

2 Corinthians 6:11-12

by St. John Chrysostom

Paul exhorts the Corinthians to be enlarged in their love and to avoid being unequally yoked with unbelievers, emphasizing the importance of being a temple of God and perfecting holiness in the fear of God.

Scripture: Matthew 19:24, 2 Corinthians 6:13-14, 2 Corinthians 6:17 - 7:1, 1 Timothy 6:10

Topics: "Christian Love", "Holiness"

Description

John Chrysostom preaches about the importance of love and openness in relationships, highlighting the Apostle Paul's deep affection for the Corinthians and his desire to communicate with them. Paul's love is demonstrated through his open communication and enlarged heart, reflecting the warmth and expansiveness of true love. Chrysostom emphasizes the need for believers to reciprocate this love and enlarge their hearts as well. He delves into the concept of holiness, urging believers to cleanse themselves from all defilement of flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God. Chrysostom also contrasts the advantages of poverty over riches in leading to the kingdom of heaven, encouraging a pursuit of true riches found in God.

Transcript

Our mouth is open unto you, O you Corinthians, our heart is enlarged, you are not straitened in us, but you are straitened in your own affections.

Having detailed his own trials and afflictions, for in patience, says he, in afflictions, in necessities, in distresses, (v. 4, 5.) in stripes, in imprisonments, in tumult, in labors, in watchings; and having shown that the thing was a great good, for as sorrowful, says he, yet always rejoicing; as poor, yet making many rich; as having nothing, and yet possessing all things; 2 Corinthians 6:10 and having called those things armor, for as chastened, says he, and not killed: and having hereby represented God's abundant care and power, for he says, that the exceeding greatness of the power may be of God, and not of us; 2 Corinthians 4:7 and having recounted his labors, for he says, we always bear about His dying; and that this is a clear demonstration of the Resurrection, for he says, that the life also of Jesus may be manifested in our mortal flesh; 2 Corinthians 4:10 and of what things he was made partaker, and with what he had been entrusted, for we are ambassadors on behalf of Christ, 2 Corinthians 3:20 says he, as though God were entreating by us; and of what things he is a minister, namely, not of the letter, but of the Spirit; 2 Corinthians 3:6 and that he was entitled to reverence not only on this account, but also for his trials, for, Thanks be to God, says he, which always causes us to triumph: he purposes now also to rebuke them as not being too well

mindful towards himself. But though purposing he does not immediately come upon this, but having his discussion of these things. For if even from his own good deeds he that rebukes be entitled to reverence; yet still, when he also displays the love, which he bears towards those who are censured, he makes his speech less offensive. Therefore the Apostle also having stepped out of the subject of his own trials and toils and contests, passes on into speaking of his love, and in this way touches them to the quick. What then are the indications of his love? Our mouth is open unto you, O you Corinthians. And what kind of sign of love is this? Or what meaning even have the words at all? 'We cannot endure,' he says, 'to be silent towards you, but are always desiring and longing to speak to and converse with you;' which is the wont of those who love. For what grasping of the hands is to the body, that is interchange of language to the soul. And along with this he implies another thing also. Of what kind then is this? That 'we discourse unto nothing.' For since afterwards he proposes to rebuke, he asks forgiveness, using the rebuking them with freedom as itself a proof of his loving them exceedingly. Moreover the addition of their name is a mark of great love and warmth and affection; for we are accustomed to be repeating continually the bare names of those we love.

Our heart is enlarged. For as that which warms is wont to dilate; so also to enlarge is the work of love. For virtue is warm and fervent. This both opened the mouth of Paul and enlarged his heart. For, 'neither do I love with the mouth only,' says he, 'but I have also a heart in union. Therefore I speak with openness, with my whole mouth, with my whole mind.' For nothing is wider than was Paul's heart which loved all the faithful with all the vehemence that one might bear towards the object of his affection; this his love not being divided and therefore weakened, but abiding in full entirety with each.

And what marvel that this was so in the case of the faithful, seeing that even in that of the unfaithful, the heart of Paul embraced the whole world? Therefore he said not 'I love you,' but with more emphasis, Our mouth is open, our heart is enlarged, we have you all within it, and not this merely, but with much largeness of room. For he that is beloved walks with great unrestraint within the heart of him that loves. Wherefore he says, You are not straitened in us, but you are straightened in your own affections.

And this reproof, see it administered with forbearance, as is the wont of such as love exceedingly. He did not say, 'ye do not love us,' but, 'not in the same measure,' for he does not wish to touch them too sensibly. And indeed every where one may see how he is inflamed toward the faithful, by selecting words out of every Epistle. For to the Romans he says, I long to see you; and, oftentimes I purposed to come unto you; and, If by any means now at length I may be prospered to come unto you.

Romans 1:11-13 And to the Galatians, he says, My little children of whom I am again in travail. Galatians 4:19 To the Ephesians again, For this cause I bow my knees for you. Ephesians 3:14 And to the Philippians, For what is my hope, or joy, or crown of rejoicing? Are not even ye? and he said that he bare them about in his heart, and in his bonds. Philippians 1:7 And to the Colossians, But I would that you knew greatly I strive for you, and for as many as have not seen my face in the flesh; that your hearts might be comforted.

Colossians 2:1-2 And to the Thessalonians, As when a nurse cherishes her children, even so being affectionately desirous of you, we were well pleased to impart unto you, not the Gospel only, but also our own souls. 1 Thessalonians 2:7-8 And to Timothy, Remembering your tears, that I may be filled with joy. 2 Timothy 1:4 And to Titus, To my beloved son; Titus 1:4 and to Philemon, in like manner. Philemon 1 And to the Hebrews too, he writes many other such-like things, and ceases not to beseech them, and say, A very little while, and he that comes shall come, and shall not tarry: Hebrews 10:37 just like a mother to her

pettish children.

And to themselves he says, You are not straitened in us. But he does not say only that he loves, but also that he is beloved by them, in order that hereby also he may the rather win them. And indeed testifying to this in them, he says, Titus came and told us your longing, your mourning, your zeal. 2 Corinthians 7:7 And to the Galatians, If possible, you would have plucked out your eyes and given them to me, Galatians 4:15 And to the Thessalonians, What manner of entering in we had unto you. 1 Thessalonians 1:9 And to Timothy also, Remembering your tears, that I may be filled with joy. 2 Timothy 1:4 And also throughout his Epistles one may find him bearing this testimony to the disciples, both that he loved and that he is loved, not however equally.

And here he says, Though the more abundantly I love you, the less I be loved. 2 Corinthians 12:15 This, however, is near the end; but at present more vehemently, You are not straitened in us, but you are straitened in your own affections, 'You receive one,' he says, 'but I a whole city, and so great a population.' And he said not, 'ye do not receive us,' but, 'you are straitened;' implying indeed the same thing but with forbearance and without touching them too deeply.

2 Corinthians 6:13

Now for a recompense in like kind (I speak as unto my children,) be ye also enlarged.

And yet it is not an equal return, first to be loved, afterwards to love. For even if one were to contribute that which is equal in amount, he is inferior in that he comes to it second. 'But nevertheless I am not going to reckon strictly,' says he, 'and if you after having received the first advances from me do but show forth the same amount, I am well-pleased and contented.' Then to show that to do this was even a debt, and that what he said was void of flattery, he says, I speak as unto my children. What means, as unto my children? 'I ask no great thing, if being your father I wish to be loved by you.' And see wisdom and moderation of mind. He mentions not here his dangers on their behalf, and his labors, and his deaths, although he had many to tell of: (so free from pride is he!) but his love: and on this account he claims to be loved; 'because,' says he, 'I was your father, because I exceedingly burn for you,' [for] it is often especially offensive to the person beloved when a man sets forth his benefits to him; for he seems to reproach. Wherefore Paul does not this; but, 'like children, love your father,' says he, which rather proceeds from instinct; and is the due of every father. Then that he may not seem to speak these things for his own sake, he shows that it is for their advantage even that he invites this love from them. And therefore he added,

2 Corinthians 6:14-16

Be not unequally yoked together with unbelievers.

He said not, 'Intermix not with unbelievers,' but rather dealing sharply with them, as transgressing what was right, 'Suffer not yourselves to turn aside,' says he, For what fellowship have righteousness and iniquity? Here in what follows he institutes a comparison, not between his own love and theirs who corrupt them, but between their nobleness and the others' dishonor. For thus his discourse became more dignified and more befitting himself, and would the rather win them. Just as if one should say to a son that despised his parents, and gave himself up to vicious persons, 'What are you doing, child? Do you despise your father and prefer impure men filled with ten thousand vices? Do you not know how much better and more respectable you are than they?' For so he detaches him more [readily] from their society than if he should express admiration of his father. For were he to say indeed, 'Do you not know how much your

father is better than they?' he will not produce so much effect; but if, leaving mention of his father, he bring himself before them, saying, 'Do you not know who you are and what they are? Do you not bear in mind your own high birth and gentle blood, and their infamy? For what communion have you with them, those thieves, those adulterers, those impostors?' by elevating him with these praises of himself, he will quickly prepare him to break off from them. For the former address indeed, he will not entertain with overmuch acceptance, because the exalting of his father is an accusation of himself, when he is shown to be not only grieving a father, but such a father; but in this case he will have no such feeling. For none would choose not to be praised, and therefore, along with these praises of him that hears, the rebuke becomes easy of digestion. For the listener is softened, and is filled with high thoughts, and disdains the society of those persons.

But not this only is the point to be admired in him that thus he prosecuted his comparison, but that he imagined another thing also still greater and more astounding; in the first place, prosecuting his speech in the form of interrogation, which is proper to things that are clear and admitted, and then dilating it by the quick succession and multitude of his terms. For he employs not one or two or three only, but several. Add to this that instead of the persons he employs the names of the things, and he delineates here high virtue and there extreme vice; and shows the difference between them to be great and infinite so as not even to need demonstration. For what fellowship, says he, have righteousness and iniquity?

And what communion has light with darkness? (v. 15, 16.) And what concord has Christ with Beliar? Or what portion has a believer with an unbeliever? Or what agreement has a temple of God with idols?

Do you see how he uses the bare names, and how adequately to his purpose of dissuasion. For he did not say, 'neglect of righteousness,' [but] what was stronger [iniquity]; nor did he say those who are of the light, and those who are of the darkness; but he uses opposites themselves which can not admit of their opposites, 'light and darkness.' Nor said he those who are of Christ, with those who are of the devil; but, which was far wider apart, Christ and Beliar, so calling that apostate one, in the Hebrew tongue. Or what portion has a believer with an unbeliever? Here, at length, that he may not seem simply to be going through a censure of vice and an encomium of virtue, he mentions persons also without particularizing. And he said not, 'communion,' but spoke of the rewards, using the term portion. What agreement has a temple of God with idols?

For you are a temple of the living God. Now what he says is this. Neither has your King anything in common with him, for what concord has Christ with Beliar? nor have the things [anything in common], for what communion has light with darkness? Therefore neither should ye. And first he mentions their king and then themselves; by this separating them most effectually. Then having said, a temple of God with idols, and having declared, For you are a temple of the living God, he is necessitated to subjoin also the testimony of this to show that the thing is no flattery. For he that praises except he also exhibit proof, even appears to flatter. What then is his testimony? For,

I will dwell in them, says he, and walk in them. I will dwell in, as in temples, and walk in them, signifying the more abundant attachment to them.

And they shall be my people and I will be their God. 'What?' says he, 'Do you bear God within you, and run to them? God That has nothing in common with them? And in what can this deserve forgiveness? Bear in mind Who walks, Who dwells in you.'

2 Corinthians 6:17

Wherefore come ye out from among them, and be ye separate, and touch no unclean thing; and I will receive you, says the Lord.

And He said not, 'Do not unclean things;' but, requiring greater strictness, 'do not even touch,' says he, 'nor go near them.' But what is filthiness of the flesh? Adultery, fornication, lasciviousness of every kind. And what of the soul? Unclean thoughts, as gazing with unchaste eyes, malice, deceits, and whatsoever such things there be. He wishes then that they should be clean in both. Do you see how great the prize? To be delivered from what is evil, to be made one with God. Hear also what follows.

2 Corinthians 6:18

And I will be to you a Father, and you shall be to me sons and daughters, says the Lord.

Do you see how from the beginning the Prophet fore-announces our present high birth, the Regeneration by grace?

2 Corinthians 7:1

Having therefore these promises, beloved.

What promises? That we should be temples of God, sons and daughters, have Him indwelling, and walking in us, be His people, have Him for our God and Father.

Let us cleanse ourselves from all defilement of flesh and spirit.

Let us neither touch unclean things, for this is cleansing of the flesh; nor things which defile the soul, for this is cleansing of the spirit. Yet he is not content with this only, but adds also,

Perfecting holiness in the fear of God. For not to touch the unclean thing does not make clean, but there needs something else besides to our becoming holy; earnestness, heedfulness, piety. And he well said, In the fear of God. For it is possible to perfect chasteness, not in the fear of God but for vainglory. And along with this he implies yet another thing, by saying, In the fear of God; the manner, namely, whereafter holiness may be perfected. For if lust be even an imperious thing, still if you occupy its territory with the fear of God, you have stayed its frenzy.

4. Now by holiness here he means not chastity alone, but the freedom from every kind of sin, for he is holy that is pure. Now one will become pure, not if he be free from fornication only, but if from covetousness also, and envy, and pride, and vainglory, yea especially from vainglory which in every thing indeed it behooves to avoid, but much more in almsgiving; since neither will it be almsgiving, if it have this distemper, but display and cruelty. For when thou dost it not out of mercy, but from parade, such deed is not only no alms but even an insult; for you have put your brother to open shame. Not then the giving money, but the giving it out of mercy, is almsgiving. For people too at the theatres give, both to prostitute boys and to others who are on the stage; but such a deed is not almsgiving. And they too give that abuse the persons of prostitute women; but this is not lovingkindness, but insolent treatment. Like this is the vainglorious also. For just as he that abuses the person of the harlot, pays her a price for that abuse; so too do you demand a price of him that receives of you, your insult of him and your investing him as well as yourself with an evil notoriety. And besides this, the loss is unspeakable. For just as a wild beast and a mad dog springing upon us might, so does this ill disease and this inhumanity make prey of our good things. For inhumanity and cruelty such a course is; yea, rather more grievous even than this. For the

cruel indeed would not give to him that asked; but thou dost more than this; you hinder those that wish to give. For when you parade your giving, you have both lowered the reputation of the receiver, and hast pulled back him that was about to give, if he be of a careless mind. For he will not give to him thenceforth, on the ground of his having already received, and so not being in want; yea he will often accuse him even, if after having received he should draw near to beg, and will think him impudent. What sort of almsgiving then is this when you both shame yourself and him that receives; and also in two ways Him that enjoined it: both because while having Him for a spectator of your alms, you seek the eyes of your fellow-servants besides Him, and because you transgress the law laid down by Him forbidding these things.

I could have wished to carry this out into those other subjects as well, both fasting and prayer, and to show in how many respects vainglory is injurious there also; but I remember that in the discourse before this I left unfinished a certain necessary point. What was the point? I was saying, that the poor have the advantage of the rich in the things of this life, when I discoursed concerning health and pleasure; and this was shown indistinctly. Come then, today let us show this, that not in the things of this life only, but also in those that are higher, the advantage is with them.

For what leads unto a kingdom, riches or poverty? Let us hear the Lord Himself of the heavens saying of those, that it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of heaven: Matthew 19:24 but of the poor the contrary, If you will be perfect, sell that you have, and give to the poor; and come, follow Me; and you shall have treasure in heaven. Matthew 19:21 But if you will, let us see what is said on either side. Narrow and straitened is the way, He says, that leads unto life.

Matthew 7:14 Who then treads the narrow way, he that is in luxury, or that is in poverty; that is independent, or that carries ten thousand burdens; the lax and dissolute, or the thoughtful and anxious? But what need of these arguments, when it is best to betake one's self to the persons themselves. Lazarus was poor, yea very poor; and he that passed him by as he lay at his gateway was rich. Which then entered into the kingdom, and was in delights in Abraham's bosom? And which of them was scorched, with not even a drop at his command?

But, says one, 'both many poor will be lost, and [many] rich will enjoy those unspeakable goods.' Nay rather, one may see the contrary, few rich saved, but of the poor far more. For, consider, making accurate measure of the hindrances of riches and the defects of poverty, (or rather, neither of riches nor of poverty are they, but each of those who have riches or poverty; howbeit,) let us at least see which is the more available weapon. What defect then does poverty seem to possess?

Lying. And what, wealth? Pride, the mother of evils; which also made the devil a devil, who was not such before. Again, the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil. 1 Timothy 6:10 Which then stands near this root, the rich man, or the poor? Is it not very plainly the rich? For the more things anyone surrounds himself with, he desires so much the more. Vainglory again damages tens of thousands of good deeds, and near this too again the rich man has his dwelling. But, says one, you mention not the [evils] of the poor man, his affliction, his straits.

Nay, but this is both common to the rich, and is his more than the poor man's; so that those indeed which appear to be evils of poverty are common to either: while those of riches are riches' only. 'But what,' says one, 'when for want of necessaries the poor man commits many horrible things?' But no poor man, no, not one, commits as many horrible things from want, as do the rich for the sake of surrounding themselves

with more, and of not losing what stores they have. For the poor man does not so eagerly desire necessities as the rich does superfluities; nor again has he as much strength to put wickedness in practice as the other has power.

If then the rich man is both more willing and able, it is quite plain that he will rather commit such, and more of them. Nor is the poor man so much afraid in respect of hunger, as the rich trembles and is anxious in respect of the loss of what he has, and because he has not yet gotten all men's possessions. Since then he is near both vainglory and arrogance, and the love of money, the root of all evils, what hope of salvation shall he have except he display much wisdom? And how shall he walk the narrow way?

Let us not therefore carry about the notions of the many, but examine into the facts. For how is it not absurd that in respect to money, indeed, we do not trust to others, but refer this to figures and calculation; but in calculating upon facts we are lightly drawn aside by the notions of others; and that too, though we possess an exact balance, and square and rule for all things, the declaration of the divine laws? Wherefore I exhort and entreat you all, disregard what this man and that man thinks about these things, and inquire from the Scriptures all these things; and having learned what are the true riches, let us pursue after them that we may obtain also the eternal good things; which may we all obtain, through the grace and love towards men of our Lord Jesus Christ, with Whom, to the Father and the Holy Spirit, be glory, might, and honor, now and ever, and world without end. Amen.

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