

John Chrysostom & Severian of Gabala
Two homilies on peace:
That Severian must be received & On Peace
(De Severiano Recipiendo & De Pace)

CPG 4395 & 4214

Translated by Bryson Sewell¹

2014

Contents

Introduction.....	2
Translator's Note	2
John Chrysostom: <i>That Severian Must be Received</i>	3
Severian of Gabala: <i>On Peace</i>	5

¹ This translation was commissioned by Roger Pearse, Ipswich, and is released by him into the public domain.

Introduction

The elevation of a popular preacher from Antioch to the patriarchal throne in Constantinople was inevitably followed by conspiracies against him by others in the court circle. John Chrysostom was popular among the preacher. But it was the arrogance of the patriarchal officials towards other bishops which made Chrysostom his most serious enemies, among them Severian of Gabala. The latter was popular at court, and the empress patched up a dispute between the two. The two homilies that are included here were delivered on successive days in the summer of 402 AD.²

The two homilies appear in the *Patrologia Graeca* 52 in abbreviated Latin versions, part of a collection of Greek homilies in an abbreviated Latin translation that circulated in late antiquity. The full Greek text of Chrysostom's homily remains unknown, so the text translated here is that of the PG³. However the full Greek text of Severian was rediscovered at the monastery of Mar Saba and published in 1891.⁴ It is translated here for the first time.

Translator's Note

Translating ancient texts into English for the first time poses many challenges for the translator. There are no commentaries to reference, no translations to check when questions arise. There are always points of ambiguity, both grammatical and lexical; the cultural divide, separated as we are by nearly 1,600 years from the events, creates its own difficulties: certain figures of speech and assumed cultural knowledge, while at home in the original context, naturally seem strange to modern readers; and the writing style can seem onerous in English. Taking these problems (and there are always more!) into consideration, my first aim has been *accuracy*, so that the reader may be assured that the English truthfully represents the original; and secondly, readability. Difficulties (and there are *always* difficulties), as well as words that may be of interest to various readers, are footnoted, as well as literal translations of expressions that, though quite acceptable in the original, have no place in good English, and so have been rendered idiomatically. Where the meaning of the text is unclear, due not to any grammatical or lexical difficulties but rather to the general ambiguity of the argument, I sometimes offer an

² The career of Chrysostom is given in Palladius, *Life of John Chrysostom*, although this is hagiographical in nature. Severian's fate was to be forgotten, and, ironically, for his works transmitted, if at all, under Chrysostom's name.

³ PG 52, 423-4.

⁴ A. Papadopoulos-Kerameus, *Analecta Hierosolymitikes Stachyologias*, (Ανάλεκτα Ιεροσολυμιτικής Σταχυολογίας) vol. 1, Petropoli, 1891, p.15-26. The ancient Latin epitome appears in PG 52, 425-8.

interpretation of what I think is meant. My hope is that these translations may benefit many.

John Chrysostom: *That Severian Must be Received*

[M. 423] Just as the body must be united to the head, so too the church [must be united to] the priest and the people to the ruler. And just as bushes [must be united to] roots, and rivers to springs, so too sons [must be united to] the father and students to their teacher.⁵ We did not, however, previously utter these things unnecessarily out of love for you,⁶ but because I must say some things in your presence in order that no one be disturbed or an interruption arise for my sermon, but so that [M. 424] the obedience of students may increase in you and that it may become apparent how much affection you have for your father. Adorn me, my sons, and set upon me the crown of your obedience, cause me to be judged blessed in the presence of all, and extol my teaching through obedience in accordance with the apostle's admonitions when he says, "Obey those who are set over you and submit to them. For they keep watch on your behalf, as they were about to render an account [M. 425] for your souls."⁷ And so I make these prefatory remarks, lest anyone disdain my admonition. For I am a father and it is necessary that I advise counsel to my sons. For the role that the nature of flesh performs in carnal fathers, the grace of the spirit performs in us. I am a father, and a father who trembles excessively for my sons, to such an extent that I am ready to pour out my blood for you. And in this I have no thanks. For there is an apostolic law and command of the Lord who says, "A good shepherd lays down his life for his sheep."⁸ But do the same thing yourselves for us; for you, too, were bound by a similar affection for us. For hear also what Paul says: "Greet," he said, "Priscilla and Aquila, my helpers in Christ, who laid down their own necks for my life."⁹ For just as it is a fine thing for a shepherd to be sacrificed for his sheep, so in turn it is a fine thing for sheep not to be separated from their shepherd even by death. For when they should be inseparable from him, they will not fear the devil, the wolf. For a wall of love is stronger than adamant. "And when a brother is helped by his brother, it will be just as a fortified and strong city."¹⁰ I send these things out in advance in order that you may hear what we say with every affection and so that no one of you should begin to be disturbed. We are talking about a matter which it is worthy to speak of in a church, and which it is worthy to hear gladly. We are speaking to you about peace. And what is more appropriate than a priest of God persuading the people to peace? There is no objection when both the holy embassy and ambassador are received¹¹. We are speaking about peace, on behalf of

⁵ Or, "disciples to their master."

⁶ Ad caritatem vestram.

⁷ Hebrews 13:17.

⁸ John 10:11.

⁹ Rom. 16:3.4.

¹⁰ Proverbs 18:19.

¹¹ Acceptus est.

which the son of God descended to earth in order that through his blood he might bring peace not only to what is on the earth, but also what is in the heavens, and so that earthly things might unite with heavenly things. We are speaking on behalf of peace, for which the son of God suffered, and because of which he was crucified and buried; which he left to us as the entire wealth of our inheritance, and gave to the church as a wall; which he placed as a shield against the devil, which he gave as a sword against demons, which he established as a most tranquil [M. 426] harbor for the faithful; which he gave as a propitiation¹² to God, which he granted as an absolution for transgressions. It was for this, then, that I was sent to you as an ambassador. Don't make me blush, don't disgrace my embassy, acquiesce in what I ask,¹³ I beseech you. Not long ago many sorrowful things were conducted in the church, I confess to God, but I don't praise disturbances, I don't embrace dissensions. Let us now lay aside these things: desist, be at peace, restrain your passions, curb your anger. What the church suffered is already sufficient, let there be an end, let the disorder cease: for this is pleasing to God and acceptable to our most pious ruler. For it is proper to obey emperors, especially when they submit to ecclesiastical laws. The apostle says, "Be subject to your rulers and authorities."¹⁴ How much more so to a most religious ruler and one who labors on behalf of the church! If, then, I have prepared your souls for receiving my embassy, receive our brother, bishop Severian.

[Chrysostom presumably paused here, and the crowd cheered]

I am thankful because you have accompanied my sermon with cheering!¹⁵ You have given me the fruit of obedience! Now I am rejoicing because I planted a good seed! For behold, now I'll gather handfuls of grain. May God repay you a reward for your kindness and recompense for your obedience! For now you have offered to God the sacrifice of peace, because no one was disturbed when they heard this name, but you received it with love. As soon as we spoke in the sermon, you drove your anger from your mind. Receive him therefore with a full heart, with open hands. If anything sorrowful took place, lay it aside. For when it is a time of peace, there is no remembrance of dissension, and so there is joy in heaven, joy on earth, spiritual happiness and exultation in the church of God. And concerning the rest, let us pray that God may deem it worthy to keep the church at peace, that he give a fixed and perpetual peace, in Jesus Christ our Lord, with whom there is glory to God the father, together with the holy spirit, forever. Amen.

¹² Repropitiatio.

¹³ Literally, "acquiesce to me."

¹⁴ Titus 3:1.

¹⁵ Literally, "praises."

Severian of Gabala: *On Peace*

[1] After the angels gathered the heavenly chorus they proclaimed the good news to the shepherds, saying “We proclaim to you today a great joy which will be for all the people.”¹⁶ And we too, borrowing the voice from those holy angels themselves, proclaim the good news to you today, that the affairs of the church are in calm weather but those of the heretics are in a storm. Today the ship of the church is in calm weather and is anchored in a harbor of peace untouched by storms, but the madness of the heretics is tempest-tossed by their own huge waves. Today the shepherds are in tranquility and the flock in safety, [but] the enemies are at a loss, the wolves are in despair. Today the vine of our savior is in prosperity but the workers of evil in despair. Today the people of God are in exaltation but the enemies of truth in humiliation. Today Christ is in great joy but the devil in grief. Today angels rejoice with gladness and demons run away with shame. And what need is there to say many things? Today Christ, the king of peace, came forth with his own peace and got rid of all enmity and all grief and all dissension.¹⁷ The sun shines upon the sky and the peace of Christ illuminates the church. Peace, the longed-for name! Peace, the shining promise of piety!¹⁸ Peace, the pure sight of the priesthood! Peace, the radiant beauty of the altar! And what can we say that is worthy of peace, which is the name of Christ? For when Paul is talking about Christ he says, “He is our peace, who made both one.”¹⁹ Both weren’t divided by will,²⁰ weren’t separated by faith, but were divided by the ill-will of the devil. But just as in the event of a royal procession the streets are cleansed and porticoes are crowned with remarkable ornaments in order that nothing should appear unworthy of the royal sight, so too all pains retreated out of our way when Christ, the king of peace, came forth. The truth shone forth, and falsehood runs away! Concord shone forth, and discord fled! And just as often in the case of kings or brothers or rulers, the best painters, when they want to show the unity of the soul, represent Concord in the form of a woman [standing] behind [them], embracing those who are united with both of her arms – in order that she²¹ may show that separated bodies are joined in will²² – so too the peace of Christ intervening joined what was separated, and what was said by the prophet was fulfilled in our time: “And there will be a counsel of peace between both.”²³

[2] Yesterday our common father introduced the gospel, the word of peace;²⁴ but today we are taking the first part²⁵ in the word of peace. Yesterday with open hands he

¹⁶ Luke 2:10.

¹⁷ Or, “meanness of spirit.”

¹⁸ Εὐσέβεια

¹⁹ Ephesians 2:14.

²⁰ Γνώμη.

²¹ Or “he,” if this refers back to the painter. The text is itself ambiguous on the gender.

²² Γνώμη.

²³ Zechariah 6:13.

²⁴ Τῆς εἰρήνης τὸν λόγον. This phrase recurs numerous times throughout this homily. Its exact meaning is elusive due to the many possible meanings of λόγος. It might mean

greeted us with the word of truth, and today we, so to speak, welcome [him] with the gifts of peace. War has been abolished and the beauty of peace is shining! Now the devil groans! Now the band of demons laments! Now the affairs of the flock are in great joy! Now the heavenly things are in gladness! Today peace dances,²⁶ the peace that dwells with the angels in heaven and lives with the saints on the earth! Peace, the hymn of the angels! Peace, the work of the saints! And see the marvel. The things in heaven sing hymns of peace, and the things on the earth sing hymns of peace! But when the angels sing hymns of peace, they send it to earth, they shine forth the rays of peace upon the earth. But whenever the saints on the earth sing hymns about it, they send its radiance up into heaven. The angels from heaven sing hymns and say, “Glory in the highest to God, and peace on earth!”²⁷ Do you see how the heavenly companies send to one another the gifts of peace? The angels in heaven proclaimed peace to the earth. For when that pious chorus was singing hymns of Christ and said, “Hosanna to the son of David, blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord!”²⁸ this was also added, “Peace in the heavens and glory in the highest!” Let us moreover also say, “Glory in the highest to God, who brought the devil low and raised high his own people. Glory to God in the highest, who got rid of enmity and decided on peace.”

[3] We spoke to you of the devil’s cunning, and before us²⁹ you weren’t ignorant of his designs. Satan saw the church fortified with faith, he saw it crowned with the teachings of piety. He saw it, and after seeing it, he melted. After seeing it he raged, after seeing it he went mad. He tried to scatter Christ’s glory, but he wasn’t able to. For neither is Christ’s glory done away with, nor is the peace of [his] priests destroyed. The devil’s³⁰ evil gave no benefit, for the concord of the brothers introduced the word of peace. For Christ is our peace. “May the peace of Christ rule in our hearts.”³¹

[4] Carefully pay attention to how God reveals the beauty of peace and shows it both flourishing among prophets and shining among apostles and dancing among martyrs. Without peace nothing can exist,³² neither of the things in heaven nor of the things on earth. Peace, [the] mouth of law! Peace, [the] tongue of prophets! Peace, [the] teaching of apostles! Peace, [the] desire of martyrs and prophets! What is [the] desire of

“message of peace, word of peace, teaching of peace, discourse on peace,” or similar expressions. It is also possible that there is a play on words as Christ as the λόγος (cf. the opening of the Gospel of John).

²⁵ i.e. by effecting a reconciliation between themselves, Severian of Gabala and Chrysostom are chiefly responsible for the peace and are hence “taking the first part in the word of peace” or “taking the lead in the word of peace.” The contrast is between God, who first “introduced the gospel, the word of peace,” onto themselves, as now *taking the lead* in effecting peace between themselves.

²⁶ Χωρεύει.

²⁷ Luke 2:14.

²⁸ Matt 21:9.

²⁹ i.e. before we spoke to you.

³⁰ Literally, “his.”

³¹ Col. 3:15.

³² Συστῆναι. This might also mean “endure” or “continue” in this context.

prophets? “Lord our God, give us peace.”³³ The king³⁴ accepted our petition. It was necessary that he sign our petition and by his superscription reply appropriately to our petition. “What do you want,” he says, “men, who were brought up in piety?” “Lord our God, give us peace.” “I grant your favor. I sign [it] and give my decision.”³⁵ The king signed it by himself,³⁶ “I fulfill your petition.” When the prophets say, “Lord our God, give us peace,” what moreover does he reply to them through the gospel’s grace? “I give you my peace. I leave you my peace.”³⁷ Why “I give?” Why “I leave?” Because every servant of Christ is considered both according to the flesh and according to divinity. He was absent³⁸ according to the flesh, remaining according to divinity. He said both “I leave” and “I give.” “I leave” as if he were being taken up³⁹ [to heaven], “I give” as if he were living as a fellow citizen. “Peace” was subjoined as a sign of the apostles’ race. For just as the signs of a public race are invalid unless they are marked⁴⁰ by a royal hand, so too the race of the apostles, unless it received a sign of peace, wouldn’t have been able to go through the world, which is full of war. Let Isaiah say what sort of thing the sign of peace is. “How beautiful are the feet of those who proclaim peace, those who proclaim good things!”⁴¹ You saw the sign of peace. Hear the beginning of the message of the gospel.⁴² The beginning of the gospel message is “peace.” Hear the savior saying, “Whatever town or house you enter into, say to this house, ‘Peace.’”⁴³ Peace fortifies⁴⁴ [the] soul of a priest. It gives open ears to those who listen. For before the words, shining peace illuminates the mind of those listening. For on account of this ancient figure of the priesthood, God, deifying [it], said, “It walked with me prospering in peace, and it turned many from injustice, because the lips of the priest guarded knowledge, and they seek [the] law from his mouth. For he is a messenger of the Lord Almighty.”⁴⁵ You saw [that] peace [is] the reins and bridle of the priesthood,⁴⁶ the bridle of those being guided. Do you want to learn another strange thing? “Peace” is the first and ancient name of the altar. For in the beginning it was called “altar of peace,” since all dissension and grief and enmity are abolished on the altar. From the beginning God established [the] name of the altar as “peace,” from which comes the [statement], “Gideon built an altar to the Lord, and he called its name “Peace of the Lord.”⁴⁷

³³ Isaiah 26:12.

³⁴ i.e. God.

³⁵ ὑποσημειοῦμαι καὶ ἀντιγράφω.

³⁶ Δι’ ἑαυτοῦ.

³⁷ John 14:27.

³⁸ ἀπεδήμει.

³⁹ Cf. Acts 1:11.

⁴⁰ i.e. a stamp of approval.

⁴¹ Isaiah 52:7.

⁴² Τοῦ εὐαγγελικοῦ λόγου τὸ προοίμιον.

⁴³ Luke 10:5.

⁴⁴ Συγκροτεῖ.

⁴⁵ Malachi 2:6-7.

⁴⁶ i.e. peace guides the priesthood in the same way reins and a bridle guide a horse.

⁴⁷ Judges 6:24.

[5] Why do you want to discover the boundaries⁴⁸ of piety? Peace is just like a large and great piece of land subjected to different ownership. The boundaries dividing [it] show how far the ownership of one person reaches and where the allotment of another person begins. In this way, since the failures and successes of human souls lay between demons and Christ, who decides on peace, while some people love Christ and his peace, and others run to demons, the word of truth sets peace as the boundary, in order that you may learn that as long as you see peace, it is the possession of Christ. Whatever is outside of peace is foreign to Christ. How can this be?⁴⁹ Let David, the ancient land-measurer, tell you and show you the boundaries, who says, “[the] measuring-lines fell for me in the best [places], and indeed my inheritance is best.”⁵⁰ This person, showing us the boundaries, says, “Jerusalem, praise the Lord, Zion, praise your God, because he strengthened the bolts of your gates, he blessed [your] sons in you, he who sets peace as your boundaries.”⁵¹

[6] You saw the boundaries of peace, eternal boundaries, which the prophets and apostles fixed. Learn also of another one. The brothers of Joseph were once suspected of being spies. Since they had no defense, they ran to the weapon of peace. “We are not spies, we are peaceful.”⁵² Again, the blessed David, raising the power of piety aloft, and showing what the vigor and power of the truth are, says, prophesying to the ancient and holy city, “Let there be peace in your power and prosperity in those who love you.”⁵³ Again God, wanting to show that the multitudes are consumed in war and the abundances of the peoples are dispersed, but in a word of peace they are gathered, says through the prophet Ezekiel, “Let a shoot of peace arise for them, and they will no longer be few. For just as men arm themselves against wild beasts and, appearing fully armed, they immediately put the bests to flight, so too whenever peace appears, war is dispersed, diabolical favors⁵⁴ are dispersed, and the phalanx of demons is broken up. For where there is peace, there evil is put to flight, just as the beasts [are put to flight] by the holy one. For this reason God says, “I will make a covenant of peace with David, and I will destroy the wild beasts.”⁵⁵ Peace is a field of truth, a vine of righteousness, a river of piety.

[7] Did you see how peace caused the church to be filled spiritually after the manner of streams of rivers?⁵⁶ Did you see how the multitudes streaming in imitate the

⁴⁸ ὄροι. Or, “boundary-stones.”

⁴⁹ Πόθεν τοῦτο;

⁵⁰ Psalm 16:6; Septuagint 15:6.

⁵¹ Psalm 148:1-3; Septuagint 147:1-3.

⁵² Gen 42:31.

⁵³ Psalm 122:7; Septuagint 121:7.

⁵⁴ Διαβολικαὶ εὐνοιαί.

⁵⁵ Ezekiel 35:25.

⁵⁶ The Greek is unclear, and this translation should not be taken as authoritative. The Greek is: εἶδες πῶς ἡ εἰρήνη ἐποίησεν τὴν ἐκκλησίαν δίκην ῥευμάτων ποταμίων πληρῶσαι πνευματικῆν; There are several issues. The first is how to understand the verb ἐποίησεν. Here the most likely meaning is “to bring it about that,” followed by an accusative and an infinitive. Hence a literal translation, “how peace brought it about that [it – “peace” must be understood again] filled the church.” The adjective πνευματικὴν at

rushing of the river, gladdening the city of God? And your great joy which arose because of the peace imitates the waves of the sea, following one another in their course and giving way to one another and coming against one another without uproar. They are not at odds because of a quarrel, but because of a concord of disposition. Do you want to learn this – that a river imitates peace – from the sight and the scriptures? “Your peace and your righteousness are as a river, as waves of the sea.”⁵⁷ But as I said before, the divine trumpet, which proclaims the word of peace, anticipated us. Today let us follow the word of peace and as if with both hands let us open the gates for it⁵⁸ and say, “Raise the gates! Let the people enter who guard righteousness and guard peace, who hold to the truth forever.”⁵⁹ For indeed peace is a cargo⁶⁰ and waves of the sea and a shining sun. Why do I say a sun? The sun doesn’t shine as much as the peace of our savior flashes forth its light! For I see that the sun is a slave to its position; it has the evening as the end of its course. But the peace of Christ, filled with light, both shines during the day and illuminates during the night and flashes forever! Listen! Whenever peace appears, it doesn’t appear alone, it doesn’t endure to come forth alone, but it brings its sister with itself, righteousness. Listen to the prophet saying, “In his day righteousness will rise up, and a great amount of peace.”⁶¹ And again, in our own time, bringing them⁶² forward receiving one another, he says, “Mercy and truth came together, righteousness and peace kissed.”⁶³ For what else is there like this for those who rule in accordance with Christ, for those who received their office of overseer,⁶⁴ like peace and righteousness? And this, you who love Christ, is dispersed by a prophetic voice. Listen to God saying, “I will give your leaders in peace, and your overseers in righteousness.”⁶⁵

[8] Peace moreover has arisen! Let the heretical beasts flee! Peace has arisen! Let the savage bands of the heretics run away! For just as the beasts which don’t have confidence during the day become fearless at night, so too do those people who don’t endure the ray of peace. When a small cloud of dissension that was introduced⁶⁶ didn’t

the end of the sentence then has to be taken as an adverbial predicate, “to fill the church *spiritually*.” The position of the adjective doesn’t allow for the translation “to fill the spiritual church.” But this leaves the noun δίκη. As it is rendered here, it is understood to be functioning as an adverb (“after the manner of,” LSJ A 2) followed by the genitive, hence “after the manner of a stream of a river.” One wonders, however, why the author didn’t merely write, “πῶς ἡ εἰρήνη ἐπλήρωσεν τὴν ἐκκλησίαν...,” “how peace filled the church...,” in place of the more tedious “brought it about that it filled the church.”

⁵⁷ Isaiah 48:18.

⁵⁸ i.e. peace.

⁵⁹ Isaiah 26:2.

⁶⁰ Γόμος.

⁶¹ Psalm 72:7; Septuagint 71:7.

⁶² i.e. peace and righteousness.

⁶³ Psalm 85:10; Septuagint 84:11.

⁶⁴ ἐπισκοπή.

⁶⁵ Isaiah 60:17.

⁶⁶ Or, “That overtook [us].”

make an end of peace but threw [it] aside,⁶⁷ the beasts, thinking that it was a lightless night, came forth from out of their own dens, bringing forward their own poison, and the statement of David was fulfilled, “You established darkness, and it became night. All the wild beasts of the field will go about in it, young lions roaring to seize”⁶⁸ [my] soul from correct belief into heretical opinion, from faith into faithlessness, from truth into falsehood. But again – for he uses the same example – just as the beasts who receive confidence that comes from the night run away if they only see a ray of the sun and return to their own nooks, so now [if they hear]⁶⁹ the voice of David, “The sun rose and they were gathered together and they will lay in their dens.”

[9] Let us give thanks to Christ, who calmed the cloud of dust and sprinkled upon [us] a drop of peace and righteousness. For just as drops calm a cloud of dust, so too drops of righteousness calm dissension and anxiety. And so blessed Isaiah also prayed saying, “Be glad, heaven above, and let the clouds sprinkle righteousness.”⁷⁰ Let the prior events trouble no one. “In a good day there is forgetfulness of sufferings.”⁷¹ Let no one be disturbed, let no one say, “There had to be dissension among the priests of Christ.” For we haven’t ceased being human, have we?⁷² And aren’t we often beguiled when we listen? You have an example capable of comforting you. I’m not committing outrage against the saints – may it not be! – but I’m demonstrating the misfortunes from them.

[10] A quarrel once arose between Paul and Barnabas, because one party valued justice, another injustice,⁷³ but each party was serving the goal of piety. The cause of their dissension was this. A certain Mark was united with them for the teaching of the Gospel from Palestine to Perga in Pamphylia. Then, since the apostles were using a strenuous course and an unbending soul in their contests and battles and dangers, after bidding farewell to the course of the apostles, he came to Palestine, not having denied Christ, but, as it has been said, having declined the great course. After this Paul and Barnabas returned, abounding in the fruits of piety and crowned with the toil of piety, and

⁶⁷ Οὐκ ἐξέκοψε τὴν εἰρήνην ἀλλ’ ἔρριπεν. The point seems to be that peace wasn’t utterly destroyed, but only cast aside for a while.

⁶⁸ Psalm 104:20-21; Septuagint 103:20-21.

⁶⁹ The syntax is ambiguous. A parallel is being constructed, but what exactly the parallel is isn’t clear. “The voice of David” doesn’t have a clear syntactic function (in the accusative case). It seems to be in parallel to “if they see a ray of the sun,” though one can’t “see the voice of David,” and so is rendered [“if they hear] the voice of David.” The quotation seems to hang in the sentence loosely. If the quotation is understood in apposition to “the voice of David,” we must supply something like “they run away” to complete the parallel. Perhaps the point is that when heretics hear that peace is restored, they flee after the manner of beasts, and peace is here characterized as the rising sun.

⁷⁰ Isaiah 45:8.

⁷¹ Sirach 11:25.

⁷² Literally, “We have not become outside of being humans, have we?”

⁷³ This is a perplexing phrase to say that Paul valued (τιμάω) justice (δικαιοσύνη) and Barnabas injustice (ἀδικία). It seems to mean that Paul viewed Mark’s action of desertion as an injustice, so that, by not receiving him back, he was carrying out some type of justice, while Barnabas disregarded this ‘justice’ and valued friendship and affection more highly.

proclaiming to the church the good news of the conversion of all the nations. When everyone was praising Paul and Barnabas for their successes, Mark was stung, he was afflicted in his soul. Following this line of thinking he thought to himself, “If I was a partner in their toils, I now became a partner in their praises.”⁷⁴ For many people who often flee the virtues themselves because of the toils, choose to toil on account of the praise that comes from them. What then? Mark, after feeling regret,⁷⁵ determined to unite with the apostles again as they were setting out. Barnabas at once received him after he had repented, but Paul was obstinate and said that “We shouldn’t receive one who wasn’t joined with us in the work of the Lord.”⁷⁶ The discord wasn’t a matter of injustice, but of justice and friendship. Paul was demanding justice, Barnabas was valuing kindness. Disagreeing moreover in their will, although they were in agreement as concerned piety, they came into such a sharp disagreement that they even separated from one another. They weren’t at variance in faith or disposition, but in a human quarrel. But an arrangement arose when they were at variance. Barnabas, taking Mark, went out on his course, but Paul, taking Timothy, went out himself on his own course. Paul’s strictness benefited Mark. For when he saw that he was thus cast out because of his laziness, he strove to cover his former sluggishness with his zeal and his second course. Accordingly Mark was running eagerly⁷⁷ with Barnabas. Paul exhorted in the churches that they not receive Mark, not in order to grieve him, but to make him more zealous. Then, when holy Paul saw Mark anticipating [him] in zeal and having rendered an account to God through his second actions, he begins to commend him. And what does he say here? One phrase. And he takes hold of holy Barnabas⁷⁸ because he treated Mark as a cousin and he was eager to forgive him his sin as a cousin. For what does he say? “Mark, the cousin of Barnabas, greets you, about whom you received orders. If he comes, receive him.”⁷⁹

[11] And now let the past matters pacify the current situation. If there was dissension between Paul and Barnabas, why is it astonishing if [there was dissension] between us? But just as at that time Mark who was in the public eye⁸⁰ made proof of his reform and was deemed worthy of kindness, let those who are now in the public eye⁸¹ be received. Let them have a gracious God. Christ will forgive everyone, and will have mercy on me with you. And let us exhort our common father to seal for us the word of peace in Christ Jesus our Lord, to whom be glory forever. Amen.

⁷⁴ An ἄν may have dropped out of the text. If so, it should be translated, “If I had been a partner in their toils, I would have now become a partner in their praises.”

⁷⁵ Or, “after repenting.”

⁷⁶ Acts 15:38.

⁷⁷ Literally, “was eager and running”

⁷⁸ ἐπιλαμβάνεται τοῦ ἁγίου Βαρνάβα. The meaning of ἐπιλαμβάνεται here is uncertain. “Lay hold of” is ambiguous. “Attack,” another possible meaning, makes no sense here. “To get” or “obtain” is tempting, though the meaning is still unclear.

⁷⁹ Colossians 4:10.

⁸⁰ ὁ ἐν τῷ μέσῳ Μάρκος. A difficult expression, with no clear parallels in the lexica. It might also be rendered, “with whom the matter is concerned”

⁸¹ Οἱ ἐν μέσῳ, i.e. Severian of Gabala and John Chrysostom.