

2 Timothy 1:8-10

by St. John Chrysostom

Do not be ashamed of the testimony of our Lord, but rather glory in it, as it is a sign of God's love for mankind.

Scripture: Galatians 6:4, Galatians 6:14, Ephesians 3:20, 2 Timothy 1:8-12

Topics: "The Cross", "Christian Suffering"

Description

John Chrysostom preaches about not being ashamed of the testimony of the Lord, emphasizing the glory in the Cross of Christ and the power of God in saving and calling us according to His purpose and grace. He warns against measuring divine things by human reasonings, highlighting the danger of falling away from the truth. Chrysostom encourages believers to be partakers of the afflictions of the Gospel, reminding them that suffering for the Gospel is a matter of dignity and boasting, not shame.

Transcript

Be not thou therefore ashamed of the testimony of our Lord, nor of me His prisoner: but be thou partaker of the afflictions of the Gospel according to the power of God; Who has saved us, and called us with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to His own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began; but is now made manifest by the appearing of our Saviour Jesus Christ.

There is nothing worse than that man should measure and judge of divine things by human reasonings. For thus he will fall from that rock a vast distance, and be deprived of the light. For if he who wishes with human eyes to apprehend the rays of the sun will not only not apprehend them, but, besides this failure, will sustain great injury; so, but in a higher degree, is he in a way to suffer this, and abusing the gift of God, who would by human reasonings gaze intently on that Light. Observe accordingly how Marcion, and Manes, and Valentinus, and others who introduced their heresies and pernicious doctrines into the Church of God, measuring divine things by human reasonings, became ashamed of the Divine economy. Yet it was not a subject for shame, but rather for glorying; I speak of the Cross of Christ. For there is not so great a sign of the love of God for mankind, not heaven, nor sea, nor earth, nor the creation of all things out of nothing, nor all else beside, as the Cross. Hence it is the boast of Paul, God forbid that I should glory, save in the Cross of our Lord Jesus Christ. Galatians 6:14 But natural men, and those who attribute to God no more than to human beings, stumble, and become ashamed. Wherefore Paul from the first exhorts his disciple, and through him all others, in these words: Be not thou ashamed of the testimony of our Lord, that is, Be not ashamed, that you preach One that was crucified, but rather glory in it. For in themselves

death and imprisonment and chains are matters of shame and reproach. But when the cause is added before us, and the mystery viewed aright, they will appear full of dignity, and matter for boasting. For it was that death which saved the world, when it was perishing. That death connected earth with heaven, that death destroyed the power of the devil, and made men angels, and sons of God: that death raised our nature to the kingly throne. Those chains were the conversion of many. Be not therefore ashamed, he says, of the testimony of our Lord, nor of me His prisoner: but be thou partaker of the afflictions of the Gospel; that is, though you should suffer the same things, be not thou ashamed. For that this is implied appears from what he said above; God has given us a spirit of power, and of love, and of a sound mind; and by what follows, Be thou partaker of the sufferings of the Gospel: not merely be not ashamed of them, but be not ashamed even to experience them.

And he does not say, Do not fear, but, the more to encourage him, be not ashamed, as if there were no further danger, if he could overcome the shame. For shame is only then oppressive, when one is overcome by it. Be not therefore ashamed, if I, who raised the dead, who wrought miracles, who traversed the world, am now a prisoner. For I am imprisoned, not as a malefactor, but for the sake of Him who was crucified. If my Lord was not ashamed of the Cross, neither am I of chains. And with great propriety, when he exhorts him not to be ashamed, he reminds him of the Cross. If you are not ashamed of the Cross, he means, neither be thou of chains; if our Lord and Master endured the Cross, much more should we chains. For he who is ashamed of what He endured, is ashamed of Him that was crucified. Now it is not on my own account that I bear these chains; therefore do not give way to human feelings, but bear your part in these sufferings. Be partaker of the afflictions of the Gospel. He says not this, as if the Gospel could suffer injury, but to excite his disciple to suffer for it.

According to the power of God; Who has saved us, and called us with a holy calling, not according to our works, but according to His own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began.

More especially because it was a hard thing to say, Be partakers of afflictions, he again consoles him. Reckon that you sustain these things, not by your own power, but by the power of God. For it is your part to choose and to be zealous, but God's to alleviate sufferings and bid them cease. He then shows him the proofs of His power. Consider how you were saved, how you were called. As he elsewhere says, According to His power that works in us. Ephesians 3:20 So much was it a greater exercise of power to persuade the world to believe, than to make the Heavens. But how was he called with a holy calling? This means, He made them saints, who were sinners and enemies. And this not of ourselves, it was the gift of God. If then He is mighty in calling us, and good, in that He has done it of grace and not of debt, we ought not to fear. For He Who, when we should have perished, saved us, though enemies, by grace, will He not much more cooperate with us, when He sees us working? Not according to our own works, he says, but according to his own purpose and grace, that is, no one compelling, no one counseling Him, but of His own purpose, from the impulse of His own goodness, He saved us; for this is the meaning of according to His own purpose. Which was given us before the world began. That is, it was determined without beginning that these things should be done in Christ Jesus. This is no light consideration, that from the first He willed it. It was not an after-thought. How then is not the Son eternal? For He also willed it from the beginning.

Ver. 10. But is now made manifest by the appearing of our Saviour Jesus Christ, Who has abolished death, and has brought life and immortality to light by the Gospel.

You see the power, you see the gift bestowed not by works, but through the Gospel. These are objects of hope: for both were wrought in His Body. And how will they be wrought in ours? By the Gospel.

Ver. 11. Whereunto I am appointed a preacher and an Apostle, and a teacher of the Gentiles.

Why does he so constantly repeat this, and call himself a teacher of the Gentiles? Because he wishes to persuade them that they also ought to draw close to the Gentiles. Be not therefore dismayed at my sufferings. The sinews of death are unstrung. It is not as a malefactor that I suffer, but because I am a teacher of the Gentiles. At the same time he makes his discourse worthy of credit.

Ver. 12. For the which cause I also suffer these things, nevertheless I am not ashamed. For I know Whom I have believed, and am persuaded that He is able to keep that which I have committed unto Him against that day.

I am not ashamed, he says. For are chains, are sufferings, a matter for shame? Be not then ashamed! You see how he illustrates his teaching by his works. These things, he says, I suffer: I am cast into prison, I am banished; For I know Whom I have believed, and am persuaded that He is able to keep that which I have committed to Him against That Day. What is that which is committed? The faith, the preaching of the Gospel. He, who committed this to him, he says, will preserve it unimpaired. I suffer everything, that I may not be despoiled of this treasure, and I am not ashamed at these things, so long as it is preserved uninjured. Or he calls the Faithful the charge which God committed to him, or which he committed to God. For he says, Now I commit you to the Lord. Acts 20:32 That is, these things will not be unprofitable to me. And in Timothy is seen the fruit of the charge thus committed. You see that he is insensible to sufferings, from the hope that he entertains of his disciples.

Moral. Such ought a Teacher to be, so to regard his disciples, to think them everything. Now we live, he says, if you stand fast in the Lord. And again, What is our hope, or joy, or crown of rejoicing? Are not even you in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ? 1 Thessalonians 3:8, and 2:19 You see his anxiety in this matter, his regard for the good of his disciples, not less than for his own. For teachers ought to surpass natural parents, to be more zealous than they. And it becomes their children to be kindly affectioned towards them.

For he says, Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves: for they watch for your souls as they that must give account. Hebrews 13:17 For say, is he subject to so dangerous a responsibility, and are you not willing to obey him, and that too, for your own benefit? For though his own state should be good, yet as long as you are in a bad condition his anxiety continues, he has a double account to render. And consider what it is to be responsible and anxious for each of those who are under his rule.

What honor would you have reckoned equal, what service, in requital of such dangers? You can not offer an equivalent. For you have not yet devoted your soul for him, but he lays down his life for you, and if he lays it not down here, when the occasion requires it, he loses it There. But you are not willing to submit even in words. This is the prime cause of all these evils, that the authority of rulers is neglected, that there is no reverence, no fear. He says, Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves.

But now all is turned upside down and confounded. And this I say not for the sake of the rulers; (for what benefit will they have of the honor they receive from us, except so far as we are rendered obedient;) but I say it for your advantage. For with respect to the future, they will not be benefited by the honor done them, but receive the greater condemnation, neither will they be injured as to the future by ill treatment, but will

have the more excuse. But all this I desire to be done for your own sakes.

For when rulers are honored by their people, this too is reckoned against them; as in the case of Eli it is said, Did I not choose him out of his father's house? 1 Samuel 2:27 But when they are insulted, as in the instance of Samuel, God said, They have not rejected you, but they have rejected Me. 1 Samuel 8:7 Therefore insult is their gain, honor their burden. What I say, therefore, is for your sakes, not for theirs. He that honors the Priest, will honor God also; and he who has learned to despise the Priest, will in process of time insult God.

He that receives you, He says, receives Me. Matthew 10:40 Hold my priests in honor Sirach 7:31?, He says. The Jews learned to despise God, because they despised Moses, and would have stoned him. For when a man is piously disposed towards the Priest, he is much more so towards God. And even if the Priest be wicked, God seeing that you respect him, though unworthy of honor, through reverence to Him, will Himself reward you. For if he that receives a prophet in the name of a prophet shall receive a prophet's reward Matthew 10:41; then he who honors and submits and gives way to the Priest shall certainly be rewarded.

For if in the case of hospitality, when you know not the , you receive so high a recompense, much more will you be requited, if you obey him whom He requires you to obey. The Scribes and Pharisees, He says, sit in Moses' seat; all therefore, whatsoever they bid you observe, that observe and do, but do not do after their works. Matthew 23:2-3 Do you not know what the Priest is? He is an Angel of the Lord. Are they his own words that he speaks? If you despise him, you despise not him, but God that ordained him.

But how does it appear, you ask, that he is ordained of God? Nay, if you suppose it otherwise, your hope is rendered vain. For if God works nothing through his means, thou neither hast any Laver, nor art partaker of the Mysteries, nor of the benefit of Blessings; you are therefore not a Christian. What then, you say, does God ordain all, even the unworthy? God indeed does not ordain all, but He works through all, though they be themselves unworthy, that the people may be saved.

For if He spoke, for the sake of the people, by an ass, and by Balaam, a most wicked man, much more will He speak by the mouth of the Priest. What indeed will not God do or say for our salvation? By whom does He not act? For if He wrought through Judas and those other that prophesied, to whom He will say, I never knew you; depart from Me, you workers of iniquity Matthew 7:22-23; and if others cast out devils Psalm 6:8; will He not much more work through the Priests? Since if we were to make inquisition into the lives of our rulers, we should then become the ordainers of our own teachers, and all would be confusion; the feet would be uppermost, the head below.

Hear Paul saying, But with me it is a very small thing that I should be judged of you, or of man's judgment. 1 Corinthians 4:3 And again, Why do you judge your brother? Romans 14:10 For if we may not judge our brother, much less our teacher. If God commands this indeed, you do well, and sinnest if you do it not; but if the contrary, dare not do it, nor attempt to go beyond the lines that are marked out. After Aaron had made the golden calf, Corah, Dathan, and Abiram raised an insurrection against him.

And did they not perish? Let each attend to his own department. For if he teach perverted doctrine, though he be an Angel, obey him not; but if he teach the truth, take heed not to his life, but to his words. You have Paul to instruct you in what is right both by words and works. But you say, He gives not to the poor, he does not govern well. Whence do you know this? Blame not, before you are informed. Be afraid of the great account. Many judgments are formed upon mere opinion.

Imitate your Lord, who said, I will go down now, and see whether they have done altogether according to the cry of it, and if not, I will know. Genesis 18:21 But if you have enquired, and informed yourself, and seen; yet await the Judge, and usurp not the office of Christ. To Him it belongs, and not to you, to make this inquisition. You are an inferior servant, not a master. You are a sheep, be not curious concerning the shepherd, lest you have to give account of your accusations against him.

But you say, How does he teach me that which he does not practice himself? It is not he that speaks to you. If it be he whom you obey, you have no reward. It is Christ that thus admonishes you. And what do I say? You ought not to obey even Paul, if he speaks of himself, or anything human, but the Apostle, that has Christ speaking in him. Let not us judge one another's conduct, but each his own. Examine your own life.

But you say, He ought to be better than I. Wherefore? Because he is a Priest. And is he not superior to you in his labors, his dangers, his anxious conflicts and troubles? But if he is not better, ought thou therefore to destroy yourself? These are the words of arrogance. For how is he not better than yourself? He steals, you say, and commits sacrilege! How do you know this? Why do you cast yourself down a precipice? If you should hear it said that such an one has a purple robe, though you knew it to be true, and could convict him, you decline to do it, and pretend ignorance, not being willing to run into unnecessary danger. But in this case you are so far from being backward, that even without cause you expose yourself to the danger. Nor think you are not responsible for these words. Hear what Christ says, Every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment. Matthew 12:36 And do you think yourself better than another, and do you not groan, and beat your breast, and bow down your head, and imitate the Publican?

And then you destroy yourself, though thou be better. Be silent, that you cease not to be better. If you speak of it, you have done away the merit; if you think it, I do not say so; if you dost not think it, you have added much. For if a notorious sinner, when he confessed, went home justified, he who is a sinner in a less degree, and is conscious of it, how will he not be rewarded? Examine your own life. Thou dost not steal; but you are rapacious, and overbearing, and guilty of many other such things. I say not this to defend theft; God forbid! Deeply lament if there is any one really guilty of it, but I do not believe it. How great an evil is sacrilege, it is impossible to say. But I spare you. For I would not that our virtue should be rendered vain by accusing others. What was worse than the Publican? For it is true that he was a publican, and guilty of many offenses, yet because the Pharisee only said, I am not as this publican, he destroyed all his merit. I am not, you say, like this sacrilegious Priest. And dost not thou make all in vain?

This I am compelled to say, and to enlarge upon in my discourse, not so much because I am concerned for them, but because I fear for you, lest you should render your virtue vain by this boasting of yourselves, and condemnation of others. For hear the exhortation of Paul, Let every one prove his own work, and then shall he have rejoicing in himself alone, and not in another. Galatians 6:4

If you had a wound, tell me, and should go to a physician, would you stay him from salving and dressing your own wound, and be curious to enquire whether the physician had a wound, or not? And if he had, would you mind it? Or because he had it, would you forbear dressing your own, and say, A physician ought to be in sound health, and since he is not so, I shall let my wound go uncured? For will it be any palliation for him that is under rule, that his Priest is wicked? By no means.

He will suffer the destined punishment, and you too will meet with that which is your due. For the Teacher now only fills a place. For it is written, They shall all be taught of God. John 6:45; Isaiah 54:13 Neither shall they say, Know the Lord. For all shall know Me from the least to the greatest. Jeremiah 31:34 Why then, you will say, does he preside? Why is he set over us? I beseech you, let us not speak ill of our teachers, nor call them to so strict an account, lest we bring evil upon ourselves.

Let us examine ourselves, and we shall not speak ill of others. Let us reverence that day, on which he enlightened us. He who has a father, whatever faults he has, conceals them all. For it is said, Glory not in the dishonor of your father; for your father's dishonor is no glory unto you. And if his understanding fail, have patience with him. Sirach 3:10-12 And if this be said of our natural fathers, much more of our spiritual fathers. Reverence him, in that he every day ministers to you, causes the Scriptures to be read, sets the house in order for you, watches for you, prays for you, stands imploring God on your behalf, offers supplications for you, for you is all his worship.

Reverence all this, think of this, and approach him with pious respect. Say not, he is wicked. What of that? He that is not wicked, does he of himself bestow upon you these great benefits? By no means. Everything works according to your faith. Not even the righteous man can benefit you, if you are unfaithful, nor the unrighteous harm you, if you are faithful. God, when He would save His people, wrought for the ark by Oxen. 1 Samuel 6:12 Is it the good life or the virtue of the Priest that confers so much on you?

The gifts which God bestows are not such as to be effects of the virtue of the Priest. All is of grace. His part is but to open his mouth, while God works all: the Priest only performs a symbol. Consider how wide was the distance between John and Jesus. Hear John saying, I have need to be baptized by You Matthew 3:14, and, Whose shoe's latchet I am not worthy to unloose. John 1:27 Yet notwithstanding this difference, the Spirit descended. Which John had not. For of His fullness, it is said, we all have received.

John 1:16 Yet nevertheless, It descended not till He was baptized. But neither was it John who caused It to descend. Why then is this done? That you may learn that the Priest performs a symbol. No man differs so widely from another man, as John from Jesus, and yet with him the Spirit descended, that we may learn, that it is God who works all, that all is God's doing. I am about to say what may appear strange, but be not astonished nor startled at it. The Offering is the same, whether a common man, or Paul or Peter offer it.

It is the same which Christ gave to His disciples, and which the Priests now minister. This is nowise inferior to that, because it is not men that sanctify even this, but the Same who sanctified the one sanctifies the other also. For as the words which God spoke are the same which the Priest now utters, so is the Offering the same, and the Baptism, that which He gave. Thus the whole is of faith. The Spirit immediately fell upon Cornelius, because he had previously fulfilled his part, and contributed his faith.

And this is His Body, as well as that. And he who thinks the one inferior to the other, knows not that Christ even now is present, even now operates. Knowing therefore these things, which we have not said without reason, but that we may conform your minds in what is right, and render you more secure for the future, keep carefully in mind what has been spoken. For if we are always hearers, and never doers, we shall reap no advantage from what is said. Let us therefore attend diligently to the things spoken. Let us imprint them upon our minds. Let us have them ever engraved upon our consciences, and let us continually ascribe glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Ghost.

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