

AN ANCIENT HOMILY.

BRETHREN, we ought so to think of Jesus Christ, as of God, as of the Judge of quick and dead. And we ought not to think mean things of our Salvation : for when we think mean things of Him, we expect also to receive mean things. And they that listen as concerning mean things do wrong ; and we ourselves do wrong, not knowing whence and by whom and unto what place we were called, and how many things Jesus Christ endured to suffer for our sakes. What recompense then shall we give unto Him ? or what fruit worthy of His own gift to us ? And how many mercies do we owe to Him ! For He bestowed the light upon us ; He spake to us, as a father to his sons ; He saved us, when we were perishing. What praise then shall we give to Him ? or what payment of recompense for those things which we received ? we who were blinded in our understanding, and worshipped stocks and stones and gold and silver and bronze, the works of men ; and our whole life was nothing else but death. While then we were thus wrapped in darkness and oppressed with this thick mist in our vision, we recovered our sight, putting off by His will the cloud wherein we were wrapped. For He had mercy on us, and in His compassion saved us, having beheld in us much error and perdition, even when we had no hope of salvation, save that which came from Him. For He called us, when we were not, and from not being He willed us to be.

2. *Rejoice, thou barren that bearest not. Break out and cry, thou that travailest not ; for more are the children of the desolate than of her that hath the husband.* In that He said *Rejoice, thou barren that bearest not*, He spake of us : for our Church was barren, before that children were given unto her. And in that He said, *Cry aloud, thou that travailest not*, He meaneth this ; Let us not, like women in travail, grow weary of offering up our prayers with simplicity to God. Again, in that He said, *For the children of the desolate are more than of her that hath the*

husband, He so spake, because our people seemed desolate and forsaken of God, whereas now, having believed, we have become more than those who seemed to have God. Again another scripture saith, *I came not to call the righteous, but sinners*. He meaneth this; that it is right to save them that are perishing. For this indeed is a great and marvellous work, to establish, not those things which stand, but those which are falling. So also Christ willed to save the things which were perishing. And He saved many, coming and calling us when we were even now perishing.

3. Seeing then that He bestowed so great mercy on us; first of all, that we, who are living, do not sacrifice to these dead gods, neither worship them, but through Him have known the Father of truth. What else is this knowledge to Himward, but not to deny Him through whom we have known Him? Yea, He Himself saith, *Whoso confesseth Me, Him will I confess before the Father*. This then is our reward, if verily we shall confess Him through whom we were saved. But wherein do we confess Him? When we do that which He saith and are not disobedient unto His commandments, and not only *honour Him with our lips*, but *with our whole heart and with our whole mind*. Now He saith also in Isaiah, *This people honoureth Me with their lips, but their heart is far from Me*.

4. Let us therefore not only call Him Lord, for this will not save us: for He saith, *Not every one that saith unto Me, Lord, Lord, shall be saved, but he that doeth righteousness*. So then, brethren, let us confess Him in our works, by loving one another, by not committing adultery nor speaking evil one against another nor envying, but being temperate, merciful, kindly. And we ought to have fellow-feeling one with another and not to be covetous. By these works let us confess Him, and not by the contrary. And we ought not rather to fear men but God. For this cause, if ye do these things, the Lord said, *Though ye be gathered together with Me in My bosom, and do not My commandments, I will cast you away and will say unto you, Depart from Me, I know you not whence ye are, ye workers of iniquity*.

5. Wherefore, brethren, let us forsake our sojourn in this world and do the will of Him that called us, and let us not be afraid to depart out of this world. For the Lord saith, *Ye shall be as lambs in the midst of wolves*. But Peter answered and said unto Him, *What then, if the wolves should tear the lambs?* Jesus said unto Peter, *Let not the lambs fear the wolves after they are dead; and ye also, fear ye not them that kill*

you and are not able to do anything to you; but fear Him that after ye are dead hath power over soul and body, to cast them into the gehenna of fire. And ye know, brethren, that the sojourn of this flesh in this world is mean and for a short time, but the promise of Christ is great and marvellous, even the rest of the kingdom that shall be and of life eternal. What then can we do to obtain them, but walk in holiness and righteousness, and consider these worldly things as alien to us, and not desire them? For when we desire to obtain these things we fall away from the righteous path.

6. But the Lord saith, *No servant can serve two masters.* If we desire to serve both God and mammon, it is unprofitable for us: *For what advantage is it, if a man gain the whole world and forfeit his soul?* Now this age and the future are two enemies. The one speaketh of adultery and defilement and avarice and deceit, but the other biddeth farewell to these. We cannot therefore be friends of the two, but must bid farewell to the one and hold companionship with the other. Let us consider that it is better to hate the things which are here, because they are mean and for a short time and perishable, and to love the things which are there, for they are good and imperishable. For, if we do the will of Christ, we shall find rest; but if otherwise, then nothing shall deliver us from eternal punishment, if we should disobey His commandments. And the scripture also saith in Ezekiel, *Though Noah and Job and Daniel should rise up, they shall not deliver their children in the captivity.* But if even such righteous men as these cannot by their righteous deeds deliver their children, with what confidence shall we, if we keep not our baptism pure and undefiled, enter into the kingdom of God? Or who shall be our advocate, unless we be found having holy and righteous works?

7. So then, my brethren, let us contend, knowing that the contest is nigh at hand, and that, while many resort to the corruptible contests, yet not all are crowned, but only they that have toiled hard and contended bravely. Let us then contend that we all may be crowned. Wherefore let us run in the straight course, the incorruptible contest. And let us resort to it in throngs and contend, that we may also be crowned. And if we cannot all be crowned, let us at least come near to the crown. We ought to know that he which contendeth in the corruptible contest, if he be found dealing corruptly with it, is first flogged, and then removed and driven out of the race-course. What think ye? What shall be done to him that hath dealt corruptly with the contest of

incorruption? For as concerning them that have not kept the seal, He saith, *Their worm shall not die, and their fire shall not be quenched, and they shall be for a spectacle unto all flesh.*

8. While we are on earth then, let us repent : for we are clay under the craftsman's hand. For in like manner as the potter, if he be making a vessel, and it get twisted or crushed in his hands, reshapeth it again ; but if he have once put it into the fiery oven, he shall no longer mend it : so also let us, while we are in this world, repent with our whole heart of the evil things which we have done in the flesh, that we may be saved by the Lord, while we have yet time for repentance. For after that we have departed out of the world, we can no more make confession there, or repent any more. Wherefore, brethren, if we shall have done the will of the Father and kept the flesh pure and guarded the commandments of the Lord, we shall receive life eternal. For the Lord saith in the Gospel, *If ye kept not that which is little, who shall give unto you that which is great? For I say unto you that he which is faithful in the least, is faithful also in much.* So then He meaneth this, Keep the flesh pure and the seal unstained, to the end that we may receive life.

9. And let not any one of you say that this flesh is not judged neither riseth again. Understand ye. In what were ye saved? In what did ye recover your sight? if ye were not in this flesh. We ought therefore to guard the flesh as a temple of God : for in like manner as ye were called in the flesh, ye shall come also in the flesh. If Christ the Lord who saved us, being first spirit, then became flesh, and so called us, in like manner also shall we in this flesh receive our reward. Let us therefore love one another, that we all may come unto the kingdom of God. While we have time to be healed, let us place ourselves in the hands of God the physician, giving Him a recompense. What recompense? Repentance from a sincere heart. For He discerneth all things beforehand and knoweth what is in our heart. Let us therefore give unto Him eternal praise, not from our lips only, but also from our heart, that He may receive us as sons. For the Lord also said, *These are My brethren, which do the will of My Father.*

10. Wherefore, my brethren, let us do the will of the Father which called us, that we may live ; and let us the rather pursue virtue, but forsake vice as the forerunner of our sins, and let us flee from ungodliness, lest evils overtake us. For if we be diligent in doing good, peace will pursue us. For for this cause is a man unable to †attain happiness†,

seeing that they call in the fears of men, preferring rather the enjoyment which is here than the promise which is to come. For they know not how great torment the enjoyment which is here bringeth, and what delight the promise which is to come bringeth. And if verily they were doing these things by themselves alone, it had been tolerable: but now they continue teaching evil to innocent souls, not knowing that they shall have their condemnation doubled, both themselves and their hearers.

11. Let us therefore serve God in a pure heart, and we shall be righteous; but if we serve Him not, because we believe not the promise of God, we shall be wretched. For the word of prophecy also saith: *Wretched are the double-minded, that doubt in their heart and say, These things we heard of old in the days of our fathers also, yet we have waited day after day and have seen none of them. Ye fools! compare yourselves unto a tree; take a vine. First it sheddeth its leaves, then a shoot cometh, after this a sour berry, then a full ripe grape. So likewise My people had tumults and afflictions: but afterward they shall receive good things.* Wherefore, my brethren, let us not be double-minded but endure patiently in hope, that we may also obtain our reward. *For faithful is He that promised to pay to each man the recompense of his works.* If therefore we shall have wrought righteousness in the sight of God, we shall enter into His kingdom and shall receive the promises which *ear hath not heard nor eye seen, neither hath it entered into the heart of man.*

12. Let us therefore await the kingdom of God betimes in love and righteousness, since we know not the day of God's appearing. For the Lord Himself, being asked by a certain person when His kingdom would come, said, *When the two shall be one, and the outside as the inside, and the male with the female, neither male nor female.* Now the two are one, when we speak truth among ourselves, and in two bodies there shall be one soul without dissimulation. And by the outside as the inside He meaneth this: by the inside He meaneth the soul and by the outside the body. Therefore in like manner as thy body appeareth, so also let thy soul be manifest in its good works. And by the male with the female, neither male nor female, He meaneth this; that a brother seeing a sister should have no thought of her as of a female, and that a sister seeing a brother should not have any thought of him as of a male. These things if ye do, saith He, the kingdom of my Father shall come.

13. Therefore, brethren, let us repent forthwith. Let us be sober unto that which is good: for we are full of much folly and wickedness. Let us wipe away from us our former sins, and let us repent with our whole soul and be saved. And let us not be found unpleased. Neither let us desire to please one another only, but also those men that are without, by our righteousness, that the Name be not blasphemed by reason of us. For the Lord saith, *Every day My Name is blasphemed among all the Gentiles*; and again, *Woe unto him by reason of whom My Name is blasphemed*. Wherein is it blasphemed? In that ye do not the things which I desire. For the Gentiles, when they hear from our mouth the oracles of God, marvel at them for their beauty and greatness; then, when they discover that our works are not worthy of the words which we speak, forthwith they mistake themselves to blasphemy, saying that it is an idle story and a delusion. For when they hear from us that God saith, *It is no thank unto you, if ye love them that love you, but this is thank unto you, if ye love your enemies and them that hate you*; when they hear these things, I say, they marvel at their exceeding goodness; but when they see that we not only do not love them that hate us, but not even them that love us, they laugh us to scorn, and the Name is blasphemed.

14. Wherefore, brethren, if we do the will of God our Father, we shall be of the first Church, which is spiritual, which was created before the sun and moon: but if we do not the will of the Lord, we shall be of the scripture that saith, *My house was made a den of robbers*. So therefore let us choose rather to be of the Church of life, that we may be saved. And I do not suppose ye are ignorant that the living Church is the body of Christ: for the scripture saith, *God made man, male and female*. The male is Christ and the female is the Church. And the Books and the Apostles plainly declare that the Church existeth not now for the first time, but hath been from the beginning: for she was spiritual, as our Jesus also was spiritual, but was manifested in the last days that He might save us. Now the Church, being spiritual, was manifested in the flesh of Christ, thereby showing us that, if any of us guard her in the flesh and defile her not, he shall receive her again in the Holy Spirit: for this flesh is the counterpart and copy of the spirit. No man therefore, when he hath defiled the copy, shall receive the original for his portion. This therefore is what He meant, brethren; Guard ye the flesh, that ye may partake of the spirit. But if we say that the flesh is the Church and the spirit is Christ, then he that hath

dealt wantonly with the flesh hath dealt wantonly with the Church. Such an one therefore shall not partake of the spirit, which is Christ. So excellent is the life and immortality which this flesh can receive as its portion, if the Holy Spirit be joined to it. No man can declare or tell *those things which the Lord hath prepared* for His elect.

15. Now I do not think that I have given any mean counsel respecting continence, and whosoever performeth it shall not repent thereof, but shall save both himself and me his counsellor. For it is no mean reward to convert a wandering and perishing soul, that it may be saved. For this is the recompense which we are able to pay to God who created us, if he that speaketh and heareth both speak and hear with faith and love. Let us therefore abide in the things which we believed, in righteousness and holiness, that we may with boldness ask of God who saith, *While thou art still speaking I will say, Behold, I am here.* For this word is the token of a great promise: for the Lord saith of Himself that He is more ready to give than he that asketh to ask. Seeing then that we are partakers of so great kindness, let us not grudge ourselves the obtaining of so many good things. For in proportion as the pleasure is great which these words bring to them that have performed them, so also is the condemnation great which they bring to them that have been disobedient.

16. Therefore, brethren, since we have found no small opportunity for repentance, seeing that we have time, let us turn again unto God that called us, while we have still One that receiveth us. For if we bid farewell to these enjoyments and conquer our soul in refusing to fulfil its evil lusts, we shall be partakers of the mercy of Jesus. But ye know that the day of judgment cometh even now as a burning oven, and the powers of the heavens shall melt, and all the earth as lead melting on the fire, and then shall appear the secret and open works of men. Almsgiving therefore is a good thing, even as repentance from sin. Fasting is better than prayer, but almsgiving than both. And love overcometh a multitude of sins, but prayer out of a good conscience delivereth from death. Blessed is every man that is found full of these. For almsgiving lifteth off the burden of sin.

17. Let us therefore repent with our whole heart, lest any of us perish by the way. For if we have received commands, that we should make this also our business, to tear men away from idols and to instruct them, how much more is it wrong that a soul which knoweth God already should perish! Therefore let us assist one another, that

we may also lead the weak upward as touching that which is good, to the end that we all may be saved: and let us convert and admonish one another. And let us not think to give heed and believe now only, while we are admonished by the presbyters; but likewise when we have departed house, let us remember the commandments of the Lord, and not suffer ourselves to be dragged off the other way by our worldly lusts; but coming hither more frequently, let us strive to go forward in the commands of the Lord, that we all having the same mind may be gathered together unto life. For the Lord said, *I come to gather together all the nations, tribes, and languages.* Herein He speaketh of the day of His appearing, when He shall come and redeem us, each man according to his works. *And the unbelievers shall see His glory and His might:* and they shall be amazed when they see the kingdom of the world given to Jesus, saying, Woe unto us, for Thou wast, and we knew it not, and believed not; and we obeyed not the presbyters when they told us of our salvation. *And Their worms shall not die, and their fire shall not be quenched, and they shall be for a spectacle unto all flesh.* He speaketh of that day of judgment, when men shall see those among us that lived ungodly lives and dealt falsely with the commandments of Jesus Christ. But the righteous, having done good and endured torments and hated the pleasures of the soul, when they shall behold them that have done amiss and denied Jesus by their words or by their deeds, how that they are punished with grievous torments in unquenchable fire, shall give glory to God, saying, There will be hope for him that hath served God with his whole heart.

18. Therefore let us also be found among those that give thanks, among those that have served God, and not among the ungodly that are judged. For I myself too, being an utter sinner and not yet escaped from temptation, but being still amidst the engines of the devil, do my diligence to follow after righteousness, that I may prevail so far at least as to come near unto it, while I fear the judgment to come.

19. Therefore, brothers and sisters, after the God of truth hath been heard, I read to you an exhortation to the end that ye may give heed to the things which are written, so that ye may save both yourselves and him that readeth in the midst of you. For I ask of you as a reward that ye repent with your whole heart, and give salvation and life to yourselves. For doing this we shall set a goal for all the young who desire to toil in the study of piety and of the goodness of

God. And let us not be displeased and vexed, fools that we are, whensoever any one admonisheth us and turneth us aside from unrighteousness unto righteousness. For sometimes while we do evil things, we perceive it not by reason of the double-mindedness and unbelief which is in our breasts, and *we are darkened in our understanding* by our vain lusts. Let us therefore practise righteousness that we may be saved unto the end. Blessed are they that obey these ordinances. Though they may endure affliction for a short time in the world, they will gather the immortal fruit of the resurrection. Therefore let not the godly be grieved, if he be miserable in the times that now are: a blessed time awaiteth him. He shall live again in heaven with the fathers, and shall have rejoicing throughout a sorrowless eternity.

20. Neither suffer ye this again to trouble your mind, that we see the unrighteous possessing wealth, and the servants of God straitened. Let us then have faith, brothers and sisters. We are contending in the lists of a living God; and we are trained by the present life, that we may be crowned with the future. No righteous man hath reaped fruit quickly, but waiteth for it. For if God had paid the recompense of the righteous speedily, then straightway we should have been training ourselves in merchandise, and not in godliness; for we should seem to be righteous, though we were pursuing not that which is godly, but that which is gainful. And for this cause Divine judgment overtaketh a spirit that is not just, and loadeth it with chains.

To the only God invisible, the Father of truth, who sent forth unto us the Saviour and Prince of immortality, through whom also He made manifest unto us the truth and the heavenly life, to Him be the glory for ever and ever. Amen.