

Homily 18 on Romans

by St. John Chrysostom

St. John Chrysostom's homily emphasizes the critical link between hearing the Gospel, believing in God, and the necessity of preachers in this process.

Topics: "Faith And Grace", "Gods Election"

Description

John Chrysostom preaches about the importance of faith, hearing, and preaching in the salvation process, emphasizing the need to believe in God, hear His word, and have preachers sent to share the Gospel. He highlights the historical examples of Elijah and the remnant of believers to show that salvation comes through God's grace and election, not by works alone. Chrysostom urges the audience to reflect on their actions, be grateful for God's grace, and strive to live a life that glorifies God, reminding them of the consequences of unbelief and ingratitude.

Transcript

Romans X. 14, 15

How then shall they call on Him in Whom they have not believed? And how shall they believe in Him of Whom they have not heard? And how shall they hear without a preacher? And how shall they preach except they be sent? As it is written.

Here again he takes from them all excuse. For since he had said, I bear them record that they have a zeal of God, but not according to knowledge, and that being ignorant of God's righteousness, they submitted not themselves to it: he next shows, that for this ignorance itself they were punishable before God. This he does not say indeed so, but he makes it good by carrying on his discourse in the way of question, and so convicting them more clearly, by framing the whole passage out of objections and answers. But look further back. The Prophet, says he, said, Whosoever shall call upon the Name of the Lord shall be saved. Now somebody might say perhaps, But how could they call upon Him Whom they had not believed? Then there is a question from him after the objection; And why did they not believe? Then an objection again. A person certainly may say, And how could they believe, since they had not heard? Yet hear they did, he implies. Then another objection again. And how could they hear without a preacher? Then an answer again. Yet preach they did, and there were many sent forth for this very purpose. And whence does it appear that these are those persons sent? Then he brings the prophet in next, who says, How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the Gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings of good things! Isaiah 3:7 You see how by the kind of preaching he points out the preachers. For there was nothing else that these men

went about telling everywhere, but those unspeakable good things, and the peace made by God with men. And so by disbelieving, it is not we, he implies, whom you disbelieve, but Isaiah the prophet, who spoke many years ago, that we were to be sent, and to preach, and to say what we do say. If the being saved, then, came of calling upon Him, and calling upon Him from believing, and believing from hearing, and hearing from preaching, and preaching from being sent, and if they were sent, and did preach, and the prophet went round with them to point them out, and proclaim them, and say that these were they whom they showed of so many ages ago, whose feet even they praised because of the matter of their preaching; then it is quite clear that the not believing was their own fault only. And that because God's part had been fulfilled completely.

Ver. 16, 17. But they have not all obeyed the Gospel. For Esaias says, Lord, who has believed our report? So then faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God. Isaiah 53:1

Since they pressed him with another objection again to this effect, that if these were the persons sent upon the mission by God, all ought to have hearkened to them: observe Paul's judgment, and see how he shows that this very thing which made the confusion, did in fact do away with confusion and embarrassment. What offends you, O Jew, he would say, after so great and abundant evidence, and demonstration of the points? That all did not submit to the Gospel? Why this very thing, when taken along with the others, is of force to certify you of the truth of my statements, even in that some do not believe.

For this too the prophet foretold. Notice his unspeakable wisdom too; how he shows more than they were looking for, or expected him to have to say in reply. For what is it that you say? He means. Is it that all have not believed the Gospel? Well! Isaiah foretold this too from of old. Or rather, not this only, but even much more than this. For the complaint you make is Why did not all believe? But Isaiah goes further than this. For what is it he says? Lord, who has believed our report?

Then since he had rid himself of this embarrassment. by making the Prophet a bulwark against them, he again keeps to the line he was before upon. For as he had said that they must call upon Him, but that they who call must believe, and they who believe must hear first, but they who are to hear must have preachers, and the preachers be sent, and as he had shown that they were sent, and had preached; as he is going to bring in another objection again, taking occasion first of another quotation from the Prophet, by which he had met the objection a little back, he thus interweaves it, and connects it with what went before.

For since he had produced the Prophet as saying, Lord, who has believed our report (ἀκούει ἰσχυρῶς)? He happily seizes on the quotation, as proving what he says, So then faith comes by hearing (ἀκούει ἰσχυρῶς ἰσχυρῶς). And this he makes not a mere naked statement. But as the Jews were forever seeking a sign, and the sight of the Resurrection, and were gaping after the thing much; he says, Yet the Prophet promised no such thing, but that it was by hearing that we were to believe. Hence he makes this good first, and says, so then faith comes by hearing.

And then since this seemed a mean thing to say, see how he elevates it. For he says, I was not speaking of mere hearing, nor of the need of hearing men's words and believing them, but I mean a great sort of hearing. For the hearing is by the word of God. They were not speaking their own, but they were telling what they learned from God. And this is a higher thing than miracles. For we are equally bound to believe and to obey God, whether speaking or working miracles. Since both works and miracles come of His words.

For both the heaven and everything else was established in this way. Psalm 33:6-8 After showing then that we ought to believe the prophets, who always speak God's words, and not to look after anything more, he proceeds next to the objection I mentioned, and says,

Ver. 18. But I say, Have they not heard?

What, he means, if the preachers were sent, and did preach what they were bid, and these did not hear? Then comes a most perfect reply to the objection.

Yes, verily, their sound went into all the earth, and their words unto the ends of the world.

What do you say? He means. They have not heard? Why the whole world, and the ends of the earth, have heard. And have you, among whom the heralds abode such a long time, and of whose land they were, not heard? Now can this ever be? Sure if the ends of the world heard, much more must you. Then again another objection.

Ver. 19. But I say, Did not Israel know?

For what if they heard, he means, but did not know what was said, nor understand that these were the persons sent? Are they not to be forgiven for their ignorance? By no means. For Isaiah had described their character in the words, How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the Gospel of peace. Isaiah 52:7 And before him the Lawgiver himself. Hence he proceeds.

First Moses says, I will provoke you to jealousy by them that are no people, and by a foolish nation I will anger you. Deuteronomy 32:21

And so they ought even from him to have been able to distinguish the preachers, not from the fact of these disbelieving only, not from the fact of their preaching peace, not from the fact of their bringing the glad tidings of those good things, not from the word being sown in every part of the world, but from the very fact of their seeing their inferiors, those of the Gentiles, in greater honor. For what they had never heard, nor their forefathers, that wisdom did these on a sudden embrace (ἀ'¼' ἰτῖ'ἰ»ἰζῖῖῖῖῖῖ...ἰ½). And this was a mark of such intense honor, as should gall them, and lead them to jealousy, and to recollection of the prophecy of Moses, which said, I will provoke you to jealousy by them that are no people. For it was not the greatness of the honor alone that was enough to throw them upon jealousy, but the fact too that a nation had come to enjoy these things which was of so little account that it could hardly be considered a nation at all. For I will provoke you to jealousy, by them which are no nation, and by a foolish nation will I anger you. For what more foolish than the Greeks (Heathen, see pp. 373, 377)? Or what of less account? See how by every means God had given from of old indications and clear signs of these times, in order to remove their blindness. For it was not any little corner in which the thing was done, but in land, and in sea, and in every quarter of the globe. And they saw those in the enjoyment of countless blessings now, who had formerly been objects of their contempt. One should consider then that this is that people of which Moses said, I will provoke you to jealousy by them that are no people, and by a foolish nation will I anger you. Was it Moses only then that said this? No, for Isaiah also after Him says so. And this is why Paul said, First Moses, to show that a second will come who says the same things in a clearer and plainer way. As then he says above, that Esaias cries, so too here.

Ver. 20. But Esaias is very bold, and says.

Now what he means is something of this kind. He put a violence on himself, and was ambitious to speak, not some thing veiled over, but to set things even naked before your eyes, and choosing rather to run (Origen in loc.) into dangers from being plain spoken, than by looking to his own safety, to leave you any shelter for your impenetrableness; although it was not the manner of prophecy to say this so clearly; but still to stop your mouths most completely, he tells the whole beforehand clearly and distinctly. The whole! What whole? Why your being cast out, and also their being brought in; speaking as follows, I was found of them that sought Me not, I was made manifest of them that asked not after Me. Isaiah 65:1 Who then are they that sought not? Who they that asked not after Him? Clearly not the Jews, but they of the Gentiles, who hitherto had not known Him. As then Moses gave their characteristic mark in the words, no people and a foolish nation, so here also he takes the same ground to point them out from, viz. their extreme ignorance. And this was a very great blame to attach to the Jews, that they who sought Him not found Him, and they who sought Him lost Him.

Ver. 21. But unto Israel He says, All the day long have I stretched forth My hands unto a disobedient and gainsaying people. Isaiah 65:2

Observe now that difficulty, which so many make a subject of question, is discovered laid up from of old in the words of the Prophet, and with a clear solution to it too. And what is this? You heard Paul say before. What shall we say then? That the Gentiles which followed not after righteousness have attained unto righteousness. But Israel which followed after the law of righteousness has not attained to the law of righteousness. Romans 9:30-31 This Esaias also says here. For to say, I was found of them that sought me not, I was made manifest unto them which asked not after me, is the same with saying, that the Gentiles which followed not after righteousness have attained unto righteousness.

Then to show that what was happening was not of God's grace only, but also of the temper of those who came to Him, as also the casting off of the others came of the disputatiousness of those who disobeyed, hear what he proceeds with. But to Israel He says, All the day long have I stretched forth My hands to a disobedient and gainsaying people; here meaning by the day the whole period of the former dispensation. But the stretching out of the hands, means calling and drawing them to Him, and inviting them.

Then to show that the fault was all their own, he says to a disobedient and gainsaying people. You see what a great charge this is against them! For they did not obey Him even when He invited them, but they gainsaid Him, and that when they saw Him doing so, not once or twice or thrice, but the whole period. But others who had never known Him, had the power to draw Him to them. Not that he says they themselves had the power to do it, but to take away lofty imaginings even from those of the Gentiles, and to show that it was His grace that wrought the whole, He says, I was made manifest, and I was found.

It may be said, Were they then void of everything? By no means, for the taking of the things found, and the getting a knowledge of what was manifested to them, was what they contributed themselves. Then to prevent these saying, But why were You not made manifest to us also? He sets down what is more than this, that I not only was made manifest, but I even continue with My hands stretched out, inviting them, and displaying all the concern of an affectionate father, and a mother that is set on her child.

See how he has brought us a most lucid answer to all the difficulties before raised, by showing that it was from their own temper that ruin had befallen them, and that they are wholly undeserving of pardon. For though they had both heard and understood what was said, still not even then were they minded to come to Him. And what is far more, He did not cause them to hear these things and to understand them only, but

a thing which has more force to rouse them up and draw them to Him, when they were disobedient and gain-saying, He added to the others.

Now what is this? It is His exasperating them, and making them jealous. For you know the domineering might of the passion, and how great the power is which jealousy is naturally possessed of for bringing all disputatiousness to an end, and rousing those who have grown remiss. And why need one say this of man when in brutes without reason, and children before they are of full age, the power it shows is so great? For a child often will not submit to its father when it is called, but continues obstinate.

But when another child has notice taken of it, then it even though not called comes to its father's bosom, and what calling could not do, provoking to jealousy will. This then God also did. For He not only called and stretched out His hands, but stirred up in them the feeling of jealousy also, by bringing those far inferior to them (a thing which makes men excessively jealous) not into their good things, but (what was a much stronger step, and makes the feeling even more domineering,) into much greater good things, and of greater necessity than theirs, and such as they had never even fancied in a dream.

But still they did not submit. What pardon then do they deserve who exhibit such excessive obstinacy? None. Yet this he does not say himself, but leaves it to the consciences of his hearers, to gather it from the conclusion of what he had stated, and again also confirms it by what he goes on to in his usual wisdom. And this he did also above, by introducing objections both in the case of the Law see on Romans 7:7, pp. 420, I and of the people, which presented an accusation beyond the true one; and then in the answer, which was to overthrow this, yielding as much as he pleased, and as the case allowed, so as to make what he was saying not unwelcome. And this he does here, writing as follows:

Chap. xi. ver. 1. I say then, Hath God cast away His people whom He foreknew? God forbid.

And he introduces the form a person would use in doubt, as though taking occasion from what had been said, and after making this alarming statement, by the denial of it he causes the sequel to be allowed with readiness; and what by all the former arguments he had been laboring to show that he makes good here also. What then is this? That even if there be but a few saved, the promise yet stands good. This is why he does not merely say people, but people which He foreknew. Then proceeding with the proof that the people were not cast off, For I also am an Israelite, of the seed of Abraham, of the tribe of Benjamin.

I, he says, the instructor, the preacher. Now since this seemed contrary to what was said before in the words, Who has believed our report? and, All the day long have I stretched forth My hands to a disobedient and gainsaying people; and, I will provoke you to jealousy by them which are no people; he was not satisfied with the deprecation, nor with having said, God forbid, but makes it good by taking it up again and saying, God has not cast away His people. But this is not a confirmation, men may say, but an assertion. Observe then the confirmation, both the first, and that which follows it. For the first is that he was himself of that race. But He would not, if on the point of casting them off, have chosen from them him to whom He entrusted all the preaching, and the affairs of the world, and all mysteries, and the whole economy. This then is one proof, but the next, after it, is his saying, that people whom He foreknew, that is, who He knew clearly were suited to it, and would receive the faith. Pocke on Hos. p. 23. See Acts 2:41; 4:4; 21:20 For three, five, even ten thousand were believers from among them. And so to prevent any from saying, Are you the people, then? And because you have been called, has the nation been called? He proceeds.

Ver. 2. He has not cast off His people, whom He foreknew.

As though he said, I have with me three, five, or ten thousand. What then? Has the people come to be three, five, or ten thousand? That seed that compared with the stars of heaven for multitude, or the sand of the sea? Is this the way you deceive us and put a cheat upon us, by making the whole people yourself and the few that are with you; and did you inflate us with idle hopes, and say that the promise has been fulfilled, when all are lost, and the salvation comes down to a few? This is all bombast and vanity! We cannot away with such sophistry as this! Now, that they may not say this, see how in the sequel he proceeds to the answer, not giving the objection indeed, but before it grounding the answer to it upon ancient history. What then is the answer?

Ver. 2-5. Do you not know, he says, what the Scripture says of Elias? How he (so most; manuscripts Sav. who) makes intercession to God against Israel, saying, Lord, they have killed Your prophets, and dug down Your altars; and I am left alone, and they seek my life. But what says the answer of God unto him? I have reserved to Myself seven thousand men, who have not bowed the knee to the image of Baal. Even so then at this present time also, there is a remnant according to the election of grace.

What he means is nearly this. God has not cast off His people. For had He done so, He would have admitted none of them. But if He did admit some, He has not cast them off. Still it is said, if He had not cast off, He would have admitted all. This does not follow; since in Elijah's time the part to be saved had come down to seven thousand: and now also there are probably many that believe. But if you do not know who they are, this is no wonder, for that prophet, who was so great and good a man, did not know.

But God ordered things for Himself when even the prophet knew them not. But consider his judgment. Now in proving what was before him, he covertly augments the charge against them. For this is why he gave the whole passage, that he might parade before them their untowardness, and show that they had been so from of old. For if he had not wished this, but had directed his whole attention to prove that the people lay in the few, he would have said that even in Elijah's time, seven thousand were left.

But now he reads to them the passage further back, as having been throughout at pains to show that it was no strange thing that they did with Christ, and the Apostles, but their habitual practice. For to prevent their saying that it was as a deceiver we put Christ to death, and as impostors that we persecute the Apostles, he brings forward the text which says, Lord, they have killed Your prophets, and dug down your altars. 1 Kings 19:14 Then in order not to make his discourse galling to them, he attaches another reason to the bringing forward of the text.

For he quotes it not as if it was on purpose to accuse them, but as if intent upon showing some other things. And he leaves them without any excuse even by what had before been done. For observe how strong the accusation is even from the person speaking. For it is neither Paul, nor Peter, nor James, nor John, but one whom they held in the greatest estimation, the chief of the Prophets, the friend of God, a man who had been so very zealous in their behalf as even to be given up to hunger for them, who even to this day has never died.

What then does this man say? Lord, they have killed Your prophets, and dug down Your altars; and I am left alone, and they seek my life. What could be more brutal cruelty than this? For when they should have besought pardon for the offenses they had already committed, they were minded even to kill him. And all these things put them quite beyond pardon. For it was not during the prevalence of the famine, but when the season was favorable, and their shame was done away, and the devils (i.e. false gods) had been put to shame, and the power of God had been shown, and the king had bowed beneath it, that they committed

these audacities, passing from murder to murder, and making away with their teachers, and such as would bring them to a better mind.

What then could they have to say to this? Were they too deceivers? Were they too impostors? Did they not know whence they were either? But they distressed you. Yes, but they also told you goodly things. But what of the altars? The altars too did not surely distress you? Did they too exasperate you? See of what obstinacy, of what insolence they were ever yielding proofs! This is why in another passage too Paul says, when writing to the Thessalonians, You also have suffered like things of your own countrymen, even as they have of the Jews, who both killed the Lord, and their own prophets, and have persecuted us, and please not God, and are contrary to all men 1 Thessalonians 2:14-15; which is what he says here too, that they both dug down the altars, and killed the prophets.

But what says the answer of God unto him? I have reserved to Myself seven thousand men who have not bowed the knee to the image of Baal. 1 Kings 19:18 And what has this to do with the present subject? Some may say. It has a great deal to do with the present subject. For he shows here that it is the worthy that God uses to save even if the promise be made to the whole nation. And this he pointed out above when he said, Though the number of the children of Israel be as the sand of the sea, a remnant shall be saved.

And, Except the Lord of Sabaoth had left us a seed, we should have become as Sodoma. Romans 9:27-29 And he points it out from this passage also. Wherefore he proceeds to say, Even so then at this present time also, there is a remnant according to the election of grace. Observe that each word maintains its own rank, showing at once God's grace, and the obedient temper of them that receive salvation. For by saying election, he showed the approval of them, but by saying grace, he showed the gift of God.

Ver. 6. And if by grace, then it is no more of works, otherwise grace is no more grace: but if it be of works, then is it no more grace, otherwise work is no more work.

He again springs upon the disputatiousness of the Jews, in what has just been quoted; and on this ground bereaves them of excuse. For you cannot, he means, so much as say, that the Prophets called indeed, and God invited, and the state of things cried aloud, and the provoking to jealousy was enough to draw us to Him, but what was enjoined was grievous, and this is why we could not draw near, since we had a display of works demanded of us, and laborious well-doings. For you cannot even say this.

For how should God have demanded this of you, when this would just throw His grace into the shade? And this he said out of a wish to show that He was most desirous that they might be saved. Deuteronomy 5:29 For not only would their salvation be easily brought about, but it was also God's greatest glory to display His love toward man. Why then are you afraid of drawing near, since you have no works demanded of you? Why are you bickering and quarrelsome, when grace is before you, and why keep putting me the Law forward to no purpose whatsoever?

For you will not be saved by that, and will mar this gift also; since if you pertinaciously insist on being saved by it, you do away with this grace of God. Then that they might not think this strange, having first taken those seven thousand; he said that they were saved by grace. For when he says, Even so then at this present time also there is a remnant according to the election of grace; he shows that they also were saved by grace. And not hereby only, but likewise by saying, I have reserved unto Myself.

For this is the language of One Who shows that He Himself was the chief Contributor. And if by grace, it will be said, how came we all not to be saved? Because ye would not. For grace, though it be grace, saves the willing, not those who will not have it, and turn away from it, who persist in fighting against it, and opposing themselves to it. Observe how throughout the point he is proving is, Not as though the Word of God had taken none effect, by showing that the worthy were those to whom the promise came, and that these, few though they be, may yet be the people of God; and indeed he had stated it in the beginning of the Epistle with much force, where he says, For what if some did not believe Romans 3:3, and did not even stop at this, but proceeded, Yea, let God be true, and every man a liar.

Romans 3:4 And here again he confirms it another way, and shows the force of grace, and that always the one were being saved, the other perished. Let us then give thanks, that we belong to them that are being saved, and not having been able to save ourselves by works, were saved by the gift of God. But in giving thanks, let us not do this in words only, but in works and actions. For this is the genuine thanksgiving, when we do those things whereby God is sure to be glorified, and flee from those from which we have been set free.

For if we, after insulting the King, instead of being punished have been honored, and then go and insult Him afresh, since we are detected in the utmost ingratitude, we should with justice have to suffer the utmost punishment, one greater far than the former. For the former insolence did not show us so ungrateful as that committed after honor and much attention shown us. Let us then flee those things from which we have been set free, and not give thanks with our mouths only, lest it be said of us also, This people honors Me with their lips, but with their heart is far from Me.

Isaiah 29:13 For how is it else than unseemly, when the heavens declare the glory of God Psalm 19:1, and thou, for whom the heavens were made that glorify Him, doest such things that through you the God that made you is blasphemed? It is for this that not only he that blasphemes, but yourself also, will be liable to punishment. For the heavens also do not glorify God by sending forth a voice but by putting others upon doing it at the sight of them, and yet they are said to declare the glory of God.

Thus too they that furnish a life to be wondered at, even though they hold their peace, yet glorify God, when others through them glorify Him. For He is not so much revered because of the heaven, as of a spotless life. When then we are discoursing with the Gentiles, we cite (4 manuscripts read or point to the reading, let us not cite) not the heavens before them, but the men, whom though they were in worse plight than brutes, He has persuaded to be the Angels' competitors.

And we (1 manuscripts let us) stop their mouths by speaking of this change. For far better than the heaven is man, and a soul brighter than their beauty may he possess. For it, though visible for so long a time, did not persuade much. But Paul, after preaching a short time, drew the whole world unto him. St. Augustine on Psalm 19:4 For he possessed a soul no less than the heaven, which was able to draw all men unto him. Our soul is not a match even for the earth: but his is equal to the heavens.

That stands indeed keeping to its own boundary and rule; but the loftiness of his soul transcended all the heavens, and conversed with Christ Himself. 2 Corinthians 10:15; Romans 15:19, etc. And the beauty of it was so great, that even God heralds it forth. For the stars did the angels marvel at when they were made. Job 38:7 But this He marvelled at when He says, He is a chosen vessel unto Me. Acts 9:15 And this Heaven does a cloud many times overshadow. But Paul's soul no temptation overshadowed but even in storms he was clearer to the sight than the hard sky (ĪfĪ,Ī±Ī,ĪµĪá¼...Ī, Ī¼ĪµĪfĪĪ¼Ī²ĪĪĪ±Ī,) at noon, and

It is possible to gain approval by your last will, not indeed in such way as in our lifetime, still it is possible. How, and in what way? If you leave Him among your heirs, and givest Him also (îôî±á½¶ Î±á½ï,á¾¥) a portion of your whole estate. Have you not fed Him in your lifetime? At all events when departed, when you are no longer owner, give Him a share of your goods. He is loving unto man, He does not deal niggardly by you. It is a mark to be sure of a greater desire, and so it will be more rewarded, to feed Him in your lifetime.

But if you have not done this, at all events do the next best thing. Leave Him joint-heir (see p. 384) with your children, and if you are dilatory over this, bethink yourself that His Father made you joint-heir with Him, and break down your inhuman spirit. For what excuse will you have if you dost not even make Him a sharer with your children, who made you share the Heaven, and was slain for you? And yet all that ever He did, He did not in repayment of a debt, but as bestowing a favor.

But you after so great benefits, have been made a debtor as well. And yet, though things are so, it is as if receiving a favor, not as demanding payment of a debt, that He crowns you; and this too when what He is to receive is His own. Give then your money, which is now no longer of any use to you, and of which you are no longer owner; and He will give you a Kingdom which shall be of service to you perpetually, and with it will bestow also the things of this life. For if He be made the joint heir of your children, He does lighten their orphanage for them, do away with plots against them, beat off insults, stop the mouths of pettifoggers.

And if they themselves be unable to stand up for their bequeathments, He will Himself stand up, and not let them be broken through. But if He do even allow this, then He makes up of Himself all that was ordered in the will with still greater liberality, because He has been but mentioned in it. Leave Him then your heir. For it is to Him that you are upon the point of going. He will be your Judge Himself in the trial for all that has been done here. But there are some so miserable and pinched, that though they have no children, still they have not the courage to do this, but approve of giving that they have to hangers on, and to flatterers, and to this person and to that, sooner than to Christ, Who has done them so great benefits.

And what can be more unreasonable than this conduct? For if one were to compare men of this cast to asses, aye, or to stones, one shall not still be saying anything tantamount to their unreasonableness and senselessness. Nor could one find a similitude to put before you their madness and dementedness. For what pardon shall they obtain for not having fed Him in their lifetime, who, even when they are on the point of departing to Him, have not the inclination to give Him but a trifle out of those goods, of which they are no longer the owners, but are of such an inimical and hostile disposition, as not even to give Him a share in what is useless to themselves?

Do you not know how many of mankind have not even been counted worthy to obtain an end of this kind, but have been snatched off suddenly? But you does God empower to give orders to your kindred, and to speak with them about your property, and set all that is in your house in order. What defense then will you have to set up, when even after receiving this favor from Him, you have treacherously given up the benefit, and art standing as it were in diametrical opposition to your forefathers in the faith?

For they even in their lifetime sold all, and brought it to the Apostle's feet. But you, even at your death, dost not give any share to them that need. What is the better part, and gives one much boldness, is to remedy poverty in one's lifetime. But if you have not been minded to do this, at all events do upon your death-bed some noble act. For this is not what a strong love for Christ would do, yet still it is an act of love.

For if you will not have the high place with the Lambs, still even to be after them at all is no light thing, and so not to be placed with the goats nor on the left hand.

But if you will not do even this, what plea is to rescue you, when neither the fear of death nor your money having become henceforth of no use to you, nor the leaving of safety behind you to your children, nor the laying up of much pardon there against the time to come, will make you merciful to man? Wherefore I advise, as the best thing, that in your lifetime you give the larger half of your goods to the poor. But if there be any of so narrow a soul as not to have the heart to do so, at all events let them by necessity become merciful.

For when you were living as if there were no death, then you clung close to your goods. But now since you have learned that you are to die, at least now give over your opinion, and deliberate about your affairs as one that must die. Or rather as one that ought to enjoy immortal life for evermore. For if what I am going to say be distasteful, and big with horror, still it must be said. Reckon with your slaves the Lord. Are you giving your slaves liberty? Give Christ liberty from famine, from distress, from imprisonment, from nakedness.

Are you horrified at the words? Is it not then more horrible when thou dost not even thus much? And here the word makes your blood curdle. But when you are gone to that world, and hast to hear things far more grievous than these, and see the tortures which are incurable, what will you say? To whom will you flee for refuge? Whom will you call to your alliance and assistance? Will it be Abraham? He will not hearken to you. Or those virgins? They will not give you of their oil.

Your father then or your grandfather? But none even of these, if he be ever so holy, will have it in his power to reverse that sentence. Weighing then all these things, to Him Who alone is Lord to blot out the bill against you and to quench that flame, to Him make prayer and supplication, and propitiate Him, by now feeding Him and clothing Him continually: that in this world you may depart with a good hope, and when you are there you may enjoy eternal blessings, which may we all attain to by the grace and love toward man, etc.

Source: <https://sermonindex.net/speakers/st-john-chrysostom/homily-18-on-romans/>

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