

Who is the Rich Man That Shall Be Saved?

By Saint Clement of Alexandria

(Died 215 AD)

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I. Those who bestow laudatory addresses on the rich appear to me to be rightly judged not only flatterers and base, in vehemently pretending that things which are disagreeable give them pleasure, but also godless and treacherous; godless, because neglecting to praise and glorify [God](#), who is alone perfect and good, "of whom are all things, and by whom are all things, and for whom are all things," [Romans 11:36](#) they invest with divine honours men wallowing in an execrable and abominable life, and, what is the principal thing, liable on this account to the judgment of [God](#); and treacherous, because, although [wealth](#) is of itself sufficient to puff up and corrupt the [souls](#) of its possessors, and to turn them from the path by which [salvation](#) is to be attained, they stupefy them still more, by inflating the minds of the rich with the pleasures of extravagant praises, and by making them utterly despise all things except [wealth](#), on account of which they are admired; bringing, as the saying is, fire to fire, pouring [pride](#) on [pride](#), and adding conceit to [wealth](#), a heavier burden to that which by nature is a weight, from which somewhat ought rather to be removed and taken away as being a dangerous and deadly disease. For to him who exalts and magnifies himself, the change and downfall to a low condition succeeds in turn, as the divine word teaches. For it appears to me to be far kinder, than basely to flatter the rich and praise them for what is bad, to aid them in working out their [salvation](#) in every possible way; asking this of [God](#), who surely and sweetly bestows such things on His own children; and thus by the [grace](#) of the Saviour healing their [souls](#), enlightening them and leading them to the attainment of the [truth](#); and whosoever obtains this and distinguishes himself in good works shall gain the prize of everlasting life. Now [prayer](#) that runs its course till the last day of life needs a strong and tranquil [soul](#); and the conduct of life needs a good and righteous disposition, reaching out towards all the commandments of the Saviour.

II. Perhaps the reason of [salvation](#) appearing more difficult to the rich than to poor men, is not single but manifold. For some, merely hearing, and that in an off-hand way, the utterance of the Saviour, "that it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter into the [kingdom of heaven](#)," [Matthew 19:24](#) despair of themselves as not destined to live, surrender all to the world, cling to the present life as if it alone was left to them, and so diverge more from the way to the life to come, no longer

inquiring either whom the Lord and Master calls rich, or how that which is impossible to man becomes possible to [God](#). But others rightly and adequately comprehend this, but attaching slight importance to the works which tend to [salvation](#), do not make the requisite preparation for attaining to the objects of their hope. And I affirm both of these things of the rich who have learned both the Saviour's power and His [glorious salvation](#). With those who are [ignorant](#) of the [truth](#) I have little concern.

III. Those then who are actuated by a [love](#) of the [truth](#) and [love](#) of their brethren, and neither are rudely insolent towards such rich as are called, nor, on the other hand, cringe to them for their own avaricious ends, must first by the word relieve them of their groundless despair, and show with the requisite explanation of the oracles of the Lord that the inheritance of the [kingdom of heaven](#) is not quite cut off from them if they [obey](#) the commandments; then admonish them that they entertain a causeless [fear](#), and that the Lord gladly receives them, provided they are willing; and then, in addition, exhibit and teach how and by what deeds and dispositions they shall win the objects of hope, inasmuch as it is neither out of their reach, nor, on the other hand, attained without effort; but, as is the case with athletes—to compare things small and perishing with things great and [immortal](#)—let the man who is endowed with worldly [wealth](#) reckon that this depends on himself. For among those, one man, because he despaired of being able to conquer and gain crowns, did not give in his name for the contest; while another, whose mind was inspired with this hope, and yet did not submit to the appropriate labours, and diet, and exercises, remained uncrowned, and was balked in his expectations. So also let not the man that has been invested with worldly [wealth](#) proclaim himself excluded at the outset from the Saviour's lists, provided he is a believer and one who contemplates the greatness of God's philanthropy; nor let him, on the other hand, expect to grasp the crowns of [immortality](#) without struggle and effort, continuing untrained, and without contest. But let him go and put himself under the Word as his trainer, and Christ the President of the contest; and for his prescribed food and drink let him have the [New Testament](#) of the Lord; and for exercises, the commandments; and for elegance and ornament, the fair dispositions, [love](#), [faith](#), hope, [knowledge](#) of the [truth](#), gentleness, meekness, pity, gravity: so that, when by the last trumpet the signal shall be given for the race and departure hence, as from the stadium of life, he may with a good [conscience](#) present himself victorious before the Judge who confers the rewards, confessedly worthy of the Fatherland on high, to which he returns with crowns and the acclamations of [angels](#).

IV. May the Saviour then grant to us that, having begun the subject from this point, we may contribute to the brethren what is [true](#), and suitable, and saving, first touching the hope itself, and, second, touching the access to the hope. He indeed grants to those who beg, and teaches those who ask, and dissipate signorance and dispels despair, by introducing again the same words about the rich, which become their own interpreters and infallible expounders. For there is nothing like listening again to the very same statements, which till now in the [Gospels](#) were distressing you, hearing them as you did without examination, and erroneously through puerility: "And going forth into the way, one approached and kneeled, saying, Good Master, what good thing shall I do that I may inherit everlasting life? And Jesus says, Why do you call Me good? There is none good but one, *that is*, God. You [know](#) the commandments. Do not commit [adultery](#), Do not

kill, Do not steal, Do not bear false [witness](#), Defraud not, Honour your father and your mother. And he answering says to Him, All these have I observed. And Jesus, looking upon him, loved him, and said, One thing you lack. If you would be perfect, sell what you have and give to the [poor](#), and you shall have treasure in heaven: and come, follow Me. And he was sad at that saying, and went away grieved: for he was rich, having great possessions. And Jesus looked round about, and says to His [disciples](#), How hardly shall they that have riches enter into the kingdom of God! And the [disciples](#) were astonished at His words. But Jesus answers again, and says unto them, Children, how hard is it for them that trust in riches to enter into the kingdom of God! More easily shall a camel enter through the eye of a needle than a rich man into the [kingdom of God](#). And they were astonished out of measure, and said, Who then can be saved? And He, looking upon them, said, What is impossible with men is possible with [God](#). For with God all things are possible. Peter began to say to Him, Lo, we have left all and followed You. And Jesus answered and said, Verily I say unto you, Whosoever shall leave what is his own, [parents](#), and brethren, and possessions, for My sake and the [Gospel's](#), shall receive an hundred-fold now in this world, lands, and possessions, and house, and brethren, with [persecutions](#); and in the world to come is life everlasting. But many that are first shall be last, and the last first."

V. These things are written in the [Gospel](#) according to Mark; and in all the rest correspondingly; although perchance the expressions vary slightly in each, yet all show identical agreement in meaning.

But well [knowing](#) that the Saviour teaches nothing in a merely human way, but teaches all things to His own with divine and mystic wisdom, we must not listen to His utterances carnally; but with due investigation and intelligence must search out and learn the meaning hidden in them. For even those things which seem to have been simplified to the [disciples](#) by the Lord Himself are found to require not less, even more, attention than what is expressed enigmatically, from the surpassing superabundance of wisdom in them. And whereas the things which are thought to have been explained by Him to those within—those called by Him the children of the kingdom—require still more consideration than the things which seemed to have been expressed simply, and respecting which therefore no questions were asked by those who heard them, but which, pertaining to the entire design of [salvation](#), and to be contemplated with admirable and supercelestial depth of [mind](#), we must not receive superficially with our ears, but with application of the mind to the very spirit of the Saviour, and the unuttered meaning of the declaration.

VI. For our Lord and Saviour was asked pleasantly a question most appropriate for Him,—the Life respecting life, the Saviour respecting [salvation](#), the Teacher respecting the chief doctrines taught, the Truth respecting the [true immortality](#), the Word respecting the word of the [Father](#), the Perfect respecting the perfect rest, the Immortal respecting the sure [immortality](#). He was asked respecting those things on account of which He descended, which He inculcates, which He teaches, which He offers, in order to show the [essence](#) of the [Gospel](#), that it is the gift of [eternal](#) life. For He foresaw as [God](#), both what He would be asked, and what each one would answer Him. For who should do this more

than the Prophet of [prophets](#), and the Lord of every prophetic spirit? And having been called "good," and taking the starting note from this first expression, He commences His teaching with this, turning the pupil to [God](#), the good, and first and only dispenser of [eternal](#) life, which the [Son](#), who received it of Him, gives to us.

VII. Wherefore the greatest and chiefest point of the instructions which relate to life must be implanted in the [soul](#) from the beginning,—to [know](#) the [eternal God](#), the giver of what is [eternal](#), and by [knowledge](#) and comprehension to possess [God](#), who is first, and highest, and one, and good. For this is the immutable and immoveable source and support of life, the [knowledge](#) of [God](#), who really is, and who bestows the things which really are, that is, those which are [eternal](#), from whom both being and the continuance of it are derived to other beings. For [ignorance](#) of Him is death; but the [knowledge](#) and appropriation of Him, and [love](#) and likeness to Him, are the only life.

VIII. He then who would live the [true](#) life is enjoined first to [know](#) Him "whom no one [knows](#), except the Son reveal (Him)." [Matthew 11:27](#) Next is to be learned the greatness of the Saviour after Him, and the newness of [grace](#); for, according to the apostle, "the law was given by [Moses](#), [grace](#) and [truth](#) came by Jesus Christ;" [John 1:17](#) and the gifts granted through a faithful servant are not equal to those bestowed by the [true](#) Son. If then the [law of Moses](#) had been sufficient to confer [eternal](#) life, it were to no purpose for the Saviour Himself to come and suffer for us, accomplishing the course of human life from His birth to His cross; and to no purpose for him who had done all the commandments of the law from his youth to fall on his knees and beg from another [immortality](#). For he had not only fulfilled the law, but had begun to do so from his very earliest youth. For what is there great or pre-eminently illustrious in an old age which is unproductive of faults? But if one in juvenile frolicsomeness and the fire of youth shows a mature judgment older than his years, this is a champion admirable and distinguished, and hoary pre-eminently in mind.

But, nevertheless, this man being such, is perfectly persuaded that nothing is wanting to him as far as respects righteousness, but that he is entirely destitute of life. Wherefore he asks it from Him who alone is able to give it. And with reference to the law, he carries confidence; but the [Son of God](#) he addresses in supplication. He is transferred from [faith](#) to [faith](#). As perilously tossing and occupying a dangerous anchorage in the law, he makes for the Saviour to find a haven.

IX. Jesus, accordingly, does not charge him with not having fulfilled all things out of the law, but loves him, and fondly welcomes his [obedience](#) in what he had learned; but says that he is not perfect as respects [eternal](#) life, inasmuch as he had not fulfilled what is perfect, and that he is a doer indeed of the law, but idle at the [true](#) life. Those things, indeed, are good. Who denies it? For "the commandment is [holy](#)," [Romans 7:12](#) as far as a sort of training with [fear](#) and preparatory discipline goes, leading as it did to the culmination of legislation and to [grace](#). [Galatians 3:24](#) But Christ is the fulfilment "of the law for righteousness to every one that [believes](#);" and not as a slave making slaves, but sons, and brethren, and fellow-heirs, who perform the Father's will.

X. "If you will be perfect." [Matthew 19:21](#) Consequently he was not yet perfect. For nothing is more perfect than what is perfect. And divinely the expression "if you will" showed the self-determination of the [soul](#) holding converse with Him. For choice depended on the man as being free; but the gift on God as the Lord. And He gives to those who are willing and are exceedingly earnest, and ask, that so their [salvation](#) may become their own. For God compels not (for compulsion is repugnant to God), but supplies to those who seek, and bestows on those who ask, and opens to those who knock. If you will, then, if you really will, and art not deceiving yourself, acquire what you lack. One thing is lacking you,—the one thing which abides, the good, that which is now above the law, which the law gives not, which the law contains not, which is the prerogative of those who live. He forsooth who had fulfilled all the demands of the law from his youth, and had gloried in what was magnificent, was not able to complete the whole with this one thing which was specially required by the Saviour, so as to receive the [eternal](#) life which he desired. But he departed displeased, vexed at the commandment of the life, on account of which he supplicated. For he did not [truly](#) wish life, as he averred, but aimed at the mere [reputation](#) of the good choice. And he was capable of busying himself about many things; but the one thing, the work of life, he was powerless, and disinclined, and unable to accomplish. Such also was what the Lord said to Martha, who was occupied with many things, and distracted and troubled with serving; while she blamed her sister, because, leaving serving, she set herself at His feet, devoting her time to learning: "You are troubled about many things, but Mary has chosen the good part, which shall not be taken away from her." [Luke 10:41-42](#) So also He bade him leave his busy life, and cleave to One and adhere to the [grace](#) of Him who offered everlasting life.

XI. What then was it which persuaded him to flight, and made him depart from the Master, from the entreaty, the hope, the life, previously pursued with ardour?—"Sell your possessions." And what is this? He does not, as some conceive off-hand, bid him throw away the substance he possessed, and abandon his property; but bids him banish from his [soul](#) his notions about [wealth](#), his excitement and morbid feeling about it, the anxieties, which are the thorns of [existence](#), which choke the seed of life. For it is no great thing or desirable to be destitute of [wealth](#), if without a special object,—not except on account of life. For thus those who have nothing at all, but are destitute, and beggars for their daily bread, the poor dispersed on the streets, who [know](#) not God and God's righteousness, simply on account of their extreme want and destitution of subsistence, and lack even of the smallest things, were most blessed and most dear to [God](#), and sole possessors of everlasting life.

Nor was the renunciation of [wealth](#) and the bestowment of it on the poor or needy a new thing; for many did so before the Saviour's advent,—some because of the leisure (thereby obtained) for learning, and on account of a dead wisdom; and others for empty fame and vainglory, as the Anaxagorases, the Democriti, and the Crateses.

XII. Why then command as new, as divine, as alone life-giving, what did not save those of former days? And what peculiar thing is it that the new creature the [Son of God](#) intimates and teaches? It is not the outward act which others have done, but something else indicated by it, greater, more godlike, more perfect, the stripping off of the [passions](#)

from the [soul](#) itself and from the disposition, and the cutting up by the roots and casting out of what is alien to the mind. For this is the lesson peculiar to the believer, and the instruction worthy of the Saviour. For those who formerly despised external things relinquished and squandered their property, but the [passions](#) of the [soul](#), I [believe](#), they intensified. For they indulged in arrogance, pretension, and vainglory, and in contempt of the rest of [mankind](#), as if they had done something superhuman. How then would the Saviour have enjoined on those destined to live for ever what was injurious and hurtful with reference to the life which He promised? For although such is the case, one, after ridding himself of the burden of [wealth](#), may none the less have still the [lust](#) and desire for money innate and living; and may have abandoned the use of it, but being at once destitute of and desiring what he spent, may doubly grieve both on account of the absence of attendance, and the presence of regret. For it is impossible and inconceivable that those in want of the necessaries of life should not be harassed in [mind](#), and hindered from better things in the endeavour to provide them somehow, and from some source.

XIII. And how much more beneficial the opposite case, for a [man](#), through possessing a competency, both not himself to be in straits about money, and also to give assistance to those to whom it is requisite so to do! For if no one had anything, what room would be left among [men](#) for giving? And how can this dogma fail to be found plainly opposed to and conflicting with many other excellent teachings of the Lord? "Make to yourselves friends of the mammon of unrighteousness, that when you fail, they may receive you into the everlasting habitations." [Luke 16:9](#) "Acquire treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys, nor thieves break through." [Matthew 6:19](#) How could one give food to the hungry, and drink to the thirsty, clothe the naked, and shelter the houseless, for not doing which He threatens with fire and the outer darkness, if each man first divested himself of all these things? Nay, He bids Zaccheus and Matthew, the rich tax-gathers, entertain Him hospitably. And He does not bid them part with their property, but, applying the just and removing the [unjust](#) judgment, He subjoins, "Today [salvation](#) has come to this house, forasmuch as he also is a son of [Abraham](#)." He so praises the use of property as to enjoin, along with this addition, the giving a share of it, to give drink to the thirsty, bread to the hungry, to take the houseless in, and clothe the naked. But if it is not possible to supply those needs without substance, and He bids people abandon their substance, what else would the Lord be doing than exhorting to give and not to give the same things, to feed and not to feed, to take in and to shut out, to share and not to share? which were the most irrational of all things.

XIV. Riches, then, which benefit also our neighbours, are not to be thrown away. For they are possessions, inasmuch as they are possessed, and goods, inasmuch as they are useful and provided by God for the use of men; and they lie to our hand, and are put under our power, as material and instruments which are for good use to those who [know](#) the instrument. If you use it skilfully, it is skilful; if you are deficient in skill, it is affected by your want of skill, being itself destitute of blame. Such an instrument is [wealth](#). Are you able to make a right use of it? It is subservient to righteousness. Does one make a wrong use of it? It is, on the other hand, a minister of wrong. For its nature is to be subservient, not to rule. That then which of itself has neither good nor [evil](#), being blameless, ought not to be blamed; but that which has the power of using it well and ill,

by reason of its possessing [voluntary](#) choice. And this is the mind and judgment of [man](#), which has freedom in itself and self-determination in the treatment of what is assigned to it. So let no man destroy [wealth](#), rather than the [passions](#) of the [soul](#), which are incompatible with the better use of [wealth](#). So that, becoming [virtuous](#) and good, he may be able to make a good use of these riches. The renunciation, then, and selling of all possessions, is to be understood as spoken of the [passions](#) of the [soul](#).

XV. I would then say this. Since some things are within and some without the [soul](#), and if the [soul](#) make a good use of them, they also are reputed good, but if a bad, bad;—whether does He who commands us to alienate our possessions repudiate those things, after the removal of which the [passions](#) still remain, or those rather, on the removal of which [wealth](#) even becomes beneficial? If therefore he who casts away worldly [wealth](#) can still be rich in the [passions](#), even though the material [for their gratification] is absent,—for the disposition produces its own effects, and strangles the reason, and presses it down and inflames it with its inbred [lusts](#),—it is then of no advantage to him to be poor in purse while he is rich in [passions](#). For it is not what ought to be cast away that he has cast away, but what is indifferent; and he has deprived himself of what is serviceable, but set on fire the innate fuel of [evil](#) through want of the external means [of gratification]. We must therefore renounce those possessions that are injurious, not those that are capable of being serviceable, if one [knows](#) the right use of them. And what is managed with wisdom, and sobriety, and [piety](#), is profitable; and what is hurtful must be cast away. But things external hurt not. So then the Lord introduces the use of external things, bidding us put away not the means of subsistence, but what uses them badly. And these are the infirmities and [passions](#) of the [soul](#).

XVI. The presence of [wealth](#) in these is deadly to all, the loss of it salutary. Of which, making the [soul](#) pure,—that is, poor and bare,—we must hear the Saviour speaking thus, "Come, follow Me." For to the pure in heart He now becomes the way. But into the impure [soul](#) the [grace](#) of God finds no entrance. And that ([soul](#)) is unclean which is rich in [lusts](#), and is in the throes of many worldly affections. For he who holds possessions, and gold, and silver, and houses, as the gifts of [God](#); and ministers from them to the God who gives them for the [salvation](#) of men; and [knows](#) that he possesses them more for the sake of the brethren than his own; and is superior to the possession of them, not the slave of the things he possesses; and does not carry them about in his [soul](#), nor bind and circumscribe his life within them, but is ever labouring at some good and divine work, even should he be necessarily some time or other deprived of them, is able with cheerful mind to bear their removal equally with their abundance. This is he who is blessed by the Lord, and called poor in spirit, a meet heir of the [kingdom of heaven](#), not one who could not live rich.

XVII. But he who carries his riches in his [soul](#), and instead of God's Spirit bears in his heart gold or land, and is always acquiring possessions without end, and is perpetually on the outlook for more, bending downwards and fettered in the toils of the world, being earth and destined to depart to earth,—whence can he be able to desire and to mind the [kingdom of heaven](#),—a man who carries not a heart, but land or metal, who must perforce be found in the midst of the objects he has chosen? For where the mind of man

is, there is also his treasure. The Lord acknowledges a twofold treasure,—the good: "For the [good](#) man, out of the good treasure of his heart, brings forth good;" and the [evil](#): for "the [evil](#) man, out of the [evil](#) treasure, brings forth [evil](#): for out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks." [Matthew 12:34-35](#) As then treasure is not one with Him, as also it is with us, that which gives the unexpected great gain in the finding, but also a second, which is profitless and undesirable, an [evil](#) acquisition, hurtful; so also there is a richness in [good](#) things, and a richness in bad things, since we [know](#) that riches and treasure are not by nature separated from each other. And the one sort of riches is to be possessed and acquired, and the other not to be possessed, but to be cast away.

In the same way spiritual poverty is blessed. Wherefore also Matthew added, "Blessed are the poor." [Matthew 5:3](#) How? "In spirit." And again, "Blessed are they that hunger and thirst after the righteousness of [God](#)." [Matthew 5:6](#) Wherefore wretched are the contrary kind of poor, who have no part in [God](#), and still less in human property, and have not tasted of the righteousness of [God](#).

XVIII. So that (the expression) rich men that shall with difficulty enter into the kingdom, is to be apprehended in a scholarly way, not awkwardly, or rustically, or carnally. For if the expression is used thus, [salvation](#) does not depend on external things, whether they be many or few, small or great, or illustrious or obscure, or esteemed or disesteemed; but on the [virtue](#) of the [soul](#), on [faith](#), and hope, and [love](#), and brotherliness, and [knowledge](#), and meekness, and humility, and [truth](#), the reward of which is [salvation](#). For it is not on account of comeliness of body that any one shall live, or, on the other hand, perish. But he who uses the body given to him chastely and according to [God](#), shall live; and he that destroys the temple of God shall be destroyed. An ugly man can be profligate, and a good-looking man temperate. Neither strength and great size of body makes alive, nor does any of the members destroy. But the [soul](#) which uses them provides the [cause](#) for each. Bear then, it is said, when struck on the face; [Matthew 5:39](#) which a man strong and in good health can [obey](#). And again, a man who is feeble may transgress from refractoriness of temper. So also a poor and destitute man may be found intoxicated with [lusts](#); and a man rich in worldly goods temperate, poor in indulgences, trustworthy, intelligent, pure, chastened.

If then it is the [soul](#) which, first and especially, is that which is to live, and if [virtue](#) springing up around it saves, and [vice](#) kills; then it is clearly manifest that by being poor in those things, by riches of which one destroys it, it is saved, and by being rich in those things, riches of which ruin it, it is killed. And let us no longer seek the [cause](#) of the issue elsewhere than in the state and disposition of the [soul](#) in respect of [obedience](#) to [God](#) and purity, and in respect of transgression of the commandments and accumulation of [wickedness](#).

XIX. He then is [truly](#) and rightly rich who is rich in [virtue](#), and is capable of making a [holy](#) and faithful use of any fortune; while he is spuriously rich who is rich, according to the flesh, and turns life into outward possession, which is transitory and perishing, and now belongs to one, now to another, and in the end to nobody at all. Again, in the same way there is a genuine poor man, and another counterfeit and [falsely](#) so called. He that is

poor in spirit, and that is the right thing, and he that is poor in a worldly sense, which is a different thing. To him who is poor in worldly goods, but rich in [vices](#), who is not poor in spirit and rich toward [God](#), it is said, Abandon the alien possessions that are in your [soul](#), that, becoming pure in heart, you may see [God](#); which is another way of saying, Enter into the [kingdom of heaven](#). And how may you abandon them? By selling them. What then? Are you to take money for effects, by effecting an exchange of riches, by turning your visible substance into money? Not at all. But by introducing, instead of what was formerly inherent in your [soul](#), which you desire to save, other riches which deify and which minister everlasting life, dispositions in accordance with the command of [God](#); for which there shall accrue to you endless reward and [honour](#), and [salvation](#), and everlasting [immortality](#). It is thus that you rightly sell the possessions, many are superfluous, which shut the heavens against you by exchanging them for those which are able to save. Let the former be possessed by the carnal poor, who are destitute of the latter. But you, by receiving instead spiritual [wealth](#), shall have now treasure in the heavens.

XX. The [wealthy](#) and legally correct man, not understanding these things figuratively, nor how the same man can be both poor and rich, and have [wealth](#) and not have it, and use the world and not use it, went away sad and downcast, leaving the state of life, which he was able merely to desire but not to attain, making for himself the difficult impossible. For it was difficult for the [soul](#) not to be seduced and ruined by the luxuries and flowery enchantments that beset remarkable [wealth](#); but it was not impossible, even surrounded with it, for one to lay hold of [salvation](#), provided he withdrew himself from material [wealth](#),—to that which is grasped by the mind and taught by [God](#), and learned to use things indifferent rightly and properly, and so as to strive after [eternal](#) life. And the [disciples](#) even themselves were at first alarmed and amazed. Why were they so on hearing this? Was it that they themselves possessed much [wealth](#)? Nay, they had long ago left their very nets, and hooks, and rowing boats, which were their sole possessions. Why then do they say in consternation, "Who can be saved?" They had heard well and like [disciples](#) what was spoken in [parable](#) and obscurely by the Lord, and perceived the depth of the words. For they were sanguine of [salvation](#) on the ground of their want of [wealth](#). But when they became conscious of not having yet wholly renounced the [passions](#) (for they were neophytes and recently selected by the Saviour), they were excessively astonished, and despaired of themselves no less than that rich man who clung so terribly to the [wealth](#) which he preferred to [eternal](#) life. It was therefore a fit subject for all [fear](#) on the [disciples'](#) part; if both he that possesses [wealth](#) and he that is teeming with [passions](#) were the rich, and these alike shall be expelled from the heavens. For [salvation](#) is the privilege of pure and passionless [souls](#).

XXI. But the Lord replies, "Because what is impossible with men is possible with [God](#)." This again is full of great wisdom. For a man by himself working and toiling at freedom from passion achieves nothing. But if he plainly shows himself very desirous and earnest about this, he attains it by the addition of the power of [God](#). For God conspires with willing [souls](#). But if they abandon their eagerness, the spirit which is bestowed by God is also restrained. For to save the unwilling is the part of one exercising compulsion; but to save the willing, that of one showing [grace](#). Nor does the [kingdom of heaven](#) belong to sleepers and sluggards, "but the violent take it by force." For this alone is commendable

[violence](#), to force [God](#), and take life from God by force. And He, [knowing](#) those who persevere firmly, or rather violently, yields and grants. For God delights in being vanquished in such things.

Therefore on hearing those words, the blessed Peter, the chosen, the pre-eminent, the first of the [disciples](#), for whom alone and Himself the Saviour paid tribute, [Matthew 17:27](#) quickly seized and comprehended the saying. And what does he say? "Lo, we have left all and followed You." Now if by all he means his own property, he boasts of leaving four oboli perhaps in all, and forgets to show the [kingdom of heaven](#) to be their recompense. But if, casting away what we were now speaking of, the old mental possessions and [soul](#) diseases, they follow in the Master's footsteps, this now joins them to those who are to be enrolled in the heavens. For it is thus that one [truly](#) follows the Saviour, by aiming at sinlessness and at His perfection, and adorning and composing the [soul](#) before it as a mirror, and arranging everything in all respects similarly.

XXII. "And Jesus answering said, Verily I say unto you, Whosoever shall leave what is his own, [parents](#), and children, and [wealth](#), for My sake and the [Gospel's](#), shall receive an hundredfold." But let neither this trouble you, nor the still harder saying delivered in another place in the words, "Whoso [hates](#) not father, and mother, and children, and his own life besides, cannot be My [disciple](#)." [Luke 14:26](#) For the [God](#) of peace, who also exhorts to [love](#) enemies, does not introduce [hatred](#) and dissolution from those that are dearest. But if we are to [love](#) our enemies, it is in accordance with right reason that, ascending from them, we should [love](#) also those nearest in kindred. Or if we are to [hate](#) our blood-relations, deduction teaches us that much more are we to spurn from us our enemies. So that the reasonings would be shown to destroy one another. But they do not destroy each other, nor are they near doing so. For from the same feeling and disposition, and on the ground of the same rule, one loving his enemy may [hate](#) his father, inasmuch as he neither takes vengeance on an enemy, nor reverences a father more than Christ. For by the one word he extirpates [hatred](#) and injury, and by the other shamefacedness towards one's relations, if it is detrimental to [salvation](#). If then one's father, or son, or brother, be godless, and become a hindrance to [faith](#) and an impediment to the higher life, let him not be friends or agree with him, but on account of the spiritual enmity, let him dissolve the fleshly relationship.

XXIII. Suppose the matter to be a law-suit. Let your father be imagined to present himself to you and say, "I begot and reared you. Follow me, and join with me in [wickedness](#), and [obey](#) not the law of Christ;" and whatever a man who is a blasphemer and dead by nature would say.

But on the other side hear the Saviour: "I regenerated you, who were ill born by the world to death. I emancipated, healed, ransomed you. I will show you the face of the good Father God. Call no man your father on earth. Let the dead bury the dead; but follow Me. For I will bring you to a rest of ineffable and unutterable blessings, which eye has not seen, nor ear heard, nor have entered into the heart of men; into which [angels](#) desire to look, and see what [good](#) things God has prepared for the [saints](#) and the children who [love](#) Him." [1 Corinthians 2:9](#); [1 Peter 1:12](#) I am He who feeds you, giving Myself as bread, of

which he who has tasted experiences death no more, and supplying day by day the drink of [immortality](#). I am teacher of supercelestial lessons. For you I contended with Death, and paid your death, which you owed for your former [sins](#) and your unbelief towards God."

Having heard these considerations on both sides, decide for yourself and give your vote for your own [salvation](#). Should a brother say the like, should a child, should a wife, should any one whosoever, in preference to all let Christ in you be conqueror. For He contends in your behalf.

XXIV. You may even go against [wealth](#). Say, "Certainly Christ does not debar me from property. The Lord does not [envy](#)." But do you see yourself overcome and overthrown by it? Leave it, throw it away, [hate](#), renounce, flee. "Even if your right eye offend you," quickly "cut it out." [Matthew 5:9](#) Better is the kingdom of God to a [man](#) with one eye, than the fire to one who is un mutilated. Whether hand, or foot, or [soul](#), [hate](#) it. For if it is destroyed here for [Christ's](#) sake, it will be restored to life yonder.

XXV. And to this effect similarly is what follows. "Now at this present time not to have lands, and money, and houses, and brethren, with [persecutions](#)." For it is neither penniless, nor homeless, nor brotherless people that the Lord calls to life, since He has also called rich people; but, as we have said above, also brothers, as Peter with Andrew, and James with John the sons of Zebedee, but of one mind with each other and Christ. And the expression "with [persecutions](#)" rejects the possessing of each of those things. There is a [persecution](#) which arises from without, from men assailing the faithful, either out of [hatred](#), or [envy](#), or [avarice](#), or through diabolic agency. But the most painful is internal [persecution](#), which proceeds from each man's own [soul](#) being vexed by impious [lusts](#), and diverse pleasures, and base hopes, and destructive dreams; when, always grasping at more, and maddened by brutish loves, and inflamed by the [passions](#) which beset it like goads and stings, it is covered with blood, (to drive it on) to insane pursuits, and to despair of life, and to contempt of [God](#).

More grievous and painful is this [persecution](#), which arises from within, which is ever with a [man](#), and which the [persecuted](#) cannot escape; for he carries the enemy about everywhere in himself. Thus also burning which attacks from without works trial, but that from within produces death. War also made on one is easily put an end to, but that which is in the [soul](#) continues till death.

With such [persecution](#), if you have worldly [wealth](#), if you have brothers allied by blood and other pledges, abandon the whole [wealth](#) of these which leads to [evil](#); procure peace for yourself, free yourself from protracted [persecutions](#); turn from them to the [Gospel](#); choose before all the Saviour and Advocate and Paraclete of your [soul](#), the Prince of life. "For the things which are seen are temporary; but the things which are not seen are [eternal](#)." [2 Corinthians 4:18](#) And in the present time are things evanescent and insecure, but in that to come is [eternal](#) life.

XXVI. "The first shall be last, and the last first." [Mark 10:31](#) This is fruitful in meaning and exposition, but does not demand investigation at present; for it refers not only to the [wealthy](#) alone, but plainly to all [men](#), who have once surrendered themselves to [faith](#). So let this stand aside for the present. But I think that our proposition has been demonstrated in no way inferior to what we promised, that the Saviour by no means has excluded the rich on account of [wealth](#) itself, and the possession of property, nor fenced off [salvation](#) against them; if they are able and willing to submit their life to God's commandments, and prefer them to transitory objects, and if they would look to the Lord with steady eye, as those who look for the nod of a good helmsman, what he wishes, what he orders, what he indicates, what signal he gives his mariners, where and whence he directs the ship's course. For what harm does one do, who, previous to [faith](#), by applying his mind and by saving has collected a competency? Or what is much less reprehensible than this, if at once by [God](#), who gave him his life, he has had his home given him in the house of such men, among [wealthy](#) people, powerful in substance, and pre-eminent in opulence? For if, in consequence of his involuntary birth in [wealth](#), a man is banished from life, rather is he wronged by [God](#), who created him, in having vouchsafed to him temporary enjoyment, and in being deprived of [eternal](#) life. And why should [wealth](#) have ever sprung from the earth at all, if it is the author and patron of death?

But if one is able in the midst of [wealth](#) to turn from its power, and to entertain moderate sentiments, and to exercise self-command, and to seek God alone, and to breathe God and walk with [God](#), such a [poor](#) man submits to the commandments, being free, unsubdued, free of disease, unwounded by [wealth](#). But if not, "sooner shall a camel enter through a needle's eye, than such a rich man reach the [kingdom of God](#)." [Mark 10:25](#)

Let then the camel, going through a narrow and strait way before the rich man, signify something loftier; which [mystery](#) of the Saviour is to be learned in the "Exposition of first Principles and of Theology."

XXVII. Well, first let the point of the [parable](#), which is evident, and the reason why it is spoken, be presented. Let it teach the prosperous that they are not to neglect their own [salvation](#), as if they had been already fore-doomed, nor, on the other hand, to cast [wealth](#) into the sea, or condemn it as a traitor and an enemy to life, but learn in what way and how to use [wealth](#) and obtain life. For since neither does one perish by any means by fearing because he is rich, nor is by any means saved by trusting and believing that he shall be saved, come let them look what hope the Saviour assigns them, and how what is unexpected may become ratified, and what is hoped for may come into possession.

The Master accordingly, when asked, "Which is the greatest of the commandments?" says, "You shall [love](#) the Lord your God with all your [soul](#), and with all your strength;" [Matthew 22:36-38](#) that no commandment is greater than this (He says), and with exceeding good reason; for it gives command respecting the First and the Greatest, [God](#) Himself, our Father, by whom all things were brought into being, and exist, and to whom what is saved returns again. By Him, then, being loved beforehand, and having received [existence](#), it is impious for us to regard anything else older or more excellent; rendering only this small tribute of gratitude for the greatest benefits; and being unable to [imagine](#)

anything else whatever by way of recompense to [God](#), who needs nothing and is perfect; and gaining [immortality](#) by the very exercise of loving the Father to the extent of one's might and power. For the more one loves [God](#), the more he enters within God.

XXVIII. The second in order, and not any less than this, He says, is, "You shall [love](#) your neighbour as yourself," [Matthew 22:39](#) consequently God above yourself. And on His interlocutor inquiring, "Who is my neighbour?" [Luke 10:29](#) He did not, in the same way with the [Jews](#), specify the blood-relation, or the fellow-citizen, or the [proselyte](#), or him that had been similarly [circumcised](#), or the man who uses one and the same law. But He introduces one on his way down from the upland region from Jerusalem to [Jericho](#), and represents him stabbed by [robbers](#), cast half-dead on the way, passed by the [priest](#), looked sideways at by the Levite, but pitied by the vilified and [excommunicated Samaritan](#); who did not, like those, pass casually, but came provided with such things as the man in danger required, such as oil, bandages, a beast of burden, money for the inn-keeper, part given now, and part promised. "Which," said He, "of them was neighbour to him that suffered these things?" and on his answering, "He that showed mercy to him," (replied), [Luke 10:36-37](#) Go also, therefore, and do likewise, since [love](#) buds into well-doing.

XXIX. In both the commandments, then, He introduces [love](#); but in order distinguishes it. And in the one He assigns to God the first part of [love](#), and allots the second to our neighbour. Who else can it be but the Saviour Himself? or who more than He has pitied us, who by the rulers of darkness were all but [put to death](#) with many wounds, fears, [lusts](#), [passions](#), pains, deceits, pleasures? Of these wounds the only physician is Jesus, who cuts out the [passions](#) thoroughly by the root,—not as the law does the bare effects, the fruits of [evil](#) plants, but applies His axe to the roots of [wickedness](#). He it is that poured wine on our wounded [souls](#) (the blood of David's vine), that brought the oil which flows from the compassions of the [Father](#), and bestowed it copiously. He it is that produced the ligatures of health and of [salvation](#) that cannot be undone,—Love, Faith, Hope. He it is that subjected [angels](#), and principalities, and powers, for a great reward to serve us. For they also shall be delivered from the vanity of the world through the revelation of the [glory](#) of the sons of [God](#). We are therefore to [love](#) Him equally with [God](#). And he loves Christ Jesus who does His [will](#) and keeps His commandments. "For not every one that says unto Me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the [kingdom of heaven](#); but he that does the [will](#) of My Father." [Matthew 7:21](#) And "Why do you call Me Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say?" [Luke 6:46](#) "And blessed are you who see and hear what neither righteous men nor [prophets](#)" (have seen or heard), [Matthew 13:16-17](#) if you do what I say.

XXX. He then is first who loves Christ; and second, he who loves and cares for those who have [believed](#) on Him. For whatever is done to a [disciple](#), the Lord accepts as done to Himself, and reckons the whole as His. "Come, you blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world. For I was an hungered, and you gave Me to eat: I was thirsty, and you gave Me to drink: and I was a stranger, and you took Me in: I was naked and you clothed Me: I was sick, and you visited Me: I was in prison, and you came to Me. Then shall the righteous answer, saying, Lord, when saw we You hungry, and fed You? or thirsty, and gave You drink? And when saw we You a

stranger, and took You in? or naked, and clothed You? Or when saw we You sick, and visited You? or in prison, and came to You? And the King answering, shall say to them, Verily I say unto you, inasmuch as you have done it unto one of the least of these My brethren, you have done it unto Me."

Again, on the opposite side, to those who have not performed these things, "Verily I say unto you, inasmuch as you have not done it unto one of the least of these, you have not done it to Me." And in another place, "He that receives you; receives Me; and he that receives not you, rejects Me." [Matthew 10:40](#); [Luke 10:16](#)

XXXI. Such He names children, and sons, and little children, and friends, and little ones here, in reference to their future greatness above. "Despise not," He says, "one of these little ones; for their [angels](#) always behold the face of My Father in heaven." [Matthew 18:10](#) And in another place, "Fear not, little flock, for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the [kingdom of heaven](#)." [Luke 12:32](#) Similarly also He says that "the least in the [kingdom of heaven](#)" that is His own [disciple](#) "is greater than John, the greatest among those born of [women](#)." [Matthew 11:11](#) And again, "He that receives a righteous man or a [prophet](#) in the name of a righteous man or a [prophet](#), shall receive their reward; and he that gives to a [disciple](#) in the name of a [disciple](#) a cup of cold water to drink, shall not lose his reward." [Matthew 10:41](#) Wherefore this is the only reward that is not lost. And again, "Make to you friends of the mammon of unrighteousness, that, when you fail, they may receive you into everlasting habitations;" [Luke 16:9](#) showing that by nature all property which a man possesses in his own power is not his own. And from this unrighteousness it is permitted to work a righteous and saving thing, to refresh some one of those who have an everlasting habitation with the Father.

See then, first, that He has not commanded you to be solicited or to wait to be importuned, but yourself to seek those who are to be benefited and are worthy [disciples](#) of the Saviour. Excellent, accordingly, also is the apostle's saying, "For the Lord loves a cheerful giver;" [2 Corinthians 9:7](#) who delights in giving, and spares not, sowing so that he may also thus reap, without murmuring, and disputing, and regret, and communicating, which is pure beneficence. But better than this is the saying spoken by the Lord in another place, "Give to every one that asks you." [Luke 6:30](#) For [truly](#) such is God's delight in giving. And this saying is above all divinity,—not to wait to be asked, but to inquire oneself who deserves to receive kindness.

XXXII. Then to appoint such a reward for liberality,—an everlasting habitation! O excellent trading! O divine merchandise! One purchases [immortality](#) for money; and, by giving the perishing things of the world, receives in exchange for these an [eternal](#) mansion in the heavens! Sail to this mart, if you are wise, O rich man! If need be, sail round the whole world. Spare not perils and toils, that you may purchase here the heavenly kingdom. Why do transparent stones and emeralds delight you so much, and a house that is fuel for fire, or a plaything of time, or the sport of the earthquake, or an occasion for a tyrant's outrage? Aspire to dwell in the heavens, and to reign with [God](#). This kingdom a man imitating God will give you. By receiving a little here, there through all ages He will make you a dweller with Him. Ask that you may receive; haste; strive;

[fear](#) lest He disgrace you. For He is not commanded to receive, but you to give. The Lord did not say, Give, or bring, or do good, or help, but make a friend. But a friend proves himself such not by one gift, but by long intimacy. For it is neither the [faith](#), nor the [love](#), nor the hope, nor the endurance of one day, but "he that endures to the end shall be saved." [Matthew 10:22](#)

XXXIII. How then does man give these things? For I will give not only to friends, but to the friends of friends. And who is it that is the friend of God? Do not you judge who is worthy or who is unworthy. For it is possible you may be mistaken in your opinion. As in the uncertainty of [ignorance](#) it is better to do good to the undeserving for the sake of the deserving, than by guarding against those that are less good to fail to meet in with the good. For though sparing, and aiming at testing, who will receive meritoriously or not, it is possible for you to neglect some that are loved by [God](#); the penalty for which is the punishment of [eternal fire](#). But by offering to all in turn that need, you must of necessity by all means find some one of those who have power with God to save. "Judge not, then, that you be not judged. With what measure you mete, it shall be measured to you again; [Matthew 7:1-2](#); [Luke 6:37-38](#) good measure, pressed and shaken, and running over, shall be given to you." Open your compassion to all who are enrolled the [disciples](#) of [God](#); not looking contemptuously to personal appearance, nor carelessly disposed to any period of life. Nor if one appears penniless, or ragged, or ugly, or feeble, do you fret in [soul](#) at this and turn away. This form is cast around us from without, the occasion of our entrance into this world, that we may be able to enter into this common school. But within dwells the hidden Father, and His Son, who died for us and rose with us.

XXXIV. This visible appearance cheats death and the [devil](#); for the [wealth](#) within, the beauty, is unseen by them. And they rave about the carcass, which they despise as weak, being blind to the [wealth](#) within; [knowing](#) not what a "treasure in an earthen vessel" [2 Corinthians 4:7](#) we bear, protected as it is by the power of [God](#) the [Father](#), and the blood of God the [Son](#), and the dew of the [Holy Spirit](#). But be not deceived, you who has tasted of the [truth](#), and been reckoned worthy of the great redemption. But contrary to what is the case with the rest of [men](#), collect for yourself an unarmed, an unwarlike, a bloodless, a passionless, a stainless host, [pious](#) old men, [orphans](#) dear to [God](#), [widows](#) armed with meekness, men, adorned with [love](#). Obtain with your money such guards, for body and for [soul](#), for whose sake a sinking ship is made buoyant, when steered by the [prayers](#) of the [saints](#) alone; and disease at its height is subdued, put to flight by the [laying on of hands](#); and the attack of [robbers](#) is disarmed, spoiled by [pious prayers](#); and the might of [demons](#) is crushed, put to shame in its operations by strenuous commands.

XXXV. All these warriors and guards are trusty. No one is idle, no one is useless. One can obtain your pardon from [God](#), another comfort you when sick, another weep and groan in sympathy for you to the Lord of all, another teach some of the things useful for [salvation](#), another admonish with confidence, another counsel with kindness. And all can [love truly](#), without guile, without [fear](#), without hypocrisy, without flattery, without pretence. O sweet service of loving [[souls](#)]! O blessed thoughts of confident [hearts]! O sincere [faith](#) of those who [fear](#) God alone! O [truth](#) of words with those who cannot lie! O beauty of deeds with those who have been commissioned to serve [God](#), to persuade [God](#),

to please [God](#), not to touch your flesh! to speak, but to the King of [eternity](#) dwelling in you.

XXXVI. All the faithful, then, are good and godlike, and worthy of the name by which they are encircled as with a diadem. There are, besides, some, the elect of the [elect](#), and so much more or less distinguished by drawing themselves, like ships to the strand, out of the surge of the world and bringing themselves to safety; not wishing to seem [holy](#), and ashamed if one call them so; hiding in the depth of their mind the ineffable [mysteries](#), and disdain to let their nobleness be seen in the world; whom the Word calls "the light of the world, and the [salt](#) of the earth." [Matthew 5:13-14](#) This is the seed, the image and likeness of [God](#), and His [true](#) son and heir, sent here as it were on a sojourn, by the high administration and suitable arrangement of the [Father](#), by whom the visible and invisible things of the world were created; some for their service, some for their discipline, some for their instruction; and all things are held together so long as the seed remains here; and when it is gathered, these things shall be very quickly dissolved.

XXXVII. For what further need has God of the [mysteries](#) of [love](#)? And then you shall look into the bosom of the [Father](#), whom God the only-begotten Son alone has declared. And God Himself is [love](#); and out of [love](#) to us became feminine. In His ineffable [essence](#) He is Father; in His compassion to us He became Mother. The Father by loving became feminine: and the great [proof](#) of this is He whom He begot of Himself; and the fruit brought forth by [love](#) is [love](#).

For this also He came down. For this He clothed Himself with man. For this He voluntarily subjected Himself to the experiences of [men](#), that by bringing Himself to the measure of our weakness whom He loved, He might correspondingly bring us to the measure of His own strength. And about to be offered up and giving Himself a ransom, He left for us a new Covenant-testament: My [love](#) I give unto you. And what and how great is it? For each of us He gave His life,—the equivalent for all. This He demands from us in return for one another. And if we owe our lives to the brethren, and have made such a mutual compact with the Saviour, why should we any more hoard and shut up worldly goods, which are beggarly, foreign to us and transitory? Shall we shut up from each other what after a little shall be the property of the fire? Divinely and weightily John says, "He that loves not his brother is a murderer," [1 John 3:14-15](#) the seed of Cain, a nursling of the [devil](#). He has not God's compassion. He has no hope of better things. He is sterile; he is barren; he is not a branch of the ever-living supercelestial vine. He is cut off; he waits the perpetual fire.

XXXVIII. But learn the more excellent way, which [Paul](#) shows for [salvation](#). "Love seeks not her own," [1 Corinthians 13:5](#) but is diffused on the brother. About him she is fluttered, about him she is soberly insane. "Love covers a multitude of [sins](#)." [1 Peter 4:8](#) "Perfect [love](#) casts out [fear](#)." [1 John 4:18](#) "Vaunts not itself, is not puffed up; rejoices not in iniquity, but rejoices in the [truth](#); bears all things, [believes](#) all things, hopes all things, endures all things. Love never fails. Prophecies are done away, tongues cease, gifts of healing fail on the earth. But these three abide, Faith, Hope, Love. But the greatest of these is Love." And rightly. For Faith departs when we are convinced by vision, by

seeing God. And Hope vanishes when the things hoped for come. But Love comes to completion, and grows more when that which is perfect has been bestowed. If one introduces it into his [soul](#), although he be born in [sins](#), and has done many forbidden things, he is able, by increasing [love](#), and adopting a pure repentance, to retrieve his mistakes. For let not this be left to despondency and despair by you, if you learn who the rich man is that has not a place in heaven, and what way he uses his property.

XXXIX. If one should escape the superfluity of riches, and the difficulty they interpose in the way of life, and be able to enjoy the [eternal good](#) things; but should happen, either from [ignorance](#) or involuntary circumstances, after the seal and redemption, to fall into [sins](#) or transgressions so as to be quite carried away; such a man is entirely rejected by [God](#). For to every one who has turned to [God](#) in [truth](#), and with his whole heart, the doors are open, and the thrice-glad Father receives His [truly](#) repentant son. And [true](#) repentance is to be no longer bound in the same [sins](#) for which He denounced death against Himself, but to eradicate them completely from the [soul](#). For on their extirpation God takes up His abode again in you. For it is said there is great and exceeding [joy](#) and festival in the heavens with the Father and the [angels](#) when one sinner turns and repents. [Luke 15:10](#) Wherefore also He cries, "I will have mercy, and not [sacrifice](#)." [Hosea 6:6](#); [Matthew 9:13](#) "I desire not the death, but the repentance of the sinner." [Ezekiel 18:23](#) "Though your [sins](#) be as scarlet wool, I will make them white as snow; though they be blacker than darkness, I will wash and make them like white wool." [Isaiah 1:18](#) For it is in the power of God alone to grant the forgiveness of [sins](#), and not to impute transgressions; since also the Lord commands us each day to forgive the repenting brethren. [Matthew 6:14](#) "And if we, being [evil](#), [know](#) to give good gifts," [Luke 11:13](#) much more is it the [nature](#) of the Father of mercies, the good Father of all consolation, much pitying, very merciful, to be long-suffering, to wait for those who have turned. And to turn is really to cease from our [sins](#), and to look no longer behind.

XL. Forgiveness of past [sins](#), then, God gives; but of future, each one gives to himself. And this is to repent, to condemn the past deeds, and beg oblivion of them from the [Father](#), who only of all is able to undo what is done, by mercy proceeding from Him, and to blot out former [sins](#) by the dew of the Spirit. "For by the state in which I find you will I judge," also, is what in each case the end of all cries aloud. So that even in the case of one who has done the greatest good deeds in his life, but at the end has run headlong into [wickedness](#), all his former pains are profitless to him, since at the catastrophe of the drama he has given up his part; while it is possible for the man who formerly led a bad and dissolute life, on afterwards repenting, to overcome in the time after repentance the [evil](#) conduct of a long time. But it needs great carefulness, just as bodies that have suffered by protracted disease need regimen and special attention. Thief, do you wish to get forgiveness? steal no more. Adulterer, burn no more. Fornicator, live for the future chastely. You who has [robbed](#), give back, and give back more than you took. False [witness](#), practice [truth](#). [Perjurer](#), [swear](#) no more, and extirpate the rest of the [passions](#), [wrath](#), [lust](#), grief, [fear](#); that you may be found at the end to have previously in this world been reconciled to the adversary. It is then probably impossible all at once to eradicate inbred [passions](#); but by God's power and human intercession, and the help of brethren, and sincere repentance, and constant care, they are corrected.

XLI. Wherefore it is by all means necessary for you, who art pompous, and powerful, and rich, to set over yourself some man of God as a trainer and governor. Reverence, though it be but one man; [fear](#), though it be but one man. Give yourself to hearing, though it be but one speaking freely, using harshness, and at the same time healing. For it is [good](#) for the eyes not to continue always wanton, but to weep and smart sometimes, for greater health. So also nothing is more pernicious to the [soul](#) than uninterrupted pleasure. For it is blinded by melting away, if it remain unmoved by bold speech. Fear this man when [angry](#); be pained at his groaning; and reverence him when making his [anger](#) to cease; and anticipate him when he is deprecating punishment. Let him pass many sleepless nights for you, interceding for you with [God](#), influencing the Father with the magic of familiar litanies. For He does not hold out against His children when they beg His pity. And for you he will [pray](#) purely, held in high [honour](#) as an [angel](#) of [God](#), and grieved not by you, but for you. This is sincere repentance. "[God](#) is not mocked," [Galatians 6:7](#) nor does He give heed to vain words. For He alone searches the marrow and reins of the heart, and hears those that are in the fire, and listens to those who supplicate in the whale's belly; and is near to all who [believe](#), and far from the ungodly if they repent not.

XLII. And that you may be still more confident, that repenting thus [truly](#) there remains for you a sure hope of [salvation](#), listen to a tale, which is not a tale but a narrative, handed down and committed to the custody of memory, about the Apostle John. For when, on the tyrant's death, he returned to [Ephesus](#) from the isle of [Patmos](#), he went away, being invited, to the contiguous territories of the [nations](#), here to appoint [bishops](#), there to set in order whole Churches, there to ordain such as were marked out by the Spirit.

Having come to one of the cities not far off (the name of which some give), and having put the brethren to rest in other matters, at last, looking to the [bishop](#) appointed, and seeing a youth, powerful in body, comely in appearance, and ardent, said, "This (youth) I commit to you in all earnestness, in the presence of the [Church](#), and with Christ as [witness](#)." And on his accepting and promising all, he gave the same injunction and testimony. And he set out for Ephesus. And the [presbyter](#) taking home the youth committed to him, reared, kept, cherished, and finally [baptized](#) him. After this he relaxed his stricter care and guardianship, under the idea that the seal of the Lord he had set on him was a complete protection to him. But on his obtaining premature freedom, some youths of his age, idle, dissolute, and adepts in [evil](#) courses, corrupt him. First they entice him by many costly entertainments; then afterwards by night issuing forth for highway [robbery](#), they take him along with them. Then they dared to execute together something greater. And he by degrees got accustomed; and from greatness of nature, when he had gone aside from the right path, and like a hard-mouthed and powerful horse, had taken the bit between his teeth, rushed with all the more force down into the depths. And having entirely despaired of [salvation](#) in [God](#), he no longer meditated what was insignificant, but having perpetrated some great exploit, now that he was once lost, he made up his mind to a like [fate](#) with the rest. Taking them and forming a band of [robbers](#), he was the prompt captain of the bandits, the fiercest, the bloodiest, the cruelest.

Time passed, and some necessity having emerged, they send again for John. He, when he had settled the other matters on account of which he came, said, "Come now, O [bishop](#),

restore to us the deposit which I and the Saviour committed to you in the face of the Church over which you preside, as [witness](#)." The other was at first confounded, thinking that it was a false charge about money which he did not get; and he could neither [believe](#) the allegation regarding what he had not, nor disbelieve John. But when he said "I demand the young man, and the [soul](#) of the brother," the old man, groaning deeply, and bursting into tears, said, "He is dead." "How and what kind of death?" "He is dead," he said, "to [God](#). For he turned [wicked](#) and abandoned, and at last a robber; and now he has taken possession of the mountain in front of the church, along with a band like him." Rending, therefore, his clothes, and striking his head with great lamentation, the apostle said, "It was a fine guard of a brother's [soul](#) I left! But let a horse be brought me, and let some one be my guide on the way." He rode away, just as he was, straight from the church. On coming to the place, he is arrested by the [robbers'](#) outpost; neither fleeing nor entreating, but crying, "It was for this I came. Lead me to your captain;" who meanwhile was waiting, all armed as he was. But when he recognized John as he advanced, he turned, ashamed, to flight. The other followed with all his might, forgetting his age, crying, "Why, my son, do you flee from me, your father, unarmed, old? Son, pity me. Fear not; you have still hope of life. I will give account to Christ for you. If need be, I will willingly endure your death, as the Lord did death for us. For you I will surrender my life. Stand, [believe](#); Christ has sent me."

And he, when he heard, first stood, looking down; then threw down his arms, then trembled and wept bitterly. And on the old man approaching, he embraced him, speaking for himself with lamentations as he could, and [baptized](#) a second time with tears, concealing only his right hand. The other pledging, and assuring him on [oath](#) that he would find forgiveness for himself from the Saviour, beseeching and falling on his knees, and kissing his right hand itself, as now purified by repentance, led him back to the church. Then by supplicating with copious [prayers](#), and striving along with him in continual [fastings](#), and subduing his mind by various utterances of words, did not depart, as they say, till he restored him to the [Church](#), presenting in him a great example of [true](#) repentance and a great token of regeneration, a trophy of the resurrection for which we hope; when at the end of the world, the [angels](#), radiant with [joy](#), hymning and opening the heavens, shall receive into the celestial abodes those who [truly](#) repent; and before all, the Saviour Himself goes to meet them, welcoming them; holding forth the shadowless, ceaseless light; conducting them, to the Father's bosom, to [eternal](#) life, to the [kingdom of heaven](#).

Let one [believe](#) these things, and the [disciples](#) of [God](#), and [God](#), who is surety, the Prophecies, the [Gospels](#), the Apostolic words; living in accordance with them, and lending his ears, and practising the deeds, he shall at his decease see the end and demonstration of the truths taught. For he who in this world welcomes the [angel](#) of penitence will not repent at the time that he leaves the body, nor be ashamed when he sees the Saviour approaching in His [glory](#) and with His army. He fears not the fire.

But if one chooses to continue and to [sin](#) perpetually in pleasures, and values indulgence here above [eternal](#) life, and turns away from the Saviour, who gives forgiveness; let him no more blame either [God](#), or riches, or his having fallen, but his own [soul](#), which

voluntarily perishes. But to him who directs his eye to [salvation](#) and desires it, and asks with boldness and vehemence for its bestowal, the good Father who is in heaven will give the [true](#) purification and the changeless life. To whom, by His Son Jesus Christ, the Lord of the living and dead, and by the [Holy Spirit](#), be [glory](#), [honour](#), power, [eternal](#) majesty, both now and ever, from generation to generation, and from [eternity](#) to [eternity](#). [Amen](#).