

1 Corinthians 12:27

by St. John Chrysostom

St. John Chrysostom emphasizes the importance of unity in the Church through diverse spiritual gifts, with love being the essential foundation for all actions.

Topics: "Christian Love", "Selfless Unity"

Description

John Chrysostom preaches about the supreme importance of love in the Christian faith, emphasizing that love surpasses all other gifts and miracles. He highlights how genuine love, demonstrated through selflessness, compassion, and unity, is the true mark of a disciple of Christ. Chrysostom contrasts the selfless love exemplified by Joseph in the face of betrayal and injustice with the destructive nature of selfish desires. He underscores that love not only unites believers but also serves as a powerful testimony to the world, surpassing the impact of miracles and signs. Chrysostom urges his audience to cultivate a deep, sacrificial love that mirrors Christ's own love for humanity.

Transcript

Now you are the body of Christ and severally members thereof.

For lest any should say, What is the example of the body to us? Since the body is a slave to nature but our good deeds are of choice; he applies it to our own concerns; and to signify that we ought to have the same concord of design as they have from nature, he says, Now you are the body of Christ. But if our body ought not to be divided, much less the body of Christ, and so much less as grace is more powerful than nature.

But what is the expression, severally? So far at least as appertains to you; and so far as naturally a part should be built up from you. For because he had said, the body, whereas the whole body was not the Corinthian Church, but the Church in every part of the world, therefore he said, severally: i.e., the Church among you is a part of the Church existing every where and of the body which is made up of all the Churches: so that not only with yourselves alone, but also with the whole Church throughout the world, you ought to be at peace, if at least ye be members of the whole body.

1 Corinthians 12:28

2. And God has set some in the Church: first apostles, secondly prophets, thirdly teachers, then miracles, then gifts of healings, helps, governments, various kinds of tongues.

Thus what I spoke of before, this also he now does. Because they thought highly of themselves in respect of the tongues he sets it last every where. For the terms, first and secondly, are not used by him here at random, but in order by enumeration to point out the more honorable and the inferior. Wherefore also he set the apostles first who had all the gifts in themselves. And he said not, God has set certain in the Church, apostles simply, or prophets, but he employs first, second, and third, signifying that same thing which I told you of.

Secondly, prophets. For they used to prophesy, as the daughters of Philip, as Agabus, as these very persons among the Corinthians, of whom he says, Let the prophets speak, two or three. 1 Corinthians 14:29 And writing also to Timothy, he said, Neglect not the gift that is in you, which was given you by prophecy. 1 Timothy 4:14 And they were much more many that prophesied. And if Christ says, The Law and the Prophets prophesied until John, Matthew 11:13 He says it of those prophets who before proclaimed His coming.

Thirdly, teachers. For he that prophesies speaks all things from the Spirit; but he that teaches sometimes discourses also out of his own mind. Wherefore also he said, Let the elders that rule well be counted worthy of double honor, especially they who labor in the word and in teaching: 1 Timothy 5:17 whereas he that speaks all things by the Spirit does not labor. This accordingly is the reason why he set him after the prophet, because the one is wholly a gift but the other is also man's labor. For he speaks many things of his own mind, agreeing however with the sacred Scriptures.

3. Then miracles, then gifts of healings. Do you see how he again divides the healings from the power, which also he did before. For the power is more than the healing: since he that has power both punishes and heals, but he that has the gift of healings does cures only. And observe how excellent the order he made use of, when he set the prophecy before the miracles and the healings. For above when he said, To one is given by the Spirit the word of wisdom, and to another the word of knowledge, he spoke, not setting them in order, but indifferently. Here, on the other hand, he sets a first and a second rank. Wherefore then does he set prophecy first? Because even in the old covenant the matter has this order. For example, when Isaiah was discoursing with the Jews, and exhibiting a demonstration of the power of God, and bringing forward the evidence of the worthlessness of the demons, he stated this also as the greater evidence of his divinity, his foretelling things to come. Isaiah 41:22-23 And Christ Himself after working so many signs says that this was no small sign of His divinity: and continually adds, But these things have I told you, that when it has come to pass, you may believe that I am He. John 13:19; 14:29; 16:4

Well then; the gifts of healing are justly inferior to prophecy. But why likewise to teaching? Because it is not the same thing to declare the word of preaching and sow piety in the hearts of the hearers, as it is to work miracles: since these are done merely for the sake of that. When therefore any one teaches both by word and life, he is greater than all. For those he calls emphatically teachers, who both teach by deeds and instruct in word. For instance: this made the Apostles themselves to become Apostles. And those gifts certain others also, of no great worth, received in the beginning, as they who said, Lord, did we not prophesy by Your Name, and do mighty works? and after this were told, I never knew you; depart from Me, you that work iniquity. Matthew 7:22 But this twofold mode of teaching, I mean that by deeds and by words, no bad man would ever undertake. As to his setting the prophets first marvel not at it. For he is not speaking of prophets simply, but of those who by prophecy do also teach and say every thing to the common benefit: which in proceeding he makes more clear to us.

Helps, governments. What is, helps? To support the weak. Is this then a gift, tell me? In the first place, this too is of the Gift of God, aptness for a patron's office ; the dispensing spiritual things; besides which he calls many even of our own good deeds, gifts; not meaning us to lose heart, but showing that in every case we need God's help, and preparing them to be thankful, and thereby making them more forward and stirring up their minds.

Divers kind of tongues. Do you see where he has set this gift, and how he every where assigns it the last rank?

4. Further, since again by this catalogue he had pointed out a great difference, and stirred up the afore-mentioned distemper of those that had lesser gifts, he darts upon them in what follows with great vehemence, because he had already given them those many proofs of their not being left much inferior. What I mean is; because it was likely that on hearing these things they would say, And why were we not all made Apostles? -- whereas above he had made use of a more soothing tone of discourse, proving at length the necessity of this result, even from the image of the body; for the body, says he, is not one member; and again, but if all were one member, where were the body? and from the fact that they were given for use; for to each one is given the manifestation of the Spirit, says he, to profit withal: and from all being watered from the same Spirit: and from what is bestowed being a free gift and not a debt; for there are, says he, diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit: and from the manifestation of the Spirit being made alike through all; for to each one, says he, is given the manifestation through the Spirit: and from the fact that these things were shaped according to the pleasure of the Spirit and of God; for all these, says he, works the one and the same Spirit, dividing to each one severally even as he will: and, God has set the members each one of them in the body, even as it pleased Him: and from the inferior members also being necessary; for those which seem, says he, to be more feeble are necessary: from their being alike necessary, in that they from the greater too needing the less: for the head, says he, cannot say to the feet, I have no need of you: from these latter enjoying even more honor; for to that which lacks, says he, He has given more abundant honor: from the care of them being common and equal; for for all the members have the same care one for another: and from there being one honor and one grief of them all; for whether, says he, one member suffers, all the members suffer with it; or one member is honored, all the members rejoice with it:-- whereas, I say, he had above exhorted them by these topics, here and henceforth he uses language so as to bear them down and rebuke them. For, as I said, it behooves us neither always to exhort people nor always to silence them. Therefore also Paul himself, because he at length exhorted them, does henceforth vehemently attack them, saying,

1 Corinthians 12:29

Are all apostles? Are all prophets? Have all gifts of healing?

And he does not stop at the first and the second gift, but proceeds to the last, either meaning this that all cannot be all things, (even as he there says, if all were one member, where were the body?) or establishing some other point also along with these, which may tell in the way of consolation again. What then is this? His signifying that even the lesser gifts are contended for equally with the greater, from the circumstance that not even these were given absolutely to all? For why, says he, do you grieve that you have not gifts of healing? Consider that what you have, even though it be less, is oftentimes not possessed by him that has the greater. Wherefore he says,

1 Corinthians 12:30

Do all speak with tongues? Do all interpret?

For even as the great gifts God has not vouchsafed all to all men, but to some this, and to others that, so also did He in respect of the less, not proposing these either to all. And this He did, procuring thereby abundant harmony and love, that each one standing in need of the other might be brought close to his brother. This economy He established also in the arts, this also in the elements, this also in the plants, and in our members, and absolutely in all things.

5. Then he subjoins further the most powerful consolation, and sufficient to recover them and quiet their vexed souls. And what is this?

1 Corinthians 12:31

Desire earnestly, says he, the better gifts. And a still more excellent way show I unto you.

Now by saying this, he gently hinted that they were the cause of their own receiving the lesser gifts, and had it in their power, if they would, to receive the greater. For when he says, desire earnestly, he demands from them all diligence and desire for spiritual things. And he said not, the greater gifts, but the better, i.e., the more useful, those which would profit. And what he means is this: continue to desire gifts; and I point out to you a fountain of gifts. For neither did he say, a gift, but a way, that he might the more extol that which he intends to mention. As if he said, It is not one, or two, or three gifts that I point out to you, but one way which leads to all these : and not merely a way, but both a more excellent way and one that is open in common to all. For not as the gifts are vouchsafed, to some these, to others those, but not all to all; so also in this case: but it is an universal gift. Wherefore also he invites all to it. Desire earnestly, says he, the better gifts and yet show I unto you a more excellent way; meaning love towards our neighbor.

Then intending to proceed to the discourse concerning it and the encomium of this virtue, he first lowers these by comparison with it, intimating that they are nothing without it; very considerately. For if he had at once discoursed of love, and having said, I show unto you a way, had added, but this is love, and had not conducted his discourse by way of comparison; some might possibly have scoffed at what was said, not understanding clearly the force of the thing spoken of but still gaping after these. Wherefore he does not at once unfold it, but first excites the hearer by the promise, and says, I show unto you a more excellent way, and so having led him to desire it, he does not even thus straightway proceed to it, but augmenting still further and extending their desire, he discourses first of these very things, and shows that without it they are nothing; reducing them to the greatest necessity of loving one another; seeing also that from neglect of it sprang that which caused all their evils. So that in this respect also it might justly appear great, if the gifts not only brought them not together, but divided them even when united: but this, when many were so divided, would reunite them by virtue of its own and make them one body. This however he does not say at once, but what they chiefly longed for, that he sets down; as that the thing was a gift and a most excellent way to all the gifts. So that, even if you will not love your brother on the score of friendship, yet for the sake of obtaining a better sign and an abundant gift, cherish love.

6. And see whence he first begins; from that which was marvellous in their eyes and great, the gift of tongues. And in bringing forward that gift, he mentions it not just in the degree they had it in, but far more. For he did not say, if I speak with tongues, but,

1 Corinthians 13:1

If I speak with the tongues of men --

What is, of men? Of all nations in every part of the world. And neither was he content with this amplification, but he likewise uses another much greater, adding the words, and of angels -- and have not love, I have become sounding brass, or a clanging cymbal.

Do you see to what point he first exalted the gift, and to what afterwards he lowered and cast it down? For neither did he simply say, I am nothing, but, I have become sounding brass, a thing senseless and inanimate. But how sounding brass? Emitting a sound indeed, but at random and in vain, and for no good end. Since besides my profiting nothing, I am counted by most men as one giving impertinent trouble, an annoying and wearisome kind of person. Do you see how one void of love is like to things inanimate and senseless?

Now he here speaks of the tongues of angels, not investing angels with a body, but what he means is this: should I even so speak as angels are wont to discourse unto each other, without this I am nothing, nay rather a burden and an annoyance. Thus (to mention one other example) where he says, To Him every knee shall bow, of things in heaven and things on earth, and things under the earth, Philippians 2:10 he does not say these things as if he attributed to angels knees and bones, far from it, but it is their intense adoration which he intends to shadow out by the fashion among us: so also here he calls it a tongue not meaning an instrument of flesh, but intending to indicate their converse with each other by the manner which is known among us.

7. Then, in order that his discourse may be acceptable, he stops not at the gift of tongues, but proceeds also to the remaining gifts; and having depreciated all in the absence of love, he then depicts her image. And because he preferred to conduct his argument by amplification, he begins from the less and ascends to the greater. For whereas, when he indicated their order, he placed the gift of tongues last, this he now numbers first; by degrees, as I said, ascending to the greater gifts. Thus having spoken of tongues, he proceeds immediately to prophecy; and says;

1 Corinthians 13:2

And if I have the gift of prophecy.

And this gift again with an excellency. For as in that case he mentioned not tongues, but the tongues of all mankind, and as he proceeded, those of angels, and then signified that the gift was nothing without love: so also here he mentions not prophecy alone but the very highest prophecy: in having said, If I have prophecy, he added, and know all mysteries and all knowledge; expressing this gift also with intensity.

Then after this also he proceeds to the other gifts. And again, that he might not seem to weary them, naming each one of the gifts, he sets down the mother and fountain of all, and this again with an excellency, thus saying, And if I have all faith. Neither was he content with this, but even that which Christ spoke of as greatest, this also he added, saying, so as to remove mountains and have not love, I am nothing. And consider how again here also he lowers the dignity of the tongues. For whereas in regard of prophecy he signifies the great advantage arising from it, the understanding mysteries, and having all knowledge; and in regard of faith, no trifling work, even the removing mountains; in respect of tongues, on the other hand, having named the gift itself only, he quits it.

But do thou, I pray, consider this also, how in brief he comprehended all gifts when he named prophecy and faith: for miracles are either in words or deeds. And how does Christ say, that the least degree of faith is the being able to remove a mountain? For as though he were speaking something very small, did He express Himself when He said, If you have faith as a grain of mustard-seed, you shall say to this mountain, Remove, and it shall remove; Matthew 17:20 whereas Paul says that this is all faith. What then must one say? Since this was a great thing, the removing a mountain, therefore also he mentioned it, not as though all faith were only able to do this, but since this seemed to be great to the grosser sort because of the bulk of the outward mass, from this also he extols his subject. And what he says is this:

If I have all faith, and can remove mountains, but have not love, I am nothing.

1 Corinthians 13:3

8. And if I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and if I give my body to be burned, but have not love, it profits me nothing.

Wonderful amplification! For even these things too he states with another addition: in that he said not, if I give to the poor the half of my goods, or two or three parts, but, though I give all my goods. And he said not, give, but, distribute in morsels, so that to the expense may be added the administering also with all care.

But not even yet have I pointed out the whole of the excellency, until I bring forward the testimonies of Christ which were spoken concerning almsgiving and death. What then are His testimonies? To the rich man He says, If you would be perfect, sell what you have and give to the poor, and come, follow me. Matthew 19:21 And discoursing likewise of love to one's neighbor, He says, Greater love has no man than this, that a man may lay down his life for his friends. John 14:13 Whence it is evident, that even before God this is greatest of all. But, I declare, said Paul, that even if we should lay down life for God's sake, and not merely lay it down, but so as even to be burned, (for this is the meaning of, if I give my body to be burned,) we shall have no great advantage if we love not our neighbor. Well then, the saying that the gifts are of no great profit without charity is no marvel: since our gifts are a secondary consideration to our way of life. At any rate, many have displayed gifts, and yet on becoming vicious have been punished: as those who prophesied in His name, and cast out many demons, and wrought many mighty works; as Judas the traitor: while others, exhibiting as believers a pure life, have needed nothing else in order to their salvation. Wherefore, that the gifts should, as I said, require this, is no marvel: but that an exact life even should avail nothing without it, this is what brings the intensity of expression strongly out and causes great perplexity: especially too when Christ appears to adjudge His great rewards to both these, I mean to the giving up our possessions, and to the perils of martyrdom. For both to the rich man He says, as I before observed, If you will be perfect, sell your goods, and give to the poor, and come, follow me: and discoursing with the disciples, of martyrdom He says, Whosoever shall lose his life for My sake, shall find it; and, Whosoever shall confess Me before men, him will I also confess before My Father which is in heaven. For great indeed is the labor of this achievement, and well near surpassing nature itself, and this is well known to such as have had these crowns vouchsafed to them. For no language can set it before us: so noble a soul does the deed belong to and so exceedingly wonderful is it.

9. But nevertheless, this so wonderful thing Paul said was of no great profit without love, even though it have the giving up of one's goods joined with it. Wherefore then has he thus spoken? This will I now endeavor to explain, first having enquired of this, How is it possible that one who gives all his goods to

feed the poor can be wanting in love? I grant, indeed, he that is ready to be burned and has the gifts, may perhaps possibly not have love: but he who not only gives his goods, but even distributes them in morsels; how has not he love? What then are we to say? Either that he supposed an unreal case as real; which kind of thing he is ever wont to do, when he intends to set before us something in excess; as when writing to the Galatians he says, If we or an angel from heaven preach any other gospel unto you than that you receive let him be accursed. Galatians 1:8 And yet neither was himself nor an angel about to do so; but to signify that he meant to carry the matter as far as possible, he set down even that which could never by any means happen. And again, when he writes to the Romans, and says, Neither angels, nor principalities, nor powers, shall be able to separate us from the love of God; for neither was this about to be done by any angels: but here too he supposes a thing which was not; as indeed also in what comes next, saying, nor any other creature, whereas there is no other creature, for he had comprehended the whole creation, having spoken of all things both above and below. Nevertheless here also he mentions that which was not, by way of hypothesis, so as to show his exceeding desire. Now the same thing he does here also, saying, If a man give all, and have not love, it profits him nothing.

Either then we may say this, or that his meaning is for those who give to be also joined closely to those who receive, and not merely to give without sympathy, but in pity and condescension, bowing down and grieving with the needy. For therefore also has almsgiving been enacted by God: since God might have nourished the poor as well without this, but that he might bind us together unto charity and that we might be thoroughly fervent toward each other, he commanded them to be nourished by us. Therefore one says in another place also; a good word is better than a gift; Sirach 18:16-17 and, behold, a word is beyond a good gift. Sirach 18:16-17 And He Himself says, I will have mercy, and not sacrifice. Matthew 9:30; Hosea 6:6 For since it is usual, both for men to love those who are benefited by them, and for those who receive benefits to be more kindly affected towards their benefactors; he made this law, constituting it a bond of friendship.

10. But the point proposed for enquiry above is, How, after Christ had said that both these belong to perfection, Paul affirms, that these without charity are imperfect? Not contradicting Him, God forbid: but harmonizing with Him, and that exactly. For so in the case of the rich man, He said, not merely, sell your goods, and give to the poor, but He added, and come, follow Me. Now not even the following Him proves any man a disciple of Christ so completely as the loving one another. For, by this shall all men know, says He, that you are My disciples, if you have love one to another. John 13:35 And also when He says, Whosoever loses his life for My sake, shall find it; Matthew 10:39 and, whosoever shall confess Me before men, him will I also confess before My Father which is in heaven; He means not this, that it is not necessary to have love, but He declares the reward which is laid up for these labors. Since that along with martyrdom He requires also this, is what He elsewhere strongly intimates, thus saying, You shall indeed drink of My cup, and be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with; Matthew 20:23 i.e., you shall be martyrs, you shall be slain for My sake; but to sit on My right hand, and on My left, (not as though any sit on the right hand and the left, but meaning the highest precedency and honor) is not Mine to give, says He, but to those for whom it is prepared. Then signifying for whom it is prepared, He calls them and says, whosoever among you will be chief, let him be servant to you all; Matthew 20:26 setting forth humility and love. And the love which He requires is intense; wherefore He stopped not even at this, but added, even as the Son of Man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give His life a ransom for many; pointing out that we ought so to love as even to be slain for our beloved. For this above all is to love Him. Wherefore also He says to Peter, If you love Me, feed My sheep. John 21:16

11. And that you may learn how great a work of virtue it is, let us sketch it out in word, since in deeds we see it no where appearing; and let us consider, if it were every where in abundance, how great benefits would ensue: how there were no need then of laws, or tribunals or punishments, or avenging, or any other such things since if all loved and were beloved, no man would injure another. Yea, murders, and strifes, and wars, and divisions, and rapines, and frauds, and all evils would be removed, and vice be unknown even in name. Miracles, however, would not have effected this; they rather puff up such as are not on their guard, unto vain-glory and folly.

Again: what is indeed the marvellous part of love; all the other good things have their evils yoked with them: as he that gives up his possessions is oftentimes puffed up on this account: the eloquent is affected with a wild passion for glory; the humble-minded, on this very ground, not seldom thinks highly of himself in his conscience. But love is free from every such mischief. For none could ever be lifted up against the person whom he loves. And do not, I pray, suppose one person only loving but all alike; and then will you see its virtue. Or rather, if you will, first suppose one single person beloved, and one loving; loving, however, as it is meet to love. Why, he will so live on earth as if it were heaven, every where enjoying a calm and weaving for himself innumerable crowns. For both from envy, and wrath, and jealousy, and pride, and vain-glory, and evil concupiscence, and every profane love, and every distemper, such a man will keep his own soul pure. Yea, even as no one would do himself an injury so neither would this man his neighbors. And being such, he shall stand with Gabriel himself, even while he walks on earth.

Such then is he that has love. But he that works miracles and has perfect knowledge, without this, though he raises ten thousand from the dead, will not be much profited, broken off as he is from all and not enduring to mix himself up with any of his fellow-servants. For no other cause than this did Christ say that the sign of perfect love towards Him is the loving one's neighbors. For, if you love Me, says He, O Peter, more than these, feed My sheep. John 21:15 Do you see how hence also He again covertly intimates, in what case this is greater than martyrdom? For if any one had a beloved child in whose behalf he would even give up his life, and some one were to love the father, but pay no regard whatever to the son, he would greatly incense the father; nor would he feel the love for himself, because of the overlooking his son. Now if this ensue in the case of father and son, much more in the case of God and men: since surely God is more loving than any parents.

Wherefore, having said, The first and great commandment is, You shall love the Lord your God, he added, and the second -- (He leaves it not in silence, but sets it down also)-- is like it, You shall love your neighbor as yourself. And see how with nearly the same excellency He demands also this. For as concerning God, He says, with all your heart: so concerning your neighbor, as yourself, which is tantamount to, with all your heart.

Yea, and if this were duly observed, there would be neither slave nor free, neither ruler nor ruled, neither rich nor poor, neither small nor great; nor would any devil then ever have been known: I say not, Satan only, but whatever other such spirit there be, nay, rather were there a hundred or ten thousand such, they would have no power, while love existed. For sooner would grass endure the application of fire than the devil the flame of love. She is stronger than any wall, she is firmer than any adamant; or if you can name any material stronger than this the firmness of love transcends them all. Her, neither wealth nor poverty overcomes: nay, rather there would be no poverty, no unbounded wealth, if there were love, but the good parts only from each estate. For from the one we should reap its abundance, and from the other its freedom from care: and should neither have to undergo the anxieties of riches, nor the dread of poverty.

12. And why do I mention the advantages arising from it? Yea, rather consider how great a blessing it is of itself to exercise love; what cheerfulness it produces, in how great grace it establishes the soul; a thing which above all is a choice quality of it. For the other parts of virtue have each their troubles yoked with them; as fasting, temperance, watching, have envy, concupiscence, and contempt. But love along with the gain has great pleasure, too, and no trouble, and like an industrious bee, gathering the sweets from every flower, deposits them in the soul of him who loves. Though any one be a slave, it renders slavery sweeter than liberty. For he who loves rejoices not so much in commanding, as in being commanded, although to command is sweet: but love changes the nature of things and presents herself with all blessings in her hands, gentler than any mother, wealthier than any queen, and makes difficulties light and easy, causing our virtues to be facile, but vice very bitter to us. As thus: to expend seems grievous, yet love makes it pleasant: to receive other men's goods, pleasant, but love suffers it not to appear pleasant, but frames our minds to avoid it as an evil. Again, to speak evil seems to be pleasant to all; but love, while she makes this out to be bitter, causes speaking well to be pleasant; for nothing is so sweet to us as to be praising one whom we love. Again, anger has a kind of pleasure; but in this case no longer, rather all its sinews are taken away. Though he that is beloved should grieve him who loves him, anger no where shows itself; but tears and exhortations, and supplications; so far is love from being exasperated: and should she behold one in error, she mourns and is in pain; yet even this pain itself brings pleasure. For the very tears and the grief of love, are sweeter than any mirth and joy. For instance: they that laugh are not so refreshed as they that weep for their friends. And if you doubt it, stop their tears; and they repine at it not otherwise than as persons intolerably ill-used. But there is, said one, an unbecoming pleasure in love. Go away, and hold your peace, whoever you are. For nothing is so pure from such pleasure as genuine love.

For tell me not of this ordinary sort, the vulgar and low-minded, and a disease rather than love, but of this which Paul seeks after, which considers the profit of them that are loved; and you shall see that no fathers are so affectionate as persons of this stamp. And even as they who love money cannot endure to spend money, but would with more pleasure be in straits than see their wealth diminishing: so too, he that is kindly affected towards any one, would choose to suffer ten thousand evils than see his beloved one injured.

13. How then, says one, did the Egyptian woman who loved Joseph wish to injure him? Because she loved with this diabolical love. Joseph however not with this, but with that which Paul requires. Consider then how great a love his words were tokens of, and the action which she was speaking of. Insult me and make me an adulteress, and wrong my husband, and overthrow all my house, and cast yourself out from your confidence towards God: which were expressions of one who so far from loving him did not even love herself.

But because he truly loved, he sought to avert her from all these. And to convince you that it was in anxiety for her, learn the nature of it from his advice. For he not only thrust her away, but also introduced an exhortation capable of quenching every flame: namely if on my account, my master, says he, knows not any thing which is in his house. He at once reminds her of her husband that he might put her to shame. And he said not, your husband, but my master, which was more apt to restrain her and induce her to consider who she was, and of whom she was enamored -- a mistress, of a slave.

For if he be lord, then are you mistress. Be ashamed then of familiarity with a servant, and consider whose wife you are, and with whom you would be connected, and towards whom you are becoming thankless and inconsiderate, and that I repay him greater good-will. And see how he extols his benefits. For since that barbarous and abandoned woman could entertain no lofty sentiment, he shames her from human

considerations, saying, He knows nothing through me, i.e., he is a great benefactor to me, and I cannot strike my patron in a vital part.

He has made me a second lord of his house, and no one has been kept back from me, but you. Here he endeavors to raise her mind, that so at any rate he might persuade her to be ashamed, and might signify the greatness of her honor. Nor did he stop even here, but likewise added a name sufficient to restrain her, saying, Because you are his wife; and how shall I do this wickedness? But what do you say? That your husband is not present, nor knows that he is wronged? But God will behold it.

She however profited nothing by his advice, but still sought to attract him. For desiring to satiate her own frenzy, not through love of Joseph, she did these things; and this is evident from what she did afterwards. As that she institutes a trial, and brings in accusation, and bears false witness, and exposes to a wild beast him that had done no wrong, and casts him into a prison; or rather for her part, she even slew him, in such a manner did she arm the judge against him.

What then? Was then Joseph too such as she was? Nay, altogether the contrary, for he neither contradicted nor accused the woman. Yes, it may be said: for he would have been disbelieved. And yet he was greatly beloved; and this is evident not only from the beginning but also from the end. For had not his barbarian master loved him greatly, he would even have slain him in his silence, making no defense: being as he was an Egyptian and a ruler, and wronged in his marriage-bed as he supposed, and by a servant, and a servant to whom he had been so great a benefactor.

But all these things gave way to his regard for him, and the grace which God poured down upon him. And together with this grace and love, he had also other no small proofs, had he been minded to justify himself; the garments themselves. For if it were she to whom violence was done, her own vest should have been torn, her face lacerated, instead of her retaining his garments. But he heard, says she, that I lifted up my voice, and left his garments, and went out. And wherefore then did you take them from him? Since unto one suffering violence, the one thing desirable is to be rid of the intruder.

But not from hence alone, but also from the subsequent events, shall I be able to point out his good-will and his love. Yea even when he fell into a necessity of mentioning the cause of his imprisonment, and his remaining there, he did not even then declare the whole course of the story. But what says he? I too have done nothing: but indeed I was stolen out of the land of the Hebrews; and he no where mentioned the adulteress nor does he plume himself on the matter, which would have been any one's feeling, if not for vain-glory, yet so as not to appear to have been cast into that cell for an evil cause. For if men in the act of doing wrong by no means abstain even so from blaming the same things, although to do so brings reproach; of what admiration is not he worthy, because, pure as he was he did not mention the woman's passion nor make a show of her sin; nor when he ascended the throne and became ruler of all Egypt, remember the wrong done by the woman nor exact any punishment?

Do you see how he cared for her? But her's was not love, but madness. For it was not Joseph that she loved, but she sought to fulfil her own lust. And the very words too, if one would examine them accurately, were accompanied with wrath and great blood-thirstiness. For what says she? You have brought in a Hebrew servant to mock us: upbraiding her husband for the kindness; and she exhibited the garments, having become herself more savage than any wild beast: but not so he. And why speak I of his good-will to her, when he was such, we know, towards his brethren who would slay him; and never said one harsh thing of them, either within doors or without?

14. Therefore Paul says, that the love which we are speaking of is the mother of all good things, and prefers it to miracles and all other gifts. For as where there are vests and sandals of gold, we require also some other garments whereby to distinguish the king: but if we see the purple and the diadem, we require not to see any other sign of his royalty: just so here likewise, when the diadem of love is upon our head, it is enough to point out the genuine disciple of Christ, not to ourselves only, but also to the unbelievers. For, by this, says He, shall all men know that you are My disciples, if you have love one to another. John 13:35 So that this sign is greater surely than all signs, in that the disciple is recognised by it. For though any should work ten thousand signs, but be at strife one with another, they will be a scorn to the unbelievers. Just as if they do no sign, but love one another exactly, they will continue both revered and inviolable by all men. Since Paul himself we admire on this account, not for the dead whom he raised, nor for the lepers whom he cleansed, but because he said, who is weak, and I am not weak? Who is made to stumble, and I burn not? 2 Corinthians 11:29 For should you have ten thousand miracles to compare with this, you will have nothing equal to it to say. Since Paul also himself said, that a great reward was laid up for him, not because he wrought miracles, but because to the weak he became as weak. For what is my reward? says he. That, when I preach the Gospel, I may make the Gospel without charge. 1 Corinthians 9:18 And when he puts himself before the Apostles, he says not, I have wrought miracles more abundant than they, but, I have labored more abundantly than they. 1 Corinthians 15:10 And even by famine was he willing to perish for the salvation of the disciples. For it were better for me to die, says he, than that any man should make my glorying void: 1 Corinthians 9:15 not because he was glorying, but that he might not seem to reproach them. For he no where is wont to glory in his own achievements, when the season does not call to it; but even if he be compelled so to do he calls himself a fool. But if he ever glory it is in infirmities, in wrongs, in greatly sympathizing with those who are injured: even as here also he says, who is weak, and I am not weak? These words are greater even than perils. Wherefore also he sets them last, amplifying his discourse.

Of what then must we be worthy compared with him, who neither contemn wealth for our own sake, nor give up the superfluities of our goods? But not so Paul; rather both soul and body did he use to give up, that they who stoned and beat him with rods, might obtain the kingdom. For thus, says he, has Christ taught me to love; who left behind Him the new commandment concerning love, which also Himself fulfilled in deed. For being Lord of all, and of that Blessed Nature; from men, whom He created out of nothing and on whom He had bestowed innumerable benefits, from these, insulting and spitting on Him, He turned not away, but even became man for their sakes, and conversed with harlots and publicans, and healed the demoniacs, and promised heaven. And after all these things they apprehended and beat him with rods, bound, scourged, mocked, and at last crucified Him. And not even so did He turn away, but even when He was on high upon the cross, He says, Father, forgive them their sin. But the thief who before this reviled Him, He translated into very paradise; and made the persecutor Paul, an Apostle; and gave up His own disciples, who were His intimates and wholly devoted to Him, unto death for the Jews' sake who crucified Him.

Recollecting therefore in our minds all these things, both those of God and of men, let us emulate these high deeds, and possess ourselves of the love which is above all gifts, that we may obtain both the present and the future blessings: the which may we all obtain, through the grace and mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ, with Whom to the Father, with the Holy Ghost, be glory, power, honor, now and ever, and world without end. Amen.

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