

4:5 Preaching Christ as Lord

ACCEPTED BY OUR FAITH.

DIDYMUS THE BLIND: It is not we but he who enables our faith, accepting us and judging us by it. PAULINE COMMENTARY FROM THE GREEK CHURCH.³⁸

THE LORD'S MOUTHPIECE.

CHRYSOSTOM: I am a servant. I am but a minister of those who receive the gospel, transacting everything for Another, and for his glory doing what I do. In warring against me you throw down what is God's. HOMILIES ON THE EPISTLES OF PAUL TO THE CORINTHIANS 8.3.⁴⁰

RESPOND TO THE INVITATION.

GREGORY OF NYSSA: And the apostle: "For we preach not ourselves but Jesus Christ as Lord, and ourselves merely as your servants in Jesus." ⁴¹ Knowing, then, the fruits of humility and the penalty of conceit, imitate the Master by loving one another and do not shrink from death or any other punishment for the good of each other. But the way which God entered upon for you, do you enter upon for him, proceeding with one body and one soul to the invitation from above, loving God and each other. For love and fear of the Lord are the first fulfillment of the law. ON THE CHRISTIAN MODE OF LIFE.⁴²

4:6 Light Out of Darkness

THIS CREATION IS GREATER.

CHRYSOSTOM: Do you see how Paul shows the glory of Moses flashing with added luster to those who want to see it? It shines in our hearts, he says, just as it shone on the face of Moses. ⁴³ First he reminds them of what was made at the beginning of creation, ⁴⁴ and then he shows that this renewed creation is greater. HOMILIES ON THE EPISTLES OF PAUL TO THE CORINTHIANS 8.3.⁴⁵

DAWNING OF DIVINE WISDOM.

ISAAC OF NINEVEH: When the Apostle said, "God, Who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined into our hearts" the resurrection, he showed this resurrection to be the exodus from the old state which in the likeness of Sheol incarcerates a man where the light of the gospel will not shine mystically upon him. This is a breath of life through hope in the resurrection, and by it the dawning of

divine wisdom shines in his heart, so that a man should become new, having nothing of the old man.
ASCETICAL HOMILIES 37.⁴⁸

THE SHINING OF THE SPIRIT.

AMBROSE: But does anyone deny that the Godhead of the eternal Trinity is to be adored, when the Scriptures also set forth the inexplicable majesty of the divine Trinity, as the apostle says elsewhere: “For the God who commanded the light to shine out of darkness has shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God, in the face of Christ Jesus?”⁴⁹ . . . Who is it, then, who shined that we might know God in the face of Christ Jesus? For he said: “God shined,” that the glory of God might be known in the face of Jesus Christ. Who else do we think but the Spirit who was made manifest? Or who else is it but the Holy Spirit, to whom the power of the Godhead is referred? For those who exclude the Spirit must introduce another to receive with the Father and the Son the glory of the Godhead. THE HOLY SPIRIT 3.12.86, 88.⁵⁰

4:7a Treasure in Earthen Vessels

THE SCRIPTURE’S HUMILITY.

JEROME: We have a treasure in such vessels of clay.² There are many who construe this last expression in reference to the body and to the Holy Spirit, meaning, of course, that we possess a treasure in earthen vessels. There is certainly that interpretation, but I think the better treasury-concept is that we have a most precious treasure in vessels of clay symbolizing the homely words of the Scripture. HOMILY 11 ON PSALM 77 (78).³

THE SCRIPTURE’S DEPTH.

JEROME: Every word of Scripture is a symbol all its own. These rustic words that persons of every age ponder over are packed full of mystical meaning. “But we carry this treasure in vessels of clay”; we have a divine treasury of meaning in the most ordinary words. HOMILY 20 ON PSALM 90 (91).⁴

4:7b *Transcendent Power*

THE TRANSCENDENT POWER BELONGS TO GOD.

CHRYSOSTOM: Both the greatness of the things given and the weakness of them that receive show the power of God, who not only gave great things but also gave them to those who are little. He used the term earthen in allusion to the frailty of our mortal nature and to declare the weakness of our flesh. For it is no better than earthenware, which is soon damaged and destroyed by death, disease and even variations of temperature. The power of God is most conspicuous when it performs mighty works by using vile and lowly things. HOMILIES ON THE EPISTLES OF PAUL TO THE CORINTHIANS 8.3.5

THE DEPTHS OF DIVINE INSPIRATION.

ORIGEN: But just as divine providence is not proved to be a fiction, particularly for those who are convinced of its existence, because its workings and arrangements are beyond the comprehension of human minds, so neither will the divine inspiration of holy Scripture, which extends through its entire body, be supposed to be nonexistent because the weakness of our understanding cannot discover the deep and hidden thoughts in every sentence. For the treasure of divine wisdom is concealed in vessels of poor and humble words, as the apostle points out when he says: "We have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the greatness of the divine power may shine forth the more," when no taint of human eloquence is mingled with the truth of the doctrines. ON FIRST PRINCIPLES 4.1.6

4:8 *Not Crushed or Despairing*

AFFLICTED BUT NOT CRUSHED.

CHRYSOSTOM: The afflictions come not only from enemies but even from our own households and friends. These things are permitted by God, not for our defeat but for our discipline. HOMILIES ON THE EPISTLES OF PAUL TO THE CORINTHIANS 9.1.7

FREEDOM IN AFFLICTION.

ORIGEN: For God delivers us from afflictions not when we are no longer in affliction (. . . Paul says "we are afflicted in every way," as though there were never a time when we were not afflicted), but when in our affliction we are not crushed because of God's help. "To be afflicted," according to a colloquial usage of the Hebrews, has the meaning of a critical circumstance that happens to us without our free choice,

while “to be crushed” implies our free choice and that it has been conquered by affliction and given into its power. And so Paul is right when he says, “We are afflicted in every way but not crushed.” ON PRAYER 30.1.9

THE MYSTERY OF UNANSWERED PRAYER.

ORIGEN: And unless we understand something that has escaped the notice of the many concerning praying not to enter into temptation, it is time to say that the apostles sometimes prayed and were not heard. How many thousand sufferings did they experience throughout their lifetimes with far greater labors, with far more beatings, with countless imprisonments, and often near death? Paul on his own received at the hands of the Jews the forty lashes less one, was beaten with rods three times, was stoned once, was shipwrecked three times, was adrift at sea a night and a day. He was in every way afflicted, perplexed, persecuted and struck down. ON PRAYER 29.4.10

4:9 Not Forsaken or Destroyed

4:10 Manifesting Jesus' Life

CARRYING THE DEATH OF JESUS.

CHRYSOSTOM: What is the death of Jesus which they carried about with them? It is the daily deaths which they died, by which the resurrection also was shown. This is another reason for the trials, that Christ's life might be manifested in human bodies. What looks like weakness and destitution in fact proclaims his resurrection. HOMILIES ON THE EPISTLES OF PAUL TO THE CORINTHIANS 9.1.13

4:11 Given Up to Death

4:12 Death at Work in Us

ENDURING DANGERS.

CHRYSOSTOM: We bear about his dying that the power of his life may be manifest. HOMILIES ON THE EPISTLES OF PAUL TO THE CORINTHIANS 9.1.17

4:13 *The Spirit of Faith*

HEAVENLY WISDOM.

CHRYSOSTOM: Paul reminds us of a psalm ³ which abounds in heavenly wisdom and is especially fitted to encourage us in dangers. The psalmist uttered these words when he was in great danger, from which there was no possibility of escape except in the power of God. ⁴ In similar circumstances, Paul says that we who have the same Spirit will be comforted likewise. Thus he shows that there is a great harmony between the Old and the New Testaments; it is the same Spirit at work in both. The men of old were in danger, just as we are. Like them, we must find a solution through faith and hope. HOMILIES ON THE EPISTLES OF PAUL TO THE CORINTHIANS 9.2.⁵

SAVED BY THE SAME FAITH.

AUGUSTINE: Moreover, our Mediator, when revealed to us, wished the sacrament of our regeneration to be manifest. But for the just men of old it was something hidden, although they also were to be saved by the same faith which was to be revealed in its own time. For we do not dare to prefer the faithful of our own time to the friends of God by whom those prophecies were to be made, since God so announced himself as the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, the God of Jacob, as to give himself that name forever. If the belief is correct that circumcision served instead of baptism in the saints of old, what shall be said of those who pleased God before this was commanded, except that they pleased him by faith, because, as it is written in Hebrews: "Without faith it is impossible to please God"? ⁶ "But having the same spirit of faith," says the apostle, "as it is written: I believed, for which cause I have spoken, we also believe, for which reason we also speak." He would not have said "the same" unless this very spirit of faith was also theirs. For, just as they, when this same mystery was hidden, believed in the incarnation of Christ which was to come, so we also believe that it has come. LETTER 187, TO DARDANUS 34.⁷

DIVERSE TIMES, A UNITED FAITH.

AUGUSTINE: Those just men also were saved by their salutary faith in him as man and God. They, before he came in the flesh, believed that he was to come in the flesh. Our faith is the same as theirs, since they believed that this would be, while we believe that it has come to pass. Hence, the apostle Paul says: "But having the same spirit of faith, as it is written: I believed for which reason I have spoken: we also believe for which reason we also speak." If, then, those who foretold that Christ would come in the flesh had the

same faith as those who have recorded his coming, these religious mysteries could vary according to the diversity of times yet all refer most harmoniously to the unity of the same faith. LETTER 190, TO OPTATUS.⁸

4:14 Brought into God's Presence

GOD RAISED JESUS.

POLYCARP: He who raised Jesus from the dead will raise us also if we do his will and walk in his commandments and love the things which he loved, abstaining from all unrighteousness, covetousness, love of money, evil speaking and false witness. EPISTLE TO THE PHILIPPIANS 2.¹³

GOD WILL RAISE US.

CHRYSOSTOM: Once again, Paul fills the Corinthians with lofty thoughts, so that they may not feel indebted to the false apostles. HOMILIES ON THE EPISTLES OF PAUL TO THE CORINTHIANS 9.2.¹⁴

4:15 To the Glory of God

FOR THE BENEFIT OF ALL.

CHRYSOSTOM: God did not raise Christ from the dead for the sake of one person only but for the benefit of us all. HOMILIES ON THE EPISTLES OF PAUL TO THE CORINTHIANS 9.2.¹⁷