

2 Corinthians 3:7-8

by St. John Chrysostom

The New Covenant is superior to the Old Covenant because it is a ministry of the Spirit, giving life and righteousness, and it is written on the heart.

Scripture: Psalm 51:10, Acts 13:2, 2 Corinthians 3:18, Hebrews 7:12

Topics: "New Covenant", "Holy Spirit"

Description

John Chrysostom preaches about the comparison between the ministration of death under the Law and the ministration of the Spirit under the New Covenant, emphasizing the superiority of the latter in bringing life and righteousness. He explains how the Law revealed sin and brought punishment but did not cause sin, while the Spirit gives life and transforms believers into the image of the Lord. Chrysostom addresses the hardening of the minds of the Jews, who failed to see the glory of the Old Covenant and its fulfillment in Christ, leading to a veil over their hearts. He encourages turning to the Lord to have the veil removed and experience the surpassing glory of the Spirit, which brings liberty and transformation.

Transcript

But if the ministration of death, written and engraven in stones, came with glory, so that the children of Israel could not look steadfastly upon the face of Moses, for the glory of his face; which glory was passing away: how shall not rather the ministration of the Spirit be with glory?

He said that the tables of Moses were of stone, as [also] they were written with letters; and that these were of flesh, I mean the hearts of the Apostles, and had been written on by the Spirit; and that the letter indeed kills, but the Spirit gives life. There was yet wanting to this comparison the addition of a further and not trifling particular, that of the glory of Moses; such as in the case of the New Covenant none saw with the eyes of the body. And even for this cause it appeared a great thing in that the glory was perceived by the senses; (for it was seen by the bodily eyes, even though it might not be approached;) but that of the New Covenant is perceived by the understanding. For to the weaker sort the apprehension of such a superiority is not clear; but the other did more take them, and turn them unto itself. Having then fallen upon this comparison and being set upon showing the superiority [in question], which yet was exceedingly difficult because of the dulness of the hearers; see what he does, and with what method he proceeds in it, first by arguments placing the difference before them, and constructing these out of what he had said before.

For if that ministration were of death, but this of life, doubtless, says he, the latter glory is also greater than the former. For since he could not exhibit it to the bodily eyes, by this logical inference he established its

superiority, saying,

2 Corinthians 3:8. But if the ministration of death came with glory, how shall not rather the ministration of the Spirit be with glory?

Now by ministration of death he means the Law. And mark too how great the caution he uses in the comparison so as to give no handle to the heretics; for he said not, 'which causes death,' but, the ministration of death; for it ministers unto, but was not the parent of, death; for that which caused death was sin; but [the Law] brought in the punishment, and showed the sin, not caused it. For it more distinctly revealed the evil and punished it: it did not impel unto the evil: and it ministered not to the existence of sin or death, but to the suffering of retribution by the sinner.

So that in this way it was even destructive of sin. For that which shows it to be so fearful, it is obvious, makes it also to be avoided. As then he that takes the sword in his hands and cuts off the condemned, ministers to the judge that passes sentence, and it is not he that is his destruction, although he cuts him off; nay, nor yet is it he who passes sentence and condemns, but the wickedness of him that is punished; so truly here also it is not that destroys, but sin. This did both destroy and condemn, but that by punishing undermined its strength, by the fear of the punishment holding it back.

But he was not content with this consideration only in order to establish the superiority [in question]; but he adds yet another, saying, written, and engraven on stones. See how he again cuts at the root of the Jewish arrogancy. For the Law was nothing else but letters: a certain succor was not found leaping forth from out the letters and inspiring them that combat, as is the case in Baptism; but pillars and writings bearing death to those who transgress the letters. Do you see how in correcting the Jewish contentiousness, by his very expressions even he lessens its authority, speaking of stone and letters and a ministration of death, and adding that it was engraven?

For hereby he declares nothing else than this, that the Law was fixed in one place; not, as the Spirit, was present everywhere, breathing great might into all; or that the letters breathe much threatening, and threatening too which can not be effaced but remains for ever, as being engraved in stone. Then even while seeming to praise the old things, he again mixes up accusation of the Jews. For having said, written and engraven in stones, came with glory, he added, so that the children of Israel could not look steadfastly upon the face of Moses; which was a mark of their great weakness and grovelling spirit.

And again he does not say, 'for the glory of the tables,' but, for the glory of his countenance, which glory was passing away; for he shows that he who bears them is made glorious, and not they. For he said not, 'because they could not look steadfastly upon the tables,' but, the face of Moses; and again, not, 'for the glory of the tables,' but, for the glory of his face. Then after he had extolled it, see how again he lowers it, saying, which was passing away. Not however that this is in accusation, but in diminution; for he did not say, 'which was corrupt, which was evil,' but, 'which ceases and has an end.'

How shall not rather the ministration of the Spirit be with glory? for henceforth with confidence he extols the things of the New [Covenant] as indisputable. And observe what he does. He opposed 'stone' to 'heart,' and 'letter' to 'spirit.' Then having shown the results of each, he does not set down the results of each; but having set down the work of the latter, namely, death and condemnation, he sets not down that of the spirit, namely, life and righteousness; but the Spirit Itself; which added greatness to the argument. For the New Covenant not only gave life, but supplied also 'The Spirit?' Which gives the life, a far greater thing than the life. Wherefore he said, the ministration of the Spirit. Then he again reverts to the same

thing, saying,

2 Corinthians 3:9

For if the ministration of condemnation is glory.

Also, he interprets more clearly the meaning of the words, The letter kills, declaring it to be that which we have said above, namely, that the Law showed sin, not caused it.

Much rather does the ministration of righteousness exceed in glory. For those Tables indeed showed the sinners and punished them, but this not only did not punish the sinners, but even made them righteous: for this did Baptism confer.

2 Corinthians 3:10

2. For verily that which has been made glorious has not been made glorious in this respect, by reason of the glory that surpasses.

Now in what has gone before, indeed, he showed that this also is with glory; and not simply is with glory, but even exceeds in it: for he did not say, How shall not the ministration of the Spirit be rather in glory? but, exceed in glory; deriving the proof from the arguments before stated. Here he also shows the superiority, how great it is, saying, 'if I compare this with that, the glory of the Old Covenant is not glory at all;' not absolutely laying down that there was no glory, but in view of the comparison. Wherefore also he added, in this respect, that is, in respect of the comparison. Not that this does disparage the Old Covenant, yea rather it highly commends it: for comparisons are wont to be made between things which are the same in kind. Next, he sets on foot yet another argument to prove the superiority also from a fresh ground. What then is this argument? That based upon duration, saying,

2 Corinthians 3:11

For if that which passes away was with glory, much more that which remains is in glory.

For the one ceased, but the other abides continually.

2 Corinthians 3:12

Having therefore such a hope, we use great boldness of speech.

For since when he had heard so many and so great things concerning the New [Covenant,] the hearer would be desirous of seeing this glory manifested to the eye, mark whither he hurls him, [even] to the world to come. Wherefore also he brought forward the hope, saying, Having therefore such a hope. Such? Of what nature? That we have been counted worthy of greater things than Moses; not we the Apostles only, but also all the faithful. We use great boldness of speech. Towards whom? Tell me. Towards God, or towards the disciples? Towards you who are receiving instruction, he says; that is, we speak every where with freedom, hiding nothing, withholding nothing, mistrusting nothing, but speaking openly; and we have not feared lest we should wound your eyesight, as Moses did that of the Jews. For that he alluded to this, hear what follows; or rather, it is necessary first to relate the history, for he himself keeps dwelling upon it. What then is the history? When, having received the Tables a second time, Moses came down, a certain glory darting from his countenance shone so much that the Jews were not able to approach and talk with him until he put a veil over his face. And thus it is written in Exodus, Exodus 34:29-34 When Moses came

down from the Mount, the two Tables [were] in his hands. And Moses knew not that the skin of his countenance was made glorious to behold. And they were afraid to come near him. And Moses called them, and spoke unto them. And when Moses had done speaking with them, he put a veil over his face. But when he went in before the Lord to speak [with Him], he took the veil off until he came out.

Putting them in mind then of this history, he says,

2 Corinthians 3:13

And not as Moses, who put a veil upon his face, so that the children of Israel should not look steadfastly on the end of that which was passing away.

Now what he says is of this nature. There is no need for us to cover ourselves as Moses did; for you are able to look upon this glory which we are encircled with, although it is far greater and brighter than the other. Do you see the advance? For he that in the former Epistle said, I have fed you with milk, not with meat; says here, We use great boldness of speech. And he produces Moses before them, carrying forward the discourse by means of comparison, and thus leading his hearer upwards.

And for the present he sets them above the Jews, saying that 'we have no need of a veil as he had with those he governed;' but in what comes afterwards he advances them even to the dignity itself of the Lawgiver, or even to a much greater.

Mean time, however, let us hear what follows next.

2 Corinthians 3:14

But their minds were hardened, for until this day remains the same veil in the reading of the Old Covenant, [it] not being revealed to them that it is done away in Christ.

See what he establishes by this. For what happened then once in the case of Moses, the same happens continually in the case of the Law. What is said, therefore, is no accusation of the Law, as neither is it of Moses that he then veiled himself, but only the senseless Jews. For the law has its proper glory, but they were unable to see it. 'Why therefore are you perplexed,' he says, 'if they are unable to see this glory of the Grace, since they saw not that lesser one of Moses, nor were able to look steadfastly upon his countenance? And why are you troubled that the Jews believe not Christ, seeing at least that they believe not even the Law? For they were therefore ignorant of the Grace also, because they knew not even the Old Covenant nor the glory which was in it. For the glory of the Law is to turn [men] unto Christ.'

3. Do you see how from this consideration also he takes down the inflation of the Jews? By that in which they thought they had the advantage, namely, that Moses' face shone, he proves their grossness and groveling nature. Let them not therefore pride themselves on that, for what was that to Jews who enjoyed it not? Wherefore also he keeps on dwelling upon it, saying one while, The same veil in the reading of the old covenant remains, it not being revealed that it is done away in Christ: another while, that unto this day when Moses is read, 2 Corinthians 3:15 the same veil lies upon their heart; showing that the veil lies both on the reading and on their heart; and above, So that the children of Israel could not look steadfastly upon the face of Moses for the glory of his countenance; which 2 Corinthians 3:7 glory was passing away.

Than which what could mark less worth in them? Seeing that even of a glory that is to be done away, or rather is in comparison no glory at all, they are not able to be spectators, but it is covered from them, so

that they could not steadfastly look on the end of that which was passing away; that is, of the law, because it has an end; but their minds were hardened. 'And what,' says one, 'has this to do with the veil then?' Because it prefigured what would be. For not only did they not then perceive; but they do not even now see the Law.

And the fault lies with themselves, for the hardness is that of an unimpressible and perverse judgment. So that it is we who know the law also; but to them not only Grace, but this as well is covered with a shadow; For until this day the same veil upon the reading of the old covenant remains, he says, it not being revealed that it is done away in Christ. Now what he says is this. This very thing they cannot see, that it is brought to an end, because they believe not Christ. For if it be brought to an end by Christ, as in truth it is brought to an end, and this the Law said by anticipation, how will they who receive not Christ that has done away the Law, be able to see that the Law is done away?

And being incapable of seeing this, it is very plain that even of the Law itself which asserted these things, they know not the power nor the full glory. 'And where,' says one, 'did it say this that it is done away in Christ.' It did not say it merely, but also showed it by what was done. And first indeed by shutting up its sacrifices and its whole ritual in one place, the Temple, and afterwards destroying this. For had He not meant to bring these to an end and the whole of the Law concerning them, He would have done one or other of two things; either not destroyed the Temple, or having destroyed it, not forbidden to sacrifice elsewhere.

But, as it is, the whole world and even Jerusalem itself He has made forbidden ground for such religious rites; having allowed and appointed for them only the Temple. Then having destroyed this itself afterwards He showed completely even by what was done that the things of the Law are brought to an end by Christ; for the Temple also Christ destroyed. But if you will see in words as well how the Law is done away in Christ, hear the Lawgiver himself speaking thus; A Prophet shall the Lord raise up unto you of your brethren, like me; Deuteronomy 17:15-19 Him shall you hear in all things whatsoever He shall command you.

And it shall come to pass, that every soul which will not hear that Prophet shall be utterly destroyed. Acts 3:22-23 Do you see how the Law showed that it is done away in Christ? For this Prophet, that is, Christ according to the flesh, Whom Moses commanded them to hear, made to cease both sabbath and circumcision and all the other things. And David too, showing the very same thing, said concerning Christ, You are a Priest after the order of Melchizedek, Psalm 110:4; not after the order of Aaron.

Wherefore also Paul, giving a clear interpretation of this, says, The priesthood being changed, there is made of necessity a change also of the Law. Hebrews 7:12 And in another place also he says again, Sacrifice and offering you would not. In whole burnt offerings and sacrifices for sin You had had no pleasure: then said I, Lo, I come. Hebrews 10:5-7 And other testimonies far more numerous than these may be adduced out of the Old Testament, showing how the Law is done away by Christ.

So that when you shall have forsaken the Law, you shall then see the Law clearly; but so long as you hold by it and believest not Christ, you know not even the Law itself. Wherefore also he added, to establish this very thing more clearly;

2 Corinthians 3:15

But even unto this day, whenever Moses is read, a veil lies upon their heart.

For since he said that in the reading of the Old Testament the veil remains, lest any should think that this that is said is from the obscurity of the Law, he both by other things showed even before what his meaning was, (for by saying, their minds were hardened, he shows that the fault was their own,) and, in this place too, again. For he said not, 'The veil remains on the writing,' but in the reading; (now the reading is the act of those that read;) and again, When Moses is read. He showed this however with greater clearness in the expression which follows next, saying unreservedly, The veil lies upon their heart. For even upon the face of Moses it lay, not because of Moses, but because of the grossness and carnal mind of these.

4. Having then suitably accused them, he points out also the manner of their correction. And what is this?

2 Corinthians 3:16

Nevertheless when [one] shall turn to the Lord, which is, to forsake the Law, the veil is taken away.

Do you see that not over the face of Moses was there that veil, but over the eyesight of the Jews? For it was done, not that the glory of Moses might be hidden, but that the Jews might not see. For they were not capable. So that in them was the deficiency, for it caused not him to be ignorant of any thing, but them. And he did not say indeed, when you shall let go the Law, but he implied it, for when you shall turn to the Lord, the veil is taken away. To the very last he kept to the history. For when Moses talked with the Jews he kept his face covered; but when he turned to God it was uncovered. Now this was a type of that which was to come to pass, that when we have turned to the Lord, then we shall see the glory of the Law, and the face of the Lawgiver bare; yea rather, not this alone, but we shall then be even in the same rank with Moses. Do you see how he invites the Jew unto the faith, by showing, that by coming unto Grace he is able not only to see Moses, but also to stand in the very same rank with the Lawgiver. 'For not only,' he says, 'shall you look on the glory which then you saw not, but you shall yourself also be included in the same glory; yea rather, in a greater glory, even so great that that other shall not seem glory at all when compared with this.' How and in what manner? 'Because that when you have turned to the Lord and art included in the grace, you will enjoy that glory, unto which the glory of Moses, if compared, is so much less as to be no glory at all. But still, small though it be and exceedingly below that other, while you are a Jew, even this will not be vouchsafed you ; but having become a believer, it will then be vouchsafed you to behold even that which is far greater than it.' And when he was addressing himself to the believers, he said, that that which was made glorious had no glory; but here he speaks not so; but how? When one shall turn to the Lord, the veil is taken away: leading him up little by little, and first setting him in Moses' rank, and then making him partake of the greater things. For when you have seen Moses in glory, then afterwards you shall also turn unto God and enjoy this greater glory.

5. See then from the beginning, how many things he has laid down, as constituting the difference and showing the superiority, not the enmity or contradiction, of the New Covenant in respect to the old. That, says he, is letter, and stone, and a ministration of death, and is done away: and yet the Jews were not even vouchsafed this glory. (Or, the glory of this.) This table is of the flesh, and spirit, and righteousness, and remains; and unto all of us is it vouchsafed, not to one only, as to Moses of the lesser then. 2 Corinthians 3:18 For, says he, we all with unveiled face reflecting as a mirror the glory of the Lord, not that of Moses. But since some maintain that the expression, when one shall turn to the Lord, is spoken of the Son, in contradiction to what is quite acknowledged; let us examine the point more accurately, having first stated the ground on which they think to establish this. What then is this? Like, says one, as it is said, God is a Spirit; John 4:24 so also here, 'The Lord is a Spirit.' But he did not say, 'The Lord is a Spirit,' but, The Spirit is the Lord. And there is a great difference between this construction and that. For when he is

desirous of speaking so as you say, he does not join the article to the predicate. And besides, let us review all his discourse from the first, of whom has he spoken? For instance, when he said, The letter kills, but the Spirit gives life: 2 Corinthians 3:6 and again, Written not with ink, but with the Spirit of the living God; 2 Corinthians 3:3 was he speaking of God, or of the Spirit? It is very plain that it was of the Spirit; for unto It he was calling them from the letter. For lest any, hearing of the Spirit, and then reflecting that Moses turned unto the Lord, but himself unto the Spirit, should think himself to have the worse, to correct such a suspicion as this, he says,

2 Corinthians 3:17

Now the Spirit is the Lord. This too is Lord, he says. And that you may know that he is speaking of the Paraclete, he added,

And where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty.

For surely you will not assert, that he says, 'And where the Lord of the Lord is.' Liberty, he said, with reference to the former bondage. Then, that you may not think that he is speaking of a time to come, he says,

2 Corinthians 3:18

But we all, with unveiled face, reflecting as a mirror the glory of the Lord.

Not that which is brought to an end, but that which remains.

Are transformed into the same image from glory to glory, even as from the Lord the Spirit.

Do you see how again he places the Spirit in the rank of God, (vide infra) and raises them up to the rank of the Apostles. For he said before, You are the Epistle of Christ; and here, But we all with open face. Yet they came, like Moses, bringing a law. But like as we, he says, needed no veil, so neither ye who received it. And yet, this glory is far greater, for this is not of our countenance, but of the Spirit; but nevertheless you are able as well as we to look steadfastly upon it. For they indeed could not even by a mediator, but you even without a mediator can [look steadfastly on] a greater. They were not able to look upon that of Moses, you even upon that of the Spirit. Now had the Spirit been at all inferior, He would not have set down these things as greater than those. But what is, we reflecting as a mirror the glory of the Lord, are transformed into the same image. This indeed was shown more clearly when the gifts of miracles were in operation; howbeit it is not even now difficult to see it, for one who has believing eyes. For as soon as we are baptized, the soul beams even more than the sun, being cleansed by the Spirit; and not only do we behold the glory of God, but from it also receive a sort of splendor. Just as if pure silver be turned towards the sun's rays, it will itself also shoot forth rays, not from its own natural property merely but also from the solar lustre; so also does the soul being cleansed and made brighter than silver, receive a ray from the glory of the Spirit, and send it back. Wherefore also he says, Reflecting as a mirror we are transformed into the same image from glory, that of the Spirit, to glory, our own, that which is generated in us; and that, of such sort, as one might expect from the Lord the Spirit. See how here also he calls the Spirit, Lord. And in other places too one may see that lordship of His. For, says he, As they ministered and fasted unto the Lord, the Spirit said, Separate me Paul and Barnabas. Acts 13:2 For therefore he said, as they ministered unto the Lord, Separate me, in order to show the [Spirit's] equality in honor. And again Christ says, The servant knows not what his lord does; but even as a man knows his own things, so does the Spirit know

the things of God; not by being taught [them,] for so the similitude holds not good. Also the working as He wills shows His authority and lordship. This transforms us. This suffers not to be conformed to this world; for such is the creation of which This is the Author. For as he says, Created in Christ Jesus, Ephesians 2:10 so says he, Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit in my inward parts. Psalm 51:10, Septuagint

6. Will you that I show you this also from the Apostles more obviously to the sense. Consider Paul, whose garments wrought: Peter, whose very shadows were mighty. Acts 19:12; 5:15 For had they not borne a King's image and their radiancy been unapproachable, their garments and shadows had not wrought so mightily. For the garments of a king are terrible even to robbers. Would you see this beaming even through the body? Looking steadfastly, said he, upon the face of Stephen, they saw it as it had been the face of an angel.

Acts 6:15 But this was nothing to the glory flashing within. For what Moses had upon his countenance, that did these carry about with them on their souls, yea 'rather' even far more. For that of Moses indeed was more obvious to the senses, but this was incorporeal. And like as fire-bright bodies streaming down from the shining bodies upon those which lie near them, impart to them also somewhat of their own splendor, so truly does it also happen with the faithful. Therefore surely they with whom it is thus are set free from earth, and have their dreams of the things in the heavens.

Woe is me! For well is it that we should here even groan bitterly, for that we who enjoy a birth so noble do not so much as know what is said, because we quickly lose the reality, and are dazzled about the objects of sense. For this glory, the unspeakable and awful, remains in us for a day or two, and then we quench it, bringing over it the winter of worldly concerns, and with the thickness of those clouds repelling its rays. For worldly things are a winter, and than winter more lowering.

For not frost is engendered thence nor rain, neither does it produce mire and deep swamps; but, things than all these more grievous, it forms hell and the miseries of hell. And as in severe frost all the limbs are stiffened and are dead, so truly the soul shuddering in the winter of sins also, performs none of its proper functions, stiffened, as it were, by a frost, as to conscience. For what cold is to the body, that an evil conscience is to the soul, whence also comes cowardice.

For nothing is more cowardly than the man that is riveted to worldly things; for such an one lives the life of Cain, trembling every day. And why do I mention deaths, and losses, and offenses, and flatteries, and services? For even without these he is in fear of ten thousand vicissitudes. And his coffers indeed are full of gold, but his soul is not freed from the fear of poverty. And very reasonably. For he is moored as it were on rotten and swiftly shifting things, and even though in his own case he experienced not the reverse, yet is he undone by seeing it happen in others; and great is his cowardice, great his unmanliness.

For not only is such an one spiritless as to danger, but also as to all other things. And if desire of wealth assail him, he does not like a free man beat off the assault; but like a bought slave, does all [it bids], serving the love of money as it were a severe mistress. If again he have beheld some comely damsel, down he crouches at once made captive, and follows like a raging dog, though it behooves to do the opposite. For when you have beheld a beautiful woman, consider not how you may enjoy your lust, but how be delivered from your lust.

'And how is this possible,' says one? 'for loving is not my own doing.' Whose then? Tell me. It is from the Devil's malice. You are quite convinced that that which plots against you is a devil; wrestle then and fight

with a distemper. But I cannot, he says. Come then, let us first teach you this, that what happens is from your own listlessness, and that you at the first gave entrance to the Devil, and now if you have a mind, with much ease may drive him off. They that commit adultery, is it from lust they commit it, or simply from desire of dangers?

Plainly from lust. Do they then therefore obtain forgiveness? Certainly not. Why not? Because the sin is their own. 'But,' says one, 'why, pray, string syllogisms? For my conscience bears me witness that I wish to repel the passion; and cannot, but it keeps close, presses me sore, and afflicts me grievously.' O man, thou dost wish to repel it, but thou dost not the things repellers should do; but it is with you just as with a man in a fever, who drinking of cold streams to the fill, should say, 'How many things I devise with the wish to quench this fever, and I cannot; but they stir up my flame the more.'

Let us see then whether at all you too do the things that inflame, yet think you are devising such as quench. 'I do not,' he says. Tell me then, what have you ever essayed to do in order to quench the passion? And what is it, in fine, that will increase the passion? For even supposing we be not all of us obnoxious to these particular charges; (for more may be found who are captivated by the love of money than of beauty;) still the remedy to be proposed will be common to all, both to these and to those.

For both that is an unreasonable passion, and this, is keener and fiercer than that. When then we have proved victorious over the greater, it is very plain that we shall easily subdue the less also. 'And how is it,' says one, 'that if this be keener, all persons are not made captive by the vice, but a greater number are mad after money?' Because in the first place this last desire appears to be unattended with danger: next, although that of beauty be even fiercer, yet it is more speedily extinguished; for were it to continue like that of money, it would wholly destroy its captive.

7. Come then, let us discourse to you on this, the love of beauty, and let us see whereby the mischief is increased; for so we shall know whether the fault be ours, or not ours. And if ours, let us do everything to get the better of it; whereas if not ours, why do we afflict ourselves for nought? And why do we not pardon, but find fault, with those who are made captive by it? Whence then is this love engendered? 'From comeliness of feature,' says one, 'when she that wounds one is beautiful and of fair countenance.'

It is said idly and in vain. For if it were beauty that attracted lovers, then would the maiden who is such have all men for her lovers; but if she has not all, this thing comes not of nature nor from beauty, but from unchaste eyes. For it was when by eyeing too curiously, you admired and become enamored, that you received the shaft. 'And who,' says one, 'when he sees a beautiful woman, can refrain from commending her he sees? If then admiring such things comes not of deliberate choice, it follows that love depends not on ourselves.'

Stop, O man! Why do you crowd all things together, running round and round on every side, and not choosing to see the root of the evil? For I see numbers admiring and commending, who yet are not enamored. 'And how is it possible to admire and not be enamored?' Clamor not, (for this I am coming to speak of,) but wait, and you shall hear Moses admiring the son of Jacob, and saying, And Joseph was a goodly person, and well favored exceedingly. Genesis 39:6, Septuagint Was he then enamored who speaks this?

By no means. 'For,' says he, 'he did not even see him whom he commended.' We are affected, however, somewhat similarly towards beauties also which are described to us, not only which are beheld. But that thou cavil not with us on this point:-- David, was he not comely exceedingly, and ruddy with beauty of

eyes? So 1 Samuel 16:12 and 17:42, Septuagint and indeed this beauty of the eyes, is even especially, a component of beauteousness of more despotic power than any. Was then any one enamored of him?

By no means. Then to be also enamored comes not [necessarily] with admiring. For many too have had mothers blooming exceedingly in beauty of person. What then? Were their children enamored of them? Away with the thought! But they admire what they see, yet fall not into a shameful love. 'No, for again this good provision is Nature's.' How Nature's? Tell me. 'Because they are mothers,' he says. Then do you not hear that Persians, and that without any compulsion, have intercourse with their own mothers, and that not one or two individuals, but a whole nation?

But independent of these, it is hence also evident that this distemper comes not from bloom of person nor from beauty merely, but from a listless and wandering soul. Many at least it is certain, oftentimes, having passed over thousands of well-favored women, have given themselves to such as were plainer. Whence it is evident that love depends not on beauty: for otherwise, surely, those would have caught such as fell into it, before these. What then is its cause? 'For,' says he, 'if it be not beauty that causes love, whence has it its beginning and its root?

From a wicked Demon?' It has it indeed, thence also, but this is not what we are inquiring about, but whether we ourselves too be not the cause. For the plot is not theirs only, but along with them our own too in the first place. For from no other source is this wicked distemper so engendered as from habit, and flattering words, and leisure, and idleness, and having nothing to do. For great, great is the tyranny of habit, even so great as to be moulded into a necessity of nature.

Now if it be habit's to gender it, it is very evident that it is also [habit's] to extinguish it. Certain it is at least that many have in this way ceased to be enamored, from not seeing those they were enamored of. Now this for a little while indeed appears to be a bitter thing and exceedingly unpleasant; but in time it becomes pleasant, and even were they to wish it, they could not afterwards resume the passion.

8. How then, when without habit one is taken captive at first sight? Here also it is indolence of body, or self-indulgence, and not attending to one's duties, nor being occupied in necessary business. For such an one, wandering about like some vagabond, is transfixed by any wickedness; and like a child let loose, any one that likes makes such a soul his slave. For since it is its wont to be at work, when you stop its workings in what is good, seeing it cannot be unemployed, it is compelled to engender what is otherwise. For just as the earth, when it is not sown nor planted, sends up simply weeds; so also the soul, when it has nought of necessary things to do, being desirous by all means to be doing, gives herself unto wicked deeds. And as the eye never ceases from seeing, and therefore will see wicked things, when good things are not set before it; so also does the thought, when it secludes itself from necessary things, busy itself thereafter about such as are unprofitable. For that even the first assault occupation and thought are able to beat off, is evident from many things. When then you have looked on a beautiful woman, and were moved towards her, look no more, and you are delivered. 'And how shall I be able to look no more,' says he, 'when drawn by that desire?' Give yourself to other things which may distract the soul, to books, to necessary cares, to protecting others, to assisting the injured, to prayers, to the wisdom which considers the things to come: with such things as these bind down your soul. By these means, not only shall you cure a recent wound, but shall wear away a confirmed and inveterate one easily. For if an insult according to the proverb prevails with the lover to give over his love, how shall not these spiritual charms much rather be victorious over the evil, if only we have a mind to stand aloof. But if we are always conversing and associating with those who shoot such arrows at us, and talking with them and hearing what they say,

we cherish the distemper. How then do you expect the fire to be quenched, when day by day you stir up the flame?

And let this that we have said about habit be our speech unto the young; since to those who are men and taught in heavenly wisdom, stronger than all is the fear of God, the remembrance of hell, the desire of the kingdom of heaven; for these are able to quench the fire. And along with these take that thought also, that what you see is nothing else than rheum, and blood, and juices of decomposed food. 'Yet a gladsome thing is the bloom of the features,' says one. But nothing is more gladsome than the blossoms of the earth, and these too rot and wither. Do not then in this either give heed to the bloom, but pass on further inward in your thought, and stripping off that beauteous skin in your thought, scan curiously what lies beneath it. For even the bodies of the dropsical shine brightly, and the surface has nothing offensive; but still, shocked with the thought of the humor stored within we cannot love such persons. 'But languishing is the eye and glancing, and beautifully arched the brow, and dark the lashes, and soft the eyeball, and serene the look.' But see how even this itself again is nothing else than nerves, and veins, and membranes, and arteries. Think too, I pray, of this beautiful eye, when diseased and old, wasting with despair, swelling with anger, how hateful to the sight it is, how quickly it perishes, how sooner even than pictured ones, it is effaced. From these things make your mind pass to the true beauty. 'But,' says he, 'I do not see beauty of soul.' But if you will choose, you shall see it: and as the absent beautiful may be with the mind admired, though with one's eyes unseen, so it is possible to see without eyes beauty of soul. Have you not often sketched a beauteous form, and felt moved unto the drawing? Image also now beauty of soul, and revel in that loveliness. 'But,' says he, 'I do not see things incorporeal.' And yet we see these, rather than the corporeal, with the mind. Therefore it is, for instance, that although we see them not, we admire angels also and archangels, and habits of character, and virtue of soul. And if you see a man considerate and moderate, you will more admire him than that beautiful countenance. And if you see one insulted, yet bearing it; wronged, yet giving way, admire and love such, even though they be stricken in age. For such a thing is the beauty of the soul; even in old age it has many enamored of it, and it never fades, but blooms forever. In order then that we also may gain this beauty, let us go in quest of those that have it, and be enamored of them. For so shall we too be able, when we have attained this beauty, to obtain the good things eternal, whereof may all we partake, through the grace and love towards men of our Lord Jesus Christ, with Whom to the Father, with the Holy Spirit, be glory and might, for ever and ever. Amen.

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