

1 Corinthians 1:1-3

by St. John Chrysostom

The sermon emphasizes the importance of humility and lowliness of mind in finding grace with God and achieving spiritual growth.

Scripture: James 4:6

Topics: "Humility And Grace", "Church Unity"

Description

John Chrysostom preaches about the humility and grace found in being called by God, emphasizing that salvation and sanctification come through God's will and not by our own merit. He highlights the importance of unity in the Church of God, reminding believers to be humble and to call upon the name of the Lord Jesus Christ in every place. Chrysostom urges the congregation to seek grace from God rather than from worldly sources, emphasizing that true peace and exaltation come through humility and a focus on heavenly rewards rather than earthly desires.

Transcript

Paul, called to be an Apostle of Jesus Christ, through the will of God, and Sosthenes our brother, unto the Church of God which is at Corinth, even them that are sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be Saints, with all that call upon the name of our Lord Jesus Christ in every place, their Lord and ours: Grace unto you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

1. See how immediately, from the very beginning, he casts down their pride, and dashes to the ground all their fond imagination, in that he speaks of himself as called. For what I have learned, says he, I discovered not myself, nor acquired by my own wisdom, but while I was persecuting and laying waste the Church I was called. Now here of Him that calls is everything: of him that is called, nothing, (so to speak,) but only to obey.

Of Jesus Christ. Your teacher is Christ; and do you register the names of men, as patrons of your doctrine?

Through the will of God. For it was God who willed that you should be saved in this way. We ourselves have wrought no good thing, but by the will of God we have attained to this salvation; and because it seemed good to him, we were called, not because we were worthy.

And Sosthenes our brother. Another instance of his modesty; he puts in the same rank with himself one inferior to Apollos; for great was the interval between Paul and Sosthenes. Now if where the interval was so wide he stations with himself one far beneath him, what can they have to say who despise their equals?

Unto the Church of God. Not of this or of that man, but of God.

Which is at Corinth. Do you see how at each word he puts down their swelling pride; training their thoughts in every way for heaven? He calls it, too, the Church of God; showing that it ought to be united. For if it be of God, it is united, and it is one, not in Corinth only, but also in all the world: for the Church's name (ἐκκλησία) properly an assembly) is not a name of separation, but of unity and concord.

To the sanctified in Christ Jesus. Again the name of Jesus; the names of men he finds no place for. But what is Sanctification? The Laver, the Purification. For he reminds them of their own uncleanness, from which he had freed them; and so persuades them to lowliness of mind; for not by their own good deeds, but by the loving-kindness of God, had they been sanctified.

Called to be Saints. For even this, to be saved by faith, is not says he, of yourselves; for you did not first draw near, but were called; so that not even this small matter is yours altogether. However, though you had drawn near, accountable as you are for innumerable wickednesses, not even so would the grace be yours, but God's. Hence also, writing to the Ephesians, he said, Ephesians 2:8 By grace have you been saved through faith, and this not of yourselves; not even the faith is yours altogether; for you were not first with your belief, but obeyed a call.

With all who call upon the Name of our Lord Jesus Christ. Not of this or that man, but the Name of the Lord.

2. In every place, both theirs and ours. For although the letter be written to the Corinthians only, yet he makes mention of all the faithful that are in all the earth; showing that the Church throughout the world must be one, however separate in various places; and much more, that in Corinth. And though the place separate, the Lord binds them together, being common to all. Wherefore also uniting them he adds, both theirs and ours. And this is far more powerful [to unite], than the other [to separate]. For as men in one place, having many and contrary masters, become distracted, and their one place helps them not to be of one mind, their masters giving orders at variance with each other, and drawing each their own way, according to what Christ says, Matthew 6:24 You cannot serve God and Mammon; so those in different places, if they have not different lords but one only, are not by the places injured in respect of unanimity, the One Lord binding them together. I say not then, (so he speaks,) that with Corinthians only, you being Corinthians ought to be of one mind, but with all that are in the whole world, inasmuch as you have a common Master. This is also why he has a second time added our; for since he had said, the Name of Jesus Christ our Lord, lest he should appear to the inconsiderate to be making a distinction, he subjoins again, both our Lord and theirs.

3. That my meaning may be clearer, I will read it according to its sense thus: Paul and Sosthenes to the Church of God which is in Corinth and to all who call upon the Name of Him who is both our Lord and theirs in every place, whether in Rome or wheresoever else they may be: grace unto you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

Or again thus; which I also believe to be rather more correct: Paul and Sosthenes to those that are at Corinth, who have been sanctified, called to be Saints, together with all who call upon the Name of our Lord Jesus Christ in place, both theirs and ours; that is to say, grace unto you, and peace unto you, who are at Corinth, who have been sanctified and called; not to you alone, but with all who in every place call upon the Name of Jesus Christ, our Lord and theirs.

Now if our peace be of grace, why have you high thoughts? Why are You so puffed up, being saved by grace? And if you have peace with God, why wish to assign yourself to others? Since this is what separation comes to. For what if you be at peace with this man, and with the other even find grace? My prayer is that both these may be yours from God; both from Him I say, and towards Him. For neither do they abide (1½1½1½1½1, Savile in marg.) secure except they enjoy the influence from above; nor unless God be their object will they anything avail you: for it profits us nothing, though we be peaceful towards all men, if we be at war with God; even as it is no harm to us, although by all men we are held as enemies, if with God we are at peace. And again it is no gain to us, if all men approve, and the Lord be offended; neither is there any danger, though all shun and hate us, if with God we have acceptance and love. For that which is verily grace, and verily peace, comes of God, since he who finds grace in God's sight, though he suffer ten thousand horrors, fears no one; I say not only, no man, but not even the devil himself; but he that has offended God suspects all men, though he seem to be in security. For human nature is unstable, and not friends only and brethren, but fathers also, before now, have been altogether changed and often for a little thing he whom they begot, the branch of their planting, has been to them, more than all foes, an object of persecution. Children, too, have cast off their fathers. Thus, if you will mark it, David was in favor with God, Absalom was in favor with men. What was the end of each, and which of them gained most honor, you know. Abraham was in favor with God, Pharaoh with men; for to gratify him they gave up the just man's wife. See St. John Chrysostom on Genesis 12:17 Which then of the two was the more illustrious, and the happy man? Every one knows. And why speak I of righteous men; The Israelites were in favor with God, but they were hated by men, the Egyptians; but nevertheless they prevailed against their haters and vanquished them, with how great triumph, is well known to you all.

For this, therefore, let all of us labor earnestly; whether one be a slave, let him pray for this, that he may find grace with God rather than with his master; or a wife, let her seek grace from God her Saviour rather than from her husband; or a soldier, in preference to his king and commander let him seek that favor which comes from above. For thus among men also will you be an object of love.

4. But how shall a man find grace with God? How else, except by lowliness of mind? For God, says one, James 4:6 resists the proud, but gives grace unto the humble; and, Psalm 51:17. 1½1½1½1½1 the sacrifice of God is a broken spirit, and a heart that is brought low God will not despise. For if with men humility is so lovely, much more with God. Thus both they of the Gentiles found grace and the Jews no other way fell from grace; Romans 10:13 for they were not subject unto the righteousness of God.

The lowly man of whom I am speaking, is pleasing and delightful to all men, and dwells in continual peace, and has in him no ground for contentions. For though you insult him, though you abuse him, whatsoever you say, he will be silent and will bear it meekly, and will have so great peace towards all men as one cannot even describe. Yea, and with God also. For the commandments of God are to be at peace with men: and thus our whole life is made prosperous, through peace one with another.

For no man can injure God: His nature is imperishable, and above all suffering. Nothing makes the Christian so admirable as lowliness of mind. Hear, for instance, Abraham saying, Genesis 18:27 But I am

wants none of these things, but despises them, and has his greatness from himself. Let us therefore become humble that we may become exalted; Luke 14:11 For he that humbles himself shall be exalted. Now the self-willed man is not such as this; rather he is of all characters the most ordinary. For the bubble, too, is inflated, but the inflation is not sound; wherefore we call these persons puffed up. Whereas the sober-minded man has no high thoughts, not even in high fortunes, knowing his own low estate; but the vulgar even in his trifling concerns indulges a proud fancy.

6. Let us then acquire that height which comes by humility. Let us look into the nature of human things, that we may kindle with the longing desire of the things to come; for in no other way is it possible to become humble, except by the love of what is divine and the contempt of what is present. For just as a man on the point of obtaining a kingdom, if instead of that purple robe one offer him some trivial compliment, will count it to be nothing; so shall we also laugh to scorn all things present, if we desire that other sort of honor. Do you not see the children, when in their play they make a band of soldiers, and heralds precede them and lictors, and a boy marches in the midst in the general's place, how childish it all is? Just such are all human affairs; yea and more worthless than these: today they are, and tomorrow they are not. Let us therefore be above these things; and let us not only not desire them, but even be ashamed if any one hold them forth to us. For thus, casting out the love of these things, we shall possess that other love which is divine, and shall enjoy immortal glory. Which may God grant us all to obtain, through the grace and loving-kindness of our Lord Jesus Christ; with whom be to the Father, together with the holy and good Spirit, the glory and the power for ever and ever. Amen.

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