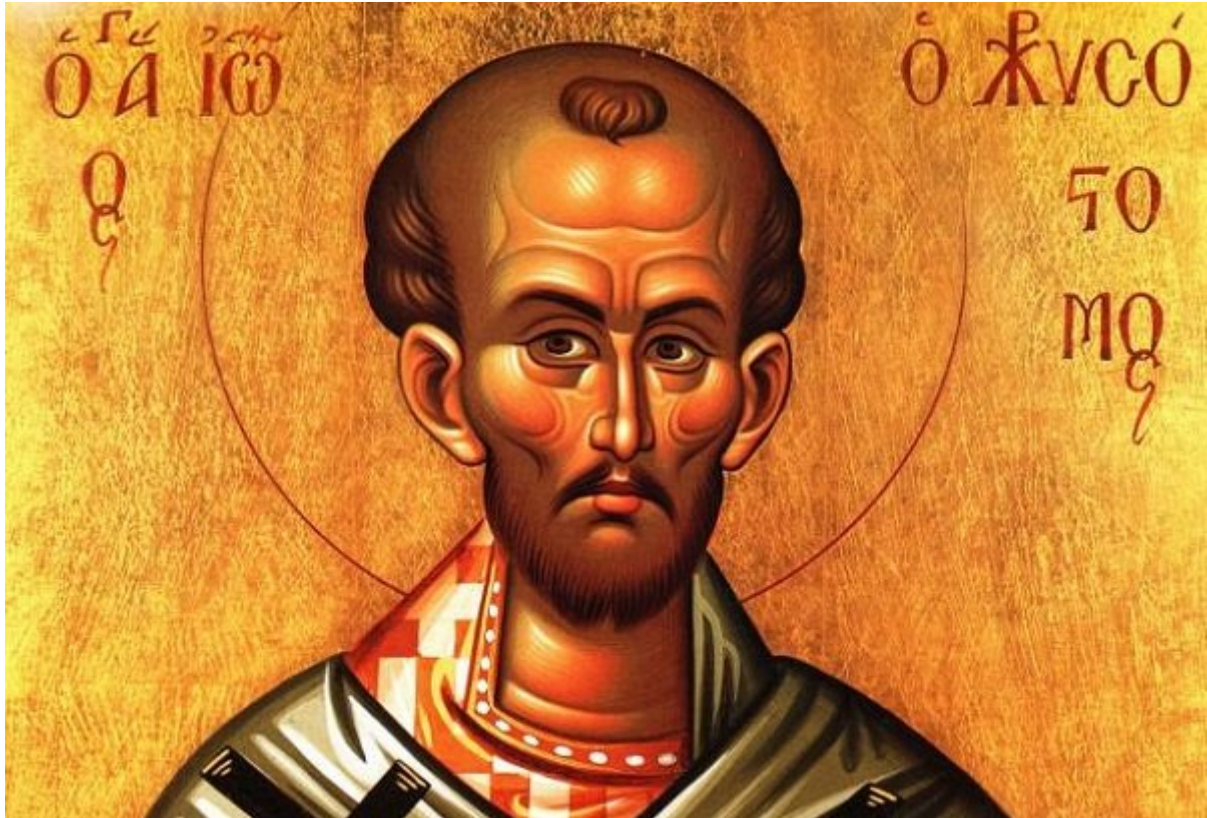


Galatians 6, 11-18 - St. John Chrysostom's Commentary (Part 1) (Saint John Chrysostom)

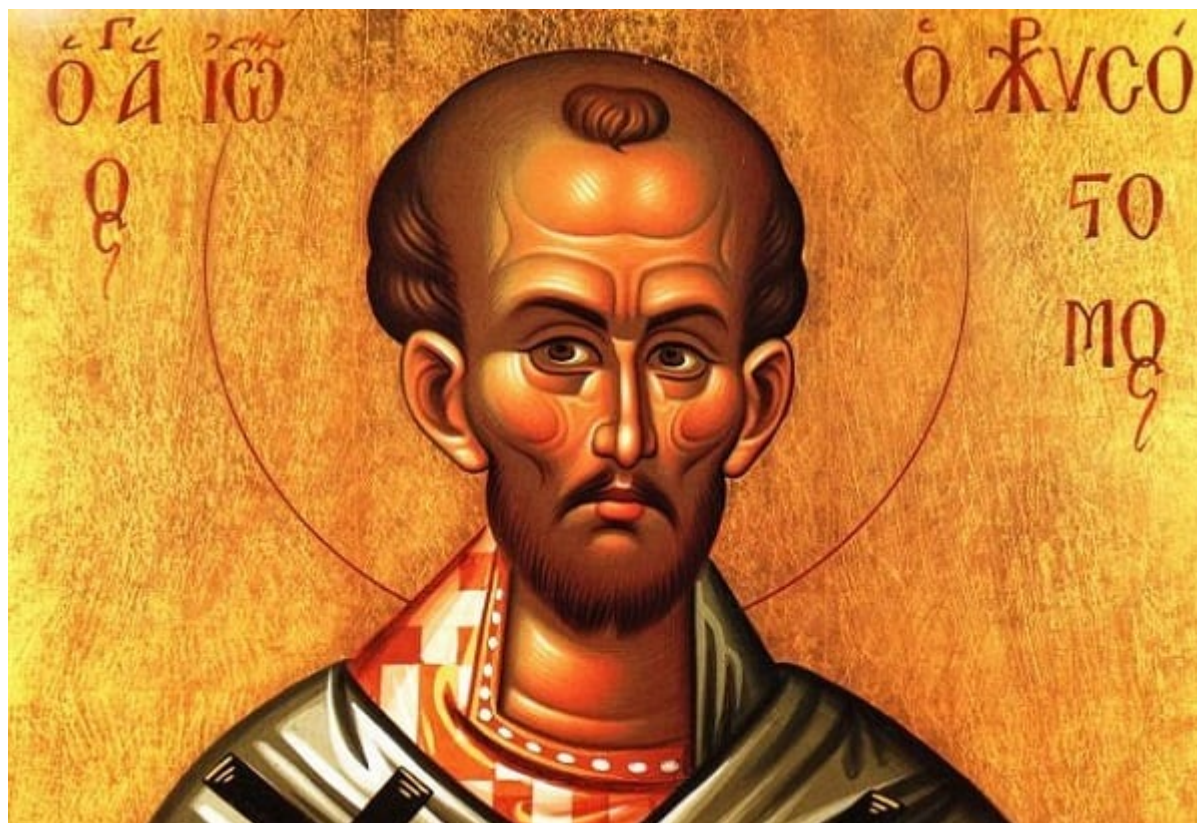
[Ξένες γλώσσες / In English](#)



Ver. 11, 12. See what large letters I use as I write to you with my own hand. Those who want to impress people by means of the flesh are trying to compel you to be circumcised.

Feel the pain that possesses his blessed soul. Just as those who have fallen into some sorrow, who have lost a true friend, or are undergoing something unexpected, rest neither by night nor day, because of the grief besieging their soul, so the blessed Paul, after a short moral discourse, returns to the subject which had first occupied his mind, saying: 'See what large letters I use as I write to you with my own hand'. By this he means that he actually wrote the whole letter himself, which was a sign of its authenticity. In his other Epistles, he himself only dictated, another wrote the words down, as can be seen from the Epistle to the Romans, where, at its close, it says, 'I, Tertius, who am writing the Epistle down, salute you' (Romans 16:22). But in this instance he wrote everything himself. And he did so by necessity, not just out of love, but in order to prevent any aspersion being cast,

because he'd been charged with things he had no part in and was reported to be actually preaching circumcision and only pretending not to. This is why he was compelled to write the Epistle with his own hand, thus staving off attack by providing a written testimony. By 'what large letters', it seems to me that he means not so much how big they are but rather how misshapen, as if he were saying: 'Although my writing isn't of the best, I've been forced to write with my own hand to stop the mouths of those who are traducing me'.



Ver. 12, 13. Those who want to impress people by means of the flesh are trying to compel you to be circumcised. The only reason they do this is to avoid being persecuted for the cross of Christ. Not even those who are circumcised keep the law, yet they want you to be circumcised, so that they may boast about your circumcision in the flesh.

Here he indicates that they undergo this, not willingly but out of necessity. He provides them with an opportunity to withdraw, almost speaking in their defence, and urging them to beat a hasty retreat. What does 'to impress people by means of the flesh' mean? It means, 'by other people'. He says that they were reviled by the Jews for deserting the customs of their fathers. Therefore they desire to injure you, so that they can answer to the Jews through your flesh. He says this in order to demonstrate that they weren't doing this for God. It's as if he were saying, 'This business has nothing to do with piety, it's all about human pretensions. Unbelievers wish to please other people and so are gratified by the mutilation of the faithful and

thus choose to offend God'. Because this is the meaning of 'to impress people by means of the flesh'. Then, as proof that there's another reason why they won't be forgiven, he again castigates them because it wasn't only in order to please others that they ordained this, but out of their own vainglory. This is why he concludes that they may boast in your flesh, as if they had disciples and were teachers. And what's the evidence for this? That they themselves, he says, don't keep the Law. And even if they did keep it, they'd deserve censure; but as things stand their purpose is dishonest.

Ver. 14. But let me not glory, except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ

This is certainly thought to be shameful by the world's reckoning and by unbelievers; in Heaven, though, and among the faithful it's the highest glory. Poverty's shameful as well, but we boast in it; and being ridiculed is a laughing matter to them, whereas we're proud of it. So, too, is the Cross our boast. He doesn't say, 'I don't boast', nor, 'I won't boast', but, 'Let me not' as if he considered it absurd to do so, and was invoking God's assistance to stop him from boasting. And what is the boast of the Cross? That Christ, for my sake, assumed the form of a slave, and bore His sufferings for me, a slave, an enemy, an ungrateful person. Indeed, He loved me so much that He gave Himself for me. What can compare to this? If servants who receive nothing but praise from their masters, to whom they're alike by nature, think this is a great thing, how can we not boast when the Master, God Himself, isn't ashamed of the Cross He endured for us. We should never be ashamed of His unutterable protection. He wasn't ashamed to be crucified for your sake, and will you then be ashamed to confess His infinite solicitude? It's as if a king went to a prison and himself loosed the chains of a prisoner who, until then, hadn't been ashamed of the king, but, after that, suddenly became ashamed of him. This would be the height of madness, since the prisoner should have been proud of the king's action.

Ver. 14. through which the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world

What he calls 'the world' here isn't heaven nor the earth, but the affairs of life, the praise of men, hangers-on, glory, wealth, and everything else that's thought to be impressive. 'To me these things have become dead'. That's how Christians should always be and that's what they should say. Not content with the first 'death', he added another, saying, 'and I to the world', implying a double 'death', and saying, 'They're dead to me, and I to them. They don't attract or overwhelm me, as they're dead once for all. Nor do I desire them, since I'm dead to them as well'. Nothing can be more blessed than this mortification, because it's the whole substance of the blessed life.