

~Other Speakers A-F: John Chrysostom:

Now these things, brethren, I have in a figure transferred to myself and Apollos for your sakes; that in us you might learn not to think of men above that which is written.

So long as there was need of expressions as harsh as these, he refrained from drawing up the curtain, and went on arguing as if he were himself the person to whom they were addressed; in order that the dignity of the persons censured tending to counteract the censurers, no room might be left for flying out in wrath at the charges. But when the time came for a gentler process, then he strips it off, and removes the mask, and shows the persons concealed by the appellation of Paul and Apollos. And on this account he said, These things, brethren, I have transferred in a figure unto myself and Apollos.

And as in the case of the sick, when the child being out of health kicks and turns away from the food offered by the physicians, the attendants call the father or the tutor, and bid them take the food from the physician's hands and bring it, so that out of fear towards them he may take it and be quiet: so also Paul, intending to censure them about certain other persons, of whom some, he thought, were injured, others honored above measure, did not set down the persons themselves, but conducted the argument in his own name and that of Apollos, in order that reverencing these they might receive his mode of cure. But that once received, he presently makes known in whose behalf he was so expressing himself.

Now this was not hypocrisy, but condescension (if...¹ and tact (²). For if he had said openly, As for you, the men whom you are judging are saints, and worthy of all admiration; they might have taken it ill and (³) started back. But now in saying, But to me it is a very small thing that I should be judged of you: and again, Who is Paul, and who is Apollos? he rendered his speech easy of reception.

This, if you mark it, is the reason why he says here, These things have I transferred in a figure unto myself for your sakes, that in us you may learn not to be wise above what is written, signifying that if he had applied his argument in their persons, they would not have learned all that they needed to learn, nor would have admitted the correction, being vexed at what was said. But as it was, revering Paul, they bore the rebuke well.

2. But what is the meaning of, not to be wise above what is written? It is written, Matthew 7:3 Why do you behold the mote that is in your brothers's eye, but considerest not the beam that is in your own eye? and Judge not, that you be not judged. For if we are one and are mutually bound together, it behooves us not to rise up against one another. For he that humbles himself shall be exalted, says he. And Matthew 20:26-27; Mark 10:43; not verbatim He that will be first of all, let him be the servant of all. These are the things which are written.

That no one of you be puffed up for one against another. Again, having dismissed the teachers, he rebukes the disciples. For it was they who caused the former to be elated.

And besides, the leaders would not quietly receive that kind of speech because of their desire of outward glory: for they were even blinded with that passion. Whereas the disciples, as not reaping themselves the fruits of the glory, but procuring it for others, would both endure the chiding with more temper, and had it more in their power than the leading men to destroy the disease.

It seems then, that this also is a symptom of being puffed up, to be elated on another's account, even though a man have no such feeling in regard of what is his own. For as he who is proud of another's wealth, is so out of arrogance; so also in the case of another's glory.

And he has well called it being puffed up. For when one particular member rises up over the rest, it is nothing else but inflammation and disease; since in no other way does one member become higher than another, except when a swelling takes place. (So in our language proud flesh.) And so in the body of the Church also; whoever is inflamed and puffed up, he must be the diseased one; for he is swollen above the proportion of the rest. For this [disproportion] is what we mean by swelling. And so comes it to pass in the body, when some spurious and evil humor gathers, instead of the wonted nourishment. So also arrogance is born; notions to which we have no right coming over us. And mark with what literal propriety he says, be not puffed up: for that which is puffed up has a certain tumor of spirit, from being filled with corrupt humor.

These things, however, he says, not to preclude all soothing, but such soothing as leads to harm. Would you wait upon this or that person? I forbid you not: but do it not to the injury of another. For not that we might array

1 Corinthians 4:6

would indeed that you did reign: then, lest there should seem to be some irony, he added, that we also might reign with you; for, says he, we also should be in possession (ἀγαθὰ ἔσομεν ἡμῶν, ms. Reg., ἀγαθὰ ἔσομεν ἡμῶν Edd.) of these blessings. Do you see how he shows in himself all at once his severity and his care over them and his self-denying mind? Do you see how he takes down their pride?

1 Corinthians 4:9

For I think that God has set forth us the Apostles last of all, as men doomed to death.

There is great depth of meaning and severity implied again in his saying, us: and not even with this was he satisfied, but added also his dignity, hitting them vehemently: us the Apostles; who are enduring such innumerable ills; who are sowing the word of Godliness; who are leading you unto this severe rule of life. These He has set forth last, as doomed to death, that is, as condemned. For since he had said, That we also might reign with you, and by that expression had relaxed his vehemency in order not to dispirit them; he takes it up again with greater gravity, and says, For I think that God has set forth us the Apostles last, as men doomed to death. For according to what I see, says he, and from what you say, the most abject of all men and emphatically the condemned, are we who are put forward for continual suffering. But you have already a kingdom and honors and great rewards in your fancy. And wishing to carry out their reasoning to still greater absurdity, and to exhibit it as incredible in the highest degree, he said not merely, We are 'last,' but, God made us last; nor was he satisfied with saying, last, but he added also, doomed to death: to the end that even one quite void of understanding might feel the statement to be quite incredible, and his words to be the words of one vexed and vehemently abashing them.

Observe too the good sense of Paul. The topics by which, when it is the proper time, he exalts and shows himself honorable and makes himself great; by these he now puts them to shame, calling himself condemned. Of so great consequence is it to do all things at the befitting season. By doomed to death, in this place he means condemned, and deserving of ten thousand deaths.

6. For we are made a spectacle unto the world, and to angels, and to men.

What means, We have become a spectacle unto the world? Not in a single corner nor yet in a small part of the world suffer we these things, says he; but every where and before all. But what means, unto angels? It is possible to become a spectacle unto men, but not so unto angels, when the things done are ordinary. But our wrestlings are such as to be worthy even of angelic contemplation. Behold from the things by which he vilifies himself, how again he shows himself great; and from the things about which they are proud, how he displays their meanness. For since to be fools was accounted a meaner thing than to appear wise; to be weak, than to be made strong; and unhonored, than glorious and distinguished; and that he is about to cast on them the one set of epithets, while he himself accepted the other; he signifies that the latter are better than the former; if at least because of them he turned the throng I say not of men only, but also of the very angels unto the contemplation of themselves. For not with men only is our wrestling but also with incorporeal powers. Therefore also a mighty theatre is set (ἐν ᾧ ἡμεῖς ὡς ἰσχυροὶ ἰσχυροῦσθε, ἡμεῖς ὡς ἰσχυροὶ ἰσχυροῦσθε.)

1 Corinthians 4:10

We are fools for Christ's sake, but you are wise in Christ.

Again, this also he spoke in a way to abash them; implying that it is impossible for these contraries to agree, neither can things so distant from one another concur. For how can it be, says he, that you should be wise, but we fools in the things relating to Christ? That is: the one sort beaten and despised and dishonored and esteemed as nothing; the others enjoying honor and looked up to by many as a wise and prudent kind of people; it gives him occasion to speak thus: as if he had said, How can it be that they who preach such things should be looked upon as practically engaged in their contraries?

We are weak, but you are strong. That is, we are driven about and persecuted; but you enjoy security and are much waited upon; howbeit the nature of the Gospel endures it not.

We are despised, but you are honorable. Here he sets himself against the noble and those who plumed themselves upon external advantages.

Even unto this present hour we both hunger, and thirst, and are naked, and are buffeted, and have no certain dwelling place; and we toil, working with our own hands. That is, It is not an old story that I am telling but just

what the very time present bears me witness of: that of human things we take no account nor yet of any outward pomp; but we look unto God only. Which thing we too have need to practice in every place. For not only are angels looking on, but even more than they He that presides over the spectacle.

7. Let us not then desire any others to applaud us. For this is to insult Him; hastening by Him, as if insufficient to admire us, we make the best of our way to our fellow servants. For just as they who contend in a small theatre seek a large one, as if this were insufficient for their display; so also do they, who contending in the sight of God afterwards seek the applause of men; giving up the greater praise and eager for the less, they draw upon themselves severe punishment. What but this has turned every thing upside down? This puts the whole world into confusion, that we do all things with an eye to men, and even for our good things, we esteem it nothing to have God as an admirer, but seek the approbation which comes from our fellow-servants: and for the contrary things again, despising Him we fear men. And yet surely they shall stand with us before that tribunal, doing us no good. But God whom we despise now shall Himself pass the sentence upon us.

But yet, though we know these things, we still gape after men, which is the first of sins. Thus were a man looking on no one would choose to commit fornication; but even though he be ten thousand times on fire with that plague, the tyranny of the passion is conquered by his reverence for men. But in God's sight men not only commit adultery and fornication; but other things also much more dreadful many have dared and still dare to do. This then alone, is it not enough to bring down from above ten thousand thunderbolts? Adulteries, did I say, and fornications? Nay, things even far less than these we fear to do before men: but in God's sight we fear no longer. From hence, in fact, all the world's evils have originated; because in things really bad we reverence not God but men.

On this account, you see, both things which are truly good, not accounted such by the generality, become objects of our aversion, we not investigating the nature of the things, but having respect unto the opinion of the many: and again, in the case of evil things, acting on this same principle. Certain things therefore not really good, but seeming fair unto the many, we pursue, as goods, through the same habit. So that on either side we go to destruction.

8. Perhaps many may find this remark somewhat obscure. Wherefore we must express it more clearly. When we commit uncleanness, (for we must begin from the instances alleged,) we fear men more than God. When therefore we have thus subjected ourselves unto them and made them lords over us; there are many other things also which seem unto these our lords to be evil, not being such; these also we flee for our part in like manner. For instance; To live in poverty, many account disgraceful: and we flee poverty, not because it is disgraceful nor because we are so persuaded, but because our masters count it disgraceful; and we fear them. Again, to be unhonored and contemptible, and void of all authority seems likewise unto the most part a matter of great shame and vileness. This again we flee; not condemning the thing itself, but because of the sentence of our masters.

Again on the contrary side also we undergo the same mischief. As wealth is counted a good thing, and pride, and pomp, and to be conspicuous. Accordingly this again we pursue, not either in this case from considering the nature of the things as good, but persuaded by the opinion of our masters. For the people is our master and the great mob (ἀνθρώπων ἡ πλειοψηφία, ἡ ἐκκλησία); a savage master and a severe tyrant: not so much as a command being needed in order to make us listen to him; it is enough that we just know what he wills, and without a command we submit: so great good will do we bear towards him. Again, God threatening and admonishing day by day is not heard; but the common people, full of disorder, made up of all manner of dregs, has no occasion for one word of command; enough for it only to signify with what it is well pleased, and in all things we obey immediately.

9. But how, says some one, is a man to flee from these masters? By getting a mind greater than their's; by looking into the nature of things; by condemning the voice of the multitude; before all, by training himself in things really disgraceful to fear not men, but the unsleeping Eye; and again, in all good things, to seek the crowns which come from Him. For thus neither in other sort of things shall we be able to tolerate them. For whoever when he does right judges them unworthy to know his good deeds, and contents himself with the suffrage of God; neither will he take account of them in matters of the contrary sort.

And how can this be? you will say. Consider what man is, what God; whom you desert, and unto whom you fly for refuge; and you will soon be right altogether. Man lies under the same sin as yourself, and the same condemnation, and the same punishment. Man is like to vanity, Psalm 144:4, Septuagint and has not correct judgment, and needs the correction from above. Man is dust and ashes, and if he bestow praise, he will often bestow it at random, or out of favor, or ill will. And if he calumniate and accuse, this again will he do out of the

same kind of purpose. But God does not so: rather irreprovable in His sentence, and pure His judgment. Wherefore we must always flee to Him for refuge; and not for these reasons alone, but because He both made, and more than all spares you, and loves you better than thou dost yourself.

Why then, neglecting to have so admirable (ἴσους ἡμῶν ἡμεῖς) an approver, betake we ourselves unto man, who is nothing, all rashness, all at random? Does he call you wicked and polluted when you are not so? So much the more do thou pity him, and weep because he is corrupt; and despise his opinion, because the eyes of his understanding are darkened. For even the Apostles were thus evil reported of; and they laughed to scorn their calumniators. But does he call you good and kind? If such indeed you are, yet be not at all puffed up by the opinion: but if you are not such, despise it the more, and esteem the thing to be mockery.

Would you know the judgments of the greater part of men, how corrupt they are, how useless, and worthy of ridicule; some of them coming only from raving and distracted persons, others from children at the breast? Hear what has been from the beginning. I will tell you of judgments, not of the people only, but also of those who passed for the wisest, of those who were legislators from the earliest period. For who would be counted wiser among the multitude than the person considered worthy of legislating for cities and peoples? But yet to these wise men fornication seems to be nothing evil nor worthy of punishment. At least, no one of the heathen laws makes its penal or brings men to trial on account of it. And should any one bring another into court for things of that kind, the multitude laughs it to scorn, and the judge will not suffer it. Dice-playing, again, is exempt from all their punishments: nor did any one among them ever incur penalty for it. Drunkenness and gluttony, so far from being a crime, are considered by many even as a fine thing. And in military carousals it is a point of great emulation; and they who most of all need a sober mind and a strong body, these are most of all given over to the tyranny of drunkenness; both utterly weakening the body and darkening the soul. Yet of the lawgivers not one has punished this fault. What can be worse than this madness?

Is then the good word of men so disposed an object of desire to you, and do you not hide yourself in the earth? For even though all such admired you, ought you not to feel ashamed and cover your face, at being applauded by men of such corrupt judgment?

Again, blasphemy by legislators in general is accounted nothing terrible. At any rate, no one for having blasphemed God was ever brought to trial and punishment. But if a man steal another's garment, or cut his purse, his sides are flayed, and he is often given over unto death: while he that blasphemes God has nothing laid to his charge by the heathen legislators. And if a man seduce a female servant when he has a wife, it seems nothing to the heathen laws nor to men in general.

10. Will you hear besides of some things of another class which show their folly? For as they punish not these things, so there are others which they enforce by law. What then are these? They collect crowds to fill theatres, and there they introduce choirs of harlots and prostituted children, yea such as trample on nature herself; and they make the whole people sit on high, and so they captivate their city; so they crown these mighty kings whom they are perpetually admiring for their trophies and victories. And yet, what can be more insipid than this honor? What more undelightful than this delight? From among these then do you seek judges to applaud your deeds? And is it in company with dancers, and effeminate, and buffoons, and harlots, that you are fain to enjoy the sound of compliment? Answer me.

How can these things be other than proofs of extreme infatuation? For I should like to ask them, is it or is it not, a dreadful thing to subvert the laws of nature, and introduce unlawful intercourse? They will surely say, it is dreadful: at any rate, they make a show of inflicting a penalty on that crime. Why then do you bring on the stage those abused wretches; and not only bring them in, but honor them also with honors innumerable, and gifts not to be told? In other places you punish those who dare such things; but here even as on common benefactors of the city, you spend money upon them and supportest them at the public expense.

However, you will say, they are (ἀνάξιτοι) infamous. Why then train them up? (ἵνα τιμωροῦνται) Why choose the infamous to pay honor to kings withal? And why ruin our (ἀνάξιτοι) cities? (Plutarch, ἑλίμια c. 17.) Or why spend so much upon these persons? Since if they be infamous expulsion is properest for the infamous. For why did you render them infamous? In praise or in condemnation? Of course in condemnation. Is the next thing to be, that although as after condemnation you make them infamous, yet as if they were honorable you run to see them, and admire and praise and applaud? Why need I speak of the sort of charm which is found in the horse races? Or in the contests of the wild beasts? For those places too being full of all senseless excitement train the populace to acquire a merciless and savage and inhuman kind of temper, and practise them in seeing men torn in pieces, and blood flowing, and the ferocity of wild beasts confounding all things. Now all these our wise lawgivers from the beginning introduced,

1 Corinthians 4:6

Now I know that I am a troublesome, sort of person and disagreeable, and morose, as though I were curtailing life of some of its pleasure. Why, this is the very cause of my mourning that things so displeasing are esteemed a sort of pleasure. For how, I ask, can it be other than displeasing to be insulted and reviled? To be reproached by all, together with your bride? If any one in the market place speak ill of your wife, you make ado without end and countest life not worth living: and can it be that disgracing yourself with your future consort in the presence of the whole city, you are pleased and lookest gay on the matter? Why, what strange madness is this!

But, says one, the thing is customary. Nay, for this very reason we ought most to bewail it, because the devil has hedged in the thing with custom. In fact, since marriage is a solemn thing and that which recruits our race and the cause of numerous blessings; that evil one, inwardly pining and knowing that it was ordained as a barrier against uncleanness, by a new device introduces into it all kinds of uncleanness. At any rate, in such assemblages many virgins have been even corrupted. And if not so in every case, it is because for the time the devil is content with those words and those songs, so flagitious; with making a show of the bride openly, and leading the bridegroom in triumph through the market-place.

Moreover, because all this takes place in the evening, that not even the darkness may be a veil to these evils, many torches are brought in, suffering not the disgraceful scene to be concealed. For what means the vast throng, and what the wassail, and what the pipes? Most clearly to prevent even those who are in their houses and plunged in deep sleep from remaining ignorant of these proceedings; that being wakened by the pipe and leaning to look out of the lattices, they may be witnesses of the comedy such as it is.

What can one say of the songs themselves, crammed as they are with all uncleanness, introducing monstrous amours, and unlawful connections, and subversions of houses, and tragic scenes without end; and making continual mention of the titles of friend and lover, mistress and beloved? And, what is still more grievous, that young women are present at these things, having divested themselves of all modesty; in honor of the bride, rather I should say to insult her, exposing even their own salvation, and in the midst of wanton young men acting a shameless part with their disorderly songs, with their foul words, with their devilish harmony. Tell me then: do you still enquire, Whence come adulteries? Whence fornications? Whence violations of marriage?

12. But they are not noble nor decent women, you will say, who do these things. Why then laugh me to scorn for this remonstrance, having been yourself aware of this law, before I said any thing. I say, if the proceedings are right, allow those well-born women also to enact them. For what if these others live in poverty? Are not they also virgins? Ought not they also to be careful of chastity? But now here is a virgin dancing in a public theatre of licentious youths; and, I ask, seems she not unto you more dishonored than a harlot?

But if you say, Female servants do these things; neither so do I acquit you of my charge: for neither to these ought such things to have been permitted. For hence all these evils have their origin, that of our household we make no account. But it is enough in the way of contempt to say, He is a slave, and, They are handmaids. And yet, day after day we hear, Galatians 3:28 In Christ Jesus there is neither bond nor free. Again, were it a horse or an ass, thou dost not overlook it but takest all pains not to have it of an inferior kind; and your slaves who have souls like your own do you neglect? And why do I say slaves, when I might say sons and daughters? What then must follow? It cannot be but grief must immediately enter in, when all these are going to ruin. And often also very great losses must ensue, valuable golden ornaments being lost in the crowd and the confusion.

13. Then after the marriage if perchance a child is born, in this case again we shall see the same folly and many practices full of absurdity. For when the time has come for giving the infant a name, caring not to call it after the saints as the ancients at first did, they light lamps and give them names, and name the child after that one which continues burning the longest; from thence conjecturing that he will live a long time. After all, should there be many instances of the child's untimely death, (and there are many,) great laughter on the devil's part will ensue, at his having made sport of them as if they were silly children. What shall we say about the amulets and the bells which are hung upon the hand, and the scarlet woof, and the other things full of such extreme folly; when they ought to invest the child with nothing else save the protection of the Cross. But now that is despised which has converted the whole world and given the sore wound to the devil and overthrown all his power: while the thread, and the woof, and the other amulets of that kind are entrusted with the child's safety.

May I mention another thing yet more ridiculous than this? Only let no one tax us with speaking out of season, should our argument proceed with that instance also. For he that would cleanse an ulcer will not hesitate first to pollute his own hands. What then is this so very ridiculous custom? It is counted indeed as nothing; (and this is

1 Corinthians 4:6

why I grieve;) but it is the beginning of folly and madness in the extreme. The women in the bath, nurses and waiting-maids, take up mud and smearing it with the finger make a mark on the child's forehead; and if one ask, What means the mud, and the clay? The answer is, It turns away an evil eye, witchcraft and envy. Astonishing! What power in the mud! What might in the clay! What mighty force is this which it has? It averts all the host of the devil. Tell me, can you help hiding yourselves for shame? Will you never come to understand the snares of the devil, how from earliest life he gradually brings in the several evils which he has devised? For if the mud has this effect, why do you not yourself also do the same to your own forehead, when you are a man and your character is formed; and you are likelier than the child to have such as envy you? Why do you not as well bemire the whole body? I say, if on the forehead its virtue be so great, why not anoint yourself all over with mud? All this is mirth and stage-play to Satan, not mockery only but hell-fire being the consummation to which these deceived ones are tending.

14. Now that among Greeks such things should be done is no wonder: but among the worshippers of the Cross, (i.e., those who profess the Christian faith) and partakers in unspeakable mysteries, and professors of such high morality, (i.e., those who are called Christians) that such unseemliness should prevail, this is especially to be deplored again and again. God has honored you with spiritual anointing; and do you defile your child with mud? God has honored you, and do you dishonor yourself? And when you should inscribe on his forehead the Cross which affords invincible security; do you forego this, and cast yourself into the madness of Satan?

If any look on these things as trifles, let them know that they are the source of great evils; and that not even unto Paul did it seem right to overlook the lesser things. For, tell me, what can be less than a man's covering his head? Yet observe how great a matter he makes of this and with how great earnestness he forbids it; saying, among many things, He dishonors his head. 1 Corinthians 11:4 Now if he that covers himself dishonors his head; he that besmears his child with mud, how can it be less than making it abominable? For how, I want to know, can he bring it to the hands of the priest? How can you require that on that forehead the seal should be placed by the hand of the presbyter, where you have been smearing the mud? Nay, my brethren, do not these things, but from earliest life encompass them with spiritual armor and instruct them to seal the forehead with the hand (i.e., with the hand of the presbyter) and before they are able to do this with their own hand, do you imprint upon them the Cross.

Why should one speak of the other satanical observances in the case of travail-pangs and childbirths, which the midwives introduce with a mischief on their own heads? Of the outcries which take place at each person's death, and when he is carried to his burial; the irrational wailings, the folly enacted at the funerals; the zeal about men's monuments; the importunate and ridiculous swarm of the mourning women; the observances of days; the days, I mean, of entrance into the world and of departure?

15. Are these then, I beseech you, the persons whose good opinion you follow after? And what can it be but the extreme of folly to seek earnestly the praise of men, so corrupt in their ideas, men whose conduct is all at random? When we ought always to resort to the unsleeping Eye, and look to His sentence in all that we do and speak? For these, even if they approve, will have no power to profit us. But He, should He accept our doings, will both here make us glorious, and in the future day will impart to us of the unspeakable good things: which may it be the lot of us all to obtain, through the grace and loving-kindness of our Lord Jesus Christ; with Whom to the Father and the Holy Spirit be glory, power, honor, now and always, and unto everlasting ages. Amen.