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ST JOHN CHRYSOSTOM

On Wealth and Poverty

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ON WEALTH AND POVERTY

St John Chrysostom

Translated and Introduced by
CATHARINE P. ROTH

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Introduction

St John of the golden mouth (Chrysostom) lived, served, and preached at a cross-roads in the history of the Christian Church.[1] He was born about 350 A.D. at Antioch in Syria: a time not long after Constantine had established Christianity as the official religion of the Roman Empire, and a city where Greek civilization encountered the various cultures of the Near East. The church in Antioch was founded by St Paul, visited by St Peter, and adorned by the episcopate of St Ignatius the God-bearer (martyred about 107). Antioch was the third city of the empire until the rise of Constantinople, with a population of perhaps 300,000, mostly Greeks, but also Syrians, Phoenicians, Romans, Jews, and others. Christianity had to compete with a variety of religions, as well as with the secular attractions of the theaters and the race-course. Earthquakes and Persian invasions were persistent dangers. Antioch prospered because of its position on the trade routes; some families were very rich, though others were very poor, and a majority were in an adequate financial condition.[2]

John's parents were Christians and prominent citizens, but his father died when John was an infant. John's mother Anthusa devoted herself to raising her son, providing his basic religious and moral training. He received the standard

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[1]Biographies of St John: D. Attwater, *St John Chrysostom, Pastor and Preacher* (Milwaukee 1939); Dom C. Baur, O.S.B., *St John Chrysostom and His Time* (London 1959).

[2]St John estimated one tenth rich and one tenth poor (Homily on the Gospel of Matthew 66.3, PG 58.630).

education of late antiquity; his reading list consisted of the great pagan Greek classics. He did not learn any other language, neither the Latin used in the imperial administration nor the Syrian spoken by the people of the local countryside. His teacher Libanius was a famous rhetorician, whose public speeches attracted large audiences. John's own sermons later became a similar form of public entertainment. His classical education also appears in occasional reminiscences of the ancient poets, Homer for example, and more often in allusions to the philosophers, such as Solon, Socrates, and Diogenes. His ethical teaching combines the spirit of the New Testament with the tradition of the Stoics and Cynics, who taught that virtue was the only true good, and wisdom the only source of true freedom and true wealth.

A Christian childhood in the fourth century did not necessarily include an early baptism, although infant baptism is attested at an earlier date. At this time, however, the children of Christian parents seem usually to have remained among the catechumens. When they reached adulthood and chose to do so, they could be enrolled among the candidates for baptism at the next Easter. Under the influence of the beloved archbishop of Antioch, St Meletius, John received baptism when he was about twenty years old. Some time in the next few years he was ordained reader. He turned his attention to religious studies, primarily of the Bible, in a school at Antioch which was led by Diodore, later bishop of Tarsus. Among his fellow students was Theodore, later bishop of Mopsuestia. These men developed the Antiochene tradition of explaining the Bible, emphasizing the historical and literal meaning of the text, and limiting the use of allegorical interpretation, which was especially developed by Origen and the exegetes of Alexandria. Another student of the school of Antioch, Nestorius, was condemned as a heretic by the Council of Ephesus in 431, and his condemnation cast suspicion,

probably undeserved, on the orthodoxy of Diodore and Theodore. John Chrysostom, for his part, was not interested in the details of theological argument, but used the Antiochene style of exegesis to promote a Christian way of life.

John's mother Anthusa urged him not to leave her to become a monk as long as she was still living. Perhaps it was after her death that he undertook the ascetic life in one of the loosely-organized communities of hermits which had settled in the hills near Antioch. Under the guidance of an old Syrian monk he spent four years in training for the hermit life, then retired to a more isolated cave to live alone. Within two years his excessive austerity forced him to return to Antioch. Perhaps also his time of contemplation had helped him to find his true vocation, as a pastor and teacher. For the next twenty years, approximately, he served the church of Antioch as reader, deacon, and priest. In his years as reader and deacon he must have come to know the people of the city, as he assisted in liturgical worship, collected and distributed alms, and helped to instruct the catechumens. He knew from experience the sufferings of the poor and the sick, and was struck in contrast by the arrogance of the rich.

In 386, Flavian, who had succeeded Meletius as archbishop of Antioch, ordained John to the priesthood and assigned him to the duty of preaching. As priest, John usually preached on Sundays at the Liturgy, sometimes at the vigil service on Saturday, probably at services on other holy days, and at daily evening services in Lent. He was evidently loved by the people, and his sermons were popular —though never as popular as the theater or the race-course. The congregation often interrupted his preaching with applause, but did not necessarily put his advice into practice. He rebuked people for coming to church only for the beginning of the Liturgy and departing with the catechumens after the sermon; he did not want the faithful to

make listening to his sermons a substitute for participation in the liturgical prayers and the holy Communion. The people expected him to preach a long and eloquent sermon; but this expectation must often have made the service as a whole rather long even by Orthodox standards. Besides preaching and administering the sacraments, John gave spiritual guidance to his people individually; he mentions urging them to read the Bible regularly. We know of some of the public crises through which he, with his bishop, led the people; his pastoral care must have been felt also in many private crises.

John's priestly service at Antioch was brought to a sudden end when St Nectarius, the patriarch of Constantinople, died in 397. That was the beginning of John's unwilling involvement in the politics, ecclesiastical and secular, of the imperial capital, and the beginning of his troubles. He was kidnapped from Antioch, for fear that the people would prevent his removal, and received episcopal consecration in 398. We do not know how strongly he may have objected, but he does not seem to have been given a choice. The common people of Constantinople, like the people of Antioch, accepted him. His enemies were ambitious prelates, courtiers, and the empress Eudoxia. Theophilus the Pope of Alexandria, who had opposed John's election to the see of Constantinople, bore him a grudge. Eudoxia suspected John of attacking her when he denounced luxury and license. Suffice it to say that John was sent into exile, continuing to encourage his faithful friends by his correspondence when he could not address them in person. He died on 14 September 407, still giving glory to God.

During his priesthood in Antioch, St John preached his series of sermons on the parable of Lazarus and the rich man, perhaps in 388 or 389.[3] He began on 2 January,

[3]PG 48.963-1054.

referring to the riotous celebrations of the Saturnalia on the previous day, which marked the beginning of the civil year. While the parties, carousing, and entertainments went on, faithful members of the church had been listening to John exhort them to do everything for God's glory.[4] Now they were back for the second day, and he introduced the parable. On the next two occasions, probably the next two Saturdays or Sundays, he continued to preach on the parable. The fourth time, he told his congregation, he would have finished explaining the parable if it had not been necessary to praise the local martyrs St Babylas and Saints Juventinus and Maximinus.[5] The feast day of St Babylas is 24 January, about three weeks after the first sermon on Lazarus; Juventinus and Maximinus were honored a few days later. On the next occasion after that, St John concluded with the fourth sermon on the parable. A week later, probably, he began the fifth sermon of the series by saying that he could speak more on the parable, but to keep his hearers from being surfeited he would discuss another text instead.

The sixth and seventh sermons were given later on, but while the parable was still on his mind and his congregation's—perhaps later the same year. The sixth was preached after an earthquake, when it seemed timely to speak of God's judgment and the necessity of choosing the right way of life before it was too late. The seventh sermon begins as an admonition to those who frequent the racecourse, with the text, "Enter by the narrow gate;" Lazarus and the rich man came easily to the preacher's mind as travellers by the narrow way and the easy road respectively.

The parable of Lazarus and the rich man enabled St John to treat several of his favorite themes. First of all, there is the age-old question, why do we see righteous

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[4]PG 48.953-961.

[5]PG 50.527-533, 571-578.

people suffering while sinners live in prosperity? From this there follows the moral question, what does God expect of us, rich and poor? In more general terms, how do we attain salvation? The first four sermons treat the text of the parable verse by verse and discuss these questions along the way.

In the first sermon, St John deals with the lives of Lazarus and the rich man (Luke 16:19-21). The parable passes over the moral qualities of the two men, so St John must discuss what is wrong with the life of luxury and what is good about the life of poverty. Are all the rich condemned and all the poor saved? No, although the poor have a better chance. The rich man's chief fault was his failure to give alms; he neglected the duty of helping his neighbor. In addition he harmed his own spiritual health by his self-indulgent way of life. Lazarus, on the other hand, by enduring patiently without complaint used his sufferings to build up his spiritual strength. Although St John does not deny that poverty is a misfortune, he says nothing about trying to escape from it. He is concerned with spiritual, not material well-being. If we wish to store up treasure in heaven, we must both observe the commandment of love towards our neighbor and practice the asceticism appropriate to our circumstances for the benefit of our own souls.

The second sermon moves along to the deaths of the two men (Luke 16:22-24). Death reveals who was truly rich and who was truly poor. The man who lived alone receives an honor guard of angels; the other man has lost all his followers and lies alone in hell. St John has more to say here about the positive duties of the rich: they must hold their property as stewards for the poor, and must share their wealth without regard to the moral qualities of those who are in need. If we spend more than necessary on ourselves, we deserve the same penalty as if we had stolen the money. St John does not say that we must sell everything and give it to the poor; he is addressing those who are not

called to the monastic life, but those who must find a Christian way of living in the world. Like others of the Fathers, he makes it clear that private property is not a Christian idea, however valid it is in law.[6] "His goods are not his own, but belong to his fellow servants." In another sermon St John goes so far as to suggest a return to the apostolic practice of holding the property of Christians in common; but he realizes that his hearers are not ready for so radical a change, even within the Christian community.[7] Of course there would have been no way for his hearers to alter the economic and social organization of the Roman Empire; so we cannot expect St John to offer a political program. He concentrates realistically on the opportunities for good works, alms-giving and hospitality, which were (and are) open to each person.[8]

In the third sermon, St John takes up the rich man's first petition, that Lazarus should bring him a drop of water, and Abraham's response (Luke 16:24-26). What is the relation between our misfortune or prosperity in this life and our condition in the life to come? Can we earn our way to heaven by our sufferings, voluntary or involuntary, in this life? Not exactly, according to St John; but earthly sufferings, if endured with patience, can help us get rid of some of our sins and the punishment due to us for them. He uses metaphors of washing or dissolving our sins away, as well as judicial and financial expressions (paying a penalty or a debt). Every one of us has some sins, no matter how good we are; but if the general trend of our life is virtuous, we can finish our necessary suffering before we die. Besides, we need to train ourselves in virtue in

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[6]See C. Avila, *Ownership: Early Christian Teaching* (New York: Maryknoll, 1983).

[7]Homily on the Acts of the Apostles 11.3, PG 60.96-98.

[8]For information on Byzantine almsgiving, see D. Constantelos, *Byzantine Philanthropy and Social Welfare* (New Brunswick, New Jersey, 1968).

order to become the kind of people God wants us to be. If we are poor or chronically ill, the effort of patient endurance with thanksgiving is sufficient asceticism. If we are rich and healthy, we must practice voluntary austerity both to overcome our sinful inclinations and to develop a virtuous character. Is this salvation by works? The opposition of works and faith is not an issue for the Greek Fathers. Of course it is God's grace which saves us, as St John prays at the end of each sermon. Grace assists our own will to foster righteousness in us. As a pastor and teacher of morals, St John concentrates on what we ourselves are expected to do.

Don't delay in choosing God

In concluding the third sermon, St John speaks of the great chasm which separates heaven from hell. This raises the issue of intercessory prayer for the dead. The Fathers of the Orthodox Church generally teach, with the support of Biblical texts like this, that we must make our choice for or against God in this life, and that once we have passed to the other life we will have no opportunity to escape from hell. Thus St John here tells his congregation that, if they have not made their own efforts to acquire virtue during their lives, they must not expect to be saved by the prayers of others, whether of their spiritual father or of any saintly relative. Nevertheless the Church traditionally prays for the dead, a practice which St John's discussion assumes. What good do our prayers for the dead accomplish? We can probably help those who are still being purified and growing in the knowledge and love of God (the Orthodox Church does not claim to know for certain what sort of purgatorial suffering there may be); as for those in hell, most of the Fathers say that our prayers are able to lessen their suffering but not actually to release them.[9] St John,

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[9]Bishop Kallistos of Diocleia (Kallistos Ware), " 'One Body in Christ': Death and the Communion of Saints," *Sobornost/ECR* 3:2 (1981) 179-191.

following his Master, wishes here to impress upon his hearers the necessity of entering the way of righteousness in this life.

The fourth sermon takes up the rich man's second request, that Lazarus should visit his brothers (Luke 16:27-31). If we do not receive visitors from the hereafter, why should we believe in a judgment after death? In the first place, we have Moses and the prophets, and all the holy Scriptures. Secondly, reason tells us that if God is just, and if people do not get their deserts in this life, then there must be a time for recompense after death. Thirdly, God must have given us a conscience for some purpose. Conscience should induce us to admit our sins (apparently St John is thinking of confession made privately to God, sacramental confession before a priest not having yet become a general custom). If we repent and confess our sins, God will forgive us, heal us, and help us to become righteous. The theme of conscience reminds St John of Joseph and his brothers. The brothers were accused by their own conscience even before they had recognized Joseph in Egypt. Joseph himself, like Lazarus, provides an example of patient trust in God's providence. St John concludes by summarizing what he has been saying in these four sermons: if we have sinned (as we all have), we must repent and confess, we must give alms and practice virtue in order to put away our sins and prepare ourself for the life of heaven.

Some time later, probably the same year, an earthquake caused damage, casualties, and distress at Antioch. St John begins to preach by saying that they have spent three days in prayer but now the earthquake is past. This sermon is longer and less well organized than any of the earlier four. One might suspect that St John is speaking extemporaneously, using ideas that are fresh in his mind or suggested to him by the situation. He recognizes that his theme is familiar also to his hearers, but asks them to listen patiently.

He frequently asks for attention; he frequently has to recall himself to the subject. The earthquake, he says, should make us mindful of God's judgment, which we have escaped for the time being. The poor must practice patience, the rich must give alms. Everyone must seek virtue—rich and poor, men and women, free people and slaves. At this point St John digresses on the origin of slavery. All human beings were created free, he says, Eve as well as Adam. Slavery was introduced by the sin of Ham, who saw Noah's nakedness and incurred his father's curse. From a Christian point of view, the real slave is the person who is a captive of sin; a virtuous slave is really free. Here St John is using the kind of paradox which was popularized by the Stoic philosophers. The theme of slavery then reminds him of Onesimus, a slave whose virtue brought him freedom. St John does not go so far as to say that Christians should free their slaves, though pious Byzantines often did so in their wills or when entering monastic life.[10] Society was not ready for a general emancipation of slaves. As for us, are we ready to accept all human beings as free children of God, whatever their social class or manner of employment (or unemployment)?

Those who suffered more in this life are closer to God in next life (martyrs)

The sermon returns to the familiar themes of the recompense received by Lazarus and the rich man. The reward for the rich man's good deeds was given to him in this life, to keep it from reducing his punishment hereafter. He could have helped himself if he had shared his prosperity; as it is, he has no claim for relief in his torment. The penalty for Lazarus' sins, whatever they were, was imposed in this life, in order that it might not detract from his blessedness hereafter. At the very end of the sermon, St John adds the possibility that someone may incur suffering in this life which outweighs his sins; in that case

[10]See the index of Constantelos, *Byzantine Philanthropy and Social Welfare,* under "slaves, freeing of."

he arrives in heaven with a credit toward righteousness. This presumably gives him greater blessedness among the blessed ones in heaven.

The final sermon on the parable of Lazarus and the rich man begins with a denunciation of those who frequent the race-course. The text is, "Enter by the narrow gate" (Matthew 7:13-14). Why was the race-course so serious a problem? There may have been gladiatorial combats as well as chariot races, or at least fights between gladiators and animals. Perhaps there were unseemly "half-time shows." St John says that Christians who were seen at the races set a bad example for prospective converts. Besides, they were wasting their time, and, above all, nullifying the work of spiritual training which they had undertaken in the church. Perhaps, like some people nowadays, they were making sport a substitute for religion, with their zealous attachment to one charioteer or another. In any case, they were walking on an easy road and would come to a bad end. The easy road and the narrow gate remind the preacher of his two favorite examples of travellers: the rich man on the easy road and Lazarus on the difficult road. In addition to what he has said before, he treats the question whether wealth really is a good thing, whether poverty really is evil. Again he uses a paradox of the Stoic type. The rich man received in his lifetime what he believed to be good, but he did not realize that some other things were much better. Lazarus, on the other hand, while receiving what the rich man considered evil (poverty and ill-health), looked beyond the appearances and strove for the truly good things, namely virtue and his heavenly reward.

Sport should not be substituted for religion

Lazarus was patient and faithful

The first four sermons have previously been translated into English by F. Allen,[11] whose version I have consulted. In general, however, the present translation is new, made

[11]*Four Discourses of Chrysostom, chiefly on the parable of the rich man and Lazarus,* translated by F. Allen, B.A. (London 1869).

from the text published by Migne (PG 48.963-1054). I have omitted the fifth sermon as well as some other passages which are not directly relevant to the problems of wealth and poverty. For quotations from the Bible I have used the Revised Standard Version except when the sense of the sermon required a different rendering. For the Old Testament, St John of course used the Greek text (Septuagint), and no special mention of this is made in the notes.

I wish to thank, for help and support of various kinds, Bishop Kallistos of Diocleia, Father John Meyendorff, Jeannette Baird, Wendy O'Donnell, Pam O'Keefe, Lawrence Stevens, and my family, Nathaniel, Margaret, and Father Gregory Roth.

—Catharine P. Roth
Bicester, England
May 1984

St. John Chrysostom, first sermon on Lazarus and the rich man

Yesterday, although it was a feast-day of Satan, you preferred to keep a spiritual feast, receiving our words with great good will, and spending most of the day here in church, drinking a drunkenness of self-control, and dancing in the chorus of Paul. In this way a double benefit came to you, because you kept free of the disorderly dance of the drunkards and you revelled in well-ordered spiritual dances. You shared a drinking-bowl which did not pour out undiluted wine but was filled with spiritual instruction. You became a flute and a lyre for the Holy Spirit. While others danced for the devil, you prepared yourselves by your occupation here to be spiritual instruments and vessels. You allowed the Holy Spirit to play on your souls and to breathe His grace into your hearts. Thus you sounded a harmonious melody to delight not only mankind but even the powers of heaven.

* * *

St John urges his congregation not to give up trying to correct those who drink excessively. We are doing our duty in giving salutary advice even if no one heeds us.

* * *

But I have proved sufficiently that we must never desert

those who are fallen, even if we know in advance that they will not heed us. Now we must proceed to the condemnation of luxurious living. As long as this feast continues, and the devil goes on wounding the souls of the drunkards with drink, our duty is to go on applying the remedies.

Yesterday we fortified ourselves against the drunkards with Paul's words, "Whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God."[1] Today we will show them Paul's Master, not merely advising and exhorting them to abstain from luxurious living, but actually chastising and punishing one who lived in luxury, for the story of the rich man and Lazarus, and what happened to both of them, demonstrates this very thing. But it will be best if I read you the whole parable from the beginning, to keep us from treating it too carelessly. "There was a rich man, who was clothed in purple and fine linen and who made merry every day. And at his gate lay a poor man named Lazarus, full of sores, who desired to be fed with what fell from the rich man's table; moreover the dogs came and licked his sores."[2]

We might ask why the Master speaks in parables, and why He explained some parables but not others, and what in fact a parable is, and many other such questions—but we will save these for another time, so as not to delay this urgent discussion now. We will ask you only this one question, which of the evangelists it is who tells us that Christ told this parable. Who is it? Only Luke. You must also know this, that all four evangelists reported some of Christ's savings, but each of them individually chose others to report. Why is this so? To make us read the other gospels, and to make us realize how remarkable their agreement is. For if all of them told everything, we would not pay careful attention to all of them, because one would be enough to

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[1]I Cor. 10:31.
[2]Luke 16:19-21.

teach us everything. But if everything they tell were different, we would not see their remarkable agreement. For this reason all of them wrote many things in common but each also chose some things to tell individually.

Now, what Christ teaches by the parable is this. There was a rich man, He says, living in great wickedness. The man was not tested by any misfortune, but everything flowed to him as if from a fountain. The very words, "He made merry every day," imply that nothing unexpected happened to him, no cause of distress or disturbance in his life. It is evident that he lived in wickedness both from the end which fell to his lot and, before the end, from his contempt for the poor man. He himself has demonstrated that not only did he neglect that man by the gate but he did not give alms to anyone else either. For if he did not give alms to this man who was continually prostrate at his gate, lying before his eyes, whom he had to see every day once or twice or many times as he went in and out, for the man was not lying in the street nor in a hidden or narrow place, but where the rich man whenever he made his entrance or exit was forced unwillingly to see him, if (I say) he did not give alms to this man, who lay in such grievous suffering, and lived in such destitution, or rather for his whole life was troubled by chronic illness of the most serious kind, whom of those he encountered would he ever have been moved to pity? If we suppose that he passed the man by on the first day, he would probably have felt some pity on the second day; if he overlooked him even on that day, he surely ought to have been moved on the third or the fourth or the day after that, even if he were more cruel than the wild beasts. But he felt no such emotion, but became harder-hearted and more reckless even than that unjust judge who knew neither fear of God nor shame before men.[3] For the widow's persistence

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[3]Luke 18:2.

persuaded that judge, cruel and savage though he was, to grant the favor. He was moved to pity at her supplication; but even persistence could not move this rich man to help the poor man, although his petition was not equivalent to the widow's, but much easier to fulfill and more just. For she besought the judge to aid her against her enemies, but he begged the rich man to release him from hunger and not to ignore him as he lay dying. She pestered the judge with her petition, but he appeared to the rich man many times each day lying in silence. This is enough to soften even the heart of stone. For when we are pestered we often become harder; but when we see those who need help standing by in complete silence, uttering no sound, not complaining though never satisfied, but merely appearing to us in silence, even if we are more insensible than the very stones, we become ashamed at the excess of politeness and are moved to pity. And another fact was not less significant than these, that the very appearance of the poor man was pitiful, as he was overcome by hunger and long illness. Nevertheless none of this tamed that savage man.

This cruelty is the worst kind of wickedness; it is an inhumanity without rival. For it is not the same thing for one who lives in poverty not to help those in need, as for one who enjoys such luxury to neglect others who are wasting away with hunger. Again, it is not the same thing to see a poor man once or twice and pass him by, as to look at him every day and not be aroused by the persistent sight to mercy and generosity. Again, it is not the same thing for one who is troubled in his heart by misfortune and distress not to help his neighbor, as for one who enjoys such happiness and continuous good fortune to neglect others who are wasting away with hunger, to lock up his heart, and not to be made more generous by his own joy. For you surely know this, that even if we are the most savage of men, we usually are made more gentle and kindly by good fortune. But that man was not improved by his

prosperity, but remained beastly, or rather he surpassed the cruelty and inhumanity of any beast in his behavior.

Nevertheless he who lived in wickedness and inhumanity enjoyed every kind of good fortune, while the righteous man who practiced virtue endured the extremes of ill fortune. For again in Lazarus' case, we can prove that he was righteous both by his end and, before his end, by his patient endurance of poverty. Do you not seem to see the whole situation as if it were present? The rich man had his ship full of merchandise, and it sailed before the wind. But do not be surprised: he was hastening to shipwreck, since he refused to unload his cargo with discretion. Shall I tell you another wickedness of his? His daily luxurious and unscrupulous feasting. For truly this is extreme wickedness, not only now, when such great wisdom is expected of us, but even at the beginning, under the old covenant, when not so much wisdom had been revealed. Hear what the prophet says: "Woe . . . to you who are approaching the evil day, who are drawing near and adopting false sabbaths."[4] What does this mean, "who are adopting false sabbaths?" The Jews think that the sabbath is given to them for idleness. This is not the purpose, but in order that they may remove themselves from worldly cares and devote all their leisure to spiritual concerns. It is evident from the facts that the sabbath is not a subject for idleness but for spiritual work. The priest indeed does double work on that day: while a single sacrifice is offered every day, on that day he is bidden to offer a double sacrifice. If the sabbath were simply for idleness, the priest ought to be idle even more than the rest of the people. Since the Jews, although they were released from worldly activities, did not attend to spiritual matters, such as self-control, kindness, and hearing the divine Scriptures, but did the opposite, gorging themselves, getting drunk, stuffing themselves,

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[4]Amos 6:3.

feasting luxuriously, for this reason the prophet condemned them. For when he said, "Woe . . . to you who are approaching the evil day," and added, "and adopting false sabbaths," he showed by his next words how their sabbaths were false. How did they make their sabbaths false? By working wickedness, feasting, drinking, and doing a multitude of shameful and grievous deeds. To prove that this is true, hear what follows. He reveals what I am saying by what he adds immediately: "Who sleep upon beds of ivory, and live delicately on their couches, and eat kids out of the flocks, and sucking calves out of the midst of the stalls . . . who drink filtered wine, and anoint yourselves with the best ointment."[5] You received the sabbath to free your soul from wickedness, but you have enslaved it further. For what could be worse than this frivolity, this sleeping on beds of ivory? The other sins, such as drunkenness, greed, and profligacy, provide some pleasure, however small; but in sleeping on beds of ivory, what pleasure is there? What comfort? The beauty of the bed does not make our sleep sweeter or more pleasant, does it? Rather it is more onerous and burdensome, if we have any sense. For when you consider that, while you sleep on a bed of ivory, someone else does not enjoy even sufficient bread, will your conscience not condemn you, and rise up against you to denounce this inequity? But if the accusation is of sleeping on beds of ivory which are also decorated all around with silver, what defense will we have?

Do you wish to see what makes a bed truly beautiful? I will show you now the splendor of a bed, not of a citizen or a soldier, but of a king. For even if you are the most ambitious of all men, I am sure that you will not wish to have a bed more splendid than the king's; and, what is more, I do not refer to any ordinary king, but the greatest king, more kingly than all other kings, who is still honored

[5]Amos 6:4-6.

in song throughout the world: I am showing you the bed of the blessed David. What kind of bed did he have? Not adorned all over with silver and gold, but with tears and confessions. He himself tells this, when he says, "I shall wash my bed every night; I shall water my couch with my tears."[6] He fixes his tears like pearls everywhere on his bed. And consider with me how he loved God in his soul. Since in the daytime many concerns about rulers, commanders, nations, peoples, soldiers, wars, peace, politics, and troubles in his household or outside or among his neighbors, distracted him and diverted his attention, the time of leisure, which everyone else uses for sleep, he used for confession, prayers, and tears. He did not do this on one night only, ceasing on the second night, nor on two or three nights, omitting the nights in between, but he kept on doing this every night. For he says, "I shall wash my bed every night; I shall water my couch with my tears," revealing the abundance and continuity of his tears. When everyone was quiet and at rest, he met God alone, and the unsleeping eye was with him as he wept and mourned and told of his private sins. You also ought to make a bed like this for yourself. Silver surrounding you awakens jealousy from men and stirs up anger from above; but tears like David's are able to quench the very fires of hell.

Shall I show you another bed? I mean Jacob's. He had the bare ground beneath him and a stone under his head. For this reason he saw the spiritual Rock and that ladder by which angels ascended and descended.[7] Let us also set our minds on such beds, so that we may see such dreams as well. But if we lie on silver beds, not only will we not gain any pleasure, but besides we will endure distress. For when you consider that in the most extreme cold, in

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[6]Psalm 6:7.

[7]Gen. 28; Compare I Cor. 10:4; several biblical rocks are interpreted as types of Christ.

the middle of the night, when you are sleeping on a bed, the poor man has thrown himself on a pile of straw by the door of the bath-house, wrapping the stalks around him, shivering, stiff with cold, pinched with hunger—even if you are the stoniest of all men, I am sure that you will condemn yourself for providing for yourself unnecessary luxury while not allowing him even what is necessary. "No soldier on service," it is written, "gets entangled in civilian pursuits."[8] You are a spiritual soldier; this kind of soldier does not sleep on an ivory bed, but on the ground. He is not anointed with perfumed oils: these are the concern of those corrupt men who dally with courtesans, of those who act on the stage, of those who live carelessly. You must not smell of perfumes but of virtue. Nothing is more unclean for the soul than when the body has such a fragrance. For the fragrance of the body and the clothes would be a sign of the stench and filthiness of the inner man. When the devil attacks and breaks down the soul with self-indulgence, and fills it with great frivolity, then he wipes off the stain of his own corruption on the body also with perfumes. Just as those who are continually afflicted with a nasal discharge and catarrh will stain their clothes, their hands, and their faces as they continually wipe off the discharge from their noses, so also the soul of this wicked man will wipe off the discharge of evil on his body. Who will expect anything noble and good from one who smells of perfumes and who keeps company with women, or rather courtesans, and who leads the life of a dancer? Let your soul breathe a spiritual fragrance, so that you may give the greatest benefit both to yourself and to your companions.

There is nothing more grievous than luxury. Hear what Moses says about it: Jacob "grew fat, he became thick and broad. The beloved one kicked out."[9] Moses does not say

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[8]II Tim. 2:4. [9]Deut. 32:15.

that Jacob walked out, but that the beloved one kicked out, suggesting how haughty and unbridled he had become. And elsewhere Moses says, when you have eaten and drunk, "take heed to yourself, that you forget not the Lord your God."[10] In this way luxury often leads to forgetfulness. As for you, my beloved, if you sit at table, remember that from the table you must go to prayer. Fill your belly so moderately that you may not become too heavy to bend your knees and call upon your God. Do you not see how the donkeys leave the manger ready to walk and carry loads and fulfill their proper service? But when you leave the table you are useless and unserviceable for any kind of work. How will you avoid being more worthless even than the donkeys? Why do I say this? Because that is the time when you most need to be sober and wide awake.[11] The time after dinner is the time for thanksgiving, and he who gives thanks should not be drunk but sober and wide awake. After dinner let us not go to bed but to prayer, or we may become more irrational than the irrational beasts.

I know that many will condemn what I say, thinking that I am introducing a strange new custom into our life; but I will condemn more strongly the wicked custom which now prevails over us. Christ has made it very clear that after taking nourishment at table we ought to receive not sleep in bed but prayer and reading of the divine Scriptures. When He had fed the great multitude in the wilderness, He did not send them to bed and to sleep, but summoned them to hear divine sayings. He had not filled their stomachs to bursting, nor abandoned them to drunkenness; but when He had satisfied their need, He led them to spiritual nourishment. Let us do the same; and let us accustom ourselves to eat only enough to live, not enough

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[10]Deut. 8:11.
[11]Compare I Thess. 5:6, I Peter 5:8.

to be distracted and weighed down. For we were not born, we do not live, in order to eat and drink; but we eat in order to live.[12] At the beginning life was not made for eating, but eating for life. But we, as if we had come into the world for this purpose, spend everything for eating.

Now to make our denunciation of luxury more vehement and more pertinent to those who practice it, let us lead our sermon back to Lazarus. Thus our advice and counsel will be truer and clearer, when you see those who attended to good eating chastised and punished, not in words but in actions. For as the rich man lived in such wickedness, practiced luxury every day, and dressed himself splendidly, he was preparing for himself a more grievous punishment, building himself a greater fire, and making his penalty inexorable and his retribution inaccessible to pardon. The poor man, on the other hand, lay at his gate and did not become discouraged, blaspheme, or complain. He did not say to himself what many people say: "What is this? He lives in wickedness, cruelty, and inhumanity, enjoys everything more than he needs, and does not endure even mental distress or any other of the unexpected troubles (of which many afflict mankind), but gains pure pleasure; but I cannot obtain a share even of necessary sustenance. Everything flows to him as if from a fountain, although he spends all his good on parasites, flatterers, and drunkenness; but I lie here an example for onlookers, a source of shame and derision, wasting away with hunger. Is this the work of providence? Does any justice oversee the deeds of mankind?" He did not say or even think any of these things. How do we know? From the fact that the angels led him away in triumph, and seated him in the bosom of Abraham. If he had been a blasphemer, he would not have come to enjoy such honor.

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[12]Socrates is reported to have said that most people live in order to eat, but that he himself ate in order to live.

Many people admire the man for this reason only, that he was poor, but I can show that he endured chastisements nine in number, imposed not to punish him, but to make him more glorious; and indeed this came about. In the first place poverty is truly a dreadful thing, as everyone knows who has experienced it; for no words can describe how great the anguish is which those endure who live as beggars without knowing wisdom. But for Lazarus this was not his only trouble, but illness was yoked to it, and this to an excessive degree. See how he shows both these misfortunes at their height. Christ showed that the poverty of Lazarus surpassed all other poverty at that time, when He said that Lazarus did not even enjoy any of the crumbs which fell from the rich man's table. Again, He showed that Lazarus' illness reached the same measure as his poverty, beyond which it could not stretch out any farther, when He said that the dogs licked his sores. Lazarus was so much weakened that he could not even shoo the dogs away, but he lay like a living corpse, watching them coming without strength to protect himself from them. His limbs were so weak, so much wasted by disease, so far consumed by his trials. Did you see both poverty and disease besieging his body to the extreme degree? If each of these by itself is dreadful and unbearable, when they are woven together, is he not a man of steel who can endure them? Many people are often ill, but do not lack their necessary sustenance; others live in extreme poverty, but enjoy good health; and one good becomes a consolation for the other misfortune. But here both these misfortunes have run together. But, you say, you can tell me of someone who is both ill and poor. But not in such loneliness. For even if not in his own home, at least in public he could receive mercy from those who see him; but for Lazarus the lack of protectors made his two misfortunes more grievous. And this lack itself was made to seem more grievous by his position at the gate of the rich

man. For if he had endured such sufferings and been neglected while lying in a desert and uninhabited place, he would not have felt so much distress. If no one had been present, he would have been persuaded even against his will to endure what was happening to him; but since he did not obtain even ordinary concern from anyone although he lay in the midst of so many drunkards and merry-makers, he came to feel his anguish more keenly and to same trials as he had; indeed he could not even hear of so much by our misfortunes when no helper is present as when people are present but unwilling to stretch out a hand; and this was his situation at that time. For there was no one to console him with a word or comfort him with a deed, no friend, neighbor, or relative, not even any onlooker, since the rich man's whole household was corrupt.

In addition to these, the sight of another person in good fortune laid on him an extra burden of anguish, not because he was envious and wicked, but because we all naturally perceive our own misfortunes more acutely by comparison with others' prosperity. In the case of the rich man there was something else which could hurt Lazarus even more. He received a keener perception of his own troubles not only by comparing his own misfortune with the rich man's prosperity, but also by considering that the rich man fared well in all respects in spite of living with cruelty and inhumanity, while he suffered extreme evils with virtue and goodness. Because of this he endured inconsolable distress. For if the man had been just, if he had been good, if he had been admirable, if he had been laden with every virtue, he would not have grieved Lazarus; but since he lived in wickedness, and had reached the height of evil, and was demonstrating such inhumanity, and treated him like an enemy, and passed him by like a stone shamelessly and mercilessly, and in spite of this all enjoyed such affluence: think how he was likely to sink the poor man's soul as if with a series of waves; think how

Lazarus was likely to feel, seeing parasites, flatterers, servants going to and fro, in and out, running around, shouting, drinking, stamping their feet, and practicing all other kinds of wantonness. As if he had come for this very purpose, to be a witness of others' good fortune, he lay thus at the gate, alive only enough to be able to perceive his own ill fortune, enduring shipwreck while in the harbor, tormenting his soul with the bitterest thirst so near the spring.

Shall I name another evil in addition to these? He could not observe another Lazarus. We, for our part, even if we suffer a multitude of troubles, can at least gain sufficient comfort and enjoy consolation from looking at him. Finding companions in our sufferings either in fact or in story brings a great consolation to those in anguish. But he could not see anyone else who had suffered the same trials as he had; indeed he could not even hear of anyone among his ancestors who had endured as much. This is enough to darken one's soul. It is possible even to add another evil to these, namely that he could not console himself with any thought of resurrection, but he believed that the present situation was closed within the present life; for he was one of those who lived before the time of grace. But now among us, when so much knowledge of God has been revealed, both the good hope of the resurrection, and the retribution awaiting sinners hereafter, and the rewards prepared for the upright, if some people are so mean-spirited and miserable that they are not upheld even by these expectations, what was he likely to feel, deprived even of this anchor? He could not yet practice any such wisdom because the time had not yet come for these teachings.

There was even something more in addition to these evils, namely that his reputation was slandered by foolish people. For most people, when they see someone in hunger, chronic illness, and the extremes of misfortune,

do not even allow him a good reputation, but judge his life by his troubles, and think that he is surely in such misery because of wickedness. They say many other things like this to one another, foolishly indeed, but still they say them: for example, if this man were dear to God, He would not have left him to suffer in poverty and the other troubles. This is what happened both to Job and to Paul. To the former they said, "You have not often been spoken to in distress, have you? Who will endure the force of your words? Whereas you have instructed many, strengthened the hands of the weak, upheld the stumbler with words, and made firm the feeble knees, yet now pain has come to you . . . and you are impatient. Is not your fear founded in folly?"[13] What he means is something like this: "If you had done something good, you would not have suffered what you have suffered; but you are paying the penalty of sin and transgression." This was what most distressed the blessed Job. About Paul also the foreigners said the same: for when they saw the viper hanging from his hand, they did not imagine anything good about him, but thought him one of those who have dared the utmost evil. This is clear from what they said, "Though he has escaped from the sea, justice has not allowed him to live."[14] We also often make an extraordinary uproar with words like these.

Nevertheless, although the waves were so great and came so close together, the boat did not sink, but he strengthened himself with wisdom like dew continually refreshing a person lying in a furnace. He did not say to himself anything like what many people are likely to say, that if this rich man, when he departs to the other world, receives punishment and retribution, he has made one for one, but if hereafter he enjoys the same honors as

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[13]Job 4:2-6.
[14]Acts 28:4.

here, he has made two for nothing. Do not you ordinary people use these expressions in the marketplace, and bring the language of the race-course and the theater into the church? I am ashamed, indeed, and I blush to put these expressions before you, except that it is necessary to say these things, to free you from the disorderly humor, the shame, and the harm that comes from such talk. Many people often say these things with a laugh, but even this belongs to the evil methods of the devil, to introduce corrupt teaching into our life in the guise of humorous expressions. Many people use these phrases continually in workshops, in the marketplace, and in their houses: this is a mark of extreme unbelief, of real mania, and of a childish disposition. To say, "If the wicked are punished when they depart," and not to be thoroughly convinced that they surely will be punished, is characteristic of unbelievers and skeptics. To think that, even if this should happen (and it will happen), the wicked will have enjoyed an equal reward with the righteous indicates the height of foolishness.

What do you say? Tell me. If the rich man departs and is punished hereafter, has he made one for one? How would you figure this? How many years do you want to suppose that he has enjoyed his money in this life? Shall we suppose a hundred? I am willing to say two hundred or three hundred or twice this many, or, if you wish, even a thousand (which is impossible, for, as it is written, "The days of our years . . . are eighty years"[15])—but let us say even a thousand. You cannot show me, can you, a life here which has no end, which understands no limit, like the life of the righteous hereafter? Tell me, if someone in a hundred years should see a good dream on one night, and enjoy great luxury in his sleep, will you be able to say in his case "one for one," and make the one night of

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[15]Psalm 89 (90):10.

those dreams equivalent to the hundred years? You cannot say this. So you must think the same way about the life to come. As one dream is to a hundred years, so the present life is to the future life; or rather the difference is much greater. As a little drop is to the boundless sea, so much a thousand years are to that future glory and enjoyment. What would one need to say more than that it has no limit and knows no end; and as much as dreams differ from the truth of reality, so much this condition differs from that hereafter?

Besides, even before the punishment to come, those who practice wickedness and live in sin are punished in this life. Do not simply tell me of the man who enjoys an expensive table, who wears silken robes, who takes with him flocks of slaves as he struts in the marketplace: unfold for me his conscience, and you will see inside a great tumult of sins, continual fear, storm, confusion, his mind approaching the imperial throne of his conscience as if in a courtroom, sitting like a juror, presenting arguments as if in a public trial, suspending his mind and torturing it for his sins, and crying aloud, with no witness but God who alone knows how to watch these inner dramas. The adulterer, for example, even if he is immensely wealthy, even if he has no accuser, does not cease accusing himself within. The pleasure is brief, but the anguish is long-lasting, fear and trembling everywhere, suspicion and agony. He fears the narrow alleys. He trembles at the very shadows, at his own servants, at those who are aware of his deeds and at those who know nothing, at the woman herself whom he has wronged, and at the husband whom he has insulted. He goes about bearing with him a bitter accuser, his conscience; self-condemned, he is unable to relax even a little. On his bed, at table, in the marketplace, in the house, by day, by night, in his very dreams he often sees the image of his sin. He lives the life of Cain, groaning and trembling on the earth even when no one knows.

Inside he has fire always concentrated. The same happens also to those who practic theft and fraud, to drunkards, and (in a word) to everyone who lives in sin. There is no way to corrupt that court. Even if we do not seek virtue, we still suffer anguish, when we are not seeking it; and if we seek evil, we still experience the anguish when we cease from the pleasure of the sin. Let us not say, about the wicked who are rich here and the righteous who are rewarded hereafter, that one makes one, but that two make nothing. For the righteous, both the life hereafter and this life provide great pleasure; but the wicked and greedy are punished both here and hereafter. They are punished even here by the expectation of the retribution hereafter, and by the evil suspicion of everyone, and by the very fact of sinning and corrupting their own souls. After their departure from here they endure unbearable retribution. In contrast, even if the righteous suffer a multitude of troubles here, they are nourished by good hopes, and have a pleasure that is pure, secure, and permanent; and hereafter the multitude of good things will welcome them, just like Lazarus. Do not tell me that he was afflicted with sores, but consider that he had a soul inside more precious than any gold—or rather not his soul only, but also his body, for the virtue of the body is not plumpness and vigor but the ability to bear so many severe trials. A person is not loathsome if he has this kind of wounds on his body, but if he has a multitude of sores on his soul and takes no care of them. Such was that rich man, full of sores within. Just as the dogs licked the wounds of the poor man, so demons licked the sins of the rich man; and just as the poor man lived in starvation of nourishment, so the rich man lived in starvation of every kind of virtue.

Knowing all these things, let us be wise. Let us not say that if God loved so-and-so, He would not have allowed him to become poor. This very fact is the greatest evidence

of God's love: "For the Lord disciplines him whom He loves, and chastises every son whom He receives."[16] And elsewhere it is written: "My son, if you come forward to serve the Lord, prepare yourself for temptation. Set your heart right and be steadfast."[17] Let us reject from among us, beloved, these frivolous notions and these vulgar expressions. "Let nothing shameful or foolish or ribald," it is written, "come forth from your mouth."[18] Let us not only not say these things ourselves; but even if we see others saying them, let us silence them, let us struggle vigorously against them, let us stop their shameless tongues. Tell me, if you see any robber-chief prowling the roads, lying in wait for passers-by, stealing from farms, burying gold and silver in caves and holes, penning up large herds in his hideouts, and acquiring a lot of clothing and slaves from that prowling, tell me, do you call him fortunate because of that wealth, or unfortunate because of the penalty which awaits him? Indeed he has not yet been apprehended, he has not been handed over to the judge, he has not been thrown into prison, he has no accuser, his case has not come to the vote, but he eats and drinks extravagantly, he enjoys great abundance. Nevertheless we do not call him fortunate because of his present visible goods, but we call him miserable because of his future expected sufferings.

You should think the same way about those who are rich and greedy. They are a kind of robbers lying in wait on the roads, stealing from passers-by, and burying others' goods in their own houses as if in caves and holes. Let us not therefore call them fortunate because of what they have, but miserable because of what will come, because of that dreadful courtroom, because of the inexorable

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[16]Prov. 3:12; Heb. 12:6.
[17]Sir. 2:1-2.
[18]Eph. 5:4, 4:29.

judgment, because of the outer darkness which awaits them. Indeed, robbers often have escaped the hands of men; nevertheless, even knowing this, we would have prayed both for ourselves and for our enemies to avoid that life with its cursed affluence. But with God we cannot say this; for no one will escape His judgment, but all who live by fraud and theft will certainly draw upon themselves that immortal and endless penalty, just like this rich man. Collecting all these thoughts in your minds, therefore, my beloved, let us call fortunate not the wealthy but the virtuous; let us call miserable not the poor but the wicked. Let us not regard what is present, but consider what is to come.[19] Let us examine not the outer garments but the conscience of each person. Let us pursue the virtue and joy which come from righteous actions; and let us, both rich and poor, emulate Lazarus. For this man did not endure just one or two or three tests of virtue, but very many—I mean that he was poor, he was ill, he had no one to help him. He remained in a house which could have relieved all his troubles but he was granted no word of comfort. He saw the man who neglected him enjoying such luxury, and not only enjoying luxury but living in wickedness without suffering any misfortune. He could not look to any other Lazarus or comfort himself with any philosophy of resurrection. Along with the evils I have mentioned, he obtained a bad reputation among the mass of people because of his misfortunes. Not for two or three days but for his whole life he saw himself in this situation and the rich man in the opposite. What excuse will we have, when this man endured all the misfortunes at once with such courage, if we will not bear even the half of these? You cannot, you cannot possibly show or name any other who has suffered so many and such great

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[19]Compare Solon's words: "Call no man happy until he dies" (Herodotus, *Histories* 1.32).

misfortunes. For this reason Christ set him before us, so that whatever troubles we encounter, seeing in this man a greater measure of tribulation, we may gain enough comfort and consolation from his wisdom and patience. He stands forth as a single teacher of the whole world, for those who suffer any misfortune whatever, offering himself for all to see, and surpassing all of them in the excess of his own troubles.

For all this let us give thanks to God who loves mankind. Let us gather help from the narration. Let us talk of Lazarus continually in councils, at home, in the marketplace, and everywhere. Let us examine carefully all the wealth which comes from this parable, so that we may both pass through the present troubles without grief and attain to the good things which are to come: of which may we all be found worthy, by the grace and love of our Lord Jesus Christ, with whom to the Father, together with the Holy Spirit, be glory, honor, and worship, now and ever, and unto ages of ages. Amen.

St. John Chrysostom, second sermon on Lazarus and the rich man

I was impressed by your good will when I preached the earlier sermon on Lazarus, because you both approved the patience of the poor man and abhorred the cruelty and inhumanity of the rich man. These are no small indications of a virtuous disposition. For even if we do not seek virtue, but at least praise it, we shall perhaps be able to attain it; and even if we do not avoid evil, but at least censure it, we shall perhaps be able to escape it. Therefore, since you received that sermon so favorably, listen, I will give you the sequel. You saw him then at the gate of the rich man; see him today in the bosom of Abraham. You saw him licked by dogs; see him carried in triumph by the angels. You saw him in poverty then; see him in luxury now. You saw him in hunger; see him in great abundance. You saw him striving in the contest; see him crowned with victory. You saw his sufferings; see his recompense, both you who are rich and you who are poor: the rich, to keep you from thinking that wealth is worth anything without virtue; the poor, to keep you from thinking that poverty is any evil. This man is presented as a teacher for you both. For if he did not complain when he was poor, what pardon will those have who complain when they are rich? If he gave thanks in hunger and so many troubles, what excuse will those have who do not try to approach the same virtue when they enjoy abundance? Likewise, what pardon will the poor have who

grumble and complain because they have to beg for a living, when this man, who lived continuously in hunger, poverty, loneliness, and illness in the house of a rich man, ignored by everyone, and could not see anyone else who had endured the same sufferings as he had, nevertheless showed such wisdom?

Let us learn from this man not to call the rich lucky nor the poor unfortunate. Rather, if we are to tell the truth, the rich man is not the one who has collected many possessions but the one who needs few possessions; and the poor man is not the one who has no possessions but the one who has many desires.[1] We ought to consider this the definition of poverty and wealth. So if you see someone greedy for many things, you should consider him the poorest of all, even if he has acquired everyone's money. If, on the other hand, you see someone with few needs, you should count him the richest of all, even if he has acquired nothing. For we are accustomed to judge poverty and affluence by the disposition of the mind, not by the measure of one's substance. Just as we would not call a person healthy who was always thirsty, even if he enjoyed abundance, even if he lived by rivers and springs (for what use is that luxuriance of water, when the thirst remains unquenchable?), let us do the same in the case of wealthy people: let us never consider those people healthy who are always yearning and thirsting after other people's property; let us not think that they enjoy any abundance. For if one cannot control his own greed, even if he has appropriated everyone's property, how can he ever be affluent? But those who are satisfied with what they have, and pleased with their own possessions, and do not have their eyes on the substance of others, even if they are the poorest of all, should be considered the richest of all. For whoever has no need of others' property but is

[1]This idea is common in pagan Greek ethical philosophy.

happy to be self-sufficient is the most affluent of all. But if you agree, let us return to our subject.

"The poor man died," Christ says, "and was carried away by the angels."[2] At this point I wish to remove an evil disease from your souls. Many of the simpler people think that the souls of those who die by a violent death become demons. This is impossible, quite impossible. It is not the souls of those who die violently which become demons, but the souls of those who live in sin. Their nature as human beings is not changed, but their way of life imitates the wickedness of demons. Christ indeed made this clear in reference to the Jews when He said, "You are the children of the devil." He called them children of the devil, not because they had changed into the devil's nature, but because they did the devil's works. For this reason He added, "Your will is to do your father's desires."[3] Similarly John said, "You brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the wrath to come? Bear fruit that befits repentance, and do not presume to say, 'We have Abraham as our father.' "[4] For Scripture often speaks of the laws of relationship, not meaning the relationship of nature, but that of virtue and wickedness; Scripture calls a man son and brother of the one whose character he shares.

But why did the devil introduce this evil teaching? He tried to abolish the glory of the martyrs. For since they die by a violent death, he did this because he wanted to spread an evil suspicion against them. But he was not strong enough to do this; for they still keep their proper glory. Instead he accomplished something else more grievous, when by these teachings he persuaded the magicians who serve him to slaughter many bodies of mere children

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[2]Luke 16:22.
[3]John 8:44.
[4]Matthew 3:7-9.

Demons tell lies Scripture is truth Devil is real

in the hope that they would be demons and serve them in return. But this is impossible, quite impossible. What about the fact that demons sometimes say, "I am the soul of such and such a monk"? I do not believe it for the very reason that demons say it; for they deceive those who listen to them. This is why Paul silenced them even though they were telling the truth, lest they take advantage of the occasion and mix falsehoods with the truth, once they had made themselves credible. For when they said, "These men are servants of the Most High God, who proclaim to you the way of salvation,"[5] he strove with the spirit of divination, rebuked it, and ordered it to come out. And after all what evil had it said? "These men are servants of the Most High God." But since many of the simpler people do not always know how to discriminate among the things demons say, he stopped them once and for all from being believed. "You are without honor, you have no right to speak," he said, "be silent, be muzzled. You have no right to preach; this privilege belongs to apostles. Why do you assume what is not yours? Be quiet; you have lost your honor." Christ also did something like this. When the demons said to Him, "We know who You are,"[6] He rebuked them with great vehemence, teaching us never to trust a demon, even if he tells you something healthful. Learning from this, let us not trust a demon at all; but even when he utters something healthful, let us flee and avoid him. We can learn the healthful and salutary teachings with accuracy not from demons but from the divine Scripture. To learn that it is not possible for a soul leaving the body to fall under the tyranny of the demons, hear what Paul says, "He who has died is freed from sin;"[7] that is, he no longr sins. If the devil will not be able to apply

Fight sin by reading

[5]Acts. 16:16-17.
[6]Mark 1:24; Luke 4:34.
[7]Rom. 6:7.

force to the soul while it dwells in the body, obviously he will not be able to do so either when it has departed. "How then do people sin," someone asks, "if they do not suffer force?" Willingly and intentionally, and surrendering themselves, not by necessity or compulsion. This is made clear by all those who have prevailed over his devices. For example, he was not strong enough to persuade Job to utter a blasphemous word in spite of great provocation.

From this it is clear that we have the power to trust or not to trust his advice; we do not submit to any necessity or compulsion from him. Not only from what I have said but from the parable we are discussing it is clear that when the souls leave their bodies, they do not linger here, but are promptly led away. Listen: Christ says, "He died and was carried away by the angels."[8] Not only the souls of the righteous but also the souls of those who lived in wickedness are led away after death; this is clear from another rich man. For when his harvest was abundant, he said to himself, "What shall I do? I will pull down my barns, and build larger ones."[9] There is nothing more wretched than such an attitude. In truth he took down his barns; for the safe barns are not walls but the stomachs of the poor. He who had neglected these did not need to concern himself about walls. What does God say to him? "Fool! Tonight they require your soul from you." You see, here it says "was carried away by the angels," there, "they require;" one was led away as a prisoner, the other was carried on their shoulders as a victor. And just as in the arena when the fighter has received many wounds and is sprinkled with blood, then puts on the wreath of victory, those who stand in front of the arena greet him with loud cheers and lead him home clapping, shouting, and marveling, so also the angels then led Lazarus away. But from

Rich man became prisoner and led to Demons

Lazarus is victorious

[8]Luke 16:22.
[9]Luke 12:17-18.

that other man his soul was required by some frightful powers, perhaps sent just for this purpose. For the soul does not go up automatically to that other life, since this is not even possible. If we need a guide when moving from one city to another, much more the soul which has burst out of the flesh and is moving toward the life to come will need guides to lead it. Because of this it often rises, and sinks down again toward the abyss, and trembles with fear, as it is about to fly out of the flesh. For the awareness of our sins always pricks us, especially at that time when we are about to be led away to the examination of accounts in that terrible court. Then, if anyone has been guilty of theft or greed, or has cursed anyone or hated anyone without cause, or has committed any other wrong, the whole swarm of sins is revived and stands before our eyes to sting our conscience. Just as those who dwell in the prison are in dejection and distress all the time but especially on that day on which they are to be led out to the very doors of the judge, and standing before the courtroom doors, hearing the voice of the judge from inside, are chilled with fear, and are no better off than the dead; so also the soul is in great distress and anxiety at the actual time of its sin, but even more when it is about to be drawn out and led away from this world.

Are you listening to this in silence? I am much happier at your silence than at applause; for applause and praise make me more famous, but this silence makes you more virtuous. I know that what I say is painful, but I cannot tell you how great a benefit it contains. If that rich man had had someone to give him this kind of advice, instead of flatterers who always suggested what he wanted to hear, and who dragged him into luxurious living, he would not have fallen into that hell, nor undergone the unendurable torments, nor repented too late for consolation; but since they all made conversation for his pleasure, they handed him over to the fire. I wish we could always and continu-

ally preach like this and speak about hell. For the Scripture says, "In all you do, remember the end of your life, and then you will never sin."[10] And again, "Prepare your work for your departure, and get everything ready for the road."[11] If you have stolen anything from anyone, give it back, and say like Zacchaeus, "I give four-fold what I have stolen."[12] If you have cheated anyone of anything by flattery, if you have hated anyone, be reconciled before the judgment. Settle everything here, so that you may approach that bench without liabilities.

While we are here, we have good hopes; when we depart to that place, we have no longer the option of repentance, nor of washing away our misdeeds. For this reason we must continually make ourselves ready for our departure from here. What if the Lord wishes to call us this evening? Or tomorrow? The future is unknown, to keep us always active in the struggle and prepared for that removal, just as this Lazarus was patient in endurance. For this reason he was led away with such great honor. The rich man also died and was buried, just as his soul had lain buried in his body like a tomb, and had been wearing the flesh like a grave. For by shackling the flesh with drunkenness and gluttony as if with chains, he had made it useless and dead.[13] Do not simply pass over that phrase "he was buried," beloved: by it you should understand that the silver-inlaid tables, couches, rugs, tapestries, all other kinds of furnishings, sweet oils, perfumes, large quantities of undiluted wine, great varieties of food, rich dishes, cooks, flatterers, body-guards, household servants, and all the rest of his ostentation have been quenched

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[10]Sir. 7:36.

[11]Prov. 24:27 (variant reading).

[12]Luke 19:8.

[13]The idea that the body is the tomb of the soul is typical of Neoplatonic philosophy; for a Christian, the body is deadly only if one chooses to make it so.

Can't take money w/ you when you die

and withered up. Now everything is ashes, all is dust and ashes, dirges and mourning, as no one is able to help any more, nor to bring back the soul which has departed. Then the power of gold is tested, and of all superfluous wealth. From such a crowd of attendants he was led away naked and alone, since he could not take anything with him out of such abundance; but he was led away without any companion or guide. None of those who had attended him, none of those who had assisted him was able to save him from the punishment and retribution; but removed from all those followers, he was taken away alone to endure the unbearable retribution. Truly, "All flesh is as the grass, and all the glory of mankind is as the flower of grass. The grass has withered, and its flower has faded; but the word of the Lord remains for ever."[14] Death came and quenched all those luxuries; it took him like a captive and led him, hanging his head low, groaning with shame, unable to speak, trembling, afraid, as if he had enjoyed all that luxury in a dream. Finally the rich man became a suppliant to the poor man and begged from the table of this man who earlier had gone hungry and been exposed to the mouths of dogs. The situation was reversed, and everyone learned who was really the rich man and was really the poor man, and that Lazarus was the most affluent of all but the other was the poorest of all. For just as on the stage actors enter with the masks of kings, generals, doctors, teachers, professors, and soldiers, without themselves being anything of the sort, so in the present life poverty and wealth are only masks. If you are sitting in the theater and see one of the actors wearing the mask of a king, you do not call him fortunate or think that he is a king, nor would you wish to become what he is; but since you know that he is some tradesman, perhaps a rope-maker or a coppersmith or something of the sort,

You are alone

God's word is forever

Situation is reversed

[14]Isaiah 40:6-8 (Septuagint).

you do not call him fortunate because of his mask and his costume, nor do you judge his social class by them, but reject this evidence because of the cheapness of his other garb. In the same way even here, sitting in this world as if in a theatre and looking at the players on the stage, when you see many rich people, do not think that they are truly rich, but that they are wearing the masks of rich people. Just as that man who acts the part of king or general on the stage often turns out to be a household servant or somebody who sells figs or grapes in the market, so also the rich man often turns out to be the poorest of all. If you take off his mask, open up his conscience, and enter into his mind, you will often find there a great poverty of virtue: you will find that he belongs to the lowest class of all. Just as in the theater, when evening falls and the audience departs, and the kings and generals go outside to remove the costumes of their roles, they are revealed to everyone thereafter appearing to be exactly what they are; so also now when death arrives and the theater is dissolved, everyone puts off the masks of wealth or poverty and departs to the other world. When all are judged by their deeds alone, some are revealed truly wealthy, others poor, some of high class, others of no account.

Lack of virtue is poverty

Often indeed one of those who are rich in this life turns out to be the poorest of all in the other life, even like this rich man. For when the evening took him, that is to say death, and he departed from the theater of the present life, and put aside his mask, he was revealed as the poorest of all in that other world; so poor indeed that he was not master even of a drop of water, but had to beg for this and did not even obtain it by begging. What could be poorer than this poverty? Listen: raising his eyes, he says to Abraham, "Father, have mercy upon me, and send Lazarus to dip the end of his finger in water and let

a drop fall into my mouth."[15] Do you see how great his tribulation is? When Lazarus was near, he used to ignore him, and now when he is distant he calls to him. The man whom he did not see as often as he went in and out, now he sees clearly when he is far way. Why does he see him? Often perhaps this rich man said, "Why do I need piety and virtue? Everything flows to me as if from a fountain, I enjoy great abundance and great prosperity. I do not endure any misfortune. Why should I seek virtue? This poor man who lives in righteousness and piety nevertheless suffers a multitude of troubles." Even now many people express these thoughts. So in order to eradicate these wrong opinions, the Lord shows him that punishment awaits evil, and a crown of honor awaits the efforts of piety. The rich man did not see Lazarus for this reason only, but in order that he might now suffer to a greater degree what the poor man had suffered before. For just as the poor man's torment was made harsher by the fact that he lay at the gate of the rich man and saw others' prosperity, so the rich man's retribution was made harsher by the fact that he lay in hell and saw Lazarus' comfort, in order that he might have a more unendurable punishment not only by the nature of his torments but also by the comparison of the other man's reward. Just as, when God expelled Adam from paradise, He settled him opposite the garden in order that the continual sight might renew his suffering and give him a clearer awareness of his fall from the good, so also He settled the rich man opposite Lazarus in order that he might see the good of which he had deprived himself. "I sent," He says, "the poor man Lazarus to your gate to teach you virtue and to receive your love; you ignored this benefit and declined to use his assistance toward your salvation. Hereafter you shall use him to bring yourself a greater punishment and retribution."

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[15]Luke 16:24.

From the poor man we learn that all who suffer curses and injustice among us will stand before us in that other life. Indeed Lazarus suffered no injustice from the rich man; for the rich man did not take Lazarus' money, but failed to share his own. If he is accused by the man he failed to pity because he did not share his own wealth, what pardon will the man receive who has stolen others' goods, when he is surrounded by those whom he has wronged? In that world there is no need of witnesses, accusers, evidence, or proof; the deeds themselves just as we have done them appear before our eyes.

"See the man," He says, "and his works: indeed this also is theft, not to share one's possessions." Perhaps this statement seems surprising to you, but do not be surprised. I shall bring you testimony from the divine Scriptures, saying that not only the theft of others' goods but also the failure to share one's own goods with others is theft and swindle and defraudation. What is this testimony? Accusing the Jews by the prophet, God says, "The earth has brought forth her increase, and you have not brought forth your tithes; but the theft of the poor is in your houses."[16] Since you have not given the accustomed offerings, He says, you have stolen the goods of the poor. He says this to show the rich that they hold the goods of the poor even if they have inherited them from their fathers or no matter how they have gathered their wealth. And elsewhere the Scripture says, "Deprive not the poor of his living."[17] To deprive is to take what belongs to another; for it is called deprivation when we take and keep what belongs to others. By this we are taught that when we do not show mercy, we will be punished just like those who steal. For our money is the Lord's, however we may have gathered it. If we provide for those in need, we shall obtain

Theft is stealing but failure to share Excess = theft of poor

[16]Compare Mal. 3:8-10.
[17]Sir. 4:1.

God shows us Grace and mercy so we must give the same to the poor.

Change perspective of possessions

Not share = steal its Gods money

Steward manages

Rich man is steward to distribute to po
penalty for spending too much

ESSAY

great plenty. This is why God has allowed you to have more: not for you to waste on prostitutes, drink, fancy food, expensive clothes, and all the other kinds of indolence, but for you to distribute to those in need. Just as an official in the imperial treasury, if he neglects to distribute where he is ordered, but spends instead for his own indolence, pays the penalty and is put to death, so also the rich man is a kind of steward of the money which is owed for distribution to the poor. He is directed to distribute it to his fellow servants who are in want. So if he spends more on himself than his need requires, he will pay the harshest penalty hereafter. For his own goods are not his own, but belong to his fellow servants.

Therfore let us use our goods sparingly, as belonging to others, so that they may become our own. How shall we use them sparingly, as belonging to others? When we do not spend them beyond our needs, and do not spend for our needs only, but give equal shares into the hands of the poor. If you are affluent, but spend more than you need, you will give an account of the funds which were entrusted to you. This happens also in great households. Many people have entrusted their financial affairs to their household servants. Those who have received this trust keep what has been given to them, and do not misuse the money, but distribute it where and when their master directs. You also must do this. For you have obtained more than others have, and you have received it, not to spend it for yourself, but to become a good steward for others as well.

It is also worth inquiring why the rich man does not see Lazarus with any other righteous man, but in the bosom of Abraham. Abraham was hospitable. The rich man sees Lazarus with Abraham, in order that Lazarus also may convict him of inhospitability. For that patriarch hunted out those who were going past and brought them into his own house; but this rich man overlooked the one

who was lying inside his gate. Although he had such a treasure and an aid to his salvation, he passed him by every day and did not use in his need the poor man's help. But the patriarch was not a man like this, but quite the opposite: sitting before his door he angled for all those who were going by. Just as a fisherman casting his net into the sea not only draws up fish but often draws up gold and pearls, so this patriarch, angling for men, once caught angels as well, and (the remarkable part) without knowing it. Paul in his amazement at this praises him and says, "Do not neglect to show hospitality to strangers, for thereby some have entertained angels unawares."[18] If he had known what he was doing when he received them with such good will, he would not have done anything great or marvelous; the whole cause for praise is that without knowig who the passers-by were, and thinking that they were simply human travelers, he called them inside with such eagerness. You also, when you receive someone famous and illustrious, if you show great eagerness, have done nothing remarkable, for the virtue of the guest often forces even the inhospitable person to show great good will. It is great and remarkable, however, when we receive anyone who happens by, even outcasts and worthless people, with great good will. For this reason Christ said, as He welcomed those who had acted in this way, "As you did it to one of the least of these, you did it to me."[19] And again He said, "So it is not the will of my Father in heaven that one of these little ones should perish."[20] And again He said, "Whoever causes one of these little ones to stumble, it would be better for him to have a great millstone fastened around his neck and be cast into the sea."[21] Everywhere Christ has much to say about the small and

If he helped Lazarus he too would have entered Heaven

Show hospitality to strangers too

Do it to least of these you are doing to God

[18]Heb. 13:2.
[19]Matthew 25:40.
[20]Matthew 18:14.
[21]Matthew 18:6.

insignificant people. Because Abraham also knew this, he did not inquire of those who were going by who they were and where they came from, as we do now; he simply welcomed all who were passing by. For if you wish to show kindness, you must not require an accounting of a person's life, but merely correct his poverty and fill his need.

The poor man has one plea, his want and his standing in need: do not require anything else from him; but even if he is the most wicked of all men and is at a loss for his necessary sustenance, let us free him from hunger. Christ also commanded us to do this, when He said, "Be like your Father in heaven, for He makes His sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust."[22] The almsgiver is a harbor for those in necessity: a harbor receives all who have encountered shipwreck, and frees them from danger; whether they are bad or good or whatever they are who are in danger, it escorts them into its own shelter. So you likewise, when you see on earth the man who has encountered the shipwreck of poverty, do not judge him, do not seek an account of his life, but free him from his misfortune. Why do you make trouble for youself? God has excused you from all officiousness and meddlesomeness. How much most of us would complain, if God had bidden us first to examine each person's life exactly, to interfere with his behavior and his deeds, and only then to give alms? But as it is we are freed from all this kind of annoyance. Then why do we bring excessive cares on ourselves? A judge is one thing, an almsgiver is another. Charity is so called because we give it even to the unworthy. Paul also advises us to do this, when he says, "Do not grow weary in well-doing . . . to all men, but especially to those who are of the household of faith."[23] If we meddle and interfere with the

Don't be Judge almsgivers

Be merciful like God is

[22]Matthew 5:45.
[23]Gal. 6:9-10.

unworthy, not even the worthy will ever willingly come to us; but if we provide also for the unworthy, undoubtedly both the worthy and those who are worth all of them together will come into our hands. This is what happened to the blessed Abraham, who, because he did not meddle or interfere with those who passed by, was able once to receive angels. Let us imitate him, and along with him his descendant Job. For he also accurately imitated the generosity of his ancestor, and because of this he said, "My door was open to every comer."[24] It was not open to one and closed to another, but simply was unlocked for everyone.

Let us also do this, I beg you, without making any inquiry more than necessary. Need alone is the poor man's worthiness; if anyone at all ever comes to us with this recommendation, let us not meddle any further. We do not provide for the manners but for the man. We show mercy on him not because of his virtue but because of his misfortune, in order that we ourselves may receive from the Master His great mercy, in order that we ourselves, unworthy as we are, may enjoy His philanthropy. For if we were going to investigate the worthiness of our fellow servants, and inquire exactly, God will do the same for us. If we seek to require an accounting from our fellow servants, we ourselves will lose the philanthropy from above: "For with the judgment you pronounce you will be judged,"[25] He says. But let us bring our discourse back to the subject. Seeing Lazarus in the bosom of Abraham, the rich man says, "Father Abraham, have mercy upon me, and send Lazarus."[26]

If we judge God will judge us

Why did he not address his words to Lazarus? It seems to me that he blushed and was ashamed, and because of

concept of shame

[24]Job 31:32.
[25]Matthew 7:2.
[26]Luke 16:24.

~~Lazarus does not~~
Rich man does not address Lazarus but addresses Abraham

Abraham was kind

what had happened he thought Lazarus would certainly bear a grudge. "If I, when I enjoyed such affluence," he says, "and had no wrong done to me, ignored the man who had such troubles, and did not share even crumbs, all the more he who was ignored will not assent to the favor." We do not say this to accuse Lazarus; certainly he had no such attitude—far from it; but we say that the rich man did not address him, because he feared this, but called to Abraham, who (he thought) was ignorant of what had happened. He asked for that finger, which he had often allowed to be licked by dogs. What did Abraham say? "Son, you have received the good things due you in your lifetime."[27] See the wisdom and kindness of the righteous man. He did not say, "Inhuman, cruel, wicked man, after you treated the man so badly, now do you remember charity, mercy, and forgiveness? Don't you blush? Aren't you ashamed?" But what did he say? "Son," he says, you have received the good things due you." "Do not add grief to the troubled soul,"[28] it is written. His punishment is sufficient; let us not trample further on his misfortunes. Besides, to keep the rich man from thinking that out of malice he was preventing Lazarus from going, he called him "son," all but apologizing for himself by this form of address. "It is not in my power to grant this," he says, "it is not possible for us to go from here to there any more." "You have received the good things due you." Why did he not say simply "you have received your good things" but "you have received the good things due to you"? I see a great sea of thoughts opening up here for us. Therefore let us keep carefully all that has been said, both now and earlier, and put it away in safety. Prepare yourselves better by what has been said to listen to what will be said. If it is possible for you, remember everything

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[27]Luke 16:25.
[28]Sir. 4:3.

I have said. If you cannot remember everything, instead of everything, I beg you, remember this without fail, that not to share our own wealth with the poor is theft from the poor and deprivation of their means of life; we do not possess our own wealth but theirs. If we have this attitude, we will certainly offer our money; and by nourishing Christ in poverty here and laying up great profit hereafter, we will be able to attain the good things which are to come, by the grace and kindness of our Lord Jesus Christ, with Whom (be glory, honor, and might,) to the Father, together with the Holy Spirit, now and ever and unto ages of ages. Amen.

St. John Chrysostom. third sermon on Lazarus and the rich man

The parable of Lazarus was of extraordinary benefit to us, both rich and poor, teaching the latter to bear their poverty with equanimity, and not allowing the former to be proud of their wealth. It taught us by example that the most pitiable person of all is the one who lives in luxury and shares his goods with nobody. So then today let us take hold again of the same subject. Those who work metals, when they see that there are many veins of gold, keep digging in the same place, and do not give up until they have brought out all that they can find. Let us go back, then, to the place where we left our discourse earlier, in order to take it up from the same place. I could have explained this whole parable to you in one day; but my concern was not that I should say a lot and then leave you, but that you might receive and hold on to my words accurately, and gain from this effort of retention some perception to bring you spiritual benefit. A loving mother who is about to introduce her nursing baby to solid food, if she pours undiluted wine into his mouth all at once, does him no good. The baby spits out what is given, and soaks all the front of his shirt.[1] But if she pours the wine in gently, little by little, he swallows what is given without difficulty. Likewise, to keep you from spitting up what you are given, I have not tipped the cup of instruction for you all at once, but I have chopped it up for you over many

[1]Homer, *Iliad* 9:491.

days, providing you a rest on these intervening days from the labor of listening, in order that what is laid down may stick firmly in the understanding of your love, and that you may receive what I am going to say next with a relaxed and vigorous soul. For this reason also I often tell you many days in advance the subject of what I am going to say, in order that you may take up the book in the intervening days, go over the whole passage, learn both what is said and what is left out, and so make your understanding more ready to learn when you hear what I will say afterwards.

I also always entreat you, and do not cease entreating you, not only to pay attention here to what I say, but also when you are at home, to persevere continually in reading the divine Scriptures. When I have been with each of you in private, I have not stopped giving you the same advice. Do not let anyone say to me those vain words, worthy of a heavy condemnation, "I cannot leave the courthouse, I administer the business of the city, I practice a craft, I have a wife, I am raising children, I am in charge of a household, I am a man of the world; reading the Scriptures is not for me, but for those who have been set apart, who have settled on the mountaintops, who keep this way of life continuously." What are you saying, man? That attending to the Scriptures is not for you, since you are surrounded by a multitude of cares? Rather it is for you more than for them. They do not need the help of the divine Scriptures as much as those do who are involved in many occupations. The monks, who are released from the clamor of the marketplace and have fixed their huts in the wilderness, who own nothing in common with anyone, but practice wisdom without fear in the calm of that quiet life, as if resting in a harbor, enjoy great security; but we, as if tossing in the midst of the sea, driven by a multitude of sins, always need the continuous and ceaseless aid of the Scriptures. They rest far from the battle, and so they do not

receive many wounds; but you stand continuously in the front rank, and you receive continual blows. So you need more remedies. Your wife provokes you, for example, your son grieves you, your servant angers you, your enemy plots against you, your friend envies you, your neighbor curses you, your fellow soldier trips you up, often a law suit threatens you, poverty troubles you, loss of your property gives you grief, prosperity puffs you up, misfortune depresses you, and many causes and compulsions to discouragement and grief, to conceit and desperation surround us on all sides, and a multitude of missiles falls from everywhere. Therefore we have a continuous need for the full armor of the Scriptures. For recognize, it is written, that you go through the midst of snares and walk on the ramparts of the city.[2] For example, the designs of the flesh attack more fiercely those who live in the midst of the world. A handsome face, a splendid body strikes us in the eyes; a shameful phrase piercing our ears troubles our mind; and often an effeminate song weakens the tension of our soul. But why am I saying this? That which often seems the slightest of all these attacks, the scent of perfume falling from courtesans as they pass somewhere nearby has captured and taken us away as prisoners by a mere accident. And there are many things like these which beseige our souls: we need the divine medicines to heal the wounds which we have received and to protect us from those which we have not yet received but will receive. We must thoroughly quench the darts of the devil and beat them off by continual reading of the divine Scriptures. For it is not possible, not possible for anyone to be saved without continually taking advantage of spiritual reading. Actually, we must be content, if even with continual use of this therapy, we are barely able to be saved. But when

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[2]Sir. 9:13.

we are struck every day, if we do not use any medical care, what hope do we have of salvation?

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Praise of Scripture reading continues.

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Reading the Scriptures is a great means of security against sinning. The ignorance of Scripture is a great cliff and a deep abyss; to know nothing of the divine laws is a great betrayal of salvation. This has given birth to heresies, this has introduced a corrupt way of life, this has put down the things above. For it is impossible, impossible for anyone to depart without benefit if he reads continually with attention. Look: how much one parable has helped us! How much better it has made our souls! Many people, I am sure, have departed taking a lasting benefit from listening; but if there are some who have not gathered such fruit, nevertheless for the one day on which they listened, they have certainly become better. It is no little matter to pass one day in contrition for sin, to look towards the heavenly philosophy, and to provide for one's soul at least a little rest from the concerns of the world. If we do this at each service and do not miss any, the continuity of listening will accomplish some great and noble good in us.

Come then, let me explain to you the next part of the parable. What is the next part? When the rich man says, "Send Lazarus to let a drop fall from the end of his finger and cool my tongue," let us hear what Abraham says, "Son, remember that you have received the good things due to you in your life, and Lazarus the evil due to him; now he is comforted and you are in anguish. And besides all this, between us and you a great chasm has been fixed, in order

that those who would pass from here to you may not be able, and none may cross from there to here."[3] This saying is hard to bear, and brings us great anguish. I know this myself; but the more our conscience hurts, the more it helps the understanding of those who are hurt. For if Abraham were saying this to us in that life, as he says it to the rich man, truly we would have to weep and groan and mourn, because we would have not time left for repentance. But since we hear his words while we are still in this life, where it is possible to recover sobriety, to wash away our sins, to obtain confidence, and to change ourselves for fear of the evils which have happened to others, let us give thanks to God who loves mankind, who awakens our sluggishness by the punishment of others and arouses us from sleep. Christ tells us this in advance for this reason, to keep us from suffering the same punishment. For if He wished to punish us, He would not have told us in advance; but since He does not wish to subject us to retribution, for this very reason He tells us the retribution in advance, in order that we may learn sense from His words and escape the trial in deeds.

But why did Abraham say not, "You have received your good things," but "You have received the good things due to you"? You remember, I know, that I said a vast great sea of ideas was opening for us. The phrase "receive as due" indicates and reveals some kind of obligation, for one receives as due that which is owed. So if this rich man was foul and repulsive, cruel and inhuman, why did Abraham not say to him, "You have received your good things," but, "You have received the good things due to you," as if they were debts owed to him? What do we learn from this? That even if some people are foul and have reached the extremes of evil, often they have done one or two or three good things. It is clear from Scripture

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[3]Luke 16:24-26.

that I am not merely guessing when I say this. For what is more foul than the injustice of that unjust judge? What is more inhuman? What is more impious? This man felt neither fear of God nor shame before men; nevertheless, although he lived in such wickedness, he did a noble deed, when he showed mercy to the widow who continually troubled him, granted the favor, gave what she asked, and prosecuted those who were wronging her.[4] Thus it can happen that someone is licentious but often merciful, or inhuman but self-controlled; or if one is both licentious and cruel, still it often happens that he has done some one good thing in his life. We ought to suspect the same also in the case of good people. Just as the most worthless people often do something good, so those who are earnest and virtuous often fail completely in some respect. "Who will boast," it is written, "that he has a pure heart, or who will say confidently that he is clean from sin?"[5]

Since, then, it is probable that even if the rich man had reached the extremes of wickedness, he had done something good, and that even if Lazarus had arrived at the height of virtue, he had committed some small sin, see how the patriarch hinted at both, when he said, "You have received the good things due to you in your life, and Lazarus likewise the evil due to him." What he means is this: if even you have done something good, and the reward for this is owed to you, you received all these things due to you in that world, living in luxury and wealth, enjoying great prosperity and good fortune; and if this man has done something bad, he received everything due to him, suffering poverty, hunger, and the extremes of misfortune. Each of you has arrived here stripped naked, he of sins, but you of the virtuous actions of righteousness. For this reason he has pure consolation, and you endure

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[4]Luke 88:2-5.
[5]Prov. 20:9.

unrelieved retribution. For when our good actions are small and slight, but the weight of our sins is unspeakably great, if in this life we enjoy prosperity and do not suffer any misfortune, we will certainly depart bare and naked from the exchange of good things, since we will have received all our due in this life. Likewise when our good actions are many and great, but our sins small and slight, if we suffer any misfortune, we put away even those small sins in this life, and in the next life we receive as our due a pure reward made ready for our good deeds. Therefore when you see anyone living in wickedness but suffering no misfortune in this life, do not call him lucky, but weep and mourn for him, because he will have to endure all the misfortunes in the next life, just like this rich man. Again, when you see anyone cultivating virtue, but enduring a multitude of trials, call him lucky, envy him, because all his sins are being dissolved in this life, and a great reward for his endurance is being prepared in the next life; just as it happened for this man Lazarus.

Some people are punished only in this life; others suffer no misfortune here, but receive all their due retribution in the next life; still others are punished both here and hereafter. Which of these three do you consider lucky? In the first place, I am sure, those who are punished here and put away their sins. In the second place after them, which? Perhaps you think those who suffer nothing here, but endure all their punishment hereafter—but I say not these, but those who are punished both here and hereafter. For he who pays some penalty here will experience a lighter punishment hereafter; but he who is forced to endure all his punishment hereafter will have an unmerciful judgment, just as this rich man, because he had not washed away any of his sins here, was so severely punished that he could not get even the smallest drop of water. Even more than those who sin but suffer no misfortune here, I am sorry for those who besides not being punished here also

enjoy luxury and freedom from need. For just as not paying the penalty for sins here makes the retribution more grievous hereafter, so also sinners' enjoyment of self-indulgence, luxury, and affluence becomes a source and occasion of greater punishment for them. When we sinners receive honor from God, this very fact will be able to cast us deeper into the fire. If one who enjoys only God's forbearance does not make good use of it, he will have a more severe retribution; if he has the highest honors along with forbearance, then continues in wickedness, who will rescue him from the punishment for this? As testimony that those who enjoy God's borbearance here are gathering the fullness of evil for themselves hereafter, if we do not repent, hear what Paul says: "Do you suppose, O man, that when you judge those who do such things and yet do them yourself, you will escape the judgment of God? Or do you presume upon the riches of his kindness and forbearance and patience? Do you not know that God's kindness is meant to lead you to repentance? But by your hard and impenitent heart you are storing up wrath for yourself on the day of wrath when God's righteous judgment will be revealed."[6] So when we see people living in wealth and luxury, scented with perfumes, passing the day in drunkenness, having great power and honor, great prestige and celebrity, yet sinning, and suffering no misfortune, for this very reason we weep and mourn especially for them, because they are not punished for their sin. Just as if you saw someone ill with dropsy or in the spleen, or having a putrid ulcer and a multitude of sores all over his body, yet in spite of all these drinking, indulging himself, and aggravating his illness, not only are you not impressed, nor think him fortunate for his luxurious life, but particularly for this very reason you are sorry for him. You should also think in this way about the soul. When you see

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[6]Rom. 2:3-5.

a person living in wickedness and enjoying great prosperity, without suffering any misfortune, you should mourn particularly for this reason, because although he is afflicted with a very serious disease and ulcer, he aggravates his illness, making himself worse by his luxury and self-indulgence. For punishment is not evil, but sin is evil. The latter separates us from God, but the former leads us towards God, and dissolves His anger. How do we know this? Hear what the prophet says: "Comfort, comfort my people, O priests, speak tenderly to Jerusalem . . . that she has received from the Lord's hand double for all her sins."[7] And elsewhere he says, "O Lord our God, give us peace; for Thou hast given us all our due."[8] And to learn that some are punished here, others hereafter, and still others both here and hereafter, listen to what Paul says, accusing those who partake unworthily of the Mysteries; for when he said, "Whoever eats and drinks the Body and Blood of the Lord unworthily will be guilty of profaning the Body and Blood of Christ," he added immediately, "That is why many of you are weak and ill, and some have died. But if we judged ourselves truly, we should not be judged. But when we are judged by the Lord, we are chastened so that we may not be condemned along with the world."[9] Do you see how the punishment here snatches us out of the retribution hereafter? He also says about the fornicator, "Deliver this man to Satan for the destruction of the flesh, that his spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus."[10] From the parable of Lazarus also this is clear, that if he had done any evil, he had washed it away in this life, and so had departed clean to the other life. From the story of the paralytic this is clear, that when he had been weak for thirty-eight years, by the length of his

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[7]Isaiah 40:1-2.
[8]Isaiah 26:12.
[9]I Cor. 11:27-32.
[10]I Cor. 5:5.

illness he had also put away his sins. As evidence that he was in this condition because of his sins, hear what Christ says: "See, you are well! Sin no more, that nothing worse befall you."[11] So from these passages it is clear that some people are punished in this life and put away their sins.

As evidence that some are punished both here and hereafter, if they do not receive an adequate retribution for the magnitude of their sins, hear what Christ says about the Sodomites: for when He said, "Whoever does not receive you, shake off the dust from your feet,"[12] He went on to say, "It shall be more tolerable on the day of judgment for the land of Sodom and Gomorrah than for that town."[13] In saying "more tolerable," He revealed that they also will be punished, but more lightly, because they have also paid a penalty in this life. That some people here suffer no misfortune, but endure their whole punishment hereafter, we learn from the story of this rich man who endures an unrelieved punishment in the other life, and does not enjoy even the least remission, because his whole retribution has been kept for the other life. Just as among sinners, therefore, those who suffer no misfortune here submit to a greater retribution hereafter, so among the righteous those who suffer any misfortunes here will enjoy great honor hereafter. And just as, if there are two sinners, of whom one has been punished here, but the other has not been punished, he who has been punished is more fortunate than he who has not; so also if there are two righteous men, of whom one has endured greater tribulation, the other less, he who endures the greater tribulation is more fortunate, since "He will reward each one according to his works."[14]

What then? "Is there nobody," someone asks, "who

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[11]John 5:14.
[12]Luke 9:5.
[13]Luke 10:12.
[14]Matthew 16:27.

enjoys comfort both here and hereafter?" This cannot be, O man, it is impossible. It is not possible, not possible at all for one who enjoys an easy life and freedom from want in this world, who continually indulges himself in every way, who lives randomly and foolishly, to enjoy honor in the other world. For if poverty does not trouble him, still desire troubles him, and he is afflicted because of this, which brings more than a little pain. If disease does not threaten him, still his temper grows hot, and it requires more than ordinary struggle to overcome anger. If trials do not come to test him, still evil thoughts continually attack. It is no common task to bridle foolish desire, to stop vain glory, to restrain presumption, to refrain from luxury, to persevere in austerity. A person who does not do these things and others like them cannot ever be saved. As testimony that those who live luxuriously cannot be saved, hear what Paul says about the widow: "she who is self-indulgent is dead even while she lives."[15] If this is said about a woman, it applies even more to a man. And Christ also made it clear that one who lives a relaxed life cannot reach the heavens, when He said, "The gate is narrow and the way is hard, that leads to life, and those who find it are few."[16]

"How then does He say," someone asks, " 'My yoke is easy, and my burden is light'?[17] For if the road is narrow and difficult, how can He also call it light and easy?" He says one thing because of the nature of the trials, but the other because of the willingness of the travelers. It is possible for even what is unendurable by nature to become light when we accept it with eagerness; just as the apostles who had been scourged returned rejoicing that they had been found worthy to be dishonored for the name of the

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[15]I Tim. 5:6.
[16]Matthew 7:14.
[17]Matthew 11:30.

Lord.[18] The nature of the torments indeed ordinarily brings tribulation and distress, but the willingness of those who were scourged conquered even the nature of their sufferings. For this reason Paul says, "All who desire to live a godly life in Christ will be persecuted."[19] So if human beings do not persecute us, yet the devil makes war on us. We need great wisdom and perseverance, to keep sober and watchful in prayer, not to desire others' property, but to distribute our goods to the needy, to reject and repudiate all luxury, whether of clothing or table, to avoid avarice, drunkenness, and slander, to control our tongue and keep from disorderly clamor ("Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slander be put away from you"[20]), to abstain from shameful or witty talk. It requires not a little effort to keep all these things carefully. If you want to learn how difficult it is to live wisely, and how little the task allows relaxation, hear what Paul says: "I pommel my body and subdue it."[21] When he said this, he hinted at the force and effort which those must use who wish to teach their bodies obedience in everything. Christ also said to His disciples, "In the world you will have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world."[22] This tribulation, He says, will bring you relief. The present life is an arena: in the arena and in athletic contests the man who expects to be crowned cannot enjoy relaxation. So if anyone wishes to win a crown, let him choose the hard and laborious life, in order that after he has striven a short time here he may enjoy lasting honor hereafter.

How many discouragements come to us every day? How great a soul is needed not to desist through impatience or disgust, but to give thanks, to glorify and worship Him

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[18]Acts 5:41.
[19]II Tim. 3:12.
[20]Eph. 4:31.
[21]I Cor. 9:27.
[22]John 16:33.

who permits these trials to assault us? How many unexpected difficulties arise? We must also fight back our evil thoughts and not permit our tongue to utter anything foul, just as the blessed Job, while he suffered a multitude of misfortunes, continued to give thanks to God.

Some people, if they stumble at all, or are slandered by anyone, or fall ill with a chronic disease, gout or headache or any such ailment, at once begin to blaspheme. They submit to the pain of the disease, but deprive themselves of its benefit. What are you doing, man, blaspheming your benefactor, savior, protector, and guardian? Or do you not see that you are falling down a cliff and casting yourself into the pit of the final destruction? You do not make your suffering lighter, do you, if you blaspheme? Indeed you aggravate it, and make your distress more grievous. For the devil brings a multitude of misfortunes for this purpose, to lead you down into that pit. If he sees you blaspheming he will readily increase the suffering and make it greater, so that when you are pricked you may give up once again; but if he sees you enduring bravely, and giving thanks the more to God, the more the suffering grows worse, he raises the siege at once, knowing that it will be useless to besiege you any more. A dog sitting by the table, if it sees the person who is eating continually throwing it scraps of food from the table, stays persistently; but if stopping at the table once or twice it goes away without getting anything, it stays away thereafter, thinking that the siege is useless. In the same way the devil continually gapes at us; if you throw to him, as to a dog, some blasphemous word, he will take it and attack you again; but if you persevere in thanksgiving, you have choked him with hunger, you have chased him away and thrown him back from you. But, you say, you cannot keep silent when you are pricked by distress. I certainly do not forbid you to make a sound, but give thanks instead of blasphemy, worship instead of despair. Confess to the Lord, cry out

loudly in prayer, cry out loudly glorifying God. In this way your suffering will be lightened, because the devil will pull back from your thanksgiving and God's help will be at your side. If you blaspheme, you have driven away God's assistance, made the devil more vehement against you, and involved yourself even more in suffering; but if you give thanks, you have driven away the plots of the evil demon, and you have drawn the care of God your protector to yourself.

Out of habit, however, the tongue often starts to utter that evil word. When it starts, before it brings forth the word, bite it hard with your teeth. It is better for the tongue to flow with blood now, than later to desire a drop of water and not be able to obtain this relief. It is better for the tongue to endure a temporary pain than to suffer the retribution later of a lasting punishment, as the tongue of the rich man burned and obtained no relief. God commanded you to love your enemies; do you turn away from God who loves you? He commanded you to speak good of those who curse you, to bless those who slander you;[23] do you speak ill of your benefactor and protector when you have suffered no wrong? He was not unable, was He (you say), to release you from the trial? But He permitted it, to improve your character. But look (you say), I am falling and perishing. Not by the nature of the trial, but by your own laziness. Which is easier, tell me, blasphemy or thanksgiving? Does not the one make your hearers hate you and cast them into despair, and afterwards cause great distress; but the other brings you many crowns for wisdom, much admiration from everyone, and a great reward from God? Why then do you neglect what is helpful, easy, and pleasant, but pursue instead what is harmful, painful, and wasteful?

Besides, if the tribulation and trial of poverty were the

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[23]Luke 6:27-28.

cause of blasphemies, all those in poverty would have to blaspheme; but in fact many of those who live in extreme poverty give thanks continually, while others who enjoy wealth and luxury do not cease blaspheming. So it is not the nature of our external circumstances but our own choice which causes one and the other. For this reason also we have read this parable, to teach you that wealth does not help the lazy man nor poverty harm the diligent man. And why do I say "poverty"? Even if all the evils of mankind come together, they will never condemn the soul of the wise man who loves God, nor persuade him to desist from virtue (and Lazarus is a witness of this). Likewise, the frivolous and dissolute man will never be able to benefit from wealth, health, continuous prosperity, or anything else. Therefore let us not say that poverty, disease, or the approach of dangers forces us to blaspheme. Not poverty but folly, not disease but heedlessness, not the approach of dangers but the absence of discretion leads both into blasphemy and into all evil those who are not attentive.

"But why," someone asks, "are some punished here, but others only hereafter and not at all here?" Why? Because if all were punished here, we would all have perished, for we all are subject to penalties. On the other hand, if no one were punished here, most people would become too careless, and many would say that there is no providence. For, if now, although they see many of the wicked being punished, they utter many blasphemies of this kind, if this were not so, what would they not say? How far would they not go in evil? For this reason God punishes some here, but does not punish others. He punishes some, cutting short their evil ways, and making their retribution hereafter the lighter, or even completely releasing them, and making those who live in wickedness better by the punishment of these people. Others, however, He does not punish, so that if they attend to themselves, repent, and

respect God's forbearance, they may be freed from both the punishment here and the retribution hereafter; but if they persist, without benefiting from God's tolerance of evil, they may undergo a greater retribution because of their great contempt. But if someone of those who profess knowledge should say that those who are punished are treated unfairly, for they could have repented, we would say this, that if God had foreknown that they would repent, He would not have punished them. For if He lets off those who He knows are remaining uncorrected, all the more He would have left alone for the present life those who He knew would benefit from His forbearance, so that they might use the respite for repentance. But as it is, catching them in advance, He both makes their penalty lighter hereafter and improves others by their punishment. And why does He not do this for all the wicked? In order that waiting in apprehension brought on by fear at the punishment of others they may become better, and praising God's forbearance and respecting His gentleness they may desist from wickedness. "But they do nothing of the kind," someone says. But God is not to blame for the rest, but their own heedlessness, because they are not willing to use such powerful medicine for their own salvation. To learn that this is His reason, attend: Pilate once mixed the blood of the Galileans with the sacrifices, and some people came and reported this to Christ. He said, "Do you think that only those Galileans were sinners? I tell you, No; but unless you repent you will likewise perish."[24] Another time eighteen people fell down in the collapse of a tower, and He said the same thing about them; for in saying, "Do you think that only those were sinners? I tell you, No," He showed that the living also deserved the same punishment; and in saying, "Unless you repent you will likewise perish," He showed that God had allowed them to suffer

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[24]Luke 13:2-5.

for this purpose, in order that the living might be frightened by what happened to others, and might repent and become inheritors of the kingdom. "What? Is that man punished," someone asks, "to make me better?" Not for this reason, but he is punished for his own sin. But in addition he becomes a means of salvation for those who pay attention to him, making them more diligent for fear of what happened to him. Masters also do the same; often by beating one servant they have made the rest behave better out of fear. When you see people either suffering from shipwreck or crushed by a house or burned to death in a fire or swept away by rivers or losing their lives by any other such violent means, then when you see others committing the same sin or even worse than theirs, and suffering no misfortune, do not be confused, saying, "Why, when they commit the same sins, do they not suffer the same consequences?" But consider this, that He has allowed one person to be taken away and put to death, preparing for him a lighter retribution hereafter, or even completely releasing him; but He has not permitted another to suffer anything like this, in order that he may be brought to his senses by this man's punishment and may become better. But if he remains in the same sins, he will gather for himself an unrelieved retribution by his own heedlessness. And God is not to blame for his unendurable punishment. Again, if you see a righteous person suffering tribulation or all the misfortunes which we have mentioned, do not lose heart: his misfortunes are preparing more brilliant crowns for him. In summary, every punishment, if it happens to sinners, reduces the burden of sin, but if it happens to the righteous, makes their souls more splendid. A great benefit comes to each of them from tribulation, provided that they bear it with thanksgiving; for this is what is required.

For this reason the history of divine Scripture is filled with a multitude of such examples, and shows us both

righteous and wicked people suffering misfortunes, in order that whether a person is righteous or sinful, he may heed the examples and endure bravely. Scripture shows you wicked people, some badly off but others prosperous, to keep you from being shaken by their prosperity, since you know from what happened to this rich man what kind of fire awaits them hereafter, if they do not change their ways. And someone asks, "It is not possible to enjoy relaxation both here and hereafter?" It is not possible.

Because it is impossible, the righteous have lived a laborious life. "What about Abraham?" someone says. Who has suffered as many misfortunes as he? Was he not exiled from his country? Was he not separated from all his household? Did he not endure hunger in a foreign land? Did he not, like a wanderer, move continually, from Babylon to Mesopotamia, from there to Palestine, and from there to Egypt? What should one say about the disputes over his wife, the wars with barbarians and the slaughter, the captivity of his relatives' household, and many other such troubles? When he had received his son, did he not endure the most unbearable of all misfortunes, when he was commanded to sacrifice with his own hands his beloved son for whom he had longed? What about Issac himself the victim? Was he not continually driven by his neighbors? Did he not lose his wife, like his father, and continue a long time childless? What about Jacob, who was nourished in his household? Did he not endure more grievous sufferings than his grandfather? And not to make the narration long by telling everything, hear what he says about his whole life: "Few and evil have been the days of my life, and they have not attained to the days of my fathers."[25] And yet, who, seeing his son sitting on a royal throne and enjoying such glory, would not forget his past misfortunes? Nevertheless he was so much worn down by

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[25]Gen. 47:9.

suffering that even in such prosperity he did not forget the troubles which had been. What about David? How many misfortunes did he endure? Does he not sing the same song as Jacob, when he says, "The years of our life are seventy, or even by reason of strength eighty, yet their span is but toil and trouble"?[26] What about Jeremiah? Does he not curse the day of his birth because of the succession of disasters?[27] What about Moses himself? Does he not say in his discouragement, "If Thou wilt deal thus with me, kill me at once"?[28] And as for Elijah, whose soul is as high as heaven, who unlocked the door of heaven, did he not continue to lament to God after many miracles, saying, "Take away my life, for I am no better than my fathers"?[29] Why should I mention each of these stories? Paul gathers them all together and goes through them, saying, "They went about in skins of sheep and goats, destitute, afflicted, ill-treated—of whom the world was not worthy."[30] In a word, it is absolutely necessary for one who hopes to please God and to be acceptable and pure, not to pursue a relaxed and slippery and dissolute life, but a laborious life, groaning with much toil and sweat; for no one is crowned, Paul says, "unless he competes according to the rules."[31] And elsewhere he says, "Every athlete exercises self-control in all things,"[32] in speech and in sight, avoiding shameful words, abuse, blasphemy, and obscenity. From Paul's words we learn that even if trials are not brought to us from somewhere outside, we must exercise ourselves every day with fasting, austerity, cheap nourishment, and a frugal table, always avoiding sumptu-

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[26]Psalm 89 (90):10.
[27]Jer. 20:14.
[28]Num. 11:15.
[29]III Kings 19:4.
[30]Heb. 11:37.
[31]II Tim. 2:5.
[32]I Cor. 9:25.

ousness; otherwise we cannot please God. Let no one say this vain word to me, that so and so has the good things both of this life and of the next: this cannot happen to those who have wealth and luxury with sin; but, if we must say this about somebody, we can say it about those who are in tribulation and distress, that they have the good things both of this life and of the next. For they have the good things of the next life, when they will enjoy their reward; and they have the good things of this life, when they are nourished by the hope of the good things hereafter, and do not take notice of the present misfortunes in their expectation of the good things to come.

But let us hear what follows. "And besides all this," Abraham says, "between us and you a great chasm has been fixed."[33] Well did David say, "No man can ransom his brother, or give to God the price of his life."[34] For it is not possible, whether you are a brother, or a father, or a son. See: Abraham called the rich man "son," yet he was not able to do the duty of a father; the rich man addressed Abraham as "father," yet he could not enjoy what a son may expect from his father's good will. This was done to teach you that neither family relationship nor love nor sympathy nor anything else can help the one who has been betrayed by his own life.

I say this because many people often, when we advise them to attend to themselves and to be sober, pay no heed and cast the advice to derision, saying, "You will vouch for me in that day; I am confident, I am not afraid." Another says, "I have a martyr for my father;" and another, "I have a bishop for my grandfather;" others still bring forward on their behalf all the members of their household. But all those claims are vain; for the virtue of others will not be able to help us in that day. Remember

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[33]Luke 16:26.
[34]Psalm 48 (49):8.

those virgins, who did not share their oil with the other five; the former entered the bridal chamber, but the latter were shut outside.[35] It is a great good to have your hope of salvation in your own righteous acts; no friend will ever stand for us hereafter. For if God said to Jeremiah, "Do not pray for this people,"[36] even here where they had the power to change their ways, how much more He would say the same hereafter. What do you say? You have a martyr for your father? This very fact will condemn you even more, if you had the example of virtue at home, yet present yourself unworthy of your father's virtue. But you have a friend who is noble and admirable? He will not be able to stand for you in that day. How does the Lord say, "Make friends for yourselves by means of unrighteous mammon, so that when you die they may receive you into the eternal habitations."[37] It is not friendship in this which will vouch for you, but almsgiving. If friendship by itself could vouch for you, He would have needed to say simply, "Make friends for yourselves;" but as it is, showing that friendship alone does not vouch for us, he has added, "by means of unrighteous mammon." Perhaps someone may say, "I can make a friend without mammon, and a better friend indeed than with mammon." But to teach you that it is almsgiving which vouches for you, and your righteous action, He urged you to have confidence not simply in the friendship of the saints, but in the friendship gained by mammon. Knowing all these things, my beloved, let us attend to ourselves with all care. If we are punished, let us give thanks. If we live in prosperity, let us make ourselves secure; brought to our senses by others' punishment, let us give thanks with repentance and compunction and continual confession. If we have transgressed

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[35]Matthew 25:1-13.
[36]Jer. 7:16.
[37]Luke 16:9.

at all in the present life, let us put the sin away, and with great zeal washing away all the stain of our life, let us call upon God to count us all worthy when we are released from this life to go there, where not with the rich man but with Lazarus we may enjoy the bosom of the patriarch and feast on the immortal good things. May all of us attain to these, by the grace and love of our Lord Jesus Christ, with whom be glory to the Father, together with the Holy Spirit, unto ages of ages. Amen.

St. John Chrysostom, fourth sermon on Lazarus and the rich man

Today we must finish the parable of Lazarus. You perhaps think that we have completed the whole; but I will not use your ignorance to deceive you, nor will I cease before I may depart with everything I can find. When a farmer has harvested the whole vine, he does not cease working until he has also cut off the stems of the bunches. Since, therefore, even now I see, as if hidden under leaves, some thoughts still concealed under the letters, come now, let us harvest these also very thoroughly, using this sermon in place of a sickle. Once a vine is harvested, it stands bare of fruit, with only leaves remaining; but the spiritual vine of the divine Scriptures is different. If we take everything we can find, the greater part still remains behind. Many indeed even before us have spoken on this subject, and many also perhaps will speak after us; but no one will be able to empty all its wealth. Such is the nature of this abundance: the deeper you dig, the more divine thoughts will gush forth, for it is a never-failing spring.

We should have paid you this debt at our last meeting, but we did not think it safe to pass over the righteous deeds of the blessed Babylas and the pair of holy martyrs who were his companions.[1] Therefore we deferred this

[1]St. Babylas, Bishop of Antioch, martyred under Decius (c. 250), feast day 24 January; Saints Juventius and Maximinus, martyred under Julian (c. 362).

installment, keeping until today the full repayment. Come then, since to our fathers we have given the praise due them, not according to their deserts but according to our ability, to you let us give the balance due of this discussion. Do not stop to rest until we reach the end.

We will take up the sermon where we left it recently. Where did we leave it? In the chasm which separates the righteous from the sinners. For when the rich man said, "Send Lazarus," Abraham said to him, "A great chasm has been fixed between us and you, in order that those who wish to pass from here to you may not be able, and none may cross from there to here."[2] We were showing at great length that, after God's loving-kindness, we must have our hope of salvation in our own righteous deeds, without counting up our fathers, grandfathers, and great-grandfathers, or our relatives and friends, family and neighbors; for "a brother does not redeem, shall a man redeem?"[3] But whatever petitions and supplications they make who have departed from this life with their sins, from that time on they will ask everything to no purpose and in vain. The five virgins begged oil from their companions and did not obtain it; the man who had buried his talent in the earth made many excuses but was condemned all the same; and as for those who did not feed Him when He was hungry, nor give Him drink when He was thirsty, although they also thought that they would be acquitted on the grounds of ignorance, no pardon or excuse was granted to them either.[4] And some others also had nothing to say, like the man wearing the dirty garments; when he was called to account, he kept silent.[5] Not this man only, but another also, who remembered his neighbor's debt, and

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[2]Luke 16:26.
[3]Psalm 48 (49):8.
[4]Matthew 25.
[5]Matthew 22:12.

demanded the repayment of a hundred denarii, then was charged by his master with cruelty and inhumanity on their account, had nothing to say.[6]

From all these parables it is clear that nothing will help us hereafter if we do not have good deeds; but whether we make supplications and petitions or whether we remain silent, all the same the sentence of punishment and retribution will come upon us. Hear, therefore, how this rich man also made two requests of Abraham but failed in both. First he made his supplication for himself, when he said, "Send Lazarus," and afterwards he made a petition no longer for himself but for his brothers; but he obtained neither request. The former was impossible; but the second, on behalf of his brothers, was superfluous. However, if you agree, let us listen attentively to the very words. When a governor brings a condemned man out in the middle of the marketplace, and gathers the people around, and examines the guilty man, if everyone runs together with great eagerness wishing to hear what the judge asks and what the condemned man answers, much more should we hear accurately in this case, what this condemned man (I mean the rich man) requests, and what the just Judge answers through Abraham. For it was not the patriarch who judged, although he spoke the words. In the outer courtrooms of this world, when some are tried as robbers and murderers, the laws keep them far from the sight of the judge and do not permit them to hear his voice (subjecting them to dishonor in this respect as in others), but a messenger carries the question of the judge and the answers of the defendants. That was how it happened then also. The condemned man did not hear God speaking to him, but Abraham was the messenger who conveyed the words of the Judge to the defendant. He did not say what he said on his own authority, but read divine

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[6]Matthew 18:23-34.

laws to the man, and spoke the denial which came from above. For this reason the man could not make any reply.

Let us listen carefully, therefore, to what they say. On purpose I am lingering on this parable, and am not leaving it although this is the fourth day, since I see that a great benefit comes from this discussion for both rich and poor and for those who are troubled by the prosperity of the wicked and the poverty and tribulation of the righteous. Nothing tends so much to disturb and scandalize the majority of people as the fact that rich people living in wickedness enjoy great good fortune while righteous people living with virtue are driven to extreme poverty and endure a multitude of other troubles even worse than poverty. But this parable is sufficient to provide the remedies, self-control for the rich and consolation for the poor. It teaches the former not to be conceited, while it comforts the poor for their present situation. It persuades the rich not to boast when they do not pay the penalty of their wickedness in this life, bcause a grievous retribution awaits them hereafter. It calls upon the poor not to be disturbed by others' prosperity, nor to think that human affairs are without providence when a righteous person fares badly in this life but a wicked and abominable person enjoys continuous good fortune. Both will receive their deserts hereafter; the one will gain the crown for his patience and perseverance, but the other will find the retribution and punishment for his wickedness.

Paint this parable, you rich and you poor: the rich, on the walls of your houses; the poor, on the walls of your hearts. If it is ever obliterated by forgetfulness, paint it in again with your memory. Or rather do you rich also paint it in your hearts instead of in your houses, and carry it about with you continuously. It will be a school for you and the first lesson of all philosophy. If we have this always portrayed in our hearts, neither will the joys of the present life be able to puff us up nor its griefs to deject

us and cast us down; but we will act towards both of these as towards the pictures on the walls. Just as, when we see the rich man and the poor man painted on the walls, we do not envy the former nor ignore the poor man, because what we see is a shadow and not factual truth; so also if we learn the true nature of wealth and poverty, of glory, and dishonor, and of all other bright or gloomy conditions, we shall be freed from the disturbance which each of these produces in us. All these things are more deceptive than shadows. A person who is noble and lofty in spirit will not be lifted too high by any of the brilliant and glorious conditions nor cast down by any humble and despised circumstances.

Now, it is time for us to hear the rest of the rich man's words. "I ask you, father," he says (that is, I beg, I beseech, I supplicate), "to send Lazarus to my father's house, for I have five brothers, so that he may warn them, lest they come into this place of torment."[7] Since he failed to obtain what he asked for himself, he makes his supplication on behalf of others. See how loving and kind he has become as a result of his punishment. The man who despised Lazarus when he was present now cares for others who are absent. The man who neglected the one who lay before his eyes now remembers those whom he does not see, and begs with great respect and zeal that they may have some foresight to avoid the evils which will befall them. He asks for Lazarus to be sent into his father's house, where Lazarus had his arena and the stadium of his virtue. "Let them see him crowned for victory," he says, "who watched him in his struggle; let the witnesses of his poverty, hunger, and innumerable troubles become witnesses of his honor, his transformation, and of all his glory, so that, because they have been taught in both ways and have learned that our affairs will not stop with the present

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[7]Luke 16:27-28.

life, they may prepare themselves so as to be able to escape this punishment and retribution."

So what does Abraham reply? "They have Moses and the prophets; let them hear them."[8] He says, "You do not care as much for your brothers as God does who made them. He established a multitude of teachers to advise, counsel, and admonish them." So what does the rich man say in return? "No, father Abraham," he says, "but if some one goes from the dead, they will believe him."[9] That is what most people say. Now where are those who say, "Who has come from the other world? Who has risen from the dead? Who has told us what happens in hell?" How many big questions like this did the rich man ask himself, when he was living in luxury? He did not simply ask for someone to rise from the dead; but when he heard Scriptures, he held them in contempt, he ridiculed them, and he considered them mere stories. So from what he had experienced in himself, he formed his opinion about his brothers. "They too," he says, "are making these conjectures; but if someone goes from the dead, they will not disbelieve him, they will not ridicule him, but instead they will heed what he says." So what does Abraham reply? "If they do not hear Moses and the prophets, neither will they listen if someone rises from the dead."[10] And the Jews proved that this is true, that he who does not hear the Scriptures will not hear even those who rise from the dead; for when they had not heard Moses and the prophets, neither did they believe when they saw some of the dead rising. Instead at one time they tried to kill Lazarus;[11] and at another time they assaulted the apostles,

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[8]Luke 16:29.
[9]Luke 16:30.
[10]Luke 16:31.
[11]John 12:10.

although many of the dead had risen at the hour of the Cross.[12]

In order to learn another reason why the teaching of the prophets is more worthy of belief than the report of those who rise from the dead, consider this fact, that every dead person is a servant, but what the Scriptures utter, the Master has uttered. So even if a dead person rises, even if an angel descends from heaven, the Scriptures are more worthy of belief than any of them.[13] For the Master of the angels, the Lord of the dead and the living, Himself has given the Scriptures their authority. Besides, in addition to what we have said, we can prove by comparison with the law-courts of this world that those who ask for dead people to come from the other world are asking something superfluous. Hell does not appear to the faithless; it is clear and obvious to the faithful, but still it does not appear to the faithless. The law-courts appear, and we hear every day that one has been punished, another's goods have been confiscated by the state, another has been sentenced to work in the mines, another has been put to death by fire, another has perished by some other kind of punishment or retribution. Nevertheless, although the wicked, the wrong-doers, and the sorcerers hear of these punishments, they do not come to their senses. What am I saying, that those who have not yet experienced these punishments do not come to their senses? Often indeed many who have been caught and evaded the punishment, who have dug their way out of the prison and made good their escape, have taken again to the same way of life and committed even worse crimes than before.

Therefore let us not seek to hear from dead people what the Scriptures teach us much more clearly every day. For if God knew that dead people by rising could help the

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[12]Matthew 27:52.
[13]Compare Gal. 1:8.

living, He who has worked everything out for our good would not have omitted or neglected such a great benefit. Besides, if dead people were going to rise continually, and report to us everything about the other world, in time we would hold even this in contempt. In addition, the devil would very easily have introduced wicked teachings. He could often have shown phantoms; or he could even have prepared phantoms to simulate death and burial, then shown them again as if risen from the dead, and by them made credible whatever he wished to the minds of those who were being deceived. For if now, when nothing like this happens, dreams appearing in the likeness of the departed have often deceived and corrupted many people, much more, if this had happened and convinced the minds of mankind, that many of the departed had returned again, that foul demon would have woven a multitude of tricks and introduced much deceit into our life. For this reason God has shut the doors and does not allow anyone of the departed to return and tell what happens hereafter, lest the devil take this as his starting-point and introduce all his own teachings. When there were prophets, he raised up false prophets; when there were apostles, he raised up false apostles; when Christ appeared, he raised up false christs. When healthful doctrines had been proclaimed, he introduced corrupt doctrine, sowing weeds everywhere.[14] So if this also had happened, he would have tried to imitate this also, by his own devices, not truly raising the dead, but deceiving the sight of the observers by some kind of magical tricks and illusions, or else arranging for some people (as I said before) to pretend death. He would have turned everything upside down and made complete confusion.

But God who foreknew all these things prevented this attack. To spare us, He did not allow anyone even to come

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[14]Compare Matthew 13:25.

from the other world and speak of what is there to living people. In this way He teaches us to consider the holy Scriptures the most trustworthy of all. For He has shown us deeds which are much more convincing than the resurrection of the dead. He has converted the whole world, He has driven out error and introduced truth, He has accomplished all this with ordinary fishermen, and He has provided for us everywhere sufficient demonstrations of His providence. Therefore let us not think that our affairs are concluded with the present life, but let us believe that there will certainly be a judgment and a recompense for all that is done here among us. This is so plain and clear to everyone that even the Jews, pagans, and heretics, and every single human being agrees about it. If indeed not all understand correctly about resurrection, still all are in accord about the judgment, the retribution, and the courts of the next world, that there is some recompense hereafter for what is done here. If this were not so, why would He have stretched out so great a heaven, spread the earth beneath, extended the sea, poured out the air, and demonstrated such providence, if He were not intending to protect us to the end?

Do you not see how many have departed after a life of virtue and inumerable sufferings without receiving any of the good they deserve? Others, however, have departed after displaying great wickedness, stealing the substance of others, robbing and oppressing widows and orphans, enjoying wealth, luxury, and innumerable good things, without suffering even ordinary troubles. So when will those former people receive the reward for their virtue, or these latter people suffer the punishment for their wickedness, if our affairs last only for the present life? Everyone would say that if God exists (as indeed He does exist), He is just; and it is also agreed that if He is just, He will repay both the former and the latter as they deserve. But if He would repay both the former and the latter as

they deserve, but in this life neither of them have received their deserts, neither the ones the retribution for their wickedness nor the others the reward for their virtue, obviously there is some time left in which each of these will have their fitting recompense.

Why has God set in the mind of every one of us such a continuously watchful and sober judge? I mean the conscience. For there is no judge, no judge at all among men as sleepless as our conscience. External judges are corrupted by money, influenced by flattery, and induced by fear to give false judgments; and many other factors spoil their upright decisions. But the court of conscience cannot yield to any of these influences. Whether you give bribes, or flatter, or threaten, or do anything else, this court will bring forth a just judgment against your sinful intentions. He who commits sin himself condemns himself even if no one else accuses him. He does this not once only, or twice, but often, and continues through his whole life. Even if a long time passes, the conscience never forgets what has happened, but even during the commission of the sin, and before and after it is committed, the conscience stands against us as a vehement accuser—especially after the commission. While we are in the act of sinning we do not perceive as keenly because we are made drunk by the pleasure; but when it is done and reaches its end, then especially, after all the pleasure is quenched, the bitter goad of repentance comes upon us, just the opposite of women in labor. In their case before the birth great and unbearable effort and sharp pains torture them with suffering, but after the birth comes relief, when the baby is brought forth through the anguish. In the case of sin it is different. As long as we are in travail and are conceiving our corrupt purposes, we take pleasure and enjoy ourselves; but when we have brought forth the evil child, our sin, then we suffer at the sight of our shameful offspring, then we are tortured more grievously than women in

labor. For this reason I beg you not to accept a corrupt desire from its very beginning. If we do accept it, we must choke its seeds within. But if we are remiss even this far, as the sinful desire goes forth into action we must kill it by confession and tears, by accusing ourselves.

Nothing is so deadly to sin as self-accusation and self-condemnation with repentance and tears. Have you condemned your sin? Put away the burden. Who says this? God Himself who judges us. "Do you first confess your sins, that you may be justified."[15] Why are you ashamed, why do you blush, tell me, to admit your sins? You are not speaking to a human being, are you, who might reproach you? You are not confessing to your fellow servant, are you, who might expose you? No, rather to the Master, who protects and cherishes you, to the physician you are showing your wound. He is not unaware, is He, even if you do not confess, since He understands everything even before it is done? So why do you not confess? The sin does not become more burdensome because of your self-accusation, does it? Rather it becomes easier and lighter. For this reason He wishes you to confess, not in order to punish you, but in order to forgive you: not in order that He may learn your sin (how could that be, since He knows already?), but in order that you may learn how great a debt He forgives you. If you do not confess the greatness of the debt, you do not discover the excess of grace. "I do not force you," He says, "to come into the middle of the theater and place many witnesses around you; tell your sin to Me alone in private, so that I may treat your wound and relieve your pain." For this reason He has set in us a conscience more loving than a father. For a father who has rebuked his child once or twice or even three times or ten times, when he sees the child remaining uncorrected, gives up and disinherits him, and expels him from the

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[15]Isaiah 43:26.

household, and cuts him off from the family; but conscience does not. Whether it speaks once or twice or three times or innumerable times, and you do not pay attention, it will speak again, and will not desist until your last breath. In the house, in the streets, at table, in the marketplace, on the road, often even in our very dreams it sets before us the images and appearances of our sins.

See the wisdom of God. He did not make the accusation of our conscience continuous (for we could not bear the burden of a continuous reproach), nor so weak that it would give up after the first or second exhortation. If it were going to goad us every day and every hour, we would expire from discouragement; but if it desisted from rebuking us after reminding us once or twice, we would not gain much benefit. For this reason He made this rebuke to be continual but not continuous: continual, so that we may not lapse into carelessness, but may be kept always sober and mindful until the end; but not continuous or in close succession, so that we may not fall, but may recover our breath in periods of relief and consolation. Just as it would be deadly not to suffer any pain because of our sins, and would beget in us the extreme of insensibility, so it would be harmful to suffer this continuously and beyond measure.

Excessive discouragement is often strong enough to put us out of our natural senses, to overwhelm our soul, and to render us useless for any good purpose. For this reason He has made the reproof of our conscience attack us at intervals, since it is very severe and pricks the sinner more grievously than any goad. Not only when we ourselves sin, but even when others commit transgressions like ours, it is strongly aroused and cries out against us with great vigor. The fornicator, the adulterer, or the thief, not only when he himself is accused, but even when he hears others being accused of the same crimes, imagines that he is being scourged, taking a reminder of his own

sins from the censure of others. Another is summoned, but this man who has not been summoned at all is stricken, if he has dared the same crimes as that other man. In the same way indeed in the case of upright deeds, when others receive praise and crowns, those who have done the same upright acts rejoice and are glad, thinking that those others are not being praised any more than they themselves are. What do you think could be more wretched than the sinner who, when others are accused, himself slinks away to hide? What, on the other hand, is more blessed than the virtuous person who, when others are praised, himself rejoices and becomes happy, taking remembrance of his own upright deeds from the acclamation of others? These are the works of God's wisdom, these are the signs of His great providence. For censure is a kind of holy anchor of our conscience, which does not allow us finally to be submerged in the depths of sin. Not only at the actual time of our sins, but even after many cycles of years, it often finds a way to remind us of old sin. I will provide clear proof of this from the Scriptures themselves.

Joseph's brothers once sold him, although they could not reproach him for anything, except that he had seen dreams foretelling the glory which would come to him. "I saw," he said, "your sheaves bowing down to my sheaf."[16] Indeed they should have guarded him because of this, for he was going to be the crown of their whole family, and the brilliance of their whole race. But envy is like that: it fights against its own good. The jealous person would prefer to suffer innumerable troubles rather than to see his neighbor in good repute, even if the cause of the good repute were to benefit him also. What could be more wretched than such a person? So this is how Joseph's brothers felt. When they saw him coming from far off, bringing food for them, they said to each other, "Come,

[16]Gen. 37:7.

let us kill him and see what his dreams will be."[17] If you did not respect him as a brother, nor acknowledge your relationship, at least you should have respected the table itself and the character of his service, because he came to bring your food. But see how they prophesied unintentionally: "Come," they said, "let us kill him and see what will be his dreams." For if they had not plotted against him, and woven their deceit, and stitched up their shameless purpose, they would not have known the power of those dreams. For it would not have been as remarkable to mount the throne of Egypt without suffering any misfortune as to attain the same eminence through so many hindrances and obstacles. If they had not plotted against him, they would not have sold him into Egypt. If they had not sold him into Egypt, his master's wife would not have fallen in love. If his master's wife had not fallen in love, he would not have been cast into prison, he would not have interpreted the visions, he would not have obtained royal authority. If he had not obtained that royal authority, his brothers would not have come to buy grain and bowed down to him. So because they tried to kill him, for this very reason they knew his dreams. What then? Did they become agents of all the good things which were coming to him and of that eminence of his? Not at all. For their part they plotted to hand him over to death, distress, slavery, and the worst of evil fates; but God who is skillful in devising good used the wickedness of the plotters for the credit of him whom they had plotted to sell.

Lest anyone think that these things happened through some coincidence or reversal of circumstances,[18] by the very men who opposed and hindered them God brings about the events which they tried to prevent, using Joseph's enemies as servants for his credit. From this you may learn

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[17]Gen. 37:20.

[18]As in classical Greek tragedies.

that what God has planned no one will scatter, and no one will turn aside His lofty hand,[19] so that when people plot against you, you may not fall or be annoyed, but may keep in mind that the plot leads to good at the end, if only you endure nobly whatever happens to you.

So you see even in this world envy brought forth a kingdom, and jealousy procured a crown and provided a throne. The very men who had plotted against Joseph propelled him to the height of that office. The victim ruled like a king, while the plotters served like slaves. The former received the veneration which the latter gave. You see, when continual troubles come upon you in quick succession, you must not be confused, you must not be annoyed, but wait for the end. Undoubtedly the conclusion will be worthy of God's great generosity, if only you endure what happens in the meantime with thanksgiving. Joseph also, although he ran the greatest risk after those dreams, was sold by his brothers, was attacked by his master's wife, and was thrown back into prison, did not say to himself, "What in the world is this? Those dreams were a deceit. I have been exiled from my country. I have been deprived of freedom. For God's sake I did not yield to my master's wife when she urged me to adultery. Because of my self-control and virtue I am being punished. And not even so did He protect me, or stretch out His hand; but He allowed me to be handed over to heavy chains and continual misfortunes. After the pit came slavery, after slavery a plot, after the plot a false accusation, after the accusation a prison." None of these threw him into confusion; but he persisted in courage and hope, knowing that God's words will never fail.

God could have fulfilled His words on the same day; but in order to show His power and the faith of His servants, He allowed a long time to intervene and many

[19]Isaiah 14:27.

hindrances to come. In this way you may learn the might of Him who fulfills His proclamations when people have given up hope of them, and you may see the patience and faith of His servants, who do not lose their good expectation because of anything which happens to them in the meantime. As I said, however, Joseph's brothers retreated. Hunger drove them headlong like a soldier, and made them stand before Joseph. They wanted to buy grain, but what did he say to them? "You are spies."[20] They said among themselves, "What is this? We came to buy food, and are we risking our lives?" Rightly so, since he brought food to you and risked his life. But he endured in truth, while you suffer this only in pretence. He was not your enemy, but he assumed the role of an enemy in order to learn accurately about the family. For since they had become evil and hard-hearted towards him, and he did not see Benjamin with them, fearing that the child might have suffered as he had, he commanded some one to be bound and left there, but all the others to take the grain and depart. He threatened them with death, if they should not bring their brother back.[21] So when this happened, and he said, "Leave someone here and bring your brother. If you do not, you shall die the death," what did they say to each other? "Yes, for we are in sin concerning our brother, when he besought us."[22] Do you see after how long a time they remembered that sin? To their father they said, "An evil beast has devoured Joseph;"[23] but when Joseph himself was present and listening, they reproached themselves for the sin. What could be more unexpected than this? Imprisonment without a trial, defense without accusation, proof without witnesses, as the very men who did the deed examine themselves and reveal what was done

[20]Gen. 42:9.
[21]Gen. 42:19-20.
[22]Gen. 42:21.
[23]Gen. 37:32.

in secret. Who persuaded them, who forced them to bring into the open the deeds which they had done so long before? Is it not obvious that conscience, the judge which cannot be deceived, had continually shaken their minds and disturbed their souls? And the murdered man sat then judging them in silence, and they themselves cast their vote condemning themselves without producing any excuse. They admitted these things, but another defended himself, when he said, "Did I not speak to you, saying, 'Do not hurt the boy, nor do him any wrong, because he is our brother'? See, now his blood is required from our hands."[24] Truly he who spoke to them said nothing about that murder and killing. As he sat he asked nothing of the sort, but inquired after the other brother. Their conscience seized the opportunity, arose and took hold of their minds, and made them confess their rash deeds without any compulsion. We often have the same experience, when our sins are past; for when we are being tested in difficult circumstances, we remember our former sins.

Knowing all this, when we have committed some wickedness, let us not wait for misfortunes and difficulties or dangers and fetters, but every hour and every day let us stir up this court in ourselves. Let us cast our vote against ourselves and try in every way to make our defense before God. Let us not ourselves dispute about the resurrection and the judgment, nor endure patiently when others speak, but in every way let us stop their mouths with our words. For if we were not going to undergo punishment for our transgressions hereafter, God would not have set up such a court in us here. But this also is evidence of His love for mankind. Since He is going to demand from us hereafter an account of our transgressions, He has set in us this impartial judge. By judging us here for our sins and making us better, this judge may rescue

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[24]Gen. 42:22.

us from the judgment to come. This is what Paul says also: "If we judged ourselves . . . we should not be judged"[25] by the Lord. So in order not to be chastised hereafter, in order not to undergo punishment hereafter, let each of us enter into his own conscience, unfold the story of his life, examine all his transgressions accurately, condemn his soul which has committed such acts, correct his intentions, afflict and straiten his thoughts. Let him seek a penalty for his sins by self-condemnation, by complete repentence, by tears, by confession, by fasting and alms-giving, by self-control and charity, so that in every way we may become able to put aside all our sins in this life and to depart to the next life with full confidence. May we all attain this, by the grace and love of our Lord Jesus Christ, with whom to the Father, together with the Holy Spirit, be glory unto ages of ages. Amen.

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[25] I Cor. 11:31.

St. John Chrysostom, sixth sermon on Lazarus and the rich man

Have you seen God's power, have you seen God's love for mankind? His power, because He shook the world; His love, because He made the tottering world firm again; or rather, you saw both His power and His love in both. For the earthquake showed His power, and its cessation showed His love, because He shook the earth and made the world fast again, because He set it upright when it was rocking and about to fall. The earthquake has gone by, but let the fear remain; that tossing has run its course, do not let discretion depart with it. We spent three days in prayer; let us not relax our zeal. This is why the earthquake came: because of our laxity. We relaxed, and we summoned the earthquake; we renewed our zeal, and we drove away His anger. Let us not relax again, or we may again summon His anger and His retribution. For God does not desire the death of the sinner, but that he should repent and live.[1] Have you seen the mortality of the human race? When the earthquake came, I reflected with myself and said, where is theft? Where is greed? Where is tyranny? Where is arrogance? Where is domination? Where is oppression? Where is the plundering of the poor? Where is the arrogance of the rich? Where is the domination of the powerful? Where is intimidation? Where is fear? One moment of time and everything was torn apart more easily than a spider's web, everything was shattered,

[1]Ez. 33:11.

the city was full of shrieking, and everyone ran to the church.

Consider, if God had chosen to demolish everything, what we would have suffered. I say this, so that the fear of these events may remain sharp in you and may keep everyone's resolution firm. He shook us, but He did not destroy us. If He had wished to destroy us, He would not have shaken us. But since He did not wish to destroy us, the earthquake came in advance like a herald, forewarning everyone of the anger of God, in order that we might be improved by fear and prevent the actual retribution. He has done this even for foreign nations. "Yet three days, and Ninevah shall be overthrown."[2] Why do You not overthrow the city? You threaten to destroy it, and why do You not destroy it? "Because I do not wish to destroy, for this very reason I threaten." So what do You say? "Lest I do what I say, let My word go in advance and prevent My deed." "Yet three days, and Ninevah shall be overthrown;" then the prophet spoke, today the walls send out a voice. I say this, and I do not cease saying it, both to the poor and to the rich: consider how great God's anger is, how easy and simple everything is to Him; and let us abstain from evil! In a brief moment of time He shattered the mind and resolution of each one of us, and He shook the foundations of our hearts.

Let us consider, if on that terrible day, when instead of one moment of time there will be endless ages, rivers of fire, threatening anger, powers dragging us to judgment, a terrible judgment seat, an incorruptible court, and the deeds of each one set before our eyes, no one to help, neither neighbor, nor counsel, nor relative, not a brother, not a father, not a mother, not a friend, not anyone else—what will we do then? Tell me. I bring fear to you in order to prepare your salvation. I have wrought a lesson sharper

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[2]Jonah 3:4.

than steel, so that each of you who has a gangrenous sore may cut it away. Have I not been asking all along, as I ask now, and do not cease asking, how long will you be attached to the things of this world? I am speaking to all of you, but especially to those who are ill and do not heed what I say. Or rather, the sermon is useful for each of you: for the ill person, to make him well, and for the healthy person, to keep him from falling ill. How long does money last? How long does wealth? How long ostentatious houses? How long the frenzied quest for pleasure in material things? See, the earthquake came: how did wealth help anyone? The labor of both rich and poor was shattered. The possession perished along with the possessor, the house along with the builder. The city became the common tomb of all, a tomb not constructed by the hands of craftsmen but prepared by the disaster itself. Where was wealth? Where was greed? Do you see that everything was slighter than a spider's web?

But you will ask me, "How do you help by preaching?" I help if anyone hears me. I do my duty: he who sows, sows. The sower went out to sow. Some seeds fell beside the road, some on the rock, some among thorns, but some on good soil.[3] Three parts perished and one was saved. He did not stop farming, but since one part survived, he did not cease from working the soil. Here also, when I have scattered such a quantity of seed, it is impossible that it should not bring forth some havest for me. If not everyone listens, half will listen; if not half, a third; if not a third, a tenth; if not a tenth, if even one from the crowd listens, let him hear. It is not a small thing for even one sheep to be saved, since that shepherd left the ninety-nine sheep and ran after the one which had strayed.[4] I do not despise anyone; even if he is only one, he is a human being,

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[3]Matthew 13:3.
[4]Matthew 18:12.

the living creature for which God cares. Even if he is a slave, I may not despise him; I am not interested in his class, but his virtue; not his condition of master or slave, but his soul. Even if he is only one, he is a human being, for whom the heaven was stretched out, the sun appears, the moon changes, the air was poured out, the springs gush forth, the sea was spread out, the prophets were sent, the law was given—and why should I mention all these?—for whom the only-begotten Son of God became man. My Master was slain and poured out His blood for man. Shall I despise him? What pardon would I have? Do you not hear that the Lord conversed with the Samaritan woman, and spent many words?[5] He did not despise her because she was a Samaritan, but because she had a soul, He cared for her. He did not neglect her because she was a harlot, but because she was going to be saved and had showed faith, she often benefited from His concern.

As for me, I will not stop speaking, even if there is no one at all who listens: I am a physician, I apply remedies; I am a teacher, I am bidden to give advice. It is written, "I have made you a watchman for the house of Israel."[6] Do I not succeed in setting anyone upright? What of it? I still have my reward. Besides, I spoke of an extreme case. It is impossible that in so great a crowd someone should not be set upright. These very pretexts and excuses are made by careless listeners. "I hear," someone says, "every day, and I do not act." Hear, even if you do not act. From the hearing the action also may come about. Even if you do not act, you are ashamed of your sin. Even if you do not act, you are changing your attitude. Even if you do not act, you are condemning yourself because you do not act. And where does this self-accusation come from? Is it the fruit of my words. When you say, "Alas,

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[5]John 4:7-42.
[6]Ez. 3:27.

I have heard, and I do not act," your "alas" is the prelude to a change for the better. You have sinned: have you mourned? You have dissolved the sin. "First confess your transgressions, that you may be justified."[7] If you are gloomy or dejected, dejection may be a beginning of salvation, not by the nature of dejection, but by the kindness of the Master. For the sinner, grief is not a small defense. "I saw that he was grieved and dejected," it is written, "and I healed his anguish."[8] Oh ineffable kindness and inexplicable goodness! "He was grieved . . . and I healed him." Is this a great thing, that he was grieved? It is not a great thing, but I made it an occasion for healing his anguish. Did you see how in a brief moment of time He brought everything together?

So think over continually in yourselves that evening of the earthquake. Everyone else was afraid because of the earthquake, but I was afraid because of the cause of the earthquake. Do you understand what I mean? They were afraid that the city would collapse, and they would die; but I am afraid that the Master is angry with us. Death is not grievous, but it is grievous to provoke the Master. So I was not afraid because of the earthquake, but because of the cause of the earthquake; for the cause of the earthquake was the anger of God, and the cause of His anger was our sins. Never fear punishment, but fear sin the mother of punishment. Is the city being shaken? What of it? But do not let your resolution be shaken. In the case of diseases and injuries we do not grieve for those who are being cured, but for those who have incurable diseases. Sin is the same as disease or injury; retribution is the same as surgery or medicine.

Do you understand what I am saying? Pay attention: I want to teach you a word of wisdom. Why do we grieve

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[7]Is. 43:26.
[8]Compare Is. 57:18.

for those who are being punished, but not for those who are sinning? Punishment is not as grievous as sin, for sin is the reason for the punishment. If you see someone with a putrifying sore, and worms and discharges coming from his body, and you see him neglecting his infection, but you see another person with the same affliction benefiting from the hands of physicians, from cautery and surgery and bitter-tasting medicines, for whom will you grieve? Tell me, for the one who is ill and is not being treated, or for the one who is ill and is being treated? In the same way imagine two sinners, one being punished, the other not being punished. Do not say, this one is lucky because he is rich, he strips orphans of their property, and he oppresses widows. Apparently he is not ill, he has a good reputation in spite of his thefts, he enjoys honor and authority, he does not endure any of the troubles which afflict mankind—no fever, no paralysis, nor any other disease—a chorus of children surrounds him, his old age is comfortable; but you should grieve most for him, because he is indeed ill and receives no treatment. I shall tell you how. If you see someone afflicted with dropsy, his body swollen with a painful spleen, and not hurrying to the doctor, but drinking cold water, keeping a Sybaritic table, getting drunk every day, surounded with body-guards, and aggravating his disease, tell me, do you call him lucky or unlucky? If you see another person afflicted with dropsy, benefiting from the care of doctors, purging himself with hunger, with great difficulty braving his bitter medicines which are painful but bring forth health through pain, do you not call this person more fortunate than the other? It is agreed: for one is ill and is not treated, but the other is ill and benefits from treatment. But, you may say, the treatment is painful. But its purpose is beneficial.

Our present life is like this also, but you must change the words from bodies to souls, from diseases to sins, from the bitter taste of medicines to the retribution and judgment

from God. What the mdicines, surgery, and cautery are for the physician, chastisement is for God. Just as fire is often used to cauterize, to prevent the spread of infection, and as the steel removes decayed flesh, bringing pain but providing benefit, so hunger and disease, and other apparent evils, are used on the soul instead of steel and fire to prevent the spread of disease, by analogy with the body, and to make it better. Suppose that there are two fornicators—imagine the picture that my words describe—two fornicators, but one rich and the other poor. Which has more hope of salvation? Obviously, we agree, the poor man. So you must not say, "The rich man commits fornication and is rich; therefore I call him lucky." You ought rather to call him lucky if he fornicated in poverty, if he fornicated in hunger; then he would have a forcible teacher of wisdom, his poverty. When you see a bad person faring well, then weep: for there are two evils, the disease and its incurability. When you see a bad person in misfortune, console him, not only for the reason that he is becoming better, but also because he is expiating many of his sins in this life. Pay careful attention to my words. Many people both expiate their sins here and endure judgment hereafter; but some here only, and some hereafter only. Hold on to my teaching. If you examine my words carefully, they will cast out many confusions from your thinking.

If you agree, let us bring into our midst first the person who is punished hereafter, but who enjoys luxury here. Let both rich and poor attend to my words: the teaching will be beneficial to both. As evidence that many people are judged both here and hereafter, listen to Christ when He says, "And whatever town or house you enter, as you enter the house, salute it, saying, 'Peace be to this house.' And if the house is worthy, let your peace come upon it; but if it is not worthy, let your peace return to you. And if anyone will not receive you or listen to your words, shake

off the dust from your feet as you leave that town. Truly, I say to you, it shall be more tolerable for the land of Sodom and Gomorrah than for that town. Whatever town or house you enter, find out who is worthy in it, and stay with him until you depart."[9] From these words it is clear that the people of Sodom and Gomorrah both were judged in this world and are being punished in the other world. When He says that it will be more tolerable for Sodom than for these people, He shows that the Sodomites are being punished but not as much as these people are.

There are, however, some who are punished in this life only, like the immoral man of whom the blessed Paul spoke when he wrote to the Corinthians, "It is actually reported that there is immorality among you, and of a kind that is not found even among pagans; for a man is living with his father's wife. And you are arrogant, and you do not rather mourn, in order that he who has done this may be removed from among you. For though absent in body, I am present in spirit; and as if present I have already pronounced judgment on the man who has done such a thing, that when you are gathered in the name of the Lord Jesus, together with my spirit, you should deliver this man to Satan for the destruction of the flesh, so that his spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus."[10] Do you see how this man is punished here, and is not punished hereafter? Because his body was punished in this world, he is not punished hereafter.

Finally, I want to show you the man who lived in luxury here, but who is punished in the other world. "There was a rich man."[11] If you recognize this story in advance, wait to hear the interpretation. This is to your credit and mine, that when you have heard the introduc-

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[9]Matthew 10:11-15 (out of order).
[10]1 Cor. 5:1-5
[11]Luke 16:19.

tion, you are already reaping the harvest. Your continual listening has made you teachers; but since there are some visitors who have come in with you, do not run out, but wait for the lame. For the Church is a body: it has an eye, and it has a head. Just as, if the heel is pricked by a thorn, the eye bends down, since it is also a part of the body, and does not say, "Because I am located above, I despise the lower member," but it bends down and leaves its height. What is humbler than the heel, or what is nobler than the eye? But sympathy corrects the difference, and love makes all even. You must do likewise. If you are swift, if you are well prepared for listening, but you have a brother who does not follow what is said, let your eye descend to the heel. Let it feel sympathy with the lame member, so that he may not await my words in destitution. Do not use use your intelligence for his destruction, but be grateful to God for your swiftness. Are you rich? I rejoice and am glad; but he is still poor. Do not let him remain in poverty because of your wealth. He has a thorn, a confusion in his mind; descend to him and remove the thorn.

So what is written? "There was a rich man"—rich in name, but not in fact. "There was a rich man" wearing purple garments, setting an expensive table, wreathing his wine-bowls with garlands, giving drinking-parties every day; and there was another man, a poor man named Lazarus. And where is the name of the rich man? Nowhere; he is nameless. How much wealth? And his name is not found. What kind of wealth is this? A tree bearing leaves but deprived of fruit; an oak reaching aloft, providing acorns as food for beasts; a man without fruit for men. Where there is wealth and robbery, there a wolf may be seen; where there is wealth and brutality, I see a lion and not a man: he has lost his nobility by the meanness of evil. "There was a rich man" wearing purple garments every day, covering his soul with cobwebs, scented with perfumes,

but stinking inside, setting an expensive table, feeding parasites and flatterers, fattening the slave, his flesh, but allowing the mistress, his soul, to perish from hunger. His house was decorated with garlands, but the foundation was dusty with sin. His soul was buried in wine. There that rich man was, you see, with his expensive table, his wine-bowls wreathed with garlands, and his company of parasites and flatterers, the evil theater of the devil, the wolves which seize many of the rich, which purchase the destruction of the wealthy by the fullness of their own bellies, which spoil wealth by excessive honor and flattery. One could not err in calling such people wolves, who surround the rich man like a sheep, lift him and puff him up with praise, and do not allow him to see his wound, but blind his understanding and increase his infection. Then when a change of circumstance overtakes him, his friends are put to flight, but we who censured him become sympathetic, while their faces are hidden. This often happens even nowadays.

There that rich man was, you see, feeding parasites and flatterers, making his house a theater, weakening everyone with wine, passing his time in great prosperity. There was another man, Lazarus, groaning with sores, sitting at the gate of the rich man, and desiring crumbs. He thirsted at the spring, he hungered in the midst of prosperity. And where was he lying? Not in the road, not in a street, not in an alley, not in the middle of the marketplace, but at the gate of the rich man, where he had to go in and out, so that he could not say, "I did not see him, I passed by and my eyes did not see him." He lies at your entrance, the pearl in the mud, and do you not see him? The physician is at your gate, and do you not accept the treatment? The pilot is in the harbor, and do you endure shipwreck? Do you feed parasites, and do you not feed the poor? This happened in the past, and it happens even now. This is why this story is written, so that those who come

later may learn from the events and may not suffer the same disaster as this man did. The poor man lay at the gate, you see: poor outwardly, but rich inwardly. He lay wounded in body, a treasure-chest with thorns above, but pearls underneath. What harm came to him from the weakness of his body, since his soul was healthy? Let the poor hear and not be suffocated by discouragement. Let the rich hear and change from their wickedness. This is why the two images are set before us, the images of wealth and poverty, of cruelty and endurance, of patience and greed, so that when you see a poor man injured and despised, you may not consider him unfortunate; and when you see a rich man adorning himself, you may not consider him fortunate. Run back to the parable. If the shipwreck of thoughts confuses you, rush to the harbor, take comfort from the explanation, think how Lazarus was despised, think how the rich man prospered and enjoyed luxury, and do not let any of the things which happen in life confuse you. If your understanding is accurate, the waves do not sink you, the ship is not submerged, if you distinguish the nature of things by the discernment of your thoughts.

Why do you say to me, "My body is in difficulty"? Do not let your mind be harmed also. "So and so is rich and wicked." What of it? "But the evil is not visible." Do not evaluate the person for me by his outside but by his inside. If you see a tree, do not examine its leaves or its fruit? In the same way also with a human being, if you see someone, do not evaluate his outside but his inside. Examine the fruit and not the leaves. Perhaps it is really a wild olive tree, but is thought to be a cultivated olive tree. Perhaps he is really a wolf but is thought to be a human being. You see, you should not examine his nature but his character, not his appearance but his disposition; and not his disposition only, but investigate his whole way of life. If he loves the poor, he is a human being; but

if he is wholly involved in commerce, he is an oak tree. If he has a savage temper, he is a lion; if he is rapacious, he is a wolf; if he is deceitful, he is a cobra. You should say, "I am looking for a human being; why have you shown me a beast instead of a man?" Learn what really is the virtue of a human being, and do not be confused.

Lazarus, you see, was lying at the gate, wounded, wasting away with hunger. The dogs came and licked his wounds: the dogs showed more love of mankind than the man did, when they licked his wounds and cleaned and removed the infection. He lay there, sitting like a gold coin beside the road, but even more valuable. He did not say what most poor people say, "Is this providence? Does God oversee human affairs? Do I live in righteousness and am I poor, while he lives in iniquity and is rich?" He did not think any of these thoughts, but submitted to the incomprehensibility of God's love for mankind. He wiped his soul clean, he put on endurance, he demonstrated patience. His body was lying down, but his mind was running forward, his will had grown wings. He was reaching for the prize, putting off evil things, becoming a witness of good things. He did not say, "Parasites are feasting in abundance, but I am not found worthy even of crumbs." What did he say instead? He gave thanks and glorified God. The time came for them to die. The rich man died and was buried. Lazarus departed, for I would not say that he died. The rich man's death was death and burial; but the poor man's death was a journey, a change for the better, a run from the mark to the prize, from the sea to the harbor, from the battle to the victory, from the sweat of the contest to the crown.

Both men departed to that place where everything is true. The stage sets were removed and the masks were taken off. In a theater of this world at mid-day the stage is set and many actors enter, playing parts, wearing masks on their faces, retelling some old story, narrating the

events. One becomes a philosopher, though he is not a philosopher. Another becomes a king, though he is not a king, but has the appearance of a king for the story. Another becomes a physician without knowing how to handle even a piece of wood, but wearing the garments of a physician. Another becomes a slave, though he is free; another a teacher, though he does not even know his letters. They appear something other than what they are, and they do not appear what they really are. One appears to be a physician, another appears to be a philosopher by wearing a hairy mask, and another appears to be a soldier by bearing the equipment of a soldier. The appearance of the mask deceives us, but it does not falsify the nature, for it truly changes the character which is represented. As long as the audience remain in their seats, the masks are valid; but when evening overtakes them, and the play is ended, and everyone goes out, the masks are cast aside. He who is king inside the theater is found to be a coppersmith outside. The masks are removed, the deceit departs, the truth is revealed. He who is a free man inside the theater is found to be a slave outside; for, as I said, the deceit is inside, but the truth is outside. Evening overtakes them, the play is ended, the truth appears. So it is also in life and its end. The present world is a theater, the conditions of men are roles: wealth and poverty, ruler and ruled, and so forth. When this day is cast aside, and that terrible night comes, or rather day, night indeed for sinners, but day for the righteous—when the play is ended, when the masks are removed, when each person is judged with his works—not each person with his wealth, not each person with his office, not each person with his authority, not each person with his power, but each person with his works, whether he is a ruler or a king, a woman or a man, when He requires an account of our life and our good deeds, not the weight of our reputation, not the slightness of our poverty, not the tyranny of our disdain—give me your deeds

if you are a slave but nobler than a free person, if you are a woman but braver than a man. When the masks are removed, then the truly rich and the truly poor are revealed. When the play ends, one of us looking out an upper window sees the man who is a philosopher inside the theater but a coppersmith outside, and says, "Hey! Wasn't this man a philosopher inside? Outside I see that he is a coppersmith. Wasn't this other man a king inside? Outside I see that he is some humble person. Wasn't that man rich inside? Outside I see that he is poor." The same thing happens when this life ends.

I will not speak in too much detail, in order not to confuse a listener by saying too many things; but I want to set before you the masks of two roles from the theater. I have handled two masks, cutting a path for you with these two, and giving you a starting point. I have broadened your understanding by explaining the present life, so that each of you may learn to distinguish reality. There were two masks, you see: one person had the mask of a rich man, the other, of a poor man. Lazarus had the mask of a poor man, but the rich man had the mask of a rich man. Appearances are masks, not the truth of reality. Both departed to the other world, the rich man and the poor man. The angels received Lazarus—angels after the dogs, after the rich man's gate the bosom of Abraham, after hunger limitless prosperity, after tribulation perpetual comfort. But poverty received the rich man after his wealth, after his rich table punishment and retribution, after his comfort unbearable anguish. See what happens: they departed to the other world, and the play ended; the masks have been removed, and the faces appear from now on. Both have departed to the other world. The rich man from his grill sees Lazarus enjoying abundance and luxury in the bosom of Abraham, and says to him, "Father Abraham, send Lazarus to dip the end of his finger in water and cool my tongue, because I am being broiled."

What does Abraham reply? "Son, you have received the good things due to you, and Lazarus the evil things due to him; now he is comforted here, and you are in anguish. And besides, between us and you a great chasm has been fixed, in order that those who would pass from here to you may not be able."[12] Pay attention: the discussion of these words is beneficial, frightening indeed, but purifying, bringing anguish, but setting us upright. Listen to what I say. From his torments the rich man looked up and saw Lazarus: he saw a new situation. "He was at your gate every day; a second or third time you went in and out without seeing him. Now, when you are on the grill, do you see from a distance? When you were living in your wealth, when you were free to see at your own will, you did not choose to see him. Why do you have such keen sight now? Was he not at your gate? How could you avoid seeing him? When he was near you did not see him; and now do you see him from a distance, even across such a chasm?"

And what does the rich man do? He calls Abraham father. "Why do you call father the man whose hospitality you did not imitate?" He calls Abraham father, and Abraham calls him son. Here are the names of relationship, but never any help. The parable brings forward the names, to teach you that family is of no benefit. True nobility is not the eminence of your ancestors, but the virtue of your character. Do not say to me, "My father is a consul." What is that to me? I do not say this only, "Do not say to me, 'My father is a consul.' " If you have Paul the apostle for your father, if you have martyrs for your brothers, but you do not imitate their virtue, the relationship is of no benefit to you, but rather it harms and condemns you. "My mother," someone says, "is an almsgiver." What does that have to do with you in your in-

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[12]Luke 16:24-26.

humanity? Her love of humanity adds to the accusation of your wickedness. What does John the Baptist say to the Jewish people? "Bear fruits that befit repentance, and do not presume to say, 'We have Abraham as our father.' "[13] Do you have a glorious ancestor? If you emulate him, you have profited; but if you do not emulate him, your noble ancestor becomes your accuser, because you are a bitter fruit from a righteous stock. Never call a person fortunate because he has a rigteous relative, if he does not imitate that relative's righteous character. Do you have a wicked woman as your mother? It has nothing to do with you. Just as a good mother's virtue does nothing to help you unless you emulate it, so also a bad mother's wickedness does not harm you if you adopt a different way of life. Just as hereafter you deserve greater blame because, having an example in your own home, you did not imitate her virtue, so also here a person deserves greater praise who has a bad mother yet does not imitate her wickedness, but has grown good fruit from a bitter stock. It is not the eminence of your ancestors but the virtue of your character which is required of you.

For my part, I may call even a slave noble, and a master shackled with chains, if I learn his character. For me the person of high rank belongs to the lowest class if he has a slavish soul. For who is truly a slave, if not the person who commits sin? Other slavery is a matter of our external circumstances, but this slavery is a difference of interior disposition. In fact slavery originally came from this source. Formerly there were no slaves. When God formed man, He did not make him a slave, but free. He made Adam and Eve, and both were free. So how did slavery begin? The race of men drifted off course, passed beyond the proper limits of desire, and were carried away with licentiousness. Hear how this came about.

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[13]Luke 3:8.

There was a flood, a common shipwreck of the whole inhabited world. The flood-gates were opened, the abysses gushed forth, and everything was water.[14] Visible things were dissolved and reduced to their elements; earth no longer appeared, but everything was sea, because of the anger of God. Everything was waves and sea. Mountains reach high, but the sea covered them. There was nothing but sea and heaven, and the race of men had perished. Noah was the spark of our race, a spark floating in the midst of the sea without being quenched, bringing the first-fruits of our race, his wife and children, a dove and a raven, and all the rest. All of them were inside, and the ark was carried on top of the water in the midst of the flood. It did not suffer shipwreck, for it had as its pilot the Master of all. It was not the planking of the ark which saved them, but His mighty hand. And see a miracle: when the earth had been washed clean by the flood, when those who did evil had been destroyed, when the storm had abated, the peaks of the mountains appeared, the ark landed, and Noah sent the dove.

These stories are mysteries, and the events are a type of what was to come: that is, the ark represents the Church, Noah represents Christ, the dove represents the Holy Spirit, the olive branch represents God's love for mankind.[15] He sent forth the gentle animal, and it went out from the ark—but those things are types, and these are the truth. See the bounty of the truth. Just as the ark in the midst of the flood saved those who were inside, so the Church saves all those who go astray. But the ark merely saved them, while the Church does something more. I mean something like this: the ark received the irrational animals saved them as irrational animals. The Church has received irrational human beings, and does not merely save them,

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[14]Gen. 7:11.
[15]Compare 1 Peter 3:20.

but also changes them. The ark received a raven and sent forth a raven. The Church receives a raven and sends forth a dove; it receives a wolf and sends forth a sheep. When a person enters rapacious and avaricious and hears the teaching of the divine Scriptures, he changes his disposition and becomes a sheep instead of a wolf. The wolf steals what belongs to others, but the sheep gives up even its own wool.

The ark landed and the doors were opened. Noah went forth, saved from shipwreck. He saw the earth made desolate. He saw a tomb improvised from mud, a common grave of animals and men, all the bodies of horses, human beings, and all kinds of irrational beasts buried together in heaps. He saw that tragedy; he saw the earth groaning bitterly. He was very discouraged. Everyone had perished. No human being, no animal, nothing else outside of the ark had been saved. He saw only the heavens. He was overcome by discouragement; he was held fast by anguish. He drank wine and yielded himself to sleep to relieve the wound of his discouragement. He lay on his bed, yielding himself to sleep as if to a doctor, obtaining forgetfulness in his mind of what had taken place, as usually happens when an old man drinks wine and falls asleep. We must defend the righteous man, because he did not desire drunkenness and passion but used them to heal his wound. Solomon also says this: "Give wine to those in grief, and strong drink to those in anguish."[16] For this reason many people, especially at funerals, when someone has lost a child or a wife, when emotion overcomes him, when discouragement surrounds him, when consciousness rules over him, take their friends into their own house and make a generous drinking party. They give undiluted wine to the one who is mourning to relieve his pain.

The same thing happened then to Noah. Overcome by

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[16]Prov. 31:6.

discouragement, he used wine like a medicine, and by means of the wine yielded himself to sleep. But in order that you may learn how slavery began, a little later that accursed son of his went in—his son by nature but not by character (again I say that nobility is not the eminence of ancestors but the virtue of one's character); his son went in and saw the nakedness of his father.[17] He should have clothed him, he should have covered him up because of his old age, because of his grief, because of his misfortune, because he was his father; but he went out and announced it and proclaimed it. His other brothers took a garment, carrying it backwards to keep from seeing what he had announced, and went in and covered their father. When their father arose, he knew everything that had happened; and he began to say, "Cursed be the child Canaan: he shall be a servant to his brothers.[18] He meant something like this: "You shall be a slave, because you proclaimed the disgrace of your father." Do you see that slavery came from sin, and wickedness introduced slavery?

Shall I show you freedom arising from slavery? There was a certain Onesimus, a slave, a good-for-nothing runaway. He escaped and went to Paul. He obtained baptism, washed away his sins, and remained at Paul's feet. Paul writes to the slave's master, "Onesimus . . . who formerly was useless to you, but now is useful indeed to you and to me . . . receive him as you would receive me." What had happened? "I have become his father in my imprisonment."[19]

Do you see his nobility? Do you see a character that brings freedom? Slave and free are simply names. What is a slave? It is a mere name. How many masters lie drunken on their beds, while slaves stand by sober? Whom shall I

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[17]Gen. 9:22.
[18]Gen. 9:25.
[19]Philemon 10-17.

call a slave? The one who is sober, or the one who is drunk? The one who is the slave of a man, or the one who is the captive of passion? The former has his slavery on the outside; the latter wears his captivity on the inside. I say this, and I will not stop saying it, in order that you may have a disposition which serves the true nature of things, and may not be led astray by the same deception as most people, but may know what a slave is, what a poor person is, what an ignoble person is, what a fortunate person is, and what passion is. If you learn to distinguish these, you will not be subject to any confusion.

But lest the digression, which has become rather long, lead my sermon astray, let us return to the subject. Here is this rich man, you see, but poor from now on; or rather, when he was rich he was poor. What benefit is it to a man who has other people's possessions but does not have his own? What benefit is it to a man who has gained money but has not gained virtue? Why do you take others' possessions and lose your own? "I have," he says, "fruitful land." What of it? You do not have a fruitful soul. "I have slaves." But you do not have virtue. "I have clothing." But you have not obtained piety. You have what belongs to another, but you do not have what is your own. If someone gives you a deposit of money in trust, I cannot call you rich, can I? No. Why not? Because you have another's money. For this is a deposit; I wish it were only a deposit, and not a sum added to your punishment.

So when the rich man sees Lazarus, he says, "Father Abraham, have mercy on me."[20] These are the words of a pauper, a mendicant, a beggar. "Father Abraham, have mercy on me." What do you want? "Send Lazarus." The man whom you passed by a thousand times, whom you did not want to see—now do you seek to have him sent to you for your salavation? "Send Lazarus." And where are your

[20]Luke 16:24.

cup bearers? Where are your carpets? Where are your parasites? Where are your flatterers? Where is your vanity? Where is your presumption? Where is your buried gold? Where are your moth-eaten garments? Where is the silver which you valued so highly? Where are your ostentation and your luxury? They were leaves—winter seized them, and they are all withered up. They were a dream—and when day came, the dream departed. They were a shadow —the truth came, and the shadow fled away.

"Send Lazarus." Why does he not see any other righteous person? Why not Noah, or Jacob, or Lot, or Isaac, but Abraham? Why? Because Abraham was hospitable and brought travellers into his tent. Abraham's hospitality, you see, becomes a more serious accusation against the rich man's inhumanity. "Send Lazarus." When we hear, let us be afraid, my beloved, lest we also see the poor and pass them by, lest instead of Lazarus there be many to accuse us hereafter. "Send Lazarus to dip the end of his finger in water and cool my tongue, because I am being broiled."[21] "For with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again."[22] Did you fail to give a share of your crumbs? You do not receive a share of water-drops. "Send Lazarus to cool my tongue with the end of his finger, because I am being broiled." And what does Abraham say to him? "Son, you have received in your life the good things due to you, and Lazarus likewise the evil due to him. And now he is comforted here, but you are in anguish."

Here in his reply Abraham did not say merely "you have received" (ἔλαβες), but "you have received as your due" (ἀπέλαβες). The addition of the prefix makes a big difference. As I have often said to you, my beloved, we ought to be interpreters even of syllables. "Search the

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[21]Luke 16:24.
[22]Matthew 7:2.

Scriptures,"[23] it is written; for often one iota or one dot awakens an idea.[24] To learn that the addition of one letter can have a meaning, remember that this same patriarch Abraham (in Greek Ἀβραάμ) was formerly called Abram. God said to him, "Your name shall not be Abram but Abraham."[25] He added an "a," and made him the father of many nations. So you see the addition of one letter showed his great nobility. Therefore do not simply pass over things like these. For Abraham did not say, "You have received your good things," but, "you have received as your due." He who receives as his due, receives what is owed to him as a debt. Pay attention to what I am saying: receiving is one thing, and receiving what is due is another. A person receives as due what he had before, but often receives what he had not obtained before.

"You have received the good things due to you, and Lazarus the evil things due to him." See how both the rich man received the good due to him, and Lazarus received the evil due to him. I have said all this because of those who are punished here but not hereafter, and because of those who live in luxury here but are punished hereafter. So pay attention to what I say: "You have received the good things due to you, and Lazarus the evil things due to him"—the things owed, the debts. Pay attention to our inquiry—I am coming to the point—let me weave the web. Do not become confused by the introduction. When I say something like this, wait for the conclusion. I want to make you keen-sighted, and not simply exercise you superficially, but bring you to the deep of the divine Scriptures, a deep without storms, a deep safer than any calm sea. The farther out you go, the greater safety you find. For here there is no disordered rush of waters, but an orderly arrangement

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[23]John 5:39.
[24]Compare Matthew 5:18.
[25]Gen. 17:5.

of ideas. "You have received the good things due to you, and Lazarus the evil things due to him; and now he is comforted, but you are in anguish." This is an important inquiry. I said that he who receives something as due receives a debt which is owed to him. So if Lazarus was righteous (as indeed he was), and he appeared in the bosom of Abraham with his crown, his prize, his comfort, his enjoyment, the rewards of his endurance and his patience, but the other was a sinner, thoroughly wicked and inhuman, spending his life in luxury and drunkenness, setting a Sybaritic table, involved in such licentiousness and wantonness, why does Abraham say to him, "You have received as your due"? Was some debt owed to him, a wealthy man, a profligate and inhuman person? What was owed to him? Why did Abraham not say, "you received," but "you received as your due"?

Pay attention to what I am saying. Retribution was owed to him, punishment was owed to him, anguish was owed to him. Why did Abraham not say, "you have received them," but "you have received those things as your due," meaning that life of his, and "Lazarus has received the evil things due to him"? Stretch your mind—I am going down into the depth of ideas. Among all human beings that exist, some are sinners and the rest are righteous. So attend also to the difference among the righteous. One person is righteous, but another is more righteous. One is sublime, but another is more so. Just as there are many stars and the sun and moon, so there is a difference among the righteous. "There is one glory of the sun, and another of the moon, and another glory of the stars."[26] For one is greater in glory, but another is less. And just as it is among heavenly bodies, so it is also among earthly bodies. And as among bodies one is a deer, another a dog, another a lion or some other beast, another a snake or

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[26] 1 Cor. 15:41.

something of that kind, so also among sins there are differences. Of human beings, you see, some are righteous and the rest are sinners; but both among the righteous and among sinners there are great differences. Pay attention: if someone is righteous, even if he is ten thousand times righteous, and if he reaches the very height, so as to be freed from sin, he still cannot be clean of every spot; even if he is ten thousand times righteous, yet he is a human being. "For who will boast that he has a pure heart? Or who will say confidently that he is clean from sin?"[27] For this reason we are commanded to say in prayer, "Forgive us our debts,"[28] so that by the habit of prayer we may remember that we are subject to punishment hereafter. Even Paul the apostle, the chosen vessel, the temple of God, the mouth of Christ, the lyre of the Spirit, the teacher of the world, he who crossed land and sea, who drew out the thorns of sin, who sowed the seeds of piety, he who was richer than kings, mightier than the wealthy, stronger than a soldier, wiser than the philosophers, more eloquent than the orators, he who possessed nothing and yet had gained everything, who loosed death by his shadow, who put disease to flight by his garments, who won a victory on the sea, who was snatched up to the third heaven, who entered paradise, who proclaimed Christ as God—he says, "I am not aware of anything against myself, but I am not thereby justified." He who has gained so many and such great virtues still says, "It is the Lord who judges me."[29]

So who will boast that he has a pure heart? Or who will say confidently that he is clean from sin? It is impossible, you see, for any human being to be without sin. What do you say? A certain person is righteous? He gives alms? He loves the poor? But he has some fault. He has

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[27]Prov. 20:9.
[28]Matthew 6:12.
[29]1 Cor. 4:4.

a violent temper, or an exaggerated opinion of himself, or something else of this kind—I do not need to make a complete catalogue. One person gives alms, but often fails to control himself; another is self-controlled, but does not give alms. One person is renowned for this virtue, another for that virtue. Suppose that a certain person is righteous· often a person is righteous, and has all the good qualities, but has become arrogant because of his righteousness; and his arrogance has spoiled his righteousness. Was not the Pharisee righteous, fasting twice in the week? And what did he say? "I am not like other people, thieves and extortioners."[30] Often from a clear conscience a person has come into arrogance; and the harm which sin did not do to him is done by his arrogance. Indeed it is not possible for a human being to be so thoroughly righteous as to be clean from sin. Conversely, it is not possible for any human being to be so evil as not to have even a small good quality. I mean something like this: so-and-so commits theft, fraud, and outrage; but sometimes he gives alms, sometimes he controls himself, sometimes he speaks a kind word, sometimes he has helped even one man, sometimes he has mourned, sometimes he has been sad. So neither is there any righteous person without sin, nor any sinner entirely destitute of goodness. What is more grievous than Ahab? He had killed and taken possession;[31] nevertheless, when he became sorrowful, God said to Elijah, "Have you seen how Ahab has been pricked to the heart?"[32] Have you seen how in such a depth of evil some small good has been found? What is worse than Judas the traitor, who was taken captive by the love of money? Nevertheless even he did a good deed, small though it was, after his betrayal. For he said, "I have sinned in betraying inno-

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[30]Luke 18:11.
[31]III Kings 20:19.
[32]III Kings 20:29.

cent blood."[33] This is what I meant: a person is not evil by nature, so that virtue can have no place in him. The sheep can never become a wild animal, for it is gentle by nature. The wolf can never become tame, for it is wild by nature. The laws of the animal's nature are not dissolved nor shaken but remain immovable. In my case this does not apply, but I become wild when I wish and tame when I wish; for I am not bound by nature, but I have been honored with freedom of choice.

As I said, neither is anyone so good as not to have a small stain, nor is anyone so bad as not to have even a small good quality. Since, therefore, there is a requital for everything, there is also a reward for everything. Even if someone is a murderer, however wicked or greedy he is, if he does something good, the recompense remains for his good deed; his good deed does not go unrewarded because of the evil which he has done. Conversely, if someone has accomplished innumerable good deeds, but has also done something mean, the recompense remains for his mean action. Remember this; keep it firm and immovable. There is neither any good person without sin, nor any bad person without righteousness. I am saying the same thing again, in order to root the idea, to plant it, to set it in the depth of your hearts. The devil puts some troubles in your soul, wishing to lead your minds astray and to spoil what I am saying. For this reason I send my words down to the depths. If you keep them there securely, even if you go outside, you cannot lose them. Just as if I put gold into a purse, tie it up and seal it, to keep a thief from taking it when I am away, so also I do with you, my beloved. With my continual teaching I tie up and seal, and make your disposition secure, so that it may not become stale from idleness, but preserving it better, I may drive away the confusion outside by the calm here within.

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[33]Matthew 27:4.

So, you see, my words do not come from mere loquacity, but from the teacher's concern, affection, and love, lest the words fall away. Saying these things is not troublesome for me, and it is more secure for you. I want to teach, not simply to put on a display.

So there is no righteous person who does not have sin, and there is no sinner who does not have goodness. But since there is a recompense for each, see what happens. The sinner receives as his due the fair recompense for his good deeds, if he has even a small good deed; and the righteous person receives as his due the fair judgment for his sin, if he has done even a small evil deed. So what happens, and what does God do? He has set a boundary for the sin between the present life and the age to come. If a person is righteous, but has performed some mean action, and is ill in this life and is handed over to punishment, do not be disturbed, but consider with yourself, and say that this righteous man has done some small evil deed at some time, and is receiving his due here, in order that he may not be punished hereafter. Conversely, if you see a sinner robbing, defrauding, and doing innumerable evil deeds, if he is prosperous, consider that he has done some good at some time and is receiving the good things due to him here, in order that he may not require his reward hereafter. So if someone is righteous and suffers some misfortune, he receives his due here for this purpose, in order that he may put away his sin here and depart clean to the other world. If someone is a sinner, laden with wickedness, ill with innumerable incurable evils, rapacious, avaricious, he enjoys prosperity here for this purpose, in order that he may not seek a reward hereafter. Since, therefore, Lazarus happened to have some sins, and the rich man had some good deed, for this reason Abraham says, "Do not seek anything here: you have received the good due to you in that life, and Lazarus the evil due to him." To prove that I am not simply saying this, but that

it really is like this, he says, "You have received the good things due to you." What? Have you done something good? You have received your wealth, your health, your luxury, your power, your authority. Nothing is owed to you. You have received the good things due to you. What then? Has Lazarus not sinned at all? Yes, Lazarus also has received the evil things due to him. When you were receiving your good things, then Lazarus also was receiving his evil things. For this reason he now is comforted, but you are in anguish.

So when you see a righteous person punished in this life, consider him fortunate, and say, "This righteous person either has some sin, and is receiving what is due for it and departing clean to the other life; or else he is being punished more than his sins, and a surplus of righteousness is being reckoned to him." For an accounting takes place hereafter, and God says to the righteous person, "You have this much from Me." Perhaps He entrusts to him ten obols and gives him a credit for the ten obols. If the person spends sixty obols, God says to him, "I count the ten obols towards your sin, and the fifty towards righteousness." To learn that the remainder is counted towards righteousness for him, remember that Job was a righteous man, blameless, truthful, pious, abstaining from every evil deed. His body was punished here in order that he might seek a reward hereafter. What does God say to him? "Do you think that I have dealt with you in any other way than that you may be revealed as righteous?"[34]

Therefore, displaying the same patience as the righteous, and showing endurance equal to their good conduct, let us receive as our due the good things which are prepared for the saints who love God; which may we all attain, by the grace and love of our Lord Jesus Christ, to Whom be the glory and the power unto ages of ages. Amen.

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[34]Job 40:8.

St. John Chrysostom, seventh sermon on Lazarus and the rich man

I want to start again on my usual instruction and set the spiritual table before you; but I hesitate and draw back, seeing that you have gathered no fruit from my continual teaching. When a farmer has sowed the seeds with a generous hand in the bosom of the earth, and sees that the yield is not worthy of his efforts, he does not undertake his work with the same willingness; for the hope of the harvest always relieves the burden of effort. In the same way we also would easily have borne this great effort of teaching, if we knew that something greater were being produced by our advice for your benefit. But as it is, when we see that after so much exhortation, counsel, and rebuke from us (for we have not ceased reminding you of the terrible court, the inexorable judgments, that unquenchable fire, and the undying worm[1]) some of those who listen to this (for I do not condemn all of you, far from it), have forgotten everything and surrendered themselves again to the satanic spectacle of the races, with what expectation shall we undertake the same efforts after this and set this spiritual teaching before them? We see that they have gathered no more fruit from it; but simply following some habit, they applaud what we say, show us that they receive our words with pleasure, and afterwards run back to the race-course. They give greater applause to the charioteers and show an uncontrollable frenzy. They rush

[1]Mark 9:48.

together with great excitement and often wrangle with one another, saying that one horse ran badly, another was tripped and fell. One person attaches himself to one charioteer, another to the other. They have no thought or memory of our words, nor of the spiritual and awesome mysteries which are celebrated here; but like captives in the snares of the devil they spend the whole day there, surrendering themselves to the satanic spectacle, and shaming themselves before the Jews, the pagans, and those who wish to ridicule us.

Who would be able to endure this without pain, even if he were stony-hearted and insensible, not to mention us who are eager to demonstrate our paternal love towards you all? This is not the only thing which grieves us, that you reveal our toil as fruitless; but we are even more affected when we consider that those who do these things are bringing a more severe condemnation on themselves. We expect the reward of our efforts from the Master, for we have done all our part, we have invested our silver, we have distributed the talent entrusted to us, and we have omitted nothing of the tasks which came to us. But as for those who received this spiritual silver, what excuse will they have, tell me, what pardon, when not only the principal is required of them but also the interest? With what eyes will they look on the Judge? How will they endure that terrible day, those unbearable punishments? They cannot plead ignorance, can they? Every day we resound in their ears, we exhort them, we urge them, we show them the destructiveness of their delusion, the greatness of the harm, the treachery of Satan's assembly; and even so we have not been able to reach them.

And why do I speak of that terrible day? Let us train them just for the present life. How, tell me, will those who have shared in the spectacle of Satan be able with confidence to attend here, while their conscience rises up against them and cries out with a loud voice? Or do these

people not hear the blessed Paul, the teacher of the world, when he says, "What fellowship has light with darkness . . . or what has a believer in common with an unbeliever?"[2] What condemnation would it not deserve, when the believer who enjoys both the prayers and awesome mysteries which are celebrated here and the spiritual instruction, after the end of the service here, goes out and sits at that satanic spectacle with the unbeliever—he who has been illuminated by the light of the Sun of righteousness, with him who wanders in the darkness of impiety? How, tell me, after this will we be able to silence the pagans or the Jews? How will we be able to attract them, how will we persuade them to come over and enroll themselves in piety, when they see those who are enrolled with us mixed up with them at those deadly shows which are filled with all kinds of corruption? Why, tell me, after attending here, cleansing your thoughts, and leading your mind to sobriety and compunction, do you go back there and defile yourself? Or do you not hear the voice of a wise man who says, "When one builds and another tears down, what do they gain but toil?"[3] This is what is happening now. When you go back there and tear down all at once what we have built up here by our continual instruction and spiritual exhortation, and you raze it (so to speak) to the foundation, what use is there in our demonstrating the elements of the building again from the beginning, and in your going through the purification again? Would this not be the greatest madness and senselessness? Tell me, if you saw someone doing this kind of thing in these material buildings which are made with stones, would you not look upon him as a madman who toils haphazardly and vainly, and spends everything to no purpose? You must think the same way about this spiritual building, and cast the same vote in this case.

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[2] 2 Cor. 6:14-15.
[3] Sir. 34:23.

Behold: since we have been assigned by God's grace to this task, every day we raise this spiritual building on high, and endeavor to lead you to instruction in virtue; but some of those who hurry to gather here in one moment of time all but tear down with their own hands by their unspeakable self-indulgence this building which has been raised with great effort. In this way they bring great discouragement to us, but upon themselves they bring a great and deadly penalty.

Perhaps I have made my rebuke too severe: too severe, that is, in respect to my love for you, but nowhere near worthy of the greatness of the transgression. Nevertheless, since it is necessary to stretch out a hand even to the fallen, and to show paternal concern for those who have been so careless, I do not despair of their salvation even so, if only they are willing no longer to fall into the same habits, but to stop their self-indulgence at this point, and to deny themselves their visits to the race-course and all similar satanic spectacles. We have a Master who is loving, gentle, and concerned for us. When He sees the weakness of our nature, when we fall into some sin, tripped up by our laziness, He seeks only one thing from us, not to despair but to leave the transgression and hurry to confess. If we do this a swift forgiveness is promised to us, for it is He Himself who says, "When someone falls, does he not arise? When someone turns away, does he not turn back again?"[4] So since we know this, let us not despise our Master who loves us so much, but let us overcome the harmful habit. Let us not walk by the wide gate and the easy road, as you have heard the common Master of all exhorting today in the Gospel, when He says, "Enter by the narrow gate, for the gate is wide and the road is easy that leads to destruction, and those who enter by it are many."[5]

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[4]Jer. 8:4.
[5]Matthew 7:13.

When you hear "wide gate" and "easy road," do not be deceived by the introduction, not observe that many enter through it, but understand that it turns out narrow at the end. And consider intelligently that He is not speaking of a visible gate, nor simply of a road, but advising us concerning our whole life and concerning virtue and wickedness. For this reason, you see, He began saying, "Enter by the narrow gate," calling the gate of virtue by this name. Then, when He has said, "Enter by the narrow gate," He teaches us afterwards the reason why He gives this advice. For He says, "If this gate is narrow and requires much effort when you enter, nevertheless if you strive a little while, you will come out into a very wide place and an easy way which can offer you great relief. Do not look at its narrowness," He says, "nor let the introduction disturb you, nor let the narrowness of the entrance make you reluctant; for this wide gate and this easy road end in destruction." Many people are deceived by the beginning and the introduction; not foreseeing any of what is to come, they yield themselves to destruction. For this reason He says, "The gate is wide and the road is easy that leads to destruction, and those who enter by it are many." Well did He call it a wide gate and an easy road that leads to destruction. For those who are eager to go to the races and the other satanic spectacles, who have no care for self-control and give no thought for virtue, who wish to behave recklessly, who yield themselves to luxury and gluttony, who spend themselves every day in madness and frenzy for money, who strain after the things of the present life—these people walk by the wide gate and the easy road. But when they go farther along, and gather a great burden of sins for themselves, when they are all spent and come to the end of the road, they are no longer able to go any farther, because they are pressed tightly by the narrowness of the road and burdened by the weight of their sins so that they cannot go through. So they must come

at last to the very brink of destruction. What benefit is it, tell me, after walking on the easy road a little while, to come to a permanent destruction; after luxuriating in a dream, so to speak, to be punished in truth?

For what the dream of one night is, the whole present life is in comparison to the punishment and retribution which await us. This is not written, is it, so that we may read it and do nothing more? For this reason the grace of the Spirit has caused the Lord's sermons to be entrusted to writing, so that by receiving medicines from them as remedies for our passions we may be able to escape the punishment which hangs over us. For this reason also at that time Christ our Master applied appropriate medicines to the listeners' wounds when He advised, "Enter by the narrow gate." He called the gate narrow, not because it is narrow by nature, but because our disposition, which generally inclines to laziness, thinks that it is narrow. Nor did He call it narrow in order to turn us away, but in order that we might avoid the width of the other gate and judge each road by its end, and so might prefer to choose this one.

But to make the sermon easily understood by everyone, come if you agree, let us bring into our midst those who entered by the wide gate and who walked on the easy road, and let us see what kind of end received them. Let us also bring forward those who entered by the narrow gate and the way of tribulation, and let us learn what kind of good things received them. You see, by setting before us one of those who entered by this wide gate and one of those who walked on the narrow road of tribulation, let us show the truth of the Lord's words, using again one of the Lord's parables. So who is it who entered by the wide gate and walked on the easy road? First we should show who this is, and what distance he traveled walking on the wide road; and then we should make clear to you how he ended his journey. I know indeed that you, intelligent as

you are, have already understood what I am going to say; nevertheless it is necessary for me to say it. Remember with me that rich man, the one who wore purple and fine linen every day, who dined lavishly, who fed parasites and flatterers, who served out a lot of undiluted wine, who yielded himself to gluttony and great luxury every day; he entered by the wide gate, all the time enjoying the pleasure and contentment of this life. Every thing flowed to him as if from a spring—he had many servants, immeasurable luxury, health of the body, plenty of money, honor from the mass of people, praise from the flatterers, and nothing up to that time to give him grief. Above all, as he passed his days in such intoxication and gluttony, he did not only enjoy bodily health and complete freedom from care, but also he pitilessly neglected the poor man Lazarus who lay at his gate, suffering from sores, surrounded and licked by dogs, and wasting away from hunger. He did not share even crumbs with him. The man who entered by the wide gate walked on the easy road, the way of luxury, licentiousness, laughter, relaxation, gluttony, drunkenness, accumulation of money, frivolity in dress. During the whole time of the present life he walked on the easy road, without being tried by anything painful, but always borne by a fair wind; inasmuch as he was traveling on the easy road, he kept on running his course free from care. Nowhere did he encounter headlands, nowhere cliffs, nowhere undersea reefs, nowhere shipwreck, nowhere unpredictable change; but continuously traveling on a firm, smooth road he ran the course of the present life. He was drowned every day by the waves of evil and did not take notice of it. He was torn to pieces every day by wicked desires and enjoyed himself. He was continuously besieged by licentiousness, by gluttony, by the madness for money, and took no notice of these terrible things, nor was able to foresee the end of the road; but plucking only the present pleasure, he gave no thought to the perpetual anguish. In his delusion, so to speak, he kept on walking the

easy road, driven along toward the very brink without being aware of it because of his drunkenness. His prosperity in all aspects of this life drowned his reasoning, and blinded the eye of his mind; and as if deprived of sight thereafter he went on walking without knowing where he was going. Perhaps he did not even take thought of his human nature as he did not see himself enduring any difficulty. He did not enjoy luxury only, but also wealth; not wealth only, but also bodily health; not bodily health only, but also the attendance of servants, and not only the attendance of numerous servants, but seeing everything flowing to him as if from a spring he passed his time in uninterrupted pleasure. Do you see, my beloved, the man who entered by the wide gate and walked always on the easy road? Do you see what comfort he enjoyed?

But no one who hears this should dare to call him lucky before his end; he should await the end of the story, and then he may cast his vote. If you agree, let us also bring into our midst the man who entered by the narrow gate and traveled by the road of tribulation. When we have observed the ends of both men, we may cast the appropriate vote in each case. Whom else can we now bring forward but Lazarus, who lay at the rich man's gate, who was afflicted by those sores, saw the dogs' tongues touching his wounds, and was not strong enough to drive them away? Just as the other man entered by the wide gate and walked on the easy road, so this fortunate man (for I call him fortunate already, because he chose to enter by the narrow gate) entered by the narrow gate, the one opposite to that other way of many possessions. Just as the other lived in continuous luxury, so this man kept on wrestling with hunger. The other man along with luxury and bodily health enjoyed also a surplus of money, and squandered it in daily gluttony and drunkenness; this man along with hunger and extreme poverty afflicted by continuous illness and sores did not even procure his necessary sustenance, but desired

the crumbs from the rich man's table and was not granted even these.

Do you see how this man who had entered by the narrow gate kept on walking the road of tribulation? Do you see how the other man kept on traveling by the wide gate and the easy road? But let us see finally the end of each man, and how that one reached a narrow end, but this one ended in a wide place full of comfort, so that when we have learned this thoroughly, we may not follow the easy road at all times nor be eager to enter by the wide gate, but may seek out the narrow gate and walk the road of tribulation, in order that we may be able to meet a good end full of comfort. When the end of each man's life arrived, see first what the Lord says about the one who traveled by the road of tribulation. "The poor man died," He says, "and was carried by the angels to Abraham's bosom."[6] Perhaps the angels led him away in procession, carrying spears before him, restoring him to the place of comfort after all his tribulations and his straitened journey. Do you see how wide the narrow gate and the road of tribulation appear at the end? Finally, you must see also the disastrous end of the easy road. "The rich man also died," He says, "and was buried." No one went before him, no one carried spears, no one led the way for him as they did for Lazarus. For since the rich man had enjoyed all these things on the easy road, and had had many bodyguards and attendants, I mean the flatterers and parasites, when he reached the end, he was stripped naked and destitute of all of them after those great comforts—or rather after that brief comfort and prosperity. For all our present life is brief when compared with the age to come.

So you see, after the brief comfort which he enjoyed as he walked the easy road, the place of distress and tribulation received him. The poor man rested in the bosom

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[6]Luke 16:22.

of the patriarch, receiving the due recompense for his great pain and misery. After his hunger and sores and his lying at the gate, he shared in that ineffable comfort which cannot be described in words. But the rich man after his luxury and comfort and his great gluttony and drunkenness met that inexorable punishment and was tormented on the grill. In order that each of them might learn from the result, the benefit of the narrow road and the disastrous penalty of the easy road, they saw each other from a great distance. Hear how this was: "And in Hades," He says, "being in torment, he lifted up his eyes, and saw Abraham far off and Lazarus in his bosom."[7] It seems to me that when he observed such a complete reversal of circumstances, and the man who had lain at the gate exposed to the tongues of the dogs now enjoying such confidence and dwelling in the bosom of the patriarch, but himself afflicted with such shame and besides tormented by a fiery grill, he felt his anguish more keenly. In any case, he saw the circumstances reversed, and knew that he had lived his life of luxury as it were in a dream and a shadow, and that he was now enduring the unbearable punishment and had reached such a narrow end after his easy road and his wide gate; he saw also that the opposite had happened to Lazarus, who was enjoying those ineffable good things because of his patient endurance in this life. When he is reduced to helplessness and knows from experience the delusion which he has suffered in choosing the easy road, he makes supplication to the patriarch and utters pitiful words full of tears. He who previously has not been moved and has not deigned even to see Lazarus the poor man who lay at his gate, but loathed him, so to speak, because of the stench of his sores and his own frivolity, in which he continually lived luxuriously, now supplicates the patriarch and says, "Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus to

[7]Luke 16:23.

dip the end of his finger in water and cool my tongue; for I am in anguish in this flame."[8] These words are enough to inspire pity; nevertheless even so they did not help him at all. His confession and petition were untimely, since he did not make them at the time when they were needed. "Send," he says, "that Lazarus, the poor man whom hitherto I loathed, to whom I did not give a share of crumbs. Now I am begging for him, and asking for that finger which the dogs used to lick." Do you see how the retribution has humbled him? Do you see how the easy road has reached a narrow end? And he does not make his supplication to Lazarus, but to the patriarch. With good reason—for he did not dare to look the poor man straight in the face. He was remembering, I suppose, his own inhumanity, and thinking how hard-hearted he had been to Lazarus, he suspected that he would perhaps not even grant him an answer. For this reason, you see, he did not even make his petition to Lazarus, but supplicated the patriarch. Nevertheless even so he obtained no benefit at all. Such an evil is untimeliness, and the neglect of the time of our earthly life which is given to us by God's kindness as the opportunity for our salvation.

What steel is so hard as not to be bent by these words, and led to pity and sympathy? Nevertheless not even so does the patriarch accede to his entreaty. He does indeed grant him an answer, but teaches him that he himself was responsible for bringing these evils on himself. For the patriarch says to the rich man, "Son, remember that you in your lifetime have received the good things due to you, and Lazarus likewise the evil due to him; but now he is comforted, and you are in anguish. And besides all this, between us and you a great chasm has been fixed, in order that those who would pass from here to you may not be

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[8]Luke 16:24.

able, and none may cross from there to us."[9] What he says is frightful, and sufficient to affect those who have any sense. For in order to teach him that he himself is showing his own compassion towards him, and is moved to pity by seeing the severity of his punishment, but is not able to do anything else for his assistance, Abraham all but apologizes to him and says, "I wanted to reach out my hand to you, to relieve your pain, and to reduce the severity of your punishment; but by taking your comfort in advance you yourself have deprived yourself of this relief." This is why he says, "Son, remember." See the goodness of the patriarch: he calls him "son." But while this can reveal Abraham's gentleness, it provides no help to the rich man because he has betrayed himself. "Son," he says, "remember that in your life you received the good things due to you: be mindful of the times which are past, do not forget how much luxury you enjoyed, how much relaxation, how much ostentation, how you spent all your life in gluttony and drunkenness, thinking that your whole lifetime would be occupied with these, and limiting the good to things like these." He passed sentence on himself by his own vote. Without imagining anything sublime or having before his eyes the evils which awaited him, he thought that those things were good.

Even now most people who are excited about luxury and gluttony have the habit of saying, "We have had many good things," when they wish to reckon the extent of their great luxury. Do not call these things good without qualification, O man, bearing in mind that they are given by the Master in order that by enjoying them in due proportion we may have sustenance for our life and may overcome the weakness of our bodies; but the truly good things are something else. None of these things is good, not luxury, not wealth, not expensive clothing; they have only

[9]Luke 16:25-26.

the name of goodness. Why do I say that they have only the name? They often indeed cause our destruction, when we use them improperly. Wealth will be good for its possessor if he does not spend it only on luxury, or on strong drink and harmful pleasures; if he enjoys luxury in moderation and distributes the rest to the stomachs of the poor, then wealth is a good thing. But if he is going to give himself up to luxury and other profligacy, not only does it not help him at all, but it even leads him down to the deep pit. This is what happened to this rich man. Therefore the patriarch says to him, "Son, remember that in your life you received the good things due to you. What you thought to be truly good, that you received, and Lazarus likewise the evil things;" not that Lazarus thought them evil (far from it), but Abraham added this also according to the rich man's judgment. He had made this judgment authoritative for himself, and thought that wealth, luxury, wantonness, and all other frivolity were good things, but supposed that poverty, hunger, and severe ill-health were evil things. "So as you supposed, and held that false opinion, remember that according to your judgment you have received those good things, as you traveled on the wide and easy road; and Lazarus likewise has received the evil things according to your opinion, as he walked by the narrow gate and the road of tribulation. So, since you saw only the beginning of the road, but he looked also toward the end, not being made more reluctant by the beginning of the road, for this reason he now is comforted here, but you are in anguish; you have reached ends opposite to each other."

By the very events, my beloved, you have seen the end of the easy, wide road; you have learned how good an end awaited the man who chose the narrow gate and the road of tribulation. Hear what is even more frightful: "Besides all this," he says, "between us and you a great chasm has been fixed, in order that those who would pass

from here to you may not be able, and none may cross from there to us."[10] Let us not simply pass over what is said, my beloved, but let us consider the exact sense of the words, and how much honor and precedence the man enjoys who lay beside the gate, the poor man who was easy to despise, who struggled continually with hunger, who was afflicted with sores and exposed to the dogs. I am happy to keep turning these things over with you, in order that no one of those who are in disease and hunger may despise his situation, feeling sorry for himself, but bearing everything with patience and thanksgiving, may already be nourished by good hopes, awaiting that ineffable recompense and the repayment for his sufferings. "And besides all this." What does he mean, "besides all this"? When he said, "You received in your earthly life everything which you thought good, and he received everything which you thought evil," he added this, teaching him that a fitting end awaited each one, besides all that he had said: "After your enjoyment of what you thought good, tribulation, distress, and the unquenchable fire received you; after his struggle throughout his life with what you yourself thought evil, relief, enjoyment of good things, and rest with the saints received him. When, you see, each one found his fitting end, and the wide gate and easy road had made you reach these straits, but the narrow way of tribulation had brought him to this relief, besides all this between us and you a great chasm has been fixed." See the poor man, the one who suffered from sores (I say this again), numbered with the patriarch and enrolled in the chorus of the righteous. For he says, "between us and you." Do you see what kind of rest awaited the man who had endured that severe illness and hunger with patience and thanksgiving? "Besides all this," he says, "a great chasm has been fixed." What separates them is great, he says, and not simply a chasm,

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[10]Luke 16:26.

but a great chasm. And in truth there is a great distance between virtue and evil, and a great difference. One is wide and easy, but the other is narrow and full of tribulation. Luxury is wide and easy, but poverty and need are narrow and full of tribulation. So just as in this life the ways are opposed—the person who chooses virginity travels the narrow road of tribulation, and so does the person who pursues chastity, embraces voluntary poverty, and scorns vain glory; but the person who is eager to travel on the wide and easy road surrenders himself to drunkenness, luxury, madness for money, licentiousness, and harmful spectacles —the difference between them is great; so also in the time of punishment and recompense, there is a great distance to be found between their requitals. "A great chasm," he says, "is fixed between us," that is, the righteous, the virtuous, those to whom that rest is allotted, "and you," that is, those who have spent themselves in wickedness and evil. "So great is the chasm that neither can anyone standing here go over to you, nor can anyone cross from there to us." Did you see the greatness of the chasm? Did you see a judgment deeper than hell? When you heard at the beginning of the rich man's prosperity, how he was attended by many servants and followers, how he devoted himself to luxury every day, did you not think that he was exceedingly fortunate? And again, when you saw the poor man lying at the gate and afflicted with those grievous sores, did you not pity his life? But behold now, from the end of the events we see the opposite happening: the rich man on the grill after that luxury and drunkenness, but Lazarus in the bosom of the patriarch after that extreme poverty and hunger.

But lest we stretch out the sermon to a great length, it is enough to stop our teaching at this point, and to entreat your love not to pursue the wide gate or the easy road, nor always to seek comfort, but bearing in mind the end of each way, to flee the easy way, considering what befell

this rich man, and to pursue the narrow gate and the way of tribulation, so that after tribulation here we may be able to reach the place of comfort. Flee, therefore, I beg of you, the spectacles of Satan and the harmful sights of the race-course. For the sake of those who have been enticed away and have walked towards the easy road I have been led to say these things, in order that they may learn to leave that road, and by traveling on the way of tribulation, I mean the way of virtue, they may be counted worthy of the patriarch's bosom like Lazarus, and in order that all of us together, freed from the fire of hell, may enjoy those ineffable good things which eye has not seen nor ear heard. May we all attain to these, by the grace and love of our Lord Jesus Christ, with whom to the Father, together with the Holy Spirit, be glory, might, and honor, now and ever and unto ages of ages. Amen.

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