



COMMENTARIES ON 'ROMANS'

ST. JOHN CHRYSOSTOM

Chapter 2

Verse 1. *“Therefore thou art inexcusable, O man; whosoever thou art that judgest; for wherein thou judgest another, thou condemnest thyself.”*

These things he says, with an aim at the rulers, inasmuch as that city then had the rule of the world put into its hands. He anticipated them therefore by saying, Thou art depriving thyself of defense, whoever thou mayest be; for when thou condemnest an adulterer, and thyself committest adultery, although no man condemneth thee, in thy judgment upon the guilty person thou hast also passed sentence against thyself.

Verse 2. *“For we are sure that the judgment of God is according to truth against them who commit such things.”*

For lest any should say, until now I have escaped, to make him afraid, he says, that it is not so with God as it is here. For here one is punished, and another escapes while doing the same thing. But hereafter it is not so. That he that judgeth then knoweth the right, he has, said: but whence he knoweth it, he hath not added; for it was superfluous. For in the case of ungodliness, he shows both that the ungodly was so even with a knowledge of God, and also whence he got that knowledge, namely, from the Creation. For inasmuch as it was not plain to all, he gave the cause also; but here he passes it over as a thing admitted. But when he says, “whosoever thou art that judgest,” he is not addressing himself to the rulers only, but to private individuals and subjects also. For all men, even if they have no chair of state, nor executioners, nor stocks at command, yet even they judge those that offend, in conversations and public meetings and by the vote of their conscience. And no one would venture to say, that the adulterer does not deserve punishment. But it is others, he says, they condemn, and not themselves. And for this cause he stands forth vehemently against them, and says,

Verse 3. *“And thinkest thou this,” O man, that judgest those which do such things, and doest the same, that thou shalt escape the judgment of God?”*

For since he had shown the sin of the world to be great, from its doctrines, from its doings, and that they did yet sin though wise, and though they had the creation to lead them by the hand, and not by leaving God only, but also by choosing the images of creeping things, and by their dishonoring virtue, and deserting, in spite of nature’s drawings back, to the service of vice even contrary to nature: he goes on next to show, that they who do such things are punished too. He did indeed at once point out a punishment by mentioning their very practice. For “they, received,” he says, “in themselves that recompense of their error which was meet.” But as they do not perceive that, he mentions another also,

which they stood most in fear of. And indeed already he chiefly pointed at this. For when he says, "That the judgment of God is according to truth," he is speaking of no other than this. But he establishes the same again upon other further grounds, saying thus, "And thinkest thou this, O man, that judgest them which do such things, and doest the same, that thou shalt escape the judgment of God?" Thou hast not been acquitted of thine own judgment, and wilt thou escape through God's? Who indeed would say this? And yet thou hast judged thyself. But since the rigorousness of the judgment-court was such, and thou weft not able to spare even thyself, how should not God, that cannot do amiss, and who is in the highest sense just, be much surer to do the same? But hast thou condemned thyself, and is God to approve of thee and praise thee? And how can this be reasonable? And all the while thou art deserving of a greater punishment, than he who is of thee condemned. For sinning merely, is not the same thing with falling again into the same sins you have chastised another for committing. See, how he has strengthened the charge! For if you, he means, punish a person who has committed less sins, though by it you will put yourself to shame, how shall not God cast you in your suit, and condemn you more severely, who have committed greater transgressions, and this too when He will never make Himself ashamed, and you are already condemned by your own reckoning. But if thou say, I know that I deserve punishment; yet through His long-suffering thinkest slightly of it, and art confident because thou dost not suffer punishment forthwith; this surely is a reason why thou oughtest to be afraid and tremble. For the fact that thou hast not yet suffered punishment, will not result in thy not suffering any punishment, but in thy suffering a more severe one if thou abidest unamended. And so he goes on to say:

Verse 4. *"Or despiseth thou the riches of His goodness and forbearance and long-suffering; not knowing that the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance?"*

For after praising God's long-suffering, showing the gain thereof to be very great to them that heeded it (and this was the drawing sinners to repentance); he adds to the terror. For as to them, who avail themselves of it aright, it is a ground of safety; so to them that slight it, it is conducive to a greater vengeance. For whenever you utter this common notion, that God doth not exact justice, because He is good and long-suffering, he says, You do but mention what will make the vengeance intenser. For God showeth His goodness that you may get free from your sins, not that you may add to them. If then thou make not this use thereof, the judgment will be more fearful. Wherefore it is a chief ground for abstaining from sin, that God is long-suffering, and not for making the benefit a plea for obstinacy. For if He be long-suffering, He most certainly punisheth. Whence does this appear? from what is next said. For if the wickedness be great and the wicked have not been requited, it is absolutely necessary that they should be requited, For if men do not overlook these things, how should God make an oversight? And so from this point he introduces the subject of the judgment. For the fact of showing many who, if they repent not, are liable, yet still are not punished here, introduces with it necessarily the judgment, and that with increase. Wherefore he says,

Verse 5. *"But after thy hardness and impenitent heart treasurest up unto thyself wrath."*

For when a man is neither to be softened by goodness nor to be turned back by fear, what can be harder than such an one? For after that he had showed the goodness of God towards men, he then shows His vengeance that it is unbearable for him who does not even so return to repentance. And observe with what propriety he uses the words! "Thou treasurest up unto thyself wrath," he says, so making it plain what is certainly laid up, and showing that it is not He that judgeth, but he that is condemned, who is the

author of this. For he says, “thou treasurest up for thyself,” not God for thee. For He did all, whatsoever things were fitting, and created thee with a power to discern between good and what was not so, and showed long-suffering over thee, and called thee to repentance, and threatened a fearful day, so by every means drawing thee to repentance. But if thou shouldst continue unyielding, “thou treasurest up unto thyself wrath against the day of wrath and revelation and the righteous judgment of God.” For lest on hearing of wrath thou shouldst think of any passion, he adds, “the righteous judgment of God.” And he said “revelation” with good reason, for then is this revealed when each man receives his desert. For here many men often annoy and practice harm to one without justice. But hereafter it is not so.

Verse 6, 7. *“Who will render to every man according to his deeds, to them who by patient continuance in well doing,” etc.*

Since he had become awestrking and harsh by discoursing of the judgment and of the punishment that shall be, he does not forthwith, as one might expect, enter upon the vengeance, but turns his discourse to what was sweeter, to the recompense of good actions, saving as follows,

Verse 7. *“To them who by patient continuance in well doing seek for glory and honor and immortality, eternal life.”*

Here also he awakens those who had drawn back during the trials, and shows that it is not right to trust in faith only. For it is deeds also into which that tribunal will enquire. But observe, how when he is discoursing about the things to come, he is unable to tell clearly the blessings, but speaketh of glory and honor. For in that they transcend all that man hath, he hath no image of them taken from this to show, but by those things which have a semblance of brightness among us, even by them he sets them before us as far as may be, by glory, by honor, by life. For these be what men earnestly strive after, yet are those things not these, but much better than these, inasmuch as they are incorruptible and immortal. See how he has opened to us the doors toward the resurrection of the body by speaking of incorruptibility. For incorruptibility belongs to the corruptible body. Then, since this sufficed not, he added glory and honor. For all of us are to rise incorruptible, but not all to glory, but some to punishment, and some to life.

Verse 8. *“But unto them that are contentious,”*

Again, he deprives of excuse those that live in wickedness, and shows that it is from a kind of disputatiousness and carelessness that they fall into unrighteousness.

“And do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness.” See, here is another accusation again. For what defense can he set up, who flees from the light and chooses the dark? And he does not say, who are “compelled by,” “lorded over by,” but who “obey unrighteousness,” that one may learn that the fall is one of free choice, the crime not of necessity.

Verse 9. *“Indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish, upon every soul of man that doeth evil.”*

That is, if a man be rich, if a consul, if a very sovereign, by none of them is the account of the judgment out-faced. Since in this dignities have no place. Having then shown the exceeding greatness of the

disease, and having added the cause, that it was from the carelessness of the disordered, and finally, that destruction awaits them and that amendment is easy, in the punishment also he again gives the Jew the heavier lot. For he that had enjoyed a larger share of instruction would also deserve to undergo a larger share of vengeance if doing lawlessly. And so the wiser or mightier men we are, the more are we punished if we sin. For if thou art rich, thou wilt have more money demanded of thee than of the poor; and if wiser than others, a stricter obedience; and if thou hast been invested with authority, more shining acts of goodness; and so in the case of all the other things, thou wilt have to bring in measures proportioned to your power.

Verse 10. *“But glory, honor, and peace to every man that worketh good, to the Jew first, and also to the Gentile.”*

What Jew does he here mean? or about what Gentiles is he discoursing? It is of those before Christ's coming. For his discourse had not hitherto come to the times of grace, but he was still dwelling upon the earlier times, so breaking down first from afar off and clearing away the separation between the Greek and the Jew, that when he should do this in the matter of grace, he might no more seem to be devising some new and degrading view. For if in the earlier times when this Grace had not shone forth in such greatness, when the estate of the Jews was solemn and renowned and glorious before all men, there was no difference, what could they say for themselves now after so great a display of grace? And this is why he establishes it with so great earnestness. For when the hearer has been informed that this held in the earlier times, much more will he receive it after the faith. But by Greeks he here means not them that worshipped idols, but them that adored God, that obeyed the law of nature, that strictly kept all things, save the Jewish observances, which contribute to piety, such as were Melchizedek and his, such as was Job, such as were the Ninevites, such as was Cornelius. Here then he is first breaking through the partition between the circumcision and the uncircumcision: and at a distance dissipates this distinction beforehand, so as to do it without being suspected, and to strike into it as compelled by another occasion, which is ever a characteristic of his Apostolic wisdom. For if he had showed it in the times of grace, what he said would have had a very suspicious look. But on describing the vice which possessed the world, and where end the ways of wickedness, to pass from that consecutively into the treatment of these points renders his teaching unsuspected. And that he means this, and for this purpose so put this together, is plain from hence: for if he were not intent upon effecting this, it were enough for him to have said, “According to thy hardness and impenitent heart thou treasurest up unto thyself wrath against the day of wrath;” and then to have dropped this subject, since it would have been complete. But in that what he had in view was not to speak of the judgment to come only, but show also that the Jew had no advantage of such a Greek, and so was not to be haughty-spirited, he advances farther, and speaks of them in order. But consider! He had put the hearer in fear, had advanced against him the fearful day, had told him what an evil it is to be living in wickedness, had showed him that no man sinneth of ignorance, nor with impunity, but that even though he suffer no punishment now, yet he certainly will suffer it: then he wishes to make good next that the teaching of the Law was not a thing of great importance. For it is upon works that both punishment and reward depend, not upon circumcision and uncircumcision. Since then he had said, that the Gentile shall by no means go unpunished and had taken this for granted, and upon it had made good that he shall also be rewarded, he next showed the Law and circumcision to be superfluous. For it is the Jews that he is here chiefly opposing. For inasmuch as they were somewhat captiously disposed, first, of their haughtiness, not deigning to be reckoned along with the Gentiles, and secondly thinking it ridiculous if the faith is to do away all sins; for this cause

he accused the Gentiles first, in whose behalf he is speaking, that without suspicion and with boldness of speech, he may attack the Jews. And then having come to the enquiry concerning the punishment, he shows that the Jew is so far from being at all profited by the Law, that he is even weighed down by it. And this was his drift some way back. For if the Gentile be on this score inexcusable, because, when the creation led him on and his own reasonings, he yet did not amend, much more were the Jew so, who besides these had the teaching of the Law also. Having then persuaded him to a ready admission of these reasonings, in the case of other men's sins, he now compels him even against his will to do so in the case of his own. And in order that what he says may be more readily allowed, he leads him forward with the better things also in view, speaking on this wise: "But glory and honor and peace to every man that worketh good, to the Jew first, and also to the Gentile." For here whatever good things a man hath, he hath with fightings, even if he be rich, if a prince, if a king. Even if he be not at variance with others, yet is he often so with himself, and has abundant war in his own thoughts. But there it is no such thing, but all is still and void of trouble, and in possession of true peace. Having then made good from what was said above, that they too which have not the Law are to enjoy the same blessings, he adds his reason in the following words:

Verse 11. *"For there is no respect of persons with God."*

For when he says that as well the Jew as the Gentile is punished if he sin, he needs no reasonings: but when he wants to prove that the Gentile is honored also, he then needs a foundation for it also; as it seemed wonderful and extravagant if he who had heard neither Law nor Prophets, were to be honored upon his working good. And this is why (as I also said before) he exercises their hearing in the times before grace, that he might afterwards more treatably bring in, along with the faith, the acquiescence in these things also. For here he is not at all suspected, as seeming not to be making his own point good. Having then said, "Glory and honor and peace to every man that worketh good, to the Jew first, and also to the Gentile," he adds, "For there is no respect of persons with God." Wonderful! What more than victory has he gained! For he shows, by reducing it to an absurdity, that it was not meet with God that it should be otherwise. For it would then be a case of respecting of persons. But of such character God is not. And he does not say, "for if this were not so, God would be a respecter of persons," but with more of dignity, "For there is no respect of persons with God." That it is not quality of persons, but difference of actions. Which He maketh inquisition for. By so saying he shows that it was not in actions but in persons only that the Jew differed from the Gentile. The consequence of this would be thus expressed; For it is not because one is a Jew and the other a Gentile, that one is honored and the other disgraced, but it is from the works that either treatment comes. But he does not say so, since it would have roused the anger of the Jew, but he sets down something more, so bringing their haughty spirit yet lower, and quelling it for the admission of the other. But what is this? The next position.

Verse 12. *"For as many," he says, "as have sinned without law shall also perish without law: and as many as have sinned in the law shall be judged by the law."*

For here, as I said before, he shows not only the equality of the Jew and the Gentile, but that the Jew was even much burdened by the gift of the Law. For the Gentile is judged without law. But this "without law" here expresses not the worse plight but the easier, that is, he has not the Law to accuse him. For "without law" (that is, without the condemnation arising from it), is he condemned solely from the reasonings of nature, but the Jew, "in the Law," that is, with nature and the Law too to accuse him. For

the greater the attention he enjoyed, the greater the punishment he will suffer. See how much greater is the necessity which he lays upon the Jews of a speedy recourse to grace! For in that they said, they needed not grace, being justified by the Law, he shows that they need it more than the Gentiles, considering they are liable to be punished more. Then he adds another reason again, and so farther contends for what has been said.

Verse 13. *“For not the hearers of the law are just before God.”*

Well doth he add “before God;” for haply before men they may be able to appear dignified and to vaunt great things, but before God it is quite otherwise - the doers of the Law alone are justified. You see with what advantage he combats, by turning what they said to an opposite bearing. For if it is by the Law you claim to be saved, in this respect, saith he, the Gentile will stand before you, when seen to be a doer of what is written in the Law. And how is it possible (one may say) for one who hath not heard to be a doer? Not this only, he says, is possible, but what is much more even than this. For not only is it possible without hearing to be a doer, but even with hearing not to be so. Which last thing he makes plainer, and that with a greater advantage over them, when he says, “Thou that teachest another, teachest thou not thyself?” (Romans 2:21.) But here he is still making the former point good.

Verse 14. *“For when the Gentiles,” he says, “which have not the law, do by nature the things contained in the law, these, having not the law, are a law unto themselves.”*

I am not, he means, rejecting the Law, but even on this score I justify the Gentiles. You see how when undermining the conceit of Judaism, he giveth no handle against himself as vilifying the Law, but on the contrary by extolling it and showing its greatness he so makes good his whole position. But whenever he saith “by nature,” he means by the reasonings of nature. And he shows that others are better than they, and, what is more better for this, that they have not received the Law, and have not that wherein the Jews seem to have an advantage over them. For on this ground he means they are to be admired, because they required not a law, and yet exhibited all the doings of the Law, having the works, not the letters, graven upon their minds. For this is what he says,

Verse 15. *“Which show the work of the Law written in their hearts, their conscience also bearing witness, and their thoughts the meanwhile accusing or else excusing one another.”*

Verse 16. *“In the day when God shall judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ, according to my Gospel.”*

See how he again puts that day before them, and brings it close to them, battering down their conceit, and showing, that those were to be the rather honored who without the Law strove earnestly to fulfill the things of the Law. But what is most to be marveled at in the discretion of the Apostle, it is worth while to mention now. For having shown, from the grounds given, that the Gentile is greater than the Jew; in the inference, and the conclusion of his reasoning, he does not state it, in order not to exasperate the Jew. But to make what I have said clearer, I will give the very words of the Apostle. For after saying, that it is not the hearers of the Law, but the doers of the Law, that shall be justified, it followed to say, “For when the Gentiles, which have not the Law, do by nature the things contained in the Law,” they are much better than those who are instructed by the Law. But this he does not say, but he stays at the encomium of the Gentiles, and does not yet awhile carry on his discourse by way of

comparison, that so at least the Jew may receive what is said. And so he does not word it as I was doing, but how? "For when the Gentiles, which have not the Law, do by nature the things contained in the Law, these, not having the Law, are a law unto themselves; which show the work of the Law, written in their hearts, their conscience also bearing witness." For the conscience and reason doth suffice in the Law's stead. By this he showed, first, that God made man independent, so as to be able to choose virtue and to avoid vice. And be not surprised that he proves this point, not once or twice, but several times. For this topic was very needful for him to prove owing to those who say, Why ever is it, that Christ came but now? And where in times before was the scheme of Providence? Now it is these that he is at present beating off by the way, when he shows that even in former times, and before the Law was given, the human race (Gr. nature) fully enjoyed the care of Providence. For "that which may be known of God was manifest in them," and they knew what was good, and what bad; by means whereof they judged others, which he reproaches them with, when he says, "wherein thou judgest another, thou condemnest thyself." But in the case of the Jews, besides what has been mentioned, there was the Law, and not reason or conscience only. And why does he put the words "accusing or else excusing?" - for, if they have a Law written, and show the work of it in them, how comes reason to be able to accuse them still? But he is not any longer speaking of those only who do well, but also of mankind (Gr. the nature) universally. For then our reasonings stand up, some accusing and some excusing. And at that tribunal a man needeth no other accuser. Then to add to their fear, he does not say the sins of men, but the secrets of men. For since he said, "Thinkest thou, that judgest them that do such things, and doest the same, that thou shalt escape the judgment of God;" that thou mayest not expect such a sentence as thou passest thyself, but mayest know, that that of God is far more exact than thine own, he brings in, "the secrets of men," and adds, "through Jesus Christ according to my Gospel." For men sit in judgment upon overt acts alone. And above too he spake of the Father alone, but as soon as he had crushed them with fear, he brought in the mention of Christ also. But he does not do barely this, but even here, after having made mention of the Father, he so introduceth Him. And by the same things he raises the dignity of his preaching. For this preaching, he means, openly speaks out what nature taught by anticipation. Do you see with what wisdom he has bound them both to the Gospel and to Christ, and demonstrated that our affairs come not here to a stand, but travel further. And this he made good before also, when he said, "thou treasurest up to thyself wrath against the day of wrath:" and here again, "God shall judge the secrets of men."

Now let each man enter into his own conscience, and reckoning up his transgressions, let him call himself to a strict account, that we be not then condemned with the world. (1 Corinthians 11:32.) For fearful is that court awful the tribunal, full of trembling the accounts, a river of fire rolls along. "A brother doth not redeem: shall man redeem?" (Psalm 49:8. LXX.) Call then to mind what is said in the Gospel, the Angels running to and fro, of the bridechamber being shut, of the lamps going out, of the powers which drag to the furnaces. And consider this, that if a secret deed of any one of us were brought forth into the midst, today, before the Church only, what could he do but pray to perish, and to have the earth to gape for him, rather than have so many witnesses of his wickedness? How then shall we feel, when, before the whole world, all things are brought into the midst, in a theater so bright and open, with both those known and those unknown to us seeing into everything? But alas! wherewith am I forced to affright you with men's estimation! when I ought to use the fear of God, and His condemnation. For what, pray, is to become of us then when bound, and gnashing our teeth, we are led away to the outer darkness? Or, rather, what shall we do (and this is the most fearful thought of all) when we offend God? For if any one have sense and reason, he has already endured a hell when he is

out of sight of God. But since this doth not pain, fire is therefore threatened. For we ought to smart not when we are punished, but when we sin. Thus listen to Paul wailing and lamenting over sins, for which he was not to be punished. For "I am not meet," he says, "to be called an Apostle, because I persecuted the Church." (1 Corinthians 15:9.) Hear also David, when he is set free from the punishment, yet, as thinking that he had offended God, calling vengeance down upon himself, and saying, "Let thy hand be upon me and upon my father's house." (2 Samuel 24:17.) For to have offended God is more distressing than to be punished. But now we are so wretchedly disposed, that, were there no fear of hell, we should not even choose readily to do any good thing. Wherefore were it for nothing else, yet for this at least, we should deserve hell, because we fear hell more than Christ. But not so the blessed Paul, but contrariwise. But since we feel otherwise, for this reason are we condemned to hell: since, did we but love Christ as we should love Him, we should have known that to offend Him we love were more painful than hell. But since we love Him not, we know not the greatness of His punishment. And this is what I bewail and grieve over the most! And yet what has God not done, to be beloved of us? What hath He not devised? What hath He omitted? We insulted Him, when He had not wronged us in aught, but had even benefited us with blessings countless and unspeakable. We have turned aside from Him when calling and drawing us to Him by all ways, yet hath He not even upon this punished us, but hath run Himself unto us, and held us back, when fleeing, and we have shaken Him off and leaped away to the Devil. And not even on this hath He stood aloof, but hath sent numberless messengers to call us to Him again, Prophets, Angels, Patriarchs: and we have not only not received the embassy, but have even insulted those that came. But not even for this did He spew us out of His mouth, but like those slighted lovers that be very earnest, He went round beseeching all, the heaven, the earth, Jeremiah, Micah, and that not that He might weigh us down, but that He might speak in behalf of His own ways (Isaiah 1:2; Jeremiah 2:12; 3:12; etc.; Micah 6:1): and along with the prophets He went also Himself to those that turned aside from Him, being ready to submit to examination, and deigning to condescend to a conference, and drawing them that were deaf to every appeal into a disputation with Himself. For He saith, "e my people, what have I done unto thee, and wherein have I wearied thee? Answer me." (Micah 6:3.) After all this we killed the Prophets, we stoned them, we did them other cruel wrongs without number. What then? In their place He sent no longer Prophets, no longer Angels, no longer Patriarchs, but the Son Himself. He too was killed when He had come, and yet not even then did He quench His love, but kindled it even more, and keepeth on beseeching us, after even His own Son was killed, and entreating us, and doing all things to turn us unto Himself. And Paul crieth aloud, saying, "Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us: be ye reconciled to God." (2 Corinthians 5:20.) None of these things however reconciled us. Yet not even then did He leave us, but keeps on both threatening hell, and promising a kingdom, that even so He may draw us unto Himself. But we be still in an insensible mood. What can be worse than this brutishness? For had a man done these things, should we not many times over have let ourselves become slaves to him? But God when doing so we turn us away from O what listlessness! O what unfeelingness We that live continually in sins and wickednesses, if we happen to do any little good, like unfeeling domestics, with what a niggardly spirit do we exact it, and how particular are we about the recompense made, if what we have done has any recompense to come of it. And yet the recompense is the greater if you do it without any hope of reward. Why saying all this, and making exact reckoning, is language fitter for an hireling than a domestic of willing mind. For we ought to do everything for Christ's sake, not for the reward, but for Him. For this also was why He threatened hell and promised the kingdom, that He might be loved of us. Let us then so love Him as we ought to love Him. For this is the great reward, this is royalty and pleasure, this is enjoyment, and glory, and honor, this is light, this is the great happiness, which language (or

reasoning) cannot set before us nor mind conceive. Yet indeed I do not know how I was led so far in this way of speaking, and came to be exhorting men who do not even think slightly of power and glory here for Christ's sake, to think slightly of the kingdom. Yet still those great and noble men even attained to this measure of love. Hear, for instance, how Peter burns with love towards Him, setting Him before soul, and life, and all things. And when he had denied Him, it was not the punishment he was grieved for, but that he had denied Him Whom he longed for, which was more bitter to him than any punishment. And all this did he show before the grace of the Spirit was given. And he perseveringly pressed the question, "Whither goest thou?" (John 13:36) and before this; "To whom shall we go?" (v. 67); and again; "I will follow Thee whithersoever Thou goest." (Luke 22:33?) Thus He was all things to them, and neither heaven nor the kingdom of heaven did they count of, in comparison of Him they longed for. For Thou art all these things unto me, he means. And why doest thou marvel that Peter was so minded? Hear now what the Prophet says: "What have I in heaven, and what is there upon earth, that I should desire in comparison of Thee?" (Psalm 73:25.) Now what he means is nearly this. Neither of things above nor of things below desire I any, save Thee only. This is passion; this is love. Can we so love, it will not be things present only, but even things to come, which we shall reckon as nothing compared with that love-charm, and even here shall we enjoy the Kingdom, delighting ourselves in the love of Him. And how is this to be? one may say. Let us reflect how oft we insult Him after numberless goodnesses, yet He standeth and calleth us to Him, and how often we run by Him, but He still doth not overlook us, but runneth to us, and draweth us to Him, and catcheth us in unto Himself. For if we consider these things, and such as these, we shall be enabled to kindle this longing. For if it were a common man that so loved, but a king who was thus beloved, would he not feel a respect for the greatness of the love? Most assuredly he would. But when the case is reversed, and His Beauty (S. "that beauty") is unspeakable, and the glory and the riches too of Him that loveth us, and our vileness so great, surely we deserve the utmost punishment, vile as we are and outcasts, who are treated with so exceeding great love by One so great and wonderful, and yet wax wanton against His love? He needeth not anything of ours, and yet He doth not even now cease loving us. We need much what is His, and for all that we cleave not unto His love, but money we value above Him, and man's friendship, and ease of body, and power, and fame, before Him who valueth nothing more than us. For He had One Son, Very and Only-Begotten, and He spared not even Him for us. But we value many things above Him. Were there not then good reason for a hell and torment, even were it twofold or threefold or manifold what it is? For what can we have to say for ourselves, if even Satan's injunctions we value more than the Laws of Christ, and are reckless of our own salvation that we may choose the works of wickedness, before Him who suffered all things for us? And what pardon do these things deserve? what excuse have they? Not one even. Let us stop then after this in our headlong course, and let us grow again sober; and reckoning up all these things, let us send up glory unto Him by our works (for words alone suffice not thereto), that we may also enjoy the glory that cometh of Him, which may we all attain unto by the grace and love toward man of our Lord Jesus Christ, through Whom, and with Whom, to the Father be glory, with the Holy Spirit, for ever and ever. Amen.

Verses 17-18. *"Behold, thou art called a Jew, and restest in the Law, and makest thy boast of God, and knowest His will, and approvest the things that are more excellent, being instructed out of the Law."*

After saying that the Gentile wanteth nothing appertaining to salvation if he be a doer of the Law, and after making that wonderful comparison, he goes on to set down the glories of the Jews, owing to which they thought scorn of the Gentiles: and first the very name itself, which was of great majesty, as the

name Christian is now. For even then the distinction which the appellation made was great. And so he begins from this, and see how he takes it down. For he does not say, Behold, thou art a Jew, but “art called” so, “and makest thy boast in God;” that is, as being loved by Him, and honored above all other men. And here he seems to me to be gently mocking their unreasonableness, and great madness after glory, because they misused this gift not to their own salvation, but to set themselves up against the rest of mankind, and to despise them. “And knowest His will, and approvest the things that are more excellent.” Indeed this is a disadvantage, if without working: yet still it seemed to be an advantage, and so he states it with accuracy. For he does not say, thou doest, but knowest; and approvest, not followest and doest.

Verse 19. *“And art confident that thou thyself.”*

Here again he does not say that thou art “a guide of the blind,” but “thou art confident,” so thou boastest, he says. So great was the unreasonableness of the Jews. Wherefore he also repeats nearly the very words, which they used in their boastings. See for instance what they say in the Gospels. “Thou wast altogether born in sin, and dost thou teach us?” (John 9:34.) And all men they utterly looked down upon, to convince them of which, Paul keeps extolling them and lowering the others, that so he may get more hold on them, and make his accusation the weightier. Wherefore he goes on adding the like things, and making more of them by different ways of relating them. For “Thou art confident,” he saith, “that thou thyself art a leader of the blind,”

Verse 20. *“An instructor of the foolish, a teacher of babes, which hast the form of knowledge and truth, which is in the Law.”*

Here again he says not, in the conscience and in actions and in well-doings, but “in the Law;” and after saying so, he does here also what he did with regard to the Gentiles. For as there he says, “for wherein thou judgest another, thou condemnest thyself,” so saith he here also.

Verse 21. *“Thou therefore which teachest another, teachest thou not thyself?”*

But there he frames his speech with more of sharpness, here with more of gentleness. For he does not say, However on this score thou deservest greater punishment, because though entrusted with so great things thou hast not made a good use of any of them, but he carries his discourse on by way of question, turning them on themselves, and saying, “Thou that teachest another, teachest thou not thyself?” And here I would have you look at the discretion of Paul in another case. For he sets down such advantages of the Jews, as came not of their own earnestness, but by a gift from above, and he shows not only that they are worthless to them if neglectful, but that they even bring with them increase of punishment. For neither is the being called a Jew any well doing of theirs, nor yet is the receiving of the Law, nor the other things he has just enumerated, but of the grace from above. And towards the beginning he had said, that the hearing of the Law is valueless unless the doing be thereto added (“for not the hearers of the Law,” he says, “are just before God,”) but now he shows further still, that not only the hearing, but, what is more than the hearing, the teaching of the Law itself will not be able to screen the teacher, unless he do what he says; and not only will it not screen him, but will even punish him the more. And he has used his expressions well too, since he does not say, Thou hast received the Law, but “Thou retest in the Law.” For the Jew was not wearied with going about to seek what was to be done, but had

on easy terms the Law pointing the way leading to virtue. For if even the Gentiles have natural reason (and it is on this ground that these are better than they, in that they do the Law without hearing), yet still the others had greater facility. But if you say, I am not only a hearer, but even a teacher, this very thing is an aggravation of your punishment. For because they prided themselves upon this, from this above all he shows them to be ridiculous. But when he says, “a guide of the blind, an instructor of the foolish, a teacher of babes,” he is speaking their own pompous language. For they treated proselytes extremely ill, and these were the names they called them by. And this is why he dwells at large upon what were supposed to be their praises, well knowing that what was said gave ground for greater accusation; “Which hast the form of knowledge and of the truth in the Law.” As if any one who had a picture of the king, were to draw nothing after it, and they that were not entrusted with it were to imitate it exactly even without the original. And then after mentioning the advantages they had from God, he tells them of their failings, bringing forward what the prophets accused them of. “Thou therefore which teachest another, teachest thou not thyself? Thou that preachest a man should not steal, dost thou steal? Thou that sayest a man should not commit adultery, dost thou commit adultery? Thou that abhorrest idols, dost thou commit sacrilege?” For it was strictly forbidden them to touch any of the treasures upon the idols by reason of the defilement. But the tyranny of avarice, he says, has persuaded you to trample this Law also under foot. Then he brings the far more grievous charge afterwards, saying,

Verse 23. *“Thou that makest a boast in the Law through breaking the Law dishonorest thou God?”*

There are two accusations which he makes, or rather three. Both that they dishonor, and dishonor that whereby they were honored; and that they dishonor Him that honored them, which was the utmost extreme of unfeelingness. And then, not to seem to be accusing them of his own mind, he brings in the Prophet as their accuser, here briefly and concisely as it were in a summary, but afterwards more in detail, and here Isaiah, and after that David, when he had shown the grounds of reproof to be more than one. For to show, he means, that it is not I who speak these things to your reproach, hear what Isaiah saith.

Verse 24. *“For the name of God is blasphemed among the Gentiles through you.” (Isaiah 52:5; Ezekiel 36:20, 23.)*

See again another double accusation. For they not only commit insolence themselves, but even induce others to do so. What then is the use of your teaching when ye teach not your own selves? Above, however, he merely said this, but here he has even turned it round to the contrary. For not only yourselves, but even others, do ye not teach what should be done. And what is far worse - ye not only teach not the things of the Law, but ye even teach the opposite, viz. to blaspheme God, which is opposite to the Law. But the circumcision, one will say, is a great thing. Yea, I also confess it, but when? when it hath the inward circumcision. And observe his judgment, in bringing in what he says about it so opportunely. For he did not begin straightway with it, since the conceit men had of it was great. But after he had shown them to have offended in that which was greater” and to be responsible for the blasphemy against God, then having henceforth possession of the reader’s judgment against them, and having stripped them of their pre-eminence, he introduces the discussion about circumcision, feeling sure that no one will any more advocate it, and says,

Verse 25. *“For circumcision verily profiteth, if thou keep the Law.”*

And yet, were this not so, a man might have rejected it and said, What is circumcision? for is it any good deed on his part that hath it? is it any manifestation of a right choice? For it takes place at an unripe age, and those in the wilderness too remained uncircumcised for a long time. And from many other points of view also, one might look at it as not necessary. And yet it is not on this foot that he rejects it, but upon the most proper ground, from the case of Abraham. For this is the most exceeding victory, - to take the very reason for showing it to be of small regard, whence it was held by them in reverence. Now he might have said that even the prophets call the Jews uncircumcised. But this is no disparagement of circumcision, but of those that hold ill to it. For what he aims at is to show that even in the very best life, it has not the least force. This is what he next proves. And here he does not bring forward the Patriarch, but having previously overturned it upon other grounds, he keeps him till afterwards, when he brings in what he has to say of faith, on the words - “How then was it reckoned” to Abraham? “when he was in circumcision, or in uncircumcision?” For so long as it is struggling against the Gentile and the uncircumcised, he is unwilling to say aught of this, lest he should be over irksome to them. But when it comes in opposition to the faith, then he disengages himself more completely for a combat with it. Up to the present point then it is uncircumcision that the contest is against, and this is why he advances in His discourse in a subdued tone, and says,

“For circumcision verily profiteth if thou keep the Law; but if thou be a breaker of the Law, thy circumcision is made uncircumcision.” For here he speaks of two uncircumcisions, and two circumcisions, as also two laws. For there is a natural law and there is a written law. But there is one also between these, that by works. And see how he points these three out, and brings them before you.

“For when the Gentiles,” he says, “which have not the Law.” What Law, say? The written one. “Do by nature the things of the Law.” Of what Law? Of that by works. “These having not the Law.” What Law? The written one. “Are a law unto themselves.” How so? By using the natural law. “Who show the work of the Law.” Of what law? Of that by actions. For that which is by writing lieth outside; but this is within, the natural one, and the other is in actions. And one the writing proclaims; and another, nature; and another, actions. Of this third there is need, for the sake of which also those two exist, both the natural and the written. And if this be not present they are of no good, but even very great harm. And to show this in the case of the natural he said, “For wherein thou judgest another, thou condemnest thyself.” But of the written Law, thus - “Thou that preachest a man should not steal, dost thou steal? Thus also there are two uncircumcisions, one that of nature, and the second from conduct: and one circumcision in the flesh, and the other from the will. I mean for instance, a man has been circumcised upon the eighth day; this is circumcision of the flesh: a man has done all the Law bids him; this is circumcision of the mind which St. Paul requires above all, yea rather the Law also. See now how having granted it in words, he in deed does away with it. For he does not say the circumcision is superfluous, the circumcision is of no profit, of no use. But what saith he? “Circumcision verily profiteth if thou keepest the Law.” (Deuteronomy 10:16; 30:6.) He approves it so far, saying, I confess and deny not that the circumcision is honorable. But when? When it has the Law kept along with it.

“But if thou be a breaker of the Law, thy circumcision is made uncircumcision.” He does not say, it is no more profitable, lest he should seem to insult it. But having stripped the Jew of it, he goes on to smite him. And this is no longer any insult to circumcision, but to him who through listlessness has lost the

good of it. As then in the case of those who are in dignified stations and are after convicted of the greatest misdemeanors, the judges deprive them of the honors of their stations and then punish them; so has Paul also done. For after saying, if thou art a breaker of the Law, thy "circumcision is made uncircumcision," and having shown him to be uncircumcised, he condemns him after that without scruple.

Verse 26. *"Therefore if the uncircumcision keep the righteousness of the Law, shall not his uncircumcision be turned into circumcision?"*

See how he acts. He does not say that the uncircumcision overcomes circumcision (for this was highly grating to those who then heard him), but that the uncircumcision hath become circumcision. And he next enquires what circumcision is, and what uncircumcision and he says that circumcision is well doing and uncircumcision is evil doing. And having first transferred into the circumcision the uncircumcised, who has good deeds, and having thrust out the circumcised man that lived a corrupt life into the uncircumcision, he so gives the preference to the uncircumcised. And he does not say, To the uncircumcised, but goes on to the thing itself, speaking as follows: "Shall not his uncircumcision be turned into circumcision?" And he does not say "reckoned," but "turned to," which was more expressive. As also above he does not say thy circumcision is reckoned uncircumcision, but has been made so.

Verse 27. *"And shall not the uncircumcision which is by nature judge?"*

You see, he recognizes two uncircumcisions, one from nature, and the other from the will. Here, however, he speaks of that from nature but does not pause here, but goes on, "if it fulfill the Law, judge thee, who by the letter and circumcision dost transgress the Law?" See his exquisite judgment. He does not say, that the uncircumcision which is from nature shall judge the circumcision, but while where the victory had been, he brings in the uncircumcision, yet where the defeat is, he does not expose the circumcision as defeated but the Jew himself who had it, and so by the wording spares offending his hearer. And he does not say, "thee that hast the Law and the circumcision," but yet more mildly, "thee who by the letter and circumcision dost transgress the Law." That is, such uncircumcision even stands up for the circumcision, for it has been wronged and comes to the Law's assistance, for it has been insulted, and obtains a notable triumph. For then is the victory decided, when it is not by Jew that Jew is judged, but by the uncircumcised; as when he says, "The men of Nineveh shall rise in judgment against this generation, and shall condemn it." (Matthew 12:41.) It is not then the Law that he dishonors (for he reverences it greatly), but him that does disgrace to the Law. Next, having settled these grounds clearly, he goes on confidently to define what the Jew really is; and he shows that it is not the Jew, nor the circumcision, but he that is no Jew, and uncircumcised, whom he is rejecting. And he seemeth indeed to stand up in its behalf, but yet does away with the opinion regarding it, securing men's concurrence by the conclusion he comes to. For he shows not only that there is no difference between the Jew and the uncircumcised, but that the uncircumcised has even the advantage, if he take heed to himself, and that it is he that is really the Jew; and so he says:

Verse 28. *"For he is not a Jew which is one outwardly."*

Here he attacks them as doing all things for show.

Verse 29. *“But he is a Jew which is one inwardly; and circumcision is that of the heart, in the spirit, and not in the letter.”*

By saying this he sets aside all things bodily. For the circumcision is outwardly, and the Sabbaths and the sacrifices and purifications: all of which he hints in a single word, when he says, “For he is not a Jew which is one outwardly.” But since much was made of the circumcision, inasmuch as even the sabbath gave way to it (John 7:22), he has good reason for aiming more especially against it. But when he has said “in the spirit” he thereafter paves the way for the conversation of the Church, and introduces the faith. For it too is in the heart and spirit and hath its praise of God. And how cometh he not to show that the Gentile which doeth aright is not inferior to the Jew which doeth aright, but that the Gentile which doeth aright is better than the Jew which breaketh the Law? It was that he might make the victory an undoubted one. For when this is agreed upon, of necessity the circumcision of the flesh is set aside, and the need of a good life is everywhere demonstrated. For when the Greek is saved without these, but the Jew with these is yet punished, Judaism stands by doing nothing. And by Greek he again means not the idolatrous Greek, but the religious and virtuous, and free from all legal observances.