To Castus, Valerius, Diophantus, Cyriacus

John Chrysostom (c. AD 349–407)

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To Castus, Valerius, Diophantus, Cyriacus

Presbyters of Antioch.

I Am not surprised that you call my long letter a short one. For this is just the way with lovers; they do not recognize such a thing as satiety, they will not admit such a thing as satisfaction, but the more they receive from the objects of their love the more they seek. Therefore, even if the letter which you have received had been ten times as large as the former one, it would not have escaped the epithet of "brief; in fact it would have been called a small letter, and not only would it have been so called, but it would have actually seemed such in your eyes. Hence I also in my turn am never satisfied with the measure of affection for me which you have attained, but am always seeking to make additions to your love-draught, and daily demanding the discharge of your love debt which is always being paid, and yet is always owing (for it is written, "owe no man anything but to love one another"). I am indeed continually receiving what I ask in great abundance, yet never think that I have received the whole. Do not cease then to pay down this goodly debt, which has a twofold pleasure. For those who pay, and those who receive, derive equal enjoyment, inasmuch as they are both alike enriched by the payment; which in the case of money is an impossibility, for there the one who pays becomes poorer, and only the man who has received is richer.

But this is not what commonly happens in the covenant of love. For he who pays it is not less bereft of it, as in the case of money when it is transferred to the receiver; but payment of love makes him who pays richer than before. Knowing these things then, O Sirs, most honoured and devout, cease not continually displaying this excellent disposition towards me. For although you need no exhortation for this purpose from me yet as I greatly long for your love I remind you, even when you need it not, both in order that you may constantly write to me, and also inform me of the state of your health. For even if you do not need any one to remind you on this account, I shall not desist from continually seeking this at your hands; as it is a matter which I have very much at heart. That it is a difficult task owing both to the season of the year, and the difficulty of the journey, and the scarcity of travellers who will do this service for you I am well aware: nevertheless as far as is possible and practicable in the midst of so much difficulty, we exhort you to write constantly, and crave this favour from your love.

Source. English translation: an older public-domain translation as collected in the Writings-Database (HistoricalChristianFaith), mostly from the Ante-Nicene, Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers and similar nineteenth-century editions. SermonIndex has only divided it into chapters and short sections; the wording is the translator's own. Square brackets, Greek or Latin words and footnote-free text are as the source file prints them, and a transcription error may remain. No Greek or Latin text is shown beside it yet, and no modern English version has been made.