

PARABLE OF THE RICH FOOL

Taking up our Cross

November 17, 2024
9th Sunday of Luke
Revision E

Gospel: Luke 12:16-21

Epistle: Galatians 2:16-20

Today's Gospel lesson is commonly used in the West also, either for the 1st or 13th Sunday after Trinity.

Gospel: Luke 12:16-21.....	1467
Background for the Parable of the Rich Fool.....	1467
The Burden of Wealth.....	1468
The Definition of "Fool".....	1469
Becoming Rich toward God.....	1470
The Transient Nature of This Life.....	1476

Background for the Parable of the Rich Fool

The Parable of the Rich Fool is part of a series of teachings that is recorded almost entirely in Luke. This series begins in Luke 10:1 with the sending out of the Seventy (of which Luke himself was a member), and continues to Luke 18. The time frame for these events is late 29 AD and early 30 AD.

As the Gospel lesson begins, someone in the crowd asked Jesus to mediate a dispute over an inheritance (Luke 12:13). It was a tradition for respected rabbis to arbitrate personal disputes over property or money¹. Jesus however refused to take this role (Luke 12:14). Instead, he said, "Take heed and beware of covetousness for one's life does not consist in the abundance of the things he possesses" (Luke 12:15). This incident led Jesus to tell the parable of the Rich Fool.

Jesus had begun teaching people over a year earlier to beware of getting trapped into having their life and happiness depend on their possessions. For example, in mid-28 AD, during the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus spoke of not worrying about one's life in terms of food, clothing, and shelter (Matthew 6:25). The analogy Jesus made then was the birds and the flowers: they don't sow, reap or gather into storehouses, nor do they spin thread or sew clothing. Yet they are well provided for by their Heavenly Father (Matthew 6:25-33). Following the Parable of the Rich Fool, Jesus repeated the same message for the people here in Judea (Luke 12:22-31) that He gave to the people just outside Capernaum at the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 6:19-34).

Under the Old Covenant, there was a relationship between the fruitfulness of the land and the peoples' obedience to God (Deuteronomy 28:1-2). As the people were faithful to honor the Lord and love their neighbor, "the Lord will command the blessing upon you in your storehouses and in all that you put your hand to, and He will bless you in the Land which the Lord your God

¹ Alfred Edersheim, Sketches of Jewish Social Life, Hendrickson Publishers, Peabody, MA, 1994, pp. 119-120.

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gives you” (Deuteronomy 28:8). As they were generous with their bounty (Deuteronomy 14:28, 29; 26:12-15; 15:7-11), “The Lord will open for you His good storehouse, the heavens, to give rain to your land in its season and to bless all the work of your hand; and you shall lend to many nations, but you shall not borrow” (Deuteronomy 28:12; 15:6). Thus they were to be a holy people, chosen to be a people of His own possession out of all the people on the face of the earth (Deuteronomy 7:6, 14:2, 26:19, 28:1).

In the 1st Century grain was stored in large structures similar to crude grain elevators today. There was an opening at the top for putting grain in and an opening at the bottom for removing it. The walls of these “barns” or silos were thick, made of brick, and the inside walls were plastered. Thus, the grain could be kept dry and away from pests for storage for many years². In ancient civilizations, entire cities were sometimes devoted to the storage of grain, wine and oil (1 Kings 9:19, 2 Chronicles 8:4-6, 16:4, 17:12, 32:28, Exodus 1:11). When the rich man said to himself, “You have many goods laid up for many years; take your ease; eat, drink and be merry” (Luke 12:19), this was a realistic expectation for him. And it put him in a commanding position economically just as it was for Joseph in Egypt when Joseph was in charge of the Egyptian storehouses (Genesis 41:28-57). When he died suddenly, however, the question is whether the new silos were built yet, and whether the old silos had already been torn down. If the old silos were torn down, there was no one to supervise construction of the new ones, or pay the workers for building them. If the old silos were still there, but the new ones had not been finished yet, there was no place to store the excess grain. In order that the grain might not be wasted, it would probably just be distributed to the poor – which is what the rich man should have done anyway.

The Burden of Wealth

The parable began with a rich man’s land yielding plentifully (Luke 12:16). But this rich man did not respond according to the Mosaic Law to the bounty of his land. According to the Mosaic Law, the more he obtained, the more generous he was to be. Instead, he decided to keep it all for himself; since he couldn’t even store it all; he decided to build bigger storehouses (Luke 12:18).

Cyril of Alexandria commented³ to say that the rich man was speaking like someone in poverty due to the poverty of his spiritual awareness.

“What, therefore, does the rich man do, surrounded by a profusion of so many blessings beyond all numbering? In distress and anxiety, he utters the words of poverty. ‘For what’, he says, ‘shall I do?’ The man who is in want of necessaries constantly emits this miserable language; but here one of boundless wealth uses similar expressions. He determined then to build more spacious storehouses; he purposed to enjoy for himself alone those revenues that were sufficient for a populous city. He doesn’t look to the future; he doesn’t raise his eyes to God; he doesn’t count it worth his while to gain those treasures, which are above in heaven. He doesn’t cherish love for the poor, nor desire the estimation to be gained thereby; he doesn’t sympathize with suffering; it gives him no pain, nor awakens his pity. And what is still more irrational, he settles for himself the

² Ralph Gower, Manners and Customs of Bible Times, Moody Press, Chicago, 1987, p. 101.

³ Cyril of Alexandria, Commentary on Gospel of Luke, Chapter 12, Studion Publishers, 1983, p. 361..

duration of his life, as if he would reap this too from the ground; for he says, ‘I will say to myself, Self, you have goods laid up for many years; eat, drink, enjoy yourself.’”

However, God referred to him as a fool. “This night your soul will be required of you; then whose will those things be which you have provided?” (Luke 12:20). This connects right back to the dispute over an inheritance that started the Parable (Luke 12:13). Now someone else has an inheritance to fight over, which goes right back to the question that started the Parable.

The Definition of “Fool”

The term “fool” in an Old Testament culture carried more connotations than it does in English today. Consider Matthew 5:22; Jesus said that whoever calls his brother a fool shall be in danger of hell-fire. In our English culture, calling someone a fool is no big deal; stand up comedians make big money doing just that. To understand the connotations involved, we need to go primarily to the writings of Solomon: Proverbs and Ecclesiastes.

Riches and fools are an often-recurring theme in the writings of Solomon. Solomon himself was very rich; and as king, met his share of fools. Table 1 is a compilation of the writings of Solomon regarding the characteristics of fools as compared to the wise. Two Hebrew words are used to convey these characteristics: “*kesil*” meaning a fool in the sense of a stupid person and “*evil*” meaning generally a fool.

Some trends apparent from Table 1 are that a fool does not fear God and even denies He exists. He thinks himself to be wise and is always right in his own eyes, but he does not seek wisdom or knowledge. He is quarrelsome, temperamental and arrogant; one can’t tell him anything or make him change his behavior. He’s perverse, deceitful and spreads slander; he mocks the idea that he might be sinning. This reads like an indictment of our generation. Solomon contrasts the wise man as having opposite characteristics.

Psalms 49 might also be titled, “The Parable of the Rich Fool” and is a more detailed version of the same theme as the Gospel lesson. Jesus may even have drawn the Parable of the Rich Fool from Psalm 49. The Psalm was written as a riddle and a proverb (Psalm 49:3, 4), and set to a string accompaniment (Psalm 49:4). A number of themes are included:

- One need not fear even though surrounded by wealthy men working iniquity. All their wealth can’t even redeem their brother never mind buy eternal life (Psalm 49:5-9).
- Everyone will die, rich and fool alike, and leave their wealth to others. They may think their houses are forever and even name their land after themselves; but it won’t endure. This is the way of the foolish (Psalm 49:10-13).
- They are sheep appointed for Sheol with death as their shepherd. God will redeem the righteous from Sheol and the righteous shall rule over them in the morning (Psalm 49:14-15).

- Do not be afraid of a rich man when the glory of his house increases. When he dies, he will carry nothing away and his glory does not descend after him. He will never see the Light; he is without understanding; and he is like an animal that perishes (Psalm 49:16-20).

Table 1
Characteristics of Fools Versus the Wise

The Fool	The Wise	Reference
Toward God		
Denies existence of God	Seeks God	Psalm 14:1,2; 55:1,2
Speaks error against Lord	Fears Lord	Isaiah 32:6, Proverbs 1:7
Sacrifice of Fools	Guards steps	Ecclesiastes 5:1, 4
On Understanding		
Thinks self wise, but hates knowledge, wisdom	Has wisdom	Proverbs 1:22, 14:33, 1:7, 17:16 Romans 1:22
Right in his own eyes	Listens to counsel	Proverbs 10:8, 12:15, 18:2, 26:5, 12, 28:26, Ecclesiastes 10:6
Feeds on folly	Seeks knowledge	Proverbs 15:14, 16:22
Walks in darkness	Eyes in head	Ecclesiastes 2:14
Behavior		
Arrogant & careless	Turns from evil	Proverbs 14:16, Ecclesiastes 7:7
Rejects father's discipline	Regards reproof	Proverbs 15:5, 17:21, 25
Even blows won't correct	Rebuke goes deep	Proverbs 17:10, 19:29, 26:3, 27:22
Quarrelsome	Avoids strife	Proverbs 20:3, 27:3
Sport = wickedness	Sport = wisdom	Proverbs 7:22, 10:23, Isaiah 32:6, 7
Always loses temper	Holds his anger	Proverbs 29:11, Ecclesiastes 7:9
Companions suffer harm	Companions wise	Proverbs 13:20, Psalm 107:17
Control of Tongue		
Speaks slander, deceit	Restrains lips	Proverbs 10:18, Ecclesiastes 10:12, Isaiah 32:7
Mocks sin	Has goodwill	Proverbs 14:9
Perverse, hasty in speech	Feeds many with lips	Proverbs 10:21, 17:7, 19:1, 29:20
Spouts folly	Builds bridges	Proverbs 15:2, Ecclesiastes 10:13

These are very strong words; but they fit the context of our Gospel lesson quite well (compare Luke 12:19-20).

Becoming Rich toward God

In contrast to the behavior of the rich fool, the Lord encourages us to be “rich toward God” (Luke 12:21). There are two parts to this: (1) discovering what are the riches of God, and (2) determining how one obtains such.

The key to both is faith: “Faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen (Hebrews 11:1). If we could see what it is we’re hoping for, it wouldn’t be hope and we wouldn’t need faith (Romans 8:24).

Concerning the riches of God, we are told of the riches of His kindness (Romans 2:4, Ephesians 2:7), the riches of His glory (Romans 9:23, Ephesians 1:18, Philippians 4:19, Colossians 1:27) and the riches of His grace (Ephesians 1:7, 2:7). These riches are unsearchable (Ephesians 3:8) and have incredible depth in wisdom and knowledge and judgment (Romans 11:33). Yet the riches of God are also a mystery (Colossians 1:27). He bestows His riches equally to Jews and Gentiles who call upon Him (Romans 11:12, Colossians 1:27). But it takes

the eyes of faith to see it. Moses saw it (through faith) and regarded the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt (Hebrews 11:26).

Concerning one's obtaining the riches of God; earthly riches can get in the way. In cases of fixation on earthly riches, Jesus advised people to sell everything and give to the poor in order that they might have treasure in heaven (Luke 12:33, Matthew 19:21). The Rich Young Ruler was so fixated on earthly riches that he couldn't do this (Matthew 19:22, Luke 18:23). Treasure in heaven is described as wealth that doesn't grow old, that doesn't fail, that can't be stolen and that can't deteriorate (Luke 12:33).

Leo the Great stated⁴ that we should be thankful no matter what we have received from God, much or little. To do otherwise is to blame Him and murmur against Him. All things are in His hand, and whatever pleases Him should please us also.

“God wishes us to be good, because He is good; none of His judgments ought to displease us. If we don't give Him thanks in all things, what else is it but we blame Him in some degree. Man's folly too often dares to murmur against his Creator, not only in time of lack, but also in time of plenty, so that, when something is not supplied, we complain, and when certain things are in abundance we are ungrateful. The man who had rich harvests scorned his well-filled silos, and groaned over his abundant grape-gathering; he did not give thanks for the size of the crop, but complained of no place to store it. If the ground has been less prolific than usual, and the vines and the olives have failed in their supply of fruit, the year is accused, the elements are blamed, and curses fill the air and the sky. On the other hand, nothing better fits the faithful disciples of Truth than the persistent lifting of praise to God. As Paul says, ‘Rejoice always, pray without ceasing; in all things give thanks, for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus in all things for you’ (1 Thessalonians 5:16-18). But how shall we be partakers of this devotion, unless changes of fortune train our minds in steadfastness, so that the love directed towards God may not be puffed up in prosperity nor faint in adversity. Let that, which pleases God, please us too. Let us rejoice in whatever measure of gifts He gives. Let him who has used great possessions well use small ones well also! Plenty and scarcity may be equally for our good, and even in spiritual progress we shall not be downcast at small results, if our minds have not become dry and barren. Let this spring from the soil of our heart. He that continues to be generous will always be supplied with means to give. Therefore, let us use all the works of godliness that each year gives us, and let not seasons of difficulty hinder our Christian benevolence. The Lord knows how to replenish the widow's vessels, which her pious deed of hospitality has emptied (1 Kings 17:8-16). He knows how to turn water into wine (John 2:1-10); He knows how to satisfy 5,000 hungry persons with a few loaves (Matthew 14:15-21).”

Paul advised Timothy concerning those in his area who were wealthy that they trust in God rather than their earthly riches. Especially, Paul said, “Let them do good, that they be rich in good works, ready to give, willing to share, storing up for themselves a good foundation for the time to come, that they may lay hold on eternal life” (1 Timothy 6:17-19). By our deeds, our

⁴ Leo the Great, Sermons, XII, 3.

good works, we treasure up for ourselves glory, honor and immortality (Romans 2:8-10 loosely). These deeds or good works are written (and treasured) in books in heaven (Revelation 20:12). On the basis of these books plus the Book of Life, everyone is judged (Revelation 20:12-15).

John Cassian stated⁵ that covetousness could only be overcome by stripping oneself of everything. Examples he used are the Apostle Judas, Ananias and Sapphira and Elisha's servant, Gehazi. Jesus allowed Judas to steal from the moneybag to curb his covetousness, but it didn't satisfy him. Ananias and Sapphira lied to escape poverty because of covetousness. Like Gehazi⁶, they were all lepers in spirit and heart. We need to consider our weak and shifty nature in order that we don't get carried away like the rich fool.

“The tyranny of avarice, once the mind is taken prisoner by it, allows it to keep to no rules of honesty, nor to be satisfied with any additions to its gains. We must seek to put an end to this madness, not by riches, but by stripping ourselves of them. Judas had received the bag set apart for the distribution to the poor, which was entrusted to his care, that he might at least satisfy himself with plenty of money, and set a limit to his avarice. Yet his plentiful supply only broke out into a still greedier incitement of desire, so that he was ready no longer secretly to rob the bag, but actually to sell the Lord Himself. For the madness of this avarice is not satisfied with any amount of riches.”

“Peter, taught by these instances, and knowing that someone who has avarice cannot bridle it, and that it cannot be ended by a large or small sum of money, but only by the renunciation of everything, punished with death Ananias and Sapphira, who had kept back something out of their property. The death, which Judas had voluntarily met with for the sin of betraying the Lord, they might also undergo for their lying avarice (Acts 5:1-11). How closely do the sin and punishment correspond in each case! In the one case treachery, in the other falsehood, was the result of covetousness. For though the issues of their deeds may appear different, yet they coincide in having one and the same aim. Judas, in order to escape poverty, desired to take back what he had forsaken⁷. The others, for fear lest they might become poor, tried to keep back something out of their property, which they should have either offered to the Apostle in good faith, or have given entirely to the brethren. In each case the judgment of death follows, because each sin sprang from the root of covetousness. If there resulted so severe a sentence against those, who did not covet other persons' goods, but tried to be sparing of their own, what should we think of those who desire to amass wealth, without ever having had any of their own. That is, if we make a show of poverty before men, but before God we are convicted of being rich through the passion of avarice, how will we fare?”

⁵ John Cassian, *Institutes of the Coenobia*, VII, 24-26, 30.

⁶ Elisha had just healed Naaman of leprosy. Naaman offered Elisha a present of a great deal of gold, silver and clothing, but like all the Unmercenary Healers, Elisha would not accept payment for what he had been freely given. Gehazi, however, ran after Naaman and asked for a small portion of the gift Naaman offered. Naaman was happy to give it to Gehazi. When Gehazi returned to Elisha, Elisha informed him that he had also inherited Naaman's leprosy because of his covetousness.

⁷ Judas, along with the rest of the Twelve, had left everything in following Jesus (Matthew 19:27-29). Yet Judas was in charge of the money box containing alms for the poor, and he pilfered what was in it (John 12:6).

“Such are seen to be lepers in spirit and heart, after the likeness of Gehazi, who desired the uncertain riches of this world, and was covered with the taint of foul leprosy (2 Kings 5:20-27). He left us a clear example that every soul which is defiled with the stain of avarice is covered with the spiritual leprosy of sin, and is counted as unclean before God with a perpetual curse.”

“Keeping then in mind the judgment of Ananias and Sapphira, let us dread keeping back any of those things which we gave up and vowed to forsake. Let us also fear the example of Gehazi, who for the sin of covetousness was chastised with the punishment of perpetual leprosy. From this let us beware of acquiring that wealth which we never formerly possessed. Moreover, dreading both the fault and the death of Judas, let us with all the power that we have, avoid taking back any of that wealth, which we once cast away from us. Above all, considering the state of our weak and shifty nature, let us beware lest the day of the Lord come upon us as a thief in the night, and find our conscience defiled even by a single penny. This would void all the fruits of our renunciation of the world, and cause that which was said to the rich man to be directed towards us also. ‘You fool, this night your soul shall be required of you; then who’s shall those things be which you have prepared? (Luke 12:20) And taking no thought for tomorrow, let us never allow ourselves to be enticed away.”

Cyprian of Carthage exhorted⁸ his people very strongly to demonstrate their faith by their works (James 2:18-26), where offerings to the Church and to the poor are the best investment one can make. The righteous man will never lack for resources, and he who feeds Christ will be himself fed by Christ. We sometimes bring forward vain excuses regarding why we can’t do this, and the Parable of the Rich Fool is a warning to us. Those who think themselves rich in this world are deceived and cannot properly labor in the Church or celebrate the Lord’s Supper. Their eyes are covered with the gloom of blackness, and they cannot see their brothers, the poor and needy, with whom they share the Christian life.

“Are you afraid that your inheritance may fall short, if you begin to give liberally from it? Yet when has it ever happened that resources have failed the righteous man, since it is written, ‘The Lord will not slay the righteous soul with famine’ (Proverbs 10:3 LXX). Ravens fed Elijah in the desert (1 Kings 17:1-6); and a meal from heaven was made ready for Daniel in the lions’ den⁹. And you are afraid that food should be lacking to you, laboring and deserving well of the Lord? He Himself bears witness, for the rebuke of those whose mind is doubtful and whose faith is small, ‘Look at the birds of the air, they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they?’ (Matthew 6:26) God feeds the birds, and daily food is available to the sparrows; to creatures, which have no sense of divine things, there is no lack of food or drink. Do you think that to a Christian, to a servant of the Lord, to one given to good works, to one that is dear to his Lord, anything will be lacking?”

⁸ Cyprian of Carthage, Treatises, VIII, 11-15.

⁹ Lancelot C. L. Brenton, The Septuagint with Apocrypha, Hendrickson Publishers, Peabody MA 01961, 1990, p. 138. Bel and the Dragon 1:30-39.

“Do you imagine that he who feeds Christ is not himself fed by Christ, or that earthly things will be lacking to those to whom heavenly and divine things are given? Where does this unbelieving thought, this impious and sacrilegious consideration come from? What does a faithless heart do in the home of faith? Why is he, who does not trust in Christ, called a Christian? The name of Pharisee is more fitting for you. When the Lord was speaking about almsgiving, He warned us to make to ourselves friends of our earthly lucre by provident good works, which might afterwards receive us into eternal dwellings. The Scripture added after this, ‘But the Pharisees heard all these things, who were very covetous, and they derided Him’ (Luke 16:14). Some people like this we see now in the Church, whose closed ears and darkened hearts admit no light from spiritual and saving warnings. We need not wonder that they criticize the servants of God, when we see the Lord Himself was despised by such.”

“Why do you applaud yourself in those vain and silly conceits, as if you were withheld from good works by fear for the future? Why do you lay out before yourself certain shadows and omens of a vain excuse? Confess what is the truth; and since you cannot deceive those who know, utter the secret and hidden things of your mind. The gloom of barrenness has besieged your mind; and while the light of truth has departed, the deep and profound darkness of avarice has blinded your carnal heart. You are the captive and slave of your money; you are bound with the chains and bonds of covetousness; and you whom Christ had once loosed, are once more in chains. You keep your money, which, when kept, does not keep you. You heap up an inheritance, which burdens you with its weight; and you do not remember what God answered to the rich man, who boasted with a foolish exultation of the abundance of his exuberant harvest. ‘You fool’, He said, ‘this night your soul is required of you; then whose shall those things be which you have provided?’ (Luke 12:20) Why do you watch in loneliness over your riches? Why, for your own punishment, do you heap up the burden of your inheritance, that in proportion as you are rich in this world, you may become poor to God? Divide your returns with the Lord your God; share your gains with Christ; make Christ a partner with you in your earthly possessions, that He also may make you a fellow-heir with Him in His heavenly kingdom.”

“Those are mistaken, and are deceived, that think themselves rich in this world. Listen to the voice of your Lord rebuking men like you with righteous reproaches. ‘You say I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing; and you don’t know that you are wretched, miserable, poor, blind and naked. I counsel you to buy of me gold tried in the fire, that you may be rich; and white clothing, that you may be clothed, and that the shame of your nakedness may not appear in you; and anoint your eyes with eye-salve, that you may see’ (Revelation 3:17-18). You therefore, who are rich, buy for yourself from Christ gold tried by fire; that you may be pure gold, with your filth burned out as if by fire, if you are purged by almsgiving and righteous works. Buy for yourself white clothing, that you who had been naked according to Adam, may be clothed with the white garment of Christ. And you who are a wealthy and rich matron in Christ’s Church, anoint your eyes, not with the eye wash of the devil, but with

Christ's eye wash, that you may be able to attain to see God, by deserving well of God, both by good works and character."

"You who are such as this cannot labor in the Church. For your eyes, overcast with the gloom of blackness, and shadowed in night, do not see the needy and poor. You are wealthy, and do you think that you celebrate the Lord's Supper, not at all considering the offering, who come to the Lord's Supper without a sacrifice, and yet take part of the sacrifice, which the poor man has offered? Consider the widow that remembered the heavenly precepts, doing good even amid the difficulties and straits of poverty, casting two mites, which were all that she had, into the treasury. The Lord observed and saw, regarding her work not for its abundance, but for its intention, and considering not how much, but from how much, she had given. He answered, 'Truly I say unto you, that widow has cast in more than anyone into the offerings of God. For everyone else has cast in to the offerings of God of that which they had in abundance; but she out of her poverty has cast in all that she had' (Luke 21:3-4). Greatly blessed and glorious woman, who even before the Day of Judgment has merited to be praised by the voice of the Judge! Let the rich be ashamed of their barrenness and unbelief. The widow, needy in means, is found rich in works. And although everything that is given is conferred upon widows and orphans, she gives, who ought to receive, that we may know from this what punishment awaits the barren rich man, when by this instance even the poor ought to labor in good works. And in order that we may understand that their labors are given to God, and that whoever performs them deserves well of the Lord, Christ calls this 'the offerings of God'. He intimates that the widow has cast in two mites into the offerings of God, that it may be more abundantly evident that he who has pity on the poor lends to God."

Clement of Alexandria stated¹⁰ that the issue in choosing between God and mammon involves neither fear of punishment nor the promise of earthly gifts, since both produce mere hirelings. We should want to do this, and not have to be driven by punishment or lured by earthly gifts into it. We should desire to seek the good and live according to the likeness of Christ and not according to the love of money, which He calls "mammon". Honor, marriage and even voluntary poverty can produce the same effects and "choke" the word of God for us if it's not something we freely choose to do. Our true treasure is in what produces righteousness in our lives.

"We must pursue the word of salvation neither from fear of punishment nor from promise of a gift, but on account of the good itself. Those who do so stand on the right hand of the sanctuary (Matthew 25:32-40, Hebrews 8:1, 1:3). But those who think that by the gift of what is perishable they shall receive immortality in exchange are, in the parable of the two brothers, called 'hirelings' (Matthew 21:28-31). This sheds some light on the expression 'in the likeness and image' (2 Corinthians 3:18). Some live according to the likeness of Christ, while those who stand on the left hand live according to their own image. To choose by imitation differs from him who chooses according to knowledge, as that which is set on fire differs from that which is illuminated".

¹⁰ Clement of Alexandria, *Stromata*, IV, 6.

“What does the parable of Lazarus mean, by showing the image of the rich and poor? (Luke 16:19-26) And what does the saying mean, ‘No man can serve two masters, God and mammon?’ (Matthew 6:24), the Lord so terming the love of money. For instance, the covetous, who were invited, did not respond to the invitation to the supper (Luke 14:15-23), not because of their possessing property, but because of their inordinate affection to what they possessed”.

For not riches only, but also honor, marriage and poverty, have ten thousand cares for him who is unfit for them. And those cares He indicated in the Parable of the Sower, when He said that ‘the seed of the word which fell among the thorns’ (Matthew 13:3-9, 18-23) was choked by them, and could not bring forth fruit. It is therefore necessary to learn how to make use of every occurrence, so as by a good life, to be trained for eternal life. For it said, ‘I saw the wicked exalted and towering as the cedars of Lebanon; and I passed’, says the Scripture, ‘and he was not. And I sought him, and his place was not found. Keep innocence, and look on uprightness; for there is a remnant to the man of peace’ (Psalm 37:35-37 LXX, Isaiah 2:12-14). Such will he be who believes unpretentiously with his whole heart, and is tranquil in his whole soul. ‘For different people honor me with their lips, but their heart is far from the Lord’ (Isaiah 29:13).

“Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on the earth, where moth and rust destroy, and thieves break through and steal’ (Matthew 6:19), says the Lord, in reproach to the covetous, to those who are full of cares, and to those who indulge their bodies. For amours, diseases, and evil thoughts ‘*break through*’ the mind. But our true ‘treasure’ is where what is allied to our mind is, since it produces righteousness, showing that we must reform our old conversation by asking for mercy. ‘For I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy’ (Romans 9:15, Exodus 33:19), said the Lord. For so He says, ‘Fool, this night shall your soul be required of you; and who’s shall those things be which you have prepared?’ (Luke 12:20)

Therefore, our Gospel lesson is a call to consider where our treasure is; for where our treasure is, there is where our heart will be also (Luke 12:34). And as we realize that our real treasure is in heaven, good works are a natural, joyful result.

The Transient Nature of This Life

One of the Psalms attributed to Moses states, “The days of our lives *are* seventy years; and if by reason of strength *they are* eighty years, yet their boast *is* only labor and sorrow; for it is soon cut off, and we fly away” (Psalm 90:10). Thus, it is with all of humanity; we have a transient existence in this life, and what matters is what we store up for eternity.

Cyprian of Carthage addressed¹¹ the transient nature of this life using the words of the Lord’s Prayer. There is both a spiritual and a literal understanding to the words, “Give us this day our daily bread” (Matthew 6:11). The spiritual understanding relates to the Eucharist, which is our true food, where we have no life without it (John 6:51-58). The literal understanding relates to those who have renounced the world with its riches and pomp, and who ask for

¹¹ Cyprian of Carthage, Treatises, IV, 18-21.

themselves merely food and support. Both understandings stand in utter contrast to the “rich fool”, where Jesus spoke of a man becoming perfect and complete by selling all his goods, not by hoarding them. On the other hand, the Scriptures promise that daily bread cannot be lacking to the righteous man.

“We ask in the Lord’s Prayer, ‘Give us this day our daily bread’. And this may be understood both spiritually and literally, because either way of understanding it is rich in divine usefulness to our salvation. For Christ is the bread of life; and this bread does not belong to all men, but it is ours. Accordingly, we say, ‘Our Father’, because He is the Father of those who understand and believe; so also, we call it ‘our bread’, because Christ is the bread of those who are in union with His body. We ask that this bread should be given to us daily, that we who are in Christ, and daily receive the Eucharist for the food of salvation, may not, by injecting some heinous sin, be prevented from partaking of the heavenly bread, and be separated from Christ’s body. He Himself warns, ‘I am the bread of life which came down from heaven. If any man eats of my bread, he shall live forever; and the bread which I will give is my flesh, for the life of the world’ (John 6:51-58). When He says that whoever shall eat of His bread shall live forever, it is clear that those who partake of His body and receive the Eucharist by the right of communion are living. On the other hand, we must fear and pray lest anyone who, being withheld from communion, is separate from Christ’s body should remain at a distance from salvation. He Himself threatens, ‘Unless you eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink His blood, you shall have no life in you’ (John 6:53). And therefore, we ask that our bread — that is, Christ — may be given to us daily, that we who live in Christ may not depart from His sanctification and body.”

“Another understanding of, ‘Give us this day our daily bread’, refers to those who have renounced the world, and have cast away its riches and pomp in the faith of spiritual grace, and who ask simply for food and support. The Lord instructs us, ‘Whoever does not forsake all that he has cannot be my disciple’ (Luke 14:33). But he who has begun to be Christ’s disciple, renouncing all things according to the word of his Master, ought to ask for his daily food, and not to extend his petition to a long period. The Lord prescribes, ‘Take no thought for tomorrow, for tomorrow itself shall take thought for itself. Sufficient for the day is the evil thereof’ (Matthew 6:34). With reason, then, does Christ’s disciple ask food for himself for today, since he is prohibited from thinking of tomorrow. It becomes a contradiction for us to seek to live long in this world, since we ask that the kingdom of God should come quickly. Paul admonishes us, giving substance to the steadfastness of our hope and faith. ‘We brought nothing into this world, *and it is* certain we can carry nothing out. And having food and clothing, with these we shall be content. But those who desire to be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and *into* many foolish and harmful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition. For the love of money is a root of all *kinds of* evil, for which some have strayed from the faith in their greediness, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows” (1 Timothy 6:7-10).

“He teaches us that riches are not only to be scorned, but that they are also dangerous; that in them is the root of seducing evils, that deceive the blindness of

the human mind by a hidden deception. God rebukes the rich fool, who thinks of his earthly wealth, and boasts himself in the abundance of his overflowing harvests, saying, 'You fool, this night your soul shall be required of you; then who's shall those things be which you have provided?' (Luke 12:20) The fool who was to die that night was rejoicing in his stores, and he to whom life already was failing, was thinking of the abundance of his food. But, on the other hand, the Lord tells us that he becomes perfect and complete who sells all his goods, and distributes them for the use of the poor, and so lays up for himself treasure in heaven. He says that that man is able to follow Him, and to imitate the glory of the Lord's passion. Free from hindrance, he is involved in no worldly entanglements, but he accompanies his possessions, which earlier have been sent to God. Every one of us may be able to thus prepare himself, let him thus learn to pray and know, from the character of the prayer, what he ought to be."

"For daily bread cannot be lacking to the righteous man, since it is written, 'The Lord will not slay the soul of the righteous by hunger' (Proverbs 10:3 LXX). And again 'I have been young and now am old, yet I have not seen the righteous forsaken, nor his descendants begging their bread' (Psalm 37:25). The Lord moreover promises, 'Do not worry saying, what shall we eat, or what shall we drink, or how shall we be clothed? For after all these things do the nations seek. And your Father knows that you have need of all these things. Seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you' (Matthew 6:31-33). To those who seek God's kingdom and righteousness, He promises that all things shall be added (John 6:27, Matthew 6:8). Since all things are God's, nothing will be lacking to him who possesses God, if God Himself is not lacking to him. Thus, a meal was divinely provided for Daniel, when he was shut up in the lions' den. In the midst of wild beasts that were hungry, and yet spared him, the man of God was fed¹². Thus, Elijah in his flight was nourished by ravens serving him in his solitude" (1 Kings 17:1-6).

Also using the words of the Lord's Prayer, Leo the Great, Pope of Rome, encouraged¹³ his people to enter into the life of the Church, which included the fasts on Wednesday and Friday, and the vigil at Great Vespers on Saturday. Part of the life of the Church includes almsgiving with cheerfulness and showing love for our neighbor in order that death doesn't come upon us unawares and we end up as the rich fool.

"In the Lord's Prayer we say, 'Thy Kingdom come, Thy will be done as in heaven, so also on earth' (Matthew 6:10). For what else do we ask for in these words but that God may subdue those whom He has not yet subdued; and as in heaven He makes the angels servants of His will, so also on earth He may make men? And in seeking this we love God; we love also our neighbor. The love within us has but one Object, since we desire the bond-servant to serve and the Lord to have rule."

"The habit of well-doing strengthens this state of mind, because the conscience needs to be delighted at good deeds, and do willingly what it rejoices

¹² Lancelot C. L. Brenton, The Septuagint with Apocrypha, Hendrickson Publishers, Peabody MA 01961, 1990, p. 138. Bel and the Dragon 1:30-39.

¹³ Leo the Great, Sermons, XC, 3-4.

to have done. Thus, fasts are kept, alms freely given, justice maintained, frequent prayer resorted to, and the desires of individuals become the common wish of all. Labor fosters patience; gentleness extinguishes anger; loving-kindness treads down hatred; unclean desires are slain by holy aspirations; avarice is cast out by liberality; and burdensome wealth becomes the means of virtuous acts. But because the snares of the devil are not at rest even in such a state of things, most rightly at certain seasons of the year the renewal of our vigor is provided for. Now in particular, one who is greedy of present good might boast due to the clemency of the weather and the fertility of the land, and having stored his crops in great barns, might say to his soul, 'you have much goods, eat and drink'. Let him pay attention to the rebuke of the Divine voice, 'You fool, this night they require your soul of you, and the things which you have prepared, whose shall they be?' (Luke 12:19-20) This should be the wise man's most anxious consideration, in order that, as the days of this life are short and its span uncertain, death may never come upon him unawares, and that knowing himself mortal he may meet his end fully prepared. And so, that this may be available both for the sanctification of our bodies and the renewal of our souls, on Wednesday and Friday let us fast, and on Saturday let us keep vigil with the most blessed Apostle Peter, whose prayers will help us to obtain fulfillment of our holy desires through Christ our Lord."

John Chrysostom compared¹⁴ this life to a temporary stay in an inn. When staying in an inn or a hotel, we don't stick around and remodel it; we don't move all our belongings in; we just stay there briefly and leave. Many people get very involved fighting for the things of this life and neglecting heavenly things. When they are called to depart, they are totally unprepared, because they do not have an accurate judgment of all things.

"Do you not know that the present life is a brief stay in a far country? You are not a citizen, but you are a traveler, where no one has a city; the city is above. Present life is but a journey every day, while nature is running its course. Some store up goods on the way; some bury jewelry on the road. Now when you enter an inn do you remodel the inn? No, you eat, drink and hurry to leave. The present life is an inn; we have entered it, and we bring present life to a close. Let us be eager to leave with a good hope; let us leave nothing here, that we may not lose it there.

When you enter the inn, what do you say to the clerk? 'Take care where you put our things', that you do not leave anything behind, that nothing may be lost, not even what is small and trifling, in order that we may carry everything back to our home. The traveler has an advantage over us. The traveler knows when he is going to the inn, and when he is leaving; for the departure as well as the arrival is in his own power. But when I enter the inn, that is to say, this present life, I don't know when I will depart. It may be that I am busy providing myself with supplies to last for a long time, when the Master suddenly summons me saying, 'You fool, for whom shall those things be which you have prepared? This night your soul is being taken from you' (Luke 12:20 loosely). The time of your departure is uncertain; the tenure of your possessions is insecure; there are

¹⁴ John Chrysostom, Two Homilies on Eutropius, II, 5-6.

many steep cliffs and roaring waves on every side of you. We ought not to desert the reality and run after shadows?"

"I say these things, and shall not cease saying them, causing continual pain, and dressing the wounds; and I say this not for the sake of the fallen, but for those who are still standing. The fallen have departed, and their career has ended, but those who are yet standing have gained a more secure position through the calamities of others. What then shall we do? Do one thing only, hate riches, and love your life; throw away your goods; not all of them, but cut off the excess. Do not be covetous of other men's goods, don't plunder the widow and orphan or seize their house. I do not address myself to persons but to facts. But if anyone's conscience attacks him, he himself is responsible for it, not my words. Why are you grasping where you bring anger upon yourself? Grasp where there is a crown to be gained. Fight to lay hold of heaven not earth! 'The kingdom of heaven suffers violence, and the violent take it by force' (Matthew 11:12). Why do you lay hold of the poor man who criticizes you? Lay hold of Christ who praises you for it. Do you see your senselessness and madness? Do you foreclose on the poor man who has little? Christ says, 'lay hold of Me; I thank you for it; lay hold of My Kingdom and take it by violence'. If you try to lay hold of an earthly kingdom, you are punished; but in the case of the heavenly kingdom, you are punished if you do not lay hold of it. Where worldly things are concerned there are hard feelings, but where spiritual things are concerned, there is love. Meditate daily on these things, and if two days from now you see another riding in a chariot, arrayed in silk clothing and elated with pride, do not be dismayed and troubled. Do not praise a rich man, but only him who lives in righteousness. Do not revile a poor man, but learn to have an upright and accurate judgment in all things."

TABLE I
CHARACTERISTICS OF FOOLS VS. THE WISE

THE FOOL	THE WISE	REFERENCE
Toward God		
Denies existence of God	Seeks God	Psalms 14:1,2; 55:1,2
Speaks error against Lord	Fears Lord	Isaiah 32:6, Proverbs 1:7
Sacrifice of Fools	Guards steps	Ecc. 5:1, 4
On Understanding		
Thinks self wise, but hates knowledge, wisdom	Has wisdom	Pr. 1:22, 14:33, 1:7, 17:16 Rom. 1:22
Right in his own eyes	Listens to counsel	Pr. 10:8, 12:15, 18:2, 26:5, 12, 28:26, Ecc. 10:6
Feeds on folly	Seeks knowledge	Pr. 15:14, 16:22
Walks in darkness	Eyes in head	Ecc. 2:14
Behavior		
Arrogant & careless	Turns from evil	Pr. 14:16, Ecc. 7:7
Rejects father's discipline	Regards reproof	Pr 15:5, 17:21, 25
Even blows won't correct	Rebuke goes deep	Pr. 17:10, 19:29, 26:3, 27:22
Quarrelsome	Avoids strife	Pr. 20:3, 27:3
Sport = wickedness	Sport = wisdom	Pr. 7:22, 10:23, Is. 32:6, 7
Always loses temper	Holds his anger	Pr. 29:11, Ecc. 7:9
Companions suffer harm	Companions wise	Pr. 13:20, Ps. 107:17
Control of Tongue		
Speaks slander, deceit	Restrains lips	Pr. 10:18, Ecc. 10:12, Is. 32:7
Mocks sin	Has goodwill	Pr. 14:9
Perverse, hasty in speech	Feeds many with lips	Pr. 10:21, 17:7, 19:1, 29:20
Spouts folly	Builds bridges	Pr. 15:2, Ecc. 10:13

Taking up our Cross

November 17, 2024
21st Sunday after Pentecost
Revision G

Table of Contents

Epistle: Galatians 2:16-20.....	1220
The Gospel versus the Law in the 1 st Century.....	1220
The Issues in Jerusalem, 48 AD.....	1221
The Result of Paul’s Actions.....	1223
Dead to the World.....	1225
Examples of the Gospel and the Cross.....	1228
Taking Up Our Cross: Humility and Love.....	1231

Epistle: Galatians 2:16-20

Today’s Epistle lesson is also used in the Orthodox Church in September for the Sunday after the Exaltation of the Cross. In the West, this Epistle lesson is sometimes used for the 4th Sunday after Pentecost. For a Study of other aspects of the Cross in our lives, see *The Exaltation of the Cross* (September 14th), the Sundays before and after the Exaltation, and the 3rd Sunday of Lent.

The Gospel versus the Law in the 1st Century

The context of today’s Epistle lesson is the conduct of the Apostle Peter in Antioch (Galatians 2:11-12) where he usually ate with the Antioch Gentiles, but withdrew and ate separately with Jews who came from Jerusalem. Paul referred to Peter, Barnabas and others of the Jews as hypocrites and as not being straightforward about the truth of the Gospel regarding Jewish dietary laws (Leviticus 11).

Paul’s argument was that Peter, himself, had had a vision in c. 40 AD (Acts 10:10-16) which Peter rested heavily upon in his argument with the Jews at the Council of Jerusalem in 48 AD that the Gentiles are equal partakers of the Kingdom:

“So God, who knows the heart, acknowledged them (the Gentiles) by giving them the Holy Spirit, just as He did to us, and made no distinction between us and them, purifying their hearts by faith. Now therefore, why do you test God by putting a yoke (i.e. the Mosaic Law) on the neck of the disciples which neither our fathers nor we were able to bear? But we believe that through the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ we shall be saved in the same manner as they” (Acts 15:8-11).

The decree of the Council of Jerusalem was that the Gentile believers did not need to keep the Mosaic Law in all its rituals (Acts 15:19-29). The Epistle lesson is Paul’s commentary on what Peter and the others did in Antioch a few years after the Council of Jerusalem. On this occasion, Peter had been hypocritical. When he was there by himself, he socialized and ate with the brethren there. But when a delegation of Jews came to visit from Bishop James in Jerusalem, he withdrew and separated himself according to the Jewish customs of avoiding defilement from contact with Gentiles (Galatians 2:11-13, John 18:28).

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Paul's reply to Peter is the subject of the Epistle lesson: Paul said, "If you, being a Jew, live in the manner of Gentiles, why do you compel Gentiles to live as Jews?" (Galatians 2:14) This was not being straightforward about the truth of the Gospel, where a man is justified not by the works of the Law but by the faith of Jesus Christ (Galatians 2:14, 16 twice).

The Issues in Jerusalem, 48 AD

What were the real issues in Jerusalem that led to the confrontation between Paul and those who wanted to keep the Mosaic Law? In Jerusalem at that time was a small, but very vocal, group of zealots bent on expelling Roman rule. One of the Twelve Apostles, Simon the Zealot, was part of this group at one time, and Judas Iscariot may have been involved also. According to Josephus, the political party of the Zealots was ultimately responsible for the destruction of Jerusalem¹⁵ as a result of their scheming and conspiring to achieve their goals. To them, circumcision represented Jewish national identity. They didn't necessarily keep all the requirements of the Law, but they were very vocal about those aspects of the Law that spoke to their political agenda¹⁶.

This ideology spilled over to the Christians. The conflict among the Christians¹⁷ was between a small minority of Jewish Christian Zealots, who were zealous about keeping the Law (Acts 21:20) and a large majority of Jewish Christians with a weak faith, who also kept the Law, but were not involved with the political agenda of the Zealots. They knew Christ after the flesh, as the Jewish Messiah, and were very sincere about that. If Paul (and James) handled this situation wrong and offended either group, many people might revert back to Judaism and be lost in the destruction coming to Jerusalem in a few years.

Tertullian stated¹⁸ that circumcision was the only issue involved when Paul wrote to the Galatians. To the Jews, "circumcision" had their national identity associated with it, since this was part of the Covenant God made with Abraham, and the Law required anyone who rejected circumcision to be cut off from Israel (Genesis 17:9-14). Paul's opponents still believed in God, but they perverted the Gospel by retaining an emphasis on the Law. If the Zealots had not brought in the spies to see what Paul was doing regarding Christian liberty, Paul may not have made it such an issue. For Paul, the major issue was the basis for his teaching; for his opponents, the major issue was Jewish national identity.

"When Paul said, that 'neither was Titus compelled to be circumcised' (Galatians 2:3), he for the first time shows us that circumcision was the only question connected with the maintenance of the Law, which had been agitated by those whom he called 'false brethren secretly brought in' (Galatians 2:4). While these persons went no further than to insist on a continuance of the Law, they retained unquestionably a sincere belief in God. They perverted the gospel in their teaching, not by tampering with the Scripture to eliminate Christ, but by

¹⁵ See Josephus, *Wars of the Jews*, IV, vi, 3.

¹⁶ In a way, this is similar to the US today, where there are Christian zealots who have a very strong political agenda involving US national identity. Those aspects of Christianity that speak to their political agenda are very important to them. Yet out of kindness and mercy, we don't want to offend them and cause them to abandon the Faith.

¹⁷ See Roberts and Donaldson, ed., *Ante-Nicene Fathers*, Volume 3, Hendrickson Publishers, Peabody, MA, 1995, Footnote 22, p. 433.

¹⁸ Tertullian, *The Five Books Against Marcion*, II, ii, 5, 3.

retaining the emphasis on the Law. Therefore, he said, ‘Because of false brethren secretly brought in, who came in secretly to spy out our liberty, which we have in Christ, that they might bring us into bondage, to whom we submitted not even for an hour’ (Galatians 2:4-5). Let us only attend to the clear sense and to the reason for their actions, and the perversion of the Scripture will be apparent”.

“Paul first said that the Apostles did not compel Titus, a Greek, to be circumcised and added that false brethren were secretly brought in. He gives us an insight into his reason for acting in a clean contrary way, showing us why he did what he would neither have done nor shown to us, if the Zealots had not induced him to act as he did. But then would they have yielded to the subjection that the Zealots demanded, if these false brethren had not crept in to spy out their liberty? I apprehend not. They therefore gave way (in a partial concession), because there were persons whose weak faith required consideration. For their rudimentary belief, which was still in suspense about the observance of the Law, deserved this concessive treatment, when even the Apostle himself had some suspicion that he might have run, and be still running, in vain (Galatians 2:2). Accordingly, the false brethren, who were the spies of their Christian liberty, must be thwarted in their efforts to bring it under the yoke of their own Judaism. Paul needed (1) to discover whether his labor had been in vain; (2) those who preceded him in the Apostolate to have the opportunity to give him the right hand of fellowship; and (3) to have an understanding before he entered on the office of preaching to the Gentiles, according to the Apostles’ arrangement with him (Galatians 2:9-10). He therefore made some concession, as was necessary, for a time; and this was the reason why he had Timothy circumcised (Acts 16:3), and the Nazirites introduced into the temple (Acts 21:23-26). Their truth may be inferred from their agreement with the apostle’s own profession, how ‘he became all things to all men, that he might gain all’”.

John Cassian stated¹⁹ that Paul identified with those he wished to reach. “To the Jews, I became as a Jew that I might gain the Jews; to those who were under the Law as being under the Law, though not myself under the Law, that I might gain those who were under the Law; to those who were without law, I became as without law, though I was not without the Law of God but under the Law of Christ, that I might gain those who were without law; to the weak I became weak, that I might gain the weak: I became all things to all men, that I might save all” (1 Corinthians 9:19-22). The Apostles in Jerusalem recognized that there would be a change in the Law as a result of the Coming of Christ (Hebrews 7:12), and they worked with the Apostle Paul in this regard.

“The Apostle James, and all the chief princes of the primitive Church urged the Apostle Paul, in consequence of the weakness of feeble persons, to condescend to a fictitious arrangement and insisted on his purifying himself according to the requirements of the Law. By shaving his head and paying his vows (Acts 21:20-25), they thought that the present harm, which would come from this hypocrisy, was of no account, but had regard rather to the gain, which would result from his continued preaching. For the gain to the Apostle Paul from

¹⁹ John Cassian, *The Second Conference of Abbot Joseph*, II, xvii, 20.

his strictness would not have counterbalanced the loss to all nations from his speedy death. And the whole Church would certainly have then incurred this unless this good and salutary hypocrisy had preserved him for the preaching of the Gospel”.

“Someone may ask how we can prove that Paul suited himself to all men in all things. When did he to the Jews become as a Jew? He had said, ‘Behold, I, Paul, say to you that if you become circumcised, Christ shall profit you nothing’ (Galatians 5:2). Yet by circumcising Timothy (Acts 16:3), he adopted a shadow as it were of Jewish superstition. And again, where did he become to those under the Law, as under the Law? James and all the Elders of the Church, fearing lest he might be attacked by the multitude of Jewish Christians, who had received the faith of Christ in such a way as still to be bound by the rites of legal ceremonies, came to his rescue in his difficulty with this counsel and advice” (Acts 21:20-24).

“And so for the good of those who were under the Law, he trod under foot for a while the strict view which he had expressed. ‘I, through the Law, am dead to the Law, that I may live to God’ (Galatians 2:19). Contrary to this, he was driven to shave his head, and be purified according to the Law and pay his vows after the Mosaic rites in the Temple” (Acts 21:20-24).

“For the good of those who were utterly ignorant of the Law of God, Paul himself became as if without law? In Athens, where heathen wickedness was flourishing, he stated, ‘as I passed by, I saw your idols and an altar on which was written: To the unknown God’ (Acts 17:23). When he began speaking to them, as if he himself also had been without law, he introduced the faith of Christ, saying, ‘The One whom you worship ignorantly, Him I proclaim to you’ (Acts 17:23). And after a little, as if he had known nothing whatever of the Divine Law, he chose to bring forward a verse of a heathen poet rather than a saying of Moses or Christ, saying, ‘As some of your own poets have said; for we are also His offspring’ (Acts 17:28). And when he had thus approached them with their own authorities, which they could not reject, thus confirming the truth by things false, he added, ‘Since then we are the offspring of God we ought not to think that the Godhead is like gold or silver or stone sculptured by the art and device of man’” (Acts 17:29).

“In this way he fulfilled what he had commanded the Corinthians to do when he said, ‘be without offense to Jews and Greeks and the Church of Christ, as I also please all men in all things, not seeking my own profit but that of the many, that they may be saved’ (1 Corinthians 10:32-33, Romans 14:3-13, 2 Corinthians 11:29). For it had certainly been profitable at other times not to circumcise Timothy, not to shave his head, not to undergo Jewish purification, not to practice going barefoot, not to pay legal vows. But he did all these things because he did not seek his own profit but that of the many”.

The Result of Paul’s Actions

At the Council of Jerusalem in 48 AD, Paul sought (1) clarification of his interpretation of the Gospel and (2) agreement with the Apostles and elders in Jerusalem. This he received very clearly, and Paul was of one mind with the Apostles and elders. Later Church Councils were patterned after Paul’s agreement with the Apostles and elders in Jerusalem, and this

agreement came to be referred to as “The mind of the Church”. While the Jewish Christian Zealots had to agree with the Council, because their disagreement would be an obvious gesture of countermanding God, they later opposed the decision of the Council. Paul ended up opposing them for the rest of his life. A similar pattern emerged following most of the later Councils of the Church, where the heretics often accepted the decisions of the Council initially, but later opposed these decisions. In both cases, this showed the basic dishonesty of the heretics, and where their allegiance was really based.

John Chrysostom pointed out²⁰ that a change in the Law was foreseen in the Mosaic Law as it referred to Christ:

“The Law itself has taught me no longer to obey itself; and therefore, if I do so, I shall be transgressing even its teaching. How, and in what way has it so taught? Moses says, speaking of Christ, ‘The Lord God will raise up for you a prophet from your midst of your brethren, like me; to Him shall you listen’ (Deuteronomy 18:15). Therefore, those who do not obey Him transgress the Law”.

Chrysostom continued²¹ to say that the impact of Peter’s conduct in Antioch was to marginalize the death of Christ. That is, one is not justified by circumcision or by Jewish rituals, but by faith. Because of the circumstances, Paul had to do something!

“Christ’s death is a plain proof of the inability of the Law to justify us; and if the Law does justify, then His death is superfluous. Yet how could it be reasonable to say Christ’s death has been done heedlessly and in vain, when it is so awesome, so surpassing human reason, a mystery so ineffable, with which Patriarchs travailed, which Prophets foretold, which angels gazed on with consternation, which all men confess as the summit of Divine tenderness? How utterly out of place it would be if they should say that so great and high a deed had been done superfluously, for this is what their conduct (i.e. the conduct of Peter and the Jews in Antioch) came to”.

At this point, some clarification is needed regarding “the Law”. The Lord referred to the Greatest Commandment, “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul and with all your mind, and you shall love your neighbor as yourself” (Matthew 22:37-39, Deuteronomy 6:5, Leviticus 19:18). On this, He said, hangs all the Law and the Prophets (Matthew 22:40); and this Greatest Commandment was part of a Creed²² used in the 1st Century Synagogue worship. In addition, the Lord had said, “Assuredly I say to you, till heaven and earth pass away, one yod (smallest Hebrew letter) or one piece of a Hebrew letter will by no means pass from the Law till all²³ is fulfilled” (Matthew 5:18). He also said that those who worship the Father must worship Him in spirit and truth (John 4:24).

All this is not contradictory. All the details of the Mosaic Law regarding sacrifices, uncleanness, Feast Days, avoiding certain foods, etc., had a purpose in leading the Lord’s people

²⁰ John Chrysostom, Homilies on Galatians, Chapter 2, v 19.

²¹ John Chrysostom, Homilies on Galatians, Chapter 2, v 21.

²² Edersheim, Sketches of Jewish Social Life, p. 245, 101-104.

²³ For more details, see the Gospel lesson for the 15th Sunday after Pentecost.

toward holiness. Once Israel ceased to exist as a nation, these tenets of the Law changed. We no longer offer animal sacrifices, but we are urged to present our bodies as a living sacrifice (Romans 12:1). We no longer follow the various washings prescribed by the Mosaic Law, but we are advised to avoid the defilement²⁴ from unclean spirits, which can be really foul.

The usefulness of the Law is as a tutor to get us started in the right direction (Galatians 3:24, 25). As we grow in the Faith and can distinguish the Holy Spirit speaking to us, we don't need the Law anymore, because it is written on our hearts (Jeremiah 31:31-34, Hebrews 10:16-17). John Chrysostom stated²⁵ that the Law and the Gospel work together:

“The Law is not the adversary but the fellow worker of Grace. But if when Grace is come, the Law continues to hold us down, it becomes an adversary. For if it confines those who ought to go forward to Grace, then it is the destruction of our salvation. If a candle which gave light by night kept us, when it became day, from the sun, it would not only cease to benefit us, but would injure us. And so does the Law if it stands between the greater benefits of Grace and us. Just so a tutor or *pedagogue* makes a youth ridiculous, by retaining him with himself, when time calls for his departure”.

Dead to the World

Paul stated, “For I through the Law died to the Law that I might live to God. I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the *life* which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me” (Galatians 2:19-20). The point he is making is that if our hope is really in the Kingdom of God, the things of this world have very little meaning.

John Chrysostom stated²⁶ that it is our love for God that deadens us to the things of this world, such as glory and honor, as if we were the only person on earth and there was no glory to receive from others. By focusing on the invisible things of God, we begin to not notice the visible things of this world.

“If anyone is caught with the fire of Christ's love, he becomes like a man would who dwelt alone upon the earth, so utterly does he not care for either glory or disgrace. As for trials, he so despises them, both scourges and imprisonments, as though the body in which he suffers were another's and not his own, or as though he had a body made of adamant²⁷. As for the sweet things of this life, he so laughs them to scorn, is so insensitive to them, as we are insensitive of dead bodies, being ourselves dead. He is as far from being taken captive by any passion, as the gold refined in the fire is free from alloy. For even as flies would not dart into the midst of a flame, but fly from it, so the passions dare not even to come near this man. Observe Paul, how he felt towards the whole world. ‘The world is crucified to me, and I to the world’ (Galatians 6:14). I am dead to the

²⁴ For more details regarding sacrifice, see the Epistle lesson for the 6th Sunday after Pentecost; for more details on uncleanness, see the Epistle lesson for the 17th Sunday after Pentecost.

²⁵ John Chrysostom, Homilies on Galatians, Chapter 3, vv 25-26.

²⁶ John Chrysostom, Commentary on Acts, LII, Recapitulation.

²⁷ Adamant was a very hard legendary material, possible associated with diamond.

world, and the world is dead to me. And again: ‘it is no longer I that live, but Christ lives in me (Galatians 2:20). To show you that it was like he was in solitude, and so looked upon the things present, hear him saying, ‘We look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen’ (2 Corinthians 4:18). What he is saying is that he sees the invisible things, and the visible he doesn’t see. Such are the eyes, which are given by Christ; for these bodily eyes see the things that are seen, but things unseen they don’t see. Similarly, those heavenly eyes do the contrary. No one that beholds the invisible things, beholds the visible; no one beholding the things seen, beholds the invisible. When we turn our mind inwards, we think of the unseen things, and our views become raised above the things on earth. Let us despise glory; let us be willing to be laughed at rather than to be praised. For he who is laughed at is not hurt; but he who is praised is hurt much”.

John Cassian gave²⁸ some specifics regarding how we can continually carry our Cross. If we were crucified, we would not be free to go where we want, and participate freely in the things of this world; we would be nailed in place. If our love for the Lord and the things of God are real, we will consider this effect in our life.

“Renunciation is nothing but the evidence of the cross and of dying to yourself. And so you must know that today you are dead to this world and its deeds and desires, and that, as the Apostle says, you are crucified to this world and this world to you. Consider therefore the demands of the cross under the sign of which you ought to live in this life. We must therefore pass our time in this life in that fashion and form in which He was crucified for us on the cross. So that as David says, ‘piercing our flesh with the fear of the Lord’ (Psalm 119:120), we may have all our wishes and desires not subservient to our own lusts but fastened to His death. Thus shall we fulfill the command of the Lord, which says, ‘He who does not take his cross and follow after me is not worthy of me’” (Matthew 10:38).

“But perhaps you will say, ‘How can a man carry his cross continually? Or how can anyone who is alive be crucified? Hear briefly how this is. The fear of the Lord is our cross. One who is crucified no longer has the power of moving or turning his limbs in any direction he pleases. So, we also ought to affix our wishes and desires, not in accordance with what is pleasant and delightful to us now, but in accordance with the Law of the Lord, where it constrains us. One who is fastened to the wood of the cross (1) no longer considers things present, (2) no longer thinks about his likings, (3) no longer is perplexed by anxiety and care for tomorrow, (4) no longer is disturbed by any desire of possession, nor inflamed by any pride, strife or rivalry, (5) does not grieve at present injuries, nor remember past ones, and (6) while he is still breathing in the body considers that he is dead to all earthly things, sending the thoughts of his heart on before to that place where he is shortly to come. So we also, when crucified by the fear of the Lord ought to be dead to all these things. That is, not only to carnal vices but also to all earthly things, having the eye of our minds fixed there where we hope that

²⁸ John Cassian, Twelve Books on the Institutes of the Coenobia, IV, 34-35.

we are soon to pass. For in this way, we can deaden all our desires and carnal affections”.

Cassian continued²⁹ to say that taking up our Cross is easy if we take the right attitude. If we are actually strong when we appear to be weak, and if the things of this world don't bother us, life is easy.

“We can prove that our Lord's saying is true, if we approach the way of perfection properly and in accordance with Christ's will, deadening all our desires, and cutting off things we like that injure us. If we abandon this world's goods, our adversary won't find opportunities for destroying us. If we actually recognize that we are not our own masters, we can truly make our own the Apostle's words, 'it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me' (Galatians 2:20). For what can be burdensome to one who (1) has embraced with his whole heart the yoke of Christ, (2) is established in true humility and (3) always fixes his eye on the Lord's sufferings and rejoices in all the wrongs that are offered to him. 'Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in needs, in persecutions, in distresses, for Christ's sake. For when I am weak, then I am strong!' (2 Corinthians 12:10) By what loss of any common thing, I ask, will he be injured, who voluntarily rejects for Christ's sake all the pomp of this world, and considers all of its desires as dung, so that he may gain Christ, and by continual meditation on this command of the Gospel, scorns getting upset at every loss? 'For what profit is it to a man if he gains the whole world, and loses his own soul? Or what will a man give in exchange for his soul?' (Matthew 16:26) For the loss of what will he be bothered, who recognizes that everything that can be taken away from others is not their own, and proclaims with unconquered valor, 'We brought nothing into this world; it is certain that we can carry nothing out?'" (1 Timothy 6:7)

John Chrysostom stated³⁰ that there is a balance in providing for the needs of our flesh. The point is to make our flesh healthy in a godly sense.

What does the Lord intimate in saying, 'Make no provision for the flesh, to fulfill its lusts?' (Romans 13:14). He does not forbid drinking, but drinking to excess, not marrying, but seeking luxurious self-enjoyment. He does not forbid making provision for the flesh either, but He does forbid doing so with a view 'to fulfill the lusts of the flesh', as for instance, by going beyond necessities. For that he does ask us to make provision for it, hear from what he says to Timothy, 'Use a little wine for your stomach's sake, and your frequent infirmities' (1 Timothy 5:23). So here too he is for taking care of it, but for health, and not luxurious self-enjoyment. This would cease to be making provision for it, when you were lighting up the flame, when you were making the furnace powerful. But that you may form a clearer notion what 'making provision' for it 'to fulfill its lusts' is, and may shun such a provision, just call to mind the drunken, the gluttonous, those that pride themselves in dress, those that are effeminate, those that live a soft and relaxed life, and you will see what is meant. For they do everything not

²⁹ John Cassian, Conference of Abbot Abraham, XXIV, 23.

³⁰ John Chrysostom, Homilies on Romans, XXIV, v 14.

that they may be healthy, but that they may seek pleasure and kindle desire. But you, who have put on Christ, prune away all those things, and seek for one thing only, to have your flesh healthy.

Examples of the Gospel and the Cross

Paul stated, “Those who are Christ’s have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit” (Galatians 5:24-25). Since the passions and desires of the flesh are the things that hinder us from a close walk with God, denying these is an integral part of our crosses. And our crosses will generally lead us to a point where we are better able to do this.

But we need to actually do something about it. “If we live in the Spirit, let us walk in the Spirit” (Galatians 5:25). This is a faith-works issue. From James 2:17-20, the English words to believe and to have faith are translations of the same Greek word (meaning to believe, to have faith, to trust). Similarly, “works” means labor or deeds. Demons believe and have faith (James 2:19), but they tremble and they have no deeds to show for their belief or faith. Similarly, for us: if we live in the Spirit, but don’t walk in the Spirit, our belief (or faith) is barren or dead. Unless we have both faith and works, we really have neither.

As an example, consider the Crosses of the Apostle Paul. All his difficulty did not cause him any permanent harm. Instead all this caused Paul to be one of the most admired of the Apostles.

“From the Jews five times I received forty stripes minus one. Three times I was beaten with rods; once I was shipwrecked; a night and a day I have been in the deep (i.e. after shipwreck). In journeys often, in perils of waters, in perils of robbers, in perils of my own countrymen, in perils of the Gentiles, in perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness, in perils in the sea, in perils among false brethren; in weariness and toil, in sleeplessness often, in hunger and thirst, in fasting often, in cold and nakedness — besides the other things, what comes upon me daily: my deep concern for all the churches” (2 Corinthians 11:24-27).

Similarly, with the Patriarch Job’s Crosses. In his day, Job was unsurpassed in righteousness (Job 1:8). Yet the Lord allowed Satan to take away all his wealth, his ten children, plus his health, leaving him sitting among the ashes scraping the pus and the worms off the boils on his skin with a piece of broken pottery (Job 1:13-22, 2:7-8). To add insult to injury, Job’s friends then began to inquire of him as to which of his secret sins had brought this calamity on him (Job 4:7-21, 8:1-6, 11:1-20). Reflecting on Job’s situation, John Chrysostom stated³¹ that

“The reproaches of his friends appeared more grievous than the worms and the sores. There is nothing more intolerable to those in affliction than a word capable of stinging the soul!”

Job grew spiritually because of all the evil that he had to bear and he was rewarded both in this life and in the age to come (Job 42:10-17, James 5:11). Obviously Job’s Crosses did him no permanent harm either.

³¹ John Chrysostom, Homilies on 2 Corinthians, XII, 3.

John Chrysostom summarized³² the effect of the Cross on the life of the Apostle Paul. Because his entire life, after his conversion, focused on the things of Christ, to the exclusion of the things of this world, he did not live the common life. He was above it; and for anyone to kill him, they simply ushered him into a better life.

“Since I have often escaped dangers, and have this to boast of to the unbelievers, do not think I am put to shame, if now I should face danger. ‘I am not ashamed of the Gospel!’ (Romans 1:16) This he did not say in ignorance, for he knew that he was not to die then, but sometime after; yet even now he prepares their soul”.

“For even in dying, he means, I shall not have died, for I have my life in myself; then would they truly have slain me, if they had power to cast faith out of my soul through fear. But as long as Christ is with me, even though death overtakes me, still I live, and in this present life, Christ is my life. Because of this, ‘that life which I now live in the flesh I live in faith’; so in that state also, ‘I live, yet not I, but Christ lives in me’ (Galatians 2:20). Such ought a Christian to be! I live not the common life, he says. How do you live then, Paul? Do you not see the sun; do you not breathe the common air? Are you not nourished with the same food as others? Do you not tread the earth as we? What do you mean by, ‘I live not?’”

“If facts witness to events, there is no boasting here. Let us learn how he lives not! ‘I have been crucified to the world, and the world to me’ (Galatians 6:14). He says, ‘I no longer live’, and, ‘to me to live is Christ’. The word ‘life’ is very significant, as also the word ‘death’. There is this life of the body and there is the life of sin (Romans 6:2). It is then possible to live the life of sin. There is the life everlasting and immortal; ‘for our citizenship is in heaven’ (Philippians 3:20). There is the life of the body, which he speaks of, ‘through Him we live and move and have our being’ (Acts 17:28). He does not deny that he lives the natural life; but he does deny that he lives the life of sin, which all men live”.

“He who desires not the present life, he who is hastening to another, he who despises death, he who desires nothing, how does he live this life? For as one made of adamant³³, though he were struck a thousand blows, would never be bothered by it; neither would Paul. And ‘I live, but no longer I’; that is, no longer the old man, as elsewhere, ‘Wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me out of the body of this death!’ (Romans 7:24). How does he live who does so not for the sake of food, clothing, nor for any of these present things? Such a one does not live the natural life: he who takes thought for none of the things which sustain life, doesn’t live. We live this life, when our every action regards it. But he didn’t live; he busied himself about nothing of the things here. Elsewhere he shows that he does not reject the natural life. ‘The life which I now live in the flesh, I live in the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me’ (Galatians 2:20). That is, a certain new life I live, an altered one”.

“Think not, he says, that I shall be deprived of anything in this life; for while alive I lived this life as Christ willed. For tell me, He who despises money,

³² John Chrysostom, Homilies on Philippians, III.

³³ Adamant was a very hard legendary material, possible associated with diamond.

luxury, hunger, thirst, dangers, health, safety, does he live this life? He who has nothing here, and is often willing to cast life away, if need be, and does not cling to it, does he live this life?"

"This I must make clear to you by a kind of example. Let us imagine someone in great wealth, with many servants, and much gold, and who makes no use of all these things; is such a one rich for all his wealth? By no means! Let him watch his children dissipating his property, strolling idly about; let him feel no concern for them. When beaten, let him not even notice pain. Shall we call him a man of wealth? By no means, although his wealth is his own! 'For me', he says, 'to live is Christ'; if you will inquire of my life, it is He. 'And to die is gain'. Why? Because then I shall more clearly be present with Him; so that my death is rather a coming to life. They who kill me will work on me no dreadful thing; they will only send me onward to my proper life, and free me from that which is not mine".

Athanasius of Alexandria stated³⁴ that we keep the Commandments when we offer ourselves to the Lord in thankfulness. This exhibits Christ living in us, even though we offer to Him only what He gave us. Wicked men, heretics and schismatics, on the other hand, cannot bring anything that God will accept, and thus cannot properly observe the Paschal Feast.

"Nature is not able, with material things, to return a recompense for His benefits; yet let us render Him thanks while we persevere in piety. And how can we more abide in piety than when we acknowledge God, Who in His love to mankind has bestowed on us such benefits? For thus we shall obediently keep the Law and observe its Commandments! Further, we shall not, as unthankful persons, be accounted transgressors of the Law, or do those things, which ought to be hated, for the Lord loves the thankful. We do this when we offer ourselves to the Lord, like the saints, when we subscribe ourselves entirely as living not to ourselves, but to the Lord, as also the blessed Paul did, when he said, 'I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me'" (Galatians 2:20).

"Our life, my brethren, truly consists in our denying all bodily things, and continuing steadfast in those only of our Savior. Therefore, the present Paschal season requires of us, that we should not only utter such words, but should also imitate the deeds of the saints. We imitate them, when we acknowledge Him who died, and no longer live to ourselves. Also, when we render recompense to the Lord, though, by grace, we give nothing of our own. He bears witness to this when He says that My offerings are My own gifts (Numbers 28:2 LXX). That is, those things which you give Me are yours, as having received them from Me, but they are the gifts of God. And let us offer to the Lord every virtue, and that true holiness which is in Him, and in piety let us keep the feast to Him with those things which He has hallowed for us. Let us thus engage in the holy fasts, as having been prescribed by Him, and by means of which we find the way to God".

"Although wicked men³⁵ press forward to keep the feast, and as at a feast praise God, and intrude into the Church of the saints, yet God says to the sinner,

³⁴ Athanasius of Alexandria, Festal Letters, V, 3-4.

³⁵ Athanasius of Alexandria, Festal Letters, VII, 4.

‘why do you talk of My ordinances?’ And the gentle Spirit rebukes them, saying, ‘Praise is not becoming in the mouth of a sinner, for it was not sent to him by the Lord’ (Ecclesiasticus 15:9 LXX, Psalm 50:16). Neither has sin any place in common with the praise of God; for the sinner has a mouth speaking perverse things, as the Proverb says, ‘The mouth of the ungodly answers evil things’ (Proverbs 15:28 LXX). For what communion has righteousness with iniquity? Or what fellowship is there between light and darkness? (2 Corinthians 6:14) Thus it is: sinners, and all those who are aliens from the Catholic Church, heretics, and schismatics, since they are excluded from glorifying God with the saints, cannot properly even continue observers of the feast. But the righteous man, although he appears dying to the world, uses boldness of speech, saying, ‘I shall not die, but live, and declare the works of the Lord’” (Psalm 118:17).

Taking Up Our Cross: Humility and Love

From the Gospel lesson from the Sunday before the Exaltation of the Cross, “For God so loved the world that He gave His Only Begotten Son” (John 3:16). The Cross, then, is the ultimate act of the love of God for man. “Greater love has no one than this, than to lay down one’s life for his friends” (John 15:13). The Lord applies these same principles that He used to us: “This is My commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you” (John 15:12).

At the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus spoke to the multitudes: “Love your enemies, bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you. For if you love those who love you, what reward have you? Do not even the tax collectors do the same?” (Matthew 5:44-48). This is how the Lord treated His enemies; He took even their sins with Him to the Cross³⁶.

Contrasting life in the world around them, Jesus had said, “You know that those who are considered rulers over the Gentiles lord it over them. Yet it shall not be so among you; but whoever desires to become great among you shall be your deacon, and slave of all” (Mark 10:42-44). The Apostle Peter elaborated on this and compared the humility of Christ with how husbands and wives should treat one another with love, humility and obedience (1 Peter 2:21-3:9). Diadochos of Photiki commented³⁷ on this:

“Obedience is the chief among the initiatory virtues; for first it displaces presumption and then it engenders humility within us. Thus, it becomes for those who are willing to embrace it, a door leading to the love of God”.

The Lord’s brother, James, wrote, “Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord and He will lift you up” (James 4:10). Diadochos also commented³⁸ on this as follows:

“When the intellect fully and consciously senses the illumination of God’s Grace, the soul possesses a humility which is, as it were, natural. Wholly filled with divine blessedness, it can no longer be puffed up with its own glory; for even

³⁶ We will consider this in more detail in the Gospel lesson for the 2nd Sunday of Luke.

³⁷ Diadochos of Photiki, On Spiritual Knowledge, Text 41.

³⁸ Diadochos of Photiki, On Spiritual Knowledge, Text 95.

if it carries out God's commandments ceaselessly, it still considers itself humbler than all other souls because it shares His forbearance".

John of Karpathos added³⁹, "If you always behave with humility before the Lord, you will never show arrogance toward anyone".

Gregory of Nyssa stated⁴⁰ that humility does not come easily, since the removal of pride is involved.

"But let no one imagine that humility can be achieved easily and without labor. The Lord removes pride, the root of evil, from our character by counseling us to imitate Him who became poor of His own will, Who is the truly Blessed One. For as it is said, 'Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus: who being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God, but emptied Himself taking the form of a servant' (Philippians 2:5-7). The perfectly Pure accepts the filth of human nature".

Just as our Lord was exalted and glorified because He humbled Himself to the point of death on His Cross (Philippians 2:5-10), so also, we will be exalted if we humble ourselves in taking up our crosses. Our crosses are not our enemies; our crosses are for our benefit. Referring to the reply of the Twelve to Jesus, "Behold we have left all we had and followed You; what therefore shall we have?" (Matthew 19:27, Mark 10:28, Luke 18:28). Gregory of Nyssa said⁴¹,

"Would you like to know who it is that is poor in spirit? It is he who is given the riches of the soul in exchange for material wealth, who is poor for the sake of the spirit. He has shaken off earthly riches like a burden so that he might be lightly lifted into the air and be borne upwards".

Paul spoke of Jesus enduring His Cross and despising the shame because of the joy that was set before Him (Hebrews 12:2). That joy for Him was us, as we faithfully endure our crosses. And like Him, any humiliation we suffer in the eyes of the world causes us no permanent harm and does not even compare to the rewards the Lord brings at His Second Coming.

Thus, the Cross, an instrument of death, actually brings life. As the Lord said: "He who does not take his cross and follow after Me is not worthy of Me. He who finds his life will lose it, and he who loses his life for My sake will find it (Matthew 10:38-39).

³⁹ John of Karpathos, Texts for the Monks of India, Text 12.

⁴⁰ Gregory of Nyssa, The Beatitudes, Sermon 1.

⁴¹ Gregory of Nyssa, The Beatitudes, Sermon 1.