

St. John Chrysostom: john homilies corinthians 2

St. John Chrysostom: John Homilies Corinthians 2 3Homily I. 1 Cor. i. 13 Paul, called to be an Apostle of Jesus Christ, through the will of God, and Sosthenes our brother, unto the Church of God which is at Corinth, even them that are sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be with all that call upon the name of our Lord Jesus Christ in every place, their Lord and ours: Grace unto you and from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. [1.] See how immediately, from the very beginning, he casts down pride, and dashes to the ground all their fond imagination, in that he speaks of himself as called. For what I have learnt, saith he, I discovered not myself, nor acquired by my own wisdom, but while I was persecuting and laying in the Church I was called. Now here of Him that calleth is everything: of him that is called, nothing, (so to speak, only to obey. Of Jesus Christ. Your teacher is Christ; and do you register the names of men, as patrons of your doctrine? Through the will of God. For it was God who willed that you should be saved in this way. We ourselves wrought no good thing, but by the will of God we have attained to this salvation; and because it seemed good that we were called, not because we were worthy. And Sosthenes our brother. Another instance of his modesty; he puts same rank with himself one inferior to Apollos; for great was the interval between Paul and Sosthenes. Now if that interval was so wide he stations with himself one far beneath him, what can they have to say who despise them? Unto the Church of God. Not of this or of that man, but of God. Which is at Corinth. Seest thou how at each he puts down their swelling pride; training their thoughts in every way for heaven? He calls it, too, the Church of God; shewing that it ought to be united. For if it be of God, it is united, and it is one, not in Corinth only, but also in all the world: for the Church's name (: properly an assembly) is not a name of separation, but of union and concord. To the sanctified in Christ Jesus. Again the name of Jesus; the names of men he findeth no place what is Sanctification? The Laver, the Purification. For he reminds them of their own uncleanness, from which he freed them; and so persuades them to lowliness of mind; for not by their own good deeds, but by the loving-kind God, had they been sanctified. Called to be Saints. For even this, to be saved by faith, is not saith he, of yourselves; for ye did not first draw near, but were called; so that not even this small matter is yours altogether. However, though you had drawn near, accountable as you are for innumerable wickednesses, not even so were yours, but God's. Hence also, writing to the Ephesians, he said, (Eph. ii. 8) By grace have ye been saved through faith, and this not of yourselves; not even the faith is yours altogether; for ye were not first with your belief, but obeyed a call. With all who call upon the Name of our Lord Jesus Christ. Not of this or that man, but the Name of the Lord. [2.] In every place, both theirs

and ours. For although the letter be written to the Corinthians only, yet he makes mention of all the faithful that are in all the earth; showing that the Church throughout the world must be one, however separate in divers places; and much more, that in Corinth. And though the place be separate, yet he looses them together, being common to all. Wherefore also uniting them he adds, both theirs and ours. And this is far more powerful [to unite], than the other [to separate]. For as men in one place, having many and contrary masters, be distracted, and their one place helps them not to be of one mind, their masters giving orders at variance with the other, and drawing each their own way, according to what Christ says, (St. Matt. vi. 24) Ye cannot serve God and Mammon; so those in different places, if they have not different lords but one only, are not by the places injured in respect of unanimity, the One Lord binding them together. I say not then, (so he speaks,) that with Corinthians you being Corinthians ought to be of one mind, but with all that are in the whole world, inasmuch as you have a Master. This is also why he hath a second time added our; for since he had said, the Name of Jesus Christ Lord, lest he should appear to the inconsiderate to be making a distinction, he subjoins again, both our Lord and theirs. [3.] That my meaning may be clearer, I will read it according to its sense thus: Paul and Sosthenes to the Church of God which is in Corinth and to all who call upon the Name of Him who is both our Lord and theirs in place, whether in Rome or wheresoever else they may be: grace unto you and peace from God our Father and Christ. Or again thus; which I also believe to be rather more correct: Paul and Sosthenes to those that are at Corinth, who have been sanctified, called to be Saints, together with all who call upon the Name of our Lord Jesus Christ in place, both theirs and ours; that is to say, grace unto you, and peace unto you, who are at Corinth, who have been sanctified and called; not to you alone, but with all who in every place call upon the Name of Jesus our Lord and theirs. Now if our peace be of grace, why hast thou high thoughts? Why art thou so puffed up, but by grace? And if thou hast peace with God, why wilt thou assign thyself to others? since this is what separation forbids: for what if you be at peace with this man, and with the other even find grace? My prayer is that both these be yours from God; both from Him I say, and towards Him. For neither do they abide (Savile in marg.) secure they enjoy the influence from above; nor unless God be their object will they avail you: for it profiteth us nothing, though we be peaceful towards all men, if we be at war with God; even as it is no harm to us, although men we are held as enemies, if with God we are at peace. And again it is no gain to us, if all men approve, and be offended; neither is there any danger, though all shun and hate us, if with God we have acceptance and love which is verily grace, and verily peace, cometh of God, since he who finds grace in God's sight, though he suffer thousand horrors, feareth no one; I say not only, no man, but not even the devil himself; but he that hath offended suspects all men, though he seem to be in security. For human nature is unstable, and not friends only and brethren also, before now, have been altogether changed and often for

a little thinge whom they begat, the bra their planting, hath been to them, more than all foes, an object of persecution. Children, too, have cast off their fathers. Thus, if ye will mark it, David was in favor with God, Absalom was in favor with men. What was the end and which of them gained most honor, ye know. Abraham was in favor with God, Pharaoh with men; for to grat gave up the just mans wife. (See St. Chrys. on Gen. xii. 17.) Which then of the two was the more illustrious, an happy man? every one knows. And why speak I of righteous men; The Israelites were in favor with God, but th by men, the Egyptians; but nevertheless they prevailed against their haters and vanquished them, with how gre is well known to you all. For this, therefore, let all of us labor earnestly; whether one be a slave, let him pray for this, that he may find grace with God rather than with his master; or a wife, let her seek grace from God her Sa rather than from her husband; or a soldier, in preference to his king and commander let him seek that favor wh from above. For thus among men also wilt thou be an object of love. [4.] But how shall a man find grace with G else, except by lowliness of mind? For God, saith one, (St. Jas. iv. 6.) resisteth the proud, but giveth grace un the humble; and, (Ps. li. 17. .) the sacrifice of God is a broken spirit, and a heart that is brought low God will not despise. For if with men humility is so lovely, much more with God. Thus both they of the Gentiles grace and the Jews no other way fell from grace; (Rom. x. 13.) for they were not subject unto the righteousness of God. The lowly man of whom I am speaking, is pleasing and delightful to all men, and dwells in continual peace hath in him no ground for contentions. For though you insult him, though you abuse him, whatsoever you say, silent and will bear it meekly, and will have so great peace towards all men as one cannot even describe. Yea, God also. For the commandments of God are to be at peace with men: and thus our whole life is made prosper peace one with another. For no man can injure God: His nature is imperishable, and above all suffering. Nothin the Christian so admirable as lowliness of mind. Hear, for instance, Abraham saying, (Gen. xviii. 27.) But I am dust and ashes; and again, God [saying] of Moses, that (Numb. xii. 3.) he was the meekest of all men. For no ever more humble than he; who, being leader of so great a people, and having overwhelmed in the sea the kin host of all the Egyptians, as if they had been flies; and having wrought so many wonders both in Egypt and by Sea and in the wilderness, and received such high testimony, yet felt exactly as if he had been an ordinary per as a son-in-law was humbler than his father-in-law, (Exodus xviii. 24) and took 5 advice from him, and was not nor did he say, What is this? After such and so great achievements, art thou come to us with thy counsel? Th most people feel; though a man bring the best advice, despising it, because of the lowliness of the person. But did he: rather through lowliness of mind he wrought all things well. Hence also he despised the courts of kings, xi. 24 26.) since he was lowly indeed: for the sound mind and the high spirit are the fruit of humility. For of how great nobleness and magnanimity, thinkest thou, was it a token, to despise the kingly palace and table?

since among the Egyptians are honored as gods, and enjoy wealth and treasures inexhaustible. But nevertheless, let these and throwing away the very sceptres of Egypt, he hastened to join himself unto captives, and men worn toil, whose strength was spent in the clay and the making of bricks, men whom his own slaves abhorred, (for, s (, Sept. Ex. i. 2.) The Egyptians abhorred them;) unto these he ran and preferred them before their masters. From whence it is plain, that who so is lowly, the same is high and great of soul. For pride cometh from ordinary mind and an ignoble spirit, but moderation, from greatness of mind and a lofty soul. [5.] And if you please let us try each by examples. For tell me, what was there ever more exalted than Abraham? And yet it was he that am but dust and ashes; it was he who said, (Gen. xiii. 8) Let there be no strife between me and thee. But this so humble, (Gen. xiv. 21-24.) despised (Persian, i. e. perhaps, of Elam.) Persian spoils, and regarded not Balthazars; and this he did of much high mindedness, and of a spirit nobly nurtured. For he is indeed exalted who humble; (not the flatterer nor the dissembler;) for true greatness is one thing, and arrogance another. And this plain from hence; if one man esteems clay to be clay, and despises it, and another admires the clay as gold, and a great thing; which, I ask, is the man of exalted mind? Is it not he who refuses to admire the clay? And which, and mean? Is it not he who admires it, and sets much store by it? Just so do thou esteem of this case also; that call himself but dust and ashes is exalted, although he say it out of humility; but that he who does not consider himself dust and ashes, but treats himself lovingly and has high thoughts, this man for his part must be counted esteeming little things to be great. Whence it is clear that out of great loftiness of thought the patriarch spoke thus saying, I am but dust and ashes; from loftiness of thought, not from arrogance. For as in bodies it is one thing healthy and plump, (firm and elastic.) and another thing to be swollen, although both indicate a full habit of flesh, (but in this case of unsound, in that of healthful flesh;) so also here: it is one thing to be arrogant, which is, as it were, to be swollen, and another thing to be high-souled, which is to be in a healthy state. And again, on a tall from the stature of his person; another, being short, by adding buskins⁷⁷, or leather shoes coming halfway up the leg, with high heels of cork; used especially by tragic actors to elevate their size. Æschylus, says Himproving tragedy, docuit magnumque loqui, nitique cothurno. A.P. 280. become taller; now tell me, which should we call tall and large? Is it not quite plain, him whose height is from himself? For the other has it as something not his own; and stepping upon things low in themselves, turns out a tall person. Such is the case with men who mount themselves up on wealth and glory; which is not exaltation, for he is exalted who wants none other things, but despises them, and has his greatness from himself. Let us therefore become humble that we may be exalted; (St. Luke xiv. 11) For he that humbles himself shall be exalted. Now the self-willed man is not such a this; rather he is of all characters the most ordinary. For the bubble, too, is inflated, but the inflation is not sound; wherefore we call these persons puffed up. Whereas the

sober-minded man has no high thoughts, no fortunes, knowing his own low estate; but the vulgar even in his trifling concerns indulges a proud fancy. [6.] Let us then acquire that height which comes by humility. Let us look into the nature of human things, that we may kindle the longing desire of the things to come; for in no other way is it possible to become humble, except by the love of what is divine and the contempt of what is present. For just as a man on the point of obtaining a kingdom, if instead of a purple robe one offer him some trivial compliment, will count it to be nothing; so shall we also laugh to scorn things present, if we desire that other sort of honor. Do ye not see the children, when in their play they make a show of soldiers, and heralds precede them and licitors, and a boy marches in the midst in the general's place, how can it all be? Just such are all human affairs; yea and more worthless than these: to-day they are, and to-morrow they are not. Let us therefore be above these things; and let us not only not desire them, but even be ashamed if any bring them forth to us. For thus, casting out the love of these things, we shall possess that other love which is divine, shall enjoy immortal glory. Which may God grant us all to obtain, through the grace and loving-kindness of our Jesus Christ; with whom be to the Father, together with the holy and good Spirit, the glory and the power for ever. Amen.