

1 Corinthians 13:8

by St. John Chrysostom

Love is the greatest gift and the more excellent way, and it will not cease, but will advance further in the future.

Scripture: Genesis 2:24, Matthew 19:21, Romans 2:5, 1 Corinthians 13:8, 1 Corinthians 13:13

Topics: "Divine Love", "Christian Unity"

Description

John Chrysostom preaches about the importance of love as the greatest gift, surpassing prophecies, tongues, and knowledge. He emphasizes that love is the foundation of exact self-denial, unity, and the removal of envy and pride. Chrysostom explains that while prophecies, tongues, and knowledge may cease, love will endure and advance further, both in this life and the afterlife. He illustrates how God's design, from the creation of Adam and Eve to the establishment of various relationships and societal structures, fosters unity, concord, and the necessity of mutual dependence among individuals.

Transcript

But whether there be prophecies, they shall be done away; whether there be tongues, they shall cease; whether there be knowledge, it shall be done away.

Having shown the excellency of love from its being requisite both to the spiritual gifts, and to the virtues of life; and from rehearsal of all its good qualities, and by showing it to be the foundation of exact self-denial; from another, a third head, again he points out its worth. And this he does, first from a wish to persuade those who seemed to be accounted inferior that it is in their power to have the chief of all signs, and that they will be no worse off than the possessors of the gifts, if they have this, but rather much better: secondly, with regard on the other hand to them that had the greater gifts and were lifted up thereby, studying to bring them down and to show that they have nothing unless they have this. For thus they would both love one another, envy as well as pride being hereby taken away; and reciprocally, loving one another, they would still further banish these passions. For love envies not, is not puffed up. So that on every side he throws around them an impregnable wall, and a manifold unanimity, which first removes all their disorders, and thereby again waxes stronger. Therefore also he put forward innumerable reasons which might comfort their dejection. As thus: both the same Spirit, says he, is the giver; and He gives to profit withal; and divides as he will, and it is a gift which He divides, not a debt. Though thou receive but a little, thou dost equally contribute to the body, and even thus you enjoy much honor. And he that has the greater, needs you who hast the less. And, Love is the greatest gift, and 'the more excellent way.'

Now all this he said doubly to bind them to each other, both by their not considering themselves disparaged while they had this; and because, after pursuit and attainment of it, they henceforth would not feel human infirmity; both as having the root of all gifts, and as no longer capable of contentiousness even though they had nothing. For he that is once led captive by love is freed from contentiousness.

And this is why, pointing out to them how great advantages they shall thence reap, he sketched out its fruits; by his praises of it repressing their disorders: inasmuch as each one of the things mentioned by him was a sufficient medicine to heal their wounds. Wherefore also he said, suffers long, to them that are at strife one with another; is kind, to them that stand mutually aloof, and bear a secret grudge; envies not, to them that look grudgingly on their superiors; vaunts not itself, to them that are separated; is not puffed up, to them that boast themselves against others; does not behave itself unseemly, to them that do not think it their duty to condescend; seeks not her own, to them that overlook the rest; is not provoked, takes not account of evil, to them that are insolent; rejoices not in unrighteousness, but rejoices with the truth, to them again that are envious; bears all things, to them that are treacherous; hopes all things, to the despairing; endures all things, never fails, to them that easily separate themselves.

2. Now then after that in every way he had shown her to be very exceedingly great, again he does so from another most important head, by a fresh comparison exalting her dignity, and saying thus; but whether there be prophecies, they shall be done away; whether there be tongues, they shall cease. For if both these were brought in in order to the faith; when that is every where sown abroad, the use of these is henceforth superfluous. But the loving one another shall not cease, rather it shall even advance further, both here and hereafter, and then more than now. For here there are many things that weaken our love; wealth, business, passions of the body, disorders of the soul; but there none of these.

But although it be no marvel that prophecies and tongues should be done away, that knowledge should be done away, this is what may cause some perplexity. For this also he added, Whether there be knowledge, it shall be done away. What then? Are we then to live in ignorance? Far from it. Nay, then specially it is probable that our knowledge is made intense. Wherefore also he said, Then shall I know, even as also I am known. For this reason, if you mark it, that you might not suppose this to be done away equally with the prophecy and the tongues, having said, Whether there be knowledge, it shall be done away, he was not silent, but added also the manner of its vanishing away, immediately subjoining the saying,

1 Corinthians 13:9-10

We know in part, and we prophesy in part. But when that which is perfect has come, then that which is in part shall be done away.

It is not therefore knowledge that is done away, but the circumstance that our knowledge is in part. For we shall not only know as much but even a great deal more. But that I may also make it plain by example; now we know that God is every where, but how, we know not. That He made out of things that are not the things that are we know; but of the manner we are ignorant. That He was born of a virgin, we know; but how, we know not yet. But then shall we know somewhat more and clearer concerning these things. Next he points out also how great is the distance between the two, and that our deficiency is no small one, saying,

1 Corinthians 13:11

When I was a child, I spoke as a child, I felt as a child, I thought as a child; but now that I have become a man, I have put away childish things.

And by another example too he manifests the same thing again, saying,

1 Corinthians 13:12

For now we see in a mirror. Further, because the glass sets before us the thing seen indefinitely, he added, darkly, to show very strongly that the present knowledge is most partial.

But then face to face. Not as though God has a face, but to express the notion of greater clearness and perspicuity. Do you see how we learn all things by gradual addition?

Now I know in part; but then shall I know even as also I have been known. Do you see how in two ways he pulls down their pride? Both because their knowledge is in part, and because not even this have they of themselves. For I knew Him not, but He made Himself known to me, says he. Wherefore, even as now He first knew me, and Himself hastened towards me, so shall I hasten towards Him then much more than now. For so he that sits in darkness, as long as he sees not the sun does not of himself hasten to meet the beauty of its beam, which indeed shows itself as soon as it has begun to shine: but when he perceives its brightness, then also himself at length follows after its light: This then is the meaning of the expression, even as also I have been known. Not that we shall so know him as He is, but that even as He hastened toward us now, so also shall we cleave unto Him then, and shall know many of the things which are now secret, and shall enjoy that most blessed society and wisdom. For if Paul who knew so much was a child, consider what those things must be. If these be a glass and a riddle, do thou hence again infer, God's open Face, how great a thing It is.

3. But that I may open out to you some small part of this difference, and may impart some faint ray of this thought to your soul, I would have you recall to mind things as they were in the Law, now after that grace has shone forth. For those things too, that came before grace, had a certain great and marvellous appearance: nevertheless, hear what Paul says of them after grace came: That which was made glorious had no glory in this respect, by reason of the glory that surpasses. 2 Corinthians 3:10

But that what I say may be made yet clearer, let us apply the argument to some one of the rites then performed, and then you will see how great is the difference. And if you will, let us bring forward that passover and this, and then shall you be aware of our superiority. For the Jews indeed celebrated it, but they celebrated it so as in a mirror, and darkly. But these hidden mysteries they never at any time did even conceive in their mind, nor what things they prefigured. They saw a lamb slain, and the blood of a beast, and door-posts sprinkled with it; but that the Son of God incarnate shall be slain, and shall set free the whole world, and shall grant both to Greeks and Barbarians to taste of this Blood, and shall open heaven to all, and shall offer what is there to the whole human race, and having taken His blood-stained flesh shall exalt it above the heaven, and the heaven of heavens, and, in a word, above all the hosts on high, of the angels and archangels and all the other powers, and shall cause it shining in unspeakable glory -- to sit down upon the throne itself of the King, on the right hand of the Father these things, I say, no one, either of them or of the rest of mankind, either foreknew or was able ever to conceive.

4. But what say those who shrink from nothing? That the expression, now I know in part, is spoken in dispensations; for that the Apostle had the perfect knowledge of God. And now he calls himself a child? How sees he in a mirror? How darkly, if he has the sum of knowledge? And why does he refer to it as

something peculiar to the Spirit, and to no other power in the creation, saying, For who among men knows the things of a man, save the spirit of the man which is in him? Even so the things of God none knows, save the Spirit of God. 1 Corinthians 2:11 And Christ again says that this belongs to Himself alone, thus saying, Not that any man has seen the Father, save He which is from God, He has seen the Father, John 6:46 giving the name, sight, to the most clear and perfect knowledge.

And how shall he who knows the Essence, be ignorant of the dispensations? Since that knowledge is greater than this.

Are we then, says he, ignorant of God? Far from it. That He is, we know, but what He is, as regards His Essence, we know not yet. And that you may understand that not concerning the dispensations did he speak the words, now I know in part, hear what follows. He adds then, but then shall I know, even as also I have been known. He was surely known not by the dispensations, but by God.

Let none therefore consider this to be a small or simple transgression, but twofold, and threefold, yea and manifold. For not only is there this impiety that they boast of knowing those things which belong to the Spirit alone; and to the only-begotten Son of God, but also that when Paul could not acquire even this knowledge which is in part without the revelation from above, these men say that they have obtained the whole from their own reasonings. For neither are they able to point out that the Scripture has any where discoursed to us of these things.

5. But however, leaving their madness, let us give heed to the words which follow concerning love. For he was not content with these things, but adds again, saying,

1 Corinthians 13:13

And now abides, faith, hope, love, these three; and the greatest of these is love.

For faith indeed and hope, when the good things believed and hoped for have come, cease. And to show this Paul said, For hope that is seen is not hope; for who hopes for that which he sees. Again, Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the proving of things not seen. Romans 8:24; Hebrews 11:1 So that these cease when those appear; but love is then most elevated, and becomes more vehement. Another encomium of love. For neither is he content with those before mentioned, but he strives to discover yet another. And observe: he has said that it is a great gift, and a still more excellent way to these. He has said, that without it there is no great profit in our gifts; he has shadowed out its image at length; he intends again and in another manner to exalt it, and to show that it is great from its abiding. Wherefore also he said, But now abides faith, hope, love, these three; but the greatest of these is love. How then is love the greater? In that those pass away.

If now so great is the virtue of love, with good reason does he add and say, Follow after love. For there is surely need of following, and a kind of vehement running after her: in such sort does she fly from us, and so many are the things which trip us up in that direction. Wherefore we have ever need of great earnestness in order to overtake her. And to point out this, Paul said not, follow love, but, pursue her; stirring us up, and inflaming us to lay hold on her.

For so God from the beginning contrived ten thousand ways for implanting her in us. Thus, first, He granted one head to all, Adam. For why do we not all spring out of the earth? Why not full grown, as he was? In order that both the birth and the bringings up of children, and the being born of another, might

bind us mutually together. For this cause neither made He woman out of the earth: and because the thing of the same substance was not equally sufficient to shame us into unanimity, unless we had also the same progenitor, He provided also for this: since, if now, being only separated by place, we consider ourselves alien from one another; much more would this have happened if our race had had two originals. For this cause therefore, as it were from some one head, he bound together the whole body of the human race. And because from the beginning they seemed to be in a manner two, see how he fastens them together again, and gathers them into one by marriage. For, therefore, says He, shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife; and they shall be for one flesh. Genesis 2:24 And he said not, the woman, but, the man, because the desire too is stronger in him. Yea, and for this cause He made it also stronger, that it might bow the superior party to the absolute sway of this passion, and might subjugate it to the weaker. And since marriage also must needs be introduced, him from whom she sprang He made husband to the woman. For all things in the eye of God are second to love. And if when things had thus begun, the first man straightway became so frantic, and the devil sowed among them so great warfare and envy; what would he not have done, had they not sprung from one root?

Further, in order that the one might be subject, and the other rule; (for equality is wont oftentimes to bring in strife;) he suffered it not to be a democracy, but a monarchy; and as in an army, this order one may see in every family. In the rank of monarch, for instance, there is the husband; but in the rank of lieutenant and general, the wife; and the children too are allotted a third station in command. Then after these a fourth order, that of the servant. For these also bear rule over their inferiors, and some one of them is oftentimes set over the whole, keeping ever the post of the master, but still as a servant. And together with this again another command, and among the children themselves again another, according to their age and sex; since among the children the female does not possess equal sway. And every where has God made governments at small distances and thick together, that all might abide in concord and much good order. Therefore even before the race was increased to a multitude, when the first two only were in being, He bade him govern, and her obey. And in order again that He might not despise her as inferior, and separate from her, see how He honored her, and made them one, even before her creation. For, Let us make for man, says He, a help meet, implying that she was made for his need, and thereby drawing him unto her who was made for his sake: since to all those things are we more kindly disposed, which are done for our sakes. But that she, on the other hand, might not be elated, as being granted him for help, nor might burst this bond, He makes her out of his side, signifying that she is a part of the whole body. And that neither might the man be elated therefore, He no longer permits that to belong to him alone which before was his alone, but effected the contrary to this, by bringing in procreation of children, and herein too giving the chief honor unto the man, not however allowing the whole to be his.

Do you see how many bonds of love God has wrought? And these indeed by force of nature He has lodged in us as pledges of concord. For both our being of the same substance leads to this; (for every animal loves its like;) and the woman being produced from the man, and again the children from both. Whence also many kinds of affection arise. For one we love as a father, another as a grandfather; one as a mother, another as a nurse; and one as a son or grandson or great-grandson again, and another as a daughter, or grand-daughter; and one as a brother, another as a nephew; and one as a sister, another as a niece. And why need one recount all the names of consanguinity?

And He devised also another foundation of affection. For having forbidden the marriage of kindred, he led us out unto strangers and drew them again unto us. For since by this natural kindred it was not possible that they should be connected with us, he connected us anew by marriage, uniting together whole families

by the single person of the bride, and mingling entire races with races.

For, marry not, says the Lord, Leviticus 18:6 your sister, nor your father's sister, nor any damsel which has such consanguinity with you, as utterly hinders the marriage; naming the degrees of such relationship. It is enough for your affection towards them that you were the fruit of the same birth-pangs, and that the others are in a different relation to you. Why do you narrow the breadth of love? Why do you idly throw away a ground of affection towards her, such as that you might thereby provide yourself with distinct source for affection to spring from; I mean, by taking a wife from another family, and through her a chain of kinsmen, both mother, and father, and brethren, and their connexions!

7. Do you see by how many ways He has bound us together? Nevertheless, not even this sufficed Him, but He likewise made us to stand in need of one another, that thus also He might bring us together, because necessities above all create friendships. For no other reason neither suffered He all things to be produced in every place, that hence also He might compel us to mix with one another. But having set us in need of one another, He on the other hand made the intercourse easy. Since if this were not so, the matter would have turned out painful and difficult in another way. For if one that wanted a physician, or a carpenter, or any other workman, had need to set off on a long foreign sojourn, the whole had come to nought. Here then is why He founded cities also, and brought all into one place. And accordingly that we might easily keep up intercourse with distant countries, He spread the level of the sea between us, and gave us the swiftness of winds, thereby making our voyages easy. And at the beginning He even gathered all men together in one spot, and did not disperse them until they who first received the gift abused their concord unto sin. However, He has drawn us together in every way; both by nature, and by consanguinity, and by language, and by place; and as he willed not that we should fall from paradise; (for had He willed it, He would not have placed there at all the man whom He had formed, but he that disobeyed was the cause;) so neither was it His will that men should have various tongues; since otherwise He would have made it so from the beginning. But now the whole earth was of one language, and all had one speech. Genesis 11:1

Here is the reason why, when it was needful that the earth should be destroyed, not even then did He make us of other matter, nor did He translate the righteous man, but leaving him in the midst of the deluge, like a kind of spark of the world, He rekindled our race from thence, even by the blessed Noah. And from the beginning He made one sovereignty only, setting the man over the woman. But after that our race ran headlong into extreme disorder, He appointed other sovereignties also, those of Masters, and those of Governors, and this too for love's sake. That is, since vice was a thing apt to dissolve and subvert our race, He set those who administer justice in the midst of our cities as a kind of physicians, that driving away vice, as it were a plague to love, they might gather together all in one.

And that not only in cities, but also in each family there might be great unanimity, He honored the man with rule and superiority; the woman on the other hand He armed with desire: and the gift also of procreation of children, He committed in common to both, and withal He furnished also other things apt to conciliate love: neither entrusting all to the man, nor all to the woman; but dividing these things also severally to each; to her entrusting the house, and to him the market; to him the work of feeding, for he tills the ground; to her that of clothing, for loom and distaff are the woman's. For it is God Himself who gave to woman-kind skill in woven work. Woe be to covetousness, which suffers not this difference to appear! For the general effeminacy has gone so far as to introduce our men to the looms, and put shuttles into their hands, and the woof, and threads. Nevertheless, even thus the forethought of the divine economy shines out. For we still greatly need the woman in other more necessary things, and we require the help of our inferiors in

those things which keep our life together.

8. And so strong is the compulsion of this need that though one be richer than all men, not even thus is he rid of this close conjunction, and of his want of that which is inferior to himself. For it is not, we see, the poor only who need the rich, but the rich also the poor; and these require those more than the others them. And that you may see it more clearly, let us suppose, if it seem good, two cities, the one of rich only, but the other of poor; and neither in that of the rich let there be any poor man, nor in that of the poor any rich; but let us purge out both thoroughly, and see which will be the more able to support itself. For if we find that of the poor able, it is evident that the rich will more stand in need of them.

Now then, in that city of the affluent there will be no manufacturer, no builder, no carpenter, no shoe-maker, no baker, no husbandman, no brazier, no rope-maker, nor any other such trade. For who among the rich would ever choose to follow these crafts, seeing that the very men who take them in hand, when they become rich, endure no longer the discomfort caused by these works? How then shall this our city stand? The rich, it is replied, giving money, will buy these things of the poor. Well then, they will not be sufficient for themselves, their needing the others proves that. But how will they build houses? Will they purchase this too? But the nature of things cannot admit this. Therefore they must needs invite the artificers there, and destroy the law, which we made at first when we were founding the city. For you remember, that we said, let there be no poor man within it. But, lo, necessity, even against our will, has invited and brought them in. Whence it is evident that it is impossible without poor for a city to subsist: since if the city were to continue refusing to admit any of these, it will be no longer a city but will perish. Plainly then it will not support itself, unless it shall collect the poor as a kind of preservers, to be within itself.

But let us look also upon the city of the poor, whether this too will be in a like needy condition, on being deprived of the rich. And first let us in our discourse thoroughly clear the nature of riches, and point them out plainly. What then may riches be? Gold, and silver, and precious stones, and garments silken, purple, and embroidered with gold. Now then that we have seen what riches are, let us drive them away from our city of the poor: and if we are to make it purely a city of poor persons, let not any gold appear there, no not in a dream, nor garments of such quality; and if you will, neither silver, nor vessels of silver. What then? Because of this will that city and its concerns live in want, tell me? Not at all. For suppose first there should be need to build; one does not want gold and silver and pearls, but skill, and hands, and hands not of any kind, but such as have become callous, and fingers hardened, and great strength, and wood, and stones: suppose again one would weave a garment, neither here have we need of gold and silver, but, as before, of hands and skill, and women to work. And what if one require husbandry, and digging the ground? Is it rich men who are wanted, or poor? It is evident to every one, poor. And when iron too is to be wrought, or any such thing to be done, this is the race of men whereof we most stand in need. What respect then remains wherein we may stand in need of the rich? Except the thing required be, to pull down this city. For should that sort of people make an entrance, and these philosophers, for (for I call them philosophers, who seek after nothing superfluous,) should fall to desiring gold and jewels, giving themselves up to idleness and luxury; they will ruin everything from that day forward.

9. But unless wealth be useful, says one, wherefore has it been given by God? And whence is it evident, that being rich is from God? The Scripture says, 'The silver is Mine, and the gold is Mine,' and to whomsoever I will, I will give it. Haggai 2:8 Here, if I were not doing an unseemly thing, I could at this moment laugh loudly, in derision of those who say these things: because as little children admitted to a King's table, together with that food they thrust into their mouth everything that comes to hand; so also do

these together with the divine Scriptures privily bring in their own notions. For this, the silver is Mine, and the gold is Mine, I know to have been spoken by the Prophet; but that, to whomsoever I will, I will give it, is not added, but is brought in by these offscourings of the people. And as to the former, why it was said, I will explain. The Prophet Haggai, because he was continually promising to the Jews after their return from Babylon, that he would show the temple in its former appearance, and some doubted of the thing spoken, and considered it to be well near impossible that after being reduced to dust and ashes, the house should appear again such as it was -- he, to remove their unbelief, in the person of God says these things; as if he said, Why are you afraid? And why do ye refuse to believe? 'The silver is Mine, and the gold is Mine,' and I need not to borrow from others, and so to beautify the house. And to show that this is the meaning he adds, and the glory of this house, the latter glory shall be greater than the glory of the former. Let us not then bring in spiders' webs upon the royal robe. For if any person, detected in weaving a counterfeit thread in a purple vest, is to suffer the severest punishment, much more in spiritual things; since neither is it an ordinary sin, which is hereby committed. And why say I, by adding and taking away? By a mere point, and by a mere circumstance of delivery in the reading, many impious thoughts have not seldom been brought into being.

Whence then the rich, says one? for it has been said, 'Riches and poverty are from the Lord.' Let us then ask those who object these things against us, whether all riches and all poverty are from the Lord? Nay, who would say this? For we see that both by rapine, and by wickedly breaking open of tombs, and by witchcraft, and by other such devices, great wealth is gathered by many, and the possessors are not worthy even to live. What then, tell me, do we say that this wealth is from God? Far from it. Whence then? From sin. For so the harlot by doing indignity to her own body grows rich, and a handsome youth oftentimes selling his bloom with disgrace brings himself gold, and the tomb-spoiler by breaking open men's sepulchres gathers together unjust wealth, and the robber by digging through walls. All wealth therefore is not from God. What then, says one, shall we say to this expression? Acquaint yourself first with a kind of poverty which proceeds not from God, and then we will proceed to the saying itself. I mean, that when any dissolute youth spends his wealth either on harlots, or on conjurors, or on any other such evil desires, and becomes poor, is it not very evident that this has not come from God, but from his own profligacy? Again, if any through idleness become poor, if any through folly be brought down to beggary, if any, by taking in hand perilous and unlawful practices; is it not quite evident, that neither has any one of these and other such persons been brought down to this their poverty by God?

Does then the Scripture speak falsely? God forbid! But they do foolishly, who neglect to examine with due exactness all things written. For if this on the one hand be acknowledged, that the Scriptures cannot lie; and this on the other hand proved, that not all wealth is from God; the weakness of inconsiderate readers is the cause of the difficulty.

10. Now it were right for us to dismiss you, having herein exculpated the Scripture, that you may suffer this punishment at our hands for your negligence concerning the Scriptures: but because I greatly spare you and cannot any longer bear to look on you confused and disturbed, let us also add the solution, having first mentioned the speaker, and when it was spoken, and to whom. For not alike to all does God speak, as neither do we deal alike with children and men. When then was it spoken, and by whom, and to whom? By Solomon in the Old Testament to the Jews, who knew no other than things of sense, and by these proved the power of God. For these are they who say, Can He give bread also? and, What sign showest Thou unto us? Our fathers did eat manna in the desert:-- whose God is their belly. Psalm 78:24; Matthew 12:38; John 6:31; Philippians 3:19 Since then they were proving Him by these things, He says to them,

This is also possible with God to make both rich and poor; not that it is of course He Himself who makes them, but that He can, when He will. Just as when he says, Who rebukes the sea, and makes it dry, and dries up all the rivers, Nahum 1:4 and yet this was never done. How then does the prophet say so? Not as though it were a doing always, but as a thing that was possible for Him to do.

What kind of poverty then does He give, and what kind of wealth? Remember the patriarch, and you shall know the kind of wealth that is given by God. For He made both Abraham rich, and after him Job, even as Job himself says; If we have received good from the Lord, shall we not also receive evil? Job 2:10 And the wealth of Jacob thence had its beginning. There is also a poverty which comes from Him, that which is commended, such as He once would have introduced to the knowledge of that rich man, saying, If you would be perfect, sell your goods, and give to the poor, and come, follow Me. Matthew 19:21 And to the disciples again, making a law and saying, Provide neither gold, nor silver, nor two coats. Matthew 9:10 Say not then that all wealth is His gift: seeing that cases have been pointed out of its being collected both by murderers, and by rapine, and by ten thousand other devices.

But again the discourse reverts to our former question: viz. if the rich are no way useful to us, wherefore are they made rich? What then must we say? That these are not useful who so make themselves rich; whereas those surely who are made so by God are in the highest degree useful. And do thou learn this from the very things done by those whom we just now mentioned. Thus Abraham possessed wealth for all strangers, and for all in need. For he who on the approach of three men, as he supposed, sacrificed a calf and kneaded three measures of fine flour, and that while sitting in his door in the heat of the day; consider with what liberality and readiness he used to spend his substance on all, together with his goods giving also the service of his body, and this at such an advanced age; being a harbor to strangers, to all who had come to any kind of want, and possessing nothing as his own, not even his son: since at God's command he actually delivered up even him; and along with his son he gave up also himself and all his house, when he hastened to snatch his brother's son out of danger; and this he did not for lucre's sake, but of mere humanity. When, for instance, they who were saved by him would put the spoils at his disposal, he rejected all, even to a thread and a shoe-latchet. Genesis 14:23

Such also was the blessed Job. For my door, says, was open to every one who came: Job 20:15 I was eyes to the blind, and feet to the lame: I was a father of the helpless, the stranger lodged not without, and the helpless, whatever need they had, failed not of it, neither suffered I one helpless man to go out of my door with an empty bosom. And much more too than these, that we may not now recount all, he continued to do, spending all his wealth on the needy.

Will you also look upon those who have become rich but not of God, that you may learn how they employed their wealth? Behold him in the parable of Lazarus, how he imparted not so much as a share of his crumbs. Behold Ahab, how not even the vineyard is free from his extortion: behold Gehazi: behold all such. Thus they on the one hand who make just acquisitions, as having received from God, spend on the commands of God: but they who in act of acquiring offend God, in the expending also do the same: consuming it on harlots and parasites, or burying and shutting it up, but laying out nothing upon the poor.

And wherefore, says one, does God suffer such men to be rich? Because He is long-suffering: because He would bring us to repentance; because He has prepared hell; because He has appointed a day in which He is to judge the world. Acts 17:31 Whereas did He use at once to punish them that are rich and not virtuously, Zacchæus would not have had an appointed time for repentance, so as even to restore fourfold whatever he had unjustly taken, and to add half of his goods; nor Matthew, to be converted and

become an Apostle, taken off as he would have been before the due season; nor yet many other such. Therefore does He bear with them, calling all to repentance. But if they will not, but continue in the same, they shall hear Paul saying that after their hardness and impenitent heart they treasure up unto themselves wrath against the day of wrath, and revelation, and righteous judgment of God: Romans 2:5 which wrath that we may escape, let us become rich with the riches of heaven, and follow after the laudable sort of poverty. For thus shall we obtain also the good things to come: 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, and honor, now and for ever, and world without end. Amen.

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