

Chrysostom also stated²³² that Paul's comment about "dying and behold we live" referred to death sentences imposed on him²³³, which he escaped by God's help.

"Paul was under sentence of death and condemned numerous times; which was itself also a matter of dishonor. Paul said this to show both the unspeakable power of God and the patience of the Corinthians. So far as those who plotted against them were concerned, they died; and this is what everyone supposed; but by God's aid they escaped the dangers."

As Chastened, and Yet Not Killed

Paul stated that he was unknown, and *yet* well known; as dying, and behold we live; as chastened, and *yet* not killed; as sorrowful, yet always rejoicing; as poor, yet making many rich; as having nothing, and *yet* possessing all things" (2 Corinthians 6:9-10). In many ways, Paul's life was similar to that of King David, who said, "The Lord has chastened me severely²³⁴, but He has not given me over to death" (Psalm 118:18).

John Chrysostom pointed out²³⁵ that Paul's enemies were actually doing him a service by hounding and persecuting him, because all their efforts were directed to revealing Paul's godliness.

"To make clear why God permits these things, Paul added, 'As chastened, and not killed' (2 Corinthians 6:9). Paul showed that the gain he received from his enemies from their temptations was great, even before the rewards at the Second Coming, and that his enemies against their will did him service."

Athanasius of Alexandria applied²³⁶ Paul's words, "chastened but not killed" to the fasting and watching customary in the Church during Holy Week.

"It is so fitting for the feast, a turning from wickedness, a pure conversation, and prayer offered without ceasing to God, with thanksgiving. Therefore let us, my brethren, looking forward to celebrate the eternal joy in heaven, keep the feast here also, rejoicing at all times, praying incessantly, and in everything giving thanks to the Lord. I give thanks to God, for those other wonders He has done, and for the various helps that have now been granted us. Though He has chastened us severely, He did not deliver us over to death, but brought us from a distance, as from the ends of the earth, and has united us again with you. I have been mindful while I keep the feast, to give you notice of the great feast of Pascha, that so we may go up together, as it were, to Jerusalem, and eat the Passover, not separately but as in one house. Let us not as saturated in water, water down the word of God; neither let us, as having broken its bones, destroy the commands of the Gospel. But as roasted with fire, with bitterness, being fervent in spirit, in fasting and watching, with lying on the ground, let us keep the Feast with penitence and thanksgiving."

²³² John Chrysostom, Homilies on 2 Corinthians, XII, 4.

²³³ For example, at Damascus (Acts 9:23-25), at Jerusalem (Acts 9:29-30, 23:12), at Iconium (Acts 14:5), at Lystra (Acts 14:19-20), at Rome (2 Timothy 4:6-7)

²³⁴ Psalms 113 to 118 were used for the Old Testament Passover Liturgy, and Psalm 118 is also used at many times in Orthodox services. According to tradition, this Psalm was the one sung by Jesus and His disciples before leaving for the Garden of Gethsemane and the Crucifixion.

²³⁵ John Chrysostom, Homilies on 2 Corinthians, XII, 4.

²³⁶ Athanasius of Alexandria, Festal Letters, XIX, 8.

As Sorrowful Yet Always Rejoicing

John Chrysostom noted²³⁷ that those outside the Church got a wrong impression of Paul's character. They thought that he was sad and in despair because he had lost all his possessions.

“To those that are outside the Church, we are suspected of being in despair; but we don't pay any attention to them. We have our pleasure at the full. Paul said not ‘rejoicing’ only, but added also its perpetuity, ‘always rejoicing’ (2 Corinthians 6:10). What then can come up to this life? Although dangers so great assaulted him, the joy became greater.”

Athanasius of Alexandria stated²³⁸ that the world is like a rough sea to us and we float on it with the wind of our own freewill. Piloted by the Word we reach rest; directed by pleasure, we are in danger and may suffer shipwreck. We may be tempted like Abraham, suffer like Job or become oppressed like Joseph; in all this, we rejoice and leap over the wall of wickedness.

“Let us, in the faith of the disciples, frequently speak with our Master. The world is like the sea to us, of which it is written, ‘On this is the great and wide sea, there go the ships, and this dragon, whom You have made to play in it’ (Psalm 104:25-26 LXX). We float on this sea, as with the wind, through our own freewill, for everyone directs his course according to his will. Either piloted by the Word, he enters into rest, or seized by pleasure, he suffers shipwreck, and is in peril by storm. As in the ocean there are storms and waves, so in the world there are many afflictions and trials. The unbeliever therefore ‘when affliction or persecution arises is offended’ (Mark 4:17), as the Lord said. Not being confirmed in the faith, and focusing on temporal things, he cannot resist the difficulties that arise from afflictions. Like that house, built on the sand by the foolish man (Luke 6:49), so he, being without understanding, fails at the assault of temptations, as if by the winds. But the saints, having their senses exercised in self-possession (Hebrews 5:14), and being strong in faith, and understanding the word, do not faint under trials. Although, from time to time, circumstances of greater trial are set against them, yet they continue faithful; awaking the Lord, Who is with them, they are delivered. Passing through water and fire, they find relief and keep the Feast; offering up prayers with thanksgiving to God Who has redeemed them. Either being tempted they are known, like Abraham; or suffering they are approved, like Job; or being oppressed and deceitfully treated, like Joseph, they patiently endure it; or being persecuted, they are not overtaken. As it is written, through God they ‘leap over the wall’ (Psalm 18:29) of wickedness, which divides and separates between brethren, and turns them from the truth. In this manner Paul, when he took pleasure in infirmities, in reproach, in necessities, in persecutions, and in distresses for Christ, rejoiced, and wished all of us to rejoice saying, ‘Rejoice always; in everything give thanks’” (1 Thessalonians 5:18).

As Poor Yet Making Many Rich

John Chrysostom stated²³⁹ that one aspect of being poor, yet making many rich is the hospitality that the Apostles received on their missionary journeys in the homes of the faithful.

²³⁷ John Chrysostom, Homilies on 2 Corinthians, XII, 4.

²³⁸ Athanasius of Alexandria, Festal Letters, XIX, 7.

²³⁹ John Chrysostom, Homilies on 2 Corinthians, XII, 4.

“Some say that spiritual riches are spoken of here; but I would say that the carnal riches are spoken of also; for the Apostles were rich in these, having the houses of everyone opened to them (Matthew 10:11-13, Luke 10:8). And this too he signified by what follows, saying, ‘As having nothing, and yet possessing all things’” (2 Corinthians 6:10).

John Chrysostom also stated²⁴⁰ that there was great spiritual benefit for the Apostles at being poor, and there is also benefit for us. The Apostles were honored by kings and by their fellow Christians for despising wealth; they became truly rich from His grace. Worldly things are merely on loan to us; the only things that are truly ours are the things like almsgiving and charity that we send ahead of us to the next world.

“Was not the whole world opened to the Apostles more than to kings? Were not all things laid at their feet? Were they not appointed rulers and lords, directing the affairs of the Church? Did not men commit their lives into their hands, suspend themselves wholly on their counsel, and enlist in their service? Do we not see many similar occurrences now? Many men of poor and humble means have been celebrated above all others, and honored by kings, even though they only handle the spade, and have just barely enough food, but have the character of monks. Consider that the things of this life are only an addition to us as an afterthought, the principal sum being stored up for the life to come. Despise riches, if you want to have riches; if you want to be truly rich, become poor. Such are the paradoxes of God. He does not want you to be rich from your own care, but from His grace. Leave these things to Me, He says; make spiritual things your concern, that you may know My power. Run from that yoke of slavery that riches impose. As long as you cling to them, you are poor. When you despise them, you are doubly rich, in that such things shall flow in upon you from every side, and in that you shall want none of those things, which the multitude wants. Not possessing much, but needing little, is to be really rich. The king, so long as he lacks nothing, doesn’t differ from the poor man. This is poverty, to stand in need of others; and by this argument the king is poor, in so far as he stands in need of his subjects. But he that is crucified to the world is not so; he lacks nothing; for his hands are sufficient for his subsistence, as Paul said, ‘These hands have ministered to my necessities, and to them that were with me’ (Acts 20:34). These are his words, ‘As having nothing, yet possessing all things’ (2 Corinthians 6:10). This is he who was thought a God by the inhabitants of Lystra (Acts 14:10-11). If you want to obtain worldly things, seek Heaven; if you want to enjoy things here, despise them. ‘Seek first the kingdom of God’, He said, ‘and all these things shall be added to you’ (Matthew 6:33). Why do you admire these trifles? Why do you long for things of no real worth? Raise your eyes to heaven, think of the riches there, and smile at gold; think of how little use it is; the enjoyment of it lasts but for the present life. Compared with eternity, the present life is as a grain of sand, or as a drop of water to the boundless ocean. This wealth is not a possession, it is not property, it is a loan for use. When you die, willingly or unwillingly, all that you have goes to others, and they again give it up to others. We are all travelers; and the tenant of the house is more truly the owner of it; for the owner dies, and the tenant lives, and still enjoys

²⁴⁰ John Chrysostom, Homilies on 1 Timothy, XI, Moral.

the house. And if the tenant leases it, the owner might be said to lease it also; for he built it, took great pains with it, and fixed it up. We are all owners in fact of other men's possessions. Those things only are our own, which we have sent ahead of us to the other world. Our goods here are not our own; they fail us during our lives. Only the virtues of the soul are properly our own, like almsgiving and charity. Worldly goods are called external things, because they are external to us. But we can make them internal. We cannot take our wealth with us when we depart, but we can take our charity. Let us send that ahead of us, that it may prepare for us a dwelling in the eternal mansions" (Luke 16:9).

In addition, Chrysostom addressed²⁴¹ the difference between wealth under the Old Covenant, which was tied to faithfulness as a nation, and poverty under the New Covenant. Godliness is the focus of both, but godliness as a nation of the world is missing under the New Covenant. We can see the same way of life among the Prophets and Patriarchs taken up by the Apostles, where they may be poor, but they are able to make many rich. Poverty becomes not a disgrace, the way it was identified with unfaithfulness under the Old Covenant, but a path that leads to heaven.

"Solomon said, 'the wisdom of the poor man is despised' (Ecclesiastes 9:16). Again, 'Give me neither poverty nor riches' (Proverbs 30:8), and, 'Deliver me from the furnace²⁴² of poverty'. Again, if riches and poverty are from the Lord, how can either poverty or riches be an evil? Why were these things said? Under the Old Covenant, much account made of wealth, and there was great contempt of poverty; poverty was a curse and wealth was a blessing²⁴³. But it is no longer so."

"Listen to the praises of poverty! Christ sought after it, 'The Son of Man has nowhere to lay His head' (Matthew 8:20). Again He said to His disciples regarding their missionary journeys, 'Provide neither gold nor silver in your money belts, nor a spare tunic' (Matthew 10:9, 10). Paul wrote, 'As having nothing and yet possessing all things' (2 Corinthians 6:10). Peter said to him who was lame from his birth, 'Silver and gold I do not have, but what I do have I give you' (Acts 3:6). Under the Old Covenant, where wealth was a blessing, who was admired? Was not Elijah, who had nothing except the sheepskin? Was not Elisha and John the Baptist?"

"Let no man then be humiliated on account of his poverty! It is not poverty that humiliates, but wealth, which compels us to have need of many, and forces us to be under obligations to many."

"What could be poorer than Jacob, who said, 'If God will be with me, and keep me in this way that I am going, and give me bread to eat and clothing to put on' (Genesis 28:20). Were Elijah and John the Baptist lacking in boldness? The one reproved Ahab, and the other reproved Herod. John said, 'It is not lawful for you to have your brother Philip's wife' (Mark 6:18). Elijah said to Ahab boldly, 'I have not troubled Israel, but you and your father's house have, in that you have

²⁴¹ John Chrysostom, *Homilies on Hebrews*, XVIII, 4-5.

²⁴² Isaiah refers to the furnace of affliction (Isaiah 48:10); Chrysostom extends affliction to poverty.

²⁴³ Under the Old Covenant, the Lord's blessing was on the Land of Israel so long as the people were faithful and didn't go after idols. Prosperity was part of this blessing, and generosity to the poor was required. The penalty for not being faithful was a lack of prosperity and a curse.

forsaken the commandments of the Lord' (1 Kings 18:18). Poverty especially produces boldness. While the rich man is a slave, being subject to loss, and to everyone wishing to hurt him; he who has nothing, doesn't fear confiscation or fine. If poverty had made men to lack boldness, Christ would not have sent His Apostles with poverty on missionary journeys requiring great boldness. The poor man is very strong, and has nothing from which he may be wronged or treated evil. But the rich man is attacked on every side, just like someone could easily catch a man, who was dragging long ropes after him. On the other hand, one could not easily catch a naked man. So here also in the case of the rich man: slaves, gold, lands, innumerable business affairs, innumerable cares, difficult circumstances, necessities, make him an easy prey to everyone."

"Let no man then regard poverty a cause of disgrace. If virtue is present, all the wealth of the world is not even a speck in comparison to it. Let us follow after this if we want to enter into the kingdom of heaven. Jesus said, 'Sell what you have, and give to the poor, and you shall have treasure in Heaven' (Matthew 19:21). Again, 'It is hard for a rich man to enter the Kingdom of Heaven' (Matthew 19:23). Even if we don't have poverty, we ought to draw it to us; so great a good is poverty. It guides us by the hand, as it were, on the path which leads to Heaven; it is an anointing for the combat, a great and admirable exercise, a quiet harbor."

As Having Nothing Yet Possessing All Things

In the Early Church right after Pentecost, "The multitude of believers was of one heart and soul; neither did any of them say that any of the things which he possessed was his own, but they had all things common" (Acts 4:32). "Each person who were possessors of lands or houses sold them and brought the proceeds of the things that were sold and laid them at the Apostles' feet and they distributed to each as anyone had need" (Acts 4:34-35). In this spirit, the notion of having nothing yet possessing all things represented the life of the Church from the beginning.

Jerome gave²⁴⁴ other examples of "having nothing but possessing all things". The Patriarch Jacob left home with nothing to seek a godly wife 800 miles away and returned with great wealth. The Apostles traveled around with nothing, yet they saw things and did things that no amount of wealth could accomplish.

"Jacob in his flight from his brother left behind in his father's house great riches and made his way with nothing into Mesopotamia. Moreover, to prove to us his powers of endurance, he took a stone for his pillow (Genesis 28:11). Yet as he lay there he saw a ladder set up on the earth reaching to heaven and saw the Lord standing above it, and the angels ascending and descending on it. The lesson taught is that the sinner must not despair of salvation, and the righteous man must not rest secure in his virtue. To pass over much of the story, after twenty years, he who before had passed over Jordan with his staff returned into his native land with three droves of cattle, rich in flocks and herds and richer still in children."

"The Apostles likewise traveled throughout the world without either money in their purses, or staff in their hands, or shoes on their feet; they could speak of themselves as 'having nothing and yet possessing all things' (2 Corinthians 6:10). 'Silver and gold', they say, 'we none, but what we do have we give you; in the

²⁴⁴ Jerome, Letter to Ageruchia, CXXIII, 15.

name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth rise up and walk' (Acts 3:6). They were not weighed down with the burden of riches. Therefore they could stand, as Moses, in the crevice of the rock (Exodus 33:21-22), they could pass through²⁴⁵ the needle's eye, and behold the back parts of the Lord" (Exodus 33:23).

Ambrose of Milan noted²⁴⁶ in the lives of the Apostles how they had nothing in earthly possessions but possessed all things via the riches of faith.

"The Apostles wandered over the whole earth, 'having nothing and yet possessing all things' (2 Corinthians 6:10). Wherever they were sent, they considered it a place full of delights, for nothing was lacking to them in whom the riches of faith abounded. They enriched others, being themselves poor as to earthly means, but rich in grace. They were tried but not killed, in fasting, labors, watching, and vigils. Out of weakness they came out strong (2 Corinthians 12:9). They did not wait for the enticements of pleasure, who were satiated by fasting; the burning summer did not parch those whom the hope of eternal grace refreshed. The cold of icy regions did not break them down, whose devotion was always budding with glowing devotion; they didn't fear the chains of men whom Jesus had set free; they didn't desire to be rescued from death, who expected to be raised again by Christ."

John Chrysostom stated²⁴⁷ that unbelievers, who see only physical things, can get a mistaken impression of the true Christian, seeing the work but not the rewards. Paul, who had nothing, was treated like an angel by the Churches; any physical thing he needed they would gladly give him. Because of his faithfulness, the Lord gave him incredible spiritual riches also.

"Paul spoke of 'having nothing, and yet possessing all things' (2 Corinthians 6:10). How can this be? We might rather ask, how can the opposite be? He that possesses many things has nothing; and he that has nothing possesses the goods of everyone. To understand this, let us bring out Paul into our midst, who commanded the world and was lord not only of their substance, but even of

²⁴⁵ Jesus gave an illustration of camels and needles (Matthew 19:24-26) that has been little understood in our generation. The main gates of most cities in ancient times were huge wooden structures set in an archway and often overlaid with brass for strength and flame proofing. At night, the gates were closed and locked with a bar on the inside and not opened until morning. Travelers that arrived late in the day after the gates were closed were forced to spend the night outside the city unless there was some provision for them to get into the city. Outside the city, law and order did not exist at night and travelers were at the mercy of outlaws. This is still the case today in some third world countries.

To deal with this situation, many ancient cities had a "needle's eye gate" which was a small, low door beside the main gate. Such a feature existed²⁴⁵ on at least one of the gates of Jerusalem and Damascus. See Weiss, Insight into Bible Times and Customs, pp. 24-25. A man could fit easily through the "needle's eye gate", but a camel, being a large animal, could not fit easily. If the camel's pack (which could weigh up to 1,000 pounds) were removed and the camel were made to kneel, the camel could just barely crawl through the "needle's eye gate."

The statement Jesus made, that it is easier for a camel to go through the needle's eye gate than for a rich man to enter the Kingdom of God, made use of this imagery. Like the camel, the rich man first needs to unload his pack or burden.

²⁴⁶ Ambrose of Milan, Letter to Limenius, Bishop of Versellae, LXIII, 69.

²⁴⁷ John Chrysostom, Homilies on 2 Corinthians, XII, 4.

their eyes. ‘If possible’, he says, ‘you would have plucked out your own eyes, and given them to me’ (Galatians 4:15). Now these things he says, to instruct us not to be disturbed at the opinions of the many, though they call us deceivers, though they don’t know us, though they count us condemned, appointed for death, in sorrow, in poverty, having nothing. Even the sun is not clear to the blind; the pleasures of the sane are unintelligible to the mentally ill. The faithful are the only proper judges of these matters, and are not pleased and pained at the same things as other people. Suppose someone who knew nothing of the Olympic Games were to see a boxer, with wounds on him but wearing a crown. He would think the boxer would be in pain on account of the wounds; not understanding the pleasure the crown would give him. Because unbelievers know what we suffer but do not know why we suffer them, naturally they suspect that there is nothing besides these; they see the wrestling and the dangers, but not the prizes and the crowns.”

“Possessing all things involves temporal things and spiritual things. Paul, whom the cities received as an angel, for whom they would have plucked out their own eyes and have given them to him (Galatians 4:14, 15), for whom they laid down their own necks (Romans 16:4), how had he not all things that were theirs? If you desire to see his spiritual things, you will find him rich in these things also. He that was so close to the King of all as even to share in unspeakable things with the Lord of the angels (2 Corinthians 12:4). Devils had been so subject to him that suffering and disease had fled away” (Acts 19:11-17).

Words of Reconciliation

Reconciliation was very apropos for Corinth because of all that Paul had been through with them. This letter came following a period of apostolic discipline and Paul was writing, in part, to reconcile all the factions. For more details on the factions, see the Study of the Epistle lesson for the 14th Sunday after Pentecost.

Having been through a great deal with the Corinthians, Paul’s aim was to reconcile all the factions back to himself and back to a good relationship with God. First he quickly passed over his dedication to the work of God. Paul would come back to this giving more details toward the end of this Epistle (2 Corinthians 11:23-29).

Having said all this regarding his dedication to the work of God, Paul went on to say, “O Corinthians, we have spoken openly to you; our heart is wide open. You are not crushed (or restricted) by us, but by your own feelings. For a mutually rewarding situation, it would help if you also were wide open” (2 Corinthians 6:11-13). Chrysostom paraphrased²⁴⁸ this:

“We cannot endure to be silent toward you but we always desire and long to speak to you, which is the desire of those who love. We speak to you on all points with freedom as to beloved people, suppressing nothing, reserving nothing. For virtue is warm and fervent. He that is beloved can walk with great unrestraint within the heart of him that loves. I ask no great thing if, being your father, (1 Corinthians 4:15) I wish to be loved by you”. Thus Paul addressed them as his own children (2 Corinthians 6:13).

²⁴⁸ John Chrysostom, Homilies on 2 Corinthians, XIII, 1.

Before Paul wrote this letter, he had left Ephesus for Macedonia figuring to visit Corinth after visiting the Churches in Macedonia. Yet he was uncertain as to how the Corinthians had received his previous admonitions. While in Macedonia, Paul met Titus who was returning from Corinth; Titus gave Paul the good news that the Corinthians had received his last letter very well. Thus relieved, Paul wrote 2 Corinthians in a spirit of reconciliation and his subsequent visit to Corinth was a particularly joyful reunion of father and children.