

2 Corinthians 7:13

by St. John Chrysostom

St. John Chrysostom's sermon on 2 Corinthians 7:13 highlights the joy of repentance and the call to generous giving as a reflection of true faith.

Scripture: 2 Corinthians 7:14 - 8:6

Topics: "Generous Giving", "Godly Love"

Description

John Chrysostom preaches about the grace of God manifested in the Churches of Macedonia, commending their fervent love, generosity, and obedience amidst afflictions and poverty. He emphasizes the importance of almsgiving, highlighting how it reflects God's love and transforms us to be more like Him. Chrysostom contrasts the value of feeding Christ through acts of mercy with the significance of performing miracles, stressing that giving willingly and joyfully is a greater gift that aligns us with God's nature. He urges believers to be generous without seeking earthly rewards, reminding them of their temporary stay on earth and the eternal rewards awaiting in heaven.

Transcript

And in your comfort, we joyed the more exceedingly for the joy of Titus, because his spirit has been refreshed by you all.

See again how he exalts their praises, and shows their love. For having said, 'I was pleased that my Epistle wrought so much and that you gained so much,' for I rejoice, he says, not that you were made sorry, but that you were made sorry unto repentance; and having shown his own love, for he says, Though I wrote to you, I wrote not for his cause that did the wrong, nor for his cause that suffered the wrong, but that our care for you might be made manifest to you: again he mentions another sign of their good will, which brings them great praise and shows the genuineness of their affection. For, in your comfort, he says, we joyed the more exceedingly for the joy of Titus. And yet this is no sign of one that loves them exceedingly; rejoicing rather for Titus than for them. 'Yes,' he replies, 'it is, for I joyed not so much for his cause as for yours.' Therefore also he subjoins the reason, saying, because his bowels were refreshed by you all. He said not, 'he,' but his bowels; that is, 'his love for you.' And how were they refreshed? By all. For this too is a very great praise.

2 Corinthians 7:14

For if in anything I have gloried to him on your behalf.

It is high praise when the teacher boasted, for he says, I was not put to shame. I therefore rejoiced, because ye showed yourselves to be amended and proved my words by your deeds. So that the honor accruing to me was twofold; first, in that you had made progress; next, in that I was not found to fall short of the truth.

2 Corinthians 7:14. But as we spoke always to you in truth, so our glorying also which I made before Titus was found to be truth.

Here he alludes to something further. As we spoke all things among you in truth, (for it is probable that he had also spoken to them much in praise of this man,) so also, what we said of you to Titus has been proved true.

2 Corinthians 7:15

And his inward affection is more abundant toward you.

What follows is in commendation of him, as exceedingly consumed with love and attached to them. And he said not 'his love.' Then that he may not appear to be flattering, he everywhere mentions the causes of his affection; in order that he may, as I said, both escape the imputation of flattery and the more encourage them by making the praise redound unto them, and by showing that it was they who had infused into him the beginning and ground of this so great love. For having said, his inward affection is more abundant toward you; he added,

Whilst he remembers the obedience of you all. Now this both shows that Titus was grateful to his benefactors, seeing he had returned, having them all in his heart, and continually remembers them, and bears them on his lips and in his mind; and also is a greater distinction to the Corinthians, seeing that so vanquished they sent him away. Then he mentions their obedience also, magnifying their zeal: wherefore also he adds these words,

How with fear and trembling ye received him. Not with love only, but also with excessive honor. Do you see how he bears witness to a twofold virtue in them, both that they loved him as a father and had feared him as a ruler, neither for fear dimming love, nor for love relaxing fear. He expressed this also above, That ye sorrow after a godly sort, what earnest care it wrought in you; yea what fear, yea what longing.

2 Corinthians 7:16

I rejoice therefore, that in every thing I am of good courage concerning you. Do you see that he rejoices more on their account; 'because,' he says, 'you have in no particular shamed your teacher, nor show yourselves unworthy of my testimony.' So that he joyed not so much for Titus' sake, that he enjoyed so great honor; as for their own, that they had displayed so much good feeling. For that he may not be imagined to joy rather on Titus' account, observe how in this place also he states the reason. As then he said above, If in anything I have gloried to him on your behalf I was not put to shame; so here also, In everything I am of good courage concerning you. 'Should need require me to rebuke, I have no apprehension of your being alienated; or again to boast, I fear not to be convicted of falsehood; or to praise you as obeying the rein, or as loving, or as full of zeal, I have confidence in you. I bade you cut off, and you did cut off; I bade you receive, and you did receive; I said before Titus that you were great and admirable kind of people and knew to reverence teachers: ye proved these things true by your conduct. And he learned these things not so much from me as from you. At any rate when he returned, he had

become a passionate lover of you: your behavior having surpassed what he had been told.'

2 Corinthians 8:1

2. Moreover, brethren, we make known to you the grace of God which has been given in the Churches of Macedonia.

Having encouraged them with these encomiums, he again tries exhortation. For on this account he mingled these praises with his rebuke, that he might not by proceeding from rebuke to exhortation make what he had to say ill received; but having soothed their ears, might by this means pave the way for his exhortation. For he purposes to discourse of almsgiving; wherefore also he says beforehand, I rejoice that in everything I am of good courage concerning you; by their past good works, making them the more ready to this duty also. And he said not at once, 'Therefore give alms,' but observe his wisdom, how he draws from a distance and from on high the preparation for his discourse. For he says, I make known to you the grace of God which has been given in the Churches of Macedonia. For that they might not be uplifted he calls what they did grace; and while relating what others did he works greater zeal in them by his encomiums on others. And he mentions together two praises of the Macedonians, or rather three; namely, that they bear trials nobly; and that they know how to pity; and that, though poor, they had displayed profuseness in almsgiving, for their property had been also plundered. And when he wrote his Epistle to them, it was as signifying this that he said, For you became imitators of the Churches of God which are in Judaea, for you also suffered the same things of your own countrymen, even as they did of the Jews. 1 Thessalonians 2:14 Hear what he said afterwards in writing to the Hebrews, For you took joyfully the spoiling of your possessions. Hebrews 10:34 But He calls what they did grace, not in order to keep them humble merely; but both to provoke them to emulation and to prevent what he said from proving invidious. Wherefore he also added the name of brethren so as to undermine all envious feeling; for he is about to praise them in high-flown terms. Listen, at least, to his praises. For having said, I make known to you the grace of God, he said not 'which has been given in this or that city,' but praises the entire nation, saying, in the Churches of Macedonia. Then he details also this same grace.

2 Corinthians 8:2

How that in much proof of affliction the abundance of their joy.

Do you see his wisdom? For he says not first, that which he wishes; but another thing before it, that he may not seem to do this of set purpose, but to arrive at it by a different connection. In much proof of affliction. This was what he said in his Epistle to the Macedonians themselves, You became imitators of the Lord, having received the word in much affliction, with joy of the Holy Ghost; and again, From you sounded forth the word of the Lord, not only in Macedonia and Achaia, but also in every place, your faith to God-ward is gone forth. 1 Thessalonians 1:6-8 But what is, in much proof of affliction the abundance of their joy? Both, he says, happened to them in excess; both the affliction and the joy. Wherefore also the strangeness was great that so great an excess of pleasure sprang up to them out of affliction. For in truth the affliction not only was not the parent of grief, but it even became unto them an occasion of gladness; and this too, though it was great. Now this he said, to prepare them to be noble and firm in their trials. For they were not merely afflicted, but so as also to have become approved by their patience: yea rather, he says not by their patience, but what was more than patience, joy. And neither said he joy simply, but abundance of joy, for it sprang up in them, great and unspeakable.

3. And their deep poverty abounded unto the riches of their liberality.

Again, both these with excessiveness. For as their great affliction gave birth to great joy, yea, abundance of joy, so their great poverty gave birth to great riches of alms. For this he showed, saying, abounded unto the riches of their liberality. For munificence is determined not by the measure of what is given, but by the mind of those that bestow it.

Wherefore he nowhere says, 'the richness of the gifts,' but the riches of their liberality. Now what he says is to this effect; 'their poverty not only was no impediment to their being bountiful, but was even an occasion to them of abounding, just as affliction was of feeling joy. For the poorer they were, the more munificent they were and contributed the more readily.' Wherefore also he admires them exceedingly, for that in the midst of so great poverty they had displayed so great munificence. For their deep, that is, 'their great and unspeakable,' poverty, showed their liberality. But he said not 'showed,' but abounded; and he said not liberality, but riches of liberality; that is, an equipoise to the greatness of their poverty, or rather much outweighing it, was the bountifulness they displayed. Then he even explains this more clearly, saying,

2 Corinthians 8:3

For according to their power, I bear witness. Trustworthy is the witness. And beyond their power. That is, it abounded unto the riches of their liberality. Or rather, he makes this plain, not by this expression alone, but also by all that follows; for he says, of their own accord. Lo! Yet another excessiveness.

2 Corinthians 8:4

With much intreaty. Lo! Yet a third and a fourth. Praying us. Lo! even a fifth. And when they were in affliction and in poverty. Here are a sixth and seventh. And they gave with excessiveness. Then since this is what he most of all wishes to provide for in the Corinthians' case, namely, the giving deliberately, he dwells especially upon it, saying, with much intreaty, and praying us. 'We prayed not them, but they us.' Pray us what? That the grace and the fellowship in the ministering to the saints. Do you see how he again exalts the deed, calling it by venerable names. For since they were ambitious of spiritual gifts, he calls it by the name grace that they might eagerly pursue it; and again by that of fellowship, that they might learn that they receive, not give only. 'This therefore they intreated us,' he says, 'that we would take upon us such a ministry. '

2 Corinthians 8:5

And this, not as we hoped. This he says with reference both to the amount and to their afflictions. 'For we could never have hoped,' he says, 'that while in so great affliction and poverty, they would even have urged us and so greatly intreated us.' He showed also their carefulness of life in other respects, by saying,

But first they gave their own selves to the Lord, and to us by the will of God.

'For in everything their obedience was beyond our expectations; nor because they showed mercy did they neglect the other virtues,' but first gave themselves to the Lord. What is, gave themselves to the Lord? 'They offered up [themselves]; they showed themselves approved in faith; they displayed much fortitude in their trials, order, goodness, love, in all things both readiness and zeal.' What means, and to us? 'They were tractable to the rein, loved, obeyed us; both fulfilling the laws of God and bound unto us by love.' And observe how here also he again shows their earnestness, saying, gave themselves to the Lord. They did not in some things obey God, and in some the world; but in all things Him; and gave themselves wholly

unto God. For neither because they showed mercy were they filled up with senseless pride, but displaying much lowlymindedness, much obedience, much reverence, much heavenly wisdom, they so wrought their almsdeeds also. But what is, by the will of God? Since he had said, they gave themselves to us, yet was it not to us, after the manner of men, but they did this also according to the mind of God.

2 Corinthians 8:6

4. Insomuch that we exhorted Titus, that as he made a beginning before, so he would also complete in you this grace also.

And what connection is there here? Much; and closely bearing on what went before. 'For because we saw them vehement,' he says, 'and fervent in all things, in temptations, in almsgiving, in their love toward us, in the purity otherwise of their life: in order that you too might be made their equals, we sent Titus.' Howbeit he did not say this, though he implied it. Behold excessiveness of love. 'For though intreated and desired by them,' he says, 'we were anxious about your state, lest by any means ye should come short of them. Wherefore also we sent Titus, that by this also being stirred up and put in mind, you might emulate the Macedonians.' For Titus happened to be there when this Epistle was writing. Yet he shows that he had made a beginning in this matter before Paul's exhortation; that as he had made a beginning before, he says. Wherefore also he bestows great praise on him; for instance, in the beginning [of the Epistle]; Because I found not Titus my brother, I had no relief for my spirit: 2 Corinthians 2:13 and here all those things which he has said, and this too itself. For this also is no light praise, the having begun before even: for this evinces a warm and fervent spirit. Wherefore also he sent him, infusing among them in this also a very great incentive unto giving, the presence of Titus. On this account also he extols him with praises, wishing to endear him more exceedingly to the Corinthians. For this too has a great weight unto persuading, when he who counsels is upon intimate terms. And well does he both once and twice and thrice, having made mention of almsgiving, call 'it grace,' now indeed saying, Moreover, brethren, I make known to you the grace of God bestowed on the Churches of Macedonia; and now, they of their own accord, praying us with much intreaty in regard of this grace and fellowship: and again, that as he had begun, so he would also finish in you this grace also.

5. For this is a great good and a gift of God; and rightly done assimilates us, so far as may be, unto God; for such an one is in the highest sense a man. A certain one, at least, giving a model of a man has mentioned this, for Man, says he, is a great thing; and a merciful man is an honorable thing. Proverbs 20:6. Septuagint Greater is this gift than to raise the dead. For far greater is it to feed Christ when an hungered than to raise the dead by the name of Jesus: for in the former case you do good to Christ, in the latter He to you.

And the reward surely comes by doing good, not by receiving good. For here indeed, in the case of miracles I mean, you are God's debtor; in that of almsgiving, you have God for a debtor. Now it is almsgiving, when it is done with willingness, when with bountifulness, when you deem yourself not to give but to receive, when done as if you were benefitted, as if gaining and not losing; for so this were not a grace. For he that shows mercy on another ought to feel joyful, not peevish.

For how is it not absurd, if while removing another's downheartedness, you are yourself downhearted? For so you no longer allow it to be alms. For if you are downhearted because you have delivered another from downheartedness, you furnish an example of extreme cruelty and inhumanity; for it were better not to deliver him, than so to deliver him. And why are you also downhearted at all, O man? For fear your gold

should diminish? If such are your thoughts, do not give at all: if you are not quite sure that it is multiplied for you in heaven, do not bestow.

But you seek the recompense here. Wherefore? Let your alms be alms, and not traffic. Now many have indeed received a recompense even here; but have not so received it, as if they should have an advantage over those who received it not here; but some of them as being weaker than they ought, because they were not so strongly attracted by the things which are there. And as those who are greedy, and ill-mannered, and slaves of their bellies, being invited to a royal banquet, and unable to wait till the proper time, just like little children mar their own enjoyment, by taking food beforehand and stuffing themselves with inferior dishes: even so in truth do these who seek for and receive [recompense] here, diminish their reward there.

Further, when you lend, you wish to receive your principal after a longer interval, and perhaps even not to receive it at all, in order that by the delay you may make the interest greater; but, in this case, do you ask back immediately; and that too when you are about to be not here, but there forever; when you are about not to be here to be judged, but to render your account? And if indeed one were building you mansions where thou were not going to remain, you would deem it to be a loss; but now, do you desire here to be rich, whence possibly you are to depart even before the evening?

Do you not know that we live in a foreign land, as though strangers and sojourners? Do you not know that it is the lot of sojourners to be ejected when they think not, expect not? Which is also our lot. For this reason then, whatsoever things we have prepared, we leave here. For the Lord does not allow us to receive them and depart, if we have built houses, if we have bought fields, if slaves, if gear, if any other such thing. But not only does He not allow us to take them and depart hence, but does not even account to you the price of them.

For He forwarned you that you should not build, nor spend what is other men's but your own. Why therefore, leaving what is your own, do you work and be at cost in what is another's, so as to lose both your toil and your wages and to suffer the extremest punishment? Do not so, I beseech you; but seeing we are by nature sojourners, let us also be so by choice; that we be not there sojourners and dishonored and cast out. For if we are set upon being citizens here, we shall be so neither here nor there; but if we continue to be sojourners, and live in such wise as sojourners ought to live in, we shall enjoy the freedom of citizens both here and there.

For the just, although having nothing, will both dwell here amidst all men's possessions as though they were his own; and also, when he has departed to heaven, shall see those his eternal habitations. And he shall both here suffer no discomfort, (for none will ever be able to make him a stranger that has every land for his city;) and when he has been restored to his own country, shall receive the true riches. In order that we may gain both the things of this life and of that, let us use aright the things we have.

For so shall we be citizens of the heavens, and shall enjoy much boldness; whereunto may we all attain, through the grace and love towards men of our Lord Jesus Christ, with Whom to the Father with the Holy Ghost, be glory and power forever. Amen.

Grow in Your Walk with Christ

Listen and read messages that will stir your heart for Christ and point you to deeper repentance and devotion.

- 50,000+ Sermons from speakers past and present
- 3,900+ Classic Christian Books freely readable online
- 1,200+ Bible Translations and Commentaries
- Over 450k forum posts — Join our vibrant online Christian forum

www.sermonindex.net