

1 Corinthians 14:1

by St. John Chrysostom

St. John Chrysostom emphasizes the importance of pursuing love and using spiritual gifts, particularly prophecy, for the edification of the Church.

Scripture: Genesis 13:8, Genesis 23:6, Acts 14:13, 1 Corinthians 14:1-18, Philippians 3:7, 1 Timothy 6:8

Topics: "Wealth Management", "Christian Stewardship"

Description

John Chrysostom preaches about the dangers of being consumed by the desire for wealth and the importance of using wealth for the benefit of others. He emphasizes the need to prioritize virtue over material possessions, highlighting how wealth can lead to various troubles and even disrespect after death. Chrysostom urges the congregation to seek contentment in all circumstances, whether in poverty or wealth, and to focus on building a soul that can withstand any situation. He warns against the tyranny of covetousness and encourages the faithful to bind wealth to acts of mercy and charity, ensuring it is used for good.

Transcript

Follow after love, yet desire earnestly spiritual gifts; but rather that you may prophesy.

Thus, inasmuch as he had with exactness rehearsed unto them all the excellence of love, he exhorts them in what follows, with alacrity to lay hold of it. Wherefore also he said, Follow after: for he that is in chase beholds that only which is chased, and towards that he strains himself, and leaves not off until he lay hold of it. He that is in chase, when by himself he cannot, by those that are before him he does overtake the fugitive, beseeching those who are near with much eagerness to seize and keep it so seized for him until he shall come up. This then let us also do. When of ourselves we do not reach unto love, let us bid them that are near her to hold her, till we come up with her, and when we have apprehended, no more let her go, that she may not again escape us. For continually she springs away from us, because we use her not as we ought, but prefer all things unto her. Therefore we ought to make every effort, so as perfectly to retain her. For if this be done, we require not henceforth much labor, nay rather scarce any; but taking our ease, and keeping holiday, we shall march on in the narrow path of virtue. Wherefore he says, Follow after her.

Then that they might not suppose that for no other end he brought in the discourse of charity, except that he might extinguish the gifts, he subjoins as follows;

Yet desire earnestly spiritual gifts; but rather that you may prophesy.

1 Corinthians 14:2

For he that speaks in a tongue, speaks not unto men, but unto God: for no man understands; but in the Spirit he speaks mysteries.

1 Corinthians 14:3

But he that prophesies speaks unto men edification, and exhortation, and comfort.

At this point he makes a comparison between the gifts, and lowers that of the tongues, showing it to be neither altogether useless, nor very profitable by itself. For in fact they were greatly puffed up on account of this, because the gift was considered to be a great one. And it was thought great because the Apostles received it first, and with so great display; it was not however therefore to be esteemed above all the others. Wherefore then did the Apostles receive it before the rest? Because they were to go abroad every where. And as in the time of building the tower the one tongue was divided into many; so then the many tongues frequently met in one man, and the same person used to discourse both in the Persian, and the Roman, and the Indian, and many other tongues, the Spirit sounding within him: and the gift was called the gift of tongues because he could all at once speak various languages. See accordingly how he both depresses and elevates it. Thus, by saying, He that speaks with tongues, speaks not unto men, but unto God, for no man understands, he depressed it, implying that the profit of it was not great; but by adding, but in the Spirit he speaks mysteries he again elevated it, that it might not seem to be superfluous and useless and given in vain.

But he that prophesies speaks unto men edification, and exhortation, and comfort.

Do you see by what he signifies the choice nature of this gift? I.e., by the common benefit? And how every where he gives the higher honor to that which tends to the profit of the many? For do not the former speak unto men also? Tell me. But not so much edification, and exhortation, and comfort. So that the being powered by the Spirit is common to both, as well to him that prophesies, as to him that speaks with tongues; but in this, the one (he, I mean, who prophesies) has the advantage in that he is also profitable unto the hearers. For they who with tongues were not understood by them that had not the gift.

What then? Did they edify no man? Yes, says he, themselves alone: wherefore also he adds,

1 Corinthians 14:4

He that speaks in tongue edifies himself.

And how, if he know not what he says? Why, for the present, he is speaking of them who understand what they say -- understand it themselves, but know not how to render it unto others.

But he that prophesies edifies the Church. Now as great as is the difference between a single person and the Church, so great is the interval between these two. Do you see his wisdom, how he does not thrust out the gift and make nothing of it, but signifies it to have some advantage, small though it be, and such as to suffice the possessor only?

2. Next, lest they should suppose that in envy to them he depresses the tongues, (for the more part had this gift,) to correct their suspicion he says,

1 Corinthians 14:5

I would have you all speak with tongues, but rather that you should prophesy: for greater is he that prophesies than he that speaks with tongues, except he interpret, that the Church may receive edifying.

But rather and greater, do not mark opposition, but superiority. So that hence also it is evident that he is not disparaging the gift, but leading them to better things, displaying both his carefulness on their behalf, and a spirit free from all envy. For neither did he say, I would that two or three, but, that you all spoke with tongues and not this only, but also, that you prophesied; and this rather than that; for greater is he that prophesies. For since he has established and proved it, he next proceeds also to assert it; not however simply, but with a qualification. Accordingly he adds, except he interpret; since if he be able to do this, I mean the interpreting, he has become equal unto the prophet, so he speaks, because then there are many who reap the advantage of it; a thing to be especially observed, how this throughout, before all else, is his object,

1 Corinthians 14:6

But now, brethren, if I come unto you speaking with tongues, what shall I profit you, unless I speak to you either by way of revelation, or of knowledge, or of prophesying, or of teaching?

And why speak I, says he, of the rest? Nay, let the person who speaks with tongues be Paul: for not even so will any good come to the hearers. And these things he says to signify that he is seeking their profit, not bearing any grudge against them that have the gift; since not even in his own person does he shrink from pointing out its unprofitableness. And indeed it is his constant way to work out the disagreeable topics in his own person: as in the beginning of the Epistle he said, Who then is Paul? And who is Apollos? And who is Cephas? This same then he does also here, saying, Not even I shall profit you, except I speak to you either by way of revelation, or of prophesying, or of knowledge, or of teaching. And what he means is, if I say not somewhat that can be made intelligible to you and that may be clear, but merely make display of my having the gift of tongues;-- tongues which you do not understand, you will go away with no sort of profit. For how should you profit by a voice which you understand not?

1 Corinthians 14:7

[3] Even things without life, giving a voice, whether pipe or harp, if they give not a distinction in the sounds, how shall it be known what is piped?

And why do I say, says he, that in our case this is unprofitable, and that only useful which is clear and easy to be apprehended by the hearers? Since even in musical instruments without life one may see this: for whether it be pipe or harp, yet if it be struck or blown confusedly and unskilfully, without proper cadence or harmony, it will captivate none of the hearers. For even in these inarticulate sounds there is need of some distinctness: and if you strike not or breathe into the pipe according to art, you have done nothing. Now if from things without life we require so much distinctness, and harmony, and appropriateness, and into those inarticulate sounds we strive and contend to infuse so much meaning, much more in men indued with life and reason, and in spiritual gifts, ought one to make significancy an object.

1 Corinthians 14:8

For if the trumpet give an uncertain voice, who shall prepare himself for war?

Thus from things merely ornamental he carries on his argument to those which are more necessary and useful; and says that not in the harp alone, but in the trumpet also one may see this effect produced. For in that also there are certain measures; and they give out at one time a warlike note, and at another one that is not so; and again sometimes it leads out to line of battle and at others recalls from it: and unless one know this, there is great danger. Which is just what he means, and the mischief of it what he is manifesting, when he says, who shall prepare himself for war? So then, if it have not this quality, it is the ruin of all. And what is this to us, says one? Truly it concerns you very especially; wherefore also he adds,

1 Corinthians 14:9

So also ye, unless ye utter by the tongue, speech easy to be understood, you will be speaking into the air: i.e., calling to nobody, speaking unto no one. Thus every where he shows its unprofitableness.

4. But if it be unprofitable, why was it given? says one. So as to be useful to him that has received it. But if it is to be so to others also, there must be added interpretation. Now this he says, bringing them near to one another; that if a person himself have not the gift of interpretation, he may take unto him another that has it, and make his own gift useful through him. Wherefore he every where points out its imperfection, that so he may bind them together. Any how, he that accounts it to be sufficient for itself, does not so much commend it as disparage it, not suffering it to shine brightly by the interpretation. For excellent indeed and necessary is the gift, but it is so when it has one to explain what is spoken. Since the finger too is a necessary thing, but when you separate it from the other members, it will not be equally useful: and the trumpet is necessary, but when it sounds at random, it is rather an annoyance. Yea, neither shall any art come to light, without matter subject to it; nor is matter put into shape, if no form be assigned to it. Suppose then the voice to be as the subject-matter, but the distinctness as that form, which not being present, there will be no use in the material.

1 Corinthians 14:10

There are, it may be, so many kinds of voices in the world, and no kind is without signification: i.e., so many tongues, so many voices of Scythians, Thracians, Romans, Persians, Moors, Indians, Egyptians, innumerable other nations.

1 Corinthians 14:11

If then I know not the meaning of the voice, I shall be to him that speaks a barbarian. For suppose not, says he, that this happens only in our case; rather in all one may see this taking place: so that I do not say this to disparage the voice, but to signify that to me it is useless, as long as it is not intelligible. Next, that he may not render the accusation unpalatable, he makes his charge alike for the two, saying, He shall be unto me a barbarian, and I to him. Not from the nature of the voice, but from our ignorance. Do you see how little by little he draws men to that which is akin to the subject. Which is his use to do, to fetch his examples from afar, and to end with what more properly belongs to the matter. For having spoken of a pipe and harp, wherein is much that is inferior and unprofitable, he comes to the trumpet, a thing more useful; next, from that he proceeds to the very voice itself. So also before, when he was discoursing to show that it was not forbidden the Apostles to receive, beginning first with husbandmen, and shepherds, and soldiers, then he brought the discourse on to that which is nearer to the subject, the priests in the old covenant.

But do thou, I pray, consider, how every where he has given diligence to free the gift from censure, and to bring round the charge to the receivers of it. For he said not, I shall be a barbarian, but, unto him that speaks, a barbarian. And again, he did not say, he that speaks shall be a barbarian, but he that speaks shall be a barbarian unto me.

5. What then must be done? says he. Why, so far from disparaging, one ought to recommend and to teach it; as indeed himself also does. Since after he had accused and rebuked it and shown its unprofitableness, he proceeds to counsel them; saying,

1 Corinthians 14:12

So also ye, since as you are zealous of spiritual gifts, seek that you may abound unto the edifying of the Church.

Do you see his aim every where, how he looks to one thing continually and in all cases, the general utility, the profiting the Church; laying this down as a kind of rule? And he did not say, that you may obtain the gifts but, that you may abound, i.e., that you may even possess them in great plenitude. Thus, so far am I from wishing you not to possess them, that I even wish you to abound in them, only so that you handle them with a view to the common advantage. And how is this to be done? This he adds, saying,

1 Corinthians 14:13

Wherefore let him that speaks in a tongue pray that he may interpret.

1 Corinthians 14:14

For if I pray in a tongue, my spirit prays, but my understanding is unfruitful.

1 Corinthians 14:15

What is it then? I will pray with the spirit, and I will pray with the understanding also; I will sing with the spirit, and I will sing with the understanding also.

Here he shows that it is in their power to obtain the gift. For, let him pray, says he, i.e., let him contribute his own part, since if you ask diligently, you will surely receive. Ask accordingly not to have the gift of tongue only, but also of interpretation, that you may become useful unto all, and not shut up your gift in yourself alone. For if I pray in a tongue, says he, my spirit prays, but my understanding is unfruitful. Do you see how by degrees bringing his argument to a point, he signifies that not to others only is such an one useless, but also to himself; if at least his understanding is unfruitful? For if a man should speak only in the Persian, or any other foreign tongue, and not understand what he says, then of course to himself also will he be thenceforth a barbarian, not to another only, from not knowing the meaning of the sound. For there were of old many who had also a gift of prayer, together with a tongue; and they prayed, and the tongue spoke, praying either in the Persian or Latin language, but their understanding knew not what was spoken. Wherefore also he said, If I pray in a tongue, my spirit prays, i.e., the gift which is given me and which moves my tongue, but my understanding is unfruitful.

What then may that be which is best in itself, and does good? And how ought one to act, or what request of God? To pray, both with the spirit, i.e., the gift, and with the understanding. Wherefore also he said, I will pray with the spirit, and I will pray with the understanding also: I will sing with the spirit, and I will sing

with the understanding also.

6. He signifies the same thing here also, that both the tongue may speak, and the understanding may not be ignorant of the things spoken. For except this be so, there will also be another confusion.

1 Corinthians 14:16

Else, says he, if you bless with the spirit, how shall he that fills the place of the unlearned say the Amen at your giving of thanks, seeing he knows not what you say.

1 Corinthians 14:17

For thou verily givest thanks well, but the other is not edified.

Observe how again here he brings his stone to the plumb-line, every where seeking the edification of the Church. Now by the unlearned he means the laymen, and signifies that he also suffers no little loss when he is unable to say the Amen. And what he says is this: if you shall bless in a barbarian tongue, not knowing what you say, nor able to interpret, the layman cannot respond the Amen. For not hearing the words, 'forever and ever,' which are at the end, he does not say the Amen. Then again, comforting him concerning this, that he might not seem to hold the gift too cheap; the same kind of remark as he made above, that he speaks mysteries, and speaks unto God, and edifies himself, and prays with the spirit, intending no little comfort from these things, this also he utters here, saying, for thou indeed givest thanks well, since you speak being moved by the Spirit: but the other hearing nothing nor knowing what is said, stands there, receiving no great advantage by it.

7. Further, because he had run down the possessors of this gift, as though they had no such great thing; that he might not seem to hold them cheap, as being himself destitute of it, see what he says:

1 Corinthians 14:18

I thank God, speaking with tongues more than ye all.

And this he does also in another place intending, namely, to take away the advantages of Judaism and to show that henceforth they are nothing, he begins by declaring that himself had been endowed with them, yea, and that in very great excess; and then he calls them loss, thus saying, If any man thinks to have confidence in the flesh, I more: circumcised the eighth day, of the stock of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of Hebrews; as touching the law, a Pharisee; as touching zeal, persecuting the Church; as touching the righteousness which is the law, found blameless. Philippians 3:4-7 And then, having signified himself to have the advantage of all, he says, Howbeit what things were gain to me, those have I counted loss for Christ. So also he does here, saying, I speak with tongues more than ye all. Do not therefore glory as though you only had the gift. For I also possess it, yea more than you.

1 Corinthians 14:19

Howbeit in the Church I had rather speak five words with my understanding, that I might instruct others also.

What is that, speak with my understanding, that I might instruct others also? Understanding what I say, and words which I can both interpret to others, and speak intelligently, and teach the hearers. Than ten thousand words in a tongue. Wherefore? That I may instruct others, says he. For the one has but display

only; the other, great utility: this being what he everywhere seeks, I mean the common profit. And yet the gift of tongues was strange, but that of prophecy familiar and ancient and heretofore given to many; this on the contrary then first given: howbeit it was not much cared for by him. Wherefore neither did he employ it; not because he had it not, but because he always sought the more profitable things: being as he was free from all vain-glory, and considering one thing only, how he might render the hearers better.

8. And here is the reason of the faculty he had of looking to the expedient both to himself and to others: viz. because he was free from vain-glory. Since he assuredly that is enslaved by it, so far from discerning what is good to others, will not even know his own.

Such was Simon, who, because he looked to vain-glory, did not even see his own advantage. Such also were the Jews, who because of this sacrificed their own salvation to the devil. Hence also did idols spring, and by this madness did the heathen philosophers excite themselves, and make shipwreck in their false doctrines. And observe the perverseness of this passion: how because of it some of them also made themselves poor, others were eager for wealth. So potent is its tyranny that it prevails even in direct contraries. Thus one man is vain of chastity, and contrariwise another of adultery; and this man of justice, and another of injustice; so of luxury and fasting, modesty and rashness, riches and poverty. I say poverty: since some of them that were with out, when it was in their power to receive, for admiration's sake forbore to receive. But not so the Apostles: that they were pure from vainglory, they showed by their doings: in that, when some were calling them Gods and were ready to sacrifice-unto them oxen with garlands, they did not merely just forbid what was doing, but they even rent their clothes. Acts 14:13-14 And after they had set the lame man upright, when all with open mouths were gazing at them, they said, Why look ye so earnestly on us, as though by our own power we had made this man to walk ? And those, among men who admired poverty, chose to themselves a state of poverty: but these among persons who despised poverty and gave praise to wealth. And these, if they received anything, ministered to the needy. Thus, not vain-glory but benevolence, was the motive of all they did. But those quite the reverse; as enemies and pests of our common nature, and no otherwise, did they such things. Thus one sunk all his goods in the sea for no good purpose, imitating fools and madmen: and another let all his land go to sheep common. Thus they did every thing for vain-glory. But not so the Apostles; rather they both received what was given them, and distributed to the needy with so great liberality that they even lived in continual hunger. But if they had been enamored of glory, they would not have practiced this, the receiving and distributing, for fear of some suspicion arising against them. For he who throws away his own for glory, will much more refuse to receive the things of others, that he may not be accounted to stand in need of others nor incur any suspicion. But these you see both ministering to the poor, and themselves begging for them. So truly were they more loving than any fathers.

9. And observe also their laws, how moderate and freed from all vain-glory. Thus: Having says he, food and covering, let us therewith be content. 1 Timothy 6:8 Not like him of Sinope , who clothed in rags and living in a cask to no good end, astonished many, but profited none: whereas Paul did none of these things; (for neither had he an eye to ostentation;) but was both clothed in ordinary apparel with all decency, and lived in a house continually, and displayed all exactness in the practice of all other virtue; which the cynic despised, living impurely and publicly disgracing himself, and dragged away by his mad passion for glory. For if any one ask the reason of his living in a cask, he will find no other but vain-glory alone. But Paul also paid rent for the house wherein he abode at Rome. Although he who was able to do things far severer, could much more have had strength for this. But he looked not to glory, that savage monster, that fearful demon, that pest of the world, that poisonous viper. Since, as that animal tears

through the womb of her parent with her teeth, so also this passion tears in pieces him that begets it.

10. By what means then may one find a remedy for this manifold distemper? By bringing forward those that have trodden it under foot, and with an eye to their image so ordering one's own life. For so the patriarch Abraham-- nay, let none accuse me of tautology if I often make mention of him, and on all occasions: this being that which most of all shows him wonderful, and deprives them that refuse to imitate him of all excuse. For, if we exhibit one doing well in this particular, and another in that, some one might say that virtue is hardly to be attained; for that it is scarcely possible to succeed in all those things together, whereof each one of the saints has performed only a part. But when one and the same person is found to possess all, what excuse will they have, who after the law and grace are not able to attain unto the same measure with them that were before the law and grace? How then did this Patriarch overcome and subdue this monster, when he had a dispute with his nephew? Genesis 13:8 For so it was, that coming off worst and losing the first share, he was not vexed. But ye know that in such matters the shame is worse than the loss to the vulgar-minded, and particularly when a person having all in his own power, as he had then, and having been the first to give honor, was not honored in return. Nevertheless, none of these things vexed him, but he was content to receive the second place, and when wronged by the young man, himself old, an uncle by a nephew, he was not indignant nor took it ill, but loved him equally and ministered to him. Again, having been victorious in that great and terrible fight, and having mightily put to flight the Barbarians Genesis 14 he does not add show to victory, nor erect a trophy. For he wished to save only, not to exhibit himself. Again, he entertained strangers, yet did he not here act vain-gloriously, but himself both ran to them and bowed down to them, not as though he were giving, but receiving a benefit, and he calls them lords, without knowing who they are who have come to him, and presents his wife in the place of a handmaiden. Genesis 18 And in Egypt too before this, when he had appeared so extraordinary a person, and had received back this very woman, his wife, and had enjoyed so great honor Genesis 12 he shows it to no man. And though the inhabitants of the place called him prince, he himself even laid down the price of the sepulchre. Genesis 23:6 And when he sent to betroth a wife for his son, he gave no command to speak in high and dignified terms of him, Genesis 24 but merely to bring the bride.

11. Will you examine also the conduct of those under grace, when from every side great was the glory of the teaching flowing round them, and will you see then also this passion cast out? Consider, I pray, this same Apostle who speaks these things, how he ever ascribes the whole to God, how of his sins he makes mention continually, but of his good deeds never, unless perchance it should be needful to correct the disciples; and even if he be compelled to do this, he calls the matter folly, and yields the first place to Peter, and is not ashamed to labor with Priscilla and Aquila, and every where he is eager to show himself lowly, not swaggering in the market place, nor carrying crowds with him, but setting himself down among the obscure. Wherefore also he said, but his bodily presence is weak. 2 Corinthians 10:10 i.e., easy to be despised, and not at all accompanied with display. And again, I pray that you do no evil, not that we may appear approved. And what marvel if he despise this glory? Seeing that he despises the glory of heaven, and the kingdom, and hell, for that which was pleasing unto Christ: for he wishes himself to be accursed from Christ for the glory of Christ. For if he says that he is willing to suffer this for the Jews' sake, he says it on this account that none of those without understanding might think to take to himself the promises made to them. If therefore he were ready to pass by those things, what marvel is it if he despise human things?

12. But the men of our time are overwhelmed by all things, not by desire of glory only, but also, on the other hand, by insult and fear of dishonor. Thus, should any one praise, it would puff you up, and if he blame, it would cast you down. And as weak bodies are by common accidents injured, so also souls which

grovel on earth. For such not poverty alone, but even wealth destroys, not grief only, but likewise joy, and prosperity more than adversity. For poverty compels to be wise, but wealth leads on oftentimes into some great evil. And as men in a fever are hard to be pleased in any thing, so also they that are depraved in mind on every side receive hurt.

Knowing therefore these things, let us not shun poverty, let us not admire riches: but prepare our soul to be sufficient for all estates. For so any one building a house does not consider how neither rain may descend, nor sunbeam light on it, (for this were impossible,) but how it may be made capable of enduring all. And he again that builds a ship does not fashion and design any thing to keep waves from breaking against it, or any tempest from rising in the sea: (for this too were impossible:) but that the sides of the ship may be ready to meet all. And again, he that cares for the body does not look to this that there may be no inequality in the temperature, but that the body may easily endure all these things. So accordingly let us act in respect of the soul, and neither be anxious to fly poverty nor to become rich, but to regulate each of them for our own safety.

Wherefore, letting alone these things, let us render our soul meet both for wealth and poverty. For although no calamity, such as man is subject to, befall, which is for the most part impossible, even thus, better is he that seeks not wealth, but knows how to bear all things easily than he that is always rich. And why? First, such an one has his safety from within, but the other from without. And as he is a better soldier who trusts to his bodily powers and skill in fighting, than he that has his strength in his armor only; so he that relies on his wealth, compared with him that is fenced in by his virtue, is inferior. Secondly, because even if he do not fall into poverty, it is impossible that he should be without trouble. For wealth has many storms and troubles; but not so virtue, but pleasure only and safety. Yea, and it puts a man out of the reach of them that lay snares for him, but wealth quite the contrary, rendering him easy to be attacked and taken. And as among animals, stags and hares are of all most easily taken through their natural timidity, but the wild boar, and the bull, and the lion, would not easily fall in the way of the liers-in-wait; just so one may see in the case of the rich, and of them that live voluntarily in poverty. The one is like the lion and the bull, the other like the stag and the hare. For whom does not the rich man fear? Are there not robbers, potentates, enviers, informers? And why speak I of robbers and informers, in a case where a man suspects his very domestics?

13. And why say I, when he is alive? Not even when dead is he freed from the villainy of the robbers, nor has death power to set him in safety, but the evil doers despoil him even when dead, so dangerous a thing is wealth. For not only do they dig into houses, but they even burst open tombs and coffins. What then can be more wretched than this man, since not even death can furnish him with this security, but that wretched body, even when deprived of life, is not freed from the evils of life, those that commit such wickedness hastening to war even with dust and ashes, and much more grievously than when it was alive? For then, it might be, entering his storehouse, they would remove his chests, but abstain from his person, and would not take so much as to strip the body itself but now the accursed hands of the tombbreakers do not even abstain from these, but move and turn it about, and with much cruelty insult it. For after it has been committed to the ground, having stripped it both of its covering of earth and of that which its grave-clothes constitute, they leave it thus to be cast out.

What foe then so deadly as wealth, which destroys both the soul of the living, and insults the body of the dead, not suffering it even to lie buried in the ground, which is common even to the condemned and to them that have been taken in the vilest crimes? For of them the legislators having exacted the punishment of death, inquire no further; but of these, wealth even after death exacts a most bitter punishment,

exposing them naked and unburied, a dreadful and pitiable spectacle: since even those who suffer this after sentence and by the anger of their judges, do not suffer so grievously as these. For they indeed remain unburied the first and second day, and so are committed to the ground; but these, when they have been committed to the ground, are then stripped naked and insulted. And if the robbers depart without taking the coffin too, there is still no thanks to their wealth, but in this case also to their poverty. For she it is that guards it. Whereas most assuredly, had we intruded wealth with even so much as this, and leaving off to form it of stone, had forged it of gold, we should have lost this also.

So faithless a thing is wealth; which belongs not so much to them that have it, as to them that endeavor to seize it. So that it is but a superfluous argument which aims to show that wealth is irresistible, seeing that not even on the day of their death do its possessors obtain security. And yet who is not reconciled with the departed, whether it be wild beast, or demon, or whatever else? The very sight being enough to bend even one who is altogether iron, and quite past feeling. Wherefore, you know, when one sees a corpse, though it be an enemy public or private whom he sees, yet he weeps for him in common with his dearest friends; and his wrath is extinguished with life, and pity is brought in. And it would be impossible, in time of mourning and carrying out of burial, to distinguish an enemy from him who is not such. So greatly do all men revere their common nature, and the customs which have been introduced respecting it. But wealth not even on obtaining this, remits her anger against her possessors; nay, it renders them that have been no way wronged enemies of the dead; if at least to strip the dead body be an act of persons very bitter and hostile. And nature for her part reconciles even his enemies to him then: but wealth makes foes of them that have nothing to accuse him of, and cruelly intreats the body in its utter desolation. And yet in that case there are many things which might lead one to pity, the fact of its being a corpse, its inability to move, and tending to earth and corruption, the absence of any one to help: but none of these things soften those accursed wretches, because of the tyranny they are under from their base cupidity. For the passion of covetousness, like some ruthless tyrant, is at hand, enjoining those inhuman commands and having made wild beasts of them, so brings them to the tombs. Yea, like wild beasts attacking the dead, they would not even abstain from their flesh, if their limbs were any way useful unto them. Such is our enjoyment of wealth; to be insulted even after death, and deprived of sepulture which even the most desperate criminals obtain.

14. Are we still then, tell me, to be fond of so grievous an enemy? Nay, I beseech you, nay, my brethren! But let us fly from it without turning to look: and if it come into our hands, let us not keep it within, but bind it fast by the hands of the poor. For these are the bonds which have more power to hold it, and from those treasuries it will never more escape; and so this faithless one abides for the time to come faithful, tractable, tame, the right hand of Mercy producing this effect on it.

As I have said then, if it ever come to us, let us hand it over to her; but if it come not, let us not seek after it, nor fret ourselves, nor count its possessors happy; for what sort of a notion of happiness is this? Unless you would also say that those who fight with beasts are to be envied, because those high-priced animals are shut up and reserved by the proposers of such contests for themselves: who however not daring themselves to approach or to touch them, but fearing and trembling because of them, hand over others to them. Something like this, I say, is the case of the wealthy, when they have shut up their wealth in their treasuries as if it were some savage beast, and day by day receive from it innumerable wounds: in this latter unlike to the beasts: since they, when you lead them out, then, and not till then, hurt such as meet them: but this, when it is shut up and preserved, then destroys its possessors and hoarders.

But let us make this beast tame. And it will be tame, if we do not shut it up, but give it into the hands of all who are in need. So shall we reap from this quarter the greatest blessings, both living in the present life with safety and a good hope, and in the day that is to come standing with boldness: to which may we all attain, through the grace and mercy, etc. etc.

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