

# Hebrews 11:37-12:3

by St. John Chrysostom

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*The sermon emphasizes the importance of looking to Jesus as the Author and Finisher of our faith, and the power of affliction to wipe out sins and make men strong.*

**Scripture:** Psalm 45:13, Matthew 25:8, 2 Corinthians 11:2, Ephesians 5:27, 1 Timothy 2:9, 1 Timothy 6:8

**Topics:** "Inner Beauty", "Spiritual Adornment"

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## Description

John Chrysostom preaches about the importance of cultivating inner beauty and modesty, urging believers to adorn themselves with virtues rather than worldly adornments. He emphasizes the need to focus on pleasing God rather than seeking the approval of others, highlighting the eternal value of a pure and uncorrupted soul. Chrysostom encourages women to dress simply and avoid extravagant adornments, reminding them that true beauty lies in the soul and in pleasing God. He warns against the dangers of vanity, pride, and extravagance, urging believers to seek the beauty that attracts God and leads to eternal blessings.

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## Transcript

They wandered about in sheep-skins, and goat-skins, being destitute, afflicted, tormented (of whom this world was not worthy); wandering in deserts, and in mountains, and in dens, and caves of the earth.

1. At all times indeed, but especially then when I reflect upon the achievements of the saints, it comes over me to feel despondency concerning my own condition, because we have not even in dreams experienced the things among which those men spent their whole lives, not paying the penalty of sins, but always doing rightly and yet always afflicted.

For consider, I beseech you, Elijah, to whom our discourse has come round today, for he speaks of him in this passage, and in him his examples end: which [example] was appropriate to their case. And having spoken of what befell the Apostles, that they were slain with the sword, were stoned, he goes back again to Elijah, who suffered the same things with them. See 2 Kings 1:8 For since it was probable that they would not as yet hold the Apostles in so great estimation, he brings his exhortation and consolation from him who had been taken up [into Heaven] and who was held in special admiration.

For they wandered about (he says) in sheep-skins, and goat-skins, being destitute, afflicted, tormented, of whom this world was not worthy.

They had not even raiment, he says, through the excess of affliction, no city, no house, no lodging-place; the same which Christ said, but the Son of Man has not where to lay His head. Matthew 8:20 Why do I say no lodging-place? No standing-place: for not even when they had gained the wilderness, were they at rest. For he said not, They sat down in the wilderness, but even when they were there, they fled, and were driven thence, not out of the inhabited world only, but even out of that which was uninhabitable. And he reminds them of the places where they were set, and of things which there befell [them].

Then next, he says, they bring accusations against you for Christ's sake. What accusation had they against Elijah, when they drove him out, and persecuted him, and compelled him to struggle with famine? Which these [Hebrews] were then suffering. At least, the brethren, it is said, decided to send [relief] to those of the disciples who were afflicted. Every man according to his ability, determined to send relief unto the brethren that dwelt in Judea Acts 11:29, which was [the case] of these also.

Tormented [or ill-treated], he says; that is, suffering distress, in journeyings, in dangers.

But They wandered about, what is this? Wandering, he says, in deserts and in mountains and in dens and caves of the earth, like exiles and outcasts, as persons taken in the basest [of crimes], as those not worthy to see the sun, they found no refuge from the wilderness, but must always be flying, must be seeking hiding-places, must bury themselves alive in the earth, always be in terror.

2. What then is the reward of so great a change? What is the recompense?

They have not yet received it, but are still waiting; and after thus dying in so great tribulation, they have not yet received it. They gained their victory so many ages ago, and have not yet received [their reward]. And you who are yet in the conflict, are you vexed?

Do you also consider what a thing it is, and how great, that Abraham should be sitting, and the Apostle Paul, waiting till you have been perfected, that then they may be able to receive their reward. For the Saviour has told them before that unless we also are present, He will not give it them. As an affectionate father might say to sons who were well approved, and had accomplished their work, that he would not give them to eat, unless their brethren came. And are you vexed, that you have not yet received the reward? What then shall Abel do, who was victor before all, and is sitting uncrowned? And what Noah? And what, they who lived in those [early] times: seeing that they wait for you and those after you?

Do you see that we have the advantage of them? For God (he says) has provided some better thing for us. In order that they might not seem to have the advantage of us from being crowned before us, He appointed one time of crowning for all; and he that gained the victory so many years before, receives his crown with you. Do you see His tender carefulness?

And he did not say, that they without us might not be crowned, but that they without us might not be made perfect; so that at that time they appear perfect also. They were before us as regards the conflicts, but are not before us as regards the crowns. He wronged not them, but He honored us. For they also wait for the brethren. For if we are all one body, the pleasure becomes greater to this body, when it is crowned altogether, and not part by part. For the righteous are also worthy of admiration in this, that they rejoice in the welfare of their brethren, as in their own. So that for themselves also, this is according to their wish, to be crowned along with their own members. To be glorified all together, is a great delight.

Hebrews 12:1

3. Hebrews 12:1 Wherefore (he says) we also being compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses. In many places the Scripture derives its consolation in evils from corresponding things. As when the prophet says, From burning heat, and from storm, and rain. Isaiah 4:6 This at least he says here also, that the memory of those holy men, reestablishes and recovers the soul which had been weighed down by woes, as a cloud does him who is burnt by the too hot rays [of the sun.]

And he did not say, lifted on high above us, but, compassing us about, which was more than the other; so that we are in greater security.

What sort of cloud? A load of witnesses. With good reason he calls not those in the New [Testament] only, but those in the Old also, witnesses [or martyrs]. For they also were witnesses to the greatness of God, as for instance, the Three Children, those with Elijah, all the prophets.

Laying aside all things. All: what? That is, slumber, indifference, mean reasonings, all human things.

And the sin which does [so] easily beset us; ἡμαρτία ἡ ἐπιβουλή, ἡ ἑπιβουλή, that is either, which easily circumvents us, or what can easily be circumvented, but rather this latter. For it is easy, if we will, to overcome sin.

Let us run with patience (he says) the race that is set before us. He did not say, Let us contend as boxers, nor, Let us wrestle, nor, Let us do battle: but, what was lightest of all, the [contest] of the foot-race, this has he brought forward. Nor yet did he say, Let us add to the length of the course; but, Let us continue patiently in this, let us not faint. Let us run (he says) the race that is set before us.

4. In the next place as the sum and substance of his exhortation, which he puts both first and last, even Christ. Hebrews 12:2 Looking (he says) unto Jesus the Author and Finisher of our Faith; The very thing which Christ Himself also continually said to His disciples, If they have called the Master of the house Beelzebub, how much more them of His household? Matthew 10:25 And again, The disciple is not above his Master, nor the servant above his Lord. Matthew 10:24

Hebrews 12:2

Looking (he says), that is, that we may learn to run. For as in all arts and games, we impress the art upon our mind by looking to our masters, receiving certain rules through our sight, so here also, if we wish to run, and to learn to run well, let us look to Christ, even to Jesus the author and finisher of our faith. What is this? He has put the Faith within us. For He said to His disciples, You have not chosen Me, but I have chosen you John 15:16; and Paul too says, But then shall I know, even as also I have been known. 1 Corinthians 13:12 He put the Beginning into us, He will also put on the End.

Who, he says, for the joy that was set before Him, endured the Cross, despising the shame. That is, it was in His power not to suffer at all, if He so willed. For He did no sin, neither was guile found in His mouth 1 Peter 2:22; as He also says in the Gospels, The Prince of the world comes and has nothing in Me. John 14:30 It lay then in His power, if so He willed, not to come to the Cross. For, I have power, He says, to lay down My life; and I have power to take it again. John 10:18 If then He who was under no necessity of being crucified, was crucified for our sake, how much more is it right that we should endure all things nobly!

Who for the joy that was set before Him (he says) endured the cross, despising the shame. But what is, Despising the shame? He chose, he means, that ignominious death. For suppose that He died. Why [should He] also [die] ignominiously? For no other reason, but to teach us to make no account of glory

from men. Therefore though under no obligation He chose it, teaching us to be bold against it, and to set it at nought. Why did he say not pain, but shame? Because it was not with pain that He bore these things.

What then is the end? He is set down at the right hand of the throne of God. Do you see the prize which Paul also says in an epistle, Wherefore God also has highly exalted Him, and given Him a Name which is above every name, that at the Name of Jesus Christ every knee should bow. Philippians 2:9-10 He speaks in respect to the flesh. Well then, even if there were no prize, the example would suffice to persuade us to accept all [such] things. But now prizes also are set before us, and these no common ones, but great and unspeakable.

5. Wherefore let us also, whenever we suffer anything of this kind, before the Apostles consider Christ. Why? His whole life was full of insults. For He continually heard Himself called mad, and a deceiver, and a sorcerer; and at one time the Jews said, Nay, (it says) but He deceives the people. John 7:12 And again, That deceiver said while He was yet alive, after three days I will rise again. Matthew 27:63 As to sorcery too they calumniated Him, saying, He casts out the devils by Beelzebub. Matthew 12:24 And that He is mad and has a devil. John 10:20 Said we not well (it says) that He has a devil and is mad? John 8:48

And these things He heard from them, when doing them good, performing miracles, showing forth the works of God. For indeed, if He had been so spoken of, when He did nothing, it would not have been so wonderful: But [it is wonderful] that when He was teaching what pertained to Truth He was called a deceiver, and when He cast out devils, was said to have a devil, and when He was overthrowing all that was opposed [to God], was called a sorcerer. For these things they were continually alleging against Him.

And if you would know both the scoffs and the ironical jeerings, which they made against Him (what particularly wounds our souls), hear first those from His kindred. Is not this (it says) the carpenter's son, whose father and mother we know? Are not his brethren all with us? Matthew 13:55; Mark 6:3; John 6:42 Also scoffing at Him from His country, they said He was of Nazareth. And again, search, it says, and see, for out of Galilee has no prophet arisen. John 7:52 And He endured being so greatly calumniated. And again they said, Does not the Scripture say, that Christ comes from the town of Bethlehem? John 7:42

Would you see also the ironical jeerings they made? Coming, it says, to the very cross they worshipped Him; and they struck Him and buffeted Him, and said, Tell us who it is that smote You Matthew 26:68; and they brought vinegar to Him, and said, If Thou be the Son of God, come down from the Cross. Matthew 27:40 And again, the servant of the High Priest struck Him with the palm of his hand; and He says, If I have spoken evil, bear witness of the evil; but if well, why smites thou Me? John 18:23 And in derision they put a robe about Him; and they spat in His face; and they were continually applying their tests, tempting Him.

Would you see also the accusations, some secret, some open, some from disciples? Will ye also go away? John 6:67 He says. And that saying, You have a devil John 8:48, 7:20, was uttered by those who already believed. Was He not continually a fugitive, sometimes in Galilee, and sometimes in Judea? Was not His trial great, even from the swaddling clothes? When He was yet a young child, did not His mother take Him and go down into Egypt? For all these reasons he says, Looking unto Jesus the Author and Finisher of our Faith who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God.

To Him then let us look, also to the [sufferings] of His disciples, reading the [writings] of Paul, and hearing him say, In much patience, in afflictions, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses, in stripes, in

imprisonments. 2 Corinthians 6:4-5 And again, Even to this present hour, we both hunger, and thirst, and are naked, and are buffeted, and have no certain dwelling-place, and labor, working with our own hands. Being reviled, we bless; being persecuted, we suffer it; being defamed, we entreat. 1 Corinthians 4:11-13 Has any one [of us] suffered the smallest part of these things? For, he says, [we are] As deceivers, as dishonored, as having nothing. 2 Corinthians 6:8-10 And again, Of the Jews five times received I forty stripes save one; thrice was I beaten with rods, once was I stoned, a night and a day have I been in the deep; in journeyings often, in tribulations, in distress, in hunger. 2 Corinthians 11:24-26 And that these things seem good to God, hear him saying, For this I besought the Lord thrice, and He said to me, My Grace is sufficient for you; for My strength is made perfect in weakness. 2 Corinthians 12:8-10 Wherefore, he says, I take pleasure in infirmities, in afflictions, in necessities, in distresses, in stripes, in imprisonments, that the power of Christ may rest upon me. Moreover, hear Christ Himself saying, In the world you shall have tribulation. John 16:33

Hebrews 12:3

6. For consider, says he, Him that endured such contradiction of sinners against Himself, lest ye be wearied and faint in your minds. For if the sufferings of those near us arouse us, what earnestness will not those of our Master give us! What will they not work in us!

And passing by all [else], he expressed the whole by the [word] Contradiction; and by adding such. For the blows upon the cheek, the laughter, the insults, the reproaches, the mockeries, all these he indicated by contradiction. And not these only, but also the things which befell Him during His whole life, of teaching.

For a great, a truly great consolation are both the sufferings of Christ, and those of the Apostles. For He so well knew that this is the better way of virtue, as even to go that way Himself, not having need thereof: He knew so well that tribulation is expedient for us, and that it becomes rather a foundation for repose. For hear Him saying, If a man take not his cross, and follow after Me, he is not worthy of Me. Matthew 10:38 If you are a disciple, He means, imitate the Master; for this is [to be] a disciple. But if while He went by [the path of] affliction, you [go] by that of ease, you no longer tread the same path, which He trod, but another. How then do you follow, when you follow not? How shall you be a disciple, not going after the Master? This Paul also says, We are weak, but you are strong; we are despised, but you are honored. 1 Corinthians 4:10 How is it reasonable, he means, that we should be striving after opposite things, and yet that you should be disciples and we teachers?

7. Affliction then is a great thing, beloved, for it accomplishes two great things; It wipes out sins, and it makes men strong.

What then, you say, if it overthrow and destroy? Affliction does not do this, but our own slothfulness. How (you say)? If we are sober and watchful, if we beseech God that He would not suffer us to be tempted above that we are able 1 Corinthians 10:13, if we always hold fast to Him, we shall stand nobly, and set ourselves against our enemy. So long as we have Him for our helper, though temptations blow more violently than all the winds, they will be to us as chaff and a leaf borne lightly along. Hear Paul saying, In all these things (are his words) we are more than conquerors. Romans 8:37 And again, For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us. Romans 8:18 And again, For the light affliction which is but for a moment, works for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory. 2 Corinthians 4:17

Consider what great dangers, shipwrecks, afflictions one upon another, and other such things, he calls light; and emulate this inflexible one, who wore this body simply and heedlessly. You are in poverty? But not in such as Paul, who was tried by hunger, and thirst, and nakedness. For he suffered this not for one day, but endured it continually. Whence does this appear? Hear himself saying, Even unto this present hour we both hunger and thirst and are naked. 1 Corinthians 4:11 Oh! How great glory did he already have in preaching, when he was undergoing so great [afflictions]! Having now [reached] the twentieth year [thereof], at the time when he wrote this. For he says, I knew a man fourteen years ago, whether in the body, or out of the body, I know not. 2 Corinthians 12:2 And again, After three years (he says) I went up to Jerusalem. Galatians 1:18 And again hear him saying, It were better for me to die, than that any man should make my glorying void. 1 Corinthians 9:15 And not only this, but again also in writing he said, We have become as the filth of the world. 1 Corinthians 4:13 What is more difficult to endure than hunger? What than freezing cold? What than plottings made by brethren whom he afterwards calls false brethren? 2 Corinthians 11:26 Was he not called the pest of the world? An Impostor? A subverter? Was he not cut with scourging?

8. These things let us take into our mind, beloved, let us consider them, let us hold them in remembrance, and then we shall never faint, though we be wronged, though we be plundered, though we suffer innumerable evils. Let it be granted us to be approved in Heaven, and all things [are] enduring. Let it be granted us to fare well there, and things here are of no account. These things are a shadow, and a dream; whatever they may be, they are nothing either in nature or in duration, while those are hoped for and expected.

For what would you that we should compare with those fearful things? What with the unquenchable fire? With the never-dying worm? Which of the things here can you name in comparison with the gnashing of teeth, with the chains, and the outer darkness, with the wrath, the tribulation, the anguish? But as to duration? Why, what are ten thousand years to ages boundless and without end? Not so much as a little drop to the boundless ocean.

But what about the good things? There, the superiority is still greater. Eye has not seen, (it is said,) ear has not heard, neither have, entered into the heart of man 1 Corinthians 2:9, and these things again shall be during boundless ages. For the sake of these then were it not well to be cut [by scourging] times out of number, to be slain, to be burned, to undergo ten thousand deaths, to endure everything whatsoever that is dreadful both in word and deed? For even if it were possible for one to live when burning in the fire, ought one not to endure all for the sake of attaining to those good things promised?

9. But why do I trifle in saying these things to men who do not even choose to disregard riches, but hold fast to them as though they were immortal? And if they give a little out of much, think they have done all? This is not Almsgiving. For Almsgiving is that of the Widow who emptied out all her living. Mark 12:44 But if you do not go on to contribute so much as the widow, yet at least contribute the whole of your superfluity: keep what is sufficient, not what is superfluous.

But there is no one who contributes even his superabundance. For so long as you have many servants, and garments of silk, these things are all superfluities. Nothing is indispensable or necessary, without which we are able to live; these things are superfluous, and are simply superadded. Let us then see, if you please, what we cannot live without. If we have only two servants, we can live. For whereas some live without servants, what excuse have we, if we are not content with two? We can also have a house built of brick of three rooms; and this were sufficient for us. For are there not some with children and wife who

have but one room? Let there be also, if you will, two serving boys.

10. And how is it not a shame (you say) that a gentlewoman should walk out with [only] two servants? It is no shame, that a gentlewoman should walk abroad with two servants, but it is a shame that she should go forth with many. Perhaps you laugh when you hear this. Believe me it is a shame. Do you think it a great matter to go out with many servants, like dealers in sheep, or dealers in slaves? This is pride and vainglory, the other is philosophy and respectability. For a gentlewoman ought not to be known from the multitude of her attendants. For what virtue is it to have many slaves? This belongs not to the soul, and whatever is not of the soul does not show gentility. When she is content with a few things, then is she a gentlewoman indeed; but when she needs many, she is a servant and inferior to slaves. Tell me, do not the angels go to and fro about the world alone, and need not any one to follow them? Are they then on this account inferior to us? They who need no [attendants] to us who need them? If then not needing an attendant at all, is angelic, who comes nearer to the angelic life, she who needs many [attendants], or she who [needs] few? Is not this a shame? For a shame it is to do anything out of place.

Tell me who attracts the attention of those who are in the public places, she who brings many in her train, or she who [brings but] few? And is not she who is alone, less conspicuous even than she who is attended by few? Do you see that this [first-named conduct] is a shame? Who attracts the attention of those in the public places, she who wears beautiful garments, or she who is dressed simply and artlessly? Again who attracts those in the public places, she who is borne on mules, and with trappings ornamented with gold, or she who walks out simply, and as it may be, with propriety? Or we do not even look at this latter, if we even see her; but the multitudes not only force their way to see the other, but also ask, Who is she, and Where from? And I do not say how great envy is hereby produced. What then (tell me), is it disgraceful to be looked at or not to be looked at? When is the shame greater, when all stare at her, or when no one [does]? When they inform themselves about her, or when they do not even care? Do you see that we do everything, not for modesty's sake but for vainglory?

However, since it is impossible to draw you away from that, I am content for the present that you should learn that this [conduct] is no disgrace. Sin alone is a disgrace, which no one thinks to be a disgrace. Sin alone is a disgrace, which no one thinks to be a disgrace, but everything rather than this.

11. Let your dress be such as is needful, not superfluous. However, that we may not shut you up too narrowly, this I assure you, that we have no need of ornaments of gold, or of lace. And it is not I who say this. For that the words are not mine, hear the blessed Paul saying, and solemnly charging women to adorn themselves, not with plaitings [of the hair], or gold, or pearls, or costly apparel. 1 Timothy 2:9 But with what kind, O Paul, would you tell us? For perhaps they will say, that only golden things are costly; and that silks are not costly. Tell us with what kind you would. But having food and raiment, let us therewith (he says) be content. 1 Timothy 6:8 Let our garment be such as merely to cover us. For God has given them to us for this reason, that we may cover our nakedness; and this any sort of garment can do, though but of trifling cost. Perhaps ye laugh, who wear dresses of silk; for in truth one may well laugh, considering what Paul enjoined and what we practice!

But my discourse is not addressed to women only, but also to men. For the rest of the things which we have are all superfluous; only the poor possess no superfluities; and perhaps they too from necessity: since, if it had been in their power, even they would not have abstained [from them]. Nevertheless, whether in pretense or in truth Philippians 1:18, so far they have no superfluities.

12. Let us then wear such clothes as are sufficient for our need. For what does much gold mean? To those on the stage these things are fitting, this apparel belongs to them, to harlots, to those who do everything to be looked at. Let her beautify herself, who is on the stage or the dancing platform. For she wishes to attract all to her. But a woman who professes godliness, let her not beautify herself thus, but in a different way. You have a means of beautifying yourself far better than that. You also have a theater: for that theater make yourself beautiful: clothe yourself with those ornaments. What is your theater? Heaven, the company of Angels. I speak not of Virgins only, but also of those in the world. All as many as believe in Christ have that theater. Let us speak such things that we may please those spectators. Put on such garments that you may gratify them.

For tell me, if a harlot putting aside her golden ornaments, and her robes, and her laughter, and her witty and unchaste talk, clothe herself with a cheap garment, and having dressed herself simply come [on the stage], and utter religious words, and discourse of chastity, and say nothing indelicate, will not all rise up? Will not this theater be dispersed? Will they not cast her out, as one who does not know how to suit herself to the crowd, and speaks things foreign to that Satanic theater? So thou also, if you enter into the Theater of Heaven clad with her garments, the spectators will cast you out. For there, there is no need of these garments of gold, but of different ones. Of what kind? Of such as the prophet names, clothed in fringed work of gold, and in varied colors Psalm 45:13, not so as to make the body white and glistening, but so as to beautify the soul. For the soul it is, which is contending and wrestling in that Theater. All the glory of the King's daughter is from within Psalm 45:13, it says. With these do thou clothe yourself; for [so] thou both deliverest yourself from other evils innumerable, and your husband from anxiety and yourself from care.

For so you will be respected by your husband, when you need not many things. For every man is wont to be shy towards those who make requests of him; but when he sees that they have no need of him, then he lets down his pride, and converses with them as equals. When your husband sees that you have no need of him in anything, that you think lightly of the presents which come from him, then, even though he be very arrogant, he will respect you more, than if you were clad in golden ornaments; and you will no longer be his slave. For those of whom we stand in need, we are compelled to stoop to. But if we restrain ourselves we shall no longer be regarded as criminals, but he knows that we pay him obedience from the fear of God, not for what is given by him. For now, when that he confers great favors on us, whatever honor he receives, he thinks he has not received all [that is due to him]: but then, though he obtain but a little, he will account it a favor he does not reproach, nor will he be himself compelled to overreach on your account.

13. For what is more unreasonable, than to provide golden ornaments, to be worn in baths, and in market places? However, in baths and in market places it is perhaps no wonder, but that a woman should come into Church so decked out is very ridiculous. For, for what possible reason does she come in here wearing golden ornaments, she who ought to come in that she may hear [the precept] that they adorn not themselves with gold, nor pearls, nor costly array? 1 Timothy 2:9 With what object then, O woman, do you come? Is it indeed to fight with Paul, and show that even if he repeat these things ten thousand times you regard them not? Or is it as wishing to put us your teachers to shame as discoursing on these subjects in vain? For tell me; if any heathen and unbeliever, after he has heard the passage read where the blessed Paul says these things, having a believing wife, sees that she makes much account of beautifying herself, and puts on ornaments of gold, that she may come into Church and hear Paul charging [the women] that they adorn themselves, neither with gold 1 Timothy 2:9, nor with pearls, nor with costly array, will he not indeed say to himself, when he sees her in her little room, putting on these things, and arranging them

beautifully, Why is my wife staying within in her little room? Why is she so slow? Why is she putting on her golden ornaments? Where has she to go to? Into the Church? For what purpose? To hear? 'not with costly array'; will he not smile, will he not burst out into laughter? will he not think our religion a mockery and a deceit? Wherefore, I beseech [you], let us leave golden ornaments to processions, to theaters, to signs on the shops. But let not the image of God be decked out with these things: let the gentlewoman be adorned with gentility, and gentility is the absence of pride, and of boastful display.

Nay even if you wish to obtain glory from men, you will obtain it thus. For we shall not wonder so much that the wife of a rich man wears gold and silk (for this is the common practice of them all), as when she is dressed in a plain and simple garment made merely of wool. This all will admire, this they will applaud. For in that adorning indeed of ornaments of gold and of costly apparel, she has many to share with her. And if she surpass one, she is surpassed by another. Yea, even if she surpass all, she must yield the palm to the Empress herself. But in the other case, she outdoes all, even the Emperor's wife herself. For she alone in wealth, has chosen the [dress] of the poor. So that even if we desire glory, here too the glory is greater.

14. I say this not only to widows, and to the rich; for here the necessity of widowhood seems to cause this: but to those also who have a husband.

But, you say, I do not please my husband [if I dress plainly]. It is not your husband you wish to please, but the multitude of poor women; or rather not to please them, but to make them pine [with envy], and to give them pain, and make their poverty greater. How many blasphemies are uttered because of you! 'Let there be no poverty' (say they). 'God hates the poor.' 'God loves not those in poverty.' For that it is not your husband whom you wish to please, and for this reason you deck yourself out, you make plain to all by what you yourself doest. For as soon as you have passed over the threshold of your chamber, you immediately put off all, both the robes, and the golden ornaments, and the pearls; and at home of all places thou dost not wear them.

But if you really wish to please your husband, there are ways of pleasing him, by gentleness, by meekness, by propriety. For believe me, O woman, even if your husband be infinitely debased, these are the things which will more effectually win him, gentleness, propriety, freedom from pride and expensiveness and extravagance. For even if you devise ten thousand such things, you will not restrain the profligate. And this they know who have had such husbands. For however you may beautify yourself, he being a profligate will go off to a courtesan; while [the husband] that is chaste and regular you will gain not by these means, but by the opposite: yea by these thou even causest him pain, clothing yourself with the reputation of a lover of the world. For what if your husband out of respect, and that as a sober-minded man, does not speak, yet inwardly he will condemn you, and will not conceal ill-will and jealousy. Will you not drive away all pleasure for the future, by exciting ill-will against yourself?

15. Possibly you are annoyed at hearing what is said, and are indignant, saying, 'He irritates husbands still more against their wives.' I say this, not to irritate your husbands, but I wish that these things should be done by you willingly, for your own sakes, not for theirs; not to free them from envy but to free you from the parade of this life.

Do you wish to appear beautiful? I also wish it, but with beauty which God seeks, which the King desires. Psalm 45:11 Whom would you have as a Lover? God or men? Should thou be beautiful with that beauty, God will desire your beauty; but if with the other apart from this, He will abominate you, and your lovers will be profligates. For no man who loves a married woman is good. Consider this even in regard to the

adorning that is external. For the other adorning, I mean that of the soul, attracts God; but this again, profligates. Do you see that I care for you, that I am anxious for you, that you may be beautiful, really beautiful, splendid, really splendid, that instead of profligate men, you may have for your Lover God the Lord of all? And she who has Him for her Lover, to whom will she be like? She has her place among the choirs of Angels. For if one who is beloved of a king is accounted happy above all, what will her dignity be who is beloved of God with much love? Though thou put the whole world [in the balance against it], there is nothing equivalent to that beauty.

This beauty then let us cultivate; with these embellishments let us adorn ourselves, that we may pass into the Heavens, into the spiritual chambers, into the nuptial chamber that is undefiled. For this beauty is liable to be destroyed by anything; and when it lasts well, and neither disease nor anxiety impair it (which is impossible), it does not last twenty years. But the other is ever blooming, ever in its prime. There, there is no change to fear; no old age coming brings a wrinkle, no undermining disease withers it; no desponding anxiety disfigures it; but it is far above all these things. But this [earthly beauty] takes flight before it appears, and if it appears it has not many admirers. For those of well-ordered minds do not admire it; and those who do admire it, admire with wantonness.

16. Let us not therefore cultivate this [beauty], but the other: let us have that, so that with bright torches we may pass into the bridal chamber. For not to virgins only has this been promised, but to virgin souls. For had it belonged merely to virgins, those five would not have been shut out. This then belongs to all who are virgins in soul, who are freed from worldly imaginations: for these imaginations corrupt our souls. If therefore we remain unpolluted, we shall depart there, and shall be accepted. For I have espoused you, he says, to one husband, to present you a chaste virgin unto Christ. 2 Corinthians 11:2 These things he said, not with reference to Virgins, but to the whole body of the entire Church. For the uncorrupt soul is a virgin, though she have a husband: she is a virgin as to that which is Virginité indeed, that which is worthy of admiration. For this of the body is but the accompaniment and shadow of the other: while that is the True Virginité. This let us cultivate, and so shall we be able with cheerful countenance to behold the Bridegroom, to enter in with bright torches, if the oil do not fail us, if by melting down our golden ornaments we procure such oil as makes our lamps bright. And this oil is lovingkindness.

If we impart what we have to others, if we make oil therefrom, then it will protect us, and we shall not say at that time, Give us oil, for our lamps are going out Matthew 25:8, nor shall we beg of others, nor shall we be shut out when we are gone to them that sell, nor shall we hear that fearful and terrible voice, while we are knocking at the doors, I know you not. Matthew 25:12 But He will acknowledge us, and we shall go in with the Bridegroom, and having entered into the spiritual Bride-chamber we shall enjoy good things innumerable.

For if here the bride-chamber is so bright, the rooms so splendid, that none is weary of observing them, much more there. Heaven is the chamber, and the bride-chamber better than Heaven; then we shall enter. But if the Bride-chamber is so beautiful, what will the Bridegroom be?

And why do I say, 'Let us put away our golden ornaments, and give to the needy'? For if you ought even to sell yourselves, if you ought to become slaves instead of free women, that so ye might be able to be with that Bridegroom, to enjoy that Beauty, [nay] merely to look on that Countenance, ought you not with ready mind to welcome all things? We look at and admire a king upon the earth, but when [we see] a king and a bridegroom both, much more ought we to welcome him with readiness. Truly these things are a shadow, while those are a reality. And a King and a Bridegroom in Heaven! To be counted worthy also to go before

Him with torches, and to be near Him, and to be ever with Him, what ought we not to do? What should we not perform? What should we not endure? I entreat you, let us conceive some desire for those blessings, let us long for that Bridegroom, let us be virgins as to the true Virginity. For the Lord seeks after the virginity of the soul. With this let us enter into Heaven, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing Ephesians 5:27; that we may attain also to the good things promised, of which may we all be partakers through the grace and mercy of Jesus Christ our Lord, with whom to the Father together with the Holy Ghost, be glory, power, honor, now and ever, and world without end. Amen.

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