

1 Timothy 2:2-4

by St. John Chrysostom

The sermon emphasizes the importance of praying for all men, living a life of godliness and honesty, and not being ashamed to pray for those who are not like us.

Scripture: Psalm 109:4

Topics: "Peaceful Living", "Christian Prayer"

Description

John Chrysostom emphasizes the importance of leading a quiet, peaceable life in godliness and honesty, highlighting the three grievous kinds of war: public, interpersonal, and internal. He stresses the need to end the internal war within oneself, as it poses the greatest danger. Chrysostom urges believers to pray for all, including kings, governors, Gentiles, and heretics, as God wills all to be saved and come to the knowledge of the truth. He explains the significance of Christ being the one Mediator between God and men, who gave Himself as a ransom for all, emphasizing the extension of grace to all nations.

Transcript

That we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty. For this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Saviour; who wills that all men should be saved, and come unto the knowledge of the truth.

If in order to put an end to public wars, and tumults, and battles, the Priest is exhorted to offer prayers for kings and governors, much more ought private individuals to do it. For there are three very grievous kinds of war. The one is public, when our soldiers are attacked by foreign armies: The second is, when even in time of peace, we are at war with one another: The third is, when the individual is at war with himself, which is the worst of all. For foreign war will not be able to hurt us greatly. What, I pray, though it slaughters and cuts us off? It injures not the soul. Neither will the second have power to harm us against our will; for though others be at war with us, we may be peaceable ourselves. For so says the Prophet, For my love they are my adversaries, but I give myself unto prayer Psalm 109:4; and again, I was at peace with them that hate peace; and, I am for peace; but when I speak, they are for war. Psalm 120:6-7, Septuagint But from the third, we cannot escape without danger. For when the body is at variance with the soul, and raises up evil desires, and arms against it sensual pleasures, or the bad passions of anger, and envy; we cannot attain the promised blessings, till this war is brought to an end; whoever does not still this tumult, must fall pierced by wounds that will bring that death that is in hell. We have daily need therefore of care and great anxiety, that this war may not be stirred up within us, or that, if stirred up, it may not last,

but be quelled and laid asleep. For what advantage is it, that the world enjoys profound peace, if you are at war with yourself? This then is the peace we should keep. If we have it, nothing from without will be able to harm us. And to this end the public peace contributes no little: whence it is said, That we may lead a quiet and peaceable life. But if any one is disturbed when there is quiet, he is a miserable creature. Do you see that He speaks of this peace which I call the third kind? Therefore when he has said, that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life, he does not stop there, but adds in all godliness and honesty. But we cannot live in godliness and honesty, unless that peace be established. For when curious reasonings disturb our faith, what peace is there? Or when spirits of uncleanness, what peace is there?

For that we may not suppose that he speaks of that sort of life which all men live, when he says, that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life, he adds, in all godliness and honesty, since a quiet and peaceable life may be led by heathens, and profligates, and voluptuous and wanton persons may be found living such a life. That this cannot be meant, is plain, from what he adds, in all godliness and honesty. Such a life is exposed to snares, and conflicts, and the soul is daily wounded by the tumults of its own thoughts. But what sort of life he really means is plain from the sequel, and plain too, in that he speaks not simply of godliness, but adds, of all godliness. For in saying this he seems to insist on a godliness not only of doctrine, but such as is supported by life, for in both surely must godliness be required. For of what advantage is it to be godly as to doctrine, but ungodly in life? And that it is very possible to be ungodly in life, hear this same blessed Apostle saying elsewhere, They profess that they know God, but in works they deny Him. Titus 1:16 And again, He has denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel. 1 Timothy 5:8 And, If any man that is called a brother be a fornicator, or covetous, or an idolater 1 Corinthians 5:11, such a man honors not God. And, He that hates his brother, knows not God. 1 John 2:9 Such are the various ways of ungodliness. Therefore he says, All godliness and good order. For not only is the fornicator not honest, but the covetous man may be called disorderly and intemperate. For avarice is a lust no less than the bodily appetites, which he who does not chastise, is called dissolute. For men are called dissolute from not restraining their desires, so that the passionate, the envious, the covetous, the deceitful, and every one that lives in sin, may be called dissolute, disorderly, and licentious.

Ver. 3. For this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Saviour.

What is said to be acceptable? The praying for all men. This God accepts, this He wills.

Ver. 4. Who wills that all men should be saved, and come to the knowledge of the truth.

Imitate God! If He wills that all men should be saved, there is reason why one should pray for all, if He has willed that all should be saved, be thou willing also; and if you wish it, pray for it, for wishes lead to prayers. Observe how from every quarter He urges this upon the soul, to pray for the Heathen, showing how great advantage springs from it; that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life; and what is much more than this, that it is pleasing to God, and thus men become like Him, in that they will the same that He does. This is enough to shame a very brute. Fear not therefore to pray for the Gentiles, for God Himself wills it; but fear only to pray against any, for that He wills not. And if you pray for the Heathens, you ought of course to pray for Heretics also, for we are to pray for all men, and not to persecute. And this is good also for another reason, as we are partakers of the same nature, and God commands and accepts benevolence and affection towards one another.

But if the Lord Himself wills to give, you say, what need of my prayer? It is of great benefit both to them and to yourself. It draws them to love, and it inclines you to humanity. It has the power of attracting others

to the faith; (for many men have fallen away from God, from contentiousness towards one another;) and this is what he now calls the salvation of God, who will have all men to be saved; without this all other is nothing great, a mere nominal salvation, and only in words. And to come to the knowledge of the truth. The truth: what truth? Faith in Him. And indeed he had previously said, Charge some that they teach no other doctrine. But that no one may consider such as enemies, and on that account raise troubles against them; he says that He wills that all men should be saved, and come to the knowledge of the truth; and having said this, he adds,

Ver. 5. For there is one God, and one Mediator between God and men.

He had before said, to come to the knowledge of the truth, implying that the world is not in the truth. Now he says, that there is one God, that is, not as some say, many, and that He has sent His Son as Mediator, thus giving proof that He will have all men to be saved. But is not the Son God? Most truly He is; why then does he say, One God? In contradistinction to the idols; not to the Son. For he is discoursing about truth and error. Now a mediator ought to have communion with both parties, between whom he is to mediate. For this is the property of a mediator, to be in close communion with each of those whose mediator he is. For he would be no longer a mediator, if he were connected with one but separated from the other. If therefore He partakes not of the nature of the Father, He is not a Mediator, but is separated. For as He is partaker of the nature of men, because He came to men, so is He partaker of the nature of God, because He came from God. Because He was to mediate between two natures, He must approximate to the two natures; for as the place situated between two others is joined to each place, so must that between natures be joined to either nature. As therefore He became Man, so was He also God. A man could not have become a mediator, because he must also plead with God. God could not have been mediator, since those could not receive Him, toward whom He should have mediated. And as elsewhere he says, There is one God the Father,...and one Lord Jesus Christ 1 Corinthians 8:6; so also here One God, and One Mediator; he does not say two; for he would not have that number wrested to Polytheism, of which he was speaking. So he wrote One and One. You see how accurate are the expressions of Scripture! For though one and one are two, we are not to say this, though reason suggests it. And here you say not one and one are two, and yet you say what reason does not suggest. If He begot He also suffered. For there is one God, he says, and one Mediator between God and men, the Man Christ Jesus.

Ver. 6. Who gave Himself a ransom for all to be testified in due time.

Was Christ then a ransom for the Heathen? Undoubtedly Christ died even for Heathen; and you cannot bear to pray for them. Why then, you ask, did they not believe? Because they would not: but His part was done. His suffering was a Testimony, he says; for He came, it is meant, to bear witness to the truth of the Father, and was slain. Thus not only the Father bore witness to Him, but He to the Father. For I came, He says, in my Father's name. John 5:43 And again, No man has seen God at any time. John 1:18 And again, That they might know You, the only true God. John 17:3 And, God is a Spirit, John 4:24 And He bore witness even to the death. But this, in due time, means, In the fittest time.

Ver. 7. Whereunto I am ordained a preacher and an Apostle, (I speak the truth in Christ, and lie not:) a teacher of the Gentiles in faith and verity.

Since therefore Christ suffered for the Gentiles, and I was separated to be a teacher of the Gentiles, why do you refuse to pray for them? He fully shows his own credibility, by saying that he was ordained Acts 13:2, that is, separated, for this purpose, the other Apostles being backward in teaching the Gentiles; he

adds, in faith and verity, to show that in that faith there was no deceit. Here is observable the extension of grace. For the Jews had no prayers for the Gentiles; but now grace is extended to them: and when he says that he was separated to be a Teacher of the Gentiles, he intimates that grace was now shed over every part of the world.

He gave himself a ransom, he says, how then was He delivered up by the Father? Because it was of His goodness. And what means ransom? God was about to punish them, but He forbore to do it. They were about to perish, but in their stead He gave His own Son, and sent us as heralds to proclaim the Cross. These things are sufficient to attract all, and to demonstrate the love of Christ. Moral. So truly, so inexpressibly great are the benefits which God has bestowed upon us. He sacrificed Himself for His enemies, who hated and rejected Him. What no one would do for friends, for brethren, for children, that the Lord has done for His servants; a Lord not Himself such an one as His servants, but God for men; for men not deserving. For had they been deserving, had they done His pleasure, it would have been less wonderful; but that He died for such ungrateful, such obstinate creatures, this it is which strikes every mind with amazement. For what men would not do for their fellow-men, that has God done for us! Yet after such a display of love towards us, we hold back, and are not in earnest in our love of Christ. He has sacrificed Himself for us; for Him we make no sacrifice. We neglect Him when He wants necessary food; sick and naked we visit Him not. What do we not deserve, what wrath, what punishment, what hell? Were there no other inducement, it should be sufficient to prevail with every one that He condescended to make human sufferings His own, to say I hunger, I thirst.

O the tyranny of wealth! Or rather the wickedness of those who are its willing slaves! For it has no great power of itself, but through our weakness and servility: it is we that are mean and groveling, that are carnal and without understanding. For what power has money? It is mute and insensible. If the devil, that wicked spirit, that crafty confounder of all things, has no power, what power has money? When you look upon silver, fancy it is tin! Cannot you? Then hold it for what it really is; for earth it is. But if you cannot reason thus, consider that we too shall perish, that many of those who have possessed it have gained scarce any advantage by it, that thousands who gloried in it are now dust and ashes. That they are suffering extreme punishment, and far more beggarly than they that fed from glass and earthenware; that those who once reclined on ivory couches, are poorer now than those who are lying on the dunghill. But it delights the eyes! How many other things delight them more! The flowers, the pure sky, the firmament, the bright sun, are far more grateful to the eye. For it has much of rust, whence some have asserted that it was black, which appears from the images that turn black. But there is no blackness in the sun, the heaven, the stars. Much greater delight is there in these brilliants than in its color. It is not therefore its brilliancy that makes it please, but covetousness and iniquity; these, and not money, give the pleasure. Cast these from your soul, and what appeared so precious will seem to you more worthless than clay. Those who are in a fever long for mud when they see it, as if it were spring water; but those in sound health seldom wish even for water. Cast off this morbid longing, and you will see things as they are. And to prove that I do not speak falsely, know, that I can point out many who have done so. Quench this flame, and you will see that these things are of less worth than flowers.

Is gold good? Yes, it is good for almsgiving, for the relief of the poor; it is good, not for unprofitable use, to be hoarded up or buried in the earth, to be worn on the hands or the feet or the head. It was discovered for this end, that with it we should loose the captives, not form it into a chain for the image of God. Use your gold for this, to loose him that is bound, not to chain her that is free. Tell me, why do you value above all things what is of so little worth? Is it the less a chain, because it is of gold? Does the material make any

difference? whether it be gold or iron, it is still a chain; nay the gold is the heavier. What then makes it light, but vainglory, and the pleasure of being seen to wear a chain, of which you ought rather to be ashamed? To make this evident, fasten it, and place the wearer in a wilderness or where there is no one to see, and the chain will at once be felt heavy, and thought burdensome.

Beloved, let us fear, lest we be doomed to hear those terrible words, Bind him hand and foot. Matthew 22:13 And why, O woman, do you now do so to yourself? No prisoner has both his hands and his feet bound. Why do you bind your head too? For you are not content with hands and feet, but bindest your head and your neck with many chains. I pass over the care that comes of these things, the fear, the alarm, the strife occasioned by them with your husband if ever he wants them, the death it is to people when they lose any of them. Can you call this a pleasure? To gratify the eyes of others, do you subject yourself to chains, and cares, and perils, and uneasiness, and daily quarrels? This is deserving of every censure and condemnation. Nay, I entreat you, let us not do thus, let us burst every bond of iniquity Acts 8:23; let us break our bread to the hungry, and let us do all other things, which may ensure to us confidence before God, that we may obtain the blessings promised through Jesus Christ our Lord, with whom, etc.

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