

## Matthew: 6:34 to 7:12

### From Catena Aurea:

34. Take therefore no thought for the morrow: for the morrow shall take thought for the things of itself. Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof.

**JEROME.** To-morrow in Scripture signifies time future, as Jacob in Genesis says, To-morrow shall my righteousness hear me. (Gen. 30:33.) And in the phantasm of Samuel the Pythoness says to Saul, To-morrow shalt thou be with me. (1 Sam. 28:19.) He yields therefore unto them that they should care for things present, though He forbids them to take thought for things to come. For sufficient for us is the thought of time present; let us leave to God the future which is uncertain. And this is that He says, The morrow shall he anxious for itself; that is, it shall bring its own anxiety with it. For sufficient for the day is the evil thereof. By evil He means here not that which is contrary to virtue, but toil, and affliction, and the hardships of life.

**CHRYSOSTOM.** Nothing brings so much pain to the spirit as anxiety and care. That He says, The morrow shall he anxious for itself, comes of desire to make more plain what He speaks; to that end employing a prosopopeia of time, after the practice of many in speaking to the rude populace; to impress them the more, He brings in the day itself complaining of its too heavy cares. Has not every day a burden enough of its own, in its own cares? why then do you add to them by laying on those that belong to another day?

**AUGUSTINE.** (ubi sup.) Or otherwise; To-morrow is said only of time where future succeeds to past. When then we work any good work, we think not of earthly but of heavenly things. The morrow shall be anxious for itself, that is, Take food and the like, when you ought to take it, that is when necessity begins to call for it. For sufficient for the day is its own evil, that is, it is enough that necessity shall compel to take these things; He calls it evil, because it is penal, inasmuch as it pertains to our mortality, which we earned by sinning. To this necessity then of worldly punishment, add no further weight, that you may not only fulfil it, but may even so fulfil it as to shew yourself God's soldier. But herein we must be careful, that, when we see any servant of God endeavouring to provide necessaries either for himself, or those committed to his care, we do not straight judge him to sin against this command of the Lord in being anxious for the morrow. For the Lord Himself, to whom Angels ministered, thought good to carry a bag for example sake. And in the Acts of the Apostles it is written, that food necessary for life was provided for future time, at a

time when famine threatened. What the Lord condemns therefore, is not the provision of these things after the manner of men, but if a man because of these things does not fight as God's soldier.

**HILARY.** This is further comprehended under the full meaning of the Divine words. We are commanded not to be careful about the future, because sufficient for our life is the evil of the days wherein we live, that is to say, the sins, that all our thought and pains be occupied in cleansing this away. And if our care be slack, yet will the future be careful for itself, in that there is held out to us a harvest of eternal love to be provided by God.

7:1–2

1. Judge not, that ye be not judged.

2. For with what judgment ye judge, ye shall be judged: and with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again.

**AUGUSTINE.** (ubi sup.) Since when these temporal things are provided beforehand against the future, it is uncertain with what purpose it is done, as it may be with a single or double mind, He opportunely subjoins, Judge not.

**JEROME.** But if He forbids us to judge, how then does Paul judge the Corinthian who had committed uncleanness? Or Peter convict Ananias and Sapphira of falsehood?

**CHRYSOSTOM.** Wherefore He does not say, 'Do not cause a sinner to cease,' but do not judge; that is, be not a bitter judge; correct him indeed, but not as an enemy seeking revenge, but as a physician applying a remedy.

**CHRYSOSTOM.** Otherwise; He does not forbid us to judge all sin absolutely, but lays this prohibition on such as are themselves full of great evils, and judge others for very small evils. In like manner Paul does not absolutely forbid to judge those that sin, but finds fault with disciples that judged their teacher, and instructs us not to judge those that are above us.

**HILARY.** Otherwise; He forbids us to judge God touching His promises; for as judgments among men are founded on things uncertain, so this judgment against God is drawn from somewhat that is doubtful. And He therefore would have us put away the custom from us altogether; for it is not here as in other cases where it is sin to have given a false judgment; but here we have begun to sin if we have pronounced any judgment at all.

**AUGUSTINE.** (Serm. in Mont. ii. 18.) I suppose the command here to be no other than that we should always put the best interpretation on such actions as seem doubtful with what mind they were done. But concerning such as cannot be done with good purpose, as adulteries, blasphemies, and the like, He permits us to judge; but of indifferent actions which admit of being done with either good or bad purpose, it is rash to judge, but especially so to condemn. There are two cases in which we should be particularly on our guard against hasty judgments, when it does not appear with what mind the action was done; and when it does not yet appear, what sort of man any one may turn out, who now seems either good or bad. Wherefore we should neither blame those things of which we know with what mind they are done, nor so blame those things which are manifest, as though we despaired of recovery. Here one may think there is difficulty in what follows, With what judgment ye judge ye shall be judged. If we judge a hasty judgment, will God also judge us with the like? Or if we have measured with a false measure, is there with God a false measure whence it may be measured to us again? For by measure I suppose is here meant judgment. Surely this is only said, that the haste in which you punish another shall be itself your punishment. For injustice often does no harm to him who suffers the wrong; but must always hurt him who does the wrong.

**AUGUSTINE.** (De. Civ. Dei, xxi. 11.) Some say, How is it true that Christ says, And with what measure ye shall mete it shall be measured to you again, if temporal sin is to be punished by eternal suffering? They do not observe that it is not said the same measure, because of the equal space of time, but because of the equal retribution—namely, that he who has done evil should suffer evil, though even in that sense it might be said of that of which the Lord spoke here, namely of judgments and condemnations. Accordingly, he that judges and condemns unjustly, if he is judged and condemned, justly receives in the same measure though not the same thing that he gave; by judgment he did what was unjust, by judgment he suffers what is just.

7:3–5

3. And why beholdest thou the mote that is in thy brother's eye, but considerest not the beam that is in thine own eye?

4. Or how wilt thou say to thy brother, Let me pull out the mote out of thine eye; and, behold, a beam is in thine own eye?

5. Thou hypocrite, first cast out the beam out of thine own eye; and then shalt thou see clearly to cast out the mote out of thy brother's eye.

**AUGUSTINE.** (Serm. in Mont. ii. 18.) The Lord having admonished us concerning hasty and unjust judgment; and because that they are most given to rash judgment, who judge concerning things uncertain; and they most readily find fault, who love rather to speak evil and to condemn than to cure and to correct; a fault that springs either from pride or jealousy—therefore He subjoins, Why seest thou the mote in thy brother's eye, and seest not the beam in thy own eye?

**JEROME.** He speaks of such as though themselves guilty of mortal sin, do not forgive a trivial fault in their brother.

**AUGUSTINE.** (ubi sup.) As if he perhaps have sinned in anger, and you correct him with settled hate. For as great as is the difference between a beam and a mote, so great is the difference between anger and hatred. For hatred is anger become inveterate. It may be if you are angry with a man that you would have him amend, not so if you hate him.

**CHRYSOSTOM.** Many do this, if they see a Monk having a superfluous garment, or a plentiful meal, they break out into bitter accusation, though themselves daily seize and devour, and suffer from excess of drinking.

**HILARY.** Otherwise; The sin against the Holy Spirit is to take from God power which has influences, and from Christ substance which is of eternity, through whom as God came to man, so shall man likewise come to God. As much greater then as is the beam than the mote, so much greater is the sin against the Holy Spirit than all other sins. As when unbelievers object to others carnal sins, and secrete in themselves the burden of that sin, to wit, that they trust not the promises of God, their minds being blinded as their eye might be by a beam.

**AUGUSTINE.** (Serm. in Mont. ii. 19.) When then we are brought under the necessity of finding fault with any, let us first consider whether the sin be such as we have never had; secondly that we are yet men, and may fall into it; then, whether it be one that we have had, and are now without, and then let our common frailty come into our mind, that pity and not hate may go before correction. Should we find ourselves in the same fault, let us not reprove, but groan with the offender, and invite him to struggle with us. Seldom indeed and in cases of great necessity is reproof to be employed; and then only that the Lord may be served and not ourselves.

**AUGUSTINE.** (Serm. in Mont. ii. 19.) For to reprove sin is the duty of the good, which when the bad do, they act a part, dissembling their own character, and assuming one that does not belong to them.

**CHRYSOSTOM.** And it is to be noted, that whenever He intends to denounce any great sin, He begins with an epithet of reproach, as below, Thou wicked servant, I forgave thee all that debt; (Mat. 18:32.) and so here, Thou hypocrite, cast out first. For each one knows better the things of himself than the things of others, and sees more the things that be great, than the things that be lesser, and loves himself more than his neighbour. Therefore He bids him who is chargeable with many sins, not to be a harsh judge of another's faults, especially if they be small. Herein not forbidding to arraign and correct; but forbidding to make light of our own sins, and magnify those of others. For it behoves you first diligently to examine how great may be your own sins, and then try those of your neighbour; whence it follows, and then shalt thou see clearly to cast the mote out of thy brother's eye.

**AUGUSTINE.** (ubi sup.) For having removed from our own eye the beam of envy, of malice, or hypocrisy, we shall see clearly to cast the beam out of our brother's eye.

7:6

6. Give not that which is holy unto the dogs, neither cast ye your pearls before swine, lest they trample them under their feet, and turn again and rend you.

**AUGUSTINE.** (ubi sup.) Because the simplicity to which He had been directing in the foregoing precepts might lead some wrongly to conclude that it was equally wrong to hide the truth as to utter what was false, He well adds, Give not that which is holy to the dogs, and cast not your pearls before swine.

**AUGUSTINE.** (Serm. in Mont. ii. 20.) Let us see now what is the holy thing, what are the dogs, what the pearls, what the swine? The holy thing is all that it were impiety to corrupt; a sin which may be committed by the will, though the thing itself be undone. The pearls are all spiritual things that are to be highly esteemed. Thus though one and the same thing may be called both the holy thing and a pearl, yet it is called holy because it is not to be corrupted; and called a pearl because it is not to be contemned.

**CHRYSOSTOM.** And to those that are right-minded and have understanding, when revealed they appear good; but to those without understanding, they seem to be more deserving reverence because they are not understood.

**AUGUSTINE.** (ubi sup.) The dogs are those that assault the truth; the swine we may not unsuitably take for those that despise the truth. Therefore because dogs leap forth to rend in pieces, and what they rend, suffer not to continue whole, He said, Give not that which is holy to the dogs; because they strive to the

utmost of their power to destroy the truth. The swine though they do not assault by biting as dogs, yet do they defile by trampling upon, and therefore He said, Cast not your pearls before swine.

**AUGUSTINE.** (ubi sup.) That which is despised is said to be trodden under foot: hence it is said, Lest perchance they tread them under foot.

**GLOSS.** (interlin.) He says, Lest perchance, because it may be that they will wisely turn from their uncleanness.

**AUGUSTINE.** (ubi sup.) That which follows, Turn again and rend you, He means not the pearls themselves, for these they tread under foot, and when they turn again that they may hear something further, then they rend him by whom the pearls on which they had trode had been cast. For you will not easily find what will please him who has despised things got by great toil. Whoever then undertake to teach such, I see not how they shall not be trode upon and rent by those they teach.

**CHRYSOSTOM.** Well is that said, Lest they turn; for they feign meekness that they may learn; and when they have learned, they attack.

**AUGUSTINE.** (ubi sup.) We must be careful therefore not to explain ought to him who does not receive it; for men the rather seek that which is hidden than that which is opened. He either attacks from ferocity as a dog, or overlooks from stupidity as swine. But it does not follow that if the truth be kept hid, falsehood is uttered. The Lord Himself who never spoke falsely, yet sometimes concealed the truth, as in that, I have yet many things to say unto you, the which ye are not now able to bear. (John 16:12.) But if any is unable to receive these things because of his filthiness, we must first cleanse him as far as lays in our power either by word or deed. But in that the Lord is found to have said some things which many who heard Him did not receive, but either rejected or contemned them, we are not to think that therein He gave the holy thing to the dogs, or cast His pearls before swine. He gave to those who were able to receive, and who were in the company, whom it was not fit should be neglected for the uncleanness of the rest. And though those who tempted Him might perish in those answers which He gave to them, yet those who could receive them by occasion of these inquiries heard many useful things. He therefore who knows what should be answered ought to make answer, for their sakes at least who might fall into despair should they think that the question proposed is one that cannot be answered. But this only in the case of such matters as pertain to instruction of salvation; of things superfluous or harmful nothing should be said; but it should then be explained for what reason we ought not to make answer in such points to the enquirer.

7:7–8

7. Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you:

8. For every one that asketh receiveth; and he that seeketh findeth; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened.

**JEROME.** Having before forbidden us to pray for things of the flesh, He now shews what we ought to ask, saying, Ask, and it shall be given you.

**AUGUSTINE.** (ubi sup.) Otherwise; when He commanded not to give the holy thing to dogs, and not to cast pearls before swine, the hearer conscious of his own ignorance might say, Why do you thus bid me not give the holy thing to dogs, when as yet I see not that I have any holy thing? He therefore adds in good season, Ask, and ye shall receive.

**GLOSS.** (ord.) We ask with faith, we seek with hope, we knock with love. You must first ask that you may have; after that seek that you may find; and lastly, observe what you have found that you may enter in.

**AUGUSTINE.** (Serm. in Mont. ii. 21.) Asking, is that we may get healthiness of soul that we may be able to fulfil the things commanded us; seeking, pertains to the discovery of the truth. But when any has found the true way, he will then come into actual possession, which however is only opened to him that knocks.

**AUGUSTINE.** (Retract. i. 19.) How these three differ from one another, I have thought good to unfold with this travail; but it were better to refer them all to instant prayer; wherefore He afterwards concludes, saying, He will give good things to them that ask him.

**CHRYSOSTOM.** And in that He adds seek, and knock, He bids us ask with much importunateness and strength. For one who seeks, casts forth all other things from his mind, and is turned to that thing singly which he seeks; and he that knocks comes with vehemence and warm soul.

**AUGUSTINE.** (Tract. in Joan. 44. 13.) Wherefore God hears sinners; for if He do not hear sinners, the Publican said in vain, Lord, be merciful to me a sinner; (Luke 18:13.) and by that confession merited justification.

**AUGUSTINE.** (Prosper, Sent. 212.) He who in faith offers supplication to God for the necessities of this life is heard mercifully, and not heard mercifully. For the physician knows better than the sick man what is

good for his sickness. But if he asks that which God both promises and commands, his prayer shall be granted, for love shall receive what truth provides.

**AUGUSTINE.** (Ep. 31. 1.) But the Lord is good, who often gives us not what we would, that He may give us what we should rather prefer.

**AUGUSTINE.** (Serm. in Mont. ii. 21.) There is need moreover of perseverance, that we may receive what we ask for.

**AUGUSTINE.** (Serm. 61. 5.) In that God sometimes delays His gifts, He but recommends, and does not deny them. For that which is long looked for is sweeter when obtained; but that is held cheap, which comes at once. Ask then and seek things righteous. For by asking and seeking grows the appetite of taking. God reserves for you those things which He is not willing to give you at once, that you may learn greatly to desire great things. Therefore we ought always to pray and not to fail.

7:9–11

9. Or what man is there of you, whom if his son ask bread, will he give him a stone?

10. Or if he ask a fish, will he give him a serpent?

11. If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your Father which is in heaven give good things to them that ask him?

**AUGUSTINE.** (Serm. in Mont. ii. 21.) As above He had cited the birds of the air and the lilies of the field, that our hopes may rise from the less to the greater; so also does He in this place, when He says, Or what man among you?

**CHRYSOSTOM.** There are two things behoveful for one that prays; that he ask earnestly; and that he ask such things as he ought to ask. And those are spiritual things; as Solomon, because he asked such things as were right, received speedily.

**CHRYSOSTOM.** This He said not detracting from human nature, nor confessing the whole human race to be evil; but He calls paternal love evil when compared with His own goodness. Such is the superabundance of His love towards men.



**JEROME.** Or perhaps he called the Apostles evil, in their person condemning the whole human race, whose heart is set to evil from his infancy, as we read in Genesis. Nor is it any wonder that He should call this generation evil, (Gen. 8:22.) as the Apostle also speaks, Seeing the days are evil.

**AUGUSTINE.** (ubi sup.) Or; He calls evil (Eph. 5:16.) those who are lovers of this age; whence also the good things which they give are to be called good according to their sense who esteem them as good; nay, even in the nature of things they are goods, that is, temporal goods, and such as pertain to this weak life.

**AUGUSTINE.** (Serm. 61, 3.) For that good thing which makes men good is God. Gold and silver are good things not as making you good, but as with them you may do good. If then we be evil, yet as having a Father who is good let us not remain ever evil.

**AUGUSTINE.** (Serm. in Mont. ii. 21.) If then we being evil, know how to give that which is asked of us, how much more is it to be hoped that God will give us good things when we ask Him?

**GLOSS.** (ord.) For from God we receive only such things as are good, of what kind soever they may seem to us when we receive them; for all things work together for good to His beloved.

7:12

12. Therefore all things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them: for this is the Law and the Prophets.

**AUGUSTINE.** (ubi sup.) Firmness and strength of walking by the way of wisdom in good habits is thus set before us, by which men are brought to purity and simplicity of heart; concerning which having spoken a long time, He thus concludes, All things whatsoever ye would, &c. For there is no man who would that another should act towards him with a double heart.

**GLOSS.** (ord.) Otherwise; The Holy Spirit is the distributor of all spiritual goods, that the deeds of charity may be fulfilled; whence He adds, All things therefore &c.

**CHRYSOSTOM.** Otherwise; The Lord desires to teach that men ought to seek aid from above, but at the same time to contribute what lays in their power; wherefore when He had said, Ask, seek, and knock, He proceeds to teach openly that men should be at pains for themselves, adding, Whatsoever ye would &c.

**AUGUSTINE.** (Serm. 61. 7.) Otherwise; The Lord had promised that He would give good things to them that ask Him. But that He may own his petitioners, let us also own ours. For they that beg are in every

thing, save having of substance, equal to those of whom they beg. What face can you have of making request to your God, when you do not acknowledge your equal? This is that is said in Proverbs, Whoso stoppeth his ear to the cry of the poor, he shall cry and shall not be heard. (Prov. 21:13.) What we ought to bestow on our neighbour when he asks of us, that we ourselves may be heard of God, we may judge by what we would have others bestow upon us; therefore He says, All things whatsoever ye would.

**CHRYSOSTOM.** He says not, All things whatsoever, simply, but All things therefore, as though He should say, If ye will be heard, besides those things which I have now said to you, do this also. And He said not, Whatsoever you would have done for you by God, do that for your neighbour; lest you should say, But how can I? but He says, Whatsoever you would have done to you by your fellow-servant, do that also to your neighbour.

**AUGUSTINE.** (Serm. in Mont. ii. 22.) Some Latin copies add here, good things, which I suppose was inserted to make the sense more plain. For it occurred that one might desire some crime to be committed for his advantage, and should so construe this place, that he ought first to do the like to him by whom he would have it done to him. It were absurd to think that this man had fulfilled this command. Yet the thought is perfect, even though this be not added. For the words, All things whatsoever ye would, are not to be taken in their ordinary and loose signification, but in their exact and proper sense. For there is no will but only in the good; (but vid. Retract. i. 9. n. 4.) in the wicked it is rather named desire, and not will. Not that the Scriptures always observe this propriety; but where need is, there they retain the proper word so that none other need be understood.

**CYPRIAN.** (Tr. vii.) Since the Word of God, the Lord Jesus Christ came to all men, He summed up all his commands in one precept, Whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye also to them; and adds, for this is the Law and the Prophets.

**CHRYSOSTOM.** Whence what we ought to do is clear, as in our own cases we all know what is proper, and so we cannot take refuge in our ignorance.

**AUGUSTINE.** (Serm. in Mont. ii. 22.) This precept seems to refer to the love of our neighbour, not of God, as in another place He says, there are two commandments on which hang the Law and the Prophets. But as He says not here, The whole Law, as He speaks there, He reserves a place for the other commandment respecting the love of God.

**AUGUSTINE.** (De Trin. viii. 7.) Otherwise; Scripture does not mention the love of God, where it says, All things whatsoever ye would; because he who loves his neighbour must consequently love Love itself above all things; but God is Love; therefore he loves God above all things.

### **From Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture:**

#### **6:34 Each Day's Trouble Sufficient**

##### **Paying No Heed to Temporal Things.**

Augustine: With a single heart, therefore, and exclusively for the sake of the kingdom of heaven, we ought to do good to all. And in this well-doing we ought not to think about temporal rewards, either exclusively or conjointly with the kingdom of God. For it is with reference to all these temporal things that the Lord used the word tomorrow when he said, "Do not think about tomorrow." For that word is not used except in the realm of time, where the future succeeds the past. Therefore, when we perform any good deed, let us think about eternal things and pay no heed to the temporal. Then our deed will be not only good but also perfect. "For tomorrow," he says, "will have anxieties of its own." By this he means that you are to take food or drink or clothing when it is fitting that you do so. When the need for them is pressing, these things will be at hand; our Father knows that we need all these things. "For sufficient for the day," he says, "is its own evil." In other words, when the need is urgent, we have sufficient reason for using these things. I suppose that this necessity is called evil because it partakes of the nature of punishment for us since it is part of the frailty and mortality that we have merited by committing sin. To this penalty of temporal necessity, therefore, do not add something more troublesome. Sermon on the Mount 2.17.56.

#### **7:1–2 Judge Not**

##### **The Rush to Judgment.**

Augustine: This carries the same intent as another passage, "Pass no judgment before the time, until the Lord comes, who will both bring to light the hidden things of darkness and reveal the thoughts of the heart; and then everyone will have his praise from God." Some actions are indifferent, and, since we do not know with what intention they are performed, it would be rash for any to pass judgment on them and most rash to condemn them. The time for judging these actions will come later, when the Lord "will bring

to light the hidden things of darkness and reveal the thoughts of the heart.” And in another passage the same apostle also says, “Some sins are manifest even before the judgment, but some sins afterward.” When it is clear with what intention they are committed, he calls them manifest sins, and these sins precede judgment. This means that if judgment follows them at once, it will not be rash judgment. But concealed sins follow judgment, because not even these will remain hidden in their proper time. And this is to be understood about good works as well, for he thus continues: “In like manner also the good works are manifest, and whatever things are otherwise cannot be hidden.” On things that are manifest, therefore, let us pass judgment, but with regard to hidden things, let us leave the judgment to God. For whether the works themselves be bad or good, they cannot remain hidden when the time comes for them to be revealed. Sermon on the Mount 2.18.60.

### **7:3–5 Logs and Specks**

#### **The Log in Your Own Eye.**

Chrysostom: Here Christ wants to show the great outrage he has toward people who do such things. For wherever he wants to show that the sin is great and that the punishment and anger for it is great, he begins with an open rebuke. For example, to show that he was provoked to anger he said to the man who was demanding the hundred silver coins, “Wicked slave, I forgave you all that debt.” In the same way also here he says, “Hypocrite.” For the verdict that one’s brother needs a splinter taken from his eye does not come from concern but from contempt for humanity. Even while one is putting on a mask of love toward others, one is actually performing a deed of consummate evil by inflicting numerous criticisms and accusations on close companions, thereby usurping the rank of teacher when one is not even worthy to be a disciple. For this reason he called this one “hypocrite.”

So then, you who are so spiteful as to see even the little faulty details in others, how have you become so careless with your own affairs that you avoid your own major faults? “First remove the plank from your eye.” You see that Jesus does not forbid judging but commands that one first remove the plank from one’s own eye. One may then set right the issues relating to others. For each person knows his own affairs better than others know them. And each one sees major faults easier than smaller ones. And each one loves oneself more than one’s neighbor. So if you are really motivated by genuine concern, I urge you to show this concern for yourself first, because your own sin is both more certain and greater. The Gospel of Matthew, Homily 23.2.

### **Seeing the Speck in Another's Eye.**

Augustine: The word hypocrite is aptly employed here, since the denouncing of evils is best viewed as a matter only for upright persons of goodwill. When the wicked engage in it, they are like impersonators, masqueraders, hiding their real selves behind a mask, while they portray another's character through the mask. The word hypocrites in fact signifies pretenders. Hence we ought especially to avoid that meddlesome class of pretenders who under the pretense of seeking advice undertake the censure of all kinds of vices. They are often moved by hatred and malice.

Rather, whenever necessity compels one to reprove or rebuke another, we ought to proceed with godly discernment and caution. First of all, let us consider whether the other fault is such as we ourselves have never had or whether it is one that we have overcome. Then, if we have never had such a fault, let us remember that we are human and could have had it. But if we have had it and are rid of it now, let us remember our common frailty, in order that mercy, not hatred, may lead us to the giving of correction and admonition. In this way, whether the admonition occasions the amendment or the worsening of the one for whose sake we are offering it (for the result cannot be foreseen), we ourselves shall be made safe through singleness of eye. But if on reflection we find that we ourselves have the same fault as the one we are about to reprove, let us neither correct nor rebuke that one. Rather, let us bemoan the fault ourselves and induce that person to a similar concern, without asking him to submit to our correction. Sermon on the Mount 2.19.64.

### **7:6 Pearls Before Swine**

#### **Unreadiness to Receive Godly Teaching.**

Augustine: Now in this precept we are forbidden to give a holy thing to dogs or to cast pearls before swine. We must diligently seek to determine the gravity of these words: holy, pearls, dogs and swine. A holy thing is whatever it would be impious to profane or tear apart. Even a fruitless attempt to do so makes one already guilty of such impiety, though the holy thing may by its very nature remain inviolable and indestructible. Pearls signify all spiritual things that are worthy of being highly prized. Because these things lie hidden in secret, it is as though they were being drawn up from the deep. Because they are found in the wrappings of allegories, it is as though they were contained within shells that have been opened. It is clear therefore that one and the same thing can be called both a holy thing and a pearl. It can be called a

holy thing because it ought not to be destroyed and a pearl because it ought not to be despised. One tries to destroy what one does not wish to leave intact. One despises what is deemed worthless, as if beneath him. Hence, whatever is despised is said to be trampled under foot.

You know that dogs rush madly to tear apart whatever they attack, leaving nothing intact. Hence the Lord says, “Do not give to dogs what is holy.” For although the holy thing itself cannot be shattered or destroyed but remains intact and unharmed, what must be considered is the desire of those who resist the truth with the utmost violence and bitterness. They do everything in their power to destroy what is holy, as if its destruction were possible. Although swine—unlike dogs—do not attack by biting, they befoul a thing by trampling all over it. Therefore “do not cast your pearls before swine, lest they trample them under their feet and turn and attack you.” Thus we may rightly understand that these words (dogs and swine) are now used to designate respectively those who assail the truth and those who resist it.

By saying “lest they turn and tear you apart” Jesus does not say, “Lest they tear apart the pearls themselves.” For by trampling on the pearls even when they turn around to hear something further, they lacerate the one who cast the pearls they have already trampled upon. Of course, it would not be easy to find anything that would please one who would trample on pearls. Who could please one who despises divine truth revealed at such great cost? But I do not see how anyone who tries to teach such people will not themselves be torn apart by indignation and disgust, for both dogs and swine are unclean animals. Therefore we must be careful not to reveal anything to one who cannot bear it, for it is better that one make a search for what is concealed than assail or despise what is revealed. Indeed, it is only through hatred or contempt that people refuse to accept truths of manifest importance. Hence for one reason some are called dogs, and for the other reason some are called swine. Sermon on the Mount 2.20.68–69.

### **7:7–8 Ask, Seek, Knock**

#### **Asking, Seeking and Knocking.**

Augustine: But when the precept was given that a holy thing should not be given to dogs and that pearls should not be cast before swine, questions abound. Mindful of our own ignorance and frailty and hearing it prescribed that we are not to give away something that we have not yet received, we might therefore ask, “What holy thing do you forbid me to give to dogs, and what pearls do you forbid me to cast before

swine? For I do not see that I have as yet received them.” Most aptly, then, did the Lord go on to say, “Ask, and it shall be given you; seek and you shall find; knock, and it shall be opened to you. For everyone who asks, receives; and one who seeks, finds; and to one who knocks, it shall be opened.” The asking refers to obtaining soundness and strength of mind through prayer, in order that we may be able to fulfill the precepts that are being given. The seeking refers to finding truth. For the blessed life is made up of acting and knowing. Action requires a store of strength, while contemplation requires the manifestation of truths. Of these two, we are to ask for the first and we are to seek for the other in order that the one may be given and that the other may be found. In this life, however, knowledge consists in knowing the way toward that blessedness rather than in possessing it. But when anyone has found the true way, that one will arrive at that possession. As for you, it is to one who knocks that the door is opened. In order that these three things—the asking, the seeking and the knocking—may be illustrated by an example, let us consider the case of one who is unable to walk because of weak limbs. Of course, such a one must first be healed and strengthened for walking. Hence the Lord said, “Ask.” Sermon on the Mount 2.21.71–72.

#### **Knock, and It Will Be Opened.**

Chrysostom: However, Jesus did not simply command us to ask but to ask with great concern and concentration—for this is the meaning of the word he used for “seek.” For those who are seeking put aside everything else from their minds. They become concerned only with the thing that they are seeking and pay no attention at all to the circumstances. Even those who are looking for gold or servants that have been lost understand what I am saying. So this is what he meant by seeking. But by knocking Jesus meant that we approach God with intensity and passion. Therefore, O mortal, do not give up. Do not show less eagerness for virtue than desire for possessions. For you frequently sought possessions but did not find them. Nevertheless, although you knew that you could not guarantee that you would find them, you used every means of searching for them. Yet even though in this case you have a promise that you surely will receive, you do not even demonstrate the smallest fraction of that same eagerness. But if you do not receive immediately, do not despair in this way. For it is because of this that Jesus said “knock” to show that even if he does not open the door immediately we should remain at the door knocking. The Gospel of Matthew, Homily 23.4.

## **7:9–11 Giving Good Gifts**

### **Our Gifts to Our Children and God's Gifts to Us.**

Augustine: But how do evil people give good gifts? Those whom he here calls evil are sinners. As such they are still lovers of this world. It is in accordance with their notion of good that their gifts are to be called good. Their gifts are called good, that is, because the givers consider them good. Although these things are good in the order of nature, they are nevertheless temporal things pertaining to the infirmities of life. Moreover, whenever an evil person bestows them, he is not giving what is his own, for “the earth and the fullness thereof is the Lord's.... Who made heaven and earth, the sea, and all things that are in them.” So even we who are evil know how to give what is asked. How much more confidence ought we to have that God will give us good things when we ask. God will not deceive us by giving us one thing rather than another when we ask of him. Even we do not deceive our children. And whatever good gifts we bestow, we give what is God's and not our own. Sermon on the Mount 2.21.73.

## **7:12 How to Treat Others**

### **Whatever You Wish Others Would Do to You.**

Chrysostom: In this statement Jesus briefly sums up all that is required. He shows that the definition of virtue is short and easy and known already to all. And he did not merely say, “Whatever things that you want,” but “Therefore whatever things that you want.” For he did not add this word therefore in its straightforward sense, but rather he used it with a deeper meaning. He is saying, “If you want to be heard, do these things in addition to those about which I have already spoken.” What are these additional things? “Whatever are those things that you want people to do to you.” Do you see how this shows that our wishes imply careful regulation of our behavior? Note that he did not say, “Whatever things that you want God to do for you, do these things to your neighbor.” Thus you cannot say, “How is that even possible? He is God and I am a human being!” Instead, Jesus said, “Whatever things that you want your fellow servant to do, you yourself also perform for your neighbor.” What is less of a burden than this? What is more just? Then the praise is exceedingly great: “For this is the law and the prophets.” From this it is clear that virtue is defined in accordance with our nature. So we all know within ourselves what our duties are. We cannot ever again find refuge in ignorance. The Gospel of Matthew, Homily 23.5.



### **Whether Love of God Is Implied in the Command.**

Augustine: Elsewhere Jesus says that there are two precepts on which the whole law and the prophets depend. The present precept seems to concern only the love of neighbor and not the love of God as well. Of course, if he had said, "All things whatever you wish to have done to you, do you also those things," he would then have embraced those two precepts in the one maxim, for it would be readily understood that everyone would wish to be loved by both God and other persons. So, when someone would be given that one precept—when he would be required to do whatever he would wish to have done to him—then he would of course implicitly be given the other precept as well: that he should love both God and neighbor. But it would seem that the present maxim means nothing more than "You shall love your neighbor as yourself," for it seems very expressly restricted to persons, since it reads, "Whatever you wish that people would do to you, do so to them." However, we must pay close attention to his further observation on this point, for Jesus goes on to say, "This is the law and the prophets." In the case of the previously mentioned two precepts, he did not say merely that "the law and the prophets depend on them." He said that "the whole law and the prophets depend" on them, for that is the sum of prophecy. But by omitting the word whole in the present instance, he seems to reserve a place for the other precept—the precept that pertains to the love of God. At any rate, the present instruction is one that was most apt for the occasion when he was expounding the precepts that pertain to singleness of heart. For there might be reason to fear that a person may have a double heart toward another, since the matters of the heart are hidden. But there is hardly anyone who would wish that others would deal double-heartedly with oneself. It is impossible for one to render service single-heartedly to another unless one renders it in such a way that one looks for no temporal advantage from it. And one cannot do this unless one is motivated by the kind of intention that we have sufficiently discussed earlier, when we were speaking about the eye that is single. Sermon on the Mount 2.22.75.