# Sermons

Asterius of Amasea (c. AD 350–410)

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# Sermon 1 -- The Rich Man and Lazarus

**I — THE RICH MAN AND LAZARUS**

There was a certain rich man, which was clothed in purple and fine linen, and fared sumptuously every day: And there was a certain beggar named Lazarus, which was laid at his gate, full of sores, And desiring to be fed with the crumbs which fell from the rich man's table: moreover the dogs came and licked his sores. And it came to pass, that the beggar died, and was carried by the angels into Abraham's bosom: the rich man also died, and was buried; And in hell he lift up his eyes, being in torments, and seeth Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom. And he cried and said, Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus, that he may dip the tip of his finger in water, and cool my tongue; for I am tormented in this flame. But Abraham said, Son, remember that thou in thy lifetime receivedst thy good things, and likewise Lazarus evil things; but now he is comforted, and thou art tormented.

And beside all this, between us and you there is a great gulf fixed: so that they which would pass from hence to you cannot; neither can they pass to us, that would come from thence.----Luke 16: 19-26.

**I — THE RICH MAN AND LAZARUS**

OUR God and Saviour does not lead men to hate wickedness and love virtue by negative precepts alone, but also by examples he makes clear the lessons of good conduct, bringing us both by deeds and words to the apprehension of a good and godly life. As he has often told us by the mouths of both prophets and evangelists, nay, even by his own voice also, that he turns away from the overbearing and haughty man of wealth, and loves a kindly disposition, and poverty when united to righteousness; so also in this parable, in order to confirm his teaching, he brings effective examples to attest the word, and in the narrative of the rich man and the |20 beggar points out the lavish enjoyment of the one, the straitened life of the other, and the end to which each finally came, in order that we, having discerned the truth from the practices of others, may justly judge our own lives.

There was a rich man who was clothed in purple and fine linen. By two brief words the Scripture ridicules and satirizes the prodigal and unmeasured wastefulness of those who

are wickedly rich. For purple is an expensive and superfluous color, and fine linen is not necessary. It is the nature and delight of those that choose a well-ordered and frugal life to measure the use of necessary things by the need of them; and to avoid the rubbish of empty vainglory and deceptive amusement as the mother of wickedness. And that we may see more clearly the meaning and force of |21 this teaching, let us note the original use of clothing; to what extent it is to be employed when kept within rational limits.

What, then, says the law of the Just One? Sheep God created with well-fleeced skins, abounding in wool. Take them, shear it off, and give it to a skilful weaver, and fashion for yourself tunic and mantle, that you may escape both the distress of winter, and the harm of the sun's burning rays. But if you need for greater comfort lighter clothing in the time of summer, God has given the use of flax, and it is very easy for you to get from it a becoming covering, that at once clothes and refreshes you by its lightness. And while enjoying these garments, give thanks to the Creator that he has not only made us, but has also provided for us comfort and security in living; but if, rejecting the sheep and the wool, the needful provision |22 of the Creator of all things, and departing from rational custom through vain devices and capricious desires, you seek out fine linen, and gather the threads of the Persian worms and weave the spider's airy web; and going to the dyer, pay large prices in order that he may fish the shell-fish out of the sea and stain the garment with the blood of the creature,----this is the act of a man surfeited, who misuses his substance, having no place to pour out the superfluity of his wealth. For this in the Gospel such a man is scourged, being portrayed as stupid and womanish, adorning himself with the embellishments of wretched girls.

Others again, according to common report are lovers of like vanity; but having cherished wickedness to a greater degree, they have not restricted their foolish invention even to the things already mentioned; |23 but having found some idle and extravagant style of weaving, which by the twining of the warp and the woof, produces the effect of a picture, and imprints upon their robes the forms of all creatures, they artfully produce, both for themselves and for their wives and children, clothing beflowered and wrought with ten thousand objects. Thenceforth they become self-confident. They no longer engage in serious business; from the vastness of their wealth they misuse life, by not using it; they act contrary to Paul and contend against the divinely inspired voices, not by words, but by deeds. For what he by word forbade, these men by their deeds support and confirm. When, therefore, they dress themselves and appear in public, they look like pictured walls in the eyes of those that meet them. And |24 perhaps even the children surround them, smiling to one another and pointing out with the finger the picture on the garment; and walk along after them, following them for a long time. On these garments are lions and leopards; bears and bulls and dogs; woods and rocks and hunters; and all attempts to imitate nature by painting. For it was necessary, as it seems, to adorn not only their houses, but finally also their tunics and their mantles.

But such rich men and women as are more pious, have gathered up the gospel history and turned it over to the weavers; I mean Christ himself with all the disciples, and each of the miracles, as recorded in the Gospel. You may see the wedding of Galilee, and the water-pots; the paralytic carrying his bed on his shoulders; the blind man being healed with the clay; the woman with the bloody issue, taking hold of the |25 border of the garment; the sinful woman falling at the feet of Jesus; Lazarus returning to life from the grave. In doing this they consider that they are acting piously and are clad in garments pleasing to God. But if they take my advice let them sell those clothes and honor the living image of God. Do not picture Christ on your garments. It is enough that he once suffered the humiliation of dwelling in a human body which of his own accord he assumed for our sakes. So, not upon your robes but upon your soul carry about his image.

Do not portray the paralytic on your garments, but seek out him that lies sick. Do not tell continually the story of the woman with the bloody issue, but have pity on the straitened widow. Do not contemplate the sinful woman kneeling before the Lord, but, with contrition for your |26 own faults, shed copious tears. Do not sketch Lazarus rising from the dead, but see to it that you attain to the resurrection of the just. Do not carry the blind man about on your clothing, but by your good deeds comfort the living, who has been deprived of sight. Do not paint to the life the baskets of fragments that remained, but feed the hungry. Do not carry upon your mantles the water-pots which were filled in Cana of Galilee, but give the thirsty drink. Thus we have profited by the magnificent raiment of the rich man.

What follows must not, however, be overlooked; for there is added to the purple and fine linen, that he fared sumptuously every day. For of course both the adorning of one's self with useless magnificence, and serving the belly and the palate luxuriously, belong to the same disposition. Luxuriousness, then, is a thing hostile to |27 virtuous life, but characteristic of idleness and inconsiderate wastefulness, of unmeasured enjoyment and slavish habit. And though at first blush it may seem a simple matter, it proves upon careful investigation to include manifold, great and many-headed evils. Luxuriousness would be impossible without great wealth; but to heap up riches without sin is also impossible; unless indeed it happens to some one rarely, as to Job, both to be abundantly rich, and at the same time to live in exact accord with justice. The man who will give himself to luxury, then, needs first a costly home, adorned like a bride, with gems and marbles and gold, and well adapted to the changes of the seasons of the year. For a dwelling is required that is warm, comfortable in winter, and turned toward the brightness of the south; but open toward the north in the summer, that |28 it may be fanned by northern breezes, light and cool. Besides this, expensive stuffs are demanded to cover the seats, the couches, the beds, the doors. For the rich carefully adorn all things, even things inanimate, while the poor are pitiably naked. Moreover, enumerate the gold and silver vessels, the costly birds from Phasis, wines from Phoenicia, which the vines of Tyre produce in abundance and at a high price, for the rich; and all the rest of the wasteful equipment which only those who use it can name with particularity.

Now luxury, steadily increasing in elaborateness, even mingles Indian spices with the food; and the apothecaries furnish supplies to the cooks rather than to the physicians. Then consider the multitude that serve the table,----the table-setters, the cupbearers, the stewardesses and the musicians that go before them, women musicians, |29 dancing girls, flute-players, jesters, flatterers, parasites,----the rabble that follows vanity. That these things may be gained, how many poor are robbed! how many orphans maltreated! how many widows weep! how many, dreadfully tortured, are driven to suicide! Like one who has tasted some Lethean stream, the self-indulgent soul absolutely forgets what it itself is, and the body to which it has been joined, and that some day it shall be released from this union, and again at some future time inhabit the reconstructed body. But when the appointed time shall come, and the inexorable command separates the soul from the body, then also shall come the recollection of things done in the past life, and vain repentance, too late! For repentance helps when the penitent has power of amendment, but the possibility of reform being |30 taken away, grief is useless and repentance vain.

There was a certain beggar named Lazarus. The narrative describes him not simply as poor, destitute of money, and of the necessaries of life, but also as afflicted with a painful disease, emaciated in body, houseless, homeless, incurable, cast down at the rich man's gate. And very carefully the narrative finally works up the circumstances of the beggar to signalize the hard-heartedness of him who had no pity; for the man that has no feeling of pity or sympathy for hunger or disease is an unreasoning wild beast in human form, deliberately and wickedly deceiving men; nay more, he is less sympathetic than the very beasts themselves; since, at least, when a hog is slaughtered, the rest of the drove feel some painful sensation and grunt miserably over the freshly spilled |31 blood; and the cattle that stand about when the bull is killed indicate their distress by passionate lowing. Flocks of cranes also when one of their mates is caught in the nets, flutter about him and fill the air with a sort of grieving clamor, seeking to release their mate and fellow. And how unnatural that man, endowed with reason and blessed with culture, who has also been taught goodness by the example of God, should take so little thought of his kinsman in pain and misfortune!

So the suffering but grateful pauper lay without feet, or else certainly he would have fled from the accursed and haughty man, and sought another place instead of the inhospitable gate, which was closed against the poor; he lay without hands, having not even a palm to stretch forth for alms; his very organs of speech were so impaired that his voice was hoarse and harsh; in fact, |32 he was quite mutilated in all his members, the wreck of a foul disease, a pitiable illustration of human infirmity. Yet not even such a list of misfortunes moved the haughty man to attention, but he passed the beggar as if he were a stone, deliberately filling up the measure of his sin; for, if accused, he could not utter this common and specious excuse, "I did not know: I was not aware: I did not notice the beggar howling. For the beggar lay before his gate, a spectacle as he went in and out to make the condemnation of the proud man inevitable. He was even denied the crumbs from the table; and while the rich man was bursting with fulness, he was wasting away with want. Therefore it would have been fair and right to have made the Canaanitish Phoenician woman the teacher of the |33

misanthropic man of wealth, saying those things that are written: "Haughty wretch, even the dogs eat of the crumbs which fall from their masters' table, and did you not think your brother, one who belongs to the same race, worthy of that bounty?

But the dogs were carefully fed, the watch-dogs by themselves and the hunting-dogs by themselves, and they were deemed worthy of a roof, and beds and attendants were carefully allotted to them; but the image of God was cast on the earth uncared for and trampled on,----that image which the great Builder and Maker of all fashioned with his own hand, if one regards Moses as having given credible testimony to the genesis of man.

Now if the story of Lazarus had ended at this point, and the nature of things were such that our life was truly represented by |34 the inequality of his career with that of the rich man, I should have cried aloud with indignation,----that we who are created equal, live on such unequal terms with men of the same race. But since that which remains is good to hear, do you, poor man, who groan over the past, take courage from the sequel, when you learn the blessed enjoyment of your fellow in poverty. For you will find that the just Judge renders exact judgment, so that the man who has lived a life of ease groans, and he who has had hardship finds luxury, each receiving his due reward.

And it came to pass that the beggar died and was carried away by the angels into Abraham's bosom. Do you see who they were who ministered to the poor and just man, and who took him to heaven? For angels were his body-guard, looking upon him gently and mildly, and betokening by |35 their manner the attendance and relief that awaited him. And he was taken and placed in the bosom of the patriarch, a statement which affords ground for doubt to those who like to question minutely the deep things of the Scriptures, for if every just man, when he dies, should be taken to the same place, the bosom would be a great one and expanded to an endless extent, if it were intended to accommodate the whole multitude of the saints. But if this is absolutely impossible----for the bosom can scarcely embrace one man and hardly two infants,----the thought presents itself to us that the material bosom is the symbol of a spiritual truth; for what is it that is meant? Abraham, he says, receives those who have lived an upright life. Then tell us, wonderful Luke,----for I will address you as though visibly present,----why, when there were many just men, even older than Abraham, |36 did you withhold this distinction from his predecessors, passing in silence over Enoch, Noah and many others who were like these in their manner of life? But perhaps I understand you, and my judgment does not go wide of the mark.

For Abraham was a minister of Christ, and, beyond other men, received the things of the revelation of Christ, and the mystery of the Trinity was adequately bodied forth in the tent of this old man when he entertained the three angels as wayfaring men. In short, after many mystical enigmas, he became the friend of God, who in after time put on flesh and, through the medium of this human veil, openly associated with men. On this account, Christ says that Abraham's bosom is a sort of fair haven, and sheltered resting-place for the just. For we all have our salvation and expectation of the life to come, in Christ, who, in his |37 human descent, sprang from the flesh of Abraham. And I think the honor in the case of this old

man has reference to the Saviour, who is the judge and rewarder of virtue, and who calls the just with a gracious voice, saying: ”Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you. And it came to pass that the beggar died. Two sides of the beggar’s life are indicated: on the one hand is shown his poverty, and on the other his modesty and the humility of his character. Let not, therefore, the man who is without substance, in want of money, and clothed in pitiable garb appropriate to himself the praise of virtue, nor think that want will secure for him salvation.

For not he who is poor from necessity is commended, but he is held up to admiration who of his own accord moderates his desires. For the poverty of |38 those who are in extreme want, and have at the same time an unmanageable or incorrigible disposition, leads to many evil deeds of daring. Whenever I have come near a ruler’s judgment-seat, I have seen that all housebreakers and kidnappers, thieves and robbers, and even murderers, were poor men, unknown, houseless and hearthless. So that from this it is clear that the Scripture accounts that poor man happy who bears his hardships with a philosophic mind, and shows himself nobly steadfast in the face of his circumstances in life, and does not wickedly do any evil deed to gain for himself the enjoyment of luxury. Such a man the Lord describes even more clearly in the first of the beatitudes, where he says: ”Blessed are the poor in spirit. So, not every poor man is righteous, but only one who is like Lazarus; nor is every |39 rich man to be despaired of, but only one who has the disposition of him that neglected Lazarus; and in real life we easily find witnesses of this truth. For who is richer than was the godly Job? Nevertheless his great prosperity did not divorce him from righteousness nor, to speak briefly, did it estrange him from virtue. Who is poorer than was Iscariot? His poverty did not secure salvation for him;

but while associating with the eleven poor men who loved wisdom, and with the Lord himself, who for our sakes voluntarily became poor,he was carried away by the wickedness of his covetous disposition and finally was guilty even of the betrayal.

It is also worth while to examine intelligently how each of these men when dead was carried forth. The poor man when he fell asleep had angels as his guards and |40 attendants, who carried him, full of joyful expectation, to the place of rest; and the rich man, Christ says, died and was buried. It is not possible in any respect to improve the declaration of the Scriptures, since a single sentence adequately indicates the unhonored decease of the rich man. For the sinner when he dies is indeed buried, being earthy in body, and worldly in soul. He debases the spiritual within him to the material by yielding to the enticements of the flesh, leaving behind no good memorial of his life, but, dying the death of beasts, is wrapped in unhonored forgetfulness. For the grave holds the body, and Hades the soul,----two gloomy prisons dividing between them the punishment of the wicked. And who would not blame the wretched man for his thoughtlessness?----since when he was on earth he prided himself, held his head high, exulted over all who lived about him and |41 were of the same race, deeming those whom he chanced to meet hardly better than ants and worms, and vainly boasting of his short-lived glory.

But when he dies, and like a scourged slave is deprived of those usurped possessions of which in his folly he thought himself master, he is as deeply humiliated as he was previously highly exalted, and, uttering complaints like a lamenting old woman, calls loudly and vainly on the patriarch, saying, "Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus, that he may dip the tip of his finger in water, and cool my tongue; for I am tormented in this flame. He seeks mercy, which he had not given when he had the power of benefiting another, and demands that Lazarus shall come down into the fire to him to help him. He prays that he may suck the finger of the leper slightly moistened in water. Such is |42 the thoughtlessness of those who love the body. This is the end of those who love wealth and pleasure. It therefore becomes the wise man who is provident of the future, to consider the parable as a sort of medicine, preventive of sickness; and to flee the experience of like evil, preferring the sympathetic and philanthropic disposition as the condition of the life to come. For the Scripture has presented the admonition to us dramatically in the persons of particular characters in order to impress upon us by a concrete and vivid example the law of good conduct, so that we may never think lightly of the precepts of the Scripture as terrifying in word only, without inflicting the threatened punishment.

I know that most men, snared by such fancies, take the liberty of sinning. But the Scripture before us teaches quite the contrary, that neither any confession of |43 the justice of the judgment lightens the punishment, nor does pity for the one in torment lessen the penalty ordained; if indeed it is necessary that the Scripture attest the word of the patriarch. For after the manifold supplications of the rich man, and after hearing countless piteous appeals, Abraham was neither moved by the laments of the suppliant, nor did he remove from his pain the one who was bitterly scourged; but with austere mind he confirmed the final judgment, saying that God had allotted to each according to his desert. And he said to the rich man, Since in life you lived in luxury through the calamities of others, what you are suffering is imposed upon you as the penalty of your sin. But to him who once had hardships, and was trampled on and endured in bitterness life in the flesh, there is allotted here a sweet and joyful existence. |44 And besides, he says, There is also a great gulf which prevents them from intercourse with one another, and separates those who are being punished from those who are being honored, that they may live apart from each other, not mixing the rewards of good and evil deeds. And I suppose the parable to be a material representation of a spiritual truth.

For let us not imagine that there is in reality a ditch digged by angels, like the trenches on the outer borders of military camps, but Luke by the similitude of a gulf has represented for us the separation of those who have lived virtuously and those who have lived otherwise. And this thought Isaiah also stamps for us with his approval, speaking somewhat thus: Is the hand of the Lord not strong to save, or is his ear heavy that it cannot hear? But our sins stand between us and God.

[Footnotes renumbered and moved to the end] 1. Luke 16: 19. 2. 1 Corinthians 7: 31, 3. 1 Timothy 2: 9, 10. 4. The disease of Lazarus is here represented as leprosy. 5. Matthew 15:27. 6. Matthew 25: 34. 7. Matthew 5:3. 8. 2 Corinthians 8:9. 9. Isaiah (59: 1, 2) Lxx.

# Sermon 2 -- The Unjust Steward

**II — THE UNJUST STEWARD**

And he said also unto his disciples, There was a certain rich man, which had a steward; and the same was accused unto him that he had wasted his goods. And he called him, and said unto him, How is it that I hear this of thee? give an account of thy stewardship; for thou mayest be no longer steward. Then the steward said within himself, What shall I do? for my lord taketh away from me the stewardship: I cannot dig; to beg I am ashamed. I am resolved what to do, that, when I am put out of the stewardship, they may receive me into their houses. So he called every one of his lord's debtors unto him, and said unto the first, How much owest thou unto my lord? And he said, An hundred measures of oil. And he said unto him, Take thy bill, and sit down quickly, and write fifty.

Then said he to another, And how much owest thou? And he said, An hundred measures of wheat. And he said unto him, Take thy bill, and write fourscore. And the lord commended the unjust steward, because he had done wisely: for the children of this world are in their generation wiser than the children of light. And I say unto you, Make to yourselves friends of the mammon of unrighteousness; that, when ye fail, they may receive you into everlasting habitations. He that is faithful in that which is least is faithful also in much: and he that is unjust in the least is unjust also in much. If therefore ye have not been faithful in the unrighteous mammon, who will commit to your trust the true riches? And if ye have not been faithful in that which is another man's, who shall give you that which is your own? ----Luke 16: 1-12.

**II — THE UNJUST STEWARD**

I HAVE often said to you in my discourses, that there is one fictitious and false conception prevalent among men, which multiplies their transgressions, and diminishes the good which we ought, each of us, to do. And this false conception is, that all that we have to enjoy in this life we possess as lords and masters. And on account of this notion we do fiercely fight and war and contend for it and protect it to the uttermost as a precious possession. Now the truth of the matter is not so, but quite otherwise. For none of those things which we have received is our own, nor do we as absolute possessors and lords dwell in this life as in a house of our own; but |48 as sojourners, and strangers, and wanderers, and when we do not expect it, we are led whither we would not go. And when it seems good to the Lord we

are deprived of the possession of our wealth. Wherefore the enjoyment of this perishable life is very liable to change. He who is to-day glorious, is to-morrow an object of pity, eliciting compassion and help. He who is now prosperous and flourishing in wealth, suddenly finds himself poor, without even bread to support life. In this respect especially does our God surpass mortals, in that he is always the same, and in the same state, and possesses life and glory and power inalienable.

Why I have thus begun my discourse, is perhaps already perceived by those who are attentive and intelligent. Luke has fashioned us a parable that, by way of preface, was just now read to us, in which he |49 describes the steward of other men's goods as groaning and troubled, because, being luxurious and extravagant, he has heard from the master of the money and property, the words, "Give an account of thy stewardship and depart, for I will not suffer thee to revel in my possessions, as though they were thine own." Now this is not the narrative of a thing that really took place, but the fiction of a parable, which by obscure sayings inculcates moral virtue. Know then, that each one of you is an administrator of what belongs to another; cast off then the pride of authority, and put on the humility and prudence of a steward, accountable for his acts. Be always waiting for your Lord, to whom with fear you must render a strict account. For you are a sojourner who has received the privilege of only a temporary and fleeting use of the things in your possession. |50 And if you are in doubt about this, observe what happens, and be taught by experience, that trustworthy teacher.

You possess an estate, having either inherited it from your fathers, or obtained it by some exchange. Call up therefore in memory and count over, if you can, all who have occupied it before you. And direct your mind also to the time to come, and think how many are to occupy it after you. Then tell me who owns it, and to whom does it especially belong; those who have had it, or those who now have it, or those who in the future are to have it? For if some one should in some way or other call them all together, the owners would be found more numerous than the clods. And, further, if you wish to see exactly what our life is like, call to mind if ever in summer, while traveling, you have seen a flourishing tree extending far enough |51 in breadth and height to serve with its shadow the purpose of a shelter. You were glad to come under its shade, and there you remained as long as possible. And when it was necessary to move on, even as you were thinking of setting off again, another wayfarer appeared. And you took up your luggage while he laid his down and appropriated all your conveniences, the. bed of leaves, the fire, the shade of the tree, the water flowing by. And he began to recline and rest, while you resumed your walk. He, too, enjoyed the place and then left it. And that one tree was, in a single day, the temporary lodging-place for perhaps ten strangers. And that which was enjoyed by all belonged to but one owner. And thus also the abundance of our life here delights and supports many, while it belongs to God alone, who has imperishable and indestructible life. |52

You can call to mind an inn where, when traveling, you have put up. There, as you brought nothing with you, you were provided with many things, bed, table, drinking-cups, a plate

and other dishes of all sorts. But perhaps before you had used them as long as you wished, another came, panting, covered with dust and hard after you, forcing you from the inn and demanding as though they were his own the things that really belonged to neither of you.

Such, brethren, is our life, and, if anything, it is still more transitory than the things I have mentioned. And I wonder at the way men say, "my estate," and "my house," and thus appropriate by an idle syllable things which are not theirs, and, with two deceptive letters, clutch things belonging to others. For as on the stage no one actor has exclusive right to any given character, but any actor may assume |53 it, so is it in the case of the earth and its material things. Men one after another put them on and off like garments. Tell me, is there anything more enduring than a kingdom? And yet, consider the palaces, search for the royal robes. You will find that many of these have covered the bodies of several successive kings. And in like manner also the crowns, and the clasps, and the girdles----all an unstable heritage, a property common to them all, passing over from those who go to those who remain. And of what worth are the possessions of magistrates, the canopy, the silver chariot, the golden wand? Do not these things always attend the magistrate, yet never the same one long, but each for a little season? For as the bier receives now one form, now another, so also the insignia of office pass from one magistrate to another. Hence, too, the apostle has uttered very many calls |54 to us indicative of this thought. "For the fashion of this world passeth away"; and the phrase, "As having nothing, and yet possessing all things"; and again, "Who use it as not abusing it." For all these sayings have this one intent, that it becomes us to live as creatures of a day, awaiting the signal for our departure.

And that you may clearly see that you are subject to the laws and ordinances of the Lord, to which it is incumbent on you strictly to conform, first, learn from self-observation that both your body and soul are wholly subject to the commands of virtue, and you are not master even of yourself, but it behooves you to act as a steward both in word and deed, and in every movement of your life. You have received from the Creator a body composed of many members and endowed with five senses for |55 the needs of life. And not even these are free and independent, but each is subject to law. And first, the eye is commanded, "Look upon nature and behold what it is right to see: the sun, illuminating all the world; the moon, shining upon the gloom and dusk of night; the stars also giving us of themselves no great or independent light, but reflecting the beauty they receive. Behold the earth, hairy with plants and herbs"; the sea when it lies fixed in perfect calm, spread out like a level plain. For the sight of these and similar things benefit us. But other sights, which through the eye introduce harm into the soul, shun and flee, and put a veil over your eyes that you may not see. For it is better to darken the sense of sight, when it affords occasion for "the deeds of darkness. On this |56 account, the Lord said to us through Matthew in the lesson of yesterday:

"Every one that looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart. And it is better to cut out the eye than that it should look upon things inordinate and lustful. And the ear also has been forbidden to listen to anything that is

evil. But it is right that it be alert to hear whatever is good, that it may transmit to the soul profitable words. But if any evil companion, ready to deal out plague and destruction approach it, and be on the point of pouring into it filth, one should flee from him as from a venomous beast. Let the tongue also, together with the mouth, exercise discretion. Let it say what is right; but let it refrain from forbidden things----reproaches, slanders, unjust accusation, evil speaking against the |57 brethren, blasphemy against God; and let it utter those things that are of good report, and pious; let it counsel good works, and let every man repeat the words of the sacred Psalmist: "I said, I will set a watch over my ways, that I sin not with my tongue: again, "With their tongues they deal treacherously: and again, "Why gloriest thou in evil, O man mighty in iniquity? All the day has thy tongue discoursed injustice; as a sharpened razor thou hast wrought deceit. Let the tongue taste profitable things. Let the nose also exercise discretion, not always scenting luxury, nor drawing into the head fragrant odors of costly perfumes. For against such things Isaiah vehemently inveighs.

Let the hand, too, remember the commandments, that it touch not all things indiscriminately. Let |58 it be outstretched in almsgiving, not in plundering. Let it keep its own, not wickedly seize the things of others. Let it in beneficent visitation touch the bodies that are feeble and distressed, not those that are lustful and devoted to fornication.

This discourse has shown us that we are not our own masters, but stewards, for whoever is subject to laws and ordinances is a bond-servant and subject of the lawgiver. And if the members of our body are not free from authority, but regulated with reference to their functions, by the will of the Lord, what should be said to those who think that they have, without accountability, the possession of gold and silver and land and all other things? O man, nothing is your own. You are a slave and what is yours belongs to your Lord. For a slave has no property that is really his own. |59 For naked you were brought into this life. What you have you have received by the dispensation of your Lord; whether you inherited it from a father, since God has so commanded,----for parents, he says, shall divide their possessions among their children, or have acquired affluence by marriage,----for marriage also and the things connected with it are ordained by God, or by trade and agriculture and other agencies, God cooperating in them.

You see, then, it has been made evident that you have received things which are not your own. Let us now further observe what is incumbent on you, and what kind of control you have over them. Give to the hungry, clothe the naked, heal the afflicted, do not neglect the needy nor the outcast at the corners of the streets. Do not be anxious about yourself, nor stop to |60 consider how you will live to-morrow. If you do these things the Scripture says that you shall be honored by the Lawgiver. But if you do not heed the command, you shall be severely punished. These things I do not regard as characteristic of one who is irresponsible and lives in independence. But on the contrary, these numerous and repeated commands suggest to me a man strictly governed, subject to a master's laws, and rigidly accountable for his conduct as an administrator. But we, living how heedlessly, neglect the

wretched and the poor, while they die in misfortune; and vying with each other in lavishness, spend our money on vanities, supporting a multitude of prodigal flatterers, and trailing after us hordes of ill-starred parasites; again, scattering our wealth to gladiators, and for wild beasts, and giving for horse-breeding |61 regardless of expense; and again, spending our abundance on jugglers and actors and persons equally worthless. And we have a fruitless experience, and one bordering on madness; for from expenditure that brings uncounted gain, and eternal salvation, we resolutely withhold our money, refusing to part with even a few obols; but where the expenditure is the occasion of sin and of countless pains and of the fiery punishment itself, of our own accord we let it flow. Prodigality anticipates the request, and opening all our doors, we lavish our wealth on those that are without. But this is not the mind of servants waiting for their lord, but of lusty, unbridled youths given over to revels.

But if you wish, my hearer, to see a steward administering with fear and wise discretion the things committed to him, open the book of David; find those words |62 where one inquiring concerning the appointed time of his end, says to God, "Lord, make me to know my end, and what is the number of my days, that I may know what I lack." You see in these words, as an image in a mirror, the attitude of the one who prays; you see that he is very fearful; he foresees that which is to come, and, expecting judgment, is concerned about the appointed time, that the signal for his departure may not find him unprepared. And he seeks to number and know how many days still remain to him, in order that he may zealously fulfil his task before his Lord comes. Now if we carefully compare what the dying man experiences, and what the man who is cast out of his stewardship endures, we shall find that the end of each one of us is like that of a steward. |63

For the dying man turns over his control of affairs to others, just as the steward does his keys; the latter on being cast out of an estate, the former on being cast out of the world. Deeply grieved, the steward retires from his own labors----from the estate rich in vineyards, gardens, houses. What then do you think the dying man experiences? Does he not bewail his possessions? Does he not piteously survey his house as, against his will, he is torn from it, and forced in spite of his attachments, to go far from his treasures and storehouses? And when he comes to the appointed place, when he hears the words, "Render the account of your stewardship, show how you have obeyed the commandments, how you have treated your fellow servants, whether properly and kindly or, on the contrary, grievously and tyrannically, smiting, punishing, and withholding the alms that mercy |64 dictates," then if he shall be able to render the master gracious, by showing that he has been a faithful servant, it shall be well with him. But if he cannot thus render him gracious there will remain for him not simply beating with rods, or the dark prison, and iron fetters, but fire unquenchable and eternal darkness, never illumined by a ray of light, and gnashing of teeth as the Gospel has plainly taught us.

If indeed you are never to be cast out of your present possessions on the ground that they belong to another, revel in the world and with every sense let pleasure be unrestrained. But

if these things are to be brought to an end and we are to enjoy them for no long time, let us, brethren, fear our removal hence, and live during the time of our sojourning as the Lord has commanded. Let us not be led away as prisoners for debt; |65 but let us go as free men, taking with us an approving conscience, and such an account of our conduct as will not be condemned by the Lord.

That rich man whose land brought forth abundantly, was a wicked steward of the earthly life, since in the abundance of his fruits he purposed nothing useful, but, enlarging the belly's desire and the broad and vast pockets of greed, designed all for his own enjoyment, saying, "I will pull down my barns, and build greater, and will say to myself, Thou hast much goods laid up; take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry." But while he was yet speaking, the death angel stood at his side, to conduct him from the earth. A dreadful fellow slave was come to drag him from his stewardship; and what profit was there in his plan for the gratification of his selfish desires? Now |66 this has been vividly portrayed for our admonition.

And what does experience teach us? Do not the events of each day loudly proclaim the truth of the parable? Do we not see the man in health at midday, dead ere the appearance of the evening star? And the man strong at evening, not alive to greet the beams of dawn? And another departing this life while eating? And who is so foolish as not to perceive at a glance that daily, now one, now another, we are being removed from our stewardship here? But the good and faithful steward, whose conscience approves his own administration of his stewardship, is of Paul's opinion. For Paul, though the Lord did not urge him, was in haste to go to his Master, and longed for his release, and of his own accord resigned his stewardship, saying somewhere, "Wretched man that I am! who |67 shall deliver me from the body of this death," and again, "But for me it is well to depart and be with Christ." But one who is earthly in mind, and really akin to the clods, being confounded at the change which overtakes him, utters such lamentations as did the man of the parable, "What shall I do, because my Lord takes away the stewardship from me? I cannot dig, to beg I am ashamed." The lamentation of an idle and pleasure-loving man! For to weep at his departure, and to lament the sensuous enjoyments of the flesh, is proof that one is engrossed in his estate; and to be incapable of toil is the mark of an idle and supine life. For if he had been accustomed to industry, he would not have hesitated to dig.

But further, to carry out the meaning of the parable, after removal to the eternal |68 world there is no longer place for importunity. And therefore let no one of them there say, "I cannot dig." For even if he could, no one would give him the opportunity. To this life belongs the obedience of the commandments, and to the life to come the reward. So that if you have done nothing here, it will be useless for you to think of digging, since you will have left the vines behind. Nor will you benefit yourself at all by entreating. And we have a notable example of this in the story of the foolish virgins, who were delayed for lack of oil, and shamelessly asked it from those who were wise. But they got no help, and turned away unsuccessful; the narrative showing that, at the bridegroom's appearing, no one may use another's oil, that is, another's rectitude, for his own benefit. For each one is |69 clothed with his own conduct as

with a garment, whether it be splendid and costly, or mean and like a beggar's cloak. But to put off this garment is not possible, nor to remove it and exchange it for another, nor to beautify and adorn it by the gift or loan of another in the time of judgment, but each one remains such as he is in truth, whether poor in good deeds or rich.

But what can we say concerning the remission of debts which the unjust steward contrived, that he might through his fellow servants secure relief for himself from the hardships of his downfall? For it is not easy to convert this into allegory consonant with Scripture, but after long reflection something like this occurred to me: All of us who busy ourselves about the rest to which we are destined, by giving what is another's, work to our own advantage; now by what is another's I mean what |70 belongs to the Lord. For nothing is our own, but all things belong to him. When, therefore, any one anticipating his end and his removal to the next world, lightens the burden of his sins by good deeds, either by canceling the obligations of debtors, or by supplying the poor with abundance, by giving what belongs to the Lord, he gains many friends, who will attest his goodness before the Judge, and secure him by their testimony a place of happiness. Now they are called witnesses, who have secured for their benefactors favor from the Judge, not because they inform him of anything, as though he were ignorant, or did not know, but in the sense that what has been done for them relieves those who have helped them from the punishment of their sins. For just as the blood of Abel was said to cry unto God, in like manner the good |71 deed, too, shall be said to testify on behalf of the upright in our Lord, Christ Jesus. Now to him be glory forever and ever. Amen.

[Footnotes renumbered and moved to the end] 1. 1 Corinthians 7: 31. 2. 2 Corinthians 6: 10. 3. Aristotle, De Mundo 5:11. 4. Romans 13: 12; Ephesians 5: 11. 5. Matthew 5: 28. 6. Matthew 18:9. 7. Psalm 38: 2 (Lxx); 39: 1. 8. Psalm 5:10 (Lxx); 5:9. 9. Psalm 51:3, 4 (Lxx); 52:1, 2. 10. Isaiah 3: 18 ff. 11. Proverbs 19:14. 12. Matthew 6: 34. 13. Psalms 39:4; 38:5 (Lxx). 14. Matthew 13:42, etc. 15. Luke 12:18, 19. 16. Romans 7: 24. 17. Philippians 1:23. 18. Matthew 25: 1ff. 19. Genesis 4: 10.

# Sermon 3 -- Against Covetousness

**III — AGAINST COVETOUSNESS**

Texts Quoted by Asterius in the Body of his Discourse No servant can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon.----Luke 16: 13. For this ye know, that no whoremonger, nor unclean person, nor covetous man, who is an idolater, hath any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God----Eph.5:5. For the love of money is the root of all evil: which while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows.----1 Tim. 6 : 10. And he said unto them, Take heed, and beware of covetousness: for a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth. And he spake a parable unto them, saying, The ground of a certain rich man brought forth plentifully:

And he thought within himself, saying, What shall I do, because I have no room where to bestow my fruits? And he said, This will I do: I will pull down my barns, and build greater; and there will I bestow all my fruits and my goods. And I will say to my soul, Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years; take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry. But God said unto him, Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee: then whose shall those things be, which thou hast provided? So is he that layeth up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God.----Luke 12: 15-21.

**III — AGAINST COVETOUSNESS**

CHRISTIANS and sharers of a heavenly calling, you country folk, and all who come from the towns, you who in concord have gathered at the present feast, ----for by a general address I embrace you all,----has each one of you thoughtfully considered and realized why we are assembled? And why are martyrs honored by the construction of notable buildings and by these annual assemblies, and what end did our fathers have in view when they ordained the things we see, and left the established custom to their descendants? Is it not evident to one who concentrates his thought |76 on this subject even for a short time, that these things have been given permanent form to rouse us to pious emulation, and that the feasts constitute public schools for our souls, in order that while we honor the martyrs, we may learn to imitate their sturdy piety; that lending the ear to the gathered teachers, we may learn some useful thing which we did not know before,----either the certainty of some

doctrine, or the explanation of some difficult Scripture, ----or may hear some discourse that will improve our morals?

But you seem to me to have abandoned your care for virtue, to have forgotten your zeal on behalf of your souls, and to have devoted all your thought to the rubbish of mammon and the business of the markets; some bargaining yourselves; some greedily haggling with competing dealers in order to reduce their prices. But transfer your |77 love to the church, Abandon the love of money, that mad passion of the market. Turn from it as from a disorderly courtezan who, embellished with foreign stuffs and with the brilliant colors of the apothecary, smiles upon the multitude. Love the church, divine and discreet, modestly attired, with look august and grave. For thus Solomon says in the book of Proverbs, "Forsake her not, and she shall preserve thee: love her, and she shall keep thee." Do not pass her by with contempt, nor deem the things that lie near us on this table of little worth because it is possible for you to procure them freely. But desire them all the more because we do not sit, as hucksters, with balance and scales; but seek only one gain,----the salvation of the hearer.

There has been read to us from the Acts |78 the speech of Paul to Festus and Agrippa, ----Paul the faithful apostle and wise speaker.You doubtless saw, my hearer, if you gave heed, how he boldly declares the truth, but, mingling deference to Agrippa with his boldness, he softens the harsh tribunal to gentleness, subduing them by the manner of his speech, as wild beasts by song. Zechariah, too, has prophesied to-day, opening to us the door of the great mysteries of the Only-begotten, by the stone with the seven quick-glancing eyes, and by the golden candlestick with its seven lamps, and the trunks of the two olive trees.There are many kindred Scriptures full of profit for us, into all of which I wished to go that I might show you the abundance of the spiritual feast. But I must fulfil the promise that I made yesterday. For after we had brought many accusations against |79 covetousness, but had scarcely laid bare its vanity, we deferred until to-day the proof of the charges. Listen, therefore, and show yourselves wise judges of the truth; for your decision affects your own salvation, not that of others; and each of you casts his vote of condemnation against his own soul, as though driving it out of house or town.

Covetousness, then, is not simply being mad for money, and other possessions, wishing to add to what you have that to which you have no right, but, to speak more broadly, it is the desire to have in every transaction more than is due or belongs to you. And you know that the devil was the first to have this fault; for he was an archangel, and appointed to the most honorable life and station; but the arrogant creature conceived of absolute rule, and rebellion against God, and was |80 thereafter cast down from heaven, and, falling into this atmosphere of earth, he became your malicious neighbor. So he did not attain the divinity to which he aspired, and he lost the rank which he had enjoyed of being archangel; an unfaithful servant, changed by gradually increasing audacity into a robber;----the dog of the Greek fable, who was both deprived of his meat and failed to grasp the shadow----for how could he grasp an intangible thing?

After him, the first man was beguiled into the love of pleasure, and by eating the forbidden fruit lost immortality, as Esau afterward lost his birthright for a dish of pottage. And love of more introduced into our life these languages of ours, the many tongues of men. For men who through plenty had become wanton, |81 thinking that the heavens were accessible to them, foolishly made a preposterous tower for mounting up to the sky, and so caused mankind, which had been of one language, to speak with different tongues; in seeking more than they had, they themselves were not only confounded but left to mankind the weariness of hearing unintelligible tongues, and of searching for their interpretation. And what of Pharaoh? How came he to fall into difficulties and to be afflicted with plagues? Was it not through covetousness, through the desire of being lord over a strange people which by no means belonged to his kingdom? And, since he did not let those go who belonged to another, he lost those who were his own; some in the smiting of the first-born and others in the pursuit through the sea. For I do not mention the rivers flowing blood, |82 and the infinite generation of frogs, and the destruction wrought by locusts, and the eruption of boils, and the death of four-footed beasts, and all the evil to which Egypt was condemned on account of her ruler's covetousness.

Again, somewhere else I have learned the outcome of this sin, how leprosy in a moment spread over the body of the covetous. Recall with me, if you are historically inclined, and fond of hearing of Elisha's deeds, how Naaman the Syrian bathed in the Jordan, and was healed of his leprosy, and how his malady passed over upon Gehazi, the prophet's servant, a covetous and foolish young man, who received raiment and silver for his master's free act of healing. How did Absalom, that fiery and impetuous young man, son of an indulgent father, become a parricide? Was |83 it not by prematurely seeking the inheritance of the kingdom and leaping like a robber upon what Was another's? And Judas, also,----what drove him out from the company of the apostles, and made him a traitor instead of an apostle? Was it not the treasury at first dishonestly administered, and then the getting of the shameful price? Why does the Acts of the Apostles tell in tragic vein of Ananias and Sapphira? Is it not because they were thieves of what was their own, and violators of their own offerings? The day will soon fail me if I try to enumerate the servants of covetousness.

But now, leaving ancient history, let us interrogate the experience of daily life, and learn what sort of a creature it recognizes in covetousness, and how hard it is to get |84 rid of; for whomsoever it seizes, ever waxing but never waning, it grows old with its victims and abides with them to the end. The lustful and the lover of his body, even if he be for a long time mad in his desires, when he becomes old, or sees the object of his affection, his body, now aged and the bloom departed, finds that there is a limit to his disorder. The glutton himself withdraws from his indulgence when surfeited, or when his digestive organs become weak, and their intense desire for food is gone. The ambitious man after having attained great notoriety ceases to desire to show himself off. But the disease of covetousness is an evil hard to rid one's self of. And just as this ivy, the plant flourishing and ever green, creeping up the trees that grow near, coils tight about the trunks wherever it touches----and even if they suffer harm or wither, it does not |85 die, unless some one with an axe severs its

serpent-like coils----so it is not easy to free the soul from covetousness, whether the body be youthful or beginning to grow old, unless some sober consideration enter in and like a knife cut off the disease.

The covetous man is odious to the members of his household, severe to his domestics, useless to his friends, ungracious to strangers, troublesome to his neighbors, a sorry companion to his wife, a penurious rearer of children, a bad master of himself; at night full of anxiety, by day absorbed, talking to himself like one demented; abounding in wealth, yet groaning as though in need; not enjoying what he has, and yet seeking what he has not; not using his own, yet casting avaricious eyes upon the property of others. Such a man has a great flock of sheep that fills the folds in which it is penned, and covers the plains |86 on which it pastures. And if a single sheep belonging to his neighbor appear in good flesh, taking no notice of his own vast flock he lays greedy siege to that one sheep of his neighbor. The same is true in the case of his kine and of his horses; nor is it otherwise in the matter of his land. The house is crowded with everything, but nothing is made any use of. For it is impossible for a greedy person to have any enjoyment, but his house is almost like a grave. For see, graves are often full of silver and gold, but no one uses the riches. The body is not sustained by them; the soul finds no satisfaction in them; for alms are not scattered by the right hand of the dead.

Now let some one who has been seized with this disease of covetousness tell me what is the object of this toil for gain? For I know that many with whom I am |87 acquainted, love money more when they are sick than when they are in health. If the doctor prescribes for their recovery softie inexpensive medicine, such as parsley or thyme or anise, which can be procured without expense, they readily heed his directions. But if he. mentions some drug, the ingredients of which are rich and complex, and they are sent to the apothecary or the perfumer to purchase it, they give up their, lives rather than open their purses. For being earthly-minded they think the possession of earthly things to be life itself. These men are profoundly depressed by general prosperity and delighted by general distress. They pray that intolerable burdens of taxation may be imposed by public proclamation that they may increase their money by usury. They want to see their neighbors throttled by money-lenders, in order that they may secure for |88 themselves their farms, their chattels, or live stock, when through necessity they are thrown on the market at a low price.

And they keep continually looking up at the sky, like those philosophers whose work it is to investigate astronomical phenomena, not studying the movement of a star, nor trying to observe what house is occupied by one of the planets, but curious about the state of the atmosphere, whether the signs that present themselves promise a downfall of rain or a drought. And if they see any portent of any calamity threatening to fall on the community at large, they rejoice over it. They gather everything into their warehouses, which they closely seal and secure with double bars, while they continually measure and reckon up their stores. And while the covetous man |89 cherishes such expectation and in his mind's eye sees himself rich, if a thick cloud arise, he is frightened as though danger were imminent. If

showers besprinkle the earth he begins to weep. And if there comes rain enough to mitigate the drought, it makes him perfectly miserable. Thereafter in all he does he goes about cogitating on the grain, as on a son in peril, thinking by what means, by what device it may be preserved for a long time, and escape danger by insects. But when he sees that the weather is dry, as physicians treat persons wasting away by perspiration, spreading out his grain he stirs and freshens it, toilsomely tends it, devises a shelter against the noonday heat, and strips off the screens at night, that it may be fanned by the night winds.

To him, engaged in this distressful toil, the poor man presents himself, asking for |90 some of the endangered grain, but he does not give it; or, if he gives it, he bestows it parsimoniously, and half-heartedly, parting with it with extreme reluctance. Therefore, I beseech you, if you are such a man, do not undergo these infinite hardships. For the covetous man who lives in luxury is deserving of pity, since he bounds his existence with the belly's enjoyment and other pleasures, regarding this as the goal of humanity. But in the case of the mean and penurious, his wretchedness has no limit, since he receives the goods of many, and does not give even to himself, and so has nothing for his pains. For who does not know that nothing, except the virtues, exists for its own sake, but we do one thing in order that we may accomplish another? No sailor traverses the sea simply for the sake of sailing, and no farmer passes his life in toil simply for the |91 sake of farming; but it is manifest that both persevere amid their hardships that they may secure, the one the increase of the earth, and the other the wealth of maritime trade. But tell me now, O covetous man, what is your goal? To accumulate? And what kind of an object in life is this, to heap up and gloat over unused substance? The very sight, he replies, delights me. Then attack your disorder in another way.

For you can allay this longing with what belongs to others. If the glitter of silver delights you, sit beside the silversmiths and gaze steadfastly upon the strong and glittering sheen; or haunt the markets, and enjoy the richly wrought vessels, platters: and pitchers. For the sight of them is free and unhindered. Watch the moneychangers also who are continually reckoning and counting the coin at their tables; but, better yet, yield to good advice and give |92 up this inclination. For amendment is easy, since covetousness is not a necessity of nature, but a direction of choice, and to change it is not difficult for those who consider their own advantage.

Pass over in thought to the time to come, when you shall be no more; when a small plot of earth shall hold your body, insensate, returned to dust, and a little tablet, a few spans in size, shall cover all that remains. Where then will be your wealth and your gathered treasures? Who will be the heir of what you leave behind? For it is by no means certain that it will be he whom you suppose. If you leave children, perhaps they will be beaten, and driven weeping from their ancestral home by some covetous man like you. But if, being childless, you mean to transmit the inheritance to one of your friends, do not regard your will as an immutable law, a thing strong |93 and incapable of being set aside. It will require but little exertion to make the writing invalid. Do you not see those who are constantly contesting wills in the

courts, how by all kinds of attacks they wrest them by putting forward as advocates skilful lawyers, invoking the aid of eloquent orators, suborning witnesses, corrupting judges? So from what you see while you are alive, learn what will happen after you are dead. If you have gotten your wealth justly, use it, as did the blessed Job, for needful purposes; if unjustly, restore it to those who have been defrauded of it, as you would a thing captured in war, giving back either just what you took, or that with something added, as did Zacchaeus.

If you have no wealth, do not get any by wickedness. For as you go the inevitable way, your sin, a bitter portion, will |94 follow you, while the enjoyment of your ill-gotten gains will be left behind for whom you know not. And then you will admire David because he says, "He heapeth up riches, and knoweth not who shall gather them. And observe also the rich man contrasted with Lazarus, of whom we have just read in the Gospels,----a narrative which is no fable composed to inspire terror, but a true picture transmitted to us of what is to be.

The fine linen perished, the kingdom departed to another, the luxuries passed away; but the sin of them went with him, as a person's shadow follows him when walking. And for this reason, after his extravagant banquets, and his luxurious table, he begs for a drop of water that falls from a leper's finger, and calls to alleviate his punishment the beggar who, perhaps, |95 when he lay at the gate, did not even have hands; for surely if he had had them he would have driven away the dogs that licked his sores. And he desires to join Lazarus, seeing him on the other side, and is hindered by the ditch or gulf between them, which was no hole that had been digged nor artificial ditch like that which one can see between hostile camps in war. But the Scripture, I think, means that his sins were the obstacle that cut off the approach of the condemned to the righteous. And the prophet Isaiah sets his seal to my interpretation, when he sternly rebukes a foolish people and says, "Is the Lord's hand shortened, that it cannot save? Or is his ear heavy, that it cannot hear? But your sins stand between you and God." But if sin is able to separate men from God, nothing can be more sinful than |96 covetousness, which Paul, the herald of the truth, truly calls idolatry, and the root and parent of all evils.

For how are those drawn into the service of demons who were once of the company of Christians and partakers in the mysteries? Is it not by the desire of acquiring great wealth, and of becoming masters of what belongs to others? Upon receiving from godless and impious men promises either of official preferment or of wealth from royal treasuries, they quickly put off their religion as a garment. And such examples occurring in previous times, memory and tradition have preserved and handed down to us. And there are also instances which belong to our own generation, and are within the range of our experience. For when that emperor who all at once cast aside the character of a Christian, and |97 disclosed the farce he had long been acting, himself shamelessly sacrificed to demons, and offered many gifts to those who were willing to do the same, how many left the church and ran to pagan altars! How many, taking the bait of emolument, swallowed with it the hook of apostasy, and branded with disgrace are wandering about among the towns, objects of hatred; pointed at as betrayers of Christ, for the sake of a little money; stricken from the list of Christians, as was

Judas from the roll of the apostles; known by the name of apostate, as horses are known by the marks branded upon them; who simply allowed themselves to be drawn into the basest of all sins, and promptly followed the teacher of unhallowed and abominable impiety!

Thus, therefore, as the apostle says, covetousness is idolatry also, and is the root |98 of all evils, generating untold iniquities. For as those who seek gold in the bowels of the earth say that the goldrbearing rock lies in great quantities at its very source and the place of its origin, and thence in veins, one running this way and another that, extends to a great distance, and is prolonged in many ramifications, somewhat as the roots of trees diverge from the trunk, so here, while I see many offshoots, I find them all bound together in one root, covetousness. Indeed, with no impropriety does a sermon against covetousness draw its illustration from gold. For gold I see the parricide taking violent steps against his father's life, reverencing neither the hoary head, nor the paternal dignity, but vexed at the lengthening life of the old man. For seeing everything abundant at home, yet having no authority over what he sees, he longs |99 to be master of this paternal wealth, and finds his father's authority irksome. At first he keeps silent, and represses the malady of covetousness in the depths of his soul; but after his desire has increased with time, and his soul is filled with it, all at once he lets the wickedness break forth, as waters break through their embankments. And thereafter he behaves insufferably to his father, all but driving him to the grave, while he is still alive and well. If he mounts his horse with agility, the son is astounded;

if he eats heartily, his son murmurs. If he early arouses the servants to their duties, the son is grieved by the alertness and vigor of the old man. But if he gives away any of his property, or releases a servant from bondage, then indeed as silly and half-witted and living beyond the proper limits of life, and as a squanderer of what belongs to another, he must listen to every |100 impious reproach, and be blackguarded like a drunkard, and upbraided for not dying soon enough.

This is your fruit, O abominable covetousness! Spurred on by you, the child becomes his parent's enemy. You fill the earth with robbers and murderers, and the sea with pirates, cities with tumult, courts with false witnesses, false accusers, betrayers, advocates, and judges who incline whichever way you draw them. Covetousness is the mother of inequality, unmerciful, hating mankind, most cruel. On account of it, the life of men is full of inequality. Some being surfeited, loathe the abundance of their possessions, as one disgorges food which has been too greedily swallowed; while others are in peril through extreme hunger and want. Some lie down under gilded roofs and live in houses that are like small cities, adorned |101 with sumptuous baths and chambers, and most extensive porches, and every kind of extravagance, while others have not the shelter of two boards. When they cannot live in open air, they either take refuge beside the furnaces of the baths, or, finding the attendants of the baths inhospitable, they dig into the dung like swine, and so contrive to get for themselves the needful warmth. Such is the marked disparity in the conditions of life, between men created equal in worth, and the cause of this disordered and anomalous state of things is nothing else than covetousness. One is put to shame by his naked limbs; the other, beside

having almost countless garments, dresses his walls with purple hangings. The poor man has not on his wooden table any bread to break;

while the luxurious man sitting at his broad silver stable is delighted with its glitter. How |102 much more just it would be that the poor man should feast to the full on the other's luxury, and that the support of the needy should be the decoration of the rich man's table! One man, aged and unable to walk, or lame by reason of some outrageous mutilation, does not possess the ass that he needs to carry him about, while another does not know his droves of horses for their very multitude. One lacks oil to light his lamps, while another has a fortune simply in lamp-stands. One has only the ground for his bed, while he who is unreasonably rich, is dazzled by the splendor of his couch, with its silver balls and chains instead of cords. These are the results of insatiable covetousness. For had it not introduced inequality into life, these anomalous heights and depths would not have existed, nor would manifold misfortunes have made our life joyless and tearful. |103

On account of covetousness men lose their natural friendship for one another, and whet their swords and array themselves against each other and like wild beasts fight one another with great ferocity. But how can one relate the consequences of these things? Massive walls are thrown down by engines, cities are taken, women led captives, and children enslaved. The land is wasted and ravaged, and the trees are warred against as though they were wrong-doers. There is great slaughter of those who are in the prime of life, and torrents of blood stream from the wretched corpses; and the wealth of the conquered is the victors' prize. There are, moreover, the lamentations of widows, the tears of orphans, who bewail at once both their fathers and their freedom. He who was day before yesterday possessor of great wealth, stretches forth his right hand to beg a bit |104 of bread, and he who had many slaves at the loom, and houses full of garments, now clothed in rags does the work of a slave, forced to carry water and scrape the dung from the stable, and to perform most menial duties. There are besides countless evils which it is impossible to compass all at once. But of all of these, the beginning and cause and root is greed, unrighteous love of the goods that belong to another.

And if any one should extirpate this passion from the human heart, profound peace would be inevitably introduced into our life, and wars and tumults would be banished from among men, and all would return to the natural condition of love and friendliness. On this account, our Lord also carefully heals this disease, once declaring in his teachings; "Ye cannot serve God and mammon; and on another |105 occasion declaring wretched the rich man who was just about to die, even as he was picturing to himself the protracted enjoyment of luxury; and elsewhere teaching that that man was perfect who divided all that he had among the needy, and went over to a self-denying life, which is the mother and companion of virtue.

But I seem to hear, even though they are silent, those who are wont to say such things as these to their teachers: "How shall we continue to live, if we do not care for the getting of money? and how shall we satisfy our needs? How are loans to be repaid, and how shall a gift be bestowed upon him who asks it, if we are all to follow your admonition and be

poor? This is the objection of an unbeliever, the speech of one devoid of understanding, who does not know that God |106 is our Master, the director of our life, and that he himself furnishes the living creature what it needs, the means of getting both necessary food and needful clothing. For the providence of God is over all his works, and the misfortune of poverty never overtakes one who is rich in faith. By presenting one of the divine narratives in proof of what I now affirm I shall, I think, offer sufficient evidence of it. In the history of the kings a widow woman is mentioned who, on account of her solitary condition was greatly oppressed. A greedy and churlish creditor pestered her, threatening to take away as pledges for her debts, her sons who were all she had left. And when the crisis in her affairs came and none of the rich had pity on her, she went to him who had humanity and faith.

Now this was Elisha the |107 prophet, a man poor in this world's goods, but abounding in immaterial wealth; an unworldly soul from among the plowmen, houseless, homeless, clad with but one garment; who had just had a legacy, and had received as his inheritance a cheap sheepskin and an invisible blessing, which fell from the chariot of fire. Yet he did not send away the suppliant disappointed, nor did he despair of helping her because he had not what she asked, nor did he utter any sordid and doubting words, as many would have done, such as, "And where am I to get money to pay your debt? but, like a most excellent physician when there are no medicines to be had, by an unexpected device he found a remedy for the disease and said, "Woman, what have you in the house? Call to mind whether you have anything within, however small. For |108 no one is so poor as to have absolutely nothing. And when she replied that she had a cruse with a little oil remaining in it, he said, "Prepare me a multitude of vessels. So she got them ready and filled them from the cruse. Thus the debt was paid to the money-lender, and the woman departed, having found a way out of her difficulties.

For the very little oil which she had told the prophet she possessed, contrary to her expectation gushed forth and filled all the jars she had made ready, and it ceased to flow only when there was not another vessel to receive it. And the gift was commensurate with her need. That was indeed oil which no plant, but the mercies of God, produced. Buy yourselves this knowledge, if you can, you kings, rulers, men of wealth, from the rising to the setting sun. You who are rich |109 in worldly wisdom, get the gift of the plowman prophet, which could not be taken away from him who had received it For the possessions which you so eagerly desire are beset with countless risks; thieves who break into houses, tyrants who confiscate, flatterers who plot, the sea that overwhelms, and the earth that quakes and yawns. Therefore let the right hand of God be the hope and treasury of men,----the hand that led his people out of Egypt,and in the desert provided abundance of good things, which brought Habakkuk to Daniel, and preserved Ishmael when he had been cast down from his mother's arms; which provides for those of every generation; and which, finally, multiplied |110 five barley loaves so that they equaled a great harvest, and one loaf supplied a thousand hungry men and filled a basket with fragments besides.

Now to our God be glory forever and ever. Amen. [Footnotes renumbered and moved to the end] 1. Hebrews 3:1. 2. Proverbs 4: 6 (Lxx). 3. Probably the Scriptures were on the table. 4. Acts 26. 5. Zechariah 3: 9; 4: 14. 6. Genesis 3:3. 7. Genesis 25: 29-34. 8. Genesis 11: 1-9. 9. Exodus 8-14. 10. 2 Kings 5. 11. 2 Samuel 15. 12. John 12: 6; Matthew 26: 15. 13. Acts 5: 1-10. 14. They believed that each planet had its own house in the heavens. Cf. Century Dict. "House," sec. 10. 15. Luke 19:8. 16. Psalms 39: 6; 38: 7 (Lxx). 17. Isaiah 59: 1, 2 (Lxx). 18. The Emperor Julian. 19. Ephesians 5:5. 20. 1 Timothy 6: 10. 21. Luke 16: 13. 22. Luke 12: 20. 23. Matthew 19: 21. 24. 2 Kings 4:1-7. 25. 2 Kings 2: 9-13. 26. 2 Kings 4: 3. 27. Exodus 14.

28. Exodus 16; Numbers 11. 29. In the history of Bel and the Dragon, Habakkuk is said to have carried food to Daniel in the den of lions at Babylon. 30. Genesis 21: 15-19. 31. John 6: 9-13.

# Sermon 4 -- On the Festival of the Calends

**IV — ON THE FESTIVAL OF THE CALENDS**

The preacher had no text. His sermon is an earnest protest against the evils into which New Year's festivals had drifted in his day. This is the earliest extant New Year's sermon, and in that respect it is unique. The strange customs portrayed in it make it peculiarly fascinating.

**IV — ON THE FESTIVAL OF THE CALENDS**

YESTERDAY and to-day two feasts, not only unrelated and discordant, but wholly adverse and hostile to each other, have been celebrated. One is of the rabble without, gathering, in large sums, the money of mammon, and bringing in its train bargaining, vulgar and mean. The other is of holy and true religion, inculcating acquaintance with God, and the virtue of the purified life. And since many, preferring the luxury and absorption which arise from vanity, have left off going to church, come, let us with a discourse dispel from your souls this foolish and harmful |114 delight, which as a sort of inflammation of the brain, with laughter and jesting, induces death. And in the treatment of the subject I may fittingly emulate Solomon. For in counseling young men to keep themselves from the snares of licentiousness, in order to make his own admonition cogent and effective, he personifies excess as an abandoned woman, and, by portraying all her wickedness, he thus exposes her to her dupes as deserving of their hatred.Wherefore I, too, after showing the vanity of the human heart in my discourse, will attempt to convert the lovers of pleasure from their misdirected zeal.

Of a public feast, this, then, should be the rule and law: first, that the festival have a distinct object; and then that the mirth be common to all; not that a part enjoy themselves and the rest be left in dejection and |115 pain. For this latter condition is characteristic of war rather than of a feast, since it is inevitable that the victors parade in their victory, while the conquered bewail their misfortune. Now in these days, first, it is not clear for what object this festival is celebrated. For the many legends current concerning it are mutually subversive and disclose nothing certain. Then I see only a few making merry, while the mass

of the people are melancholy, even though they try to conceal their dejection by a cheerful demeanor; while all is noise and tumult, the multitude heedlessly jostling one another.

It is a recollection of, and a rejoicing over, the new year. What kind of rejoicing, sir? First, then, I observe the manner of meeting, of what a sort it is, and how suspicious and unfriendly! With a voice feeble and faint the salutation drops |116 from the lips. Then follows the kiss, as a prelude to the New Year's present. The mouth indeed is kissed, but it is the coin that is loved,----the form of a sale and the deed of covetousness! But where there is pure and frank friendship, kindnesses are freely bestowed with no expectation of gain. So, while on this New Year's festival many things are carried about everywhere, and money is given, there is no pretext of legitimate barter, nor does any one claim it. It is not a wedding, so that one might call it the prodigality of a haughty bridegroom. Nor am I able to call the expenditure almsgiving, since no poor man is relieved of his misfortune. One cannot call what takes place exchange, for the multitude exchange nothing with one another. But to call it a free gift is still more inappropriate, since the giving is by necessity. What, then, are we to call the |117 festival, or the money spent in it? I cannot make out. But tell me, you who have been wearing yourselves out in preparing for it. Give an account of it, as we do of the festivals which are genuine and according to the will of God.

We celebrate the birth of Christ, since at this time God manifested himself in the flesh. We celebrate the Feast of Lights (Epiphany), since by the forgiveness of our sins we are led forth from the dark prison of our former life into a life of light and uprightness. Again, on the day of the resurrection we adorn ourselves and march through the streets with joy, because that day reveals to us immortality and the transformation into a higher existence. Thus we keep these feasts and the rest of them in orderly succession. For every human event there is a reason, but that which lacks reasonable explanation and purpose is stuff and nonsense. |118

Oh, the absurdity of it! All stalk about open-mouthed, hoping to receive something from one another. Those who have given are dejected; those who have received a gift do not retain it, for the present is handed on from one to another, and he who received it from an inferior gives it to a superior. The money of this festival is as unstable as the ball of boys at play, for it is passed quickly on from me to my neighbor. It is but a new form of bribery and servility, having inevitably linked with it the element of necessity. For the more eminent and respectable man shames one into giving. A person of lower rank asks outright, and it all moves by degrees toward the pockets of the most eminent men. And you may see just such a thing as happens in the confluence of waters. There a streamlet melts into and mingles its waters with one larger than itself, and it in turn |119 loses itself in one still more copious, and many small streams joined together become part of the neighboring river; this again, of another greater still, and so on, one joining another, until the last one brings the waters to rest in the depth and breadth of the sea.

This is misnamed a feast, being full of annoyance; since going out-of-doors is burdensome, and staying within doors is not undisturbed. For the common vagrants and the jugglers of

the stage, dividing themselves into squads and hordes, hang about every house. The gates of public officials they besiege with especial persistence, actually shouting and clapping their hands until he that is beleaguered within, exhausted, throws out to them whatever money he has and even what is not his own. And these mendicants going from door to door follow one after another, and, until late in the |120 evening, there is no relief from this nuisance. For crowd succeeds crowd, and shout, shout, and loss, loss. Such is this delectable feast, the source of debt and usury, the occasion of poverty, the beginning of misfortunes. And if a man become prosperous by honest industry, incredible as that may seem, and not by the craft of the usurer, even he is dragged along as one who has failed to pay the royal taxes; he weeps like one whose goods are confiscated, and he laments like a man who falls among thieves. He is dogged, he is flogged, and if there be in the house any little thing for the support of his wife and wretched children, this he lets go, and sits him down hungry with his whole family on this glorious feast-day. A new law this, of evil custom, that annoyance be celebrated as a feast, and man's want be called a festival! |121

This festival teaches even the little children, artless and simple, to be greedy, and accustoms them to go from house to house and to offer novel gifts, fruits covered with silver tinsel. For these they receive in return gifts double their value, and thus the tender minds of the young begin to be impressed with that which is commercial and sordid. But as to the sturdy and honest farmers! What things this feast-day brings to them! It renders the city a place to be shunned rather than visited, and they fly from it more timidly than hares from nets. Such as are found within it are flogged, treated with drunken violence, what they have in their hands is snatched from them; they are warred upon in time of peace, are jeered at, and mocked with words and deeds. Even our most excellent and guileless prophets, the unmistakable |122 representatives of God, who when unhindered in their work are our faithful ministers, are treated with insolence. Thus it is, then, with those in office, thus with the poor, thus with the children, thus with the rustics. For some are distressed, some murmur, and some learn what it were better not to know.

And let us consider how the soldiers under arms, too, are benefited by this feast. As to money they are losers. They offer their entire wages as pay for one debauch. As to manners and habits they are made worse. For they learn vulgarity, and the practices of actors. Their military discipline is relaxed and slackened. They make sport of the laws and the government of which they have been appointed guardians. For they ridicule and insult the august government. They mount a chariot as though upon a stage; they appoint pretended lictors and publicly act like buffoons. This is |123 the nobler part of their ribaldry. But their other doings, how can one mention them? Does not the champion, the lion-hearted man, the man who when armed is the admiration of his friends and the terror of his foes, loose his tunic to his ankles, twine a girdle about his breast, use a woman's sandal, put a roll of hair on his head in feminine fashion, and ply the distaff full of wool, and with that right hand which once bore the trophy, draw out the thread, and changing the tone of his voice utter his words in the sharper feminine treble? These are the good uses of the festival, these the advantages of to-day's public feast!

Even the eminent consuls who have attained the pinnacle of human rewards, spend their money in vanity, scattering large sums for no righteous end, but for the fruit of sin. Their folly is as conspicuous |124 as their throne is high. For being seated on many human thrones, and administering the greatest offices of the kingdom, they take unsparingly from every source the largest possible amounts, some appropriating the provision money of poor soldiers, others oftentimes selling justice and truth, and others extracting untold wealth from royal coffers and greedily gathering together money from all quarters, disdaining no source of income, however unbecoming or unjust. They provoke God: now presiding in public, and, a little later, lavishing their gold upon charioteers, ill-starred flute-players, buffoons, dancers, the effeminate and harlots, who offer their persons for sale to the public. Moreover, they squander their gold upon the beast-fighters, blood-stained and desperate, and even upon the beasts themselves. For it is manifest that their gold supports the wild beasts, too, |125 buying flesh for some, grain for others. And all this money is prodigally spent for one object, that their names may be written upon contracts. What folly! What blindness! God promises to write the names of those who feed the poor in living books, immortal, incorruptible, which moth does not consume, nor time destroy. For these inscriptions you do not care. Do you take no account of the blessed promise, nor seek to be written in the remembrance of God? For this is the Book that abides.

But you count it of great importance to have your names written down by the notaries, to be mentioned by those who buy slaves, and to be applauded by vulgar flatterers. You thus show yourselves poor judges of what is truly useful and advantageous. Give to |126 the crippled beggar, and not to the dissolute musician. Give to the widow instead of the harlot; instead of to the woman of the street, to her who is piously secluded. Lavish your gifts upon the holy virgins singing psalms unto God, and hold the shameless psaltery in abhorrence, which by its music catches the licentious before it is seen. Satisfy the orphan, pay the poor man's debt, and you shall have a glory that is eternal. You empty a multitude of purses for shameful pastime, and ribald laughter, not knowing how many poor men's tears you are giving, from whom your wealth has been gathered; how many have been imprisoned, how many beaten, how many have come near death by the halter, to furnish what dancers to-day receive. And what is the end? Vanity. After it all, a little grave, a garment worth a few obols, shrouding the poor body. |127 After a little, forgetfulness,----the inevitable experience of time, veiling all the things striven for. After that, the judgment of God and the inexorable punishment of evil choice.

Where now are the consuls? Consider those of very recent times. Was not one caught in the sudden uprising of an armed multitude and did he not lose his head like a malefactor? And after death he was more paraded than when aforetime riding in his chariot he used to exult in his dignity. And another, with a military command, attaining the same honor, fleeing the penalty of condemnation, perished miserably on the frontiers of Egypt and Libya, at last ending his life on the sands, since all the region through which he fled was waste and without habitation. And what can we say about that one of the generals and |128 consuls who is now living in disgrace in the Colchian country, and who is kept alive only by the

generosity of the barbarians there? And that one of the prefects, that man invincible and lion-hearted as was supposed, what an end his life had! For first he beheld his own son beheaded; then he himself also was doomed to die, but when the noose had already been adjusted around his neck, the royal clemency stayed the hand of the executioner. And the old man, after living a short time amid woes and calamities, departed this life in disgrace, having found this the end of his august consulship. And that other, so much discussed by both men and women! how last year he planned greater things than the giants! Escaping his masters' rods, he aspired to the rods of a consul.He acquired land to an amount not easy to |129 describe; but he was buried in only as much as the pitiful gave him. Are not all such things then, according to the wise Preacher, Vanity of vanities? And are not these political eminences like visions of baseless dreams, delighting for a little, then fleeting away; blooming and withering? Let us therefore end our discourse at this point, and render glory to the Saviour.

[Footnotes renumbered and moved to the end] 1. Proverbs 5; 3-6. 2. In the Byzantine period contracts were usually dated by the names of the ruling consuls, who thus became the eponyms of the year. 3. The allusion is to Rufinus, who fell A. D. 395. 4. i. e., the fasces. 5. The allusion is to Eutropius, and supplies the only fixed date in the life of Asterius, who must have preached this sermon at the beginning of January, A. D. 400. 6. Ecclesiastes 1: 2.

# Sermon 5 -- On Divorce

**V — ON DIVORCE**

The Pharisees also came unto him tempting him, and saying unto him, Is it lawful for a man to put away his wife for every cause?----Matthew 19: 3.

**V — ON DIVORCE**

ON the text from the Gospel according to Matthew, whether it is lawful for a man to put away his wife for every reason? A beautiful lesson is presented to the Christians and the industrious in the conjunction of these two days; I mean the Sabbath and the Lord's Day, which revolving time brings round each week. These days, as mothers or nurses of the church, both assemble the people and seat the priests before them as teachers. And they lead both learners and teachers to care for their souls. So the discourse of yesterday is still ringing in my ears, and the things |134 that concerned us then linger in my memory. I behold the cross set up, according to the prophecy of Isaiah, and the Lord's garments stained with blood, like the garments of one who treads the wine-press; and I see the Saviour bearing in his right hand the reward; and Solomon I behold exactly arranging for us the balances and weights to the best of his ability. And I pity the debtor of the Gospel, who did not share with his fellow servant the clemency which he had received from his Lord, but by thoughtlessness and harshness brought calamity again upon himself. For with those chapters we were yesterday busy as all of you who were not inattentive know.

And to-day again the Spirit lays before us many things, all beautiful, as many as are on the table which you see. And I |135 have fixed my attention on the disputatious and tempting Pharisees; and I have pitied them exceedingly for the depravity of their dispositions, inasmuch as they sought to outwit even the Fountain of wisdom by their questions and failed in their attempt; the divinity of the Only-begotten ever turning their questions against themselves. It was of them, as it seems to me, that Isaiah prophesied, when he said, "I am the Lord that turneth wise men backward, and maketh their knowledge foolish; that confirmeth the word of his servant." And again David says, "They flatter with their tongue; Hold them guilty, O God; let them fall by their own counsels."But thanks be to them, hostile though they were, that they moved Wisdom to answer, in order that he might leave behind in writing for us, his servants, instruction for |136 our profit. For, behold, marriage, the chief affair of human life, is regulated by him, and the limits of this union and the conditions of

its dissolution are exactly determined. Let each one earnestly attend to the two ordinances of marriage, in order that women may be instructed as to their duties and men in the duties which belong to them.

"Whether it is lawful for a man to put away his wife for every reason?" This, then, is the problem of the Jews. I see the aim of their asking this question in the presence of the others. For since women are more ready to believe than men and are more susceptible to the magnificence of miracles, and inclined to the acceptance and belief of the divinity of Christ, (thus even behind the murderers who were dragging the Lord to the cross, was the multitude of women who bewailed his |137 sufferings, and, following the Saviour, piteously lamented him) in order that they might lead him to offend and alienate all women, the Jews, by their crafty question, laid a trap and snare for him. But the Lord, through the power of his divinity, seeing what villainy they were devising, defeating their treachery, and, at the same time, laying down beneficent rules of life, makes reply, pleading the cause of women, and sending away empty those hungry wolves of Pharisees who in vain had snapped at him with their questions. "The creation itself," says he, "shows its aim to be union, not separation." The Creator was the first bestower of the bride in marriage, since he joined the first human beings in the marriage bond, giving to those who should come after, the inflexible ordinance of the conjugal life, which must be recognized as |138 the law of God; and they who are thus associated with one another are no longer two, but one flesh, so that" What God hath joined together, let not man put asunder."

These things were spoken to the Pharisees; but do you hear them now, you who do such things as these: you who change your wives as readily as your garments; who build bridal chambers as often and as easily as you build booths for feasts; who marry money, and deal in women; who if provoked a little immediately write a bill of divorcement; you who leave many widows while you are yet alive; believe me, marriage is terminated only by death or adultery. For it is not as in the case of mistresses, a companionship for a few days only, nor a mere quest for pleasure, but like most other things is subject to rule and regulation. But in marriage, O man, both soul and body are united, so that |139 disposition is mingled with disposition, and flesh with flesh. How, then, are you going to sever the bond of marriage without suffering? How can you withdraw from this union easily and without pain, after taking your sister and wife not as a servant of a few days, but as a partner for life, a sister by reason of her formation and creation,----for you were both made of the same element of earth and of the same substance,----and wife because of the conjugal union, because of the law of marriage? What sort of a bond, then, are you about to break, for you are bound by both law and nature; and how will you set at naught the agreements which you made at marriage?

What sort of compacts do you think I mean? Those made when the dowry had been agreed upon, when with your own hand you signed the roll, and set your seal to the contract? These are strong indeed, |140 and possess stability enough, but I refer back to the utterance of Adam: "This is flesh of my flesh and bone of my bones, This shall be called my wife. Not

without reason is this utterance preserved in writing; for, uttered by the first man, it is the common covenant of men, made with the whole class of women, who are joined by law to their husbands. Do not be surprised if by what one has said, another is bound. For whatever happened in the beginning, in the case of those first created, has become the nature of their posterity.

If, then, the woman you have lightly divorced shall take the book of Genesis and drag you unto the Judge, who is both Judge and witness, tell me, what will you say? How will you repudiate your own utterance which you made in the name of |141 God, which Moses, the servant of God, recorded, instead of some cheap notary? God gave Adam a wife without father and without mother; and for this reason, as a guardian he shielded the orphan. But now daughters strongly assert their mothers' rights against their unfeeling and undutiful husbands. So that from every point of view it is impossible for you to slight your wife with impunity, bound as you are by the ancient laws of God and the modern laws of men.

Let your wife's very helpfulness put you to shame. For she is a companion, a helper, a partner with whom to pass your life, and to bring children into the world, an aid in sickness, a comfort in distress, the guardian of the hearth, the custodian of the household goods, having the same sorrows, the same joys, sharing with you your wealth, if wealth be yours, or mitigating |142 hard poverty, resourcefully and sturdily bearing up against its grievous consequences, and because of her marriage with you, enduring the toilsome rearing of children. And if perchance a change of fortune overtakes the husband, he overwhelmed thereby sinks into obscurity, and those who have been considered friends, measuring their friendship by the duration of his prosperity, desert him in his adversity, while the servants run away from both master and misfortunes. Only the wife is left, a partner of his distress, serving her husband amid manifold evils. She wipes away his tears, and heals his stripes if he be smitten. She follows him when he is led to prison; and if permitted to enter with him, she cheerfully shares his confinement. But if even this be forbidden she remains at the door of the prison, like a dog devoted to his master. |143

I have known a woman who even cut off her hair, and put on man's attire,----and that gay-colored, in order that when her husband fled and hid himself, she might not be separated from him. And while she seemed to be a slave, in truth she was a slave of love. This life she lived for many years, going from place to place, and from wilderness to wilderness. Such a one, too, we find the wife of most excellent Job to be. For all had left him. With the loss of his wealth his flatterers departed from him. His friends, too, limited their friendship by the duration of his prosperity. If they were present at all, they came to reproach, not to cheer him. Instead of comforting him they aggravated his calamity. By reason of it, indeed, all his "miserable comforters" uttered indignant complaints against him. But she alone, who |144 had before lived in splendor, sat with her husband upon the dunghill, scraping off the discharge, and drawing the worms from his sores. Thus was she the partner of his life, not the sharer of his prosperity only; an inseparable friend, not a mere flatterer during his days of pleasure,----the only blessing that remained of all his good fortune and of all his intimates

and kindred. So on account of her lofty and superlative affection for her husband, she fell even into the sin of blasphemy, counseling him to utter a blasphemous word against God so that he might die quickly and not be long punished, and that she might not see him in his ceaseless pains. For she took no account of her own misfortune of widowhood that would follow, but she cared for only one thing,----that her husband might escape from his insupportable existence. These |145 are the lessons which those who outrage the ordinances of marriage should learn from antiquity and from modern experience.

Now what can the man seeking divorce say to this? And what sort of specious defense of his own fickleness can he offer? "My wife's disposition," he says, "is mean and hateful, and her tongue is violent, and her tastes are not domestic, and her house is ill-managed. So be it. Granted. I am so far persuaded, and accept it, like the judges who are not very critical in hearing, but are readily carried away by the invectives of advocates. But tell me, when you first married her, did you not know that you were being joined to a human being? And does anybody fail to see that to a human being sin attaches? For perfection is of God alone. And do you yourself, then, never sin? Do you not cause your |146 wife pain by your conduct? Are you free from all fault? Do you preserve the ordinance of wedlock in purity? Oh, how many times, perhaps, your wife has endured your drunken violence! How many ready insults and shameful reproaches she has patiently suffered I And how many shortcomings of yours are kept secret, because your wife has not published them! She has borne with you when you were angry without reason, and boiling with wrath; and the free woman, your equal in station, has remained silent like a slave from the market. When you failed through poverty or parsimony to furnish the necessaries of life, though grieved, she did not reproach you.

Nay, further, when you came once from a banquet, drunken and frenzied, she did not cast you off, hating you for your drunkenness, but with kindly forgiveness she received you, and though you resisted, |147 she led you by the hand, and gently bathed your head, dizzied by the fumes of the wine, and guided you to the marriage bed, alone feeling sympathy, while the domestics were laughing and mocking at their master's drunken derangement. Yet you stalk about the neighborhood heartlessly accusing and misrepresenting your wife, that you may awaken sympathy for yourself and secure approval of your prospective divorce. Hard is the heart of such men, savage and cruel, sprung, as the proverb says, from oak or rock. For wiping out the memory of all past kindnesses, they unfeelingly seek divorce. But who chops off a diseased limb, instead of healing it, and that, too, when no dangerous malady has attacked it, but when there is bright and certain |148 prospect of restoration? A blister has risen on the hand; let us carefully attend to it. A boil has begun to annoy the foot; let us reduce the swelling with liniment. But if we decline the attendance of physicians and busy ourselves with amputation and the knife in the case of each of the disordered parts, before we have lived long we shall have pruned ourselves of all our limbs. But not so, sirs. Let there be some thought even of the limbs. Let the very services of your wives put you to shame.

However much you are provoked, compare the pain of one child-birth with your grounds of complaint, and you will find your crowd of grievances outweighed.

Recall her good deeds of kindness: nursing of the sick, companionship in misfortune, tearful entreaties in court on her husband's behalf; leaving her parents and the ancestral hearth, and following a |149 stranger; selling her own property to atone for her husband's insolence and relieve his embarrassment. Let all this unite you to her and prove a bond of affection, propping up and making secure your unsteady soul, as one braces a dilapidated house. Let pity prevail, and let not intimacy and the association of a long life, which makes even brute beasts inseparable, be trodden under foot. For I have seen an ox lowing piteously when he had wandered away from his fellows and found himself alone; and a sheep bleating in a glen and scurrying over the mountains until it rejoined the flock from which, while feeding, it was parted. And a she-goat in this same plight, no matter if as she runs she overtakes many flocks of goats, does not stop until she finds her own flock and her own herdsman.

Let us who are reasonable beings not be |150 found less susceptible to friendship than the brutes. And let us not hold a wife less precious than a fellow traveler, or a man, who on some slight pretext has suddenly become dear to us. You observe how men meeting one another even on the highways, and coming under the roof of the same inn, or under some spreading tree, as a shelter in summer from the noonday heat, make the chance meeting the occasion of genuine friendship; and when they come to the place where their ways diverge, they do not part from one another without emotion, but stand and with tears in their eyes look earnestly upon one another, while each gives mementoes to the other to carry with him. And after going a little way, they turn back again, and call to each other, invoking good fortune upon each other. Does a little time like this cement a friendship so closely that separation |151 becomes difficult and is only effected by absolute necessity, and will you think as lightly of the partner of your life, as of a broken dish, or a cheap cloak spoiled on a journey, or a Maltese lap-dog that has escaped the house? Where is that attachment that was formed at first? Where the sharing of one bed, the bond of law, the power of constant and protracted association, which, as the saying is, and experience proves,----becomes a second nature? You have snapped them all asunder more easily than Samson the cords of the Philistines.

But the man who is wise and guards his attachment does not easily forget his wife even after she has departed this life; but he cherishes the children that she leaves as a trust common to him and her and sees in them the departed one. For one of the children preserves the tones of his mother's |152 voice; another possesses most of her features; another is like her in disposition. Thus the father has impressed upon him, with many living and striking likenesses of his wife before him, the immortal character of his union with her. For this reason, he takes no thought of pleasure. He does not to-day heap up a grave and shortly thereafter furnish a nuptial chamber. He does not hasten from tears and groans to the marriage dance. He does not exchange his black and mourning garb for a wedding suit. He does not lead a second wife to the marriage bed, still warm, of her who is departed,

nor does he give a stepmother, hateful name, to his children. But he imitates the strange yet natural devotion of the turtle-dove. For they say that that bird, when separated from its mate, devotes itself to perpetual widowhood, and is very different from the common dove, as far as mating |153 again is concerned. So, then, let reproaches come thick and fast upon the husband who seeks divorce, and let the charges of ingratitude, falling thicker than snowflakes, pelt him.

But if he put forward a charge of adultery, ,and offer this as the ground of his separation, I will at once become the advocate of the injured man, and directing my discourse against the adulteress, will take my stand beside the husband, no longer his foe, but his valiant ally, commending him who flees the treacherous woman, and severs the tie which bound him to an asp and a viper. For the Creator of all is the first to absolve this man as justly indignant, and right in driving the plague from his house and hearth. For marriage exists for these two things, love and offspring, neither of which is compatible with adultery. For there is no love when |154 affection turns towards another; and honor in bringing children into the world is destroyed, when their parentage is made doubtful. The things that contribute to this sin have been duly mentioned under another head. But pray let both parties to the marriage contract practise self-control,----the unbroken bond of wedlock. For where the honor of marriage is maintained, there is, of necessity, affection and peace, with no vulgar and unlawful desire to excite the soul, and expel legitimate and righteous love.

This law of self-control is not ordained by God for women alone, but for men also. But they who give heed to secular lawgivers, and leave to men the unrestricted license of adultery, while they are stern judges and teachers of the sanctity of women, are themselves shamelessly licentious. Healers of others, according to the proverb, they are yet themselves full of |155 sores. If any one upbraids them with these offenses, they offer a subtle and playful defense. For men, they say, even if they approach many women, do their own hearth no harm; but women, if they sin, introduce alien heirs into their houses and families. But let the sophistical inventors of this frivolous justification of their conduct know that they themselves are overturning other hearths and homes. For the women with whom they associate are surely the daughters or wives of somebody; and in any case there will be found either a marriage plotted against, or a parent wronged who has begotten and reared a daughter, hoping to have a virgin for the bridal chamber, but whose fond expectation has been thwarted by the robbers of her virtue. If the wretch is a father, let him think on the feelings of a father who |156 has been thus disappointed; if a husband, let him imagine himself the injured man. For usually it is well that each one judge the affairs of another as he wishes another to judge his own.

And if any, heeding the law of the Romans, consider fornication permissible, they make a dreadful mistake, not knowing that God lays down law in one way, while men make statutes in another. Listen to Moses, as he proclaims the will of God, and utters bitter condemnation against fornicators. Listen to Paul when he says: ”Fornicators and adulterers God will judge. Other teachers will not be able to save you in the time of retribution, but, trembling and

filled with consternation, they shall melt away. Plato, the professor of laws, shall appear to you then ignorant and untaught, and that weighty voice, which assumed authority over all |157 lawgivers, will be humbled when he and they shall see the lovers of the body to whom they have wickedly permitted license, dragged forth to punishment. And assuredly they who have not forbidden others, have first involved themselves in the sin, and are found liable to a twofold charge, both for what they themselves have done, and because they have allowed others to be licentious. Let those, therefore, whose purpose it is to live with the very purest wives, make their own manner of life a model for their spouses, in order that they may maintain in the home a worthy rivalry in virtue.

[Footnotes renumbered and moved to the end] 1. Matthew 19: 3. 2. Isaiah 63: 1-3. 3. Proverbs 11: 1. 4. Matthew 18: 28ff. 5. Isaiah 44: 25. 6. Psalm 5: 9, 10. 7. Luke 23: 27. 8. Genesis 2: 23. The quotation does not agree exactly either with Heb. or Lxx. 9. Job 16: 2. 10. Job 2: 9. 11. Odyssey 19: 163, "You are not born of immemorial oak or rock" (Palmer). Cf. Clement of Alexandria, who quotes the verse, Admonit. ad Gentes, p. 18. 12. Judges 16: 12. 13. Cf. Euripides, Frag. 1071. 14. Deuteronomy 22: 22. 15. Hebrews 13:4.

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