

2 Corinthians 1:6-7

by St. John Chrysostom

Paul's affliction is for the Corinthians' comfort and salvation, and their prayers and supplications are a great protection and support in the Apostles' salvation.

Scripture: 2 Corinthians 1:6-10

Topics: "Suffering And Faith", "Gods Sovereignty"

Description

John Chrysostom preaches about the importance of enduring sufferings for the sake of salvation and comfort, highlighting how afflictions can lead to a deeper faith and trust in God. He emphasizes the shared experiences of suffering and comfort among believers, showing how trials can strengthen one's hope and salvation. Chrysostom encourages believers to surrender to God's will, endure sufferings with patience, and find comfort in knowing that God works through their afflictions for their ultimate good and salvation.

Transcript

Whether we be afflicted, it is for your comfort and salvation, which works in the patient enduring of the same sufferings which we also suffer: and our hope for you is steadfast.

Having spoken of one, and that the chief ground of comfort and consolation, namely, having fellowship [by sufferings] with Christ: he lays down as second this which he now mentions, namely, that the salvation of the disciples themselves was procured thereby. Faint not, therefore, he says, nor be confounded and afraid because we are afflicted; for this same thing were rather a reason for your being of good cheer: for had we not been afflicted, this had been the ruin of you all.

How and wherein? For if through lack of spirit and fear of danger we had not preached unto you the word whereby ye learned the true knowledge, your situation had been desperate. Do you see again the vehemence and earnest contention of Paul? The very things which troubled them he uses for their comfort. For, says he, the greater the intensity of our persecutions, the greater should be the increase of your good hope; because the more abundant also in proportion is your salvation and consolation.

For what has equal force of consolation with this of having obtained such good things through the preaching. Then that he may not seem to be bringing the encomium round to himself alone, see how he makes them too to share these praises. For to the words, Whether we be afflicted, it is for your comfort and salvation: he adds, which works in the patient enduring of the same sufferings which we also suffer. 2 Corinthians 1:7 Afterwards, indeed, he states this more clearly, thus saying, As you are partakers of the

sufferings, so also are you of the consolation; but here also meanwhile he alludes to it in the words, the same sufferings, so making what he says include them.

For what he says is this, Your salvation is not our work alone, but your own as well; for both we in preaching to you the word endure affliction, and you in receiving it endure the very same; we to impart to you that which we received, you to receive what is imparted and not to let it go. Now what humility can compare with this, seeing that those who fell so far short of him he raises to the same dignity of endurance? For he says, Which worked in the enduring of the same sufferings; for not through believing only comes your salvation, but also through the suffering and enduring the same things with us.

For like as a pugilist is an object of admiration, when he does but show himself and is in good training and has his skill within himself, but when he is in action, enduring blows and striking his adversary, then most of all shines forth, because that then his good training is most put in action, and the proof of his skill evidently shown; so truly is your salvation also then more especially put into action, that is, is displayed, increased, heightened, when it has endurance, when it suffers and bears all things nobly.

So then the work of salvation consists not in doing evil, but in suffering evil. Moreover he says not, which works, but, which is wrought, to show that together with their own willingness of mind, grace also which wrought in them did contribute much.

2 Corinthians 1:7

And our hope for you is steadfast. That is, though ye should suffer ills innumerable, we are confident that you will not turn round, either upon your own trials or upon our persecutions. For so far are we from suspecting you of being confounded on account of our sufferings that even when yourselves are in peril, we are then confident concerning you.

2. Do you see how great had been their advance since the former Epistle? For he has here witnessed of them far greater things than of the Macedonians, whom throughout that Epistle he extols and commends. For on their [the Macedonians'] account he feared and says, We sent, unto you, Timothy...to establish you, and to comfort you concerning your faith, that no man be moved by these afflictions, for yourselves know that hereunto we are appointed. 1 Thessalonians 3:2-3 And again: For this cause when I could no longer forbear, I sent to know your faith, lest by any means the tempter has tempted you: and our labor should be in vain. 2 Corinthians 1:5 But of these [the Corinthians] he says nothing of this kind, but quite the contrary, Our hope for you is steadfast.

2 Corinthians 1:6-7

Or whether we be comforted, it is for your consolation and salvation. Knowing that as you are partakers of the sufferings, so also are you of the comfort.

That for their sakes the Apostles were afflicted, he showed when he said, whether we be afflicted, it is for your consolation and salvation: he wishes also to show that for their sakes also they were comforted. He said this indeed even a little above, although somewhat generally, thus; Blessed be God, Who comforts us in all our afflictions, that we may be able to comfort them which are in any affliction. He repeats it here too in other words more clearly and more home to their needs. For whether we be comforted, says he, it is for your comfort. What he means is this; our comfort becomes your refreshment, even though we should not comfort you by word. If we be but a little refreshed, this avails for encouragement to you; and if we be

ourselves comforted, this becomes your comfort. For as you consider our sufferings your own, so do ye also make our comfort your own. For surely it cannot be that, when you share in worse fortune with us, you will not share in the better. If then ye share in everything, as in tribulation so in comfort, you will in no wise blame us for this delay and slowness in coming, because that both for your sakes we are in tribulation and for your sakes in comfort. For lest any should think this a hard saying, for your sakes we thus suffer, he adds, for your sakes also we are comforted, and not we alone are in peril; for you also, says he, are partakers of the same sufferings. Thus then, by admitting them to be partakers in the perils and ascribing to them the cause of their own comfort, he softens what he says. If then we be beset by craft, be of good cheer; we endure this that your faith may grow in strength. And if we be comforted, glory in this also; for we enjoy this too for your sakes, that thereby ye may receive some encouragement by sharing in our joy. And that the comfort he here speaks of is that which they enjoyed not only from being comforted by themselves, (the Apostles) but also from knowing them (the Apostles) to be at rest, hear him declaring in what follows next, Knowing that as you are partakers of the sufferings, so also are you of the comfort. For as when we suffer persecution, you are in distress as though yourselves so suffering; so are we sure that when we are comforted, you think the enjoyment also your own. What more humble-minded than this spirit? He who so greatly surpasses in perils, calls them partakers, who endured no part of them whatever; while of the comfort he ascribes the whole cause to them, not to his own labors.

3. Next, having spoken before only generally of troubles, he now makes mention of the place too where they (Ben. he) endured them.

2 Corinthians 1:8

For we would not, Brethren, have you ignorant concerning our affliction which befell us in Asia.

These things we speak, says he, that you may not be ignorant of what befell us; for we wish, yea have earnestly endeavored, that you should know our affairs: which is a very high proof of love. Of this even in the former Epistle he had before given notice, where he said, For a great door and effectual is opened to me at Ephesus, and there are many adversaries. 1 Corinthians 16:8-9 Putting them then in mind of this, and recounting how much he suffered, he says, I would not have you ignorant of our affliction which befell us in Asia. And in his Epistle to the Ephesians too he said the same. For having sent Tychicus to them, he gives this as the reason of his journey: whence he says, But that you also may know my affairs, and how I do, Tychicus, the beloved brother and faithful minister in the Lord, shall make known to you all things; whom I have sent unto you for this very purpose, that you may know our state, and that he may comfort your hearts. Ephesians 6:21-22 And in other Epistles also he does the very same. Nor is it superfluous, but even exceedingly necessary: both because of his exceeding affection for the disciples, and because of their continued trials; wherein the knowledge of each other's fortunes was a very great comfort; so that if these were calamitous, they might be prepared both to be energetic and to be safer against falling; or if these were good, they might rejoice with them. He here, however, speaks as well of being delivered from trials as of being assaulted by them, saying, We were weighed down exceedingly, beyond our power. Like a vessel sinking under some mighty burden. He may seem to have said, only one thing here exceedingly and beyond our power: it is, however, not one but two; for lest one should object, What then? Granting the peril were exceeding, yet it was not great to you; he added, it both was great and surpassed our strength, yea, so surpassed it, That we despaired even of life.

That is, we had no longer any expectation of living. What David calls the gates of hell, the pangs and the shadow of death, this he expresses by saying, We endured peril pregnant with certain death.

2 Corinthians 1:9

But we had the answer of death in ourselves, that we should not trust in ourselves, but in God which raises the dead.

What is this, the answer of death? The vote, the judgment, the expectation. For so spoke our affairs; our fortunes gave this answer, We shall surely die.

To be sure, this did not come to the proof, but only as far as to our anticipations, and stopped there: for the nature of our affairs did so declare, yet the power of God allowed not the declaration to take effect, but permitted it to happen only in our thought and in expectation: wherefore he says, We had the answer of death in ourselves, not in fact. And wherefore permitted He peril so great as to take away our hope and cause us to despair? That we should not trust in ourselves, says he, but in God. These words Paul said, not that this was his own temper. Away with such a thought, but as attuning the rest by what he says of himself, and in his great care to speak modestly. Whence also further on he says, There was given to me a thorn in the flesh, (meaning his trials,) lest I should be exalted overmuch. 2 Corinthians 12:7 And yet God does not say that He permitted them for this, but for another reason. What other? That His strength might be the more displayed; For, says he, My grace is sufficient for you, for My power is made perfect in weakness. 2 Corinthians 1:9 But, as I said, he no where forgets his own peculiar character, classing himself with those who fall short exceedingly and stand in need of much discipline and correction. For if one or two trials suffice to sober even ordinary men, how should he who of all men had most cultivated lowliness of mind his whole life long and had suffered as no other man did, after so many years and a practice of wisdom worthy of the heavens, be in need of this admonition? Whence it is plain that here too, it is from modesty and to calm down those who thought highly of themselves and boasted, that he thus speaks, That we should not trust in ourselves, but in God.

4. And observe how he treats them tenderly here also. For, says he, these trials were permitted to come upon us for your sakes; of so great price are you in God's sight; for whether we be afflicted, says he, it is for your consolation and salvation; but they were out of measure for our sake, lest we should be high minded. For we were weighed down exceedingly, beyond our power, that we should not trust in ourselves, but in God that raises the dead. He again puts them in mind of the doctrine of the Resurrection whereon he said so much in the former Epistle, and confirms it from the present circumstance; whence he added,

2 Corinthians 1:10-11

Who delivered us out of so great deaths.

He said not, from so great dangers, at once showing the insupportable severity of the trials, and confirming the doctrine I have mentioned. For whereas the Resurrection was a thing future, he shows that it happens every day: for when [God] lifts up again a man who is despaired of and has been brought to the very gates of Hades, He shows none other thing than a resurrection, snatching out of the very jaws of death him that had fallen into them: whence in the case of those despaired of and then restored either out of grievous sickness or insupportable trials, it is an ordinary way of speaking to say, We have seen a resurrection of the dead in his case.

And we have set our hope that He will also still deliver us; ye also helping together on our behalf by your supplication, that for the gift bestowed upon us by the means of many, thanks may be given by many persons on our behalf.

Since the words, that we should not trust in ourselves, might seem to be a common charge and an accusation that pointed to some among them; he softens again what he said, by calling their prayers a great protection and at the same time showing that [this] our life must be throughout a scene of conflict. For in those words, And we have set our hope that He will also still deliver us, he predicts a future sleet of many trials: but still no where anything of being forsaken, but of succor again and support. Then, lest on hearing that they were to be continually in perils they should be cast down, he showed before the use of perils; for instance, that we should not trust in ourselves; that is, that he may keep us in continual humility, and that their salvation may be wrought; and many other uses besides; the being partakers with Christ; (for, says he, the sufferings of Christ abound in us;) the suffering for the faithful; (for, says he, whether we be afflicted, it is for your comfort and salvation;) the superior lustre this last (i.e., their salvation) should shine with ; which, says he, works [in you] in the patient enduring of the same sufferings; their being made hardy; and besides all these, that of seeing the resurrection vividly portrayed before their eyes: for, He has delivered us out of so great death; being of an earnest mind and ever looking unto Him, for, says he, we have set our hope that he will deliver us; its rivetting them to prayers, for he says, ye also helping together on our behalf by your supplication. Thus having shown the gain of affliction and then having made them energetic: he anoints once more their spirits [for the combat], and animates them to virtue by witnessing great things of their prayers, for that to these God had granted Paul; as he says, You helping together on our behalf by prayer. But what is this: That for the gift bestowed upon us by means of many , thanks may be given by many on our behalf? He delivered us from those deaths, says he, ye also helping together by prayer; that is, praying all of you for us. For the gift bestowed upon us, that is, our being saved, He was pleased to grant to you all, in order that many persons might give Him thanks, because that many also received the boon.

5. And this he said, at once to stir them up to prayer for others, and to accustom them always to give thanks to God for whatever befalls others, showing that He too wills this exceedingly. For they that are careful to do both these for others, will much more for themselves show an example of both. And besides this, he both teaches them humility and leads on to more fervent love. For if he who was so high above them owns himself to have been saved by their prayers: and that to their prayers himself had been granted as a boon of God, think what their modesty and disposition ought to have been.

And observe, I pray you, this also; that even if God does any thing in mercy, yet prayer does mightily contribute thereunto. For at the first he attributed his salvation to His mercies; for The God of mercies, he says, Himself delivered us, but here to the prayers also. For on him too that owed the ten thousand talents He had mercy after that he fell at His feet; Matthew 18:24-27 although it is written, that being moved with compassion, He loosed him. And again to the woman of Canaan, it was after that long attendance and importunity of hers, Matthew 15:22 that He finally granted the healing of her daughter, even though of His mercy He healed her.

Hereby then we learn that even though we are to receive mercy, we must first make ourselves worthy of the mercy; for though there be mercy, yet it seeks out those that are worthy. It will not come upon all without distinction; those even who have no feeling; for He says, I will have mercy on whom I have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I have compassion. Romans 9:15 Observe at least what he says here, You also helping together by prayer. He has neither ascribed the whole of the good work to them lest he should lift them up, nor yet deprived them of all share whatever in it, in order to encourage them and animate their zeal, and bring them together one to another.

Whence also he said, He also granted to you my safety. For oftentimes also God is abashed by a multitude praying with one mind and mouth. Whence also He said to the prophet, And shall not I spare this city wherein dwell more than six score thousand persons? Jonah 4:11 Then lest you think He respects the multitude only, He says, Though the number of Israel be as the sand of the sea, a remnant shall be saved. Isaiah 10:22 How then saved He the Ninevites? Because in their case, there was not only a multitude, but a multitude and virtue too.

For each one turned from his evil way. Jonah 3:10; 4:11 And besides, when He saved them, He said that they discerned not between their right hand and their left hand: whence it is plain that even before, they sinned more out of simpleness than of wickedness: it is plain too from their being converted, as they were, by hearing a few words. But if their being six score thousand were of itself enough to save them, what hindered even before this that they should be saved? And why says He not to the Prophet, And shall I not spare this city which so turns itself?

But brings forward the score thousands. He produces this also as a reason over and above. For that they had turned was known to the prophet, but he knew not either their numbers or their simpleness. So by every possible consideration he is desirous to soften them. For even greatness of number has power, when there is virtue withal. And truly the Scripture elsewhere also shows this plainly, where it says, But prayer was made earnestly of the Church unto God for him: Acts 12:5 and so great power had it, even when the doors were shut and chains lay on him and keepers were sleeping by on either side, that it led the Apostle forth and delivered him from them all.

But as where there is virtue, greatness of number has mighty power; so where wickedness is, it profits nothing. For the Israelites of whom He says that the number of them was as the sand of the sea, perished every one, and those too in the days of Noe were both many, yea, numberless; and yet this profited them nothing. For greatness of number has no power of itself, but only as an adjunct.

6. Let us then be diligent in coming together in supplication; and let us pray for one another, as they did for the Apostles. For [so] we both fulfil a commandment, and are anointed unto love: (and when I say love, I speak of every good thing:) and also learn to give thanks with more earnestness: for they that give thanks for the things of others, much more will they for their own. This also was David wont to do, saying, Magnify the Lord with me, and let us exalt His name together; Psalm 34:3 this the Apostle too does every where require.

This let us too labor in; and let us show forth unto all the beneficence of God that we may get companions in the act of praise: for if when we have received any good from men, by proclaiming it forth we make them the readier to serve us: much more shall we, by telling abroad the benefits of God, draw Him on to more good-will. And if when we have received benefits of men we stir up others also to join us in the giving of thanks, much more ought we to bring many unto God who may give thanks for us.

For if Paul who had so great confidence [toward God] does this, much more is it necessary for us to do it. Let us then exhort the saints to give thanks for us; and let us do the same ourselves for one another. To priests especially this good work belongs, since it is an exceeding privilege. For drawing near, we first give thanks for the whole world and the good things common [to all]. For even though the blessings of God be common, yet does the common preservation include your own; so that you both owe common thanksgivings for your own peculiar blessing, and for the common blessings should of right render up your own peculiar praise: for He lighted up the sun not for you alone, but also for all in common; but

nevertheless thou for your part hast it whole.

For it was made so large for the common good; and yet thou individually see it as large as all men have seen it; so that you owe a thanksgiving as great as all together; and you ought to give thanks for what all have in common and likewise for the virtue of others; for on account of others, too, we receive many blessings: for had there been found in Sodom ten righteous only, they had not suffered what they did. So then let us give thanks also for the confidence of others [toward God].

For this custom is an ancient one, planted in the Church from the beginning. Thus Paul also gives thanks for the Romans, Romans 1:8 for the Corinthians, 1 Corinthians 1:4 for the whole world, 1 Timothy 2:1 And tell me not, The good work is none of mine; for though it be none of yours, yet even so ought thou to give thanks that your member is such an one. And besides, by your acclamation you make it your own, and share in the crown, and shall yourself also receive the gift. On this account it is that the laws of the Church command prayer also to be thus made, and that not for the faithful only, but also for the Catechumens.

For the law stirs up the faithful to make supplication for the uninitiated. For when the Deacon says, Let us pray earnestly for the Catechumens, he does no other than excite the whole multitude of the faithful to pray for them; although the Catechumens are as yet aliens. For they are not yet of the Body of Christ, they have not yet partaken of the Mysteries, but are still divided from the spiritual flock. But if we ought to intercede for these, much more for our own members.

And even therefore he says, earnestly let us pray, that you should not disown them as aliens, that you should not disregard them as strangers. For as yet they have not the appointed prayer, which Christ brought in; as yet they have not confidence, but have need of others' aid who have been initiated. For without the king's courts they stand, far from the sacred precincts. Therefore they are even driven away while those awful prayers are being offered. Therefore also he exhorts you to pray for them that they may become members of you, that they may be no longer strangers and aliens. For the words, Let us pray, are not addressed to the priests alone, but also to those that make up the people: for when he says, Let us stand in order : let us pray; he exhorts all to the prayer.

7. Then beginning the prayer, he says, That the all-pitying and merciful God would listen to their prayers. For that you may not say, What shall we pray? They are aliens, not yet united [to the body]. Whereby can I constrain the regard of God? Whence can I prevail with Him to impart unto them mercy and forgiveness? That you may not be perplexed with such questions as these, see how he disentangles your perplexity, saying, that the all-pitying and merciful God. Heardest thou? All-pitying God. Be perplexed no more. For the All-pitying pities all, both sinners and friends. Say not then, How shall I approach Him for them? Himself will listen to their prayers. And the Catechumens' prayer, what can it be but that they may not remain Catechumens? Next, he suggests also the manner of the prayer. And what is this? That He would open the ears of their hearts; for they are as yet shut and stopped up. Ears, he says, not these which be outward, but those of the understanding, so as to hear 'the things which eye has not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man.' 1 Corinthians 2:9; Isaiah 54:4 For they have not heard the untold mysteries; but they stand somewhere at a distance and far off from them; and even if they should hear, they know not what is said; for those [mysteries] need much understanding, not hearing only: and the inward ears as yet they have not: wherefore also he next invokes for them a Prophet's gift, for the Prophet spoke on this wise; God gives me the tongue of instruction, that I should know how to speak a word in season; for He opened my mouth; He gave to me betimes in the morning; He granted me a hearing ear. Isaiah 1:4. Septuagint For as the Prophets heard otherwise than the many, so also do the

faithful than the Catechumens. Hereby the Catechumen also is taught not to learn to hear these things of men, (for He says, Call no man master upon the earth, but from above, from heaven, For they shall be all taught of God. Isaiah 54:13

Wherefore he says, And instil into them the word of truth, so that it may be inwardly learned; for as yet they know not the word of truth as they ought to know. That He would sow His fear in them. But this is not enough; for some fell by the wayside, and some upon the rock. But we ask not thus; but as on rich soil the plough opens the furrows, so we pray it may be here also, that having the fallow ground of their minds tilled deep, they may receive what is dropped upon them and accurately retain everything they have heard. Whence also he adds, And confirm His faith in their minds; that is, that it may not lie on the surface, but strike its root deep downwards. That He would unveil to them the Gospel of Righteousness. He shows that the veil is two-fold, partly that the eyes of their understanding were shut, partly that the Gospel was hidden from them. Whence he said a little above, that He would open the ears of their hearts, and here, that he would unveil unto them the Gospel of Righteousness; that is, both that He would render them wise and apt for receiving seed, and that He would teach them and drop the seed into them; for though they should be apt, yet if God reveal not, this profits nothing; and if God should unveil but they receive not, there results like unprofitableness. Therefore we ask for both: that He would both open their hearts and unveil the Gospel. For neither if kingly ornaments lie underneath a veil, will it profit at all that the eyes be looking; nor yet that they be laid bare, if the eyes be not waking. But both will be granted, if first they themselves desire it. But what then is the Gospel of Righteousness? That which makes righteous. By these words he leads them to the desire of Baptism, showing that the Gospel is for the working not only of the remission of sins, but also of righteousness.

8. That He would grant to them a godly mind, sound judgment, and virtuous manner of life. Let such of the faithful attend as are riveted to the things of [this] life. For if we are bidden to ask these things for the uninitiated: think in what things we ought to be occupied who ask these things for others. For the manner of life ought to keep pace with the Gospel. Whence surely also the order of the prayer shifts from the doctrines [of the Gospel] to the deportment: for to the words, that He would unveil to them the Gospel of Righteousness; it has added, that He would give unto them a Godly mind. And what is this Godly? That God may dwell in it. For He says, I will dwell in them, and walk in them; Leviticus 26:12 for when the mind has become righteous, when it has put off its sins, it becomes God's dwelling. Romans 6:16 But when God indwells, nothing of man will be left. And thus does the mind become Godly, speaking every word from Him, even as in truth a house of God dwelling in it. Surely then the filthy in speech has not a Godly mind, nor he who delights in jesting and laughter.

Sound judgment. And what can it be to have a sound judgment? To enjoy the health that pertains to the soul: for he that is held down by wicked lusts and dazzled with present things, never can be sound, that is, healthy. But as one who is diseased lusts even after things which are unfit for him, so also does he. And a virtuous mode of life, for the doctrines need a mode of life [answerable]. Attend to this, you who come to baptism at the close of life, for we indeed pray that after baptism ye may have also this deportment, but you are seeking and doing your utmost to depart without it. For, what though thou be justified: yet is it of faith only. But we pray that you should have as well the confidence that comes of good works.

Continually to think those things which be His, to mind those things which be His, to practise those things which be His: for we ask not to have sound judgment and virtuous deportment for one day only, or for two or three, but through the whole tenor and period of our life; and as the foundation of all good things, to mind those things which be His. For the many seek their own, not the things which are Jesus Christ's.

Philippians 2:21 How then might this be? (For besides prayer, need is that we contribute also our own endeavors.) If we be occupied in His law day and night. Whence he goes on to ask this also, to be occupied in His law; and as he said above, continually, so here day and night. Wherefore I even blush for these who scarce once in the year are seen in church. For what excuse can they have who are bidden not simply day and night to commune with the law but to be occupied in, that is, to be for ever holding converse with it, and yet scarce do so for the smallest fraction of their life?

To remember His commandments, to keep His judgments. Do you see what an excellent chain is here? And how each link hangs by the next compacted with more strength and beauty than any chain of gold? For having asked for a Godly mind, he tells whereby this may be produced. Whereby? By continually practising it. And how might this be brought about? By constantly giving heed to the Law. And how might men be persuaded to this? If they should keep His Commandments: yea rather, from giving heed to the law comes also the keeping His Commandments; as likewise from minding the things which be His and from having a Godly mind, comes the practising the things which be His. For each of the things mentioned jointly procures and is procured by the next, both linking it and being linked by it.

9. Let us beseech for them yet more earnestly. For since by length of speaking the soul uses to grow drowsy, he again arouses it up, for he purposes to ask again certain great and lofty things. Wherefore he says, Let us beseech for them yet more earnestly. And what is this? That He would deliver them from every evil and inordinate thing. Here we ask for them that they may not enter into temptation, but be delivered from every snare, a deliverance as well bodily as spiritual. Wherefore also he goes on to say, from every devilish sin and from every besetment of the adversary, meaning, temptations and sins. For sin does easily beset, taking its stand on every side, before, behind, and so casting down. For, after telling us what ought to be done by us, namely, to be occupied in His law, to remember His Commandments, to keep His judgments, he assures us next that not even is this enough, except Himself stand by and succor. For, Except the Lord build the house, they labor in vain that build it; Psalm 127:1 and especially in the case of those who are yet exposed to the devil and are under his dominion. And ye that are initiated know this well. For call to mind, for instance, those words wherein ye renounced his usurped rule, and bent the knee and deserted to The King, and uttered those awful words whereby we are taught in nothing whatever to obey him. But he calls him adversary and accuser, because he both accuses God to man and us to God, and us again one to another. For at one time he accused Job to God, saying, Does Job serve the Lord for nought? Job 1:16 at another time God to Job, Fire came down from heaven. And again, God to Adam, Genesis 3:5 when He said their eyes would be opened. And to many men at this day, saying, that God takes no care for the visible order of things, but has delegated your affairs to demons. And to many of the Jews he accused Christ, calling Him a deceiver and a sorcerer. But perchance some one wishes to hear in what manner he works. When he finds not a godly mind, finds not a sound understanding, then, as into a soul left empty, he leads his revel there; when one remembers not the commandments of God nor keeps His judgments, then he takes him captive and departs. Had Adam, for instance, remembered the commandment which said, Of every tree you may eat: Genesis 2:16 had he kept the judgment which said, In the day in which you eat thereof, then shall you surely die; it had not fared with him as it did.

That He would count them worthy in due season of the regeneration of the laver, of the remission of sins. For we ask some things to come now, some to come hereafter; and we expound the doctrine of the laver, and in asking instruct them to know its power. For what is said thenceforth familiarizes them to know already that what is there done is a regeneration, and that we are born again of the waters, just as of the womb; that they say not after Nicodemus, How can one be born when he is old! Can he enter into his

mother's womb, and be born again? Then, because he had spoken of remission of sins, he confirms this by the words next following, of the clothing of incorruption; for he that puts on sonship plainly becomes incorruptible. But what is that in due season? When any is well disposed, when any comes thereunto with earnestness and faith; for this is the due season of the believer.

10. That He would bless their coming in and their going out, the whole course of their life. Here they are directed to ask even for some bodily good, as being yet somewhat weak. Their houses and their households, that is, if they have servants or kinsfolk or any others belonging to them. For these were the rewards of the old Covenant; and nothing then was feared so much as widowhood, childlessness, untimely mournings, to be visited with famine, to have their affairs go on unprosperously.

And hence it is, that he allows these also fondly to linger over petitions rather material, making them mount little by little to higher things. For so too does Christ; so too does Paul, making mention of the ancient blessings: Christ, when He says, Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth; Paul, when he says, Honor your father and your mother....and you shall live long on the earth. That He would increase their children and bless them, and bring them to full age, and teach them wisdom.

Here again is both a bodily and spiritual thing, as for persons yet but too much babes in disposition. Then what follows is altogether spiritual, that He would direct all that is before them unto good; for he says not simply, all that is before them, but, all that is before them unto good. For often a journey is before a man, but it is not good; or some other such thing, which is not profitable. Hereby they are taught in every thing to give thanks to God, as happening for good.

After all this, he bids them stand up during what follows. For having before cast them to the ground, when they have asked what they have asked and have been filled with confidence, now the word given raises them up, and bids them during what follows engage for themselves also in supplication to God. For part we say ourselves, and part we permit them to say, now opening unto them the door of prayer, (exactly as we first teach children [what to say], and then bid them say it of themselves,) saying, Pray ye, Catechumens, for the angel of peace; for there is an angel that punishes, as when He says, A band of evil angels, Psalm 78:49 there is that destroys.

Wherefore we bid them ask for the angel of peace, teaching them to seek that which is the bond of all good things, peace; so that they may be delivered from all fightings, all wars, all seditions. That all that is before you may be peaceful; for even if a thing be burdensome, if a man have peace, it is light. Wherefore Christ also said, My peace I give unto you John 14:27 for the devil has no weapon so strong as fighting, and enmity, and war. Pray that this day and all the days of your life be full of peace.

Do you see how he again insists that the whole life be passed in virtue? That your ends be Christian; your highest good, the honorable and the expedient; for what is not honorable is not expedient either. For our idea of the nature of expediency is different from that of the many. Commend yourselves to the living God and to His Christ; for as yet we trust them not to pray for others, but it is sufficient to be able to pray for themselves.

Do you see the completeness of this prayer, both in regard of doctrine and of behavior? For when we have mentioned the Gospel and the clothing of incorruption and the Laver of Regeneration, we have mentioned all the doctrines: when again we spoke of a Godly mind, a sound understanding, and the rest of what we said, we suggested the mode of life. Then we bid them bow their heads; regarding it as a proof of their prayers being heard that God blessed them. For surely it is not a man that blesses; but by means of his

hand and his tongue we bring unto the King Himself the heads of those that are present. And all together shout the Amen.

Now why have I said all this? To teach you that we ought to seek the things of others, that the faithful may not think it no concern of theirs when these things are said. For not to the walls surely does the Deacon say, Let us pray for the Catechumens. But some are so without understanding, so stupid, so depraved, as to stand and talk not only during the time of the Catechumens, but also during the time of the faithful. Hence all is perverted; hence all is utterly lost: for at the very time when we ought most to propitiate God, we go away having provoked Him. So again in [the prayers of] the faithful, we are bidden to approach the God that loves men, for Bishops, for Priests, for Kings, for those in authority, for earth and sea, for the seasons, for the whole world. When then we who ought to have such boldness as to pray for others, are scarce awake even while praying for ourselves, how can we excuse ourselves? How find pardon? Wherefore I beseech you that laying all this to heart, you would know the time of prayer, and be lifted up and disengaged from earth, and touch the vault itself of heaven; so that we may have power to make God propitious and obtain the good things promised, whereunto may we all attain, through the grace and love towards men of our Lord Jesus Christ; with Whom unto the Father, together with the Holy Ghost, be glory, might, honor, now and for ever, and world without end. Amen.

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