



From the Homily of St. John Chrysostom on Hebrews 13:24-25

"They of Italy salute you. Grace be with you all. Amen."

But how does "Grace" come to be "with" us? If we do not do despite to the benefit, if we do not become indolent in regard to the Gift. And what is "the grace"? Remission of sins, Cleansing: this is "with" us. For who (he means) can keep the Grace despitefully, and not destroy it? For instance; He freely forgave thee thy sins. How then shall the "Grace be with" thee, whether it be the good favor or the effectual working of the Spirit? If thou draw it to thee by good deeds. For the cause of all good

things is this, the continual abiding with us of the "grace" of the Spirit. For this guides us to all [good things], just as when it flies away from us, it ruins us, and leaves us desolate.

Let us not then drive it from us. For on ourselves depends, both its remaining, and its departing. For the one results, when we mind heavenly things; the other, when [we mind] the things of this life. "Which the world" (He says) "cannot receive because it seeth Him not, neither knoweth Him." ([John 14:17](#).) Seest thou that a worldly soul cannot have Him? We need great earnestness that so there He may be held fast by us, so as to direct all our affairs, and do them in security, and in much peace.

For as a ship sailing with favorable winds is neither to be hindered nor sunk, so long as it enjoys a prosperous and steady breeze, but also causes great admiration according to the march of its progress both to the mariners, and to the passengers, giving rest to the one, and not forcing them to toil on at their oars, and setting the others free from all fear, and giving them the most delightful view of her course; so too a soul strengthened by the Divine Spirit, is far above all the billows of this life, and more strongly than the ship, cuts the way bearing on to Heaven, since it is not sent along by wind, but has all the pure sails filled by the Paraclete Himself: and He casts out of our minds all that is slackened and relaxed.

For as the wind if it fall upon a slackened sail, would have no effect; so neither does the Spirit endure to continue in a slack soul; but there is need of much tension, of much vehemence, so that our mind may be on fire, and our conduct under all circumstances on the stretch, and braced up. For instance when we pray, we ought to do it with much intentness, stretching forth the soul toward Heaven, not with cords, but with great earnestness. Again when we do works of mercy, we have need of intentness, lest by any means, thought for our household, and care for children, and anxiety about wife, and fear of poverty entering in, should slacken our sail. For if we put it on the stretch on all sides by the hope of the things to come, it receives well the energy of the Spirit; and none of those perishable and wretched things will fall upon it, yea, and if any of them should fall, it does it no harm, but is quickly thrown back by the tightness, and is shaken off and fails down.

Therefore we have need of much intentness. For we too are sailing over a great and wide sea, full of many monsters, and of many rocks, and bringing forth for us many storms, and from the midst of serene weather raising up a most violent tempest. It is necessary then if we would sail with ease, and without danger, to stretch the sails, that is, our determination: for this is sufficient for us. For Abraham also, when he had stretched forth his affections towards God and set before Him his fixed resolution, what else had he need of? Nothing: but "he believed God, and it was counted unto him for righteousness." ([Genesis 15:6](#).) But Faith [comes] of a sincere will. He offered up his son, and though he did not slay him, he received a recompense as if he had slain him, and though the work was not done the reward was given.

Let our sails then be in good order, not grown old (for everything "that is decayed and waxen old is nigh to vanishing away") (c. viii.13), not worn into holes, that so they may bear the energy of the Spirit. "For the natural man," it is said, "receiveth not the things of the Spirit." ([1 Corinthians 2:14](#).) For as the webs of spiders could not receive a blast of wind, so neither will the soul devoted to this life, nor the natural man ever be able to receive the grace of the Spirit: for our reasonings differ nothing from them, preserving a connection in appearance only but destitute of all power.

Our condition, however, is not such, if we are watchful: but whatever may fall upon [the Christian], he bears all, and is above all, stronger than any whirlpool. For suppose there be a spiritual man, and that innumerable calamities befall him, yet is he overcome by none of them. And what do I say? Let poverty come upon him, disease, insults, revilings, mockings, stripes, every sort of infliction, every sort of mocking, and slanders, and insults: yet, as though he were outside the world, and set free from the feelings of the body, so will he laugh all to scorn.

And that my words are not mere boasting, I think many [such] exist even now; for instance, of those who have embraced the life of the desert. This however, you say, is nothing wonderful. But I say that of those also who live in cities, there are such men unsuspected. If thou wish however, I shall be able to exhibit some among those of old. And that thou mayest learn, consider Paul, I pray thee. What is there fearful that he did not suffer, and that he did not submit to? But he bore all nobly. Let us imitate him, for so shall we be able to land in the tranquil havens with much merchandise.

Let us then stretch our mind towards Heaven, let us be held fast by that desire, let us clothe ourselves with spiritual fire, let us gird ourselves with its flame. No man who bears flame fears those who meet him; be it wild beast, be it man, be it snares innumerable, so long as he is armed with fire, all things stand out of his way, all things retire. The flame is intolerable, the fire cannot be endured, it consumes all.

With this fire let us clothe ourselves, offering up glory to our Lord Jesus Christ, with whom to the Father, together with the Holy Ghost, be glory, might, honor, now and ever and world without end. **Amen.**

Thanks be to God.

