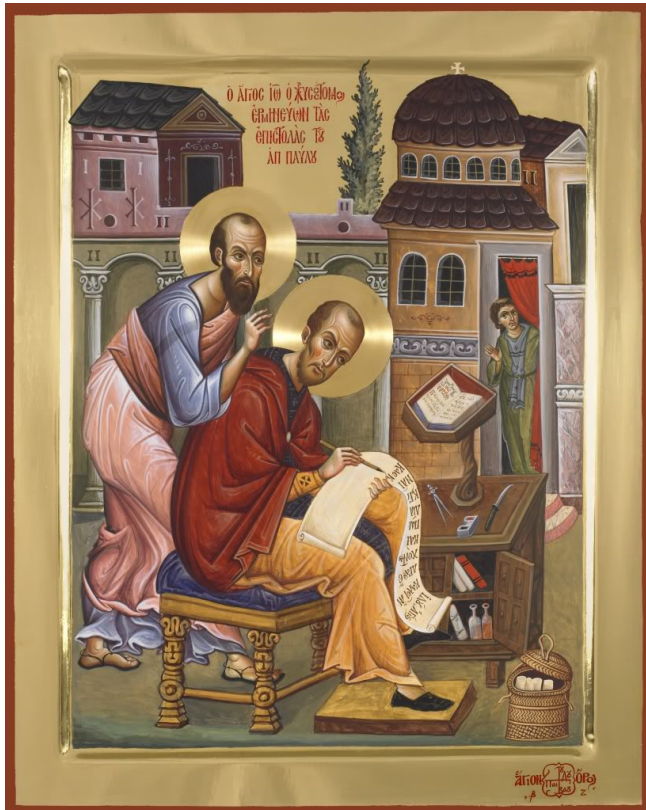


Excerpts from Saint John Chrysostom's homily On 11th Sunday of St. Matthew (Matt. 18:25-35)



On forgiving our enemies...

...Say not then that he insulted you, and slandered you, and did unto you ills beyond number; for the more you tell, so much the more do you declare him a benefactor. For he has given you an opportunity to wash away your sins; so that the greater the injuries he has done you, so much more is he become to you a cause of a greater remission of sins.

For if we be willing, no one shall be able to injure us, but even our enemies shall advantage us in the greatest degree. And why do I speak of men? For what can be more wicked than the devil; yet nevertheless, even hence have we a great opportunity of approving ourselves; and Job shows it. But if the devil has become a cause of crowns, why are you afraid of a man as an enemy?

See then how much you gain, bearing meekly the spiteful acts of your enemies. First and

greatest, deliverance from sins; secondly, fortitude and patience; thirdly, mildness and benevolence; for he that knows not how to be angry with them that grieve him, much more will he be ready to serve them that love him. Fourthly, to be free from anger continually, to which nothing can be equal. For of him that is free from anger, it is quite clear that he is delivered also from the despondency hence arising, and will not spend his life on vain labors and sorrows. For he that knows not how to hate, neither does he know how to grieve, but will enjoy pleasure, and ten thousand blessings. So that we punish ourselves by hating others, even as on the other hand we benefit ourselves by loving them.

Besides all these things, you will be an object of veneration even to your very enemies, though they be devils; or rather, you will not so much as have an enemy while you are of such a disposition.

But what is greater than all, and first, you gain the favor of God. Should thou have sinned, you will obtain pardon; should you have done what is right, you will obtain a greater confidence. Let us accomplish therefore the hating no one, that God also may love us, that, though we be in debt for ten thousand talents, He may have compassion and pity us.

But have you been injured by him? Pity him then, do not hate him; weep and mourn, do not turn away from him. For you are not the one that has offended against God, but he; but you have even approved yourself, if you endure it. Consider that Christ, when about to be crucified, rejoiced for Himself, but wept for them that were crucifying Him. This ought to be our disposition also; and the more we are injured, so much the more should we lament for them that are injuring us. For to us many are the benefits hence arising, but to them the opposites.

But did he insult you, and strike you before all? Then has he disgraced and dishonored himself before all, and has opened the mouths of a thousand accusers, and for you has he woven more crowns, and gathered for you many to publish your forbearance.

But did he slander you to others? And what is this? God is the one that is to demand the account, not they that have heard this. For to himself has he added occasion of punishment, so that not only for his own sins he should give account, but also of what he said of you. And upon you has he brought evil report with men, but he himself has incurred evil report with God.

And if these things are not sufficient for you, consider that even your Lord was evil reported of both by Satan and by men, and that to those most loved by Him; and His Only-Begotten the same again. Wherefore He said, If they have called the Master of the house Beelzebub, much more shall they call them of His household. Matthew 10:25

And that wicked demon did not only slander Him, but was also believed, and slandered Him not in ordinary matters, but with the greatest reproaches and accusations. For he affirmed Him to be possessed, and to be a deceiver, and an adversary of God.

But have you also done good, and received evil? Nay, in respect of this most of all lament and grieve for him that has done the wrong, but for yourself rather rejoice, because you have become like God, Who makes the sun to rise upon evil and good. Matthew 5:45

But if to follow God is beyond you, although to him that watches not even this is hard; yet nevertheless if this seem to you to be too great for you, come let us bring you to your fellow-servants, to Joseph, who suffered countless things, and did good unto his brethren; to Moses, who after their countless plots against him, prayed for them; to the blessed Paul, who cannot so much as number what he suffered from them, and is willing to be accursed for them; to Stephen, who is stoned, and entreating this sin may be forgiven them. And having considered all these things, cast away all anger, that God may forgive us also all our trespasses by the grace and love towards man of our Lord Jesus Christ, with whom to the Father and the Holy Ghost be glory, might, honor, now and always, and world without end. Amen.

