

Homily 11 on Matthew

by St. John Chrysostom

St. John Chrysostom's Homily 11 on Matthew emphasizes the urgent call to repentance and the necessity of genuine transformation through faith in Christ.

Scripture: Matthew 3:7-21, Luke 20:5, John 1:24-25, John 1:34, John 5:46

Topics: "Repentance", "Righteous Living"

Description

John Chrysostom preaches about the importance of repentance, belief, and bearing good fruits as demonstrated by the encounter of John the Baptist with the Pharisees and Sadducees. He highlights the need for genuine transformation of the heart, warning against complacency and emphasizing the imminent judgment and the necessity of living a life in accordance with God's will. Chrysostom urges the congregation to diligently practice virtue, resist temptations, and cultivate a life of self-restraint and righteousness, both at home and in public, to prepare for the eternal rewards promised by God.

Transcript

Matt. III. 7.

But when he saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees come to his baptism, he said to them, O generation of vipers, who has warned you to flee from the wrath to come?

How then does Christ say, that they did not believe John? Luke 20:5 Because this was not believing, to decline receiving Him whom he preached. For so they thought they regarded their prophets and their lawgiver, nevertheless He said they had not regarded them, forasmuch as they received not Him, that was foretold by them. For if you had believed Moses, says He, ye would have believed Me. John 5:46 And after this again, being asked by Christ, The baptism of John, whence is it? Matthew 21:25-26 they said, If we shall say, Of earth, we fear the people; if we shall say, From heaven, He will say unto us, How then did ye not believe him?

So that from all these things it is manifest that they came indeed and were baptized, yet they did not abide in the belief of that which was preached. For John also points out their wickedness, by their sending unto the Baptist, and saying, Are you Elias? Are you Christ? wherefore he also added, they which were sent were of the Pharisees. John 1:24

What then? Were not the multitudes also of this same mind? One may say. Nay, the multitudes in simplicity of mind had this suspicion, but the Pharisees, wishing to lay hold of Him. For since it was acknowledged that Christ comes out of the village of David, and this man was of the tribe of Levi, they laid a snare by the question, in order that if he should say any such thing they might quickly come upon him. This at any rate he has declared by what follows; for on his not acknowledging any of the things which they expected, even so they take hold of him, saying, Why do you baptize then, if you be not the Christ? John 1:25

And to convince you that the Pharisees came with one mind, and the people with another, hear how the evangelist has declared this too; saying of the people, that they came and were baptized of him, confessing their sins; Matthew 3:6 but concerning the Pharisees, no longer like that, but that when he saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees coming, he said, O generation of vipers, who has warned you to flee from the wrath to come? O greatness of mind! How does he discourse unto men ever thirsting after the blood of the prophets, and in disposition no better than serpents! How does he disparage both themselves and their progenitors with all plainness!

2. Yea, says one; he speaks plainly enough, but the question is if there be any reason in this plainness. For he did not see them sinning, but in the act of change; wherefore they did not deserve blame, but rather praise and approbation, for having left city and houses, and making haste to hear his preaching.

What then shall we say? That he had not things present, and even now doing, in his view, but he knew the secrets of their mind, God having revealed this. Since then they were priding themselves on their forefathers, and this was like to prove the cause of their destruction, and was casting them into a state of carelessness, he cuts away the roots of their pride. For this cause Isaiah also calls them, rulers of Sodom, and people of Gomorrhah; Isaiah 1:10 and another prophet says, Are ye not as children of the Ethiopians; Amos 9:7 and all withdraw them from this way of thinking, bringing down their pride, which had caused them unnumbered evils.

But the prophets, you will say, naturally did so; for they saw them sinning: but in this case, with what view and for what cause does he the same, seeing them obey him. To make them yet more tender-hearted.

But if one accurately mark his words, he has also tempered his rebuke with commendation. For he spoke these things, as marveling at them, that they had become able, however late, to do what seemed almost an impossibility for them. His rebuke, you see, is rather that of one bringing them over, and working upon them to arouse themselves. For in that he appears amazed, he implies both their former wickedness to be great, and their conversion marvellous and beyond expectation. Thus, what has come to pass, says he, that being children of those men, and brought up so badly, they have repented? Whence has come so great a change? Who has softened down the harshness of their spirit? Who corrected that which was incurable?

And see how straightway from the beginning he alarmed them, by laying first, for a foundation, his words concerning hell. For he spoke not of the usual topics: Who has warned you to flee from wars, from the inroads of the barbarians, from captivities, from famines, from pestilences? but concerning another sort of punishment, never before made manifest to them, he was striking the first preparatory note, saying thus, Who has warned you to flee from the wrath to come?

And full well did he likewise call them, generation of vipers. For that animal too is said to destroy the mother that is in travail with her, and eating through her belly, thus to come forth unto light; which kind of

thing these men also did being murderers of fathers, and murderers of mothers, 1 Timothy 1:9 and destroying their instructors with their own hands.

3. However, he stops not at the rebuke, but introduces advice also. For, Bring forth, says he, fruits meet for repentance.

For to flee from wickedness is not enough, but you must show forth also great virtue. For let me not have that contradictory yet ordinary case, that refraining yourselves for a little while, you return unto the same wickedness. For we are not come for the same objects as the prophets before. Nay, the things that are now are changed, and are more exalted, forasmuch as the Judge henceforth is coming, His very self, the very Lord of the kingdom, leading unto greater self-restraint, calling us to heaven, and drawing us upward to those abodes. For this cause do I unfold the doctrine also touching hell, because both the good things and the painful are forever. Do not therefore abide as you are, neither bring forward the accustomed pleas, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, the noble race of your ancestors.

And these things he said, not as forbidding them to say that they were sprung from those holy men, but as forbidding them to put confidence in this, while they were neglecting the virtue of the soul; at once bringing forward publicly what was in their minds, and foretelling things to come. Because after this they are found to say, We have Abraham to our father, and were never in bondage to any man. John 8:33 Since then it was this, which most of all lifted them up with pride and ruined them, he first puts it down.

And see how with his honor paid to the patriarch he combines his correction touching these things. Namely, having said, Think not to say, We have Abraham to our father, he said not, for the patriarch shall not be able to profit you anything, but somehow in a more gentle and acceptable manner he intimated the self-same thing, by saying,

For God is able of these stones to raise up children to Abraham. Matthew 3:9

Now some say, that concerning the Gentiles he says these things, calling them stones, metaphorically; but I say, that the expression has also another meaning. But of what kind is this? Think not, says he, that if you should perish, you would make the patriarch childless. This is not, this is not so. For with God it is possible, both out of stones to give him men, and to bring them to that relationship; since at the beginning also it was so done. For it was like the birth of men out of stones, when a child came forth from that hardened womb.

This accordingly the prophet also was intimating, when he said, Look unto the hard rock, whence you are hewn, and to the hole of the pit, whence you are dug: look unto Abraham your father, and unto Sarah that bare you. Isaiah 51:1-2 Now of this prophecy, you see, he reminds them, showing that if at the beginning he made him a father, as marvellously as if he had made him so out of stones, it was possible for this now also to come to pass. And see how he both alarms them, and cuts them off: in that he said not, He had already raised up, lest they should despair of themselves, but that He is able to raise up: and he said not, He is able out of stones to make men, but what was a much greater thing, kinsmen and children of Abraham.

Do you see how for the time he drew them off from their vain imagination about things of the body, and from their refuge in their forefathers; in order that they might rest the hope of their salvation in their own repentance and continence? Do you see how by casting out their carnal relationship, he is bringing in that which is of faith?

4. Mark then how by what follows also he increases their alarm, and adds intensity to their agonizing fear.

For having said that God is able of these stones to raise up children unto Abraham, he added, And now also the axe is laid unto the root of the trees, by all means making his speech alarming. For as he from his way of life had much freedom of speech, so they needed his severe rebuke, having been left barren now for a long time. For why do I say (such are his words) that you are on the point of falling away from your relationship to the patriarch and of seeing others, even those that are of stones, brought in to your pre-eminence? Nay, not to this point only will your penalty reach, but your punishment will proceed further. For now, says he, the axe is laid unto the root of the trees. There is nothing more terrible than this turn of his discourse. For it is no longer a flying sickle, nor the taking down of a hedge, nor the treading under foot of the vineyard; Isaiah 5:5 but an axe exceeding sharp, and what is worse, it is even at the doors. For inasmuch as they continually disbelieved the prophets, and used to say, Where is the day of the Lord: and let the counsel of the Holy One of Israel come, that we may know it, Isaiah 5:19 by reason that it was many years before what they said came to pass; to lead them off from this encouragement also, he sets the terrors close to them. And this he declared by saying now, and by his putting it to the root. For the space between is nothing now, says he, but it is laid to the very root. And he said not, to the branches, nor to the fruits, but to the root. Signifying, that if they were negligent, they would have incurable horrors to endure, and not have so much as a hope of remedy. It being no servant who is now come, as those before Him were, but the very Lord of all, bringing on them His fierce and most effectual vengeance.

Yet, although he has terrified them again, he suffers them not to fall into despair; but as before he said not He has raised up, but He is able to raise up children to Abraham (at once both alarming and comforting them); even so here also he did not say that it has touched the root, but it is laid to the root, and is now hard by it, and shows signs of no delay. However, even though He has brought it so near, He makes its cutting depend upon you. For if you change and become better men, this axe will depart without doing anything; but if you continue in the same ways, He will tear up the tree by the roots. And therefore, observe, it is neither removed from the root, nor applied as it is does it cut at all: the one, that you may not grow supine, the other to let you know that it is possible even in a short time to be changed and saved. Wherefore he does also from all topics heighten their fear, thoroughly awakening and pressing them on to repentance. Thus first their falling away from their forefathers; next, others being introduced instead; lastly, those terrors being at their doors, the certainty of suffering incurable evils (both which he declared by the root and the axe), was sufficient to rouse thoroughly those even that were very supine, and to make them full of anxiety. I may add, that Paul too was setting forth the same, when he said, A short word will the Lord make upon the whole world. Romans 9:28

But be not afraid; or rather, be afraid, but despair not. For you have yet a hope of change; the sentence is not quite absolute, neither did the axe come to cut (else what hindered it from cutting, close as it was to the root?); but on purpose by this fear to make you a better man, and to prepare you to bring forth fruit. For this cause he added, Therefore every tree, which brings not forth good fruit, is hewn down, and cast into the fire. Matthew 3:10 Now by the word every, he rejects again the privilege which they had from their noble descent; Why, if you be Abraham's own descendant, says he, if you have thousands of patriarchs to enumerate, you will but undergo a double punishment, abiding unfruitful.

By these words he alarmed even publicans, the soldiers' mind was startled by him, not casting them into despair, yet ridding them of all security. For along with the terror, there is also much encouragement in what he says; since by the expression, which brings not forth good fruit, he signified that what bears fruit is delivered from all vengeance.

5. And how, says one, shall we be able to bring forth fruit, when the edge is being applied, and the time so strait, and the appointed season cut short. You will be able, says he, for this fruit is not of the same kind as that of common trees, waiting a long time, and in bondage to the necessities of seasons, and requiring much other management; but it is enough to be willing, and the tree at once has put forth its fruit. For not the nature of the root only, but also the skill of the husbandman contributes the most to that kind of fruit-bearing.

For (let me add) on account of this -- lest they should say, You are alarming and pressing, and constraining us, applying an axe, and threatening us with being cut down, yet requiring produce in time of punishment,-- he has added, to signify the ease of bearing that fruit, I indeed baptize you with water, but He that comes after me is mightier than I, the latchet of whose shoe I am not worthy to unloose; He shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost and with fire: implying hereby that consideration only is needed and faith, not labors and toils; and as it is easy to be baptized, so is it easy to be converted, and to become better men. So having stirred their mind by the fear of God's judgment, and the expectation of His punishment, and by the mention of the axe, and by the loss of their ancestors, and by the bringing in of those other children, and by the double vengeance of cutting off and burning, and having by all means softened their hardness, and brought them to desire deliverance from so great evils; then he brings in what he has to say touching Christ; and not simply, but with a declaration of His great superiority. Then in setting forth the difference between himself and Him, lest he should seem to say this out of favor, he establishes the fact by comparison of the gifts bestowed by each of them. For he did not at once say, I am not worthy to unloose the latchet of His shoe; but when he had first set forth the little value of his own baptism, and had shown that it has nothing more than to lead them to repentance (for he did not say with water of remission, but of repentance), he sets forth Christ's also, which is full of the unspeakable gift. Thus he seems to say, Lest, on being told that He comes after me, you should despise Him as having come later; learn the virtue of His gift, and you will clearly know that I uttered nothing worthy nor great, when I said, I am not worthy to unloose the latchet of His shoe. So too when you are told, He is mightier than I, do not think I said this in the way of making a comparison. For I am not worthy to be ranked so much as among His servants, no, not even the lowest of His servants, nor to receive the least honored portion of His ministry. Therefore He did not merely say, His shoes, but not even the latchet, which kind of office was counted the last of all. Then to hinder your attributing what he had said to humility, he adds also the proof from the facts: For He shall baptize you, says he, with the Holy Ghost and with fire.

6. Do you see how great is the wisdom of the Baptist? How, when He Himself is preaching, He says everything to alarm, and fill them with anxiety; but when He is sending men to Him, whatever was mild and apt to recover them: not bringing forward the axe, nor the tree that is cut down and burnt, and cast into the fire, nor the wrath to come, but remission of sins, and removing of punishment, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption, and adoption, and brotherhood, and a partaking of the inheritance, and an abundant supply of the Holy Ghost. For all these things he obscurely denoted, when he said, He shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost; at once, by the very figure of speech, declaring the abundance of the grace (for he said not, He will give you the Holy Ghost, but He will baptize you with the Holy Ghost); and by the specification of fire on the other hand indicating the vehement and uncontrollable quality of His grace.

Imagine only what sort of men it was meet for the hearers to become, when they considered that they were at once to be like the prophets, and like those great ones. For it was on this account, you see, that he made mention at all of fire; that he might lead them to reflect on the memory of those men. Because, of all

the visions that appeared unto them, I had almost said, the more part appeared in fire; thus God discoursed with Moses in the bush, thus with all the people in the mount Sinai, thus with Ezekiel on the cherubim. Ezekiel 1:27

And mark again how he rouses the hearer, by putting that first which was to take place after all. For the Lamb was to be slain, and sin to be blotted out, and the enmity to be destroyed, and the burial to take place, and the resurrection, and then the Spirit to come. But none of these things does he mention as yet, but that first which was last, and for the sake of which all the former were done, and which was fit to proclaim His dignity; so that when the hearer should be told that he was to receive so great a Spirit he might search with himself, how and in what manner this shall be, while sin so prevails; that finding him full of thought and prepared for that lesson, he might thereupon introduce what he had to say touching the Passion, no man being any more offended, under the expectation of such a gift.

Wherefore he again cried out, saying, Behold the Lamb of God, which bears the sin of the world. He did not say, which remits, but, that which implies a more guardian care, which hears it. For it is not all one, simply to remit, and to take it upon Himself. For the one was to be done without peril, the other with death.

And again, he said, He is Son of God. John 1:34 But not even this declared His rank openly to the hearers (for they did not so much as know yet how to conceive of Him as a true Son): but by so great a gift of the Spirit that also was established. Therefore the Father also in sending John gave him, as you know, this as a first token of the dignity of Him that had come, saying, Upon whom you shall see the Spirit descending and remaining, the same is He which baptizes with the Holy Ghost. Wherefore himself too says, I saw and bare record that this is the Son of God; as though the one were to all time the clear evidence of the other.

7. Then, as having uttered the gentler part of his message, and soothed and relaxed the hearer, he again binds him up, that he may not become remiss. For such was the nature of the Jewish nation; by all encouraging things they were easily puffed up, and corrupted. Wherefore he again adduces his terrors, saying, Whose fan is in His hand. Matthew 3:12

Thus, as before he had spoken of the punishment, so here he points out the Judge likewise, and introduces the eternal vengeance. For He will burn the chaff, says he, with unquenchable fire. You see that He is Lord of all things, and that He is Himself the Husbandman; albeit in another place He calls His Father the same. For My Father, says He, is the Husbandman. John 15:1 Thus, inasmuch as He had spoken of an axe, lest you should suppose that the thing needed labor, and the separation was hard to make; by another comparison he suggests the easiness of it, implying that all the world is His; since He could not punish those who were not His own. For the present, it is true, all are mingled together (for though the wheat appears gleaming through, yet it lies with the chaff, as on a threshing floor, not as in a garner), but then, great will be the separation.

Where now are they by whom hell-fire is disbelieved? Since surely here are two points laid down, one, that He will baptize with the Holy Ghost, the other, that He will burn up the disobedient. If then that is credible, so is this too, assuredly. Yea, this is why the two predictions are put by him in immediate connection, that by that which has taken place already, he might accredit the other, as yet unaccomplished. For Christ too Himself in many places does so, often of the same things, and often of opposites, setting down two prophecies; the one of which He performs here, the other He promises in the future; that such as are too contentious may, from the one which has already come to pass, believe the other also, which is not yet accomplished. For instance, to them that strip themselves of all that they have for His sake He promised to

give an hundred fold in the present world, and life eternal in that which is to come; by the things already given making the future also credible. Which, as we see, John likewise has done in this place; laying down two things, that He shall both baptize with the Holy Ghost, and burn up with unquenchable fire. Now then, if He had not baptized with the Spirit the apostles, and all every day who are willing, you might have doubts concerning those other things too; but if that which seems to be greater and more difficult, and which transcends all reason, has been done, and is done every day; how do you deny that to be true, which is easy, and comes to pass according to reason? Thus having said, He shall baptize with the Holy Ghost and with fire, and having thence promised great blessings; lest you, released wholly from the former things, grow supine, he has added the fan, and the judgment thereby declared. Thus, think not at all, says he, that your baptism suffices, if you become ordinary persons hereafter: for we need both virtue, and plenty of that known self-restraint. Therefore as by the axe he urges them unto grace, and unto the font, so after grace he terrifies them by the fan, and the unquenchable fire. And of the one sort, those yet unbaptized, he makes no distinction, but says in general, Every tree that brings not forth good fruit is hewn down, Matthew 3:10 punishing all the unbelievers. Whereas after baptism He works out a kind of division, because many of them that believed would exhibit a life unworthy of their faith.

Let no man then become chaff, let no one be tossed to and fro, nor lie exposed to wicked desires, blown about by them easily every way. For if you continue wheat, though temptation be brought on you, you will suffer nothing dreadful; nay, for in the threshing floor, the wheels of the car, that are like saws, do not cut in pieces the wheat; but if you fall away into the weakness of chaff, you will both here suffer incurable ills, being smitten of all men, and there you will undergo the eternal punishment. For all such persons both before that furnace become food for the irrational passions here, as chaff is for the brute animal: and there again they are material and food for the flame.

Now to have said directly that He will judge men's doings, would not so effectually procure acceptance for His doctrine: but to blend with it the parable, and so establish it all, was apter to persuade the hearer, and attract him by a more ample encouragement. Wherefore also Christ Himself for the most part so discourses with them; threshing floor, and harvest, and vineyard, and wine-press, and field, and net, and fishing, and all things familiar, and among which they were busied He makes ingredients in His discourses. This kind of thing then the Baptist likewise did here, and offered an exceeding great demonstration of his words, the giving of the Spirit. For He who has so great power, as both to forgive sins, and to give the Spirit, much more will these things also be within His power: so he speaks.

Do you see how now in due order the mystery came to be laid as a foundation, before the resurrection and judgment? Hebrews 6:1-2

And wherefore, it may be said, did he not mention the signs and wonders which were straightway to be done by Him? Because this was greater than all, and for its sake all those were done. Thus, in his mention of the chief thing, he comprehended all; death dissolved, sins abolished, the curse blotted out, those long wars done away; our entrance into paradise, our ascent into heaven, our citizenship with the angels, our partaking of the good things to come: for in truth this is the earnest of them all. So that in mentioning this, he has mentioned also the resurrection of our bodies, and the manifestation of His miracles here, and our partaking of His kingdom, and the good things, which eye has not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man. 1 Corinthians 2:9 For all these things He bestowed on us by that gift. It was therefore superfluous to speak of the signs that were immediately to ensue, and which sight can judge of; but those were meet to be discoursed on, whereof they doubted; as for instance, that He is the Son of God; that He exceeds John beyond comparison; that He bears the sin of the world; that He will require an

account of all that we do; that our interests are not limited to the present, but elsewhere every one will undergo the due penalty. For these things were not as yet proveable by sight.

8. Therefore, knowing these things, let us use great diligence, while we are in the threshing floor; for it is possible while we are here, to change even out of chaff into wheat, even as on the other hand many from wheat have become chaff. Let us not then be supine, nor be carried about with every wind; neither let us separate ourselves from our brethren, though they seem to be small and mean; forasmuch as the wheat also compared with the chaff is less in measure, but better in nature. Look not therefore to the forms of outward pomp, for they are prepared for the fire, but to this godly humility, so firm and indissoluble, and which cannot be cut, neither is burnt by the fire. It being for their sake that He bears long with the very chaff, that by their intercourse with them they may become better. Therefore judgment is not yet, that we may be all crowned together, that from wickedness many may be converted unto virtue.

Let us tremble then at hearing this parable. For indeed that fire is unquenchable. And how, it may be said, is it unquenchable? Do you see not this sun ever burning, and never quenched? Did you not behold the bush burning, and not consumed? If then you also desire to escape the flame, lay up alms beforehand, and so you will not even taste of that fire. For if, while here, you will believe what is told you, you shall not so much as see this furnace, after your departure into that region; but if you disbelieve it now, you shall know it there full well by experience, when no sort of escape is possible. Since in truth no entreaty shall avert the punishment from them who have not shown forth an upright life. For believing surely is not enough, since even the devils tremble at God, but for all that they will be punished.

9. Wherefore our care of our conduct has need to be great. Why, this is the very reason of our continually assembling you here; not simply that you should enter in, but that you should also reap some fruit from your continuance here. But if you come indeed constantly, but go away again reaping no fruit from thence, you will have no advantage from your entering in and attendance in this place.

For if we, when sending children to teachers, should we see them reaping no benefit thereby, begin to be severe in blaming the teachers, and remove them often to others; what excuse shall we have for not bestowing upon virtue even so much diligence as upon these earthly things, but forever bringing our tablets home empty? And yet our teachers here are more in number and greater. For no less than prophets and apostles and patriarchs, and all righteous men, are by us set over you as teachers in every Church. And not even so is there any profit, but if you have joined in chanting two or three Psalms, and making the accustomed prayers at random and anyhow, are so dismissed, you think this enough for your salvation. Have ye not heard the prophet, saying (or rather God by the prophet), This people honors me with their lips, but their heart is far from me?

Therefore, lest this be our case too, wipe out the letters, or rather the impressions, which the devil has engraven in your soul; and bring me a heart set free from worldly tumults, that without fear I may write on it what I will. Since now at least there is nothing else to discern, except his letters -- rapines, covetings, envy, jealousy. Wherefore of course, when I receive your tablets, I am not able so much as to read them. For I find not the letters, which we every Lord's day inscribe on you, and so let you go; but others, instead of these, unintelligible and misshapen. Then, when we have blotted them out, and have written those which are of the Spirit, you departing, and giving up your hearts to the works of the devil, give him again power to substitute his own characters in you. What then will be the end of all this, even without any words of mine, each man's own conscience knows. For I indeed will not cease to do my part, and to write in you the right letters. But if you mar our diligence, for our part our reward is unaltered, but your danger is not

small.

Now, though I would fain say nothing to disgust you, yet I beseech again and entreat you, imitate at least the little children's diligence in these matters. For so they first learn the form of the letters, after that they practise themselves in distinguishing them put out of shape, and then at last in their reading they proceed orderly by means of them. Just so let us also do; let us divide virtue, and learn first not to swear, nor to forswear ourselves, nor to speak evil; then proceeding to another row, not to envy, not to lust, not to be gluttonous, not to be drunken, not fierce, not slothful, so that from these we may pass on again to the things of the Spirit, and practise continence, and neglect of the belly, temperance, righteousness, to be above glory, and gentle and contrite in mind; and let us join these one with another, and write them upon our soul.

10. And all these let us practise at home, with our own friends, with our wife, with our children. And, for the present, let us begin with the things that come first, and are easier; as for instance, with not swearing; and let us practise this one letter continually at home. For, in truth, there are many at home to hinder this our practice; sometimes a man's servant provoking him, sometimes his wife annoying and angering him, sometimes an indocile and disorderly child urges him on to threatening and swearing. If now at home, when thus continually galled, you should attain not to be tempted into swearing, you will in the market-place also have power with ease to abide unconquered.

Yea, and in like sort, you will attain to keep yourself from insulting any, by not insulting your wife, nor your servants, nor any one else among those in your house. For a man's wife too not seldom, praising this or that person, or bemoaning herself, stirs him up to speak evil of that other. But do not let yourself be constrained to speak evil of him that is praised, but bear it all nobly. And if you should perceive your servants praising other masters, be not perturbed, but stand nobly. Let your home be a sort of lists, a place of exercise for virtue, that having trained yourself well there, you may with entire skill encounter all abroad.

Do this with respect to vainglory also. For if you train yourself not to be vainglorious in company of your wife and your servants, you will not ever afterwards be easily caught by this passion with regard to any one else. For though this malady be in every case grievous and tyrannical, yet is it so especially when a woman is present. If we therefore in that instance put down its power, we shall easily master it in the other cases also.

And with respect to the other passions too, let us do this self-same thing, exercising ourselves against them at home, and anointing ourselves every day.

And that our exercise may be easier, let us further enact a penalty for ourselves, upon our transgressing any of our purposes. And let the very penalty again be such as brings with it not loss, but reward -- such as procures some very great gain. And this is so, if we sentence ourselves to intenser fastings, and to sleeping often on the bare ground, and to other like austerity. For in this way will much profit come unto us from every quarter; we shall both live the sweet life of virtue here, and we shall attain unto the good things to come and be perpetually friends of God.

But in order that the same may not happen again -- that you may not, having here admired what is said, go your way, and cast aside at random, wherever it may chance, the tablet of your mind, and so allow the devil to blot out these things -- let each one, on returning home, call his own wife, and tell her these things, and take her to help him; and from this day let him enter into that noble school of exercise, using for oil the

supply of the Spirit. And though you fall once, twice, many times in your training, despair not, but stand again, and wrestle; and do not give up until you have bound on you the glorious crown of triumph over the devil, and hast for the time to come stored up the riches of virtue in an inviolable treasure-house.

For if you should establish yourself in the habits of this noble self-restraint, then, not even when remiss, will you be able to transgress any of the commandments, habit imitating the solidity of nature. Yea, as to sleep is easy, and to eat, and to drink, and to breathe, so also will the deeds of virtue be easy to us, and we shall reap to ourselves that pure pleasure, resting in a harbor without a wave, and enjoying continual calm, and with a great freight bringing our vessel into haven, in that City, on that day; and we shall attain unto the undecaying crowns, unto which may we all attain, by the grace and love towards man of our Lord Jesus Christ, to whom be all glory and might, now and always, and world without end. Amen.

Source: <https://sermonindex.net/speakers/st-john-chrysostom/homily-11-on-matthew/>

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