

1 Timothy 1:18, 19

by St. John Chrysostom

St. John Chrysostom emphasizes the importance of faith, conscience, and humility in our spiritual lives, and warns against the dangers of neglecting our spiritual responsibilities.

Scripture: 1 Timothy 4:14

Topics: "Divine Election", "Spiritual Warfare"

Description

John Chrysostom emphasizes the divine election and dignity of the office of a Teacher and Priest, highlighting the importance of being chosen by God and not by human considerations. He stresses the need for strong faith, good conscience, and obedience to God's calling, warning against neglecting the gifts and responsibilities given by God. Chrysostom urges Timothy to 'war a good warfare' by maintaining faith and a good conscience, emphasizing the spiritual battle and the necessity for continual vigilance and preparation for conflicts. He also addresses the consequences of turning away from faith, using examples like Hymenaeus and Alexander who made shipwreck concerning the faith, and explains the concept of delivering someone to Satan for instruction and correction.

Transcript

This charge I commit unto you, son [my child, ἱερωτάτου] Timothy, according to the prophecies which went before on you, that you by them might [may] war a good warfare; holding faith, and a good conscience; which some having put away have made shipwreck concerning the faith.

The office of a Teacher and that of a Priest is of great dignity, and to bring forward one that is worthy requires a divine election. So it was of old, and so it is now, when we make a choice without human passion, not looking to any temporal consideration, swayed neither by friendship, nor enmity. For though we be not partakers of so great a measure of the Spirit as they, yet a good purpose is sufficient to draw unto us the election of God. For the Apostles, when they elected Matthias, had not yet received the Holy Spirit, but having committed the matter to prayer, they chose him into the number of the Apostles. For they looked not to human friendships. And so now too it ought to be with us. But we have advanced to the extreme of negligence; and even what is clearly evident, we let pass. Now when we overlook what is manifest, how will God reveal to us what is unseen? As it is said, If you have not been faithful in that which is little, who will commit to you that which is great and true? Luke 16:11 But then, when nothing human was done, the appointment of Priests too was by prophecy. What is by prophecy? By the Holy Spirit. For prophecy is not only the telling of things future, but also of the present. It was by prophecy that Saul was

discovered hidden among the stuff. 1 Samuel 10:22 For God reveals things to the righteous. So it was said by prophecy, Separate me Barnabas and Saul. Acts 13:2 In this way Timothy also was chosen, concerning whom he speaks of prophecies in the plural; that, perhaps, upon which he took and circumcised him, and when he ordained him, as he himself says in his Epistle to him, Neglect not the gift that is in you. 1 Timothy 4:14 Therefore to elevate him, and prepare him to be sober and watchful, he reminds him by whom he was chosen and ordained, as if he had said, God has chosen you. He gave you your commission, you were not made by human vote. Do not therefore abuse or bring into disgrace the appointment of God. When again he speaks of a charge, which implies something burdensome, he adds, This charge I commit to you, son Timothy. He charges him as his son, his own son, not so much with arbitrary or despotic authority as like a father, he says, my son Timothy. The committing, however, implies that it is to be diligently kept, and that it is not our own. For we did not obtain it for ourselves, but God conferred it upon us; and not it only, but also faith and a good conscience. What He has given us then, let us keep. For if He had not come, the faith had not been to be found, nor that pure life which we learn by education. As if he had said, It is not I that charge you, but He who chose you, and this is meant by the prophecies that went before on you. Listen to them, obey them.

And say; what do you charge? That by them you should war a good warfare. They chose you, that then for which they chose you do thou, war a good warfare. He named a good warfare, since there is a bad warfare, of which he says, As you have yielded your members instruments to uncleanness and to iniquity. Romans 6:19 Those men serve under a tyrant, but you serve under a King. And why calls he it a warfare? To show how mighty a contest is to be maintained by all, but especially by a Teacher; that we require strong arms, and sobriety, and awakenedness, and continual vigilance: that we must prepare ourselves for blood and conflicts, must be in battle array, and have nothing relaxed. That you should war in them, he says. For as in an army all do not serve in the same capacity, but in their different stations; so also in the Church one has the office of a Teacher, another that of a disciple, another that of a private man. But you are in this. And, because this is not sufficient he adds,

Ver. 19. Holding faith, and a good conscience.

For he that would be a Teacher must first teach himself. For as he who has not first been a good soldier, will never be a general, so it is with the Teacher; wherefore he says elsewhere, Lest when I have preached to others, I myself should be a cast-away. 1 Corinthians 9:27 Holding faith, he says, and a good conscience, that so you may preside over others. When we hear this, let us not disdain the exhortations of our superiors, though we be Teachers. For if Timothy, to whom all of us together are not worthy to be compared, receives commands and is instructed, and that being himself in the Teacher's office, much more should we. Which some having put away, have made shipwreck concerning the faith. And this follows naturally. For when the life is corrupt, it engenders a doctrine congenial to it, and from this circumstance many are seen to fall into a gulf of evil, and to turn aside into Heathenism. For that they may not be tormented with the fear of futurity, they endeavor to persuade their souls, that what we preach is false. And some turn aside from the faith, who seek out everything by reasoning; for reasoning produces shipwreck, while faith is as a safe ship.

They then who turn aside from the faith must suffer shipwreck; and this he shows by an example.

Ver. 20. Of whom are Hymenæus and Alexander.

And from them he would instruct us. You see how even from those times there have been seducing Teachers, curious enquirers, and men holding off from the faith, and searching out by their own reasonings. As the shipwrecked man is naked and destitute of all things, so is he that falls away from the faith without resource, he knows not where to stand or where to stay himself, nor has he the advantage of a good life so as to gain anything from that quarter. For when the head is disordered, what avails the rest of the body? And if faith without a good life is unavailing, much more is the converse true. If God despises His own for our sakes, much more ought we to despise our own for His sake. For so it is, where any one falls away from the faith, he has no steadiness, he swims this way and that, till at last he is lost in the deep.

Whom I delivered to Satan, that they might be taught not to blaspheme! Thus it is blasphemy to search into divine things by our own reasonings. For what have human reasonings in common with them? But how does Satan instruct them not to blaspheme? Can he instruct others, who has not yet taught himself, but is a blasphemer still? It is not that he should instruct, but that they should be instructed. It is not he that does it, though such is the result. As elsewhere he says in the case of the fornicator: To deliver such an one to Satan for the destruction of the flesh.

Not that he may save the body, but that the spirit may be saved. 1 Corinthians 5:5 Therefore it is spoken impersonally. How then is this effected? As executioners, though themselves laden with numberless crimes, are made the correctors of others; so it is here with the evil spirit. But why did you not punish them yourself, as you did that Bar-Jesus, and as Peter did Ananias, instead of delivering them to Satan? It was not that they might be punished, but that they might be instructed.

For that he had the power appears from other passages, What will you? Shall I come unto you with a rod? 1 Corinthians 4:21 And again, Lest I should use sharpness, according to the power which the Lord has given me to edification, and not to destruction. 2 Corinthians 13:10 Why did he then call upon Satan to punish them? That the disgrace might be greater, as the severity and the punishment was more striking. Or rather, they themselves chastised those who did not yet believe, but those who turned aside, they delivered to Satan.

Why then did Peter punish Ananias? Because while he was tempting the Holy Ghost, he was still an unbeliever. That the unbelieving therefore might learn that they could not escape, they themselves inflicted punishment upon them; but those who had learned this, yet afterwards turned aside, they delivered to Satan; showing that they were sustained not by their own power, but by their care for them; and as many as were lifted up into arrogance were delivered to him. For as kings with their own hands slay their enemies, but deliver their subjects to executioners for punishment, so it is in this case.

And these acts were done to show the authority committed to the Apostles. Nor was it a slight power, to be able thus to subject the devil to their commands. For this shows that he served and obeyed them even against his will, and this was no little proof of the power of grace. And listen how he delivered them: When you are gathered together, and my spirit, with the power of our Lord Jesus Christ, to deliver such an one unto Satan. 1 Corinthians 5:4 He was then immediately expelled from the common assembly, he was separated from the fold, he became deserted and destitute; he was delivered to the wolf.

For as the cloud designated the camp of the Hebrews, so the Spirit distinguished the Church. If any one therefore was without, he was consumed, and it was by the judgment of the Apostles that he was cast out of the pale. So also the Lord delivered Judas to Satan. For immediately after the sop Satan entered into

him. John 13:27 Or this may be said; that those whom they wished to amend, they did not themselves punish, but reserved their punishments for those who were incorrigible. Or otherwise, that they were the more dreaded for delivering them up to others. Job also was delivered to Satan, but not for his sins, but for fuller proof of his worth.

Many such instances still occur. For since the Priests cannot know who are sinners, and unworthy partakers of the holy Mysteries, God often in this way delivers them to Satan. For when diseases, and attacks, and sorrows, and calamities, and the like occur, it is on this account that they are inflicted. This is shown by Paul. For this cause many are weak and sickly among you, and many sleep. 1 Corinthians 11:30 But how? Says one, when we approach but once a year! But this is indeed the evil, that you determine the worthiness of your approach, not by the purity of your minds, but by the interval of time. You think it a proper caution not to communicate often; not considering that you are seared by partaking unworthily, though only once, but to receive worthily, though often, is salutary. It is not presumptuous to receive often, but to receive unworthily, though but once in a whole life. But we are so miserably foolish, that, though we commit numberless offenses in the course of a year, we are not anxious to be absolved from them, but are satisfied, that we do not often make bold impudently to insult the Body of Christ, not remembering that those who crucified Christ, crucified Him but once. Is the offense then the less, because committed but once? Judas betrayed his Master but once. What then, did that exempt him from punishment? Why indeed is time to be considered in this matter? Let our time of coming be when our conscience is pure. The Mystery at Easter is not of more efficacy than that which is now celebrated. It is one and the same. There is the same grace of the Spirit, it is always a Passover. You who are initiated know this. On the Preparation, on the Sabbath, on the Lord's day, and on the day of Martyrs, it is the same Sacrifice that is performed. For as often, he says, as you eat this bread and drink this cup, you do show the Lord's death. 1 Corinthians 11:26 No time is limited for the performance of this Sacrifice, why then is it then called the Paschal feast? Because Christ suffered for us then. Let not the time, therefore, make any difference in your approach. There is at all times the same power, the same dignity, the same grace, one and the same body; nor is one celebration of it more or less holy than another. And this you know, who see upon these occasions nothing new, save these worldly veils, and a more splendid attendance. The only thing that these days have more is that from them commenced the day of our salvation when Christ was sacrificed. But with respect to these mysteries, those days have no further pre-eminence.

When you approach to take bodily food, you wash your hands and your mouth, but when you draw near to this spiritual food, you do not cleanse your soul, but approach full of uncleanness. But you say, Are not the forty days' fastings sufficient to cleanse the huge heap of our sins? But of what use is it, tell me? If wishing to store up some precious ointment, you should make clean a place to receive it, and a little after having laid it up, should throw dung upon it, would not the fine odor vanish? This takes place with us too. We make ourselves to the best of our power worthy to approach; then we defile ourselves again! What then is the good of it? This we say even of those who are able in those forty days to wash themselves clean.

Let us then, I beseech you, not neglect our salvation, that our labor may not be in vain. For he who turns from his sins, and goes and commits the same again, is like a dog that returns to his vomit. Proverbs 26:11 But if we act as we ought, and take heed to our ways, we shall be thought worthy of those high rewards, which that we may all obtain, God grant through the grace and lovingkindness of our Lord Jesus Christ, with whom, etc.

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