

Homily 33 on Matthew

by St. John Chrysostom

St. John Chrysostom's Homily 33 on Matthew emphasizes the call for disciples to embody wisdom and gentleness amidst persecution, relying on God's strength.

Scripture: Job 1:5, Job 3:25, Job 31:1, Daniel 3:18, Matthew 10:16, Matthew 10:22, Acts 5:28, 2 Corinthians 12:9, 1 Peter 3:15

Topics: "Christian Persecution", "Spiritual Endurance"

Description

John Chrysostom preaches on the importance of emulating the faith and endurance of biblical figures like Job, the apostles, and the three children in the fiery furnace. He emphasizes the need for Christians to be wise as serpents and harmless as doves, facing persecution and trials with courage and self-control. Chrysostom highlights the strength and endurance displayed by early Christians, who endured suffering, persecution, and martyrdom with unwavering faith and trust in God's providence, even when faced with unimaginable trials and tribulations. He challenges believers to exercise self-discipline, patience, and fortitude in the face of adversity, drawing inspiration from the examples of biblical heroes who remained steadfast in their faith amidst great challenges.

Transcript

Matt. X. 16.

Behold, I send you forth as sheep in the midst of wolves; be ye therefore wise as serpents, and harmless as doves.

Having made them feel confident about their necessary food, and opened unto them all men's houses, and having invested their entrance with an appearance to attract veneration, charging them not to come in as wanderers, and beggars, but as much more venerable than those who received them (for this He signifies by His saying, the workman is worthy of his hire; and by His commanding them to inquire, who was worthy, and there to remain, and enjoining them to salute such as receive them; and by His threatening such as receive them not with those incurable evils): having I say, in this way cast out their anxiety, and armed them with the display of miracles, and made them as it were all iron and adamant, by delivering them from all worldly things, and enfranchising them from all temporal care: He speaks in what follows of the evils also that were to befall them; not only those that were to happen soon after, but those too that were to be in long course of time; from the first, even long beforehand, preparing them for the war against the devil. Yea, and many advantages were hence secured; and first, that they learned the power

of His foreknowledge; secondly, that no one should suspect, that through weakness of their Master came these evils upon them; thirdly, that such as undergo these things should not be dismayed by their falling out unexpectedly, and against hope; fourthly, that they might not at the very time of the cross be troubled on hearing these things. For indeed, they were just so affected at that time; when also He upbraided them, saying, Because I have said these things unto you, sorrow has filled your hearts; and none of you asks me, where are You going? John 16:6, 5 And yet He had said nothing as yet touching Himself, as that He should be bound, and scourged, and put to death, that He might not hereby also confound their minds; but for the present He announces before what should happen to themselves.

Then, that they might learn that this system of war is new, and the manner of the array unwonted; as He sends them bare, and with one coat, and unshod, and without staff, and without girdle or scrip, and bids them be maintained by such as receive them; so neither here did He stay His speech, but to signify His unspeakable power, He says, Even thus setting out, exhibit the gentleness of sheep, and this, though you are to go unto wolves; and not simply unto wolves, but into the midst of wolves.

And He bids them have not only gentleness as sheep, but also the harmlessness of the dove. For thus shall I best show forth my might, when sheep get the better of wolves, and being in the midst of wolves, and receiving a thousand bites, so far from being consumed, do even work a change on them a thing far greater and more marvellous than killing them, to alter their spirit, and to reform their mind; and this, being only twelve, while the whole world is filled with the wolves.

Let us then be ashamed, who do the contrary, who set like wolves upon our enemies. For so long as we are sheep, we conquer: though ten thousand wolves prowl around, we overcome and prevail. But if we become wolves, we are worsted, for the help of our Shepherd departs from us: for He feeds not wolves, but sheep: and He forsakes you, and retires, for neither do you allow His might to be shown. Because, as He accounts the whole triumph His own, if you being ill used, show forth gentleness; so if you follow it up and give blows, you obscure His victory.

2. But do thou consider, I pray you, who they are that hear these injunctions, so hard and laborious: the timid and ignorant; the unlettered and uninstructed; such as are in every respect obscure, who have never been trained up in the Gentile laws, who do not readily present themselves in the public places; the fishermen, the publicans, men full of innumerable deficiencies. For if these things were enough to confound even the lofty and great, how were they not enough to cast down and dismay them that were in all respects untried, and had never entertained any noble imagination? But they did not cast them down.

And very naturally, some one may perhaps say; because He gave them power to cleanse lepers, to drive out devils. I would answer as follows: Nay, this very thing was enough especially to perplex them, that for all their raising the dead, they were to undergo these intolerable evils, both judgments, and executions, and the wars which all would wage on them, and the common hatred of the world; and that such terrors await them, while themselves are working miracles.

3. What then is their consolation for all these things? The power of Him that sends them. Wherefore also He puts this before all, saying, Behold, I send you. This suffices for your encouragement, this for confidence, and fearing none of your assailants.

Do you see authority? Do you see prerogative? Do you see invincible might? Now His meaning is like this: Be not troubled (so He speaks), that sending you among wolves, I command you to be like sheep and like doves. For I might indeed have done the contrary, and have suffered you to undergo nothing terrible, nor

as sheep to be exposed to wolves; I might have rendered you more formidable than lions; but it is expedient that so it should be. This makes you also more glorious; this proclaims also my power.

This He said also unto Paul: My grace is sufficient for you, for my strength is made perfect in weakness. 2 Corinthians 12:9 It is I, now mark it, who have caused you so to be. For in saying, I send you forth as sheep, He intimates this. Do not therefore despond, for I know, I know certainly, that in this way more than any other ye will be invincible to all.

After this, that they may contribute something on their own part also, and that all might not seem to be of His grace, nor they supposed to be crowned at random, and vainly, He says, Be therefore wise as serpents, and harmless as doves. But what, it might be said, will our wisdom avail in so great dangers? Nay, how shall we be able to have wisdom at all, when so many waves are drenching us all over? For let a sheep be ever so wise, when it is in the midst of wolves, and so many wolves, what will it be able to do? Let the dove be ever so harmless, what will it profit, when so many hawks are assailing it? In the brutes indeed, not at all: but in you as much as possible.

But let us see what manner of wisdom He here requires. That of the serpent, He says. For even as that animal gives up everything, and if its very body must be cut off, does not very earnestly defend it, so that it may save its head; in like manner do thou also, says He, give up every thing but the faith; though goods, body, life itself, must be yielded. For that is the head and the root; and if that be preserved, though thou lose all, you will recover all with so much the more splendor.

On this account then He neither commanded to be merely a simple and single-hearted sort of person, nor merely wise; but has mixed up both these, so that they may become virtue; taking in the wisdom of the serpent that we may not be wounded in our vitals; and the harmlessness of the dove, that we may not retaliate on our wrongdoers, nor avenge ourselves on them that lay snares; since wisdom again is useless, except this be added. Now what, I ask, could be more strict than these injunctions? Why, was it not enough to suffer wrong? Nay, says He, but I do not permit you so much as to be indignant. For this is the dove. As though one should cast a reed into fire, and command it not to be burnt by the fire, but to quench it.

However, let us not be troubled; nay, for these things have come to pass, and have had an accomplishment, and have been shown in very deed, and men became wise as serpents, and harmless as doves; not being of another nature, but of the same with us.

Let not then any one account His injunctions impracticable. For He beyond all others knows the nature of things; He knows that fierceness is not quenched by fierceness, but by gentleness. And if in men's actual deeds too you would see this result, read the book of the Acts of the Apostles, and you will see how often, when the people of the Jews had risen up against them and were sharpening their teeth, these men, imitating the dove, and answering with suitable meekness, did away with their wrath, quenched their madness, broke their impetuosity. As when they said, Did not we strictly command you, that you should not speak in this name? Acts 5:28 although able to work any number of miracles, they neither said nor did anything harsh, but answered for themselves with all meekness, saying, Whether it be right to hearken unto you more than unto God, judge ye. Acts 4:19

Have you seen the harmlessness of the dove? Behold the wisdom of the serpent. For we cannot but speak the things, which we know and have heard. Acts 4:20 Do you see how we must be perfect on all points, so as neither to be abased by dangers, nor provoked by anger?

4. Therefore He said also, Matthew 10:17-18

Beware of men, for they shall deliver you up to councils, and they shall scourge you in their synagogues: and you shall be brought before governors and kings for my sake, for a testimony to them and the Gentiles.

Thus again is He preparing them to be vigilant, in every case assigning to them the sufferance of wrong, and permitting the infliction of it to others; to teach you that the victory is in suffering evil, and that His glorious trophies are thereby set up. For He said not at all, Fight ye also, and resist them that would vex you, but only, You shall suffer the utmost ills.

O how great is the power of Him that speaks! How great the self-command of them that hear! For indeed we have great cause to marvel, how they did not straightway dart away from Him on hearing these things, apt as they were to be startled at every sound, and such as had never gone further than that lake, around which they used to fish; and how they did not reflect, and say to themselves, And whither after all this are we to flee? The courts of justice against us, the kings against us, the governors, the synagogues of the Jews, the nations of the Gentiles, the rulers, and the ruled. (For hereby He not only forewarned them of Palestine, and the ills therein, but discovered also the wars throughout the world, saying, You shall be brought before kings and governors; signifying that to the Gentiles also He was afterwards to send them as heralds.) You have made the world our enemy, You have armed against us all them that dwell on the earth, peoples, tyrants, kings.

And what follows again is much more fearful, since men are to become on our account murderers of brothers, of children, of fathers.

For the brother, says He, shall deliver up the brother to death, and the father the child; and children shall rise up against their parents, and cause them to be put to death. Matthew 10:21

How, then, one might say, will the rest of men believe, when they see on our account, children slain by their fathers, and brethren by brethren, and all things filled with abominations? What? Will not men, as though we were destructive demons, will they not, as though we were devoted, and pests of the world, drive us out from every quarter, seeing the earth filled with blood of kinsmen, and with so many murderers? Surely fair is the peace (is it not?) which we are to bring into men's houses and give them, while we are filling those houses with so many slaughters. Why, had we been some great number of us, instead of twelve; had we been, instead of unlearned and ignorant, wise, and skilled in rhetoric, and mighty in speech; nay more, had we been even kings, and in possession of armies and abundance of wealth; how could we have persuaded any, while kindling up civil wars, yea, and other wars far worse than they? Why, though we were to despise our own safety, which of all other men will give heed to us?

But none of these things did they either think or say, neither did they require any account of His injunctions, but simply yielded and obeyed. And this came not from their own virtue only, but also of the wisdom of their Teacher. For see how to each of the fearful things He annexed an encouragement; as in the case of such as received them not, He said, It shall be more tolerable for the land of Sodom and Gomorrha in the day of judgment, than for that city; so here again, when He had said, You shall be brought before governors and kings, He added, for my sake, for a testimony to them, and the Gentiles. And this is no small consolation, that they are suffering these things both for Christ, and for the Gentiles' conviction. Thus God, though no one regard, is found to be everywhere doing His own works. Now these things were a comfort to them, not that they desired the punishment of other men, but that they might have

ground of confidence, as sure to have Him everywhere present with them, who had both foretold and foreknown these things; and because not as wicked men, and as pests, were they to suffer all this.

And together with these, He adds another, and that no small consolation for them, saying,

But when they deliver you up, take no thought how or what you shall speak, for it shall be given you in that hour what you shall speak. For it is not ye that speak, but the Spirit of your Father that speaks in you. Matthew 10:19-20

For lest they should say, How shall we be able to persuade men, when such things are taking place? He bids them be confident as to their defense also. And elsewhere indeed He says, I will give you a mouth and wisdom; Luke 21:15 but here, It is the Spirit of your Father that speaks in you, advancing them unto the dignity of the prophets. Therefore, when He had spoken of the power that was given, then He added also the terrors, the murders, and the slaughters.

For the brother shall deliver up the brother, says He, to death, and the father the child, and the children shall rise up against their parents, and cause them to be put to death. Matthew 10:21

And not even at this did He stop, but added also what was greatly more fearful, and enough to shiver a rock to pieces: And you shall be hated of all men. And here again the consolation is at the doors, for, For my name's sake, says He, you shall suffer these things. And with this again another, But he that endures to the end, the same shall be saved. Matthew 10:22...

And these things in another point of view likewise were sufficient to rouse up their spirits; since at any rate the power of their gospel was to blaze up so high, as that nature should be despised, and kindred rejected, and the Word preferred to all, chasing all mightily away. For if no tyranny of nature is strong enough to withstand your sayings, but it is dissolved and trodden under foot, what else shall be able to get the better of you? Not, however, that your life will be in security, because these things shall be; but rather ye will have for your common enemies and foes them that dwell in the whole world.

5. Where now is Plato? Where Pythagoras? Where the long chain of the Stoics? For the first, after having enjoyed great honor, was so practically refuted, as even to be sold out of the country, and to succeed in none of his objects, no, not go much as in respect of one tyrant: yea, he betrayed his disciples, and ended his life miserably. And the Cynics, mere pollutions as they were, have all passed by like a dream and a shadow. And yet assuredly no such thing ever befell them, but rather they were accounted glorious for their heathen philosophy, and the Athenians made a public monument of the epistles of Plato, sent them by Dion; and they passed all their time at ease, and abounded in wealth not a little. Thus, for instance, Aristippus was used to purchase costly harlots; and another made a will, leaving no common inheritance; and another, when his disciples had laid themselves down like a bridge, walked on them; and he of Sinope, they say, even behaved himself unseemly in the market place.

Yea, these are their honorable things. But there is no such thing here, but a strict temperance, and a perfect decency, and a war against the whole world in behalf of truth and godliness, and to be slain every day, and not until hereafter their glorious trophies.

But there are some also, one may say, skilled in war among them; as Themistocles, Pericles. But these things too are children's toys, compared with the acts of the fishermen. For what can you say? That he persuaded the Athenians to embark in their ships, when Xerxes was marching upon Greece? Why in this

case, when it is not Xerxes marching, but the devil with the whole world, and his evil spirits innumerable assailing these twelve men, not at one crisis only, but throughout their whole life, they prevailed and vanquished; and what was truly marvellous, not by slaying their adversaries, but by converting and reforming them.

For this especially you should observe throughout, that they slew not, nor destroyed such as were plotting against them, but having found them as bad as devils, they made them rivals of angels, enfranchising human nature from this evil tyranny, while as to those execrable demons that were confounding all things, they drove them out of the midst of markets, and houses, or rather even from the very wilderness. And to this the choirs of the monks bear witness, whom they have planted everywhere, clearing out not the habitable only, but even the uninhabitable land. And what is yet more marvellous, they did not this in fair conflict, but in the enduring of evil they accomplished it all. Since men actually had them in the midst, twelve unlearned persons, binding, scourging, dragging them about, and were not able to stop their mouths; but as it is impossible to bind the sunbeam, so also their tongue. And the reason was, it was not they themselves that spoke, but the power of the Spirit. Thus for instance did Paul overcome Agrippa, and Nero, who surpassed all men in wickedness. For the Lord, says he, stood with me, and strengthened me, and delivered me out of the mouth of the lion. 2 Timothy 4:17

But do thou also admire them, how when it was said to them, Take no thought, they yet believed, and accepted it, and none of the terrors amazed them. And if you say, He gave them encouragement enough, by saying, It shall be the Spirit of your Father that shall speak; even for this am I most amazed at them, that they doubted not, nor sought deliverance from their perils; and this, when not for two or three years were they to suffer these things, but all their life long. For the saying, He that endures to the end, the same shall be saved, is an intimation of this.

For His will is, that not His part only should be contributed, but that the good deeds should be also done of them. Mark, for instance, how from the first, part is His, part His disciples'. Thus, to do miracles is His, but to provide nothing is theirs. Again, to open all men's houses, was of the grace from above; but to require no more than was needful, of their own self-denial. For the workman is worthy of his hire. Their bestowing peace was of the gift of God, their inquiring for the worthy, and not entering in without distinction unto all, of their own self command. Again, to punish such as received them not was His, but to retire with gentleness from them, without reviling or insulting them, was of the apostles' meekness. To give the Spirit, and cause them not to take thought, was of Him that sent them, but to become like sheep and doves, and to bear all things nobly, was of their calmness and prudence. To be hated and not to despond, and to endure, was their own; to save them that endured, was of Him who sent them.

Wherefore also He said, He that endures to the end, the same shall be saved. That is, because the more part are wont at the beginning indeed to be vehement, but afterwards to faint, therefore says He, I require the end. For what is the use of seeds, flourishing indeed at first, but a little after fading away? Therefore it is continued patience that He requires of them. I mean, lest any say, He wrought the whole Himself, and it was no wonder that they should prove such, suffering as they did nothing intolerable; therefore He says unto them, There is need also of patience on your part. For though I should rescue you from the first dangers, I am reserving you for others more grievous, and after these again others will succeed; and you shall not cease to have snares laid for you, so long as you have breath. For this He intimated in saying, But he that endures to the end, the same shall be saved.

For this cause then, though He said, Take no thought what you shall speak; yet elsewhere He says, Be ready to give an answer to every man that asks you a reason of the hope that is in you. 1 Peter 3:15 That is, as long as the contest is among friends, He commands us also to take thought; but when there is a terrible tribunal, and frantic assemblies, and terrors on all sides, He bestows the influence from Himself, that they may take courage and speak out, and not be discouraged, nor betray the righteous cause.

For in truth it was a very great thing, for a man occupied about lakes, and skins, and receipt of custom, when tyrants were on their thrones, and satraps, and guards standing by them, and the swords drawn, and all standing on their side; to enter in alone, bound, hanging down his head, and yet be able to open his mouth. For indeed they allowed them neither speech nor defense with respect to their doctrines, but set about torturing them to death, as common pests of the world. For They, it is said, that have turned the world upside down, have come hither also; and again, They preach things contrary to the decrees of Cæsar, saying that Jesus Christ is king. Acts 17:6-7 And everywhere the courts of justice were preoccupied by such suspicions, and much influence from above was needed, for their showing both the truth of the doctrine they preached, and that they are not violating the common laws; so that they should neither, while earnest to speak of the doctrine, fall under suspicion of overturning the laws; nor again, while earnest to show that they were not overturning the common government, corrupt the perfection of their doctrines: all which you will see accomplished with all due consideration, both in Peter and in Paul, and in all the rest. Yea, and as rebels and innovators, and revolutionists, they were accused all over the world; yet nevertheless they both repelled this impression, and invested themselves with the contrary, all men celebrating them as saviors, and guardians, and benefactors. And all this they achieved by their much patience. Wherefore also Paul said, I die daily; and he continued to stand in jeopardy unto the end.

6. What then must we deserve, having such high patterns, and in peace giving way to effeminacy, and remissness? With none to make war (it is too evident) we are slain; we faint when no man pursues, in peace we are required to be saved, and even for this we are not sufficient. And they indeed, when the world was on fire, and the pile was being kindled over the whole earth, entering, snatched from within, out of the midst of the flame, such as were burning; but you are not able so much as to preserve yourself.

What confidence then will there be for us? What favor? There are no stripes, no prisons, no rulers, no synagogues, nor anything else of that kind to set upon us; yea, quite on the contrary we rule and prevail. For both kings are godly, and there are many honors for Christians, and precedences, and distinctions, and immunities, and not even so do we prevail. And whereas they being daily led to execution, both teachers and disciples, and bearing innumerable stripes, and continual brandings, were in greater luxury than such as abide in Paradise; we who have endured no such thing, not even in a dream, are softer than any wax. But they, it will be said, wrought miracles. Did this then keep them from the scourge? Did it free them from persecution? Nay, for this is the strange thing, that they suffered such things often even at the hands of them whom they benefited, and not even so were they confounded, receiving only evil for good. But thou if you bestow on any one any little benefit, and then be requited with anything unpleasant, art confounded, art troubled, and repentest of that which you have done.

If now it should happen, as I pray it may not happen nor at any time fall out, that there be a war against churches, and a persecution, imagine how great will be the ridicule, how sore the reproaches. And very naturally; for when no one exercises himself in the wrestling school, how shall he be distinguished in the contests? What champion, not being used to the trainer, will be able, when summoned by the Olympic contests, to show forth anything great and noble against his antagonist? Ought we not every day to wrestle and fight and run? See ye not them that are called Pentathli, when they have no antagonists, how

they fill a sack with much sand, and hanging it up try their full strength thereupon? And they that are still younger, practise the fight against their enemies upon the persons of their companions.

These do thou also emulate, and practise the wrestlings of self denial. For indeed there are many that provoke to anger, and incite to lust, and kindle a great flame. Stand therefore against your passions, bear nobly the mental pangs, that you may endure also those of the body.

7. For so the blessed Job, if he had not exercised himself well before his conflicts, would not have shone so brightly in the same. Unless he had practised freedom from all despondency, he would have uttered some rash word, when his children died. But as it was he stood against all the assaults, against ruin of fortune, and destruction of so great affluence: against loss of children, against his wife's commiseration, against plagues in body, against reproaches of friends, against revilings of servants.

And if you would see his ways of exercise also, hear him saying, how he used to despise wealth: If I did but rejoice, says he, because my wealth was great: if I set gold up for a heap, if I put my trust in a precious stone. Therefore neither was he confounded at their being taken away, since he desired them not when present.

Hear how he also managed what related to his children, not giving way to undue softness, as we do, but requiring of them all circumspection. For he who offered sacrifice even for their secret sins, imagine how strict a judge he was of such as were manifest. Job 1:5

And if you would also hear of his strivings after continence, hearken to him when he says, I made a covenant with my eyes, that I should not think upon a maid. Job 31:1 For this cause his wife did not break his spirit, for he loved her even before this, not however immoderately, but as is due to a wife.

Wherefore I am led even to marvel, whence it came into the devil's thought to stir up the contest, knowing as he did of his previous training. Whence then did it occur to him? The monster is wicked, and never despairs: and this turns out to us a very great condemnation that he indeed never gives up the hope of our destruction, but we despair of our own salvation.

But for bodily mutilation and indignity, mark how he practised himself. Why, inasmuch as he himself had never undergone any such thing, but had continued to live in wealth and luxury, and in all other splendor, he used to divine other men's calamities, one by one. And this he declared, when he said, For the thing which I greatly feared has come upon me; and that which I was afraid of has come unto me. Job 3:25 And again, But I wept for every helpless man, and groaned when I saw a man in distress. Job 30:25

So because of this, nothing of what happened confounded him, none of those great and intolerable ills. For I bid you not look at the ruin of his substance, nor at the loss of his children, nor at that incurable plague, nor at his wife's device against him; but at those things which are far more grievous than these.

And what, says one, did Job suffer more grievous than these? For from his history there is nothing more than these for us to learn. Because we are asleep, we do not learn, since he surely that is anxious, and searches well for the pearl, will know of many more particulars than these. For the more grievous, and apt to infuse greater perplexity, were different.

And first, his knowing nothing certain about the kingdom of heaven, and the resurrection; which indeed he also spoke of, lamenting. For I shall not live always, that I should suffer long. Next, his being conscious to himself of many good works. Thirdly, his being conscious of no evil thing. Fourthly, his supposing that at

God's hands he was undergoing it; or if at the devil's, this again was enough to offend him. Fifthly, his hearing his friends accusing him of wickedness, For you have not been scourged, say they, according to what your sins deserve. Job 11:6 Sixthly, his seeing such as lived in wickedness prospering, and exulting over him. Seventhly, not having any other to whom he might look as even having ever suffered such things.

8. And if you would learn how great these things are, consider our present state. For if now, when we are looking for a kingdom, and hoping for a resurrection, and for the unutterable blessings, and are conscious to ourselves of countless evil deeds, and when we have so many examples, and are partakers of so high a philosophy; should any persons lose a little gold, and this often, after having taken it by violence, they deem life not to be lived in, having no wife to lay sore on them, nor bereaved of children, nor reproached by friends, nor insulted by servants, but rather having many to comfort them, some by words, some by deeds; of how noble crowns must not he be worthy, who seeing what he had gotten together by honest labor, snatched away from him for nought and at random, and after all that, undergoing temptations without number, like sleet, yet throughout all abides unmoved, and offers to the Lord his due thanksgiving for it all?

Why, though no one had spoken any of the other taunts, yet his wife's words alone were sufficient utterly to shake a very rock. Look, for example, at her craft. No mention of money, none of camels, and flocks, and herds, (for she was conscious of her husband's self command with regard to these), but of what was harder to bear than all these, I mean, their children; and she deepens the tragedy, and adds to it her own influence.

Now if when men were in wealth, and suffering no distress, in many things and oft have women prevailed on them: imagine how courageous was that soul, which repulsed her, assaulting him with such powerful weapons, and which trod under foot the two most tyrannical passions, desire and pity. And yet many having conquered desire, have yielded to pity. That noble Joseph, for instance, held in subjection the most tyrannical of pleasures, and repulsed that strange woman, plying him as she did with innumerable devices; but his tears he contained not, but when he saw his brethren that had wronged him, he was all on fire with that passion, and quickly cast off the mask, and discovered the part he had been playing. But when first of all she is his wife, and when her words are piteous, and the moment favorable for her, as well as his wounds and his stripes, and those countless waves of calamities; how can one otherwise than rightly pronounce the soul impassive to so great a storm to be firmer than any adamant?

Allow me freely to say, that the very apostles, if not inferior to this blessed man, are at least not greater than he was. For they indeed were comforted by the suffering for Christ; and this medicine was so sufficient daily to relieve them, that the Lord puts it everywhere, saying, for me, for my sake, and, If they call me, the master of the house, Beelzebub. Matthew 10:25 But he was destitute of this encouragement, and of that from miracles, and of that from grace; for neither had he so great power of the Spirit.

And what is yet greater, nourished in much delicacy, not from among fishermen, and publicans, and such as lived frugally, but after enjoyment of so much honor, he suffered all that he did suffer. And what seemed hardest to bear in the case of the apostles, this same he also underwent, being hated of friends, of servants, of enemies, of them who had received kindness of him: and the sacred anchor, the harbor without waves, namely, that which was said to the apostles, for my sake, of this he had no sight.

I admire again the three children, for that they dared the furnace, that they stood up against a tyrant. But hear what they say, We serve not your Gods, nor worship the image which you have set up. Daniel 3:18 A thing which was the greatest encouragement to them, to know of a certainty that for God they are suffering all whatsoever they suffer. But this man knew not that it was all conflicts, and a wrestling; for had he known it, he would not have felt what was happening. At any rate, when he heard, Do you think that I have uttered to you mine oracles for nought, or that you might be proved righteous? consider how straightway, at a bare word, he breathed again, how he made himself of no account, how he accounted himself not so much as to have suffered what he had suffered, thus saying, Why do I plead any more, being admonished and reprov'd of the Lord, hearing such things, I being nothing? And again, I have heard of You before, as far as hearing of the ear; but now my eye has seen You; wherefore I have made myself vile, and have melted away; and I accounted myself earth and ashes.

This fortitude then, this moderation, of him that was before law and grace, let us also emulate, who are after law and grace; that we may also be able to share with him the eternal tabernacles; unto which may we all attain, by the grace and love towards man of our Lord Jesus Christ, to whom be the glory and the victory forever and ever. Amen.

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