

Homily 13 on Romans

by St. John Chrysostom

St. John Chrysostom's Homily 13 on Romans explores the spiritual nature of the Law, the struggle of human sinfulness, and the necessity of grace through Christ for salvation.

Scripture: Romans 8:6-13

Topics: "Spiritual Life", "Overcoming Sin"

Description

John Chrysostom preaches about the dangers of living a life consumed by worldly desires, such as drunkenness and covetousness, which lead to spiritual death and separation from God. He contrasts the miserable state of those who prioritize material wealth and pleasures with the true life found in living according to the Spirit, which brings righteousness, peace, and eternal blessings. Chrysostom emphasizes the importance of mortifying the flesh, not in its essence, but in its inclination towards sinful deeds, to experience true life and freedom from the bondage of sin.

Transcript

Rom. VII. 14

For we know that the Law is spiritual: but I am carnal, sold under sin.

After having said that great evils had taken place, and that sin, taking occasion by the commandment, had grown stronger, and the opposite of what the Law mainly aimed at had been the result, and after having thrown the hearer into a great deal of perplexity, he goes on next to give the rationale of these events, after first clearing the Law of any ill suspicion. For lest -- upon hearing that it was through the commandment that sin took that occasion, and that it was when it came that sin revived, and through it deceived and killed -- any one should suppose the Law to be the source of these evils, he first sets forth its defense with considerable advantage, not clearing it from accusation only, but encircling it also with the utmost praise.

And this he lays down, not as granting it for his own part, but as declaring a universal judgment. For we know, he says, that the Law is spiritual. As if he had said, This is an allowed thing, and self-evident, that it is spiritual, so far is it from being the cause of sin, or to blame for the evils that have happened. And observe, that he not only clears it of accusation, but bestows exceeding great praise upon it. For by calling it spiritual, he shows it to be a teacher of virtue and hostile to vice; for this is what being spiritual means, leading off from sin of every kind.

And this the Law did do, by frightening, admonishing, chastening, correcting, recommending every kind of virtue. Whence then, was sin produced, if the teacher was so admirable? It was from the listlessness of its disciples. Wherefore he went on to say, but I am carnal; giving us a sketch now of man, as comporting himself in the Law, and before the Law. Sold under sin. Because with death (he means) the throng of passions also came in. For when the body had become mortal, it was henceforth a necessary thing for it to receive concupiscence, and anger, and pain, and all the other passions, which required a great deal of wisdom (φιλοσοφίας) to prevent their flooding us, and sinking reason in the depth of sin.

For in themselves they were not sin, but, when their extravagancy was unbridled, it wrought this effect. Thus (that I may take one of them and examine it as a specimen) desire is not sin: but when it has run into extravagance, being not minded to keep within the laws of marriage, but springing even upon other men's wives; then the thing henceforward becomes adultery, yet not by reason of the desire, but by reason of its exorbitancy. And observe the wisdom of Paul. For after praising the Law, he hastens immediately to the earlier period, that he may show the state of our race, both then and at the time it received the Law, and make it plain how necessary the presence of grace was, a thing he labored on every occasion to prove.

For when he says, sold under sin, he means it not of those who were under the Law only, but of those who had lived before the Law also, and of men from the very first. Next he mentions the way in which they were sold and made over.

Ver. 15. For that which I do, I know not.

What does the I know not mean?-- I am ignorant. And when could this ever happen? For nobody ever sinned in ignorance. Do you see, that if we do not receive his words with the proper caution, and keep looking to the object of the Apostle, countless incongruities will follow? For if they sinned through ignorance, then they did not deserve to be punished. As then he said above, for without the Law sin is dead, not meaning that they did not know they were sinning, but that they knew indeed, but not so distinctly; wherefore they were punished, but not so severely: and again; I should not have known lust; not meaning an entire ignorance of it, but referring to the most distinct knowledge of it; and said, that it also wrought in me all manner of concupiscence, not meaning to say that the commandment made the concupiscence, but that sin through the commandment introduces an intense degree of concupiscence; so here it is not absolute ignorance that he means by saying, For what I do, I know not; since how then would he have pleasure in the law of God in his inner man? What then is this, I know not? I get dizzy, he means, I feel carried away, I find a violence done to me, I get tripped up without knowing how. Just as we often say, Such an one came and carried me away with him, without my knowing how; when it is not ignorance we mean as an excuse, but to show a sort of deceit, and circumvention, and plot. For what I would, that I do not: but what I hate, that I do. How then can you be said not to know what you are doing? For if you will the good, and hate the evil, this requires a perfect knowledge. Whence it appears that he says, that I would not, not as denying free will, or as adducing any constrained necessity. For if it was not willingly, but by compulsion, that we sinned, then the punishments that took place before would not be justifiable. But as in saying I know not, it was not ignorance he set before us, but what we have said; so in adding the that I would not, it is no necessity he signifies, but the disapproval he felt of what was done. Since if this was not his meaning in saying, That which I would not, that I do: he would else have gone on, But I do what I am compelled and enforced to. For this is what is opposed to willing and power (ἐξουσία & 139.). But now he does not say this, but in the place of it he has put the word, that I hate, that you might learn how when he says, that I would not, he does not deny the power. Now, what does the that I would not mean? It means, what I praise not, what I do not approve, what I love not. And in contradistinction to

this, he adds what follows; But what I hate, that I do.

Ver. 16. If then I do that which I would not, I consent unto the Law, that it is good.

You see here, that the understanding is not yet perverted, but keeps up its own noble character even during the action. For even if it does pursue vice, still it hates it the while, which would be great commendation, whether of the natural or the written Law. For that the Law is good, is (he says) plain, from the fact of my accusing myself, when I disobey the Law, and hate what has been done. And yet if the Law was to blame for the sin, how comes it that he felt a delight in it, yet hated what it orders to be done? For, I consent, he says, unto the Law, that it is good.

Ver 17, 18. Now then it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwells in me. For I know that in me, that is, in my flesh, dwells no good thing.

On this text, those who find fault with the flesh, and contend it was no part of God's creation, attack us. What are we to say then? Just what we did before, when discussing the Law: that as there he makes sin answerable for everything so here also. For he does not say, that the flesh works it, but just the contrary, it is not I that do it, but sin that dwells in me. But if he does say that there dwells no good thing in it, still this is no charge against the flesh. For the fact that no good thing dwells in it, does not show that it is evil itself. Now we admit, that the flesh is not so great as the soul, and is inferior to it, yet not contrary, or opposed to it, or evil; but that it is beneath the soul, as a harp beneath a harper, and as a ship under the pilot. And these are not contrary to those who guide and use them, but go with them entirely, yet are not of the same honor with the artist. As then a person who says, that the art resides not in the harp or the ship, but in the pilot or harper, is not finding fault with the instruments, but pointing out the great difference between them and the artist; so Paul in saying, that in my flesh dwells no good thing, is not finding fault with the body, but pointing out the soul's superiority. For this it is that has the whole duty or pilotage put into its hands, and that of playing. And this Paul here points out, giving the governing power to the soul, and after dividing man into these two things, the soul and the body, he says, that the flesh has less of reason, and is destitute of discretion, and ranks among things to be led, not among things that lead. But the soul has more wisdom, and can see what is to be done and what not, yet is not equal to pulling in the horse as it wishes. And this would be a charge not against the flesh only, but against the soul also, which knows indeed what it ought to do, but still does not carry out in practice what seems best to it. For to will, he says, is present with me; but how to perform that which is good, I find not. Here again in the words, I find not, he does not speak of any ignorance or perplexity, but a kind of thwarting and crafty assault made by sin, which he therefore points more clearly out in the next words.

Ver. 19, 20. For the good that I would I do not: but the evil which I would not that I do. Now if I do that I would not, it is no more I that do it but sin that dwells in me.

Do you see, how he acquits the essence of the soul, as well as the essence of the flesh, from accusation, and removes it entirely to sinful actions? For if the soul wills not the evil, it is cleared: and if he does not work it himself, the body too is set free, and the whole may be charged upon the evil moral choice. Now the essence of the soul and body and of that choice are not the same, for the two first are God's works, and the other is a motion from ourselves towards whatever we please to direct it. For willing is indeed natural (■ μόνον), and is from God: but willing on this wise is our own, and from our own mind.

Ver. 21. I find then a law, that when I would do good, evil is present with me.

What he says is not very clear. What then is it that is said? I praise the law, he says, in my conscience, and I find it pleads on my side so far as I am desirous of doing what is right, and that it invigorates this wish. For as I feel a pleasure in it, so does it yield praise to my decision. Do you see how he shows, that the knowledge of what is good and what is not such is an original and fundamental part of our nature, and that the Law of Moses praises it, and gets praise from it? For above he did not say so much as I get taught by the Law, but I consent to the Law; nor further on that I get instructed by it, but I delight in it. Now what is I delight? It is, I agree with it as right, as it does with me when wishing to do what is good. And so the willing what is good and the not willing what is evil was made a fundamental part of us from the first. But the Law, when it came, was made at once a stronger accuser in what was bad, and a greater praiser in what was good. Do you observe that in every place he bears witness to its having a kind of intensitiveness and additional advantage, yet nothing further? For though it praises and I delight in it, and wish what is good the evil is still present with me, and the agency of it has not been abolished. And thus the Law, with a man who determines upon doing anything good, only acts so far as auxiliary to him, as that it has the same wish as himself. Then since he had stated it indistinctly, as he goes on he gives a yet more distinct interpretation, by showing how the evil is present, how too the Law is a law to such a person only who has a mind to do what is good.

Ver. 22. For I delight, he says, in the law of God after the inward man.

He means, for I knew even before this what was good, but when I find it set down in writing, I praise it.

Ver. 23. But I see another law warring against the law of my mind.

Here again he calls sin a law warring against the other, not in respect of good order, but from the strict obedience yielded to it by those who comply with it. As then it gives the name of master κ■πιον Matthew 6:24; Luke 16:13 to Mammon, and of god Philippians 3:19 to the belly, not because of their intrinsically deserving it, but because of the extreme obsequiousness of their subjects; so here he calls sin a law, owing to those who are so obsequious to it, and are afraid to leave it, just as those who have received the Law dread leaving the Law.

This then, he means, is opposed to the law of nature; for this is what is meant by the law of my mind. And he next represents an array and battle, and refers the whole struggle to the law of nature. For that of Moses was subsequently added over and above: yet still both the one and the other, the one as teaching, the other as praising what was right, wrought no great effects in this battle; so great was the thralldom of sin, overcoming and getting the upper hand as it did. And this Paul setting forth, and showing the decided (κατ■ κ■πιος) victory it had, says, I see another law warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity.

He does not use the word conquering only, but bringing me into captivity to the law of sin. He does not say the bent of the flesh, or the nature of the flesh, but the law of sin. That is, the thrall, the power. In what sense then does he say, Which is in my members? Now what is this? Surely it does not make the members to be sin, but makes them as distinct from sin as possible. For that which is in a thing is diverse from that wherein it is. As then the commandment also is not evil, because by it sin took occasion, so neither is the nature of the flesh, even if sin subdues us by means of it.

For in this way the soul will be evil, and much more so too, since it has authority in matters of action. But these things are not so, certainly they are not. Since neither if a tyrant and a robber were to take possession of a splendid mansion and a king's court, would the circumstance be any discredit to the

house, inasmuch as the entire blame would come on those who contrived such an act. But the enemies of the truth, along with their impiety, fall unawares also into great unreasonableness.

For they do not accuse the flesh only, but they also disparage the Law. And yet if the flesh were evil, the Law would be good. For it wars against the Law, and opposes it. If, however, the Law be not good, then the flesh is good. For it wars and fights against it even by their own account. How come they then to assert that both belong to the devil, putting things opposed to each other before us? Do you see, along with their impiety, how great is their unreasonableness also? But such doctrines as these are not the Church's, for it is the sin only that she condemns; and both the Laws which God has given, both that of nature and that of Moses, she says are hostile to this, and not to the flesh; for the flesh she denies to be sin, for it is a work of God's, and one very useful too in order to virtue, if we live soberly.

Ver. 24. O wretched man that I am! Who shall deliver me from the body of this death?

Do you notice what a great thralldom that of vice is, in that it overcomes even a mind that delighted in the Law? For no one can rejoin, he means, that I hate the Law and abhor it, and so sin overcomes me. For I delight in it, and consent to it, and flee for refuge to it, yet still it had not the power of saving one who had fled to it. But Christ saved even one that fled from Him. See what a vast advantage grace has! Yet the Apostle has not stated it thus; but with a sigh only, and a great lamentation, as if devoid of any to help him, he points out by his perplexity the might of Christ, and says, O wretched man that I am! Who shall deliver me from the body of this death? The Law has not been able: conscience has proved unequal to it, though it praised what was good, and did not praise it only, but even fought against the contrary of it. For by the very words wars against he shows that he was marshalled against it for his part. From what quarter then is one to hope for salvation?

Ver. 25. I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Observe how he shows the necessity of having grace present with us, and that the well-doings herein belong alike to the Father and the Son. For if it is the Father Whom he thanks, still the Son is the cause of this thanksgiving. But when you hear him say, Who shall deliver me from the body of this death? do not suppose him to be accusing the flesh. For he does not say body of sin, but body of death: that is, the mortal body -- that which has been overcome by death, not that which gendered death.

And this is no proof of the evil of the flesh, but of the marring (■ πηρε■ας, thwarting) it has undergone. As if any one who was taken captive by the savages were to be said to belong to the savages, not as being a savage, but as being detained by them: so the body is said to be of death, as being held down thereby, not as producing it. Wherefore also it is not the body that he himself wishes to be delivered from, but the mortal body, hinting, as I have often said, that from its becoming subject to suffering, it also became an easy prey to sin.

Why then, it may be said, the thralldom of sin being so great before the times of grace, were men punished for sinning? Because they had such commands given them as might even under sin's dominion be accomplished. For he did not draw them to the highest kind of conversation, but allowed them to enjoy wealth, and did not forbid having several wives, and to gratify anger in a just cause, and to make use of luxury within bounds. Matthew 5:38 And so great was this condescension, that the written Law even required less than the law of nature.

For the law of nature ordered one man to associate with one woman throughout. And this Christ shows in the words, He which made them at the beginning, made them male and female. Matthew 19:4 But the Law of Moses neither forbade the putting away of one and the taking in of another, nor prohibited the having of two at once! Matthew 5:31 And besides this there are also many other ordinances of the Law, that one might see those who were before its day fully performing, being instructed by the law of nature.

They therefore who lived under the old dispensation had no hardship done them by so moderate a system of laws being imposed upon them. But if they were not, on these terms, able to get the upper hand, the charge is against their own listlessness. Wherefore Paul gives thanks, because Christ, without any rigorousness about these things, not only demanded no account of this moderate amount, but even made us able to have a greater race set before us. And therefore he says, I thank my God through Jesus Christ.

And letting the salvation which all agreed about pass, he goes from the points he had already made good, to another further point, in which he states that it was not our former sins only that we were freed from, but we were also made invincible for the future. For there is, he says, now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh. Yet he did not say it before he had first recalled to mind our former condition again in the words, So then with the mind I myself serve the law of God, but with the flesh the law of sin.

Chap. viii. ver. 1. There is therefore no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus.

Then as the fact that many fall into sin even after baptism presented a difficulty (■ ντ■πιπτεν), he consequently hastened to meet it, and says not merely to them that are in Christ Jesus, but adds, who walk not after the flesh; so showing that all afterward comes of our listlessness. For now we have the power of walking not after the flesh, but then it was a difficult task. Then he gives another proof of it by the sequel, in the words,

Ver. 2. For the law of the Spirit of life has made me free.

It is the Spirit he is here calling the law of the Spirit. For as he calls sin the law of sin, so he here calls the Spirit the law of the Spirit. And yet he named that of Moses as such, where he says, For we know that the Law is spiritual. What then is the difference? A great and unbounded one. For that was spiritual, but this is a law of the Spirit. Now what is the distinction between this and that? The other was merely given by the Spirit, but this even furnishes those that receive it with the Spirit in large measure. Wherefore also he called it the law of life in contradistinction to that of sin, not that of Moses. For when he says, It freed me from the law of sin and death, it is not the law of Moses that he is here speaking of, since in no case does he style it the law of sin: for how could he one that he had called just and holy so often, and destructive of sin too? But it is that which wars against the law of the mind. For this grievous war did the grace of the Spirit put a stop to, by slaying sin, and making the contest light to us and crowning us at the outstart, and then drawing us to the struggle with abundant help. Next as it is ever his wont to turn from the Spirit to the Son and the Father, and to reckon all our estate to lean upon the Trinity, so does he here also. For after saying, Who shall deliver me from the body of this death, he pointed at the Father as doing this by the Son, then again at the Holy Spirit along with the Son. For the law of the Spirit of Life in Christ Jesus has made me free, he says. Then again, at the Father and the Son;

Ver. 3. For what the Law could not do, he says, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh.

Again, he seems indeed to be disparaging the Law. But if any one attends strictly, he even highly praises it, by showing that it harmonizes with Christ, and gives preference to the same things. For he does not speak of the badness of the Law, but of what it could not do; and so again, in that it was weak, not, in that it was mischievous, or designing. And even weakness he does not ascribe to it, but to the flesh, as he says, in that it was weak through the flesh, using the word flesh here again not for the essence and subsistency itself, but giving its name to the more carnal sort of mind.

In which way he acquits both the body and the Law of any accusation. Yet not in this way only, but by what comes next also. For supposing the Law to be of the contrary part, how was it Christ came to its assistance, and fulfilled its requisitions, and lent it a helping hand by condemning sin in the flesh? For this was what was lacking, since in the soul the Lord had condemned it long ago. What then? Is it the greater thing that the Law accomplished, but the less that the Only-Begotten did?

Surely not. For it was God that was the principal doer of that also, in that He gave us the law of nature, and added the written one to it. Again, there were no use of the greater, if the lesser had not been supplied. For what good is it to know what things ought to be done, if a man does not follow it out? None, for it were but a greater condemnation. And so He that has saved the soul it is, Who has made the flesh also easy to bridle. For to teach is easy, but to show besides a way in which these things were easily done, this is the marvel.

Now it was for this that the Only-Begotten came, and did not depart before He had set us free from this difficulty. But what is greater, is the method of the victory; for He took none other flesh, but this very one which was beset with troubles. So it is as if any one were to see in the street a vile woman of the baser sort being beaten, and were to say he was her son, when he was the king's, and so to get her free from those who ill treated her. And this He really did, in that He confessed that He was the Son of Man, and stood by it (i.e. the flesh), and condemned the sin.

However, He did not endure to smite it besides; or rather, He smote it with the blow of His death, but in this very act it was not the smitten flesh which was condemned and perished, but the sin which had been smiting. And this is the greatest possible marvel. For if it were not in the flesh that the victory took place, it would not be so astonishing, since this the Law also wrought. But the wonder is, that it was with the flesh (μετὰ σαρκός) that His trophy was raised, and that what had been overthrown numberless times by sin, did itself get a glorious victory over it.

For behold what strange things there were that took place! One was, that sin did not conquer the flesh; another, that sin was conquered, and conquered by it too. For it is not the same thing not to get conquered, and to conquer that which was continually overthrowing us. A third is, that it not only conquered it, but even chastised it. For by not sinning it kept from being conquered, but by dying also, He overcame and condemned it, having made the flesh, that before was so readily made a mock of by it, a plain object of fear to it.

In this way then, He at once unnerved its power, and abolished the death by it introduced. For so long as it took hold of sinners, it with justice kept pressing to its end. But after finding a sinless body, when it had given it up to death, it was condemned as having acted unjustly. Do you observe, how many proofs of victory there are? The flesh not being conquered by sin, Its even conquering and condemning it, Its not condemning it barely, but condemning it as having sinned.

For after having convicted it of injustice, he proceeds to condemn it, and that not by power and might barely, but even by the rules of justice. For this is what he means by saying, for sin condemned sin in the flesh. As if he had said that he had convicted it of great sin, and then condemned it. So you see it is sin that gets condemned everywhere, and not the flesh, for this is even crowned with honor, and has to give sentence against the other. But if he does say that it was in the likeness of flesh that he sent the Son, do not therefore suppose that His flesh was of a different kind.

For as he called it sinful, this was why he put the word likeness. For sinful flesh it was not that Christ had, but like indeed to our sinful flesh, yet sinless, and in nature the same with us. And so even from this it is plain that by nature the flesh was not evil. For it was not by taking a different one instead of the former, nor by changing this same one in substance, that Christ caused it to regain the victory: but He let it abide in its own nature, and yet made it bind on the crown of victory over sin, and then after the victory raised it up, and made it immortal. What then, it may be said, is this to me, whether it was this flesh that these things happened in? Nay, it concerns you very much. Wherefore also he proceeds:

Ver. 4. That the righteousness of the Law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh.

What means this word, righteousness? Why, the end, the scope, the well-doing. For what was its design, and what did it enjoin? To be without sin. This then is made good to us (κατὰ ρῥωταὶ μὲν) now through Christ. And the making a stand against it, and the getting the better of it, came from Him. But it is for us to enjoy the victory. Then shall we never sin henceforth? We never shall unless we have become exceedingly relaxed and supine. And this is why he added, to them that walk not after the flesh. For lest, after hearing that Christ has delivered you from the war of sin, and that the requisition (δικαίωμα) of the Law is fulfilled in you, by sin having been condemned in the flesh, you should break up all your defences; therefore, in that place also, after saying, there is therefore no condemnation, he added, to them that walk not after the flesh; and here also, that the requisition of the Law might be fulfilled in us, he proceeds with the very same thing; or rather, not with it only, but even with a much stronger thing. For after saying, that the righteousness of the Law might be fulfilled in us that walk not after the flesh, he proceeds, but after the Spirit.

So showing, that it is not only binding upon us to keep ourselves from evil deeds, but also to be adorned (κομμεν) with good. For to give you the crown is His; but it is yours to hold it fast when given. For the righteousness of the Law, that one should not become liable to its curse, Christ has accomplished for you. Be not a traitor then to so great a gift, but keep guarding this goodly treasure. For in this passage he shows that the Font will not suffice to save us, unless, after coming from it, we display a life worthy of the Gift. And so he again advocates the Law in saying what he does. For when we have once become obedient to Christ, we must use all ways and plans so that its righteousness, which Christ fulfilled, may abide in us, and not come to naught.

Ver. 5. For they that are after the flesh do mind the things of the flesh.

Yet even this is no disparaging of the flesh. For so long as it keeps its own place, nothing amiss comes to pass. But when we let it have its own will in everything, and it passes over its proper bounds, and rises up against the soul, then it destroys and corrupts everything, yet not owing to its own nature, but to its being out of proportion, and the disorder thereupon ensuing. But they that are after the Spirit do mind the things of the Spirit.

Ver. 6. For to be carnally minded is death. He does not speak of the nature of the flesh, or the essence of the body, but of being carnally minded, which may be set right again, and abolished. And in saying thus, he does not ascribe to the flesh any reasoning power of its own. Far from it. But to set forth the grosser motion of the mind, and giving this a name from the inferior part, and in the same way as he often is in the habit of calling man in his entireness, and viewed as possessed of a soul, flesh. But to be spiritually minded. Here again he speaks of the spiritual mind, in the same way as he says further on, But He that searches the hearts knows what is the mind of the spirit Romans 8:27; and he points out many blessings resulting from this, both in the present life, and in that which is to come. For as the evils which being carnally minded introduces, are far outnumbered by those blessings which a spiritual mind affords. And this he points out in the words life and peace. The one is in contraposition to the first -- for death is what he says to be carnally minded is. And the other in contraposition to the following. For after mentioning peace, he goes on,

Ver. 7. Because the carnal mind is enmity against God: and this is worse than death. Then to show how it is at once death and enmity; for it is not subject to the Law of God, he says, neither indeed can be. But be not troubled at hearing the neither indeed can be. For this difficulty admits of an easy solution. For what he here names carnal mindedness is the reasoning (or way of thinking, λογισμ^{ον}) that is earthly, gross, and eager-hearted after the things of this life and its wicked doings.

It is of this he says neither yet can it be subject to God. And what hope of salvation is there left, if it be impossible for one who is bad to become good? This is not what he says. Else how would Paul have become such as he was? How would the (penitent) thief, or Manasses, or the Ninevites, or how would David after falling have recovered himself? How would Peter after the denial have raised himself up? 1 Corinthians 5:5 How could he that had lived in fornication have been enlisted among Christ's fold? 2 Corinthians 2:6-11 How could the Galatians who had fallen from grace Galatians 5:4, have attained their former dignity again?

What he says then is not that it is impossible for a man that is wicked to become good, but that it is impossible for one who continues wicked to be subject to God. Yet for a man to be changed, and so become good, and subject to Him, is easy. For he does not say that man cannot be subject to God, but, wicked doing cannot be good. As if he had said, fornication cannot be chastity, nor vice virtue. And this it says in the Gospel also, A corrupt tree cannot bring forth good fruit Matthew 7:18, not to bar the change from virtue to vice, but to say how incapable continuance in vice is of bringing forth good fruits.

For He does not say that an evil tree cannot become a good one, but that bring forth good fruit it cannot, while it continues evil. For that it can be changed, He shows from this passage, and from another parable, when He introduces the tares as becoming wheat, on which score also He forbids their being rooted up; Lest, He says, ye root up also the wheat with them Matthew 13:29; that is, that which will spring (γενεσθαι, 4 manuscripts τεκυσθαι) from them. It is vice then he means by carnal mindedness, and by spiritual mindedness the grace given, and the working of it discernible in the right determination of mind, not discussing in any part of this passage, a substance and an entity, but virtue and vice.

For that which you had no power to do under the Law, now, he means, you will be able to do, to go on uprightly, and with no intervening fall, if you lay hold of the Spirit's aid. For it is not enough not to walk after the flesh, but we must also go after the Spirit, since turning away from what is evil will not secure our salvation, but we must also do what is good. And this will come about, if we give our souls up to the Spirit, and persuade our flesh to get acquainted with its proper position, for in this way we shall make it also

spiritual; as also if we be listless we shall make our soul carnal.

For since it was no natural necessity which put the gift into us, but the freedom of choice placed it in our hands, it rests with you henceforward whether this shall be or the other. For He, on His part, has performed everything. For sin no longer wars against the law of our mind, neither does it lead us away captive as heretofore, for all that state has been ended and broken up, and the affections cower in fear and trembling at the grace of the Spirit. But if you will quench the light, and cast out the holder of the reins, and chase the helmsman away, then charge the tossing thenceforth upon yourself.

For since virtue has been now made an easier thing (for which cause also we are under far stricter obligations of religious living), consider how men's condition lay when the Law prevailed, and how at present, since grace has shone forth. The things which aforetime seemed not possible to any one, virginity, and contempt of death, and of other stronger sufferings, are now in full vigor through every part of the world, and it is not with us alone, but with the Scythians, and Thracians, and Indians, and Persians, and several other barbarous nations, that there are companies of virgins, and clans of martyrs, and congregations of monks, and these now grown even more numerous than the married, and strictness of fasting, and the utmost renunciation of property.

Now these are things which, with one or two exceptions, persons who lived under the Law never conceived even in a dream. Since you see then the real state of things voiced with a shriller note than any trumpet, let not yourself grow soft and treacherous to so great a grace. Since not even after the faith is it possible for a listless man to be saved! For the wrestlings are made easy that you may strive and conquer, nor that you should sleep, or abuse the greatness of the grace by making it a reason for listlessness, so wallowing again in the former mire. And so he goes on to say,

Ver. 8. So then they that are in the flesh cannot please God.

What then? Are we, it will be said, to cut our bodies in pieces to please God, and to make our escape from the flesh? And would you have us be homicides, and so lead us to virtue? You see what inconsistencies are gendered by taking the words literally. For by the flesh in this passage, he does not mean the body, or the essence of the body, but that life which is fleshly and worldly, and uses self-indulgence and extravagance to the full, so making the entire man flesh. For as they that have the wings of the Spirit, make the body also spiritual, so do they who bound off from this, and are the slaves of the belly, and of pleasure, make the soul also flesh, not that they change the essence of it, but that they mar its noble birth. And this mode of speaking is to be met with in many parts of the Old Testament also, to signify by flesh the gross and earthly life, which is entangled in pleasures that are not convenient. For to Noah He says, My Spirit shall not always make its abode in these men, because they are flesh. Genesis 6:3 as the Septuagint gives it And yet Noah was himself also compassed about with flesh. But this is not the complaint, the being compassed about with the flesh, for this is so by nature, but the having chosen a carnal life. Wherefore also Paul says, But they that are in the flesh cannot please God. Then he proceeds:

Ver. 9. But you are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit.

Here again, he does not mean flesh absolutely, but such sort of flesh, that which was in a whirl and thralldom of passions. Why then, it may be said, does he not say so, nor state any difference? It is to rouse the hearer, and to show that he that lives aright is not even in the body. For inasmuch as it was in a manner clear to every one that the spiritual man was not in sin, he states the greater truth that it was not in sin alone, that the spiritual man was not, but not even in the flesh was he henceforward, having become

from that very moment an Angel, and ascended into heaven, and henceforward barely carrying the body about.

Now if this be your reason for disparaging the flesh, because it is by its name that he calls the fleshly life, at this rate you are also for disparaging the world, because wickedness is often called after it, as Christ also said to His disciples, You are not of this world; and again to His brethren, He says, The world cannot hate you, but me it hates. John 15:19. Ibid. 7:7 And the soul too Paul must afterwards be calling estranged from God, since to those that live in error, he gives the name of men of the soul 1 Corinthians 2:14, ψυχικῆς A.V. natural.

But this is not so, indeed it is not so. For we are not to look to the bare words, but always to the sentiment of the speaker, and so come to a perfectly distinct knowledge of what is said. For some things are good, some bad, and some indifferent. Thus the soul and the flesh belong to things indifferent, since each may become either the one or the other. But the spirit belongs to things good, and at no time becomes any other thing. Again, the mind of the flesh, that is, ill-doing, belongs to things always bad.

For it is not subject to the law of God. If then you yield your soul and body to the better, you will have become of its part. If on the other hand thou yield to the worse, then are you made a partaker of the ruin therein, not owing to the nature of the soul and the flesh, but owing to that judgment which has the power of choosing either. And to show that these things are so, and that the words do not disparage the flesh, let us take up the phrase itself again, and sift it more thoroughly.

But you are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, he says. What then? Were they not in the flesh, and did they go about without any bodies? What sense would this be? You see that it is the carnal life that he intimates. And why did he not say, But you are not in sin? It is that you may come to know that Christ has not extinguished the tyranny of sin only, but has even made the flesh to weigh us down less, and to be more spiritual, not by changing its nature, but rather by giving it wings.

For as when fire comes in company with iron, the iron also becomes fire, though abiding in its own nature still; thus with them that believe, and have the Spirit, the flesh henceforth goes over into that manner of working, and becomes wholly spiritual, crucified in all parts, and flying with the same wings as the soul, such as was the body of him who here speaks. Wherefore all self-indulgence and pleasure he made scorn of, and found his self-indulgence in hunger, and stripes, and prisons, and did not even feel pain in undergoing them. 2 Corinthians 11 And it was to show this that he said, For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, etc. 2 Corinthians 4:17 So well had he tutored even the flesh to be in harmony with the spirit.

If so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you (ἐν πνεύματι.) He often uses this if so be, not to express any doubt, but even when he is quite persuaded of the thing, and instead of since, as when he says, If it is a righteous thing, for seeing it is a righteous thing with God to recompense tribulation to them that trouble you. 2 Thessalonians 1:6 Again, Have ye suffered so many things in vain, if it be yet in vain? Galatians 3:4

Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ. He does not say, if you have not, but he brings forward the distressing word, as applied to other persons. He is none of His, he says.

Ver. 10. And if Christ be in you.

Again, what is good he applies to them, and the distressing part was short and parenthetical. And that which is an object of desire, is on either side of it, and put at length too, so as to throw the other into shade. Now this he says, not as affirming that the Spirit is Christ, far from it, but to show that he who has the Spirit not only is called Christ's, but even has Christ Himself. For it cannot but be that where the Spirit is, there Christ is also. For wheresoever one Person of the Trinity is, there the whole Trinity is present. For It is undivided in Itself, and has a most entire Oneness. What then, it may be said, will happen, if Christ be in us? The body is dead because of sin; but the Spirit is life because of righteousness. You see the great evils that come of not having the Holy Spirit; death, enmity against God, inability to satisfy His laws, not being Christ's as we should be, the want of His indwelling. Consider now also what great blessings come of having the Spirit. Being Christ's, having Christ himself, vying with the Angels (for this is what mortifying the flesh is), and living an immortal life, holding henceforward the earnest of the Resurrection, running with ease the race of virtue. For he does not say so little as that the body is henceforward inactive for sin, but that it is even dead, so magnifying the ease of the race. For such an one without troubles and labors gains the crown. Then afterward for this reason he adds also, to sin, that you may see that it is the viciousness, not the essence of the body, that He has abolished at once. For if the latter had been done, many things even of a kind to be beneficial to the soul would have been abolished also. This however is not what he says, but while it is yet alive and abiding, he contends, it is dead. For this is the sign of our having the Son, of the Spirit being in us, that our bodies should be in no respect different from those that lie on the bier with respect to the working of sin (so the manuscripts Sav. of the body. The preceding words are slightly corrupt.) But be not affrighted at hearing of mortifying. For in it you have what is really life, with no death to succeed it: and such is that of the Spirit. It yields not to death any more, but wears out death and consumes it, and that which it receives, it keeps it immortal. And this is why after saying the body is dead, he does not say, but the Spirit 'lives,' but, is life, to point out that He (the Spirit) had the power of giving this to others also. Then again to brace up his hearer, he tells him the cause of the Life, and the proof of it. Now this is righteousness; for where there is no sin, death is not to be seen either; but where death is not to be seen, life is indissoluble.

Ver. 11. But if the Spirit of Him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you, He that raised up our Lord shall also quicken your mortal bodies by His Spirit that dwells in you.

Again, he touches the point of the Resurrection, since this was the most encouraging hope to the hearer, and gave him a security from what had happened unto Christ. Now be not thou afraid because you are compassed about with a dead body. Let it have the Spirit, and it shall assuredly rise again. What then, shall the bodies which have not the Spirit not rise? How then must all stand before the judgment-seat of Christ? Romans 14:10 or how will the account of hell be trustworthy? For if they that have not the Spirit rise not, there will not be a hell at all. What then is it which is said? All shall rise, yet not all to life, but some to punishment and some to life. John 5:29 This is why he did not say, shall raise up, but shall quicken. Daniel 12:2 And this is a greater thing than resurrection, and is given to the just only. And the cause of this honor he adds in the words, By His Spirit that dwells in you. And so if while here thou drive away the grace of the Spirit, and do not depart with it still safe, you will assuredly perish, though thou dost rise again. For as He will not endure then, if He see His Spirit shining in you, to give you up to punishment, so neither will He allow them, if He see It quenched, to bring you into the Bride-chamber, even as He admitted not those virgins. Matthew 25:12

Suffer not your body then to live in this world, that it may live then! Make it die, that it die not. For if it keep living, it will not live: but if it die, then shall it live. And this is the case with resurrection in general. For it

must die first and be buried, and then become immortal. But this has been done in the Font. It has therefore had first its crucifixion and burial, and then been raised. This has also happened with the Lord's Body. For that also was crucified and buried (7 manuscripts died) and rose again.

This then let us too be doing: let us keep continually mortifying it in its works. I do not mean in its substance -- far be it from me -- but in its inclinations towards evil doings. For this is a life too, or rather this only is life, undergoing nothing that is common to man, nor being a slave to pleasures. For he who has set himself under the rule of these, has no power even to live through the low spirits, the fears, and the dangers, and the countless throng of ills, that rise from them.

For if death must be expected, he has died, before death, of fear. And if it be disease he dreads, or affront, or poverty, or any of the other ills one cannot anticipate, he is ruined and has perished. What then can be more miserable than a life of this sort? But far otherwise is he that lives to the Spirit, for he stands at once above fears and grief and dangers and every kind of change: and that not by undergoing no such thing, but, what is much greater, by thinking scorn of them when they assail him.

And how is this to be? It will be if the Spirit dwell in us continually. For he does not speak of any short stay made thereby, but of a continual indwelling. Hence he does not say the Spirit which dwelt, but which dwells in us, so pointing to a continual abiding. He then is most truly alive, who is dead to this life. Hence he says, The Spirit is life because of righteousness. And to make the thing clearer, let me bring before you two men, one who is given up to extravagances and pleasures, and the deceitfulness of this life; and the other made dead to all these; and let us see which is more really the living one.

For let one of these two be very rich and much looked up to, keeping parasites and flatterers, and let us suppose him to spend the whole day upon this, in revelling and drunkenness: and let the other live in poverty, and fasting, and hard fare, and strict rules (φιλοσοφία 139.), and at evening partake of necessary food only; or if you will let him even pass two or three days without food. Which then of these two think we (3 manuscripts you) is most really alive? Men in general will, I know, reckon the former so, the man that takes his pleasure (Sav. σκίπτειντα, manuscripts τρυφειντα) and squanders his goods.

But we reckon the man that enjoys the moderate fare. Now then since it is still a subject of contest and opposition let us go into the houses of them both, and just at the very time too when in your judgment the rich man is living in truest sense, in the very season of self-indulgence, and when we have got in, let us look and see the real condition of each of these men. For it is from the actions that it appears which is alive and which dead. Shall we not find the one among his books, or in prayer and fasting, or some other necessary duty, awake and sober, and conversing with God?

But the other we shall see stupid in drunkenness, and in no better condition than a dead man. And if we wait till the evening, we shall see this death coming upon him more and more, and then sleep again succeeding to that: but the other we shall see even in the night keeping from wine and sleep. Which then shall we pronounce to be most alive, the man that lies in a state of insensibility, and is an open laughing-stock to everybody? Or the man that is active, and conversing with God?

For if you go up to the one, and tell him something he ought to know, you will not hear him say a word, any more than a dead man. But the latter, whether you choose to be in his company at night or by day, you will see to be an angel rather than a man, and will hear him speak wisdom about things in Heaven. Do you see how one of them is alive above all men living, and the other in a more pitiable plight even than the dead? And even if he have a mind to stir he sees one thing instead of another, and is like people that are

mad, or rather is in a worse plight even than they.

For if any one were to do them any harm, we should at once feel pity for the sufferer, and rebuke the doer of the wrong. But this man, if we were to see a person trample on him, we should not only be disinclined to pity, but should even give judgment against him, now that he was fallen. And will you tell me this is life, and not a harder lot than deaths unnumbered? So you see the self-indulgent man is not only dead, but worse than dead, and more miserable than a man possessed.

For the one is the object of pity, the other of hatred. And the one has allowance made him, the other suffers punishment for his madness. But if externally he is so ridiculous, as having his saliva tainted, and his breath stinking of wine, just consider what case his wretched soul, inhumed as it were in a grave, in such a body as this, is probably in. For one may look upon this as much the same as if one were to permit a damsel, comely, chaste, free-born, of good family, and handsome, to be trampled on, and every way insulted by a serving woman, that was savage, and disgusting, and impure; drunkenness being something of this sort.

And who, being in his senses, would not choose to die a thousand deaths, rather than live a single day in this way? For even if at daylight he were to get up, and seem to be sober from that revelling (or absurd show, κωμῶδες, 1 manuscript κῆμον) of his, still even then it is not the clear brightness of temperance which he enjoys, since the cloud from the storm of drunkenness still is hanging before his eyes. And even if we were to grant him the clearness of sobriety, what were he the better?

For this soberness would be of no service to him, except to let him see his accusers. For when he is in the midst of his unseemly deeds, he is so far a gainer in not perceiving those that laugh at him. But when it is day he loses this comfort even, and while his servants are murmuring, and his wife is ashamed, and his friends accuse him, and his enemies make sport of him, he knows it too. What can be more miserable than a life like this, to be laughed at all day by everybody, and when it is evening to do the same unseemly things afresh.

But what if you would let me put the covetous before you? For this is another, and even a worse intoxication. But if it be an intoxication, then it must be a worse death by far than the former, since the intoxication is more grievous. And indeed it is not so sad to be drunk with wine as with covetousness. For in the former case, the penalty ends with the sufferings (several manuscript sufferer,) and results in insensibility, and the drunkard's own ruin. But in this case the mischief passes on to thousands of souls, and kindles wars of sundry kinds upon all sides.

Come then and let us put this beside the other, and let us see what are the points they have in common, and in what again this is worse than it, and let us make a comparison of drunkards today. For with that blissful man, who lives to the Spirit, let them not be put at all in comparison, but only tried by one another. And again, let us bring the money-table before you, laden as it is with blood. What then have they in common, and in what are they like each other? It is in the very nature of the disease.

For the species of drunkenness is different, as one comes of wine, the other of money, but its way of affecting them is similar, both being alike possessed with an exorbitant desire. For he who is drunken with wine, the more glasses he has drunk off, the more he longs for; and he that is in love with money, the more he compasses, the more he kindles the flame of desire, and the more importunate he renders his thirst. In this point then they resemble each other. But in another the covetous man has the advantage (in a bad sense).

Now what is this? Why that the other's affection is a natural one. For the wine is hot, and adds to one's natural drought, and so makes drunkards thirsty. But what is there to make the other man always keep desiring more? How comes it that when he is increased in riches, then he is in the veriest poverty? This complaint then is a perplexing one, and has more of paradox about it. But if you please, we will take a view of them after the drunkenness also. Or rather, there is no such thing as ever seeing the covetous man after his drunkenness, so continual a state of intoxication is he in!

Let us then view them both in the state of drunkenness, and let us get a distinct notion which is the most ridiculous, and let us again figure to ourselves a correct sketch of them. We shall see then the man who dotes with his wine at eventide with his eyes open, seeing no one, but moving about at mere hap-hazard, and stumbling against such as fall in his way, and spewing, and convulsed, and exposing his nakedness in an unseemly manner. See Habakkuk 2:16 And if his wife be there, or his daughter, or his maid-servant, or anybody else, they will laugh at him heartily.

And now let us bring before you the covetous man. Here what happens is not deserving of laughter only, but even of a curse, and exceeding wrath, and thunderbolts without number. At present however let us look at the ridiculous part, for this man as well as the other has an ignorance of all, whether friend or foe. And like him too, though his eyes are open, he is blinded. And as the former takes all he sees for wine, so does this man take all for money. And his spewing is even more disgusting.

For it is not food that he vomits, but words of abuse, of insolence, of war, of death, that draws upon his own head lightnings without number from above. And as the body of the drunkard is livid and dissolving, so also is the other's soul. Or rather, even his body is not free from this disorder, but it is taken even worse, care eating it away worse than wine does (as do anger too and want of sleep), and by degrees exhausting it entirely. And he that is seized with illness from wine, after the night is over may get sober.

But this person is always drunken day and night, watching or sleeping, so paying a severer penalty for it than any prisoner, or person at work in the mines, or suffering any punishment more grievous than this, if such there be. Is it then life pray, and not death? Or rather, is it not a fate more wretched than any death? For death gives the body rest, and sets it free from ridicule, as well as disgrace and sins: but these drunken fits plunge it into all these, stopping up the ears, dulling the eyesight, keeping down the understanding in great darkness.

For it will not bear the mention of anything but interest, and interest upon interest, and shameful gains, and odious traffickings, and ungentlemanly and slavelike transactions, barking like a dog at everybody, and hating everybody, averse to everybody, at war with everybody, without any reason for it, rising up against the poor, grudging at the rich, and civil to nobody. And if he have a wife, or children, or friends, if he may not use them all towards getting gain, these are to him more his enemies than natural enemies.

What then can be worse than madness of this sort, and what more wretched? When a man is preparing rocks for his own self on every side, and shoals, and precipices, and gulfs, and pits without number, while he has but one body, and is the slave of one belly. And if any thrust you into a state office, you will be a runaway, through fear of expense. Yet to yourself you are laying up countless charges far more distressing than those, enlisting yourself for services not only more expensive, but also more dangerous, to be done for mammon, and not paying this tyrant a money contribution only, nor of bodily labor, torture to the soul, and grief, but even of your blood itself, that you may have some addition to your property (miserable and sorrow-stricken man!) out of this barbarous slavery.

Do you not see those who are taken day by day to the grave, how they are carried to tombs naked and destitute of all things, unable to take with them anything that is in the house, but bearing what clothes they have about them to the worm? Consider these day by day, and perchance the malady will abate, unless you mean even by such an occasion to be still more mad at the expensiveness of the funeral rites-- for the malady is importunate, the disease terrible! This then is why we address you upon this subject at every meeting, and constantly foment your hearing, that at all events by your growing accustomed to such thoughts, some good may come.

But be not contentious, for it is not only at the Day to come, but even before it, that this manifold malady brings with it sundry punishments. For if I were to tell you of those who pass their days in chains, or of one nailed to a lingering disease, or of one struggling with famine, or of any other thing whatsoever, I could point out no one who suffers so much as they do who love money. For what severer evil can befall one, than being hated by all men, than hating all men, than not having kindly feeling towards any, than being never satisfied, than being in a continual thirst, than struggling with a perpetual hunger, and that a more distressing one than what all men esteem such?

Than having pains day by day, than being never sober, than being continually in worries and harasses? For all these things, and more than these, are what the covetous set their shoulder to; in the midst of their gaining having no perception of pleasure, though scraping to themselves from all men, because of their desiring more. But in the case of their incurring a loss, if it be but of a farthing, they think they have suffered most grievously, and have been cast out of life itself.

What language then can put these evils before you? And if their fate here be such, consider also what comes after this life, the being cast out of the kingdom, the pain that comes from hell, the perpetual chains, the outer darkness, the venomous worm, the gnashing of teeth, the affliction, the sore straitening, the rivers of fire, the furnaces that never get quenched. And gathering all these together, and weighing them against the pleasure of money, tear up now this disease root and branch, that so receiving the true riches, and being set free from this grievous poverty, you may obtain the present blessings, and those to come, by the grace and love toward man, etc.

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