

**349 BC**

**THE THIRD OLYNTHIAC ORATION**

**Demosthenes**

**translated by Thomas Leland, D.D.**

**Notes and Introduction by Thomas Leland, D.D.**

**Demosthenes (383-322 BC) - Athenian statesman and the most famous of Greek orators. He was leader of a patriotic party opposing Philip of Macedon.**

**The Third Olynthiac Oration (349 BC) - The third in a series of speeches which, like the "Philippics," oppose Philip of Macedon. The "Olynthiac Orations" condemn Philip's attack on the state of Olynthus. These speeches, together with the "Philippics," are regarded as Demosthenes' best.**

## **THE THIRD OLYNTHIAC ORATION**

### **INTRODUCTION**

To the Third Olynthiac Oration The preceding oration (The Second Olynthiac Oration) had no further effect on the Athenians than to prevail on them to send orders to Charidemus, who commanded for them at the Hellespont, to make an attempt to relieve Olynthus. He accordingly led some forces into Chalcis, which, in conjunction with the forces of Olynthus, ravaged Pallene, a peninsula of Macedon, towards Thrace, and Bottia, a country on the confines of Chalcis, which, among other towns, contained Pella, the capital of Macedon.

But these attempts could not divert Philip from his resolution of reducing Olynthus, which he had now publicly avowed. The Olynthians, therefore, found it necessary to have once more recourse to Athens; and to request, that they would send troops, composed of citizens, animated with a sincere ardor for their interests, their own glory, and the common cause.

Demosthenes, in the following oration, insists on the importance of saving Olynthus; alarms his hearers with the apprehension of war, which actually threatened Attica, and even the capital; urges the necessity of personal service; and returns to his charge of the misapplication of the public money, but in such a manner as show that his former remonstrances had not the desired effect.

## THE THIRD OLYNTHIAC ORATION

**Pronounced in the year 349 B.C.**

I AM persuaded, Athenians, that you would account it less valuable to possess the greatest riches, \*(1) than to have the true interest of the state on this emergency clearly laid before you. It is your part, therefore, readily and cheerfully to attend to all who are disposed to offer their opinions: for your regards need not be confined to those whose counsels are the effect of premeditation: \*(2) it is your good fortune to have men among you who can at once suggest many points of moment. From opinions, therefore, of every kind, you may easily choose that most conducive to your interest.

And now, Athenians, the present juncture calls upon us; we almost hear its voice, declaring loudly that you yourselves must engage in these affairs, if you have the least attention to your own security. You entertain I know not what sentiments on this occasion. My opinion is, that the reinforcements should be instantly decreed; that they should be raised with all possible expedition; that so our succors may be sent from this city, and all former inconveniences be avoided; and that you should send ambassadors to notify these things, and to secure our interests by their presence. For as he is a man of consummate policy, complete in the art of turning every incident to his own advantage, there is the utmost reason to fear, that partly by concessions, where they may be seasonable, partly by menaces (and his menaces may \*(3) be believed), and partly by rendering us and our absence suspected, he may tear from us something of the last importance, and force it into his own service.

Those very circumstances, however, which contributed to the power of Philip are happily the most favorable to us: for that uncontrolled command, with which he governs all transactions public and secret; his entire direction of his army, as their leader, their sovereign, and their treasurer; and his diligence, in giving life to every part of it by his presence; these things greatly contribute to carrying on a war with expedition and success, but are powerful obstacles to that accommodation which he would gladly make with the Olynthians. For the Olynthians see plainly that they do not now fight for glory, or for part of their territory, but to defend their state from dissolution and slavery. They know how he rewarded those traitors of Amphipolis who made him master of that city, and those of Pydna who opened their gates to him. In a word, free states, I think, must ever look with suspicion on an absolute monarchy; but a neighboring monarchy must double their apprehensions.

Convinced of what hath now been offered, and possessed with every other just and worthy sentiment, you must be resolved, Athenians, you must exert your spirit; you must apply to the war now, if ever; your fortunes, your persons, your whole powers, are now demanded. There is no excuse, no pretence left for declining the performance of your duty: for that which you were all ever urging loudly, that the Olynthians should be engaged in a war with Philip, hath now happened of itself; and this in a manner most agreeable to our interest. For, if they had entered into this war at our persuasion, they must have been precarious allies, without steadiness or resolution: but, as their private injuries have made them enemies to Philip, it is probable that enmity will be lasting, both on account of what they fear, and what they have already suffered. My countrymen! let not so favorable an opportunity escape you: do not repeat that error which hath been so often fatal to you. For when, at our return from assisting the Euboeans, \*(4) Hierax and Stratocles, citizens of Amphipolis, mounted this gallery, \*(5) and pressed you to

send out your navy, and to take their city under your protection, had we discovered that resolution in our own cause which we exerted for the safety of Euboea, then had Amphipolis been yours, and all those difficulties had been avoided in which you have been since involved. Again, when we received advice of the sieges of Pydna, Potidaea, Methone, Pagasae, and other places (for I would not detain you with a particular recital), had we ourselves marched with a due spirit and alacrity to the relief of the first of these cities, we should now find much more compliance, much more humility in Philip. But by still neglecting the present, and imagining our future interests will not demand our care, we have aggrandized our enemy, we have raised him to a degree of eminence greater than any king of Macedon hath ever yet enjoyed. Now, we have another opportunity- that which the Olynthians of themselves present to the state; one no less considerable than any of the former.

And, in my opinion, Athenians, if a man were to bring the dealings of the gods towards us to a fair account, though many things might appear not quite agreeable to our wishes, yet he would acknowledge that we had been highly favored by them; and with great reason: for that many places have been lost in the course of war is truly to be charged to our own weak conduct. But that the difficulties arisen from hence have not long affected us; and that an alliance now presents itself to remove them, if we are disposed to make the just use of it; this I cannot but ascribe to the divine goodness. But the same thing happens in this case as in the use of riches. If a man be careful to save those he hath acquired, he readily acknowledges the kindness of fortune; but if by his imprudence they be once lost, with them he also loses the sense of gratitude. So in political affairs, they who neglect to improve their opportunities, forget the favors which the gods have bestowed; for it is the ultimate event which generally determines men's judgment of everything precedent: and, therefore, all affairs hereafter should engage your strictest care; that, by correcting our errors, we may wipe off the inglorious stain of past actions. But should we be deaf to these men too, and should he be suffered to subvert Olynthus; say, what can prevent him from marching his forces into whatever territory he pleases? Is there not a man among you, Athenians, who reflects by what steps Philip, from a beginning so inconsiderable, hath mounted to this height of power? First, he took Amphipolis; then he became master of Pydna; then Potidaea fell; then Methone; then came his inroad into Thessaly: after this, having disposed affairs at Pherae, at Pagasae, at Magnesia, entirely as he pleased, he marched into Thrace.

Here, while engaged \*(6) in expelling some, and establishing other princes, he fell sick. Again recovering, he never turned a moment from his course to ease or indulgence, but instantly attacked the Olynthians. His expeditions against the Illyrians, the Paeonians, against Arymbas, \*(7) I pass all over. But I may be asked, why this recital now? That you may know and see your own error, in ever neglecting some part of your affairs, as if beneath your regard; and that active spirit with which Philip pursues his designs; which ever fires him, and which never can permit him to rest satisfied with those things he hath already accomplished. If, then, he determines firmly and invariably to pursue his conquests; and if we are obstinately resolved against every vigorous and effectual measure; think, what consequences may we expect! In the name of Heaven! can any man be so weak, as not to know that, by neglecting this war, we are transferring it from that country to our own? And should this happen, I fear, Athenians, that as they who inconsiderately borrow money on high interest, after a short-lived affluence are deprived of their own fortunes; so we, by this continued indolence, by consulting only our ease and pleasure, may be reduced to the grievous necessity of engaging in affairs the most shocking and disagreeable, and of exposing ourselves in the defence of this our native territory.

To censure, someone may tell me, is easy, and in the power of every man: but the true counsellor should point out that conduct which the present exigence demands. Sensible as I am, Athenians, that when your expectations have in any instance been disappointed, your resentment frequently falls not on those who merit it, but on him who hath spoken last; yet I cannot, from a regard to my own safety, suppress what I deem of moment to lay before you. I say, then, this occasion calls for a twofold armament. First, we are to defend the cities of the Olynthians; and for this purpose to detach a body of forces: in the next place, in order to infest his kingdom, we are to send out our navy manned with other levies. If you neglect either of these, I fear your expedition will be fruitless: for, if you content yourselves with infesting his dominions, this he will endure, until he is master of Olynthus; and then he can with ease repel the invasion: or, if you only send succors to the Olynthians, when he sees his own kingdom free from danger, he will apply with constancy and vigilance to the war, and at length weary out the besieged to a submission. Your levies, therefore, must be considerable enough to serve both purposes. These are my sentiments with respect to our armament.

And now as to the expense of these preparations. You are already provided for the payment of your forces better than any other people. This provision is distributed among yourselves in the manner most agreeable; but if you restore it to the army, the supplies will be complete without any addition; if not, an addition will be necessary; or the whole, rather, will remain to be raised. How then? (I may be asked) do you move for a decree to apply those funds to the military service? By no means. It is my opinion, indeed, that an army must be raised; that this money really belongs to the army; and that the same regulation which entitles our citizens to receive should oblige them also to act. At present you expend the sums on entertainments, without regard to your affairs. It remains then that a general contribution be raised: a great one, if a great one be required: a small one, if such may be sufficient. Money must be found: without it nothing can be effected. Various schemes are proposed by various persons: do you make that choice which you think most advantageous; and, while you have an opportunity, exert yourselves in the care of your interests.

It is worthy \*(8) your attention to consider how the affairs of Philip are at this time circumstanced; for they are by no means so well disposed, so very flourishing, as an inattentive observer would pronounce. Nor would he have engaged in this war at all had he thought he should have been obliged to maintain it. He hoped that the moment he appeared all things would fall before him. But these hopes were vain; and this disappointment, in the first place, troubles and dispirits him. Then the Thessalians alarm him; a people remarkable for their perfidy \*(9) on all occasions, and to all persons; and just as they have ever proved, even so he finds them now. For they have resolved in council to demand the restitution of Pagasae, and have opposed his attempt to fortify Magnesia: and I am informed, that for the future he is to be excluded from their ports and markets, as these conveniences belong to the states of Thessaly, and are not to be intercepted by Philip.

And, should he be deprived of such a fund of wealth, he must be greatly straitened to support his foreign troops. Besides this, we must suppose that the Paeonian and the Illyrian, and all the others, would prefer freedom and independence to a state of slavery. They are not accustomed to subjection; and the insolence of this man, it is said, knows no bounds: nor is this improbable; for great and unexpected success is apt to hurry weak minds into extravagances. Hence it often proves much more difficult to maintain acquisitions than to acquire. It is your part, therefore, to regard the time of his distress as your most favorable opportunity; improve it to the utmost; send out your embassies; take the field yourselves, and excite a general ardor abroad; ever considering how readily Philip would attack us, if he were favored by any incident like this- if a war had

broken out on our borders. And would it not be shameful to want the resolution to bring that distress on him which, had it been equally in his power, he certainly would have made you feel? This too demands your attention, Athenians, that you are now to determine whether it be most expedient to carry the war into his country, or to fight him here. If Olynthus be defended, Macedon will be the seat of war: you may harass his kingdom, and enjoy your own territories free from apprehensions. But should that nation be subdued by Philip, who will oppose his marching hither? Will the Thebans? Let it not be thought severe when I affirm that they will join readily in the invasion. \*(10) Will the Phocians? a people scarcely able \*(11) to defend their own country without your assistance. Will any others? \*(12) But, sir, cries someone, he would make no such attempt. This would be the greatest absurdities; not to execute those threats, when he hath full power, which now, when they appear so idle and extravagant, he yet dares to utter. And I think you are not yet to learn how great would be the difference between our engaging him here and there.

Were we to be only thirty days abroad, and to draw all the necessaries of the camp from our own lands, even were there no enemy to ravage them, the damage would, in my opinion, amount to more than the whole expense of the late war.

\*(13) Add then the presence of an enemy, and how greatly must the calamity be increased! But, farther, add the infamy; and to those who judge rightly, no distress can be more grievous than the scandal of misconduct.

It is incumbent, therefore, on us all (justly influenced by these considerations) to unite vigorously in the common cause, and repel the danger that threatens this territory. Let the rich exert themselves on this occasion; that by contributing a small portion of their affluence, they may secure the peaceful possession of the rest. Let those who are of the age of military duty; that, by learning the art of war in Philip's dominions, they may become formidable defenders of their native land. Let our orators; that they may safely submit their conduct to the public inspection: for your judgment of their administrations will ever be determined by the event of things. And may we all contribute to render that favorable!

## NOTES

### To the Third Olynthiac Oration

\*(1) Ulpian finds out a particular propriety in this exordium. He observes, that, as the orator intends to recommend to them to give up their theatrical appointments, he prepares them for it by this observation; and while he is endeavoring to persuade them to a just disregard of money, appears as if he only spoke their sentiments.

\*(2) M. Turreil admires the greatness of mind of Demosthenes, who, though he gloried in the pains and labors his orations cost him, was yet superior to that low and malignant passion which oftentimes prompts us to decry those talents which we do not possess. I suspect, however, that this passage was occasioned by some particular circumstance in the debate. Perhaps some speaker, who opposed Demosthenes, might have urged his opinion somewhat dogmatically, as the result of mature reflection and deliberation.

\*(3) Although his promises could by no means be relied on.

\*(4) This refers to the expedition in favor of the Euboeans against the Thebans. The Athenians prepared for this expedition in three days, according to Demosthenes; in five, according to Aeschines: and their success was as sudden as their preparation.

\*(5) In the original, touti to BEMA; that eminence where all the public speakers were placed, and from whence the people were addressed on all occasions.

\*(6) Thrace was inhabited by an infinite number of different peoples, whose names Herodotus has transmitted. And he observes, that could they have united under a single chief, or connected themselves by interest or sentiment, they would have formed a body infinitely superior to all their neighbors. After Teres, the Thracians had diverse kings. This prince had two sons, Sitalces and Sparadocus, among whose descendants various contests arose, till, after a series of usurpations and revolutions, Seuthes recovered part of the territory of his father Maesades, and transmitted the succession peaceably to Cotis the father of Cersobleptes (as Demosthenes says; not his brother, as Diodorus). At the death of Cotis the divisions recommenced, and in the place of one king Thrace had three, Cersobleptes, Berisades, and Amadocus. Cersobleptes dispossessed the other two, and was himself dethroned by Philip. Frontinus reports, that Alexander, when he had conquered Thrace, brought the princes of that country with him in his expedition into Asia, to prevent their raising any commotions in his absence; a proof that Philip and Alexander had established several petty kings in Thrace, who were vassals to Macedon.

\*(7) He was the son of Alcetas, King of Epirus, and brother to Neoptolemus, whose daughter Olympias Philip married. About three years before the date of this oration the death of their father produced a dispute between the brothers about the succession. Arymbas was the lawful heir; yet Philip obliged him, by force of arms, to divide the kingdom with Neoptolemus: and not contented with this, at the death of Arymbas, he found means by his intrigues and menaces, to prevail on the Epirots to banish his son, and to constitute Alexander, the son of Neoptolemus, sole monarch.

\*(8) Hitherto the orator has painted Philip in all his terrors. He is politic, and vigilant, and intrepid: he has risen gradually to the highest pitch of power; and is now ready to appear before the walls of Athens, if he is not instantly opposed: but, lest this description should dispirit the Athenians, he is now represented in a quite different manner. His power is by no means real and solid; his allies are prepared to revolt; his kingdom is threatened with war and desolation; and he is just ready to be crushed by the



very first effort that is made to distress him: but as it was necessary that the danger to which they were exposed should make the deepest impression on the minds of his hearers, he returns to his former description, and concludes with the dreadful image of a formidable enemy ravaging their territory, and shutting them up within their walls.

\*(9) This people had a bad character from the earliest times, so as to become even proverbial; and Greece, and Athens particularly, had experienced their want of faith on very important occasions. They invited Xerxes into Greece, and were not ashamed to join Mardonius after the battle of Salamis, and to serve him as guides in his invasion of Attica; and in the heat of a battle between Athens and Sparta, they on a sudden deserted their allies, the Athenians, and joined the enemy.

\*(10) The reasons of Thebes's hatred to Athens have been already assigned.

\*(11) The Phocians were at this time reduced to a very low state, by a continued series of ill-success in the Sacred War. Philomelus and Onomarchus had perished; Phayllus and Phalecus, their successors, had been frequently defeated; and the Thebans were continually gaining advantages over them.

\*(12) He avoids all mention of the Thessalians; because he had just shown that they were ill-affected to Philip, and therefore might be supposed willing to join with the Athenians.

\*(13) That is, their expedition into Thrace, in order to recover Amphipolis, which, according to the calculation of Aeschines, cost them one thousand five hundred talents.

#### **THE END OF THE THIRD OLYNTHIAC ORATION**