

1 Corinthians 9:1

by St. John Chrysostom

St. John Chrysostom's sermon on 1 Corinthians 9:1 explores the rights of apostleship and the importance of self-sacrifice for the sake of others' edification.

Scripture: Proverbs 19:17, Matthew 25:40, Luke 6:38, 1 Corinthians 9:12, James 2:15

Topics: "Christian Charity", "Compassionate Living"

Description

John Chrysostom preaches about the importance of generosity and compassion towards the needy, emphasizing the need to care for the poor and vulnerable in society. He challenges the congregation to reflect on their actions and attitudes towards those in need, urging them to follow the example of Christ in showing mercy and kindness. Chrysostom highlights the significance of almsgiving as a way to demonstrate love for others and to fulfill the commandments of God. He warns against indifference and selfishness, encouraging a spirit of generosity and selflessness in all aspects of life. The sermon serves as a call to action for the listeners to examine their hearts and strive to live out the teachings of Christ through acts of charity and compassion.

Transcript

Am I not an Apostle? Am I not free? Have I not seen Jesus Christ our Lord? Are you not my work in the Lord?

Inasmuch as he had said, If meat make my brother to stumble I will eat no flesh forever; a thing which he had not yet done, but professed he would do if need require: lest any man should say, You vaunt yourself at random, and art severe in discourse, and utterest words of promise, a thing easy to me or to any body; but if these sayings come from your heart, show by deeds something which you have slighted in order to avoid making your brother stumble: for this cause, I say, in what follows he is compelled to enter on the proof of this also, and to point out how he was used to forego even things permitted that he might not give offense, although without any law to enforce his doing so.

And we are not yet come to the admirable part of the matter: though it be admirable that he abstain even from things lawful to avoid offense: but it is his habit of doing so at the cost of so much trouble and danger. For why, says he, speak of the idol sacrifices? Since although Christ had enjoined that those who preach the Gospel should live at the charge of their disciples, I did not so, but chose, if need were, to end my life with famine and die the most grievous of deaths, so I might avoid receiving of those whom I instruct.

Not because they would otherwise be made to stumble, but because his not receiving would edify them : a much greater thing for him to do. And to witness this he summons themselves, among whom he was used to live in toil and in hunger, nourished by others, and put to straits, in order not to offend them. And yet there was no ground for their taking offense, for it would but have been a law which he was fulfilling. But for all this, by a sort of supererogation he used to spare them.

Now if he did more than was enacted lest they should take offense, and abstained from permitted things to edify others; what must they deserve who abstain not from idol sacrifices? And that, when many perish thereby? A thing which even apart from all scandal one ought to shrink from, as being the table of demons.

The sum therefore of this whole topic is this which he works out in many verses. But we must resume it and make a fresh entrance on what he has alleged. For neither has he set it down thus expressly as I have worded it; nor does he leap at once upon it; but begins from another topic, thus speaking;

2. Am I not an Apostle? For besides all that has been said, this also makes no small difference that Paul himself is the person thus conducting himself. As thus: To prevent their alleging, You may taste of the sacrifices, sealing at the same time: for a while he withstands not that statement, but argues, Though it were lawful, your brethren's harm should keep you from doing so; and afterwards he proves that it is not even lawful. In this particular place, however, he establishes the former point from circumstances relating to himself. And intending presently to say that he had received nothing from them, he sets it not down at once, but his own dignity is what he first affirms: Am I not an Apostle? Am I not free?

Thus, to hinder their saying, True; thou did not receive, but the reason thou did not was its not being lawful; he sets down therefore first the causes why he might reasonably have received, had he been willing to do so.

Further: that there might not seem to be any thing invidious in regard of Peter and such as Peter, in his saying these things, (for they did not use to decline receiving;) he first shows that they had authority to receive, and then that no one might say, Peter had authority to receive but you had not, he possesses the hearer beforehand with these encomiums of himself. And perceiving that he must praise himself, (for that was the way to correct the Corinthians,) yet disliking to say any great thing of himself, see how he has tempered both feelings as the occasion required: limiting his own panegyric, not by what he knew of himself, but by what the subject of necessity required. For he might have said, I most of all had a right to receive, even more than they, because 'I labored more abundantly than they.' But this he omits, being a point wherein he surpassed them; and those points wherein they were great and which were just grounds for their receiving, those only he sets down: as follows:

Am I not an Apostle? Am I not free? i.e. have I not authority over myself? Am I under any, to overrule me and forbid my receiving?

But they have an advantage over you, in having been with Christ.

Nay, neither is this denied me. With a view to which he says,

Have I not seen Jesus Christ our Lord? For last of all, 1 Corinthians 15:8 says he, as unto one born out of due time, He appeared unto me also. Now this likewise was no small dignity: since many Prophets, Matthew 13:17 says He, and righteous men have desired to see the things which you see, and have not

seen them: and, Days will come when you shall desire to see one of these days. Luke 17:22

What then, though thou be 'an Apostle,' and 'free,' and hast 'seen Christ,' if you have not exhibited any work of an Apostle; how then can it be right for you to receive? Wherefore after this he adds,

Are you not my work in the Lord? For this is the great thing; and those others avail nothing, apart from this. Even Judas himself was an Apostle, and free, and saw Christ; but because he had not the work of an Apostle, all those things profited him not. You see then why he adds this also, and calls themselves to be witnesses of it.

Moreover, because it was a great thing which he had uttered, see how he chastens it, adding, In the Lord: i.e., the work is God's, not mine.

1 Corinthians 9:2

If to others I am not an Apostle, yet at least I am to you.

Do you see how far he is from enlarging here without necessity? And yet he had the whole world to speak of, and barbarous nations, and sea and land. However, he mentions none of these things, but carries his point by concession, and even granting more than he need. As if he had said, Why need I dwell on things over and above, since these even alone are enough for my present purpose? I speak not, you will observe, of my achievements in other quarters, but of those which have you for witnesses. Upon which it follows that if from no other quarter, yet from you I have a right to receive. Nevertheless, from whom I had most right to receive, even you whose teacher I was, from those I received not.

If to others I am not an Apostle, yet at least I am to you. Again, he states his point by concession. For the whole world had him for its Apostle. However, says he, I say not that, I am not contending nor disputing, but what concerns you I lay down. 'For the seal of mine Apostleship are you:' i.e., its proof. Should any one, moreover, desire to learn whence I am an Apostle, you are the persons whom I bring forward: for all the signs of an Apostle have I exhibited among you, and not one have I failed in. As also he speaks in the Second Epistle, saying, 2 Corinthians 12:12 Though I am nothing, truly the signs of an Apostle were wrought among you in all patience, by signs and wonders and mighty works. For what is there wherein you were made inferior to the rest of the Churches? Wherefore he says, The seal of mine Apostleship are you. For I both exhibited miracles, and taught by word, and underwent dangers, and showed forth a blameless life. And these topics you may see fully set forth by these two Epistles, how he lays before them the demonstration of each with all exactness.

1 Corinthians 9:3

3. My defense to them that examine me is this. What is, My defense to them that examine me is this? To those who seek to know whereby I am proved to be an Apostle, or who accuse me as receiving money, or inquire the cause of my not receiving, or would fain show that I am not an Apostle: to all such, my instruction given to you and these things which I am about to say, may stand for a full explanation and defense. What then are these?

1 Corinthians 9:4-5

Have we no right to eat and to drink? Have we no right to lead about a wife that is a believer? Why, how are these sayings a defense? Because, when it appears that I abstain even from things which are allowed,

it cannot be just to look suspiciously on me as a deceiver or one acting for gain.

Wherefore, from what was before alleged and from my having instructed you and from this which I have now said, I have matter sufficient to make my defense to you: and all who examine me I meet upon this ground, alleging both what has gone before and this which follows: Have we no right to eat and to drink? Have we no right to lead about a wife that is a believer? Yet for all this, having it I abstain?

What then? Did he not use to eat or to drink? It were most true to say that in many places he really did not eat nor drink: for 1 Corinthians 4:11 in hunger, says he, and in thirst, and in nakedness we were abiding. Here, however, this is not his meaning; but what? We eat not nor drink, receiving of those whom we instruct, though we have a right so to receive.

Have we no right to lead about a wife that is a believer, even as the rest of the Apostles, and the brethren of the Lord, and Cephas? Observe his skilfulness. The leader of the choir stands last in his arrangement: since that is the time for laying down the strongest of all one's topics. Nor was it so wonderful for one to be able to point out examples of this conduct in the rest, as in the foremost champion and in him who was entrusted with the keys of heaven. But neither does he mention Peter alone, but all of them: as if he had said, Whether you seek the inferior sort or the more eminent, in all you find patterns of this sort.

For the brethren too of the Lord, being freed from their first unbelief see John 7:5, had come to be among those who were approved, although they attained not to the Apostles. And accordingly the middle place is that which he has assigned to them, setting down those who were in the extremes before and after.

1 Corinthians 9:6

Or I only and Barnabas, have we not a right to forbear working?

(See his humility of mind and his soul pure from envy, how he takes care not to conceal him whom he knew to be a partaker with himself in this perfection.) For if the other things be common, how is not this common? Both they and we are apostles and are free, and have seen Christ, and have exhibited the works of Apostles. Therefore we likewise have a right both to live without working and to be supported by our disciples.

1 Corinthians 9:7

4. What soldier ever serves at his own charges? For since, which was the strongest point, he had proved from the Apostles that it is lawful to do so, he next comes to examples and to the common practice; as he uses to do: What soldier serves at his own charges? says he. But do thou consider, I pray, how very suitable are the examples to his proposed subject, and how he mentions first that which is accompanied with danger; viz. soldiership and arms and wars. For such a kind of thing was the Apostolate, nay rather much more hazardous than these. For not with men alone was their warfare, but with demons also, and against the prince of those beings was their battle array. What he says therefore is this: Not even do heathen governors, cruel and unjust as they are, require their soldiers to endure service and peril and live on their own means. How then could Christ ever have required this?

Nor is he satisfied with one example. For to him who is rather simple and dull, this also is wont to come as a great refreshment, viz. their seeing the common custom also going along with the laws of God. Wherefore he proceeds to another topic also and says, Who plants a vineyard, and eats not of the fruit thereof? For as by the former he indicated his dangers, so by this his labor and abundant travail and care.

He adds likewise a third example, saying, Who feeds a flock, and eats not of the milk thereof? He is exhibiting the great concern which it becomes a teacher to show for those who are under his rule. For, in fact, the Apostles were both soldiers and husbandmen and shepherds, not of the earth nor of irrational animals, nor in such wars as are perceptible by sense; but of reasonable souls and in battle array with the demons.

It also must be remarked how every where he preserves moderation, seeking the useful only, not the extraordinary. For he said not, What soldier serves and is not enriched? but, What soldier ever serves at his own charges? Neither did he say, Who plants a vineyard, and gathers not gold, or spares to collect the whole fruit? but, Who eats not of the fruit thereof? Neither did he say, Who feeds a flock, and makes not merchandize of the lambs? But what? And eats not of the milk thereof? Not of the lambs, but of the milk; signifying, that a little relief should be enough for the teacher, even his necessary food alone. (This refers to those who would devour all and gather the whole of the fruit.) So likewise the Lord ordained, saying, The laborer is worthy of his food. Matthew 10:10

And not this only does he establish by his illustrations, but he shows also what kind of man a priest ought to be. For he ought to possess both the courage of a soldier and the diligence of a husbandman and the carefulness of a shepherd, and after all these, to seek nothing more than necessities.

5. Having shown, as you see, both from the Apostles, that it is not forbidden the teacher to receive, and from illustrations found in common life, he proceeds also to a third head, thus saying,

1 Corinthians 9:8

Do I speak these things after the manner of men? Or says not the law also the same?

For since he had hitherto alleged nothing out of the Scriptures, but put forward the common custom; think not, says he, that I am confident in these alone, nor that I go to the opinions of men for the ground of these enactments. For I can show that these things are also well-pleasing to God, and I read an ancient law enjoining them. Wherefore also he carries on his discourse in the form of a question, which is apt to be done in things fully acknowledged; thus saying, Say I these things after the manner of men? i.e. do I strengthen myself only by human examples? or says not the law also the same?

1 Corinthians 9:9-10

For it is written in the law of Moses, You shall not muzzle the ox when he treads out the grain.

And on what account has he mentioned this, having the example of the priests? Wishing to establish it far beyond what the case required. Further, lest any should say, And what have we to do with the saying about the oxen? he works it out more exactly, saying, Is it for the oxen that God cares; Does God then, tell me, take no care for oxen? Well, He does take care of them, but not so as to make a law concerning such a thing as this. So that had he not been hinting at something important, training the Jews to mercy in the case of the brutes, and through these, discoursing with them of the teachers also; he would not have taken so much interest as even to make a law to forbid the muzzling of oxen.

Wherein he points out another thing likewise, that the labor of teachers both is and ought to be great.

And again another thing. What then is this? That whatever is said by the Old Testament respecting care for brutes, in its principal meaning bears on the instruction of human beings: as in fact do all the rest: the

precepts, for example, concerning various garments; and those concerning vineyards and seeds and not making the ground bear various crops, and those concerning leprosy; and, in a word, all the rest: for they being of a duller sort He was discoursing with them from these topics, advancing them little by little.

And see how in what follows he does not even confirm it, as being clear and self-evident. For having said, Is it for the oxen that God cares? he added, or says he it altogether for our sake? Not adding even the altogether at random, but that he might not leave the hearer any thing whatever to reply.

And he dwells upon the metaphor, saying and declaring, Yea for our sakes it was written, because he who plowes ought to plow in hope; i.e., the teacher ought to enjoy the returns of his labors; and he that threshes ought to thresh in hope of partaking. And observe his wisdom in that from the seed he transferred the matter to the threshing floor; herein also again manifesting the many toils of the teachers, that they in their own persons both plough and tread the floor. And of the ploughing, because there was nothing to reap, but labor only, he used the word, hope; but of treading the floor he presently allows the fruit, saying, He that threshes is a partaker of his hope.

Further, lest any should say, Is this then the return for so many toils, he adds, in hope, i.e., which is to come. No other thing therefore does the mouth of this animal being unmuzzled declare than this; that the teachers who labor ought also to enjoy some return.

1 Corinthians 9:11

6. If we sowed unto you spiritual things, is it a great matter if we shall reap your carnal things?

Lo, he adds also a fourth argument for the duty of yielding support. For since he had said, What soldier ever serves at his own charges? and, who plants a vineyard? and, who feeds a flock? and introduced the ox that treads the grain; he points out likewise another most reasonable cause on account of which they might justly receive; viz. having bestowed much greater gifts, no more as having labored only. What is it then? if we sowed unto you spiritual things, is it a great matter if we shall reap your carnal things? Do you see a most just allegation and fuller of reason than all the former? For in those instances, says he, carnal is the seed, carnal also is the fruit; but here not so, but the seed is spiritual, the return carnal. Thus, to prevent high thoughts in those who contribute to their teachers, he signified that they receive more than they give. As if he had said, Husbandmen, whatsoever they sow, this also do they receive; but we, sowing in your souls spiritual things, do reap carnal. For such is the kind of support given by them. Further, and still more to put them to the blush.

1 Corinthians 9:12

If others partake of this right over you, do not we yet more?

See also again another argument, and this too from examples though not of the same kind. For it is not Peter whom he mentions here nor the Apostles, but certain other spurious ones, with whom he afterwards enters into combat, and concerning whom he says, 2 Corinthians 11:20 If a man devour you, if he take you captive, if he exalt himself, if he smite you on the face, and already he is sounding the prelude to the fight with them. Wherefore neither did he say, If others take of you, but pointing out their insolence and tyranny and trafficking, he says, if others partake of this right over you, i.e., rule you, exercise authority, use you as servants, not taking you captive only, but with much authority. Wherefore he added do not we yet more? which he would not have said if the discourse were concerning the Apostles. But it is evident

that he hints at certain pestilent men, and deceivers of them. So that besides the law of Moses even ye yourselves have made a law in behalf of the duty of contribution.

And having said, do not we yet more? he does not prove why yet more, but leaves it to their consciences to convince them of that, wishing at the same time both to alarm and to abash them more thoroughly.

7. Nevertheless, we did not use this right; i.e., did not receive. Do you see, when he had by so many reasons before proved that receiving is not unlawful, how he next says, we receive not, that he might not seem to abstain as from a thing forbidden? For not because it is unlawful, says he, do I not receive; for it is lawful and this we have many ways shown: from the Apostles; from the affairs of life, the soldier, the husbandman, and the shepherd; from the law of Moses; from the very nature of the case, in that we have sown unto you spiritual things; from what yourselves have done to others. But as he had laid down these things, lest he should seem to put to shame the Apostles who were in the habit of receiving; abashing them and signifying that not as from a forbidden thing does he abstain from it: so again, lest by his large store of proof and the examples and reasonings by which he had pointed out the propriety of receiving, he should seem to be anxious to receive himself and therefore to say these things; he now corrects it. And afterwards he laid it down more clearly where he says, And I wrote not these things, that it may be so done in my case; but here his words are, we did not use this right.

And what is a still greater thing, neither could any have this to say, that being in abundance we declined using it; rather, when necessity pressed upon us we would not yield to the necessity. Which also in the second Epistle he says; I robbed other Churches, taking wages of them that I might minister unto you; and when I was present with you, and was in want, I was not a burden on any man. 2 Corinthians 11:8-9 And in this Epistle again, We both hunger, and thirst, and are naked, and are buffeted. 1 Corinthians 4:11 And here again he hints the same thing, saying, But we bear all things. For by saying, we bear all things, he intimates both hunger and great straits and all the other things. But not even thus have we been compelled, says he, to break the law which we laid down for ourselves. Wherefore? that we may cause no hinderance to the Gospel of Christ. For since the Corinthians were rather weak-minded, lest we should wound you, says he by receiving, we chose to do even more than was commanded rather than hinder the Gospel, i.e., your instruction. Now if we in a matter left free to us, and when we were both enduring much hardship and having Apostles for our pattern, used abstinence lest we should give hindrance, (and he did not say, subversion, but hindrance; nor simply hindrance, but any hindrance,) that we might not, so to speak, cause so much as the slightest suspense and delay to the course of the Word: If now, says he, we used so great care, how much more ought you to abstain, who both come far short of the Apostles and have no law to mention, giving you permission: but contrariwise are both putting your hand to things forbidden and things which tend to the great injury of the Gospel, not to its hindrance only; and not even having any pressing necessity in view. For all this discussion he had moved on account of these Corinthians, who were making their weaker brethren to stumble by eating of things sacrificed to idols.

8. These things also let us listen to, beloved; that we may not despise those who are offended, nor, cause any hindrance to the Gospel of Christ; that we may not betray our own salvation. And say not thou to me when your brother is offended, this or that, whereby he is offended, has not been forbidden; it is permitted. For I have something greater to say to you: although Christ Himself have permitted it, yet if you see any injured, stop and do not use the permission. For this also did Paul; when he might have received, Christ having granted permission, he received not. Thus has our Lord in His mercy mingled much gentleness with His precepts that it might not be all merely of commandment, but that we might do much also of our own mind. Since it was in His power, had He not been so minded, to extend the commandments further

and to say, he who fasts not continually, let him be chastised; he who keeps not his virginity, let him be punished; he that does not strip himself of all that he has, let him suffer the severest penalty. But he did not so, giving you occasion, if you will, to be forward in doing more. Wherefore both when He was discoursing about virginity, He said, He that is able to receive, let him receive it: and in the case of the rich man, some things He commanded, but some He left to the determination of his mind. For He said not, Sell what you have, but, If you will be perfect, sell.

But we are not only not forward to do more, and to go beyond the precepts, but we fall very short even of the measure of things commanded. And whereas Paul suffered hunger that he might not hinder the Gospel; we have not the heart even to touch what is in our own stores, though we see innumerable souls overthrown. Yea says one, let the moth eat, and let not the poor eat; let the worm devour, and let not the naked be clothed; let all be wasted away with time, and let not Christ be fed; and this when He hungers. Why, who said this? it will be asked. Nay, this is the very grievance, that not in words but in deeds these things are said: for it were less grievous uttered in words than done in deeds. For is not this the cry, day by day, of the inhuman and cruel tyrant, Covetousness, to those who are led captive by her? Let your goods be set before informers and robbers and traitors for luxury, and not before the hungry and needy for their sustenance. Is it not ye then who make robbers? Is it not ye who minister fuel to the fire of the envious? Is it not ye who make vagabonds and traitors, putting your wealth before them for a bait? What madness is this? (for a madness it is, and plain distraction,) to fill your chests with apparel, and overlook him that is made after God's image and similitude, naked and trembling with cold, and with difficulty keeping himself upright.

But he pretends, says one, this tremor and weakness. And do you not fear lest a thunderbolt from heaven, kindled by this word, should fall upon you? (For I am bursting with wrath: bear with me.) You, I say, pampering and fattening yourself and extending your potations to the dead of night and comforting yourself in soft coverlets, dost not deem yourself liable to judgment, so lawlessly using the gifts of God: (for wine was not made that we should be drunken; nor food, that we should pamper our appetites; nor meats, that we should distend the belly.) But from the poor, the wretched, from him that is as good as dead, from him do you demand strict accounts, and do you not fear Christ's tribunal, so full of all awfulness and terror? Why, if he do play the hypocrite, he does it of necessity and want, because of your cruelty and inhumanity, requiring the use of such masks and refusing all inclination to mercy. For who is so wretched and miserable as without urgent necessity, for one loaf of bread, to submit to such disgrace, and to bewail himself and endure so severe a punishment? So that this hypocrisy of his goes about, the herald of your inhumanity. For since by supplicating and beseeching and uttering piteous expressions and lamenting and weeping and going about all day, he does not obtain even necessary food, he devised perhaps even this contrivance also, the disgrace and blame whereof falls not so much on himself as on you: for he indeed is meet to be pitied because he has fallen into so great necessity; but we are worthy of innumerable punishments because we compel the poor to suffer such things. For if we would easily give way, never would he have chosen to endure such things.

And why speak I of nakedness and trembling? For I will tell a thing yet more to be shuddered at, that some have been compelled even to deprive their children of sight at an early age in order that they might touch our insensibility. For since when they could see and went about naked, neither by their age nor by their misfortunes could they win favor of the unpitying, they added to so great evils another yet sterner tragedy, that they might remove their hunger; thinking it to be a lighter thing to be deprived of this common light and that sunshine which is given to all, than to struggle with continual famine and endure the most miserable of

deaths. Thus, since you have not learned to pity poverty, but delight yourselves in misfortunes, they satisfy your insatiable desire, and both for themselves and for us kindle a fiercer flame in hell.

9. And to convince you that this is the reason why these and such like things are done, I will tell you of an acknowledged proof which no man can gainsay. There are other poor men, of light and unsteady minds and not knowing how to bear hunger, but rather enduring every thing than it. These having often tried to deal with us by piteous gestures and words and finding that they availed nothing, have left off those supplications and henceforward our very wonder-workers are surpassed by them, some chewing the skins of worn-out shoes, and some fixing sharp nails into their heads, others lying about in frozen pools with naked stomachs, and others enduring different things yet more horrid than these, that they may draw around them the ungodly spectators. And thou, while these things are going on, standest laughing and wondering the while and making a fine show of other men's miseries, our common nature disgracing itself. And what could a fierce demon do more? Next, you give him money in abundance that he may do these things more promptly. And to him that prays and calls on God and approaches with modesty, you vouchsafe neither an answer nor a look: rather you utter to him, continually teasing you, those disgusting expressions, Ought this fellow to live? Or at all to breathe and see this sun? whereas to the other sort you are both cheerful and liberal, as though you were appointed to dispense the prize of that ridiculous and Satanic unseemliness. Wherefore with more propriety to those who appoint these sports and bestow nothing till they see others punishing themselves, might these words be addressed, Ought these men to live, to breathe at all, or see the sun, who transgress against our common nature, who insult God? For whereas God says, Give alms, and I give you the kingdom of heaven, you hear not: but when the Devil shows you a head pierced with nails, on a sudden you have become liberal. And the contrivance of the evil spirit pregnant with so much mischief, has wrought upon you more than the promise of God bringing innumerable blessings. If gold were to be laid down to prevent the doing of these things or the looking upon them when done, there is nothing which you ought not to practise and endure, to get rid of so excessive madness; but you contrive every thing to have them done, and look on the doing of them. Still do you ask then, tell me, to what end is hell-fire? Nay, ask not that any more, but how is there one hell only? For of how many punishments are not they worthy, who get up this cruel and merciless spectacle and laugh at what both they and yourselves ought to weep over; yea, rather of the two, you who compel them to such unseemly doings.

But I do not compel them, say you. What else but compelling is it, I should like to know? Those who are more modest and shed tears and invoke God, you are impatient even of listening to; but for these thou both findest silver in abundance and bringest around you many to admire them.

Well, let us leave off, say you, pitying them. And do you too enjoin this? Nay, it is not pity, O man, to demand so severe a punishment for a few pence, to order men to maim themselves for necessary food and cut into many pieces the skin of their head so mercilessly and pitifully. Gently, say you, for it is not we who pierce those heads. Would it were thou, and the horror would not be so horrible. For he that slays a man does a much more grievous thing than he who bids him slay himself, which indeed happens in the case of these persons. For they endure more bitter pains when they are bidden to be themselves the executors of these wicked commands.

And all this in Antioch, where men were first called Christians, wherein are bred the most civilized of mankind, where in old time the fruit of charity flourished so abundantly. For not only to those at hand but also to those very far off, they used to send, and this when famine was expected.

10. What then ought we to do? Say you. To cease from this savage practice: and to convince all that are in need that by doing these things they will gain nothing, but if they modestly approach they shall find your liberality great. Let them be once aware of this, even though they be of all men most miserable, they will never choose to punish themselves so severely, I pledge myself; nay, they will even give you thanks for delivering them both from the mockery and the pain of that way of life. But as it is, for charioteers you would let out even your own children, and for dancers you would throw away your very souls, while for Christ an hungered you spare not the smallest portion of your substance. But if you give a little silver, you think as much of it as if you had laid out all you have, not knowing that not the giving but the giving liberally, this is true almsgiving. Wherefore also it is not those simply who give whom the prophet proclaims and calls happy, but those who bestow liberally. For he does not say simply, He has given, but what? Psalm 112:8 he has dispersed abroad, he has given to the poor. For what profit is it, when out of it you give as it were a glass of water out of the sea, and even a widow's magnanimity is beyond your emulation? And how will you say, Pity me, O Lord, according to your great pity, and according to the multitude of your mercies blot out my transgression, yourself not pitying according to any great pity, nay, haply not according to any little. For I am greatly ashamed, I own, when I see many of the rich riding upon their golden-bitted chargers with a train of domestics clad in gold, and having couches of silver and other and more pomp, and yet when there is need to give to a poor man, becoming more beggarly than the very poorest.

11. But what is their constant talk? He has, they say, the common church-allowance. And what is that to you? For you will not be saved because I give; nor if the Church bestow have you blotted out your own sins. For this cause do you not give, because the Church ought to give to the needy? Because the priests pray, will you never pray yourself? And because others fast, will you be continually drunken? Do you not know that God enacted not almsgiving so much for the sake of the poor as for the sake of the persons themselves who bestow?

But do you suspect the priest? Why this thing itself, to begin with, is a grievous sin. However, I will not examine the matter too nicely. Do thou it all in your own person, and so shall you reap a double reward. Since in fact, what we say in behalf of almsgiving, we say not, that you should offer to us, but that you should yourself minister by your own hands. For if you bring your alms to me, perhaps you may even be led captive by vain-glory, and oftentimes likewise you shall go away offended through suspicion of something evil: but if you do all things by yourselves, you shall both be rid of offenses and of unreasonable suspicion, and greater is your reward. Not therefore to compel you to bring your money hither, do I say these things; nor from indignation on account of the priests being ill-reported of. For if one must be indignant and grieve, for you should be our grief, who say this ill. Since to them who are spoken ill of falsely and vainly the reward is greater, but to the speakers the condemnation and punishment is heavier. I say not these things therefore in their behalf, but in solicitude and care for you. For what marvel is it if some in our generation are suspected, when in the case of those holy men who imitated the angels, who possessed nothing of their own, I mean the Apostles, there was a murmuring in the ministration to the widows Acts 6:1 that the poor were overlooked? When not one said that anything of the things he possessed was his own, but they had all things common? Acts 4:32

Let us not then put forward these pretexts, nor account it an excuse that the Church is wealthy. But when you see the greatness of her substance, bear in mind also the crowds of poor who are on her list, the multitudes of her sick, her occasions of endless expenses. Investigate, scrutinize, there is none to forbid, nay, they are even ready to give you an account. But I wish to go much farther. Namely, when we have

given in our accounts and proved that our expenditure is no less than our income, nay, sometimes more, I would gladly ask you this further question: When we depart hence and shall hear Christ saying, You saw me hungry, and gave me no meat; naked, and you clothed me not; what shall we say? What apology shall we make? Shall we bring forward such and such a person who disobeyed these commands? Or some of the priests who were suspected? Nay, what is this to you? For I accuse you, says He, of those things wherein you have yourself sinned. And the apology for these would be, to have washed away your own offenses, not to point to others whose errors have been the same as yours.

In fact, the Church through your meanness is compelled to have such property as it has now. Since, if men did all things according to the apostolic laws, its revenue should have been your good will, which were both a secure chest and an inexhaustible treasury. But now when you lay up for yourselves treasures upon the earth and shut up all things in your own stores, while the Church is compelled to be at charges with bands of widows, choirs of virgins, sojournings of strangers, distresses of foreigners, the misfortunes of prisoners, the necessities of the sick and maimed, and other such like causes, what must be done? Turn away from all these, and block up so many ports? Who then could endure the shipwrecks that would ensue; the weepings, the lamentations, the wailings which would reach us from every quarter?

Let us not then speak at random what comes into our mind. For now, as I have just said, we are really prepared to render up our accounts to you. But even if it were the reverse, and you had corrupt teachers plundering and grasping at every thing, not even so were their wickedness an apology for you. For the Lover of mankind and All-wise, the Only-Begotten Son of God, seeing all things, and knowing the chance that in so great length of time and in so vast a world there would be many corrupt priests; lest the carelessness of those under their rule should increase through their neglect, removing every excuse for indifference; In Moses' seat, says He, sit the Scribes and the Pharisees; all things, therefore, whatsoever they bid you, these do ye, but do not ye after their works: implying, that even if you have a bad teacher, this will not avail you, should you not attend to the things which are spoken. For not from what your teacher has done but from what you have heard and disobeyed, from that, I say, does God pass his sentence upon you. So that if you do the things commanded, you shall then stand with much boldness: but if you disobey the things spoken, even though you should show ten thousand corrupt priests, this will not plead for you at all. Since Judas also was an apostle, but nevertheless this shall never be any apology for the sacrilegious and covetous. Nor will any be able when accused to say, Why the Apostle was a thief and sacrilegious, and a traitor; yea, this very thing shall most of all be our punishment and condemnation that not even by the evils of others were we corrected. For this cause also these things were written that we might shun all emulation of such things.

Wherefore, leaving this person and that, let us take heed to ourselves. For each of us shall give account of himself to God. In order therefore that we may render up this account with a good defense, let us well order our own lives and stretch out a liberal hand to the needy, knowing that this only is our defense, the showing ourselves to have rightly done the things commanded; there is no other whatever. And if we be able to produce this, we shall escape those intolerable pains of hell, and obtain the good things to come; unto which may we all attain, by the grace and mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ, with Whom, to the Father and the Holy Ghost, be glory, power, and honor, now and ever, and world without end. Amen.

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