

Homily 6 on Romans

by St. John Chrysostom

St. John Chrysostom's homily emphasizes the importance of genuine faith and practice over mere adherence to Jewish identity and rituals.

Topics: "True Faith", "Righteous Living"

Description

John Chrysostom preaches about the importance of living a life of true faith and righteousness, emphasizing that being called a Jew or having external religious practices is not enough if one's heart and actions do not align with God's will. He highlights the privilege and responsibility the Jews had in being entrusted with the oracles of God, but also points out their failure to live up to this calling, leading to their condemnation. Chrysostom challenges his audience to examine their own lives, to not just boast in religious titles or knowledge, but to truly live out the righteousness and faith they claim to possess.

Transcript

Romans II. 17, 18

Behold, you are called a Jew, and retest in the Law, and makest your boast of God, and know His will, and approvest the things that are more excellent, being instructed out of the Law.

After saying that the Gentile wants nothing appertaining to salvation if he be a doer of the Law, and after making that wonderful comparison, he goes on to set down the glories of the Jews, owing to which they thought scorn of the Gentiles: and first the very name itself, which was of great majesty, as the name Christian is now. For even then the distinction which the appellation made was great. And so he begins from this, and see how he takes it down. For he does not say, Behold, you are a Jew, but art called so, and makest your boast in God; that is, as being loved by Him, and honored above all other men. And here he seems to me to be gently mocking their unreasonableness, and great madness after glory, because they misused this gift not to their own salvation, but to set themselves up against the rest of mankind, and to despise them. And know His will, and approvest the things that are more excellent. Indeed this is a disadvantage, if without working: yet still it seemed to be an advantage, and so he states it with accuracy. For he does not say, you do, but know; and approvest, not followest and doest. "testest things that differ." So Weiss, Godet, Wilke (Clavis N.T.), Lange, Tholuck. Alford, Philippi. This interpretation has the advantage of following the original meaning of both verbs.--G.B.S)-->

Ver. 19. And art confident that you yourself.

Here again he does not say that you are a guide of the blind, but you are confident, so you boast, he says. So great was the unreasonableness of the Jews. Wherefore he also repeats nearly the very words, which they used in their boastings. See for instance what they say in the Gospels. You were altogether (■ λος 4 manuscripts ■ λως) born in sin, and do you teach us? John 9:34 And all men they utterly looked down upon, to convince them of which, Paul keeps extolling them and lowering the others, that so he may get more hold on them, and make his accusation the weightier. Wherefore he goes on adding the like things, and making more of them by different ways of relating them. For You are confident, he says, that you yourself art a leader of the blind,

Ver. 20. An instructor of the foolish, a teacher of babes, which hast the form of knowledge and truth, which is in the Law.

Here again he says not, in the conscience and in actions and in well-doings, but in the Law; and after saying so, he does here also what he did with regard to the Gentiles. For as there he says, for wherein you judge another, you condemn yourself, so says he here also.

Ver. 21. You therefore who teaches another, do you not teach yourself?

But there he frames his speech with more of sharpness, here with more of gentleness. For he does not say, However on this score you deserve greater punishment, because though entrusted with so great things you have not made a good use of any of them, but he carries his discourse on by way of question, turning them on themselves (■ ντρ■πων), and saying, Thou that teachest another, do you not teach yourself? And here I would have you look at the discretion of Paul in another case.

For he sets down such advantages of the Jews, as came not of their own earnestness, but by a gift from above, and he shows not only that they are worthless to them if neglectful, but that they even bring with them increase of punishment. For neither is the being called a Jew any well doing of theirs, nor yet is the receiving of the Law, nor the other things he has just enumerated, but of the grace from above. And towards the beginning he had said, that the hearing of the Law is valueless unless the doing be thereto added (for not the hearers of the Law, he says, are just before God,) but now he shows further still, that not only the hearing, but, what is more than the hearing, the teaching of the Law itself will not be able to screen the teacher, unless he do what he says; and not only will it not screen him, but will even punish him the more.

And he has used his expressions well too, since he does not say, You have received the Law, but You rest in the Law. For the Jew was not wearied with going about to seek what was to be done, but had on easy terms the Law pointing the way leading to virtue. For if even the Gentiles have natural reason (and it is on this ground that these are better than they, in that they do the Law without hearing), yet still the others had greater facility. But if you say, I am not only a hearer, but even a teacher, this very thing is an aggravation of your punishment.

For because they prided themselves upon this, from this above all he shows them to be ridiculous. But when he says, a guide of the blind, an instructor of the foolish, a teacher of babes, he is speaking their own pompous language. For they treated proselytes extremely ill, and these were the names they called them by. And this is why he dwells at large upon what were supposed to be their praises, well knowing that what was said gave ground for greater accusation; Which hast the form of knowledge and of the truth in the Law.

As if any one who had a picture of the king, were to draw nothing after it, and they that were not entrusted with it were to imitate it exactly even without the original. And then after mentioning the advantages they had from God, he tells them of their failings, bringing forward what the prophets accused them of. You therefore who teaches another, do you not teach yourself? You that preaches that a man should not steal, do you steal? You who says a man should not commit adultery, do you commit adultery?

You that abhors idols, do you commit sacrilege? For it was strictly forbidden them to touch any of the treasures upon the idols (so Field from the manuscripts: Vulg. in the idol temples) by reason of the defilement. But the tyranny of avarice, he says, has persuaded you (4 manuscripts and mar. us) to trample this Law also under foot. Then he brings the far more grievous charge afterwards, saying,

Ver. 23. You that makes a boast in the Law through breaking the Law do you dishonor God?

There are two accusations which he makes, or rather three. Both that they dishonor, and dishonor that whereby they were honored; and that they dishonor Him that honored them, which was the utmost extreme of unfeelingness. And then, not to seem to be accusing them of his own mind, he brings in the Prophet as their accuser, here briefly and concisely as it were in a summary, but afterwards more in detail, and here Isaiah, and after that David, when he had shown the grounds of reproof to be more than one. For to show, he means, that it is not I who speak these things to your reproach, hear what Isaiah says.

Ver. 24. For the name of God is blasphemed among the Gentiles through you. Isaiah 52:5; Ezekiel 36:20-23

See again another double accusation. For they not only commit insolence themselves, but even induce others to do so. What then is the use of your teaching when you teach not your own selves? Above, however, he merely said this, but here he has even turned it round to the contrary. For not only yourselves, but even others, do ye not teach what should be done. And what is far worse -- ye not only teach not the things of the Law, but you even teach the opposite, viz. to blaspheme God, which is opposite to the Law. But the circumcision, one will say, is a great thing. Yea, I also confess it, but when? When (So all manuscripts S. then, when) it has the inward circumcision. And observe his judgment, in bringing in what he says about it so opportunely. For he did not begin straightway with it, since the conceit men had of it was great. But after he had shown them to have offended in that which was greater and to be responsible for the blasphemy against God, then having henceforth possession of the reader's judgment against them, and having stripped them of their pre-eminence, he introduces the discussion about circumcision, feeling sure that no one will any more advocate it, and says,

Ver. 25. For circumcision verily profits, if you keep the Law.

And yet, were this not so, a man might have rejected it and said, What is circumcision? For is it any good deed on his part that has it? Is it any manifestation of a right choice? For it takes place at an unripe age, and those in the wilderness too remained uncircumcised for a long time. And from many other points of view also, one might look at it as not necessary. And yet it is not on this foot that he rejects it, but upon the most proper ground, from the case of Abraham. For this is the most exceeding victory -- to take the very reason for showing it to be of small regard, whence it was held by them in reverence. Now he might have said that even the prophets call the Jews uncircumcised. But this is no disparagement of circumcision, but of those that hold ill to it. For what he aims at is to show that even in the very best life, it has not the least force. This is what he next proves. And here he does not bring forward the Patriarch, but having previously overturned it upon other grounds, he keeps him till afterwards, when he brings in what he has to say of

faith, on the words -- How then was it reckoned to Abraham? when he was in circumcision, or in uncircumcision? For so long as it is struggling against the Gentile and the uncircumcised, he is unwilling to say anything of this, lest he should be over irksome to them. But when it comes in opposition to the faith, then he disengages himself more completely for a combat with it. Up to the present point then it is uncircumcision that the contest is against, and this is why he advances in His discourse in a subdued tone, and says,

For circumcision verily profits if you keep the Law; but if you be a breaker of the Law, your circumcision is made uncircumcision. For here he speaks of two uncircumcisions, and two circumcisions, as also two laws. For there is a natural law and there is a written law. But there is one also between these, that by works. And see how he points these three out, and brings them before you.

For when the Gentiles, he says, which have not the Law. What Law, say? The written one. Do by nature the things of the Law. Of what Law? Of that by works. These having not the Law. What Law? The written one. Are a law unto themselves. How so? By using the natural law. Who show the work of the Law. Of what law? Of that by actions. For that which is by writing lies outside; but this is within, the natural one, and the other is in actions. And one the writing proclaims; and another, nature; and another, actions. Of this third there is need, for the sake of which also those two exist, both the natural and the written. And if this be not present they are of no good, but even very great harm. And to show this in the case of the natural he said, For wherein you judge another, you condemn yourself. But of the written Law, thus -- You who preaches that a man should not steal, do you steal? Thus also there are two uncircumcisions, one that of nature, and the second from conduct: and one circumcision in the flesh, and the other from the will. I mean for instance, a man has been circumcised upon the eighth day; this is circumcision of the flesh: a man has done all the Law bids him; this is circumcision of the mind which St. Paul requires above all, yea rather the Law also. See now how having granted it in words, he in deed does away with it. For he does not say the circumcision is superfluous, the circumcision is of no profit, of no use. But what says he? Circumcision verily profits if you keep the Law. Deuteronomy 10:16; 30:6 He approves it so far, saying, I confess and deny not that the circumcision is honorable. But when? When it has the Law kept along with it.

But if you be a breaker of the Law, your circumcision is made uncircumcision. He does not say, it is no more profitable, lest he should seem to insult it. But having stripped the Jew of it, he goes on to smite him. And this is no longer any insult to circumcision, but to him who through listlessness has lost the good of it. As then in the case of those who are in dignified stations and are after convicted of the greatest misdemeanors, the judges deprive them of the honors of their stations and then punish them; so has Paul also done. For after saying, if you are a breaker of the Law, your circumcision is made uncircumcision, and having shown him to be uncircumcised, he condemns him after that without scruple.

Ver. 26. Therefore if the uncircumcision keep the righteousness of the Law, shall not his uncircumcision be turned into circumcision?

See how he acts. He does not say that the uncircumcision overcomes circumcision (for this was highly grating to those who then heard him), but that the uncircumcision has become circumcision. And he next enquires what circumcision is, and what uncircumcision and he says that circumcision is well doing and uncircumcision is evil doing. And having first transferred into the circumcision the uncircumcised, who has good deeds, and having thrust out the circumcised man that lived a corrupt life into the uncircumcision, he so gives the preference to the uncircumcised. And he does not say, To the uncircumcised, but goes on to

the thing itself, speaking as follows: Shall not his uncircumcision be turned into circumcision? And he does not say reckoned, but turned to, which was more expressive. As also above he does not say your circumcision is reckoned uncircumcision, but has been made so.

Ver. 27. And shall not the uncircumcision which is by nature judge?

You see, he recognizes two uncircumcisions, one from nature, and the other from the will. Here, however, he speaks of that from nature, but does not pause here, but goes on, if it fulfil the Law, judge you, who by the letter and circumcision dost transgress the Law? See his exquisite judgment. He does not say, that the uncircumcision which is from nature shall judge the circumcision, but while where the victory had been, he brings in the uncircumcision, yet where the defeat is, he does not expose the circumcision as defeated; but the Jew himself who had it, and so by the wording spares offending his hearer. And he does not say, you that hast the Law and the circumcision, but yet more mildly, you who by the letter and circumcision dost transgress the Law. That is, such uncircumcision even stands up for the circumcision, for it has been wronged and comes to the Law's assistance, for it has been insulted, and obtains a notable triumph. For then is the victory decided, when it is not by Jew that Jew is judged, but by the uncircumcised; as when he says, The men of Nineveh shall rise in judgment against this generation, and shall condemn it. Matthew 12:41 It is not then the Law that he dishonors (for he reverences it greatly), but him that does disgrace to the Law. Next, having settled these grounds clearly, he goes on confidently to define what the Jew really is; and he shows that it is not the Jew, nor the circumcision, but he that is no Jew, and uncircumcised, whom he is rejecting. And he seems indeed to stand up in its behalf, but yet does away with the opinion regarding it, securing men's concurrence by the conclusion he comes to. For he shows not only that there is no difference between the Jew and the uncircumcised, but that the uncircumcised has even the advantage, if he take heed to himself, and that it is he that is really the Jew; and so he says:

Ver. 12. For he is not a Jew which is one outwardly.

Here he attacks them as doing all things for show.

Ver. 29. But he is a Jew which is one inwardly; and circumcision is that of the heart, in the spirit, and not in the letter.

By saying this he sets aside all things bodily. For the circumcision is outwardly, and the sabbaths and the sacrifices and purifications: all of which he hints in a single word, when he says, For he is not a Jew which is one outwardly. But since much was made of the circumcision, inasmuch as even the sabbath gave way to it John 7:22, he has good reason for aiming more especially against it. But when he has said in the spirit he thereafter paves the way for the conversation of the Church, and introduces the faith. For it too is in the heart and spirit and has its praise of God. And how comes he not to show that the Gentile which does aright is not inferior to the Jew which does aright, but that the Gentile which does aright is better than the Jew which breaks the Law? It was that he might make the victory an undoubted one. For when this is agreed upon, of necessity the circumcision of the flesh is set aside, and the need of a good life is everywhere demonstrated. For when the Greek is saved without these, but the Jew with these is yet punished, Judaism stands by doing nothing. And by Greek he again means not the idolatrous Greek, but the religious and virtuous, and free from all legal observances.

Chap. iii. ver. 1. What advantage then has the Jew?

Since he has set all aside, the hearing, the teaching, the name of the Jew, the circumcision, and all the other particulars by his saying that he is not a Jew which is one outwardly, but he which is one inwardly; he next sees an objection which starts up, and against this makes his stand. Now what is this objection? If, he means, these things are no use, what reason was there for that nation being called, and the circumcision too being given? What does he then and how does he solve it? By the same means as he did before: for as there, he told, not of their praises, but the benefits of God; nor their well doings (for to be called a Jew and to know His Will and to approve the things which are more excellent, was no well doing of their own, but came of the grace of God: and this the Prophet also says, upbraiding them; He has not done so to any nation, neither has he showed His judgments unto them; Psalm 147:20 and Moses again; Ask now whether there has been any such thing as this? he says, did ever people hear the voice of God speaking out of the midst of the fire, and live?) Deuteronomy 4:32-33, this then he does here also. For as, when speaking of circumcision, he did not say, Circumcision is valueless without a good life, but, Circumcision is of value with a good life, pointing out the same thing but in a more subdued tone. And again he does not say, If you be a breaker of the Law, thou who art circumcised art no whit profited, but your circumcision is made uncircumcision: and after this again, the uncircumcision, says he, shall judge, not the circumcision, but you that dost transgress the Law, so sparing the things of the Law, and smiting the persons. So he does here also. For after setting before himself this objection, and saying, what advantage then has the Jew? he says not, None, but he concurs with the statement, and confutes it again by the sequel, and shows that they were even punished owing to this preëminence. And how he does so, I will tell you when I have stated the objection. What advantage then, he says, has the Jew, or what profit is there of circumcision?

Ver. 2. Much every way: chiefly, because that they were entrusted with the oracles of God.

Do you see that, as I said above, it is not their well doings, but the benefits of God, that he everywhere counts up? And what is the word ■ πιστε■θησαν? (they were trusted.) It means, that they had the Law put into their hands because He held them to be of so much account that He entrusted to them oracles which came down from above. I know indeed that some take the entrusted not of the Jews, but of the oracles, as much as to say, the Law was believed in. But the context does not admit of this being held good. For in the first place he is saying this with a view to accuse them, and to show that, though in the enjoyment of many a blessing from above, they yet showed great ingratitude. Then, the context also makes this clear. For he goes on to say, For what if some did not believe? If they did not believe, how do some say, the oracles were believed in? What does he mean then? Why that God entrusted the same to them, and not that they trusted to the oracles: how else will the context make sense? For he farther goes on to say,

Ver. 3. For what if some did not believe?

And what comes next makes the same point clear. For he again adds and follows; Shall their unbelief make the faith of God without effect?

Ver. 4. God forbid. The word ■ πιστε■θησαν, then, proclaims God's gift.

And I would have you here also note his judgment. For again he does not bring in his accusation of them on his own part, but as it were by way of objection, as if he said, But perhaps you will say, 'What then is the use of this circumcision since they used it not as was fitting, since they were trusted with the Law and were unfaithful to the trust?' And hitherto he is not a severe accuser, but as if to clear God of complaints against Him, he by this means turns the whole of the accusation round upon themselves. For why, he

would say, do you complain that they did not believe? And how does this affect God? For as for His benefit, does the ingratitude of those benefited overturn it? Or does it make the honor to be no honor? For this is what the words, Shall their unfaithfulness make the faith of God without effect, amount to. God forbid. As if one should say, I have honored such an one. And if he did not receive the honor, this gives no ground for accusing me, nor impairs my kindness, but shows his want of feeling. But Paul does not say this merely, but what is much more. That not only does their unbelief not leave the soil of complaint upon God, but even shows His honor and love of man to be the greater, in that He is seen to have bestowed honor upon one who would dishonor Him. See how he has brought them out guilty of misdemeanors by means of what they gloried in; forasmuch as the honor with which God treated them was so great, that even when He saw what would come thereof, He withheld not His good-will toward them! Yet they made the honors bestowed on them a means of insulting Him that Honor them! Next, since he said, For what if some did not believe? (while clearly it was all of them that did not believe,) lest by speaking here too as the history allowed him, he should seem to be a severe accuser of them like an enemy, he puts that, which really took place, in the method of reasoning and syllogism, saying as follows: Yea, let God be true, but every man a liar. What he says is something of this sort. I do not mean, he says, that some did not believe, but if you will, suppose that all were unbelieving, so waiving what really happened, to fall in with the objector, that he might seem overbearing or to be suspected. Well, he says, in this way God is the more justified. What does the word justified mean? That, if there could be a trial and an examination of the things He had done for the Jews, and of what had been done on their part towards Him, the victory would be with God, and all the right on His side. And after showing this clearly from what was said before, he next introduces the Prophet also as giving his approval to these things, and saying, that You might be justified in Your sayings, and clear when You are judged. Psalm 51:4 He then for His part did everything, but they were nothing the better even for this. Then he brings forward after this another objection that arises, and says,

Ver. 5. But if our unrighteousness commend the righteousness of God, what shall we say? Is God unrighteous Who takes vengeance? I speak as a man.

Ver. 6. God forbid.

He solves one perplexity by another again. Yet as this is not clear, we must needs declare it more clearly. What is it then he means? God honored the Jews: they did despite to Him. This gives Him the victory, and shows the greatness of His love towards man, in that He honored them even such as they were. Since then, he means, we did despite to Him and wronged Him, God by this very thing became victorious, and His righteousness was shown to be clear. Why then (a man may say) am I to be punished, who have been the cause of His victory by the despite I did Him? Now how does he meet this? It is, as I was saying, by another absurdity again. For if it were you, he says, that were the cause of the victory, and after this are punished, the thing is an act of injustice. But if He is not unjust, and yet you are punished, then you are no more the cause of the victory. And note his apostolic reverence; (or caution: ἐλαβειν); for after saying, Is God unrighteous Who takes vengeance? he adds, I speak as a man. As if, he means, any body were to argue in the way men reason. For what things seem with us to be justice, these the just judgment of God far exceeds, and has certain other unspeakable grounds for it. Next, since it was indistinct, he says the same thing over again:

Ver. 7. For if the truth of God has more abounded through my lie unto His glory: why yet am I also judged as a sinner?

For if God, he means is shown to be a Lover of man, and righteous, and good, by your acts of disobedience, you ought not only to be exempt from punishment but even to have good done unto you. But if so, that absurdity will be found to result, which is in circulation with so many, that good comes of evil, and that evil is the cause of good; and one of the two is necessary, either that He be clearly unjust in punishing, or that if He punish not, it is from our vices that He has the victory. And both of these are absurd to a degree. And himself meaning to show this too, he introduces the Greeks (i.e. heathens) as the fathers of these opinions, thinking it enough to allege against what he has mentioned the character of the persons who say these things. For then they used to say in ridicule of us, let us do evil that good may come. And this is why he has stated it clearly in the following language.

Ver. 8. If not (as some affirm that we say,) Let us do evil that good may come? Whose damnation is just.

For whereas Paul said, where sin abounded grace did much more abound Romans 5:20, in ridicule of him and perverting what he said to another meaning, they said, We must cling to vice that we may get what is good. But Paul said not so; however to correct this notion it is that he says, What then? Shall we continue in sin that grace may abound? God forbid! (ib. 6:1, 2.) For I said it, he means, of the times which are past, not that we should make this a practice. To lead them away then from this suspicion, he said, that henceforth this was even impossible. For how shall we, he says, that are dead unto sin, live any longer therein? Against the Greeks then he inveighs (καταδραμεν) without difficulty. For their life was exceeding abandoned. But of the Jews, even if their life seemed to have been careless, still they had great means of cloaking these things in the Law and circumcision, and the fact of God having conversed with them, and their being the teachers of all. And this is why he strips them even of these, and shows that for these they were the more punished, and this is the conclusion to which he has here drawn his discussion. For if they be not punished, he would say, for so doing, that blasphemous language -- let us do evil that good may come -- must necessarily gain currency. But if this be impious, and they who hold this language shall be punished (for this he declared by saying, whose damnation is just), it is plain that they are punished. For if they who speak it be deserving of vengeance, much more are they who act it, but if deserving thereof, it is as having done sin. For it is not man that punishes them, that any one should suspect the sentence, but God, that does all things righteously. But if they are righteously punished, it is unrighteously that they, who make ridicule of us, said what they did. For God did and does everything, that our conversation might shine forth and be upright on every side.

Let us then not be listless; for so we shall be able to recover the Greeks also from their error. But when we are in words lovers of wisdom, but in deeds behave unseemly, with what looks shall we face them? With what lips shall we discourse concerning doctrines? For he will say to each of us, How can you that have failed in what is less, claim to teach me about what is greater? You who as yet have not learned that covetousness is a vice, how can you be wise upon the things in heaven?

But do you know that it is a vice? Then, the charge is the greater, because you transgress knowingly. And why speak I of the Greek, for even our laws allow us not to speak thus boldly when our life has become abandoned. For to the sinner, it says, says God, what have you to do to declare my statutes? Psalm 50:16 There was a time when the Jews were carried away captive, and when the Persians were urgent with them, and called upon them to sing those divine songs unto them, they said, How shall we sing the Lord's song in a strange land?

Psalm 137:4 Now if it were unlawful to sing the oracles of God in a strange land, much less might the estranged soul do it. For estranged the merciless soul is. If the Law made those who were captives and

had become slaves to men in a strange land, to sit in silence; much more is it right for those who are slaves to sin and are in an alien community (πολίτε■& 139·) to have a curb upon their mouths. And however they had their instruments then. For it says, Upon the willows in the midst thereof did we hang our instruments, but still they might not sing.

And so we also, though we have a mouth and tongue, which are instruments of speech, have no right to speak boldly, so long as we be slaves to what is more tyrannical than any barbarian, sin. For tell me what have you to say to the Greek, if you plunder, and be covetous? will you say, Forsake idolatry, acknowledge God, and draw not near to gold and silver? Will he not then make a jest of you, and say, Talk to yourself first in this way? For it is not the same thing for a Gentile to practise idolatry, and a Christian to commit this same (4 manuscripts. om. same) sin.

For how are we to draw others away from that idolatry if we draw not ourselves away from this? For we are nearer related to ourselves than our neighbor is, and so when we persuade not ourselves, how are we to persuade others? For if he that does not rule well over his own house, will not take care of the Church either 1 Timothy 3:5, how shall he that does not rule even over his own soul be able to set others right? Now do not tell me, that you do not worship an image of gold, but make this clear to me, that you do not do those things which gold bids you.

For there be different kinds of idolatry, and one holds mammon lord, and another his belly his god, and a third some other most baneful lust. But, you do not sacrifice oxen to them as the Gentiles do. Nay, but what is far worse, you butcher your own soul. But you do not bow the knee and worship. Nay, but with greater obedience you do all that they command you, whether it be your belly, or money, or the tyranny of lust. For this is just what makes Gentiles disgusting, that they made gods of our passions; calling lust Venus, and anger Mars, and drunkenness Bacchus.

If then you do not grave images as did they, yet do you with great eagerness bow under the very same passions, when you make the members of Christ members of an harlot, and plunge yourself into the other deeds of iniquity. 1 Corinthians 6:15 I therefore exhort you to lay to heart the exceeding unseemliness hereof, and to flee from idolatry:-- for so does Paul name covetousness-- and to flee not only covetousness in money, but that in evil desire, and that in clothing, and that in food, and that in everything else: since the punishment we shall have to suffer if we obey not God's laws is much severer.

For, He says, the servant that knew his Lord's will, and did it not, shall be beaten with many stripes. Luke 12:47 With a view then to escaping from this punishment, and being useful both to others and to ourselves, let us drive out all iniquity from our soul and choose virtue. For so shall we attain to the blessings which are to come, whereto may it be granted us all to attain by the grace and love toward man, etc.

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