

(26) And when it is the opportune time for almsgiving and philanthropy, correct the poverty, do away with the hunger, deliver yourself from the affliction, do not busy yourself any further. For, in truth, if we are going to examine lives, we will never have mercy upon any human being; rather, hindered by this inopportune meddlesomeness, we will remain fruitless and destitute of all help, and we shall submit ourselves to great toil to no purpose and in vain. For this reason I now beg you truly: banish far from us this ill-timed curiosity, and give to all who have need, and do this abundantly, so that we may obtain much mercy and the philanthropy of God on that day, which may we all attain by the grace and love toward man of our Lord Jesus Christ, to whom belongs the glory, might, and honor, together with the Father and the Holy Spirit, now and always, and unto the ages of ages. Amen.

A Sermon on Almsgiving by St. John Chrysostom

This sermon was delivered when St. John Chrysostom was passing through the marketplace during winter time, and he saw the poor and the beggars uncared for and wasting away. The sermon shows his vast knowledge and understanding of the Holy Scriptures.



Today, I stand before you to make a just, useful, and suitable intercession. I come from no one else; only the beggars who live in our city elected me for this purpose, not with words, votes, and the resolve of a common council, but rather with their pitiful and most bitter spectacle. In other words, just as I was passing through the marketplace and the

narrow lanes, hastening to your assembly, I saw in the middle of the streets many outcasts, some with severed hands, others with gouged-out eyes, others filled with festering ulcers and incurable wounds, especially exposing those body parts that, because of their stored-up rottenness, they should be concealing. I thought it the worst inhumanity not to appeal to your love on their behalf, especially now that the season forces us to return to this topic.

(2) We must always make sermons about almsgiving, because we, too, have much need of this mercy issuing from the Master who created us, but especially during the present season when the frost is severe. During the summer season the poor find great consolation. Even if they walk nude they are free from danger, the ray of the sun sufficing them in the place of clothing. Even if they simply lie down to sleep upon the ground and pass the night in the open air, they are safe.

Neither are shoes necessary for them, nor drinking wine, nor eating plentifully; rather, to some, the streams of water are enough, to others the most paltry vegetables, to others a few dried seeds, as this season of the year supplies them with a makeshift table. They have even greater consolation yet, the availability of work; for those who build houses, till the earth, and sail upon the sea have most need of their assistance. And what fields and houses and the other sources of revenue are to the wealthy, this body is to the poor; all their income is from their hands and from nothing else. For this reason, they enjoy some sort of consolation during the summer; but during the season of winter, the battle against them is mighty from all quarters, and the siege is twice as great – the famine that devours the viscera from within and the frost that freezes and deadens the flesh from without. Therefore, they need more nourishment, a heavier garment, a shelter, a bed, shoes, and many other things. And, indeed, what is altogether grievous, they cannot find work easily, since the season of the year does not allow it. Therefore, their need of the bare necessities is much greater, and besides, work passes them by, because no one hires the wretched, or summons them to service.

(3) Onward. Let us substitute for the employers' hands the hands of the almsgivers. Let us take Paul as a colleague in this entreaty, he who is truly a champion and protector of those who live in poverty. For he tends to this matter with greater foresight than anyone else. For this

through the hands of Barnabas and Saul to those who resided in Jerusalem and, indeed, to those about whom we raise this whole discussion. (Acts 11:30) Therefore, of what pardon and defense would we be worthy, when our ancestors appear to support with their own money even those who are settled far away, and run to help them, while we drive away even those from another place who flee to us for refuge, and we demand exact audits and that sort of thing, although we are responsible for myriads of evils? And if God should examine minutely each of our issues as we investigate about the poor, we would not bring to pass for ourselves one single pardon or mercy. "With the judgment you judge," He says, "you shall be judged." (Mt. 7:2) Therefore, become a philanthropist and gentle toward your fellow-slave, and remit his many sins and have mercy upon him, so that you too may become worthy of the same favorable verdict from God. What circumstances do you weave for yourself? Why are you a busybody and why do you meddle with other folks' affairs? God did not command us to investigate the lives of others and demand of them accounts, and to be curious after others' ways of life. I wonder if He had, would many not be vexed?

Would they not say to themselves, "What is this? God appointed this matter to be difficult for me. And could it be that we can examine the lives of others? Do we perhaps know the severity of everyone's sins?" Would many not have said many such things? And now when He delivered us from all this meddlesomeness, and promised to give the complete recompense (whether they are evil or good the ones who receive our almsgiving), we cause troubles for ourselves. "And how is it obvious," He says, "that we are going to receive the reward when we give to the good and to the evil?" From what He said: "Pray for the ones who deal spitefully with you and who persecute you, so that you may become like your Father who is in the heavens; for He makes His sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and rains upon the just and the unjust." (Mt. 5:44–45) Although countless blaspheme your Master, and thousands upon thousands commit prostitution, steal, plunder, dig up and open graves, perform myriads of evils, He, nevertheless, does not withdraw His benefits from all of them; rather, He extends to all the ray of the sun and the rains and the crops of the earth to be shared in common by all. You do likewise by demonstrating His philanthropy.

words of Paul not only with the poor individual, but even with yourself. For the laws of Paul are laid down not only for the poor but also for us.

(24) Let me say something burdensome and grievous. I know that you will grow angry. Nevertheless, I will say it; for I do not say it to smite you but to correct you. We criticize them for their laziness, something which is worthy of forgiveness for the most part. However, we too often do things that are even more grievous than any laziness. "But I," you will say, "have paternal land." Just because this man is poor, and came from poor parents, and did not have wealthy ancestors, is it just for him to perish utterly? Tell me. It is for this precise reason he must be worthy of mercy and compassion, much more so than all those who have. For you who many times pass the day in the theaters, or in councils and assemblies that do not have any profit, and who slander thousands upon thousands of people, do you suppose that you do not create any suffering and that you do not become idle? And that miserable and wretched man, who spends all day begging, in tears, in all wretchedness, you judge him and you drag him to court and demand reckonings? However, what do these things have in common with humans? Tell me. Therefore, when you say, "What then shall we say to Paul?" converse with yourself, too, and say these things not only to the poor. Read not only the threat of punishment but also the forgiveness, for the one who said: "If anyone does not wish to work, neither let him eat," added, "And you, brethren, do not lose heart in doing good." (2 Thes. 3:13) However, what is their specious excuse? "They are fugitives," he says, "and foreigners, and worthless knaves, and they gave up their fatherlands, and are streaming together to our city." (i.e., the city of Antioch in Syria) Hence, is it for this reason you are vexed, tell me, and you tear into pieces the practice of almsgiving which is the crowning glory of the city that all consider it to be a common harbor; and they prefer the foreign city to their own in which they were born?

(25) In truth, this is why you must rejoice exceedingly and be delighted: that to your hands all run as to a common emporium, and they consider this city a common mother. Now do not utterly destroy the encomium and do not mutilate the commendation, which is paternal and ancient. For at one time, when hunger was going to fall upon all the earth, the residents of this city sent a lot of money

reason, when he sent the disciples to Peter, he did not discuss the guardianship of the poor, but said, "They gave Barnabas and me the right hands of fellowship, that we should go to the Gentiles but they to the circumcision," and he added, "in order that we might be mindful of the poor, which very thing I was eager to do, indeed." (Gal. 2:9-10) In truth, everywhere in the epistles he introduces the same language concerning these things; it is impossible to find a single epistle that does not have this advice. He knows well the great power of the matter, and for this reason he expounds the teaching about these things with exhortations and counsels, and he places it exactly like a marvelous roof upon each structure. Therefore, that which he did even here, when he talked about resurrection and he set right all the rest, he ended his speech with almsgiving, saying, "Now about the collection for the saints, as I charged the churches of Galatia, so you also are to do. On the first day of every week each of you [...]" (1 Cor. 16:1-2) Behold the intelligence of the Apostle, how opportune his advice. In other words, when he called to mind the future court and that fearful tribunal, and the glory with which the righteous will be clothed, and the immortal way of life, then he inserted this speech about the poor, so that the one who listens will become optimistic and docile, and will accept him with much greater eagerness, having the fear of the judgment abounding inside of him and his soul rejoicing over the expectation of the blessings in store for him. For he who can philosophize about the resurrection, and can remove himself entirely to the future life, will account the present circumstances as nothing: neither wealth, nor plenty, nor gold, nor silver, nor the covering of clothes, nor luxuriousness, nor expensive tables, nor any other such thing. And he who accounts these as nothing will more readily abound in the guardianship of the poor.

(4) For this reason Paul rightly prepared their thought with the philosophy about the resurrection, and then introduced the exhortation. And he did not say, "about the collection for the beggars" nor "for the poor" but "for the saints," teaching the listeners even to marvel at the poor when they are pious, and to loathe the rich when they despise virtue. Therefore, he knows to call even a king, profane and lawless, when the king is an enemy to God, and to call the poor, saints, when they are reasonable and moderate. Therefore he calls Nero a mystery of lawlessness, saying, "For the mystery of lawlessness already operates." (2 Thes. 2:7) He called saints those who did not abound in the necessary nourishment but were nourished from almsgiving. At the same time, however, he unknowingly taught the rich

neither to be conceited nor to magnify themselves that their giving is according to the commandment, that they provide for the insignificant and the contemptible; rather to know well and be reassured that they enjoy very great honor when they are made worthy to share in the hardships of the poor.

(5) Indeed, it is worthwhile for us to examine even this: Who are these saints? For he (St. Paul) remembers them not only here (1 Cor. 16:1–2) but again elsewhere when he says: "Now, however, I am going to Jerusalem to minister to the saints." (Rom. 15:25) And Luke in Acts, when a great famine was expected, remembers these same saints and says: "The disciples, each according to his ability, determined to send relief to the poor among the saints in Jerusalem." (Acts 11:29) And again, what I said before: "In order that we might remember only the poor, which very thing I was eager to do, indeed." (Gal. 2:10) However, since we (Chrysostom is speaking here as if he is St. Paul) divided among ourselves, each his own share, I the Greeks (i.e., the nations or Gentiles) and Peter the Jews, we consented to a common opinion so that this division might not exist among the poor. When they preached, in other words, one preached to the Jews and the other to the Greeks. But when they managed the poor, this did not occur, one solely for the poor Jews and the other only for the poor Greeks; rather, each demonstrated much care for the beggars from among the Jews. For this reason he said: "In order that we might remember only the poor, which very thing I was eager to do, indeed." Who thus are they about whom he discourses here, and in the Epistle to the Romans, and in the Epistle to the Galatians, and for whom he called on the Macedonians to aid? The poor among the Jews who live in Jerusalem. And why does he bring to pass so much concern for their sake? Could it be that beggars and the poor did not exist in every city? Why, therefore, does he send relief to them and beg everyone on their behalf? Neither simply, nor by chance, nor from some particular preference for individuals, but rather, for the useful and the profitable.

(6) And I must advance the reason just mentioned. Since the Apostle Paul suddenly changed his opinion on the affairs of the Jews, and since they crucified Christ, they ratified that voice about themselves, saying: "We have no king but Caesar." (Jn. 19:15) And they, from that moment on, surrendered themselves to the leadership of the Romans. Thereafter they were neither independent as before nor wholly slaves as now; instead, they continued being allies in rank, who paid taxes to their own kings and accepted the leaders that were sent by them. Yet often they lived under

came and clothed Himself with flesh and lived among men, He neither disregarded nor considered it to be worthy of shame to manage personally the affairs of the needy. And indeed, [although] He made so many loaves of bread, and everything that He wanted He could accomplish by His command, and He was capable of revealing myriads of treasures all at once, He did not do this. Rather, He commanded His disciples to have charge of a basket, bear whatever was placed in it and help the needy from it. Therefore, too, when He talked in parable to Judas about the proceeds, (Jn. 12:7–8) the disciples, who did not understand His words, thought, the Apostle John says, that He told Judas to give something to the poor. "And as he had the purse," he says, "he carried off what was put into it. (Jn. 12:6)

(22) Great is the principle of mercy to God. Not only His to us, but also that issuing from us which ought to fall to the share of our fellow-slaves. Both in the Old Testament and in the New, God lays down innumerable laws pertaining to this matter; and He orders us to be benevolent continually in all quarters, through words, money, and deeds. And Moses up and down, to and fro, scatters words about these matters in all his legislation. And in the person of God the prophets shout, "I desire mercy and not sacrifice." (Hos. 6:7) And all the apostles act and speak in harmony with these prophetic words. Therefore, let us not neglect the matter, (Mt. 9:3) for we greatly benefit our own selves, not the poor; and we receive much more than we provide.

(23) I do not say these things haphazardly now, but rather because many are often overly investigative toward the needy; they examine their lineage, life, habits, pursuit, and the vigor of their body. They make complaints and demand immense public scrutiny of their health. For this precise reason, many of the poor simulate physical disabilities, so that by dramatizing their misfortunes they may deflect our cruelty and inhumanity. And although when it is summertime, it is terrible to make these complaints, it is not quite so dreadful. However during the frost and the cold, for someone to become such a savage and inhuman judge and not impart any forgiveness to the unemployed, does this not involve extreme cruelty? "Therefore, what did Paul ordain by law," they say, "when he said to the Thessalonians: 'If anyone does not wish to work, neither let him eat?'" (2 Thes. 3:10) So that you too may also hear these things, you should discuss the

his going abroad, revealing that if the offering was abundant and so much that it would rouse even him, then he would by all means take part in the journey. For what he said, "If it is fitting," is enigmatic. If he were to refuse this departure altogether, he would have made them more disheartened and more unready. Again, if he agreed and promised ambiguously, he would have made them more indolent. For this reason, he neither refuses entirely nor promises; rather, he leaves this to the judgment of the Corinthians, saying, "If it is fitting."

(20) Hearing that Paul is about to carry off their donation, they attended with greater readiness and zeal to the matter, on the condition that those holy hands would administer the offerings and his prayers would be added to this sacrifice. And if the Corinthians, when they were going to give the donations to Paul to carry over, did this with superabundant readiness, then you who are about to give to the Master of Paul (because He receives them through the poor), what defense will you have who put it off? For if the matter was neither great nor worthy of much pain, he who has been entrusted with the entire world and who is anxious about all the churches that lie under the sun, would not have promised to serve in the management of this money. Therefore, taking into account whether we need to give, and whether we should help provide for others, let us not shrink from doing this nor become disheartened as if our property were decreasing. For how can it not be out of place: the husbandman sowing the seeds, stripping away his own property, neither being vexed, nor feeling pain of mind, considering what is happening not as expenditure, but rather as profit and income, his hope indeed being uncertain? And you who do not sow for these purposes but for much greater ones (and when you intend to entrust your money to Christ Himself) hesitate and grow numb, and cite poverty as a defense? And perhaps could God not have commanded the earth to produce perfect gold? He who said, "Let the earth bring forth the herb of grass," (Gen. 1:11) and showed it suddenly adorned could have commanded fountains and rivers of gold to gush everywhere. However, He did not will this; rather, He allowed many to be found in beggary both for their and for your advantage. For poverty assuredly is more suitable to virtue than wealth; and those existing in sin come into great consolation from helping those who stand in need.

(21) The urgency of the matter is so great before God that, when He

their own laws, and they punished their own who sinned according to the paternal customs. And that they paid taxes to the Romans is evident from all that they said when they tempted Jesus and asked Him: "Teacher, is it lawful to give tribute to Caesar, or not?" (Mt. 22:17) And when He Himself commanded them to offer Him the customary tribute, He said: "Render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's and to God the things of God." (Mt. 22:21) And Luke says that the temple had both generals and centurions. These things, therefore, reveal adequately how the Jews were subject to the Romans. But that they lived under their own laws is manifest from the following: They stoned Stephen without taking him to court. They killed James, the brother of the Lord. Christ Himself they crucified, although the judge (i.e., Pontius Pilate) forgave Him and set Him free from all accusations. For this reason he washed his hands and said: "I am innocent of this man's blood." (Mt. 27:24) And because he saw them persist exceedingly, he did not cast a vote; rather, he abstained. And they used their own despotic power and accomplished everything that happened afterward.

(7) They even attacked Paul many times. Therefore, since they used their own courts, it happened that, from among them, those believing in Christ suffered worse evils than all the others. In other words, in the other cities, there were courts, laws, and leaders; and thereafter, the Greeks did not have the right to pounce with their own despotic rule upon those (i.e., the Christians or the Jews who believed in Christ as the Son of God) from among them, (i.e., the Jews who did not believe in Christ and who were responsible for His crucifixion and for the martyrdom by death of His followers) nor slaughter, nor stone, nor expose them (i.e., the believing Jews) to some other evil such as this. Instead, if they (i.e., the Greeks) seized anyone who had dared to commit something such as this contrary to the vote of the judges, (i.e., of the Jewish court) he, too, was punished. However, these things were forgiven freely if they issued from the Jews. For precisely this reason, all from among those (i.e., the Jews) who believed in Christ suffered dreadfully, as if they were terrified by threats among wolves and had no one to set them free. In this way, therefore, they even flogged Paul many times; and listen to him as he says: "Five times I received by the Jews the forty [lashes] less one. Thrice I was beaten with rods; once I was stoned." (2 Cor. 11:24–25) And that what was spoken was not conjecture, Paul says, writing to the Hebrews: "Remember the former days in which, being enlightened, you endured a great struggle with sufferings, sometimes being exposed publicly to reproaches and

afflictions, [and] sometimes being partners with those so suffering. For indeed, you accepted joyfully the seizure of your possessions, knowing that you have a better possession in the heavens and an abiding one." (Heb. 10:32–34) And when he called for aid to the Thessalonians, he brought these (i.e., the faithful) before them: "For you, brethren, became imitators of the churches of God which are in Judea, since you also suffered the same things from your own countrymen as they did from the Jews." (1 Thes. 2:14) Therefore, since they were suffering the worst of all (not only were they not shown mercy, but everything they had was taken away from them, and they were led here and there, (they were carried off and plundered as captives and booty) and they were expelled from all quarters), he suitably inspires them (i.e., the Christians) from all places to their defense. And here again he exhorts the Corinthians about the same ones, saying: "Now concerning the collection for the saints, as I charged the Churches of Galatia, so you also are to do." (1 Cor. 16:1)

(8) Therefore, who these saints (i.e., the Christians) are, and why he sometimes exercises so much more forethought for their sake, has become evident enough. Now we must inquire why he remembers the Galatians. For why did he not say, "Concerning the collection for the saints, do this: on the first day of every week, each of you (by himself) is to put something aside and store it up," rather than, "Now concerning the collection for the saints, as I charged the churches of Galatia, so you also are to do"? Why then does he do this, remembering neither one nor two nor three cities, but an entire nation? So that they (i.e., the Corinthian Christians) may exhibit greater readiness, and the praises for the others (i.e., the Galatian Christians) becomes for them a goad to zeal.

(9) Afterward, he even tells of the manner in which he commanded them: "On the first day of every week," he says, "each of you (by himself) is to put something aside and store it up, whatever he has prospered, so, whenever I come, there will not be any collections." (1 Cor. 16:2) He called the first day of the week the Day of the Lord. Why did he limit the gathering of the contributions to this day? Why did he not say the second day of the week? The third day of the week? Or the week itself? He did this neither fortuitously nor purposelessly, but because he wanted to receive assistance even from the appointed time, to make the contributors more eager.

(10) And it is no small matter for the opportune time to be suitable for every thing. "And what," he says, "does the proper time have that is

Corinthians and not with Paul's. Indeed, just the opposite. It appeared odd to him for the contribution to be theirs and for the election of the administrators to be his. Therefore, he committed this matter to them, exhibiting at once his fairness and along with this abolishing every pretext and shadow of unwonted suspicion. For even though he was brighter than the sun and removed from every evil suspicion, nonetheless, he was earnest, over and above what was necessary, in order both to spare the weakest and to escape false suspicions. For this reason he says: "And whenever I arrive, I will send whomever you approve to carry your gift." What are you saying? That you neither sail nor accept the money; instead you entrust the matter to others? So that they might not become more indolent by thinking of these things, pay attention to how he corrected this again. He did not simply say, "I will send whomever you approve." Then what? "By epistles." And even if I am not physically present, I will come to you with my letters. And I will join their service.

(18) Are we worthy of the shadow of Paul or of his sandals when, on the one hand, he who had so much more grace than all the rest averts honors beyond everyone else, and, on the other hand, when we are vexed and annoyed if those who administer these monies are elected neither with our opinion nor with our judgment and vote? When we consider it an outrage that those who spend their money spend without us and without our opinion? And observe how he always calls himself to mind and he never forgets, because here he invoked neither a command nor almsgiving, but grace, showing that just as the raising of the dead, the expulsion of demons, and the cleansing of lepers are works of grace, likewise the amending of poverty and reaching out to the needy, and more so the latter than the former.

(19) For even though it is a grace, there is need also of our own earnestness and readiness, so that we may be merciful and willing and render ourselves worthy of the grace. Therefore, he consoled them with this one thing: by sending his letters with them. And by yet another way much greater than the first: he promised that he would join them on this journey abroad. "For if it is fitting," he says, "that I also should go, they will accompany me." (1 Cor. 16:4) And consider here his intelligence. For he neither denied joining them nor he promised absolutely. Rather, he again left it up to the judgment of those who provided the money; and he made them authorities about

liberality; he who gives aid with zeal; he who does acts of mercy with cheerfulness." (Rom. 12:8) Almsgiving is precisely to give with joy and to believe that you receive more than you give. For this reason he endeavors to make the injunction easy in every way, so that the contribution will be made with eagerness.

(17) And contemplate how many ways he attempted to abridge the difficulty of the matter: Firstly, by commanding the whole city to contribute, and not just one or two or three. For a collection for the poor is nothing more than a collection and a contribution that is given freely by all. Secondly, with the honor bestowed on those who receive, because he did not say, "the beggars," rather, "the saints." Thirdly, with the example of others who had already done this. "(For) as I commanded," he says, "the churches of Galatia." Besides this, with the timeliness of the day. For: "On the first day," he says, "of every week each of you (by himself) is to put something aside and store it up." Fifthly, by not ordering almsgiving to be brought forth all at once, rather, gradually and little by little. It is unfair for him to order them to contribute in one day, and for him to divide it into small parts in this much time; for, in this manner, no one takes note of the expense. Sixthly, by not defining the measure of the amount, rather leaving it to the judgment of the contributors, and to show that this is given by God, since he revealed these two things by saying, "whatever he has prospered." And he added even another, a seventh way, saying, "so that collections need not be made when I come. "For he does to them both things together; and if they hasten to collect money, they will still have to wait for his arrival; and they should have comfort in the great amount of foreappointed time that he grants them to collect money before he comes. And he was not satisfied only with these; instead, he added something else, an eighth. So then, what was this? "And whenever," he says, "I arrive, I will send whomever you approve by these epistles to carry your gift. And if it is fitting for me to go also, they will accompany me." (1 Cor. 16:3-4) Behold how modest and gentle that blessed and noble soul was!

How provident and affectionate! He neither willed nor tolerated to elect with his own opinion these who were to look after the money; rather, he entrusted their election to the Corinthians. And he did not consider the matter to be an outrage against himself for them to be appointed in this manner, with the vote and judgment of the

favorable to persuade us to give alms?" It is on this day that we put aside every work, when our soul beams with joy from relaxation; most important of all, we have enjoyed innumerable blessings this day. For on this day death was abolished, the curse was erased, sin disappeared, the doors of Hades were broken into pieces, the devil was imprisoned, the long-lasting war ended, and reconciliation between God and men happened. And our race returned to its former, or, better yet, to a much greater nobility, and the sun beheld that marvelous and paradoxical sight – man being born immortal.

(11) He wanted to remind us of all these events and other similar ones, and he brought the day before all, taking only this day as an advocate, and he says to every one: "Just think about how many and extraordinarily great blessings you benefited from on this day, O man; from how many evils you were delivered, who you were before and who you have become since these things. If on our birthdays we, and many house-slaves on the days on which they were freed, celebrate these events with great honor, and the former hold banquets while the free even give gifts, and they all very much honor those specific times, much more so must we honor the Day of the Lord, which one would not err in calling the birthday of all of human nature. For we were lost and then found, dead and alive again, enemies and then reconciled." For this reason, it is fitting to honor it with spiritual honor – neither to hold banquets, nor to pour out wine like water, nor to get drunk and dance, but rather to render great abundance to the poorer of the brethren.

(12) I say these things, not only for you to approve, but also for you to imitate. And do not think that these things were meant only for the Corinthians, but also for each one of us, and for all who will come into existence after this; and let us do exactly the very thing Paul ordered. On each Day of the Lord, let everyone lay aside in his house the Master's money; and let the deed become a law and an immovable custom. And then we will require no other recommendation or counsel. For discourse and advice do not have the power to achieve these things as much as the habit that is established firmly with time. If we ratify this – to lay aside something toward the succor of the poor on every Day of the Lord – we will not transgress this law, even if innumerable needs fall upon us.

(13) However, when he said, "On the first day of every week," he added, "each of you." "I do not say this only to the rich," he says, "but also to the poor; not only to the free but also to slaves; not only to men but also to women." Let no one remain unaccomplished in this ministrations. Let no one refrain from sharing in the gain; rather, let everyone contribute. Certainly, do not even permit poverty to become a hindrance to this contribution. And even if you are ten thousand times poor, you are not poorer than that widow who emptied herself of all her property. (Lk. 21:2-4) Even if you are ten thousand times a beggar, you are not more of a beggar than the woman of Sidon who had only a handful of flour, yet was not prevented from extending hospitality to the Prophet Elijah. Although she saw a chorus of children surrounding her, and famine pressing upon her, and nothing else remaining in reserve, she received the prophet with great readiness. (1 Chr. 17:10 [=3 Ki.17:10]) Why did he say, "each of you (by himself) is to put something aside and store it up"? Perhaps (because) the one laying aside was ashamed and hesitated to offer something little. For this reason he says, "You put to the side and save; and when the little in turn becomes a lot by small contributions, then bring it before all." He did not say, "gather together," rather, "store it up," so you may learn that this expense is a treasure, that this expenditure becomes an advance, a treasure better than any treasure.

(14) For the visible treasure lays snares and diminishes, and many times it has utterly destroyed those who found it; but the treasure in heaven is completely the opposite. It remains unspent and unassailable; it is salvation to those who procure it for themselves and to those who partake of it. For it is unspent with time, envy does not capture it; instead, it is untouchable by all these schemes and provides innumerable goods to those who gather it.

(15) Therefore, let us comply, and, likewise, let us collect money in the home for the explicit purpose of almsgiving; and let there be established firmly in our homes sacred money laid away together with our private property, so that our personal possessions may be protected by it. For just as in royal treasuries, if it is revealed that in there, there is reserved the money of the ruled, and these through the money laid aside for the needy enjoy great security, likewise, in your own home if you lay aside money for the poor and on every Day of the Lord you collect it, the alms for the destitute will be insurance for the

general funds. In this manner, you will become ordained by Paul a steward of your own money. What am I saying? And that money which has been already collected will become for you a cause and a greater opportunity for the collection of even more money in the future. For even if you only begin this good custom, you yourself will be in the habit of collecting money for the poor without any counselor. In this manner, therefore, let everyone's house become a church that will have sacred money stored up within it. For the fortified banks that are unassailable on earth are a symbol of these treasuries in heaven.

Wherever money is stored up for the poor, that place is inaccessible to the demons; and the money that is collected together for almsgiving fortifies Christian homes more than a shield, spear, weapons, physical power, and multitudes of soldiers.

(16) Having said, therefore, when, and from whom, and how this money must be collected, the Apostle Paul entrusted the question of how much to those who contribute. He did not say: "Contribute such and such an amount," so that the command would not become burdensome, and would not give opportunity to the rich who are reluctant to give to cite poverty and cause the truly poor to say: "What shall we do now if we are incapable of giving?" Rather, he confined the measure of the contribution to the ability of those who contribute. "Each of you," he says, "(by himself) is to put something aside and store it up, whatever he has prospered." And he did not say, "whatever he can," or "whatever is found," rather, "whatever he has prospered," to show that he will have the influence and favor from above as his assistants. Paul's purpose was not only for money to be contributed to the poor, but for it to be contributed with great eagerness. Likewise, God appointed almsgiving not only for the needy to be nourished, but also for the providers to receive benefit, and much more so for the latter than for the former. For if he considered only the interest of the poor, he would have commanded solely that the money be given, and he would not have asked for the eagerness of the providers. But now you see the Apostle in every way ordering by will first and above all for the givers to be joyful: the suppliers to furnish in a cheerful manner. And at one time he says, "Everyone must do as he has chosen in his heart, neither out of grief nor necessity, for God loves a cheerful giver," (2 Cor. 9.7) not simply a giver, but the one who does this with pleasure. And again elsewhere he says, "...he who contributes in