

Homily 59 on Matthew

by St. John Chrysostom

St. John Chrysostom's Homily 59 on Matthew emphasizes the necessity of vigilance against offenses and the importance of personal choice in the face of sin.

Scripture: Matthew 6:24, Matthew 16:26, Matthew 18:7, Matthew 18:10, Matthew 18:12, Luke 6:37, Luke 15:7, Romans 8:32, 1 Corinthians 1:9

Topics: "Social Justice", "Spiritual Discipline"

Description

John Chrysostom preaches about the importance of caring for and not despising those who are considered insignificant or struggling, emphasizing the need to cut off relationships that lead to sin, to be vigilant against offenses, and to prioritize the salvation of others over material wealth. He urges listeners to imitate God's care for the lost and to strive for the salvation of souls, warning against neglecting the spiritual well-being of oneself and others. Chrysostom highlights the need for self-restraint, discipline, and the nurturing of virtues, while condemning the prioritization of worldly possessions over the purity and salvation of the soul.

Transcript

Matt. XVIII. 7.

Woe unto the world because of offenses: for it must needs be that offenses come: but woe to that man by whom the offense comes.

And if 'it must needs be that offenses come,' (some one of our adversaries may perchance say), why does He lament over the world, when He ought rather to afford succor, and to stretch forth His hand in its behalf? For this were the part of a physician, and a protector, whereas the other might be looked for even from any ordinary person.

What then could we possibly say, in answer to so shameless a tongue? Nay what do you seek for equal to this healing care of His? For indeed being God He became man for you, and took the form of a slave, and underwent all extremities, and left undone none of those things which it concerned Him to do. But inasmuch as unthankful men were nothing the better for this, He laments over them, for that after so much fostering care they continued in their unsoundness.

It was like as if over the sick man, that had had the advantage of much attendance, and who had not been willing to obey the rules of the physician, any one were to lament and say, Woe to such a man from his infirmity, which he has increased by his own remissness. But in that case indeed there is no advantage from the bewailing, but here this too is a kind of healing treatment to foretell what would be, and to lament it. For many oftentimes, though, when advised, they were nothing profited, yet, when mourned for, they amended.

For which reason most of all He used the word Woe, thoroughly to rouse them, and to make them in earnest, and to work upon them to be wakeful. And at the same time He shows forth the good will He had towards those very men and His own mildness, that He mourns for them even when gainsaying, not taking mere disgust at it, but correcting them, both with the mourning, and with the prediction, so as to win them over.

But how is this possible? He may say. For if it must needs be that offenses come, how is it possible to escape these? Because that the offenses come indeed must needs be, but that men should perish is not altogether of necessity. Like as though a physician should say (for nothing hinders our using the same illustration again), it must needs be that this disease should come on, but it is not a necessary consequence that he who gives heed should be of course destroyed by the disease. And this He said, as I mentioned, to awaken together with the others His disciples. For that they may not slumber, as sent unto peace and unto untroubled life, He shows many wars close upon them, from without, from within. Declaring this, Paul said, Without were fightings, within were fears; 2 Corinthians 7:5 and, In perils among false brethren; 2 Corinthians 11:26 and in his discourse to the Milesians too He said, Also of you shall some arise speaking perverse things; Acts 20:30 and He Himself too said, The man's foes shall be they of his own household. Matthew 10:36 But when He said, It must needs be, it is not as taking away the power of choosing for themselves, nor the freedom of the moral principle, nor as placing man's life under any absolute constraint of circumstances, that He says these things, but He foretells what would surely be; and this Luke has set forth in another form of expression, It is impossible but that offenses should come. Luke 17:1

But what are the offenses? The hindrances on the right way. Thus also do those on the stage call them that are skilled in those matters, them that distort their bodies.

It is not then His prediction that brings the offenses; far from it; neither because He foretold it, therefore does it take place; but because it surely was to be, therefore He foretold it; since if those who bring in the offenses had not been minded to do wickedly, neither would the offenses have come; and if they had not been to come, neither would they have been foretold. But because those men did evil, and were incurably diseased, the offenses came, and He foretells that which is to be.

But if these men had been kept right, it may be said, and there had been no one to bring in an offense, would not this saying have been convicted of falsehood? By no means, for neither would it have been spoken. For if all were to have been kept right, He would not have said, it must needs be that they come, but because He foreknew they would be of themselves incorrigible, therefore He said, the offenses will surely come.

And wherefore did He not take them out of the way? It may be said. Why, wherefore should they have been taken out of the way? For the sake of them that are hurt? But not thence is the ruin of them that are hurt, but from their own remissness. And the virtuous prove it, who, so far from being injured thereby, are

even in the greatest degree profited, such as was Job, such as was Joseph, such as were all the righteous, and the apostles. But if many perish, it is from their own slumbering. But if it were not so, but the ruin was the effect of the offenses, all must have perished. And if there are those who escape, let him who does not escape impute it to himself. For the offenses, as I have said, awaken, and render more quick-sighted, and sharper, not only him that is preserved; but even him that has fallen into them, if he rise up again quickly, for they render him more safe, and make him more difficult to overcome; so that if we be watchful, no small profit do we reap from hence, even to be continually awake. For if when we have enemies, and when so many dangers are pressing upon us, we sleep, what should we be if living in security. Nay, if you will, look at the first man. For if having lived in paradise a short time, perchance not so much as a whole day, and having enjoyed delights, he drove on to such a pitch of wickedness, as even to imagine an equality with God, and to account the deceiver a benefactor, and not to keep to one commandment; if he had lived the rest of his life also without affliction, what would he not have done?

2. But when we say these things, they make other objections again, asking, And why did God make him such? God did not make him such, far from it, since then neither would He have punished him. For if we in those matters in which we are the cause, do not find fault with our servant, much more will not the God of all. But whence did this come to pass? one may say. Of himself and his own remissness. What means, of himself? Ask yourself. For if it be not of themselves the bad are bad, do not punish your servant nor reprove your wife for what errors she may commit, neither beat your son, nor blame your friend, nor hate your enemy that does despite to you: for all these deserve to be pitied, not to be punished, unless they offend of themselves. But I am not able to practise self-restraint, one may say. And yet, when you perceive the cause not to be with them, but of another necessity, you can practise self-restraint. When at least a servant being taken with sickness does not the things enjoined him, so far from blaming thou dost rather excuse him. Thus you are a witness, that the one thing is of one's self, the other not of one's self. So that here too, if you knew that he was wicked from being born such, so far from blaming, you would rather have shown him indulgence. For surely, when you make him allowance for his illness, it could not be that you would have refused to make allowance for God's act of creation, if indeed he had been made such from the very first.

And in another way too it is easy to stop the mouths of such men, for great is the abounding power of the truth. For wherefore do you never find fault with your servant, because he is not of a beautiful countenance, that he is not of fine stature in his body, that he is not able to fly? Because these things are natural. So then from blame against his nature he is acquitted, and no man gainsays it. When therefore you blame, you show that the fault is not of nature but of his choice. For if in those things, which we do not blame, we bear witness that the whole is of nature, it is evident that where we reprove, we declare that the offense is of the choice.

Do not then bring forward, I beseech you, perverse reasonings, neither sophistries and webs slighter than the spider's, but answer me this again: Did God make all men? It is surely plain to every man. How then are not all equal in respect of virtue and vice? Whence are the good, and gentle, and meek? Whence are the worthless and evil? For if these things do not require any purpose, but are of nature, how are the one this, the others that? For if by nature all were bad, it were not possible for any one to be good, but if good by nature, then no one bad. For if there were one nature of all men, they must needs in this respect be all one, whether they were to be this, or whether they were to be that.

But if we should say that by nature the one are good, the other bad, which would not be reasonable (as we have shown), these things must be unchangeable, for the things of nature are unchangeable. Nay, mark.

All mortals are also liable to suffering; and no one is free from suffering, though he strive without end. But now we see of good many becoming worthless, and of worthless good, the one through remissness, the other by earnestness; which thing most of all indicates that these things do not come of nature.

For the things of nature are neither changed, nor do they need diligence for their acquisition. For like as for seeing and hearing we do not need labor, so neither should we need toils in virtue, if it had been apportioned by nature.

But wherefore did He at all make worthless men, when He might have made all men good? Whence then are the evil things? says he. Ask yourself; for it is my part to show they are not of nature, nor from God.

Come they then of themselves? he says. By no means. But are they unoriginated? Speak reverently, O man, and start back from this madness, honoring with one honor God and the evil things, and that honor the highest. For if they be unoriginate they are mighty, and cannot so much as be plucked up, nor pass into annihilation. For that what is unoriginate is imperishable, is surely manifest to all.

3. And whence also are there so many good, when evil has such great power? How are they that have an origin stronger than that which is unoriginate?

But God destroys these things, he says. When? And how will He destroy what are of equal honor, and of equal strength, and of the same age, as one might say, with Himself?

Oh malice of the devil! How great an evil has he invented! With what blasphemy has he persuaded men to surround God! With what cloak of godliness has he devised another profane account? For desiring to show, that not of Him was the evil, they brought in another evil doctrine, saying, that these things are unoriginate.

Whence then are evils? one may say. From willing and not willing. But the very thing of our willing and not willing, whence is it? From ourselves. But thou dost the same in asking, as if when you had asked, whence is seeing and not seeing? Then when I said, from closing the eyes or not closing the eyes, thou were to ask again; the very closing the eyes or not, whence is it? Then having heard that it was of ourselves, and our will, thou were to seek again another cause.

For evil is nothing else than disobedience to God. Whence then, one may say, did man find this? Why, was it a task to find this? I pray you. Nay, neither do I say this, that this thing is difficult; but whence became he desirous to disobey. From remissness. For having power for either, he inclined rather to this.

But if you are perplexed yet and dizzy at hearing this, I will ask you nothing difficult nor involved, but a simple and plain question. Have you become some time bad? And have you become some time also good? What I mean, is like this. Did you prevail some time over passion, and were you taken again by passion? Have you been overtaken by drunkenness, and have you prevailed over drunkenness? Were you once moved to wrath, and again not moved to wrath? Did you overlook a poor man, and not overlook him? Did you commit whoredom once? And did you become chaste again? Whence then are all these things? Tell me, whence? Nay if you yourself do not tell, I will say. Because at one time you restrained yourself and strove, but after that you became remiss and careless. For to those that are desperate, and are continually in wickedness, and are in a state of senselessness, and are mad, and who are not willing so much as to hear what will amend them, I will not even discourse of self restraint; but to them that have been sometimes in the one, and sometimes in the other, I will gladly speak. Did you once take by violence

the things that belonged not to you; and after this, subdued by pity, imparted even of your own unto him that was in need? Whence then this change? Is it not quite plain it is from the mind, and the choice of will?

It is quite plain, and there is no one who would not say this. Wherefore I entreat you to be in earnest, and to cleave to virtue, and you will have no need of these questions. For our evils are mere names, if we be willing. Inquire not then whence are evils, neither perplex yourself; but having found that they are from remissness only, flee the evil deeds.

And if any one should say, that these things come not from us; whenever you see him angry with his servants, and provoked with his wife, and blaming a child, and condemning them who injure him, say to him, how then did you say, that evils come not from us? For if they be not from us, wherefore do you find fault? Say again; is it of yourself you revile, and insultest? For if it be not of yourself, let no man be angry with you; but if it be of yourself, of yourself and of your remissness are your evil deeds.

But what? Do you think there are some good men? For if indeed no man is good, whence have you this word? Whence are praises? But if there are good men, it is quite plain that they will also reprove the bad. Yet if no one is voluntarily wicked, nor of himself, the good will be found to be unjustly reproving the bad, and they themselves too will be in this way bad again. For what can be worse than to subject the guiltless to accusations? But if they continue in our estimation good men, though reproving, and this especially is a proof of their goodness, even to the very fools it is hereby plain, that no one is ever by necessity bad.

But if after all this you would still inquire, whence are evils? I would say, from remissness, from idleness, from keeping company with the bad, from contempt of virtue; hence are both the evils themselves, and the fact that some inquire, whence are the evils. Since of them surely who do right no one inquires about these things, of them that are purposed to live equitably and temperately; but they, who dare to commit wicked acts, and wish to devise some foolish comfort to themselves by these discussions, do weave spiders' webs.

But let us tear these in pieces not by our words only, but by our deeds too. For neither are these things of necessity. For if they were of necessity, He would not have said, Woe to the man, by whom the offense comes. Matthew 18:7 For those only does he bewail, who are wicked by their choice.

And if He says by whom, marvel not. For not as though another were bringing in it by him, does He say this, but viewing him as himself causing the whole. For the Scripture is wont to say, by whom, for of whom; as when it says, I have gotten a man by God, putting not the second cause, but the first; and again, Is not the interpretation of them by God, Genesis 40:8 and, God is faithful, by whom you are called unto the fellowship of His Son. 1 Corinthians 1:9

4. And that you may learn that it is not of necessity, hear also what follows. For after bewailing them, He says, If your hand, or your foot offend you, cut them off, and cast them from you: for it is better for you to enter into life halt or maimed, rather than having two hands or feet to be cast into the fire. And if your right eye offend you, pluck it out; it is better for you to enter into life with one eye, than having two eyes to be cast into the furnace of fire; not saying these things of limbs; far from it; but of friends, of relations, whom we regard in the rank of necessary members. This He had both said further back, and now He says it. For nothing is so hurtful as bad company. For what things compulsion cannot, friendship can often effect, both for hurt, and for profit. Wherefore with much earnestness He commands us to cut off them that hurt us, intimating these that bring the offenses.

Do you see how He has put away the mischief that would result from the offenses? By foretelling that there surely will be offenses, so that they might find no one in a state of carelessness, but that looking for them men might be watchful. By showing the evils to be great (for He would not have said without purpose, Woe to the world because of the offenses, but to show that great is the mischief therefrom), by lamenting again in stronger terms over him that brings them in. For the saying, But woe to that man, was that of one showing that great was the punishment, but not this only, but also by the comparison which He added He increased the fear.

Then He is not satisfied with these things, but He shows also the way, by which one may avoid the offenses.

But what is this? The wicked, says He, though they be exceeding dear friends to you, cut off from your friendship.

And He gives a reason that cannot be gainsaid. For if they continue friends, you will not gain them, but you will lose yourself besides; but if you should cut them off, your own salvation at least you will gain. So that if any one's friendship harms you, cut it off from you. For if of our own members we often cut off many, when they are both in an incurable state, and are ruining the rest, much more ought one to do this in the case of friends.

But if evils were by nature, superfluous were all this admonition and advice, superfluous the precaution by the means that have been mentioned. But if it be not superfluous, as surely it is not superfluous, it is quite clear that wickedness is of the will.

Take heed that you despise not one of these little ones; for I say unto you, that their angels do always behold the face of my Father which is in Heaven.

He calls little ones not them that are really little, but them that are so esteemed by the multitude, the poor, the objects of contempt, the unknown (for how should he be little who is equal in value to the whole world; how should he be little, who is dear to God?); but them who in the imagination of the multitude are so esteemed.

And He speaks not of many only, but even of one, even by this again warding off the hurt of the many offenses. For even as to flee the wicked, so also to honor the good, has very great gain, and would be a twofold security to him who gives heed, the one by rooting out the friendships with them that offend, the other from regarding these saints with respect and honor.

Then in another way also He makes them objects of reverence, saying, That their angels do always behold the face of my Father which is in Heaven.

Hence it is evident, that the saints have angels, or even all men. For the apostle too says of the woman, That she ought to have power on her head because of the angels. 1 Corinthians 10:10 And Moses, He set the bounds of the nations according to the number of the angels of God. Deuteronomy 32:8

But here He is discoursing not of angels only, but rather of angels that are greater than others. But when He says, The face of my Father, He means nothing else than their fuller confidence, and their great honor.

For the Son of Man has come to save that which was lost.

Again, He is putting another reason stronger than the former, and connects with it a parable, by which He brings in the Father also as desiring these things. For how think ye? says He; If a man have an hundred sheep, and one of them be gone astray, does he not leave the ninety and nine, and goes into the mountains, and seeks that which is gone astray? And if so be that he find it, he rejoices over it more than over the ninety and nine, which went not astray. Even so it is not will before your Father, that one of these little ones should perish. Matthew 18:12-14

Do you see by how many things He is urging to the care of our mean brethren. Say not then, Such a one is a blacksmith, a shoemaker, he is a ploughman, he is a fool, and so despise him. For in order that you should not feel this, see by how many motives He persuades you to practise moderation, and presses you into a care for these. He set a little child, and says, Be as little children. And, Whosoever receives such a little child receives me; and, Whosoever shall offend, shall suffer the utmost penalties. And He was not even satisfied with the comparison of the millstone, but added also His woe, and commanded us to cut off such, though they be in the place of hands and eyes to us. And by the angels again that are entrusted with these same mean brethren, He makes them objects of veneration, and from His own will and passion (for when He said, The Son of Man has come to save that which was lost, He signifies even the cross, like as Paul says, speaking of a brother, For whom Christ died); and from the Father, for that neither to Him does it seem good that one should perish; and from common custom, because the shepherd leaves them that are safe, and seeks what is lost; and when he has found what had gone astray, he is greatly delighted at the finding and the saving of this.

5. If then God thus rejoices over the little one that is found, how do you despise them that are the objects of God's earnest care, when one ought to give up even one's very life for one of these little ones? But is he weak and mean? Therefore for this very cause most of all, one ought to do everything in order to preserve him. For even He Himself left the ninety and nine sheep, and went after this, and the safety of so many availed not to throw into the shade the loss of one. But Luke says, that He even brought it on his shoulders, and that There was greater joy over one sinner that repents, than over ninety and nine just persons. Luke 15:7 And from His forsaking those that were saved for it, and from His taking more pleasure in this one, He showed His earnestness about it to be great.

Let us not then be careless about such souls as these. For all these things are said for this object. For by threatening, that he who has not become a little child should not so much as at all set foot in the Heavens, and speaking of the millstone, He has brought down the haughtiness of the boastful; for nothing is so hostile to love as pride; and by saying, It must needs be that offenses come, He made them to be wakeful; and by adding, Woe unto him by whom the offense comes, He has caused each to endeavor that it be not by him. And while by commanding to cut off them that offend He made salvation easy; by enjoining not to despise them, and not merely enjoining, but with earnestness (for take heed, says He, that you despise not one of these little ones), and by saying, Their angels behold the face of my Father, and, For this end am I come, and my Father wills this, He has made those who should take care of them more diligent.

Do you see what a wall He has set around them, and what earnest care He takes of them that are contemptible and perishing, at once threatening incurable ills to them that make them fall, and promising great blessings to them that wait upon them, and take care of them, and bringing an example from Himself again and from the Father?

Him let us also imitate, refusing none of the tasks that seem lowly and troublesome for our brethren's sake; but though we have to do service, though he be small, though he be mean for whom this is done,

though the work be laborious, though we must pass over mountains and precipices, let all things be held enduring for the salvation of our brother. For a soul is an object of such earnest care to God, that He spared not His own Son. Romans 8:32

Wherefore I entreat, when morning has appeared, straightway as we come out of our house, let us have this one object in view, this earnest care above all, to rescue him that is in danger; I do not mean this danger only that is known by sense, for this is not danger at all, but the danger of the soul, that which is brought upon men by the devil.

For the merchant too, to increase his wealth, crosses the sea; and the artisan, to add to his substance, does all things. Let us also then not be satisfied with our own salvation only, since else we destroy even this. For in a war too, and in an engagement, the soldier who is looking to this only how he may save himself by flight, destroys the rest also with himself; much as on the other hand the noble-minded one, and he who stands in arms in defense of the others, with the others preserves himself also. Since then our state too is a war, and of all wars the bitterest, and an engagement and a battle, even as our King commanded us, so let us set ourselves in array in the engagement, prepared for slaughter, and blood, and murders, looking to salvation in behalf of all, and cheering them that stand, and raising up them that are down. For indeed many of our brethren lie fallen in this conflict, having wounds, wallowing in blood, and there is none to heal, not any one of the people, not a priest, no one else, no one to stand by, no friend, no brother, but we look every man to his own things.

By reason of this we maim our own interests also. For the greatest confidence and means of approval is the not looking to our own things.

Therefore I say, are we weak and easy to be overcome both by men, and by the devil, because we seek the opposite to this, and lock not our shields one with another, neither are fortified with godly love, but seek for ourselves other motives of friendship, some from relationship, some from long acquaintance, some from community of interest, some from neighborhood; and from every cause rather are we friends, than from godliness, when one's friendships ought to be formed upon this only. But now the contrary is done; with Jews and with Greeks we sometimes become friends, rather than with the children of the church.

6. Yes, says he, because the one is worthless, but the other kind and gentle. What do you say? Do you call your brother worthless, who art commanded not to call him so much as Raca? And are you not ashamed, neither do you blush, at exposing your brother, your fellow member, him that has shared in the same birth with you, that has partaken of the same table?

But if you have any brother after the flesh, if he should perpetrate ten thousand evil deeds, you labor to conceal him, and accountest yourself also to partake of the shame, when he is disgraced; but as to your spiritual brother, when you ought to free him from calumny, thou dost rather encompass him with ten thousand charges against him?

Why he is worthless and insufferable, you may say. Nay then for this reason become his friend, that you may put an end to his being such a one, that you may convert him, that you may lead him back to virtue.-- But he obeys not, you will say, neither does he bear advice.-- Whence do you know it? What, have you admonished him, and attempted to amend him?-- I have admonished him often, you will say. How many times?-- Oftentimes, both once, and a second time.-- Oh! Is this often? Why, if you had done this throughout all the time, ought thou to grow weary, and to give it up? Do you see not how God is always

admonishing us, by the prophets, by the apostles, by the evangelists? What then? Have we performed all? And have we been obedient in all things? By no means. Did He then cease admonishing? Did He hold His peace? Does He not say each day, You cannot serve God, and mammon Matthew 6:24 and with many, the superfluity and the tyranny of wealth yet increases? Does He not cry aloud each day, Forgive, and you shall have forgiveness, Luke 6:37 and we become wild beasts more and more? Does He not continually admonish to restrain desire, and to keep the mastery over wicked lust, and many wallow worse than swine in this sin? But nevertheless, He ceases not speaking.

Wherefore then do we not consider these things with ourselves, and say that even with us God reasons, and abstains not from doing this, although we disobey Him in many things?

Therefore He said that, Few are the saved. For if virtue in ourselves suffices not for our salvation, but we must take with us others too when we depart; when we have saved neither ourselves, nor others, what shall we suffer? Whence shall we have any more a hope of salvation?

But why do I blame for these things, when not even of them that dwell with us do we take any account, of wife, and children, and servants, but we have care of one thing instead of another, like drunken men, that our servants may be more in number, and may serve us with much diligence, and that our children may receive from us a large inheritance, and that our wife may have ornaments of gold, and costly garments, and wealth; and we care not at all for themselves, but for the things that belong to them. For neither do we care for our own wife, nor provide for her, but for the things that belong to the wife; neither for the child, but for the things of the child.

And we do the same as if any one seeing a house in a bad state, and the walls giving way, were to neglect to raise up these, and to make up great fences round it without; or when a body was diseased, were not to take care of this, but were to weave for it gilded garments; or when the mistress was ill, were to give heed to the maidservants, and the looms, and the vessels in the house, and mind other things, leaving her to lie and moan.

For this is done even now, and when our soul is in evil and wretched case, and angry, and reviling, and lusting wrongly, and full of vainglory, and at strife, and dragged down to the earth, and torn by so many wild beasts, we neglect to drive away the passions from her, and are careful about house and servants. And while if a bear has escaped by stealth, we shut up our houses, and run along by the narrow passages, so as not to fall in with the wild beast; now while not one wild beast, but many such thoughts are tearing in pieces the soul, we have not so much as a feeling of it. And in the city we take so much care, as to shut up the wild beasts in solitary places and in cages, and neither at the senate house of the city, nor at the courts of justice, nor at the king's palace, but far off somewhere at a distance do we keep them chained; but in the case of the soul, where the senate house is, where the King's palace, where the court of justice is, the wild beasts are let loose, crying and making a tumult about the mind itself and the royal throne. Therefore all things are turned upside down, and all is full of disturbance, the things within, the things without, and we are in nothing different from a city thrown into confusion from being overrun by barbarians; and what takes place in us is as though a serpent were setting on a brood of sparrows, and the sparrows, with their feeble cries, were flying about every way affrighted, and full of trouble, without having any place whither to go and end their consternation.

7. Wherefore I entreat, let us kill the serpent, let us shut up the wild beasts, let us stifle them, let us slay them, and these wicked thoughts let us give over to the sword of the Spirit, lest the prophet threaten us

also with such things as he threatened Judea, that The wild asses shall dance there, and porcupines, and serpents.

For there are, there are even men worse than wild asses, living as it were in the wilderness, and kicking; yea the more part of the youth among us is like this. For indeed having wild lusts they thus leap, they kick, going about unbridled, and spend their diligence on no becoming object.

And the fathers are to blame, who while they constrain the horsebreakers to discipline their horses with much attention, and suffer not the youth of the colt to go on long untamed, but put upon it both a rein, and all the rest, from the beginning; but their own young ones they overlook, going about for a long season unbridled, and without temperance; disgracing themselves, by fornications, and gamings, and continuings in the wicked theatres, when they ought before fornication to give him to a wife, to a wife chaste, and highly endued with wisdom; for she will both bring off her husband from his most disorderly course of life, and will be instead of a rein to the colt.

For indeed fornications and adulteries come not from any other cause, than from young men's being unrestrained. For if he have a prudent wife, he will take care of house and honor and character. But he is young, you say. I know it too. For if Isaac was forty years old when he took his bride, passing all that time of his life in virginity, much more ought young men under grace to practise this self-restraint. But oh what grief! You do not endure to take care of their chastity, but you overlook their disgracing, defiling themselves, becoming accursed; as though ye knew not that the profit of marriage is to preserve the body pure, and if this be not so, there is no advantage of marriage. But ye do the contrary; when they are filled with countless stains, then ye bring them to marriage without purpose and without fruit.

Why I must wait, you will say, that he may become approved, that he may distinguish himself in the affairs of the state; but of the soul you have no consideration, but you overlook it as a cast-away. For this reason all things are full of confusion, and disorder, and trouble, because this is made a secondary matter, because necessary things are neglected, but the unimportant obtain much forethought.

Do you not know, that you can do no such kindness to the youth, as to keep him pure from whorish uncleanness? For nothing is equal to the soul. Because, What is a man profited, says He, if he shall gain the whole world, but lose his own soul. Matthew 16:26 But because the love of money has overturned and cast down all, and has thrust aside the strict fear of God, having seized upon the souls of men, like some rebel chief upon a citadel; therefore we are careless both of our children's salvation, and of our own, looking to one object only, that having become wealthier, we may leave riches to others, and these again to others after them, and they that follow these to their posterity, becoming rather a kind of passers on of our possessions and of our money, but not masters.

Hence great is our folly; hence the free are less esteemed than the slaves. For slaves we reprove, if not for their sake, yet for our own; but the free enjoy not the benefit even of this care, but are more vile in our estimation than these slaves. And why do I say, than our slaves? For our children are less esteemed than cattle; and we take care of horses and asses rather than of children. And should one have a mule, great is his anxiety to find the best groom, and not one either harsh, or dishonest, or drunken, or ignorant of his art; but if we have set a tutor over a child's soul, we take at once, and at random, whoever comes in our way. And yet than this art there is not another greater. For what is equal to training the soul, and forming the mind of one that is young? For he that has this art, ought to be more exactly observant than any painter and any sculptor.

But we take no account of this, but look to one thing only, that he may be trained as to his tongue. And to this again we have directed our endeavors for money's sake. For not that he may be able to speak, but that he may get money, does he learn speaking; since if it were possible to grow rich even without this, we should have no care even for this.

Do you see how great is the tyranny of riches? How it has seized upon all things, and having bound them like some slaves or cattle, drags them where it will?

But what are we advantaged by such accusations against it? For we indeed shoot at it in words, but it prevails over us in deeds. Nevertheless, not even so shall we cease to shoot at it with words from our tongue. For if any advance is made, both we are gainers and you; but if you continue in the same things, all our part at least has been performed.

But may God both deliver you from this disease, and cause us to glory in you, for to Him be glory, and dominion, world without end. Amen.

Source: <https://sermonindex.net/speakers/st-john-chrysostom/homily-59-on-matthew/>

Grow in Your Walk with Christ

Listen and read messages that will stir your heart for Christ and point you to deeper repentance and devotion.

- 50,000+ Sermons from speakers past and present
- 3,900+ Classic Christian Books freely readable online
- 1,200+ Bible Translations and Commentaries
- Over 450k forum posts — Join our vibrant online Christian forum

www.sermonindex.net