

1 Corinthians 15:1-2

by St. John Chrysostom

St. John Chrysostom's sermon on 1 Corinthians 15:1-2 emphasizes the critical importance of the resurrection for the Christian faith and the necessity of holding onto this truth amidst doubts and false teachings.

Scripture: 1 Corinthians 10:12, 1 Corinthians 15:3-5, 1 Corinthians 15:9, 1 Timothy 1:12, Hebrews 4:7, Hebrews 12:12

Topics: "Christian Humility", "Eternal Values"

Description

John Chrysostom preaches about the importance of humility, gratitude, and contentment in the face of life's challenges. He emphasizes the need to acknowledge our faults and attribute our successes to God's grace, showcasing Paul's humility in recognizing his past sins and God's transformative work in his life. Chrysostom encourages the congregation to focus on eternal values rather than temporary worldly distinctions, reminding them of the fleeting nature of wealth, honor, and disgrace. He urges believers to find comfort in the consideration of future blessings and trials, guiding them towards a mindset of enduring joy and hope in Christ.

Transcript

Now I make known unto you, brethren, the gospel which I preached unto you, which also ye received, wherein also ye stand; by which also you are saved: in what words I preached it unto you.

Having finished the discourse of spiritual gifts, he passes to that which is of all most necessary, the subject of the resurrection. For in this too they were greatly unsound. And as in men's bodies, when the fever lays actual hold of their solid parts, I mean the nerves and the veins and the primary elements, the mischief becomes incurable unless it receive much attention; just so at that time also it was like to happen. Since to the very elements of godliness the mischief was proceeding. Wherefore also Paul uses great earnestness. For not of morals was his discourse henceforth nor about one man's being a fornicator, another covetous, and another having his head covered; but about the very sum of all good things. For touching the resurrection itself they were at variance. Because this being all our hope, against this point did the devil make a vehement stand, and at one time he was wholly subverting it, at another his word was that it was past already; which also Paul writing to Timothy called a gangrene, I mean, this wicked doctrine, and those that brought it in he branded, saying, Of whom is Hymenœus and Philetus, who concerning the truth have erred, saying that the resurrection is past already, and overthrow the faith of some. 2 Timothy 2:17-18 At one time then they said thus, but at another that the body rises not again but the purification of the soul is the resurrection.

But these things that wicked demon persuaded them to say, not wishing to overturn the resurrection only, but also to show that all the things done for our sakes are a fable. For if they were persuaded that there is no resurrection of bodies, he would have gradually persuaded them that neither was Christ raised. And thereupon he would introduce also this in due course, that He had not come nor had done what He did. For such is the craft of the devil. Wherefore also Paul calls it cunning craftiness, because he does not straightway signify what he intends to effect, for fear of being detected, but dressing himself up in a mask of one kind, he fabricates arts of another kind: and like a crafty enemy attacking a city with walls, he secretly undermines it from below: so as thereby to be hardly guarded against and to succeed in his endeavors. Therefore such snares on his part being continually detected, and these his crafty ambushes hunted out by this admirable and mighty man, he said, For we are not ignorant of his devices. 2 Corinthians 2:11 So also here he unfolds his whole guile and points out all his stratagems, and whatsoever he would fain effect, Paul puts before us, with much exactness going over all. Yea, and therefore he put this head after the rest, both because it was extremely necessary and because it involves the whole of our condition.

And observe his consideration: how first having secured his own, he then proceeds even beyond in his discourse, and them that are without he does abundantly reduce to silence. Now he secures his own, not by reasonings, but by things which had already happened and which themselves had received and believed to have taken place: a thing which was most of all apt to shame them, and capable of laying hold on them. Since if they were unwilling to believe after this, it was no longer Paul but themselves they would disbelieve: which thing was a censure on those who had once for all received it and changed their minds. For this cause then he begins also from hence, implying that he needs no other witnesses to prove his speaking truth, but those very persons who were deceived.

2. But that what I say may become clearer, we must needs in what follows attend to the very words. What then are these? I make known unto you, brethren, says he, the gospel which I preached unto you. Do you see with what modesty he commences? Do you see how from the beginning he points out that he is bringing in no new nor strange thing? For he who makes known that which was already known but afterwards had fallen into oblivion, makes known by recalling it into memory.

And when he called them brethren, even from hence he laid the foundation of no mean part of the proof of his assertions. For by no other cause became we brethren, but by the dispensation of Christ according to the flesh. And this is just the reason why he thus called them, at the same time soothing and courting them, and likewise reminding them of their innumerable blessings.

And what comes next again is demonstrative of the same. What then is this? The gospel. For the sum of the gospels has its original hence, from God having become man and having been crucified and having risen again. This gospel also Gabriel preached to the Virgin, this also the prophets to the world, this also the apostles all of them.

Which I preached unto you, which also ye received, wherein also ye stand. By which also you are saved, in what word I preached unto you; if you hold it fast, except ye believed in vain.

Do you see how he calls themselves to be witnesses of the things spoken? And he says not, which you heard, but, which you received, demanding it of them as a kind of deposit, and showing that not in word only, but also by deeds and signs and wonders they received it, and that they should hold it safe.

Next, because he was speaking of the things long past, he referred also to the present time, saying, wherein also ye stand, taking the vantage ground of them that disavowal might be out of their power, though they wished it never so much. And this is why at the beginning he said not, I teach you, but, 'I make known unto you' what has already been made manifest.

And how says he that they who were so tossed with waves stand? He feigns ignorance to profit them; which also he does in the case of the Galatians, but not in like manner. For inasmuch as he could not in that case affect ignorance, he frames his address in another way, saying, I have confidence toward you in the Lord, that you will be none otherwise minded. Galatians 5:10 He said not, that you were none otherwise minded, because their fault was acknowledged and evident, but he answers for the future; and yet this too was uncertain; but it was to draw them to him more effectually. Here however he does feign ignorance, saying, wherein also ye stand.

Then comes the advantage; by which also you are saved, in what words I preached it unto you. So then, this present exposition is for doctrine clearness and interpretation. For the doctrine itself ye need not, says he, to learn, but to be reminded of it and corrected. And these things he says, leaving them no room to plunge into recklessness once for all.

But what is, in what word I preached it unto you? After what manner did I say, says he, that the resurrection takes place? For that there is a resurrection I would not say that you doubt: but you seek perhaps to obtain a clearer knowledge of that saying. This then will I provide for you: for indeed I am well assured that you hold the doctrine. Next, because he was directly affirming, wherein also ye stand; that he might not thereby make them more remiss, he alarms them again, saying, If you hold it fast, except ye believed in vain; intimating that the stroke is on the chief head, and the contest for no common things but in behalf of the whole of the faith. And for the present he says it with reserve, but as he goes on and waxes warm, he throws off the veil and proceeds to cry out, and say, But if Christ has not been raised then is our preaching vain, your faith also is vain: you are yet in your sins: but in the beginning not so: for thus it was expedient to proceed, gently and by degrees.

1 Corinthians 15:3

For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received.

Neither here does he say, I said to you, nor, I taught you, but uses the same expression again, saying, I delivered unto you that which also I received: nor again here does he say, I was taught, but, I received: establishing these two things; first, that one ought to introduce nothing from one's self; next, that by demonstration from his deeds they were fully persuaded, not by bare words: and by degrees while he is rendering his argument credible, he refers the whole to Christ, and signifies that nothing was of man in these doctrines.

But what is this, For I delivered unto you first of all? for that is his word. In the beginning, not now. And thus saying he brings the time for a witness, and that it were the greatest disgrace for those who had so long time been persuaded now to change their minds: and not this only, but also that the doctrine is necessary. Wherefore also it was delivered among the first, and from the beginning straightway. And what did you so deliver? Tell me. But this he does not say straightway, but first, I received. And what did you receive? That Christ died for our sins. He said not immediately that there is a resurrection of our bodies, yet this very thing in truth he does establish, but afar off and by other topics saying that Christ died, and laying before a kind of strong base and irrefragable foundation of the doctrine concerning the resurrection.

For neither did he simply say that Christ died; although even this were sufficient to declare the resurrection, but with an addition, Christ died for our sins.

3. But first it is worth while to hear what those who are infected with the Manichæan doctrines say here, who are both enemies to the truth and war against their own salvation. What then do these allege? By death here, they say, Paul means nothing else than our being in sin; and by resurrection, our being delivered from our sins. Do you see how nothing is weaker than error? And how it is taken by its own wings, and needs not the warfare from without, but by itself it is pierced through? Consider, for instance, these men, how they too have pierced themselves through by their own statements. Since if this be death, and Christ did not take a body, as you suppose, and yet died, He was in sin according to you. For I indeed say that He took unto Himself a body and His death, I say, was that of the flesh; but thou denying this, will be compelled to affirm the other. But if He was in sin, how says He, Which of you convinces Me of sin? and The prince of this world comes, and has nothing in me? John 8:46; 14:30 and again, Thus it becomes Us to fulfill all righteousness? Matthew 3:15 Nay, how did He at all die for sinners, if Himself were in sin? For he who dies for sinners ought himself to be without sin. Since if he himself also sin, how shall he die for other sinners? But if for others' sins He died, He died being without sin: and if being without sin He died, He died -- not the death of sin; for how could He being without sin?-- but the death of the body. Wherefore also Paul did not simply say, He died, but added, for our sins: both forcing these heretics against their will to the confession of His bodily death, and signifying also by this that before death He was without sin: for he that dies for others' sins, it follows must himself be without sin.

Neither was he content with this, but added, according to the Scriptures: hereby both again making his argument credible, and intimating what kind of death he was speaking of: since it is the death of the body which the Scriptures everywhere proclaim. For, they pierced My hands and My feet, Psalm 21:18 says He, and, they shall look on Him Whom they pierced. John 19:37; Zechariah 12:10 And many other instances, too not to name all one by one, partly in words and partly in types, one may see in them stored up, setting forth His slaughter in the flesh and that He was slain for our sins. For, for the sins of my people, says one, is He come to death: and, the Lord delivered Him up for our sins: and, He was wounded for our transgressions. Isaiah 53 But if you dost not endure the Old Testament, hear John crying out and declaring both, as well His slaughter in the body as the cause of it: thus, Behold, says he, the Lamb of God, Who takes away the sin of the world: John 1:29 and Paul saying, For Him Who knew no sin, He made to be sin on our behalf, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him: 2 Corinthians 5:21 and again, Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law, having become a curse for us: Galatians 3:13 and again, having put off from himself principalities and powers, He made a show of them openly, triumphing over them; Colossians 2:15 and ten thousand other sayings to show what happened at His death in the body, and because of our sins. Yea, and Christ Himself says, for your sakes I sanctify Myself and, now the prince of this world has been condemned ; showing that having no sin he was slain.

1 Corinthians 15:4

4. And that he was buried.

And this also confirms the former topics, for that which is buried is doubtless a body. And here he no longer adds, according to the Scriptures. He had wherewithal, nevertheless he adds it not. For what cause? Either because the burial was evident unto all, both then and now, or because the expression, according to the Scriptures, is set down of both in common. Wherefore then does he add, according to the Scriptures, in this place, and that He rose on the third day according to the Scriptures, and is not content

with the former clause, so spoken in common? Because this also was to most men obscure: wherefore here again he brings in the Scriptures by inspiration, having so conceived this thought so wise and divine.

How is it then that he does the same in regard of His death ? Because in that case too, although the cross was evident unto all and in the sight of all He was stretched upon it; yet the cause was no longer equally so. The fact indeed of his death all knew, but that He suffered this for the sins of the world was no longer equally known to the multitude. Wherefore he brings in the testimony from the Scriptures.

This however has been sufficiently proved by what we have said. But where have the Scriptures said that He was buried, and on the third day shall rise again? By the type of Jonah which also Himself alleges, saying, As Jonah was three days and three nights in the whale's belly, so shall also the Son of Man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth. Matthew 12:40 By the bush in the desert. For even as that burned, yet was not consumed, Exodus 3:2 so also that body died indeed, but was not holden of death continually. And the dragon also in Daniel shadows out this. For as the dragon having taken the food which the prophet gave, burst asunder in the midst; even so Hades having swallowed down that Body, was rent asunder, the Body of itself cutting asunder its womb and rising again.

Now if you desire to hear also in words those things which you have seen in types, listen to Isaiah, saying, His life is taken from the earth, Isaiah 53:8-11 and, it pleases the Lord to cleanse Him from His wound...to show unto Him light: and David before him, You will not leave My soul to Hades, nor will You suffer Your Holy One to see corruption. Psalm 16:10

Therefore Paul also sends you on to the Scriptures, that you may learn that not without cause nor at random were these things done. For how could they, when so many prophets are describing and proclaiming them beforehand? And no where does the Scripture mean the death of sin, when it makes mention of our Lord's death, but that of the body, and a burial and resurrection of the same kind.

1 Corinthians 15:5

5. And that He appeared to Cephas: he names immediately the most credible of all. Then to the twelve.

1 Corinthians 15:6

Then he appeared to above five hundred brethren at once; of whom the greater part remain until now, but some are fallen asleep.

1 Corinthians 15:7

Then he appeared to James; then to all the Apostles.

1 Corinthians 15:8

And last of all, as unto one born out of due time, he appeared to me also.

Thus, since he had mentioned the proof from the Scriptures, he adds also that by the events, producing as witnesses of the resurrection, after the prophets, the apostles and other faithful men. Whereas if he meant that other resurrection, the deliverance from sin, it were idle for him to say, He appeared to such and such an one; for this is the argument of one who is establishing the resurrection of the body, not of one obscurely teaching deliverance from sins. Wherefore neither said he once for all, He appeared, although it were sufficient for him to do so, setting down the expression in common: but now both twice and thrice,

and almost in each several case of them that had seen Him he employs it. For He appeared, says he, to Cephas, He appeared to above five hundred brethren, He appeared to me also. Yet surely the Gospel says the contrary, that He was seen of Mary first. Mark 16:9 But among men He was seen of him first who did most of all long to see Him.

But of what twelve apostles does he here speak ? For after He was received up, Matthias was taken into the number, not after the resurrection immediately. But it is likely that He appeared even after He was received up. At any rate, this our apostle himself after His ascension was both called, and saw Him. Therefore neither does he set down the time, but simply and without defining recounts the appearance. For indeed it is probable that many took place; wherefore also John said, This third time He was manifested. John 21:14

Then He appeared to above five hundred brethren. Some say that above , is above from heaven; that is, not walking upon earth, but above and overhead He appeared to them: adding, that it was Paul's purpose to confirm, not the resurrection only, but also the ascension. Others say that the expression, above five hundred, means, more than five hundred.

Of whom the greater part remain until now. Thus, though I relate events of old, says he, yet have I living witnesses. But some are fallen asleep. He said not, are dead, but, are fallen asleep, by this expression also again confirming the resurrection. After that, He was seen of James. I suppose, His brother. For the Lord is said to have Himself ordained him and made him Bishop in Jerusalem first. Then to all the apostles. For there were also other apostles, as the seventy.

And last of all he appeared unto me also, as unto one born out of due time. This is rather an expression of modesty than any thing else. For not because he was the least, therefore did he appear to him after the rest. Since even if He did call him last, yet he appeared more illustrious than many which were before him, yea rather than all. And the five hundred brethren too were not surely better than James, because He appeared to them before him.

Why did He not appear to all at the same time? That He might first sow the seeds of faith. For he that saw Him first and was exactly and fully assured, told it unto the residue: then their report coming first placed the hearer in expectation of this great wonder, and made way before for the faith of sight. Therefore neither did He appear to all together, nor in the beginning to many, but to one alone first, and him the leader of the whole company and the most faithful: since indeed there was great need of a most faithful soul to be first to receive this sight. For those who saw him after others had seen him, and heard it from them, had in their testimony what contributed in no small degree to their own faith and tended to prepare their mind beforehand; but he who was first counted worthy to see Him, had need, as I have said, of great faith, not to be confounded by a sight so contrary to expectation. Therefore he appears to Peter first. For he that first confessed Him to be Christ was justly also counted worthy first to behold His resurrection. And not on this account alone does He appear to him first, but also because he had denied Him, more abundantly to comfort him and to signify that he is not despaired of, before the rest He vouchsafed him even this sight and to him first entrusted His sheep. Therefore also He appeared to the women first. Because this sex was made inferior, therefore both in His birth and in His resurrection this first tastes of His grace.

But after Peter, He appears also to each at intervals, and at one time to fewer, at another to more, hereby making them witnesses and teachers of each other, and rendering His apostles trustworthy in all that they

said.

6. And last of all, as unto one born out of due time, he appeared to me also. What mean here his expressions of humility, or wherein are they seasonable? For if he wishes to show himself worthy of credit and to enrol himself among the witnesses of the resurrection, he is doing the contrary of what he wishes: since it were meet that he exalt himself and show that he was great, which in many places he does, the occasion calling for it. Well, the very reason why he here also speaks modestly is his being about to do this. Not straightway, however, but with his own peculiar good sense: in that having first spoken modestly and heaped up against himself many charges, he then magnifies the things concerning himself. What may the reason be? That, when he comes to utter that great and lofty expression concerning himself, I labored more abundantly than all, his discourse may be rendered more acceptable, both hereby, and by its being spoken as a consequence of what went before and not as a leading topic. Therefore also writing to Timothy, and intending to say great things concerning himself, he first sets down his charges against himself. For so all persons, when speaking in high terms of others, speak out freely and with boldness: but he that is compelled to praise himself, and especially when he also calls himself to witness, is disconcerted and blushes. Therefore also this blessed man first declares his own misery, and then utters that lofty expression. This then he does, partly to abate the offensiveness of speaking about himself, and partly that he might hereby recommend to their belief what he had to say afterwards. For he that truly states what things are discreditable to him and conceals none of them, such as that he persecuted the Church, that he laid waste the faith, does hereby cause the things that are honorable to him also to be above suspicion.

And consider the exceeding greatness of his humility. For having said, and last of all He appeared to me also, he was not content with this: For many that are last shall be first, says He, and the first last. Matthew 20:16 Therefore he added, as unto one born out of due time. Neither did he stop here, but adds also his own judgment and with a reason, saying,

1 Corinthians 15:9

For I am the least of the apostles, that am not meet to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the Church of God.

And he said not, of the twelve alone, but also of all the other apostles. And all these things he spoke, both as one speaking modestly and because he was really so disposed as I said, making arrangements also beforehand for what was intended to be spoken and rendering it more acceptable. For had he come forward and said, You ought to believe me that Christ rose from the dead; for I saw Him and of all I am the most worthy of credit, inasmuch as I have labored more, the expression might have offended the hearers: but now by first dwelling on the humiliating topics and those which involve accusation, he both took off what might be grating in such a narrative, and prepared the way for their belief in his testimony.

On this account therefore neither does he simply, as I said, declare himself to be the last and unworthy of the appellation of an apostle, but also states the reason, saying, because I persecuted the Church. And yet all those things were forgiven, but nevertheless he himself never forgot them, desiring to signify the greatness of God's favor: wherefore also he goes on to say,

1 Corinthians 15:10

7. But by the grace of God I am what I am.

Do you see again another excess of humility? In that the defects he imputes to himself, but of the good deeds nothing; rather he refers all to God. Next, lest he might hereby render his hearer supine, he says, And His grace which was bestowed upon me was not found vain. And this again with reserve: in that he said not, I have displayed a diligence worthy of His grace, but, it was not found vain.

But I labored more abundantly than they all. He said not, I was honored, but, I labored; and when he had perils and deaths to speak of, by the name of labor he again abates his expression.

Then again practicing his wonted humility, this also he speedily passes by and refers the whole to God, saying, Yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me. What can be more admirable than such a soul? Who having in so many ways depressed himself and uttered but one lofty word, not even this does he call his own; on every side finding ways, both from the former things and from them that follow after, to contract this lofty expression, and that because it was of necessity that he came to it.

But consider how he abounds in the expressions of humility. For so, to me last of all He appeared, says he. Wherefore neither does he with himself mention any other, and says, as of one born out of due time, and that himself is the least of the apostles, and not even worthy of this appellation. And he was not content even with these, but that he might not seem in mere words to be humble-minded, he states both reasons and proofs: of his being one born out of due time, his seeing Jesus last; and of his being unworthy even of the name of an apostle, his persecuting the Church. For he that is simply humble-minded does not this: but he that also sets down the reasons utters all from a contrite mind. Wherefore also he elsewhere makes mention of these same things, saying, And I thank him that enabled me; even Christ Jesus our Lord, for that He counted me faithful, appointing me to his service, though I was before a blasphemer, and a persecutor, and injurious. 1 Timothy 1:12-13

But wherefore did he utter at all that same lofty expression, I labored more abundantly than they? He saw that the occasion compelled him. For had he not said this, had he only depreciated himself, how could he with boldness call himself to witness, and number himself with the rest, and say,

1 Corinthians 15:11

Whether then it be I or they, so we preach.

For the witness ought to be trustworthy, and a great man. But how he labored more abundantly than they, he indicated above, saying, Have we no right to eat and to drink, as also the other Apostles? And again, to them that are without law as without law. Thus, both where exactness was to be displayed, he overshot all: and where there was need to condescend, he displayed again the same great superiority.

But some cite his being sent to the Gentiles and his overrunning the larger part of the world. Whence it is evident that he enjoyed more grace. For if he labored more, the grace was also more: but he enjoyed more grace, because he displayed also more diligence. Do you see how by those particulars whereby he contends and strives to throw into shade the things concerning himself, he is shown to be first of all?

8. And these things when we hear, let us also make open show of our defects, but of our excellencies let us say nothing. Or if the opportunity force it upon us, let us speak of them with reserve and impute the whole to God's grace: which accordingly the Apostle also does, ever and anon putting a bad mark upon his former life, but his after-state imputing to grace, that he might signify the mercy of God from every circumstance: from His having saved him such as he was and when saved making him again such as he

is. Let none accordingly of those who are in sin despair, let none of those in virtue be confident, but let the one be exceeding fearful and the other forward. For neither shall any slothful man be able to abide in virtue, nor one that is diligent be weak to escape from evil. And of both these the blessed David is an example, who after he slumbered a little, had a great downfall: and when he was pricked in his heart, again hastened up to his former height. Since in fact both are alike evils, both despair and slothfulness; the one quickly casting a man down from the very arch of the heavens; the other not suffering the fallen to rise again. Wherefore with respect to the one, Paul said, Let him that thinks he stands take heed lest he fall: 1 Corinthians 10:12 but unto the other, Today if you will hear His voice, harden not your hearts: Hebrews 4:7 and again, Lift up the hands that hang down and the palsied knees. Hebrews 12:12 And him too that had committed fornication but repented, he therefore quickly refreshes, that such an one might not be swallowed up with his overmuch sorrow? 2 Corinthians 2:7

Why then in regard of other griefs art you cast down, O man? Since if for sins, where only grief is beneficial, excess works much mischief, much more for all other things. For wherefore do you grieve? That you have lost money? Nay, think of those that are not even filled with bread, and you shall very speedily obtain consolation. And in each of the things that are grievous to you mourn not the things that have happened, but for the disasters that have not happened give thanks. Had you money and did you lose it? Weep not for the loss, but give thanks for the time when you enjoyed it. Say like Job, Have we received good at the hand of the Lord, and shall we not receive evil? Job 2:10 And together with that use this argument also; that even if you lost your money, yet your body you have still sound and hast not with your poverty to grieve that it also is maimed. But has your body too endured some outrage? Yet is not this the bottom of human calamities, but in the middle of the cask you are as yet carried along. For many along with poverty and maiming, both wrestle with a demon and wander in deserts: others again endure other things more grievous than these. For may it never be our lot to suffer all that it is possible for one to bear.

These things then ever considering, bear in mind them that suffer worse, and be vexed at none of those things: but when you sin, only then sigh, then weep; I forbid you not, nay I enjoin you rather; though even then with moderation, remembering that there is returning, there is reconciliation. But do you see others in luxury and yourself in poverty: and another in goodly robes, and in preeminence? Look not however on these things alone, but also on the miseries that arise out of these. And in your poverty too, consider not the beggary alone, but the pleasure also thence arising do thou take into account. For wealth has indeed a cheerful mask, but its inward parts are full of gloom; and poverty the reverse. And should you unfold each man's conscience, in the soul of the poor you will see great security and freedom: but in that of the rich, confusions, disorders, tempests. And if you grieve, seeing him rich, he too is vexed much more than thou when he beholds one richer than himself. And as you fear him, even so does he another, and he has no advantage over you in this. But you are vexed to see him in office, because you are in a private station and one of the governed. Recollect however the day of his ceasing to hold office. And even before that day the tumults, the perils, the fatigues, the flatteries, the sleepless nights, and all the miseries.

9. And these things we say to those who have no mind for high morality: since if you know this, there are other and greater things whereby we may comfort you: but for the present we must use the coarser topics to argue with you. When therefore you see one that is rich, think of him that is richer than he, and you will see him in the same condition with yourself. And after him look also on him that is poorer than yourself, consider how many have gone to bed hungry, and have lost their patrimony, and live in a dungeon, and pray for death every day. For neither does poverty breed sadness, nor wealth pleasure, but both the one and the other our own thoughts are wont to produce in us. And consider, beginning from beneath: the

scavenger grieves and is vexed that he cannot be rid of this his business so wretched and esteemed so disgraceful: but if you rid him of this, and cause him, with security, to have plenty of the necessaries of life, he will grieve again that he has not more than he wants: and if you grant him more, he will wish to double them again, and will therefore vex himself no less than before: and if you grant him twofold or threefold, he will be out of heart again because he has no part in the state: and if you provide him with this also, he will count himself wretched because he is not one of the highest officers of state. And when he has obtained this honor, he will mourn that he is not a ruler; and when he shall be ruler, that it is not of a whole nation; and when of a whole nation, that it is not of many nations; and when of many nations, that it is not of all. When he becomes a deputy, he will vex himself again that he is not a king; and if a king, that he is not so alone; and if alone, that he is not also of barbarous nations; and if of barbarous nations, that he is not of the whole world even: and if of the whole world, why not likewise of another world? And so his course of thought going on without end does not allow him ever to be pleased. Do you see, how even if from being mean and poor you should make a man a king, thou dost not remove his dejection, without first correcting his turn of thought, enamored as it is of having more?

Come, let me show you the contrary too, that even if from a higher station you should bring down to a lower one him that has consideration, you will not cast him into dejection and grief. And if you will, let us descend the same ladder, and do thou bring down the satrap from his throne and in supposition deprive him of that dignity. I say that he will not on this account vex himself, if he choose to bear in mind the things of which I have spoken. For he will not reckon up the things of which he has been deprived, but what he has still, the glory arising from his office. But if you take away this also, he will reckon up them who are in private stations and have never ascended to such sway, and for consolation his riches will suffice him. And if you also cast him out again from this, he will look to them that have a moderate estate. And if you should take away even moderate wealth, and should allow him to partake only of necessary food, he may think upon them that have not even this, but wrestle with incessant hunger and live in prison. And even if you should bring him into that prison-house, when he reflects on them that lie under incurable diseases and irremediable pains, he will see himself to be in much better circumstances. And as the scavenger before mentioned not even on being made a king will reap any cheerfulness, so neither will this man ever vex himself if he become a prisoner. It is not then wealth that is the foundation of pleasure, nor poverty of sadness, but our own judgment, and the fact, that the eyes of our mind are not pure, nor are fixed anywhere and abide, but without limit flutter abroad. And as healthy bodies, if they be nourished with bread alone, are in good and vigorous condition: but those that are sickly, even if they enjoy a plentiful and varied diet, become so much the weaker; so also it is wont to happen in regard of the soul. The mean spirited, not even in a diadem and unspeakable honors can be happy: but the denying, even in bonds and fetters and poverty, will enjoy a pure pleasure.

10. These things then bearing in mind, let us ever look to them that are beneath us. There is indeed, I grant, another consolation, but of a high strain in morality, and mounting above the grossness of the multitude. What is this? That wealth is naught, poverty is naught, disgrace is naught, honor is naught, but for a brief time and only in words do they differ from each other. And along with this there is another soothing topic also, greater than it; the consideration of the things to come, both evil and good, the things which are really evil and really good, and the being comforted by them. But since many, as I said, stand aloof from these doctrines, therefore were we compelled to dwell on other topics, that in course we might lead on to them the receivers of what had been said before.

Let us then, taking all these things into account, by every means frame ourselves aright, and we shall never grieve at these unexpected things. For neither if we should see men rich in a picture, should we say they were to be envied, any more than on seeing poor men there depicted we should call them wretched and pitiable: although those are surely more abiding than they whom we reckon wealthy. Since one abides rich in the picture longer than in the nature itself of things. For the one often lasts, appearing such, even to a hundred years, but the other sometimes, not having had so much as a year to live at his ease in his possessions, has been suddenly stripped of all. Meditating then on all these things, let us from all quarters build up cheerfulness as an outwork against our irrational sorrow, that we may both pass the present life with pleasure, and obtain the good things to come, 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 forever, and world without end. Amen.

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