

1 Corinthians 9:24

by St. John Chrysostom

St. John Chrysostom emphasizes the importance of discipline, temperance, and learning from biblical examples to strive for the ultimate prize of eternal life in Christ.

Scripture: 1 Corinthians 9:25 - 10:1, 1 Corinthians 10:5-6, 1 Corinthians 10:9-11

Topics: "Spiritual Wealth", "Repentance"

Description

John Chrysostom preaches about the dangers of covetousness and the importance of prioritizing spiritual wealth over material possessions. He highlights how the pursuit of wealth leads to various sins and ultimately separates individuals from God's mercy and salvation. Chrysostom emphasizes the need for repentance, self-control, and a focus on eternal rewards rather than temporary gains. He warns against the insidious nature of greed, which blinds individuals to the true beauty of spiritual blessings and leads them into a cycle of discontent and destruction.

Transcript

Do you not know that they which run in a race run all, but one receives the prize?

Having pointed out the manifold usefulness of condescension and that this is the highest perfectness, and that he himself having risen higher than all towards perfection, or rather having gone beyond it by declining to receive, descended lower than all again; and having made known to us the times for each of these, both for the perfectness and for the condescension; he touches them more sharply in what follows, covertly intimating that this which was done by them and which was counted a mark of perfectness, is a kind of superfluous and useless labor. And he says it not thus out clearly, lest they should become insolent; but the methods of proof employed by him makes this evident.

And having said that they sin against Christ and destroy the brethren, and are nothing profited by this perfect knowledge, except charity be added; he again proceeds to a common example, and says,

Do you not know that they which run in a race run all, but one receives the prize? Now this he says, not as though here also one only out of many would be saved; far from it; but to set forth the exceeding diligence which it is our duty to use. For as there, though many descend into the course not many are crowned, but this befalls one only; and it is not enough to descend into the contest, nor to anoint one's self and wrestle: so likewise here it is not sufficient to believe, and to contend in any way; but unless we have so run as unto the end to show ourselves unblameable, and to come near the prize, it will profit us nothing. For even

though thou consider yourself to be perfect according to knowledge, you have not yet attained the whole; which hinting at, he said, so run, that you may obtain. They had not then yet, as it seems, attained. And having said thus, he teaches them also the manner.

1 Corinthians 9:25

And every man that strives in the games is temperate in all things.

What is, all things? He does not abstain from one and err in another, but he masters entirely gluttony and lasciviousness and drunkenness and all his passions. For this, says he, takes place even in the heathen games. For neither is excess of wine permitted to those who contend at the time of the contest, nor wantonness, lest they should weaken their vigor, nor yet so much as to be busied about any thing else, but separating themselves altogether from all things they apply themselves to their exercise only. Now if there these things be so where the crown falls to one, much more here, where the incitement in emulation is more abundant. For here neither is one to be crowned alone, and the rewards also far surpass the labors. Wherefore also he puts it so as to shame them, saying, Now they do it receive to a corruptible crown, but we an incorruptible.

1 Corinthians 9:26

2. I therefore so run, as not uncertainly.

Thus having shamed them from those that are without, he next brings forward himself also, which kind of thing is a most excellent method of teaching: and accordingly we find him every where doing so.

But what is, not uncertainly? Looking to some mark, says he, not at random and in vain, as you do. For what profit have ye of entering into idol-temples, and exhibiting for-truth that perfectness? None. But not such am I, but all things whatsoever I do, I do for the salvation of my neighbor. Whether I show forth perfectness, it is for their sake; or condescension, for their sake again: whether I surpass Peter in declining to receive [compensation], it is that they may not be offended; or descend lower than all, being circumcised and shaving my head, it is that they may not be subverted. This is, not uncertainly. But you, why do you eat in idol-temples, tell me? Nay, you can not assign any reasonable cause. For meat commends you not to God; neither if you eat are you the better, nor if you eat not are you the worse. 1 Corinthians 8:8 Plainly then you run at random: for this is, uncertainly.

So fight I, as not beating the air. This he says, again intimating that he acted not at random nor in vain. For I have one at whom I may strike, i.e., the devil. But thou dost not strike him, but simply throwest away your strength.

Now so far then, altogether bearing with them, he thus speaks. For since he had dealt somewhat vehemently with them in the preceding part, he now on the contrary keeps back his rebuke, reserving for the end of the discourse the deep wound of all. Since here he says that they act at random and in vain; but afterwards signifies that it is at the risk of no less than utter ruin to their own soul, and that even apart from all injury to their brethren, neither are they themselves guiltless in daring so to act.

1 Corinthians 9:27

But I buffet my body, and bring it into bondage lest by any means, after that I have preached to others, I myself should be rejected.

Here he implies that they are subject to the lust of the belly and give up the reins to it, and under a pretence of perfection fulfil their own greediness; a thought which before also he was travailing to express, when he said, meats for the belly, and the belly for meats. 1 Corinthians 6:13 For since both fornication is caused by luxury, and it also brought forth idolatry, he naturally oftentimes inveighs against this disease; and pointing out how great things he suffered for the Gospel, he sets this also down among them. As I went, says he, beyond the commands, and this when it was no light matter for me: (for we endure all things, it is said,) so also here I submit to much labor in order to live soberly. Stubborn as appetite is and the tyranny of the belly, nevertheless I bridle it and give not myself up to the passion, but endure all labor not to be drawn aside by it.

For do not, I pray you, suppose that by taking things easily I arrive at this desirable result. For it is a race and a manifold struggle, and a tyrannical nature continually rising up against me and seeking to free itself. But I bear not with it but keep it down, and bring it into subjection with many struggles. Now this he says that none may despairingly withdraw from the conflicts in behalf of virtue because the undertaking is laborious. Wherefore he says, I buffet and bring into bondage. He said not, I kill: nor, I punish for the flesh is not to be hated, but, I buffet and bring into bondage; which is the part of a master not of an enemy, of a teacher not of a foe, of a gymnastic master not of an adversary.

Lest by any means, having preached to others, I myself should be a rejected.

Now if Paul feared this who had taught so many, and feared it after his preaching and becoming an angel and undertaking the leadership of the whole world; what can we say?

For, think not, says he, because you have believed, that this is sufficient for your salvation: since if to me neither preaching nor teaching nor bringing over innumerable persons, is enough for salvation unless I exhibit my own conduct also unblameable, much less to you.

3. Then he comes to other illustrations again. And as above he alleged the examples of the Apostles and those of common custom and those of the priests, and his own, so also here having set forth those of the Olympic games and those of his own course, he again proceeds to the histories of the Old Testament. And because what he has to say will be somewhat displeasing he makes his exhortation general, and discourses not only concerning the subject before him, but also generally concerning all the evils among the Corinthians. And in the case of the heathen games, Do you not know? says he: but here,

1 Corinthians 10:1-4

For I would not, brethren, have you ignorant.

Now this he said, implying that they were not very well instructed in these things. And what is this which you would not have us ignorant of?

That our fathers, says he, were all under the cloud, and all passed through the sea; and were all baptized unto Moses in the cloud and in the sea; and did all eat the same spiritual meat; and did all drink the same spiritual drink; for they drank of a spiritual Rock that followed them: and the Rock was Christ. Howbeit with most of them God was not well pleased.

And wherefore says he these things? To point out that as they were nothing profited by the enjoyment of so great a gift, so neither these by obtaining Baptism and partaking of spiritual Mysteries, except they go on and show forth a life worthy of this grace. Wherefore also he introduces the types both of Baptism and

of the Mysteries.

But what is, They were baptized into Moses? Like as we, on our belief in Christ and His resurrection, are baptized, as being destined in our own persons to partake in the same mysteries; for, we are baptized, says he, for the dead, i.e., for our own bodies; even so they putting confidence in Moses, i.e., having seen him cross first, ventured also themselves into the waters. But because he wishes to bring the Type near the Truth; he speaks it not thus, but uses the terms of the Truth even concerning the Type.

Further: this was a symbol of the Font, and that which follows, of the Holy Table. For as you eat the Lord's Body, so they the manna: and as you drink the Blood, so they water from a rock. For though they were things of sense which were produced, yet were they spiritually exhibited, not according to the order of nature, but according to the gracious intention of the gift, and together with the body nourished also the soul, leading it unto faith. On this account, you see, touching the food he made no remark, for it was entirely different, not in mode only but in nature also; (for it was manna;) but respecting the drink, since the manner only of the supply was extraordinary and required proof, therefore having said that they drank the same spiritual drink, he added, for they drank of a spiritual Rock that followed them, and he subjoined, and the Rock was Christ. For it was not the nature of the rock which sent forth the water, (such is his meaning,) else would it as well have gushed out before this time: but another sort of Rock, a spiritual One, performed the whole, even Christ who was every where with them and wrought all the wonders. For on this account he said, that followed them.

Do you perceive the wisdom of Paul, how in both cases he points cut Him as the Giver, and thereby brings the Type near to the Truth? For He who set those things before them, says he, the same also has prepared this our Table: and the same Person both brought them through the sea and you through Baptism; and before them set manna, but before you His Body and Blood.

4. As touching His gift then, such is the case: now let us observe also what follows, and consider, whether when they showed themselves unworthy of the gift, He spared them. Nay, this you can not say. Wherefore also he added, Howbeit with most of them God was not well-pleased; although He had honored them with so great honor. Yea, it profited them nothing, but most of them perished. The truth is, they all perished, but that he might not seem to prophesy total destruction to these also, therefore he said, most of them. And yet they were innumerable, but their number profited them nothing: and these were all so many tokens of love; but not even did this profit them, inasmuch as they did not themselves show forth the fruits of love.

Thus, since most men disbelieve the things said of hell, as not being present nor in sight; he alleges the things heretofore done as a proof that God does punish all who sin, even though He have bestowed innumerable benefits upon them: for if you disbelieve the things to come, so he speaks, yet surely the things that are past ye will not disbelieve. Consider, for example, how great benefits He bestowed on them: from Egypt and the slavery there He set them free, the sea He made their path, from heaven he brought down manna, from beneath He sent forth strange and marvellous fountains of waters; He was with them every where, doing wonders and fencing them in on every side: nevertheless since they showed forth nothing worthy of this gift, He spared them not, but destroyed them all.

1 Corinthians 10:5

For they were overthrown, says he, in the wilderness. Declaring by this word both the sweeping destruction, and the punishments and the vengeance inflicted by God, and that they did not so much as attain to the rewards proposed to them. Neither were they in the land of promise when He did these things

unto them, but without and afar somewhere, and wide of that country; He thus visiting them with a double vengeance, both by not permitting them to see the land, and this too though promised unto them, and also by actual severe punishment.

And what are these things to us? Say you. To you surely they belong. Wherefore also he adds,

1 Corinthians 10:6

Now these things were figures of us.

For as the gifts are figures, even so are the punishments figures: and as Baptism and the Table were sketched out prophetically, so also by what ensued, the certainty of punishment coming on those who are unworthy of this gift was proclaimed beforehand for our sake that we by these examples might learn soberness. Wherefore also he adds,

To the intent we should not lust after evil things, as they also lusted. For as in the benefits the types went before and the substance followed, such shall be the order also in the punishments. Do you see how he signifies not only the fact that these shall be punished, but also the degree, more severely than those ancients? For if the one be type, and the other substance, it must needs be that the punishments should as far exceed as the gifts.

And see whom he handles first: those who eat in the idol-temples. For having said, that we should not lust after evil things, which was general, he subjoins that which is particular, implying that each of their sins arose from evil lusting. And first he said this,

1 Corinthians 10:7-8

Neither be ye idolaters, as were some of them; as it is written, 'the people sat down to eat and to drink, and rose up to play.'

Do you hear how he even calls them idolaters? here indeed making the declaration, but afterwards bringing the proof. And he assigned the cause too wherefore they ran to those tables; and this was gluttony. Wherefore having said, to the intent that we should not lust after evil things, and having added, nor be idolaters, he names the cause of such transgression; and this was gluttony. For the people sat down, says he, to eat and to drink, and he adds the end thereof, they rose up to play. For even as they, says he, from sensuality passed into idolatry; so there is a fear lest ye also may fall from the one into the other. Do you see how he signifies that these, perfect men forsooth, were more imperfect than the others whom they censured? Not in this respect only, their not bearing with their brethren throughout, but also in that the one sin from ignorance, but the others from gluttony. And from the ruin of the former he reckons the punishment to these, but allows not these to lay upon another the cause of their own sin but pronounces them responsible both for their injury, and for their own.

Neither let us commit fornication, as some of them committed. Wherefore does he here make mention of fornication again, having so largely discoursed concerning it before? It is ever Paul's custom when he brings a charge of many sins, both to set them forth in order and separately to proceed with his proposed topics, and again in his discourses concerning other things to make mention also of the former: which thing God also used to do in the Old Testament, in reference to each several transgression, reminding the Jews of the calf and bringing that sin before them. This then Paul also does here, at the same time both reminding them of that sin, and teaching that the parent of this evil also was luxury and gluttony.

Wherefore also he adds, Neither let us commit fornication, as some of them committed, and fell in one day three and twenty thousand.

And wherefore names he not likewise the punishment for their idolatry? Either because it was clear and more notorious, or because the plague was not so great at that time, as in the matter of Balaam, when they joined themselves to Baalpeor, the Midianitish women appearing in the camp and alluring them to wantonness according to the counsel of Balaam. For that this evil counsel was Balaam's Moses shows after this, in the following statement at the end of the Book of Numbers. Numbers 31:8-16 in our translation Balaam also the son of Beor they slew in the war of Midian with the sword and they brought the spoils.... And Moses was angry, and said, Wherefore have ye saved all the women alive? For these were to the children of Israel for a stumbling-block, according to the word of Balaam, to cause them to depart from and despise the word of the Lord for Peor's sake.

1 Corinthians 10:9

Neither let us tempt Christ, as some of them also tempted, and perished by serpents.

By this he again hints at another charge which he likewise states at the end, blaming them because they contended about signs. And indeed they were destroyed on account of trials, saying, when will the good things come? When the rewards? Wherefore also he adds, on this account correcting and alarming them,

1 Corinthians 10:10

Neither murmur ye, as some of them murmured, and perished by the destroyer.

For what is required is not only to suffer for Christ, but also nobly to bear the things that come on us, and with all gladness: since this is the nature of every crown. Yea, and unless this be so, punishment rather will attend men who take calamity with a bad grace. Wherefore, both the Apostles when they were beaten rejoiced, and Paul gloried in his sufferings.

1 Corinthians 10:11

5. Now all these things happened unto them by way of example; and they were written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the ages have come.

Again he terrifies them speaking of the ends, and prepares them to expect things greater than had already taken place. For that we shall suffer punishment is manifest, says he, from what has been said, even to those who disbelieve the statements concerning hell-fire; but that the punishment also will be most severe, is evident, from the more numerous blessings which we have enjoyed, and from the things of which those were but figures. Since, if in the gifts one go beyond the other, it is most evident that so it will be in the punishment likewise. For this cause he both called them types, and said that they were written for us and made mention of an end that he might remind them of the consummation of all things. For not such will be the penalties then as to admit of a termination and be done away, but the punishment will be eternal; for even as the punishments in this world are ended with the present life, so those in the next continually remain. But when he said, the ends of the ages, he means nothing else than that the fearful judgment is henceforth near at hand.

1 Corinthians 10:12

Wherefore let him that thinks he stands take heed lest he fall.

Again, he casts down their pride who thought highly of their knowledge. For if they who had so great privileges suffered such things; and some for murmuring alone were visited with such punishment, and others for tempting, and neither their multitude moved God to repent, nor their having attained to such things; much more shall it be so in our case, except we be sober. And well said he, he that thinks he stands: for this is not even standing as one ought to stand, to rely on yourself: for quickly will such an one fall: since they too, had they not been high-minded and self-confident, but of a subdued frame of mind, would not have suffered these things. Whence it is evident, that chiefly pride, and carelessness from which comes gluttony also, are the sources of these evils. Wherefore even though thou stand, yet take heed lest you fall. For our standing here is not secure standing, no not until we be delivered out of the waves of this present life and have sailed into the tranquil haven. Be not therefore high-minded at your standing, but guard against your falling; for if Paul feared who was firmer than all, much more ought we to fear.

6. Now the Apostle's word, as we have seen, was, Wherefore let him that thinks he stands take heed lest he fall; but we cannot say even this; all of us, so to speak, having fallen, and lying prostrate on the ground. For to whom am I to say this? To him that commits extortion every day? Nay, he lies prostrate with a mighty fall. To the fornicator? He too is cast down to the ground. To the drunkard? He also is fallen, and knows not even that he is fallen. So that it is not the season for this word, but for that saying of the prophet which he spoke even to the Jews, Jeremiah 8:4-- He that falls, does he not rise again? For all are fallen, and to rise again they have no mind. So that our exhortation is not concerning the not falling, but concerning the ability of them that are fallen to arise. Let us rise again then, late though it be, beloved, let us rise again, and let us stand nobly. How long do we lie prostrate? How long are we drunken, besotted with the excessive desire of the things of this life? It is a meet opportunity now to say, Jeremiah 6:10 To whom shall I speak and testify? So deaf are all men become even to the very instruction of virtue, and thence filled with abundance of evils. And were it possible to discern their souls naked; as in armies when the battle is ended one may behold some dead, and some wounded, so also in the Church we might see. Wherefore I beseech and implore you, let us stretch out a hand to each other and thoroughly raise ourselves up. For I myself am of them that are smitten, and require one to apply some remedies.

Do not however despair on this account. For what if the wounds be severe? Yet are they not incurable; such is our physician: only let us feel our wounds. Although we be arrived at the very extreme of wickedness, many are the ways of safety which He strikes out for us. Thus, if you forbear to be angry with your neighbor, your own sins shall be forgiven. For if you forgive men, says He, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. Matthew 6:14 And if you give alms, He will remit you your sins; for, break off your sins, says He, by alms. Daniel 4:24 And if you pray earnestly, you shall enjoy forgiveness: and this the widow signifies who prevailed upon that cruel judge by the importunity of her prayer. And if you accuse your own sins, you have relief: for declare thou your iniquities first, that you may be justified: Isaiah 47:26 and if you are sorrowful on account of these things, this too will be to you a powerful remedy: for I saw, says He, that he was grieved and went sorrowful, and I healed his ways. Isaiah 57:17 And if, when you suffer any evil, thou bear it nobly, you have put away the whole. For this also did Abraham say to the rich man, that Lazarus received his evil things, and here he is comforted. And if you have pity on the widow, your sins are washed away. For, Judge, says He, the orphan, and plead for the widow, and come and let us reason together, says the Lord. And if your sins be as scarlet, I will make them white as snow; and if they be as crimson, I will make them white as wool. Isaiah 1:17 For not even a single scar of the wounds does He suffer to appear. Yea, and though we be come to that depth of misery into which he fell, who devoured his

father's substance and fed upon husks, and should repent, we are undoubtedly saved. And though we owe ten thousand talents, if we fall down before God and bear no malice, all things are forgiven us. Although we have wandered away to that place whither the sheep strayed from his keeper, even thence He recovers us again: only let us be willing, beloved. For God is merciful. Wherefore both in the case of him that owed ten thousand talents, He was content with His falling down before Him; and in the case of him who had devoured his father's goods, with his return only; and in the case of the sheep, with its willingness to be borne.

7. Considering therefore the greatness of His mercy, let us here make Him propitious unto us, and let us come before His face by a full confession, Psalm 95:2. Septuagint that we may not depart hence without excuse, and have to endure the extreme punishment. For if in the present life we exhibit even an ordinary diligence, we shall gain the greatest rewards: but if we depart having become nothing better here, even though we repent ever so earnestly there it will do us no good. For it was our duty to strive while yet remaining within the lists, not after the assembly was broken up idly to lament and weep: as that rich man did, bewailing and deploring himself, but to no purpose and in vain, since he overlooked the time in which he ought to have done these things. And not he alone, but many others there are like him now among the rich; not willing to despise wealth, but despising their own souls for wealth's sake: at whom I cannot but wonder, when I see men continually interceding with God for mercy, while they are doing themselves incurable harm, and unsparing of their very soul as if it were an enemy. Let us not then trifle, beloved, let us not trifle nor delude ourselves, beseeching God to have mercy upon us, while we ourselves prefer both money and luxury, and, in fact, all things to this mercy. For neither, if any one brought before you a case and said in accusation of such an one, that being to suffer ten thousand deaths and having it in his power to rid himself of the sentence by a little money, he chose rather to die than to give up any of his property, would you say that he was worthy of any mercy or compassion. Now in this same way do thou also reason touching yourself. For we too act in this way, and making light of our own salvation, we are sparing of our money. How then do you beseech God to spare you, when you yourself art so unsparing of yourself, and honorest money above your soul?

Wherefore also I am greatly astonished to see, how great witchery lies hid in wealth, or rather not in wealth, but in the souls of those that are beguiled. For there are, there are those that utterly derided this sorcery. For which among the things therein is really capable of bewitching us? Is it not inanimate matter? Is it not transitory? Is not the possession thereof unworthy of trust? Is it not full of fears and? Dangers? Nay, of murders and conspiracy? Of enmity and hatred? Of carelessness and much vice? Is it not dust and ashes? What madness have we here? What disease?

But, say you, we ought not merely to bring such accusations against those that are so diseased, but also to destroy the passion. And in what other way shall we destroy it, except by pointing out its baseness and how full it is of innumerable evils?

But of this it is not easy to persuade a lover concerning the objects of his love. Well then, we must set before him another sort of beauty. But incorporeal beauty he sees not, being yet in his disease. Well then, let us show him some beauty of a corporeal kind, and say to him, Consider the meadows and the flowers therein, which are more sparkling than any gold, and more elegant and transparent than all kinds of precious stones. Consider the limpid streams from their fountains, the rivers which like oil flow noiselessly out of the earth. Ascend to heaven and behold the lustre of the sun, the beauty of the moon, the stars that cluster like flowers. Why, what is this, say you, since we do not, I suppose, make use of them as of wealth? Nay, we use them more than wealth, inasmuch as the use thereof is more needful, the enjoyment

more secure. For you have no fear, lest, like money, any one should take them and go off: but you may be ever confident of having them, and that without anxiety or care. But if you grieve because you enjoy them in common with others, and dost not possess them alone like money; it is not money, but mere covetousness, which you seem to me to be in love with: nor would even the money be an object of your desire, if it had been placed within reach of all in common.

8. Therefore, since we have found the beloved object, I mean Covetousness, come let me show you how she hates and abhors you, how many swords she sharpens against you, how many pits she digs, how many nooses she ties, how many precipices she prepares; that thus at any rate you may do away with the charm. Whence then are we to obtain this knowledge? From the highways, from the wars, from the sea, from the courts of justice. For she has both filled the sea with blood, and the swords of the judges she often reddens contrary to law, and arms those who on the highway lie in wait day and night, and persuades men to forget nature, and makes parricides and matricides, and introduces all sorts of evils into man's life. Which is the reason why Paul entitles her a root of these things. 1 Timothy 6:10 She suffers not her lovers to be in any better condition than those who work in the mines. For as they, perpetually shut up in darkness and in chains, labor unprofitably; so also these buried in the caves of avarice, no one using any force with them, voluntarily draw on their punishment, binding on themselves fetters that cannot be broken. And those condemned to the mines at least when even comes on, are released from their toils; but these both by day and night are digging in these wretched mines. And to those there is a definite limit of that hard labor, but these know no limit, but the more they dig so much the greater hardship do they desire. And what if those do it unwillingly, but these of their own will? In that you tell me of the grievous part of the disease, that it is even impossible for them to be rid of it, since they do not so much as hate their wretchedness. But as a swine in mud, so also do these delight to wallow in the noisome mire of avarice, suffering worse things than those condemned ones. As to the fact that they are in a worse condition, hear the circumstances of the one, and then you will know the state of the other.

Now it is said that that soil which is impregnated with gold has certain clefts and recesses in those gloomy caverns. The malefactor then condemned to labor in that place, taking for that purpose a lamp and a mattock, so, we are told, enters within, and carries with him a cruse to drop oil from thence into the lamp, because there is darkness even by day, without a ray of light, as I said before. Then when the time of day calls him to his wretched meal, himself, they say, is ignorant of the time, but his jailor from above striking violently on the cave, by that clattering sound declares to those who are at work below the end of the day.

Do ye not shudder when you hear all this? Let us see now, whether there be not things more grievous than these in the case of the covetous. For these too, in the first place, have a severer jailor, viz. avarice, and so much severer, as that besides their body he chains also their soul. And this darkness also is more awful than that. For it is not subject to sense, but they producing it within, wherever they go, carry it about with themselves. For the eye of their soul is put out: which is the reason why more than all Christ calls them wretched, saying, But if the light that is in you be darkness, how great is that darkness. Matthew 6:23 And they for their part have at least a lamp shining, but these are deprived even of this beam of light; and therefore every day they fall into countless pitfalls. And the condemned when night overtakes them have a respite, sailing into that calm port which is common to all the unfortunate, I mean the night: but against the covetous even this harbor is blocked up by their own avarice: such grievous thoughts have they even at night, since then, without disturbance from any one, at full leisure they cut themselves to pieces.

Such are their circumstances in this world; but those in the next, what discourse shall exhibit? The intolerable furnaces, the rivers burning with fire, the gnashing of teeth, the chains never to be loosed, the

envenomed worm, the rayless gloom, the never-ending miseries. Let us fear them, beloved, let us fear the fountain of so great punishments, the insatiate madness, the destroyer of our salvation. For it is impossible at the same time to love both money and your soul. Let us be convinced that wealth is dust and ashes, that it leaves us when we depart hence, or rather that even before our departure it oftentimes darts away from us, and injures us both in regard of the future and in respect of the present life. For before hell fire, and before that punishment, even here it surrounds us with innumerable wars, and stirs up strifes and contests. For nothing is so apt to cause war as avarice: nothing so apt to produce beggary, whether it show itself in wealth or in poverty. For in the souls of poor men also this grievous disease arises, and aggravates their poverty the more. And if there be found a poor covetous man, such an one suffers not punishment in money, but in hunger. For he allows not himself to enjoy his moderate means with comfort, but both racks his belly with hunger and punishes his whole body with nakedness and cold, and every where appears more squalid and filthy than any prisoners; and is always wailing and lamenting as though he were more wretched than all, though there be ten thousand poorer than he. This man, whether he go into the market-place, goes away with many a stripe; or into the bath, or into the theatre, he will still be receiving more wounds, not only from the spectators, but also from those upon the stage, where he beholds not a few of the unchaste women glittering in gold. This man again, whether he sail upon the sea, regarding the merchants and their richly-freighted ships and their enormous profits, will not even count himself to live: or whether he travel by land, reckoning up the fields, the suburban farms, the inns, the baths, the revenues arising out of them, will count his own life thenceforth not worth living; or whether thou shut him up at home, he will but rub and fret the wounds received in the market, and so do greater despite to his own soul: and he knows only one consolation for the evils which oppress him; death and deliverance from this life.

And these things not the poor man only, but the rich also, will suffer, who falls into this disease, and so much more than the poor, inasmuch as the tyranny presses more vehemently on him, and the intoxication is greater. Wherefore also he will account himself poorer than all; or rather, he is poorer. For riches and poverty are determined not by the measure of the substance, but by the disposition of the mind: and he rather is the poorest of all, who is always hangering after more and is never able to stay this wicked lust.

On all these accounts then let us flee covetousness, the maker of beggars, the destroyer of souls, the friend of hell, the enemy of the kingdom of heaven, the mother of all evils together; and let us despise wealth that we may enjoy wealth, and with wealth may enjoy also the good things laid up for us; unto which may we all attain, etc.

Source: <https://sermonindex.net/speakers/st-john-chrysostom/1-corinthians-924/>

Grow in Your Walk with Christ

Listen and read messages that will stir your heart for Christ and point you to deeper repentance and devotion.

- 50,000+ Sermons from speakers past and present
- 3,900+ Classic Christian Books freely readable online
- 1,200+ Bible Translations and Commentaries
- Over 450k forum posts — Join our vibrant online Christian forum

www.sermonindex.net