

# Homily 17 on Matthew

by St. John Chrysostom

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*Christ teaches that true righteousness is not just about following the law, but about living a life of love and faithfulness to God and others.*

**Scripture:** 1 Samuel 3:13, Matthew 5:20-36, John 8:44

**Topics:** "Moral Purity", "Obedience To God"

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## Description

John Chrysostom preaches about the importance of upholding God's commandments, focusing on the seriousness of committing adultery not only physically but also in the heart by lusting after someone. He explains the progression of Christ's teachings, emphasizing the need for self-control and purity of heart. Chrysostom highlights the significance of avoiding false oaths and the power of habit in shaping one's behavior. He urges the listeners to strive for righteousness that surpasses that of the Scribes and Pharisees, emphasizing the need for diligence and obedience to God's laws to attain the kingdom of Heaven.

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## Transcript

Matthew 5:27-28.

You have heard that it was said to them of old time, You shall not commit adultery; but I say unto you, that every one who looks upon a woman to lust after her, has committed adultery with her already in his heart.

Having now finished the former commandment, and having extended it unto the height of self-denial, He, advancing in course and order, proceeds accordingly unto the second, herein too obeying the law.

And yet, it may be said, this is not the second, but the third; for neither is the first, You shall not kill, but The Lord your God is one Lord.

Wherefore it is worth inquiring too, why He did not begin with that. Why was it then? Because, had He begun from thence, He must have enlarged it also, and have brought in Himself together with His Father. But it was not as yet time to teach any such thing about Himself.

And besides, He was for a while practising His moral doctrine only, being minded from this first, and from His miracles, to convince the hearers that He was the Son of God. Now, if He had said at once, before He had spoken or done anything, You have heard that it was said to them of old time, I am the Lord your God, and there is none other but me, but I say unto you, Worship me even as Him; this would have made all

regard Him as a madman. For if, even after His teaching, and His so great miracles, while not even yet was He saying this openly, they called Him possessed with a devil; John 8:48 had He before all these attempted to say any such thing, what would they not have said? What would they not have thought?

But by keeping back at the proper season His teaching on these subjects, He was causing that the doctrine should be acceptable to the many. Wherefore now He passed it by quickly, but when He had everywhere established it by His miracles, and by His most excellent teaching, He afterwards unveiled it in words also.

For the present, however, by the manifestation of His miracles, and by the very manner of His teaching, He unfolds it on occasion, gradually and quietly. For His enacting such laws, and such corrections of laws, with authority, would lead on the attentive and understanding hearer, little by little, unto the word of His doctrine. For it is said, they were astonished at Him, because He taught not as their Scribes. Matthew 7:28-29

2. For beginning from those passions, which most belong to our whole race, anger, I mean, and desire (for it is these chiefly that bear absolute sway within us, and are more natural than the rest); He with great authority, even such as became a legislator, both corrected them, and reduced them to order with all strictness. For He said not that the adulterer merely is punished; but what He had done with respect to the murderer, this He does here also, punishing even the unchaste look: to teach you wherein lies what He had more than the scribes. Accordingly, He says, He that looks upon a woman to lust after her has already committed adultery with her: that is, he who makes it his business to be curious about bright forms, and to hunt for elegant features, and to feast his soul with the sight, and to fasten his eyes on fair countenances. For He came to set free from all evil deeds not the body only, but the soul too before the body. Thus, because in the heart we receive the grace of the Spirit, He cleanses it out first.

And how, one may say, is it possible to be freed from desire? I answer, first, if we were willing, even this might be deadened, and remain inactive.

In the next place, He does not here take away desire absolutely, but that desire which springs up in men from sight. For he that is curious to behold fair countenances, is himself chiefly the enkindler of the furnace of that passion, and makes his own soul a captive, and soon proceeds also to the act.

Thus we see why He said not, whosoever shall lust to commit adultery, but, whosoever shall look to lust. And in the case of anger He laid down a certain distinction, saying, without a cause, and for nought; but here not so; rather once for all He took away the desire. Yet surely both are naturally implanted, and both are set in us for our profit; both anger, and desire: the one that we may chastise the evil, and correct those who walk disorderly; the other that we may have children, and that our race may be recruited by such successions.

Why then did He not make a distinction here also? Nay, very great is the distinction which, if you attend, you will see here also included. For He said not simply, whosoever shall desire, since it is possible for one to desire even when sitting in the mountains; but, Whosoever shall look to lust; that is to say, he who gathers in lust unto himself; he who, when nothing compels him, brings in the wild beast upon his thoughts when they are calm. For this comes no longer of nature, but of self-indulgence. This even the ancient Scripture corrects from the first, saying, Contemplate not beauty which is another's. Sirach 9:8 And then, lest any one should say, what then, if I contemplate, and be not taken captive, He punishes the look, lest confiding in this security you should some time fall into sin. What then, one may say, if I should look, and

desire indeed, but do no evil? Even so you are set among the adulterers. For the Lawgiver has pronounced it, and you must not ask any more questions. For thus looking once, twice, or thrice, you will perhaps have power to refrain; but if you are continually doing this, and kindling the furnace, you will assuredly be taken; for your station is not beyond that nature which is common to men. As we then, if we see a child holding a knife, though we do not see him hurt, beat him, and forbid his ever holding it; so God likewise takes away the unchaste look even before the act, lest at any time you should fall in act also. For he who has once kindled the flame, even when the woman whom he has beheld is absent, is forming by himself continually images of shameful things, and from them often goes on even to the deed. For this cause Christ takes away even that embrace which is in the heart only.

What now can they say, who have those virgin inmates? Why, by the tenor of this law they must be guilty of ten thousand adulteries, daily beholding them with desire. For this cause the blessed Job Job 31:1 also laid down this law from the beginning, blocking out from himself on all sides this kind of gazing.

For in truth greater is the struggle on beholding, and not possessing the object of fondness: nor is the pleasure so great which we reap from the sight, as the mischief we undergo from increasing this desire; thus making our opponent strong, and giving more scope to the devil, and no longer able to repulse him, now that we have brought him into our inmost parts, and have thrown our mind open unto him. Therefore He says, commit no adultery with your eyes, and you will commit none with your mind.

For one may indeed behold in another way, such as are the looks of the chaste; wherefore he did not altogether prohibit our seeing, but that seeing which is accompanied with desire. And if He had not meant this, He would have said simply, He who looks on a woman. But now He said not thus, but, He who looks to lust, he who looks to please his sight.

For not at all to this end did God make you eyes, that you should thereby introduce adultery, but that, beholding His creatures, you should admire the Artificer.

Just then as one may feel wrath at random, so may one cast looks at random; that is, when you do it for lust. Rather, if you desire to look and find pleasure, look at your own wife, and love her continually; no law forbids that. But if you are to be curious about the beauties that belong to another, you are injuring both your wife by letting your eyes wander elsewhere, and her on whom you have looked, by touching her unlawfully. Since, although you have not touched her with the hand, yet have you caressed her with your eyes; for which cause this also is accounted adultery, and before that great penalty draws after it no slight one of its own. For then all within him is filled with disquiet and turmoil, and great is the tempest, and most grievous the pain, and no captive nor person in chains can be worse off than a man in this state of mind. And oftentimes she who has shot the dart is flown away, while the wound even so remains. Or rather, it is not she who has shot the dart, but you gave yourself the fatal wound, by your unchaste look. And this I say to free modest women from the charge: since assuredly, should one deck herself out, and invite towards herself the eyes of such as fall in her way; even though she smite not him that meets with her, she incurs the utmost penalty: for she mixed the poison, she prepared the hemlock, even though she did not offer the cup. Or rather, she did also offer the cup, though no one were found to drink it.

3. Why then does He not discourse with them also? it may be said. Because the laws which He appoints are in every case common, although He seem to address Himself unto men only. For in discoursing with the head, He makes His admonition common to the whole body also. For woman and man He knows as one living creature, and nowhere distinguishes their kind.

But if you desire to hear also His rebuke for them in particular, listen to Isaiah, Isaiah 3:16 in many words inveighing against them, and deriding their habit, their aspect, their gait, their trailing garments, their tripping feet, their drooping necks. Hear with him the blessed Paul also, setting many laws for them; and both about garments, and ornaments of gold, and plaiting of hair, and luxurious living, and all other such things, vehemently rebuking this sex. And Christ too, by what follows next, obscurely intimated this very same; for when He says, pluck out and cut off the eye that offends you, He speaks as indicating His anger against them.

3. Wherefore also He subjoins,

If your right eye offend you, pluck it out, and cast it from you.

Thus, lest you should say, But what if she be akin to me? What if in any other way she belong to me? therefore He has given these injunctions; not discoursing about our limbs -- far from it -- for nowhere does He say that our flesh is to be blamed for things, but everywhere it is the evil mind that is accused. For it is not the eye that sees, but the mind and the thought. Often, for instance, we being wholly turned elsewhere, our eye sees not those who are present. So that the matter does not entirely depend upon its working. Again, had He been speaking of members of the body, He would not have said it of one eye, nor of the right eye only, but of both. For he who is offended by his right eye, most evidently will incur the same evil by his left also. Why then did He mention the right eye, and add the hand? To show you that not of limbs is He speaking, but of them who are near unto us. Thus, If, says He, you so lovest any one, as though he were in stead of a right eye; if you think him so profitable to you as to esteem him in the place of a hand, and he hurts your soul; cut off even these. And see the emphasis; for He says not, Withdraw from him, but to show the fullness of the separation, pluck it out, says He, and cast it from you.

Then, forasmuch as His injunction was sharp, He shows also the gain on either hand, both from the benefits and from the evils, continuing in the metaphor.

For it is profitable for you, says He, that one of your members should perish, and not that your whole body should be cast into hell.

For while he neither saves himself, nor fails to destroy you too, what kindness is it for both to sink, whereas if they were separated, one at least might have been preserved?

But why did Paul then, it may be said, choose to become accursed? Romans 9:3 Not on condition of gaining nothing, but with a view to the salvation of others. But in this case the mischief pertains to both. And therefore He said not, pluck out only, but also cast from you: to receive him again no more, if he continue as he is. For so shall you both deliver him from a heavier charge, and free yourself from ruin.

But that you may see yet more clearly the profit of this law; let us, if you please, try what has been said, in the case of the body itself, by way of supposition. I mean, if choice were given, and you must either, keeping your eye, be cast into a pit and perish, or plucking it out, preserve the rest of your body; would you not of course accept the latter? It is plain to everyone. For this were not to act as one hating the eye, but as one loving the rest of the body. This same reckoning do thou make with regard to men also and women: that if he who harms you by his friendship should continue incurable, his being thus cut off will both free you from all mischief, and he also will himself be delivered from the heavier charges, not having to answer for your destruction along with his own evil deeds.

Do you see how full the law is of gentleness and tender care, and that which seems to men in general to be severity, how much love towards man it discloses?

Let them hearken to these things, who hasten to the theatres, and make themselves adulterers every day. For if the law commands to cut off him, whose connection with us tends to our hurt; what plea can they have, who, by their haunting those places, attract towards them daily those even that have not yet become known to them, and procure to themselves occasions of ruin without number?

For henceforth, He not only forbids us to look unchastely, but having signified the mischief thence ensuing, He even straitens the law as He goes on, commanding to cut off, and dissever, and cast somewhere far away. And all this He ordains, who has uttered words beyond number about love, that in either way you might learn His providence, and how from every source He seeks your profit.

4. Now it has been said, Whosoever shall put away his wife, let him give her a writing of divorcement. But I say unto you, Whosoever shall put away his wife, saving for the cause of fornication, causes her to commit adultery; and whosoever marries her that is put away, commits adultery. Matthew 6:31-32

He goes not on to what lies before Him, until He have well cleared out the former topics. For, lo, He shows us yet another kind of adultery. And what is this? There was an ancient law made, Deuteronomy 24:1-4 that he who hated his wife, for whatever kind of cause, should not be forbidden to cast her out, and to bring home another instead of her. The law however did not command him simply to do this, but after giving the woman a writing of divorcement, that it might not be in her power to return to him again; that so at least the figure of the marriage might remain.

For if He had not enjoined this, but it were lawful first to cast her out, and take another, then afterwards to take back the former, the confusion was sure to be great, all men continually taking each others' wives; and the matter thenceforth would have been direct adultery. With a view to this, He devised, as no small mitigation, the writing of divorcement.

But these things were done by reason of another, a far greater wickedness; I mean, had He made it necessary to keep in the house her even that was hated, the husband, hating, would have killed her. For such was the race of the Jews. For they who did not spare children, who slew prophets, and shed blood as water, much more would they have showed no mercy to women. For this cause He allowed the less, to remove the greater evil. For that this was not a primary law, hear Him saying, Moses wrote these things according to the hardness of your hearts, that you might not slay them in the house, but rather put them out. But forasmuch as He had taken away all wrath, having forbidden not murder only, but even the mere feeling of anger, He with ease introduces this law likewise. With this view also He is ever bringing to mind the former words, to signify that His sayings are not contrary to them, but in agreement: that He is enforcing, not overthrowing them; perfecting, not doing them away.

And observe Him everywhere addressing His discourse to the man. Thus, He that puts away his wife, says He, causes her to commit adultery, and he that marries a woman put away, commits adultery. That is, the former, though he take not another wife, by that act alone has made himself liable to blame, having made the first an adulteress; the latter again has become an adulterer by taking her who is another's. For tell me not this, the other has cast her out; nay, for when cast out she continues to be the wife of him that expelled her. Then lest He should render the wife more self-willed, by throwing it all upon him who cast her out, He has shut against her also the doors of him who was afterwards receiving her; in that He says, He who marries her that is put away commits adultery; and so makes the woman chaste even though

unwilling, and blocks up altogether her access to all, and suffers her not to give an occasion for jealousy. For she who has been made aware that she positively must either keep the husband, who was originally allotted to her, or being cast out of that house, not have any other refuge -- she even against her will was compelled to make the best of her consort.

And if He discourse not at all unto her concerning these things, marvel not; for the woman is rather a weak creature. For this cause letting her go, in his threatening against the men He fully corrects her remissness. Just as if any one who had a prodigal child, leaving him, should rebuke those who make him such, and forbid them to have intercourse, or to approach him. And if that be galling, call to mind, I pray you, His former sayings, on what terms He had blessed His hearers; and you will see that it is very possible and easy. For he that is meek, and a peacemaker, and poor in spirit, and merciful, how shall he cast out his wife? He that is used to reconcile others, how shall he be at variance with her that is his own?

And not thus only, but in another way also He has lightened the enactment: forasmuch as even for him He leaves one manner of dismissal, when He says, Except for the cause of fornication; since the matter had else come round again to the same issue. For if He had commanded to keep her in the house, though defiling herself with many, He would have made the matter end again in adultery.

Do you see how these sayings agree with what had gone before? For he who looks not with unchaste eyes upon another woman, will not commit whoredom; and not committing whoredom, he will give no occasion to the husband to cast out his wife.

Therefore, you see, after this He presses the point without reserve, and builds up this fear as a bulwark, urging on the husband the great danger, if he do cast her out, in that he makes himself accountable for her adultery. Thus, lest you being told, pluck out the eye, should suppose this to be said even of a wife: He added in good time this corrective, in one way only giving leave to cast her out, but no otherwise.

5. Again, you have heard that it was said to them of old time, You shall not forswear yourself, but shall perform unto the Lord your oaths. But I say unto you, swear not at all. Matthew 5:33-34

Why did He go straightway not to theft, but to false witness, passing over that commandment? Because he that steals, does upon occasion swear also; but he that knows not either swearing or speaking falsehood, much less will he choose to steal. So that by this He has overthrown the other sin likewise: since falsehood comes of stealing.

But what means, You shall perform unto the Lord your oaths? It is this, you shall be true in swearing. But I say unto you, swear not at all.

Next, to lead them farther away from swearing by God, He says, Neither by Heaven, for it is God's throne, nor by the earth, for it is the footstool of His feet; nor by Jerusalem, for it is the city of the great King: still speaking out of the prophetic writings, and signifying Himself not to be opposed to the ancients. This was because they had a custom of swearing by these objects, and he intimates this custom near the end of his Gospel.

But mark, I pray you, on what ground He magnifies the elements; not from their own nature, but from God's relation to them, such as it had been in condescension declared. For because the tyranny of idolatry was great, that the elements might not be thought worthy of honor for their own sake, He has assigned this cause, which we have mentioned, which again would pass on to the glory of God. For He neither said,

because Heaven is beautiful and great, nor, because earth is profitable; but because the one is God's throne, the other His footstool; on every side urging them on towards their Lord.

Neither by your head, says He, because you can not make one hair white or black. Matthew 5:36

Here again, not as wondering at man, has He withdrawn him from swearing by his head (for so man himself would be worshipped), but as referring the glory to God, and signifying that you are not master even of yourself, and of course therefore not of the oaths made by your head. For if no one would give up his own child to another, much more will not God give up His own work to you. For though it be your head, yet is it the property of another; and so far from being master thereof, you shall not be able to do with it, no not the least thing of all. For He said not, You can not make one hair grow; but, Not so much as change its quality.

But what, it may be said, if any one should require an oath, and apply constraint? Let the fear of God be more powerful than the constraint: since, if you are to bring forward such excuses, you will keep none of the things which are enjoined.

Yea, for first with respect to your wife you will say, what if she be contentious and extravagant; and then as to the right eye, what if I love it, and am quite on fire? and of the unchaste look, what then, if I cannot help seeing? and of our anger against a brother, what if I be hasty, and not able to govern my tongue? and in general, all His sayings you may on this wise trample under foot. Yet surely with regard to human laws you dare not in any case use this allegation, nor say, what then if this or that be the case, but, willing or unwilling, you receive what is written.

And besides, you will never have compulsion to undergo at all. For he that has hearkened unto those former blessings, and has framed himself to be such as Christ enjoined, will have no such constraint to endure from any, being held in reverence and veneration by all.

But let your yea, be yea; and your nay, nay: for that which exceeds these comes of the evil one.

What is it then that exceeds yea and nay? It is the oath, not the perjury. For this latter is quite acknowledged, and no man needs to learn that it is of the evil one; and it is not an excess, but an opposite: whereas an excess means something more, and added over and above: which kind of thing swearing is.

What then, says one, was it of the evil one? And if it was of the evil one, how was it a law? Well, this same thing you will say concerning the wife also; how is that now accounted adultery, which was before permitted?

What now may one reply to this? That the precepts then uttered had reference to the weakness of them who were receiving the laws; since also to be worshipped with the vapor of sacrifice is very unworthy of God, just as to lisp is unworthy of a philosopher. That kind of thing accordingly was now laid down to be adultery, and swearing to be of the evil one, now that the principles of virtue have advanced. But if these things had been, from the first, laws of the devil, they would not have attained to so great goodness. Yea, for had those not been forerunners in the first place, these which we now have would not have been so easily received. Do not thou then require their excellency now, when their use is past: but then, when the time was calling for them. Or rather, if you will, even now: yea, for now also is their virtue shown: and most of all for the very cause, by reason of which we find fault with them. For their appearing such now, is the

greatest commendation of them. For had they not brought us up well, and made us meet for the reception of the greater precepts, they would not have appeared such.

Therefore as the breast, when it has fulfilled all its part, and is dismissing the child to the more manly diet, after that appears useless; and the parents who before thought it necessary for the babe, now abuse it with ten thousand mockeries (and many even not content with words of abuse, anoint it also with bitter drugs; that when their words have not power to remove the child's unseasonable propensity towards it, the real things may quench their longing): so also Christ says, that they are of the evil one, not to indicate that the old law is of the devil, but in order that with most exceeding earnestness He might lead them away from their ancient poverty. And to them He says these things; but with regard to the Jews, who were insensible and persevered in the same ways, He has anointed their city all round with the terror of captivity, as with some bitter drug, and made it inaccessible. But since not even this had power to restrain them, but they desired to see it again, running to it, just as a child to the breast, He hid it from them altogether; both pulling it down, and leading away the more part of them far from it: as it is with our cattle; many, by shutting out the calves, in time induce them to forego their old familiar use of the milk.

But if the old law had belonged to the devil, it would not have led people away from idolatry, but rather would have drawn them on and cast them into it; for this did the devil desire. But now we see the opposite effect produced by the old law. And indeed this very thing, the oath, was ordained of old for this cause, that they might not swear by the idols. For you shall swear, says He, by the true God. They were then no small advantages which the law effected, but rather very great. For that they came unto the strong meat, was the work of its care.

What then, it may be said, is not swearing of the evil one? Yes, indeed it is altogether of the evil one; that is, now, after so high a rule of self-restraint; but then not so.

But how, one may say, should the same thing become at one time good, at another time not good? Nay, I say the very contrary: how could it help becoming good and not good, while all things are crying aloud, that they are so: the arts, the fruits of the earth, and all things else?

See it, for example, taking place first in our own kind. Thus, to be carried, in the earliest age of life, is good, but afterwards pernicious; to eat food that has been softened in the mouth, in the first scene of our life, is good, but afterwards it is full of disgust; to be fed upon milk and to fly to the breast, is at first profitable and healthful, but tends afterwards to decay and harm. Do you see how the same actions, by reason of the times, appear good, and again not so? Yea, and to wear the robe of a child is well as long as you are a boy, but contrariwise, when you have become a man, it is disgraceful. Would you learn of the contrary case too, how to the child again the things of the man are unsuited? Give the boy a man's robe, and great will be the laughter; and greater the danger, he being often upset in walking after that fashion. Allow him to handle public affairs, and to traffic, and sow, and reap, and great again will be the laughter.

And why do I mention these things? When killing, which among all is acknowledged to be an invention of the evil one, killing, I say, having found its proper occasion, caused Phinehas, who committed it, to be honored with the priesthood. Numbers 25:8 For that killing is a work of him whom I just now mentioned, hear what Christ says; You will do the works of your Father; he was a manslayer from the beginning. John 8:44 But Phinehas became a manslayer, and it was counted unto him (so He speaks) for righteousness: and Abraham again on becoming not a man-slayer only, but (which was far worse) the slayer of his child, won more and more approbation. And Peter too wrought a twofold slaughter, nevertheless what he did

was of the Spirit. Acts v

Let us not then examine simply the acts, but the season too, and the causes, and the mind, and the difference of persons, and whatsoever else may accompany them, these let us search out with all exactness: for there is no arriving at the truth otherwise.

And let us be diligent, if we would attain unto the kingdom, to show forth something more than the old commandments; since we cannot otherwise lay hold of the things of Heaven. For if we arrive but at the same measure, that of the ancients, we shall stand without that threshold; for unless your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees, you cannot enter into the kingdom of Heaven. Matthew 5:20

6. Yet, although so heavy a threat is set down, there are some who so far from over-passing this righteousness, even come short of it; so far from shunning oaths, they even swear falsely; so far from avoiding an unchaste gaze, they even fall into the very act of wickedness. And all the rest of the things which are forbidden, they dare to do, as though past feeling: waiting for one thing only, the day of punishment, and the time when they are to pay the most extreme penalty for their misdoings. And this is the portion of those only who have ended their lives in wickedness. For these have reason to despair, and thenceforth to expect nothing else but punishment; whereas they who are yet here, may have power both to renew the fight and to conquer and be crowned with ease.

Despond not therefore, O man, neither put away your noble earnestness; for in truth the things are not grievous, which are enjoined. What trouble is it, I pray you, to shun an oath? What, does it cost any money? Is it sweat and hardship? It is enough to have willed only, and the whole is done.

But if you allege to me your habit; for this very reason most of all do I say, that your doing right is easy. For if you bring yourself to another habit, you had effected all.

Consider, for example, how among the Greeks, in many instances, persons lispings have entirely cured by much practice their halting tongue; while others, who were used to shrug up their shoulders in an unseemly way, and to be continually moving them, by putting a sword over them, have broken themselves of it.

For since you are not persuaded out of the Scriptures, I am compelled to shame you by them that are without. This God also did unto the Jews, when He said, Go forth unto the Isles of Chittim, and send unto Kedar, and know if nations will change their gods; which yet are no gods. And to the brutes likewise He sends us oftentimes, saying on this wise, Go to the ant, thou sluggard, and emulate her ways: and go forth to the bee.

This therefore I also now say unto you; consider the philosophers of the Greeks; and then you will know of how great punishment we are worthy, who disobey the laws of God: in that they for seemliness before men have taken exceeding pains, and you bestow not the same diligence, no, not for the things of Heaven.

But if you should reply, Habit has a wonderful power to beguile even those who are very much in earnest: this I likewise acknowledge; however, there is another thing which I say with it; that as it is powerful to beguile, so also is it easy to be corrected. For if you will set over yourself at home many to watch you, such as your servant, your wife, your friend, you will easily break off from the bad habits, being hard

pressed and closely restrained by all. If you succeed in doing this for ten days only, you will after that no longer need any further time, but all will be secured to you, rooted anew in the firmness of the most excellent habit.

When therefore you are beginning to correct this, though you should transgress your law a first, a second, a third, a twentieth time, do not despair, but rise up again, and resume the same diligence, and you will surely prevail.

For perjury surely is no trifling mischief. If to swear is of the evil one, how great the penalty which false swearing will bring! Did ye give praise to what has been said? Nay, I want not applause, nor tumults, nor noise. One thing only do I wish, that quietly and intelligently listening, you should do what is said. This is the applause, this the panegyric for me. But if you praise what I say, but doest not what you applaud, greater is the punishment, more aggravated the accusation: and to us it is shame and ridicule. For the things here present are no dramatic spectacle; neither do ye now sit gazing on actors, that you may merely applaud. This place is a spiritual school. Wherefore also there is but one thing aimed at, duly to perform the things that have been spoken, and to show forth our obedience by our works. For then only shall we have obtained all. Since as things are, to say the truth, we have fairly given up in despair. For I have not ceased giving these admonitions either to those whom I meet in private, or in discourse with you all in common. Yet I see no advantage at all gained, but you are still clinging to the former rude beginnings, which thing is enough to fill the teacher with weariness.

See, for example, Paul himself, hardly bearing it, because his scholars were delaying a long time in their earlier lessons: For when for the time, says he, ye ought to be teachers, you have need to be taught again which be the first principles of the oracles of God.

Wherefore we too mourn and lament. And if I see you persisting, I will forbid you for the future to set foot on this sacred threshold, and partake of the immortal mysteries; as we do fornicators and adulterers, and persons charged with murder. Yea, for it is better to offer our accustomed prayers, with two or three, who keep the laws of God, than to sweep together a multitude of transgressors and corrupters of others.

Let me have no rich man, no potentate, puffing at me here, and drawing up his eyebrows; all these things are to me a fable, a shade, a dream. For no one of those who are now rich, will stand up for me there, when I am called to account and accused, as not having thoroughly vindicated the laws of God, with all due earnestness. For this, this ruined even that admirable old man, 1 Samuel 3:13 though in his own life giving no handle for blame; yet for all that, because he overlooked the treading under foot of God's laws, he was chastised with his children, and paid that grievous penalty. And if, where the absolute authority of nature was so great, he who failed to treat his own children with due firmness endured so grievous a punishment; what indulgence shall we have, freed as we are from that dominion, and yet ruining all by flattery?

In order therefore that you may not destroy both us and your own selves with us, be persuaded, I entreat you; set very many to watch over you, and call you to account, and so free yourselves from the habit of oaths; that going on orderly from thence, you may both with all facility succeed in attaining unto all other virtue, and may enjoy the good things to come; which God grant that we may all win, by the grace and love towards man of our Lord Jesus Christ, to whom be glory and might now and always, even for ever and ever. Amen.

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