

Homily 2 on Romans

by St. John Chrysostom

St. John Chrysostom's Homily 2 on Romans highlights the importance of faith, love, and obedience, and demonstrates the humility and mutual faith of Paul and the Romans.

Scripture: Genesis 22:3, Romans 1:8, Romans 1:16-17, Hebrews 11:31

Topics: "Faith And Righteousness", "Salvation Through Faith"

Description

John Chrysostom preaches about the power of faith and the righteousness of God revealed through the Gospel, emphasizing the importance of not being ashamed of the message of the Cross. He highlights the universal nature of salvation, available to both Jews and Gentiles, through faith in Jesus Christ. Chrysostom encourages believers to trust in God's providence and not to question His ways, illustrating this with examples from the Old Testament. He urges the Romans to embrace faith, knowing that through it, they can receive the gift of salvation and righteousness from God.

Transcript

Rom. I. 8

First, I thank my God through Jesus Christ for you all, that your faith is spoken of throughout the whole world.

An exordium worthy of this blessed spirit, and able to teach all men to offer unto God the firstlings of their good deeds and words, and to render thanks not only for their own, but also for others' well-doings: which also makes the soul pure from envy and grudging, and draws God in a greater measure towards the loving spirit of them that so render thanks. Wherefore also elsewhere he says, Blessed be God and the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, Who has blessed us with all spiritual blessing.

Ephesians 1:3 And it is fitting that we render thanks not only when rich, but also when poor, not when in health only, but also when sick, not when we thrive only, but also when we have to bear the reverse. For when our affairs are borne onward with a fair wind, to be thankful is not matter of wonder. But when no small tempests be upon us, and the vessel veers about and is in jeopardy, then is the great time for displaying patience and goodness of heart. For this cause Job also gained a crown from hence, and the shameless mouth of the devil did he stop, and show clearly that not even when he saw good days was it through his wealth that he was thankful, but through his much love toward God.

And see too what things he is thankful for: not for things earthly and perishing, as power and authority and glory (for these things are of no account), but for real blessings, faith and boldness of speech. And with how much feeling he gives thanks: for he says not to God, but to my God, which also the Prophets do, so making that which is common to all their own. And what is there wonderful in the Prophets doing so? For God himself plainly does it continually to His servants, calling Himself the God of Abraham and Isaac and Jacob, as peculiarly theirs.

That your faith is spoken of throughout the whole world. What then, had the whole world heard of the faith of the Romans? Yes, the whole, according to him. (Or, since that time, π[α]σ[α] κ[α]τ[ε]ν[ο]υ). And it is not a thing unlikely. For the city was not one of no note, but as being upon a sort of eminence it was on every account conspicuous. But consider, I pray, the power of the preaching, how in a short time by means of publicans and fishermen it took hold upon the very head of all cities, and Syrians became the teachers and guides of Romans.

He attests then two excellencies in them, both that they believed, and that they believed with boldness, and that so great as that the fame of them reached into all the world. For your faith, he says is spoken of throughout the whole world. Your faith, not your verbal disputations, nor your questionings, nor your syllogisms. And yet there were there many hindrances to the teaching. For having recently acquired the empire of the world they were elated, and lived in riches and luxury, and fishermen brought the preaching there, and they Jews and of the Jews, a nation hated and had in abomination among all men; and they were bidden to worship the Crucified, Who was brought up in Judea.

And with the doctrine the teachers proclaimed also an austere life to men who were practised in softness, and were agitated about things present. And they that proclaimed it were poor and common men, of no family, and born of men of no family. But none of these things hindered the course of the word. So great was the power of the Crucified as to carry the word round everywhere. For it is spoken of, he says, in all the world. He says not, it is manifested, but, is spoken of, as if all men had them in their mouths.

And indeed when he bears witness of this in the Thessalonians, he adds another thing also. For after saying, from you sounded out the word of God, he adds, so that we need not to speak anything. 1 Thessalonians 1:8 For the disciples had come into the place of teachers, by their boldness of speech instructing all, and drawing them to themselves. For the preaching came not anywhere to a stand, but went over the whole world more rapidly than fire. But here there is only thus much -- it is spoken of.

He well says that it is spoken of, showing that there was no need to add anything to what was said, or to take away. For a messenger's business is this, to convey from one to another only what is told him. For which cause also the priest is called a messenger Malachi 2:7, because he speaks not his own words, but those of Him that sent him. And yet Peter had preached there. But he reckons what was his, to be his own as well. In such degree, as I said before, was he beyond measure clear of all grudging!

Ver. 9. For God is my witness, whom I serve with my spirit in the Gospel of His Son.

Words these of an Apostle's bowels of affection, the showing forth this of fatherly concernment! And what is it which he says, and why does he call God to witness? He had to declare his feeling toward them. Since then he had not as yet ever seen them, he therefore called no man to witness, but Him Who enters in the hearts. For since he was saying, I love you, and as a token thereof alleged his praying continually for them, and wishing to come to them, and neither was this self-evident, he betakes himself to the trustworthy testimony.

Will then any one of you be able to boast that he remembers, when praying at his house (■ π■ τ■ς ο■κ■αζ) the entire body of the Church? I think not. But Paul drew near to God in behalf not of one city only, but of the whole world, and this not once, or twice, or thrice, but continually. But if the continually bearing any one about in one's memory would not happen without much love; to have any in one's prayers, and to have them there continually, think what great affection and friendship that implies.

But when he says, Whom I serve with my spirit in the Gospel of His Son, he shows us at once the grace of God, and also his own humble-mindedness; the grace of God because He entrusted to him so great a matter; but his own humility, because he imputes it all not to his own zeal, but to the assistance of the Spirit. But the addition of the Gospel, shows the kind of ministry. For there are many and diverse modes of service. And as under kings all are ranged under one that bears kingly power, and all have not to minister (διακονο■νται) about the same thing, but to one belongs the ministry of ruling armies and to another that of ordering cities and to another again that of keeping treasures in the storehouses, thus also in spiritual things, one serves God and labors (λατρε■ει κα■δουλε■ει) in believing and ordering his own life well, and another in undertaking the care of strangers, and another in taking in hand the patronship of them that be in need.

As even during the Apostle's own time, they of Stephen's company served God in the guardianship of the widows, others (■ λλοι 2 manuscripts, all ■ ν) in the teaching of the word, of whom also Paul was serving in the preaching of the Gospel. And this was the fashion of his service: for it was to this that he was appointed. On this account, he not only calls God to witness, but also says what he was entrusted with, to show that having so great things put into his hands, he would not have called Him Who trusted them to him to witness what was false.

And therewith he wished to make another point out also, viz. that he could not but have this love and care for them. For that they might not say who are you? And, from whence? That you say that you are anxious over a city so great, and most imperial, he shows that he must needs have this care, if at least the sort of service that was committed to him, was to declare the Gospel: for he that has this put into his hands, must needs have continually upon his mind them that are to receive the word.

And he shows another thing besides this by saying, in my spirit; that this service is much higher than either the Gentile or the Jewish. For the Gentile is both fleshly and in error, and the Jewish is true indeed, yet even this is fleshly. But that of the Church is the opposite of the Gentile, but more lofty than the Jewish by a great deal. For the mode of our service is not with sheep and oxen and smoke and fat, but by a spiritual soul, which Christ also shows in saying that God is a Spirit, and they that worship Him must worship Him in spirit and in truth. John 4:24

In the Gospel of His Son. Having said above that it was the Father's Gospel, here he says it is the Son's. So indifferent is it to say the Father's or the Son's! For he had learned from that blessed voice that the things of the Father are the Son's, and the things of the Son are the Father's. For all Mine are Yours, and Yours are Mine. John 17:10

That without ceasing I make mention of you always in my prayers. This is the part of genuine love, and he seems indeed to be saying some one thing, yet states four things even here. Both that he remembers, and that he does so continually, and that it is in his prayers, and that it is to ask great things for them.

Ver. 10, 11. Making request, if by any means now at length I might have a prosperous journey by the will of God to come unto you.

You see him painfully desiring to see them, and yet not enduring to see them contrary to what seemed good unto God, but having his longing mingled with the fear of God. For he loved them, and was eager to come to them. Yet he did not, because he loved them, desire to see them, contrary to what seemed good unto God. This is true love, not as we love who err on both sides from the laws of love: for either we love no one, or if we ever do love, we love contrary to what seems good unto God, acting in both against the Divine law. And if these things be grievous (φορτικόν) when spoken of, they are more grievous when done. And how do we love contrary to what seems good to God? (you will say.) When we neglect Christ pining with hunger, and provide our children and friends and relations above their needs. Or rather what need to carry the subject further. For if any one will examine his own conscience, he will find that this takes place in many things. But such was not that blessed person, but he knew both how to love and to love as he ought (3 manuscripts omit as he ought), and as was fitting, and though exceeding all men in loving, he transgressed not the measures of love. See then two things thrive extremely in him, fear of God, and also longing towards the Romans. For to be praying continually, and not to desist when he obtained not, shows exceeding love. But while loving, thus to continue yielding to the will of God, shows intense reverence. In another place, however, having thrice besought the Lord 2 Corinthians 12:8, he not only did not receive, but on the contrary, when he did not receive, he was very thankful for not having been heard. So, in all things did he look to God. But here he received, though not when he asked, but after delay, and neither hereat was he discontented. And these things I mention that we may not repine at not being heard, or at being heard slowly. For we are not better than Paul, who confesses his thankfulness for both, and with good ground. For when he had once given himself up to the all-governing Hand, and put himself with as much subjection under it, as clay under the potter, he followed wheresoever God led. Having then said that he desired to see them, he mentioned also the cause of his desire; and what is it?

Ver. 11. That I may impart unto you some spiritual gift, to the end ye may be established.

For it was not merely as many now go travelling in a needless and profitless way that he also went, but for necessary and very urgent ends. And he does not tell them his meaning openly, but by way of hints, for he does not say that I may teach you, that I may instruct you, that I may fill up that which is wanting; but, that I may impart; showing, that it is not his own things which he is giving them, but that he was imparting to them what he had received. And here again he is unassuming, in saying some, he means, a small one, and suited to my powers. And what may this small one be which you are now going to impart? This it is, he says, to the end that you may be established. This then also comes of grace, namely, the being unwavering and standing fast. But when you hear of grace, think not that the reward of resolve on our part is thereby cast aside; for he speaks of grace, not to disparage the labor of resolve on our part, but to undermine (πυτυμνόμενος, as piercing a thing inflated) the haughtiness of an insolent spirit (πονομας). Do not thou then, because that Paul has called this a gift of grace, grow supine. For he knows how, in his great candor, to call even well doings, graces; because even in these we need much influence from above. But in saying, to the end that you may be established, he covertly shows that they needed much correction: for what he would say is this: Of a long time I have both desired and prayed to see you, for no other reason than that I may establish, strengthen, fix you thoroughly in the word of God, so that you be not continually wavering. But he does not express himself so (for he would have shocked them), but in another way he hints to them the same thing, though in a subdued tone. For when he says, to the end that you may be established, he makes this plain. Then since this also was very irksome, see how he softens it by the sequel. For that they may not say, are we wavering, and carried about? And need we speech of yours in order to stand fast? He anticipates and does away any gainsaying of the kind, by saying as follows.

Ver. 12. That is, that I may be comforted together with you by the mutual faith both of you and me.

As if he said, Do not suspect that I spoke to accuse you. It was not with this feeling that I said what I did. But what may it be that I wished to say? You are undergoing many tribulations, being drenched on every side (by those who persecute you *περιαντλο■μενοι* . 3 manuscripts *παρενοχλο■μενοι*, harassed). I desired then to see you, that I might comfort you, or rather, not that I might comfort you only, but that I might myself receive comfort. See the wisdom of the teacher. He said, to the end that ye may be strengthened; he knew that what he had said would be heavy and irksome to the disciples.

He says, to the end that you may be comforted. But this again is heavy, not indeed to such a degree as the former, still it is heavy. He then pares down what is galling in this also, smoothing his speech on every side, and rendering it easy of acceptance. For he does not say barely, to be comforted, but, to be comforted together with you; nor was he content with this but he puts in a further lenitive, when he says, by the mutual faith both of you and me. Oh how great was his humble-mindedness!

He showed himself also to be in need of them, and not them only of him. And he puts the disciples in the position of teachers, not letting any superiority remain upon his own side, but pointing out their full equality. For the gain is mutual, he means, and I need the comfort from you, and you that from me. And how comes this to pass? Through the mutual faith both of you and me. For as in the case of fire, if any one gather together many lights, it is a bright flame that he kindles, thus also does it naturally happen with the faithful.

For when we be by ourselves, torn away from others, we are somehow in worse spirits. But when we see one another, and are entwined with the members of our own selves, great is the comfort we receive. You must not look to the present time, during which, by God's grace, both in city and in the desert itself, there be many hosts of believers, and all impiety has been driven out; but consider, in that time, how great a good it was both for disciples to see their master, and for brethren who had come from another city to be seen of brethren.

But that I may make what I am saying plainer, let me bring the matter to an example. For if it should even happen and come to pass (may it never do so!) that we had been carried away to the land of the Persians or Scythians or other barbarians, and had been scattered (7 manuscripts torn asunder) by twos and threes in their cities, and were then suddenly to see any one of those here coming to us, reflect what a harvest of comfort we should reap of it! See ye not those too who are in the prisons, if they see any of their acquaintance, how they revive, and are quite fluttering with the pleasure?

But if I compare those days with captivity and imprisonment, count it no wonder. For these suffered far harder things than those, scattered as they were, and driven about, and dwelling in the midst of famine and of wars, and tremblingly expecting daily death, and suspecting friends and kindred and relatives, and dwelling in the world as in a strange land, aye, and in far harder plight than they who live in another's country. This is why he says, to the end that you may be established and comforted with us by our mutual faith.

And this he says, not as though himself needed any assistance from them (far from it; for how should the pillar of the Church, who was stronger than iron and the rock, the spiritual adamant, who was equal to the charge of countless cities), but that he should not make his language impetuous and his reproof vehement, he says, that he himself also needs their consolation. But if any one here should say, that the comfort was his gladness at the increase of their faith, and that Paul needed this, he would not be

mistaking his meaning in this way either. If then thou desire, one might say, and pray, and will gain comfort and give comfort by it, what is there to hinder your coming? By way of dissipating this suspicion then, he proceeds.

Ver. 13. Now I would not have you ignorant, brethren, that oftentimes I desired to come unto you (but was let hitherto).

Here is a compliance great as that of slaves, and a plain exhibition of his excellent temper (εἰς γνώμην ἑστηκός)! For, that he was let, he says, but why, he does not go on to say. For he does not pry into the command of his Master, but only obeys. And yet one might expect a person to start questions, as to why God hindered a city so conspicuous and great, and towards which the whole world was looking, from enjoying such a teacher, and that for so long a time. For he that had overcome the governing city, could easily go on to the subjects of it. But he that let alone the more royal one, and lay in wait about the dependents, had the main point left neglected. But none of these things does he busy himself with, but yields to the incomprehensibility of Providence, thereby both showing the right tone of his soul, and instructing us all never to call God to account for what happens, even though what is done seem to trouble the minds of many. For the Master's part it is alone to enjoin, the servants' to obey. And this is why he says, that he was let, but not for what cause; for he means, even I do not know; ask not then of me the counsel or mind of God. For neither shall the thing formed say to him that formed it, Why have you made me thus? For why, tell me, do you even seek to learn it? Do you not know that all things are under His care, that He is wise, that He does nothing at a mere hazard, that He loves you more than they who begot you, and goes exceeding far beyond a father's yearnings of affection to you, and a mother's anxiousness. Seek then no more, and go not a step further; for this is sufficient consolation for you: since even then it was well ordered for the Romans. And if you know not the manner, take it not to heart: for this is a main feature of faith, even when in ignorance of the manner of the dispensation, to receive what is told us of His Providence.

Paul then having succeeded in what he was earnest about (and what was this? To show that it was not as slighting them that he did not come to them, but because, though greatly desiring it, he was hindered), and having divested himself of the accusation of remissness, and having persuaded them that he was not less desirous to see them than themselves, further shows his love to them by other things. For even when I was hindered he means, I did not stand aloof from the attempt, but I kept attempting always yet was always hindered, yet never did I stand aloof thus, without falling out with the will of God, still keeping my love.

For by his purposing it to himself and not standing aloof from it, he showed his affection; but through his being hindered and yet not struggling against it, all his love to God. That I might have some fruit among you also. Yet he had told them the cause of his longing before, and shown that it was becoming him; but still here also, he states it, clearing away all their suspicion. For since the city was conspicuous, and in the whole extent of sea and land had no equal to many even the mere desire of becoming acquainted with it became a reason (πρὸς φασίς) for a journey to it; that they might not think anything of the sort about Paul, or suspect that, merely with a view to glory in claiming them to himself he desired to be present there, he repeatedly lays down the ground of his desire, and before he says, it was that I may impart to you some spiritual gift, that I desired to see you; but here more clearly, that I might have some fruit among you also even as among other Gentiles.

The rulers he puts with the subjects, and after the countless triumphs and victories and the glory of the consuls, he puts them with the barbarians, and with good reason too. For where the nobility of faith is, there is none barbarian, none Grecian, none stranger, none citizen, but all mount up to one height of dignity. And see him here also unassuming, for he does not say, that I may teach and instruct, but what? that I might have some fruit. And not fruit, simply, but some fruit.

Again, depreciating his own share therein just as he had said above, that I may impart some gift. And then to repress them too, as I said also before, he says, even as among other Gentiles. For, I do not, because you are rich, and have the advantage of others, show less concern about the others. For it is not the rich that we are seeking, but the faithful. Where now are the wise of the Greeks, they that wear long beards and that are clad in open dress, and puff forth great words (τ■μεγ■λα φουσ■ντες)?

All Greece and all barbarian lands has the tentmaker converted. But Plato, who is so cried up and carried about among them, coming a third time to Sicily with the bombast of those words of his, with his brilliant reputation (■πσλ■ψεως), did not even get the better of a single king, but came off so wretchedly, as even to have lost his liberty. But this tentmaker ran over not Sicily alone or Italy, but the whole world; and while preaching too he desisted not from his art, but even then sewed skins, and superintended the workshop.

And even this did not give offense to those who were born of consuls, and with very good reason, for it is not their trades and occupations, but falsehood and forged doctrines, which usually render teachers easy subjects of contempt. And for this reason, even Athenians still laugh at the former. But this man even barbarians attend to, and even foolish and ignorant men. For his preaching is set forth to all alike, it knows no distinction of rank, no preëminence of nation, no other thing of the sort; for faith alone does it require, and not reasonings.

Wherefore it is most worthy of admiration, not only because it is profitable and saving, but that it is readily admissible and easy (Sav. lovable), and comprehensible to all: which is a main object in the Providence of God, who sets forth His blessings to all in common.

For what He did in respect of the sun and the moon and the earth and the sea and other things, not giving the rich and the wise a greater share of the benefits of these, and a less to the poor, but setting forth the enjoyment of them to all alike, this also did He with regard to the preaching, and even in a much greater degree, by how much this is more indispensable than they. Wherefore Paul repeatedly says, among all the Gentiles, to show that he in no respect favors them, but is fulfilling his Master's command, and sending them away to thanksgiving to the God of all, he says;

Ver. 14. I am a debtor to the Greeks and to the Barbarians, both to the wise and to the unwise.

Which also he said when writing to the Corinthians. And he says it, to ascribe the whole to God. 1 Corinthians 9:16

Ver. 15. So, as much as in me is, I am ready to preach the Gospel to you that are at Rome also.

Oh, noble soul! Having taken on him a task laden of so great dangers, a voyage across the sea, temptations, plottings, risings -- for it was likely, that one who was going to address so great a city which was under the tyrannic sway of impiety, should undergo temptations thick as snowflakes; and it was in this way that he lost his life in this city, being cut off by the tyrant of it -- yet still expecting to undergo so great troubles, for none of these did he become less energetic, but was in haste and was in travail and was

ready-minded. Wherefore he says, So, as much as in me is, I am ready to preach the Gospel to you that are at Rome also.

Ver. 16. For I am not ashamed of the Gospel.

"What do you say, O, Paul? When it were fitting to say, that I boast, and am proud, and luxuriate in it; you say not this, but what is less than this, that you are not ashamed, which is not what we usually say of things very glorious. What then is this which he says, and why does he thus speak? While yet he exults over it more than over heaven. At least, in writing to the Galatians, he said, God forbid that I should glory, save in the Cross of our Lord Jesus Christ. Galatians 6:14 How then comes he here to say, not that I even glory, but that I am not ashamed?

The Romans were most anxiously eager about the things of the world, owing to their riches, their empire, their victories; and their kings they reckoned to be equal to the gods, and so they even called them. And for this cause too, they worshipped them with temples and with altars and with sacrifices. Since then they were thus puffed up, but Paul was going to preach Jesus, who was thought to be the carpenter's son, who was brought up in Judea, and that in the house of a mean woman, who had no body guards, who was not encircled in wealth, but even died as a culprit with robbers, and endured many other inglorious things; and it was likely that they were concealing themselves as not as yet knowing any of the unspeakable and great things: for this reason he says, I am not ashamed, having still to teach them not to be ashamed.

For he knew that if they succeeded in this, they would speedily go on and come to glorying also: and do you then, if you hear any one saying, Do you worship the Crucified? Be not ashamed, and do not look down, but luxuriate in it, be bright-faced at it, and with the eyes of a free man, and with uplifted look, take up your confession; and if he say again, Do you worship the Crucified? Say in reply to him, Yes! And not the adulterer, not the insulter of his father, not the murderer of his children (for such be all the gods they have), but Him who by the Cross stopped the mouths of devils, and did away with their countless juggleries.

For the Cross is for our sakes, being the work of unspeakable Love towards man, the sign of His great concern for us. And in addition to what has been said, since they were puffed up with great pomposity of speech and with their cloak of external wisdom, I, he means to say, bidding an entire farewell to these reasonings, come to preach the Cross, and am not ashamed because of it: for it is the power of God to salvation. For since there is a power of God to chastisement also (for when He chastised the Egyptians, He said, This is My great power,) Joel 2:25 and a power to destruction, (for, fear Him, He says, that is able to destroy both body and soul in hell), Matthew 10:28 for this cause he says, it is not these that I come to bring, the powers of chastisement and punishment, but those of salvation.

What then? Did not the Gospel tell of these things also, namely, the account of hell, and that of the outer darkness, and of the venomous worm? And yet we know of these from no other source than the Gospel. In what sense then does he say, the power of God unto salvation? Attend only to what follows. To every one that believes; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek.

For it is not to all absolutely, but to them that receive it. For though thou be a Grecian (i.e. Heathen), and even one that has run into every kind of vice, though a Scythian, though a barbarian, though a very brute, and full of all irrationality, and burdened with the weights of endless sins, no sooner have you received the word concerning the Cross, and been baptized, than you have blotted out all these; and why says he here, to the Jew first, and also to the Greek? What means this difference? And yet he has often said, Neither

circumcision is anything, nor uncircumcision Galatians 5:6 and 6:15; how then does he here discriminate, setting the Jew before the Greek? Now why is this? Seeing that by being first he does not therefore receive any more of the grace (for the same gift is bestowed both on this person and that,) but the first is an honor in order of time only. For he has no such advantage as that of receiving greater righteousness, but is only honored in respect of his receiving it first. Since in the case of those that are enlightened (you that are initiated know what is meant,) all run to the baptism, yet not all at the same hour, but one first and another second. Yet the first does not receive more than the second, nor he than the person after him, but all enjoy the same gifts. The first then here is an honor in word, not a superiority in grace. Then after saying, unto salvation, he enhances the gift further, by showing that it stays not at the present point, but proceeds farther. For this is what he sets forth, when he says,

Ver. 17. For therein is the righteousness of God revealed.

But he who has become just shall live, not for the present life only, but for that which is to come. And he hints not only this, but also another thing along with this, namely, the brightness and gloriousness of such a life. For since it is possible to be saved, yet not without shame (as many are saved of those, who by the royal humanity are released from punishment), that no one may suspect this upon hearing of safety, he adds also righteousness; and righteousness, not your own, but that of God; hinting also the abundance of it and the facility.

For you do not achieve it by toilings and labors, but you receive it by a gift from above, contributing one thing only from your own store, believing. Then since his statement did not seem credible, if the adulterer and effeminate person, and robber of graves, and magician, is not only to be suddenly freed from punishment but to become just, and just too with the highest righteousness; he confirms his assertion from the Old Testament. And first with a short sentence, he lays open a vast sea of histories to one who has a capacity for seeing them.

For after having said, from faith to faith, he sends the hearer back to the dispensations of God, which took place thus in the Old Testament, which, when writing to the Hebrews, he explains with his usual great wisdom, showing that both the just and the sinners were justified in that way even then, wherefore also he made mention both of the harlot and of Abraham. But then here, after having just hinted at it (for he was running on to another and a pressing subject), he again confirms what he had said from the Prophets, bringing in Habakkuk before them, crying, and saying, that it is not in the nature of things for him who is to live, to live otherwise save by faith; for the just, he says, shall live by faith Habakkuk 2:4, speaking about the life to come.

For since what God gives transcends reasoning entirely, it is but reason that we need faith. But the man that thinks meanly of it, and is contemptuous and vainglorious, will not effect anything at all. Let heretics hearken to the voice of the Spirit, for such is the nature of reasonings. They are like some labyrinth or puzzles which have no end to them anywhere, and do not let the reason stand upon the rock, and have their very origin in vanity. For being ashamed to allow of faith, and to seem ignorant of heavenly things, they involve themselves in the dust-cloud of countless reasonings.

Then oh miserable and painful man, fit object for endless tears, should any one ask you, how the heaven was made, and how the earth -- and why do I say the heaven and the earth? How thou were yourself born, how nourished, and how you grew, are you then not ashamed of your ignorance? But if anything be said about the Only-begotten, do you thrust yourself through shame into a pit of destruction, thinking that it is

unworthy of you not to know everything? And yet disputatiousness is an unworthy thing, and so is ill-timed curiosity.

And why do I speak of doctrines? For even from the corruption in our present life we have escaped by no other means than through the faith. Thus shone also all those aforetime, thus Abraham, thus Isaac, thus Jacob, thus too the harlot was saved, the one in the Old Testament, and likewise the one in the New. For, by faith, he says, the harlot Rahab perished not with them that believed not when she had received the spies. Hebrews 11:31 For if she had said to herself, and how can they that are captives and exiles, and refugees, and live the life of vagabond tribes, get the better of us who have a city, and walls, and towers? she would have destroyed both herself and them.

Which also the forefathers of those who were then saved did suffer. For when, upon the sight of men great and tall, they questioned the manner of victory, they perished, without battle or array, all of them. Do you see what a pit is that of unbelief! What a wall that of faith! For the one carried down endless thousands, the other not only saved a harlot, but made her the patroness of so numerous a people!

Now since we know of these and more than these, never let us call God to account for what is done, but whatsoever He may lay on us, that let us take up with, and let us not run into niceties and curious questions, though to human reasoning the thing commanded appears even amiss. For what, let me ask, looks more amiss than for a father to slay with his own hands his only and legitimate son? Genesis 22:3 But still when the righteous man was bid do it, he raised no nice scruples about it, but owing to the dignity of the bidder, he merely accepted the injunction. And another too that was bidden of God to strike a prophet, when he raised nice scruples about the seeming unreasonableness of the injunction, and did not simply obey, he was punished to the extreme. 1 Kings 20:35-36 But he that struck, gained a good report. And Saul too, when he saved men contrary to the decree of God, fell from the kingdom, and was irretrievably punished. And one might find other instances beside these: by all which we learn, never to require a reason for God's injunctions, but to yield and obey only. But if it be dangerous to raise nice scruples about anything that He may enjoin, and extreme punishment is appointed for those who are curious questioners, what possible excuse shall they have who curiously question things far more secret and awful than these, as for instance, how He begot the Son, and in what fashion, and what His Essence is? Now as we know this, let us with all kindness receive the mother of all blessings, faith; that sailing as it were in a still harbor, we may at once keep our doctrines orthodox, and by steering our life safely in a straight course, may attain those eternal blessings by the grace and love toward man of our Lord Jesus Christ, through Whom and with Whom be glory unto the Father, with the Holy Ghost, for ever and ever. Amen.

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