

2 Timothy 3:1-7

by St. John Chrysostom

The sermon emphasizes the importance of love, generosity, and living a virtuous life in the face of perilous times.

Scripture: Job 1:10, Romans 13:10, 1 Timothy 5:10, 1 Timothy 6:10, 2 Timothy 3:1

Topics: "Last Days", "Selfless Love"

Description

John Chrysostom preaches about the signs of the last days, warning of perilous times when people will be consumed by self-love, covetousness, boasting, pride, blasphemy, disobedience, ungratefulness, and lack of holiness. He emphasizes the importance of genuine love for others, as it leads to humility, generosity, and peace, contrasting it with the destructive nature of greed and selfishness. Chrysostom highlights the story of Jonathan and David as an example of true friendship, urging listeners to cultivate selflessness and care for others. He also addresses the virtue of widowhood, encouraging women to embrace a life of charity, prayer, and service rather than being consumed by material wealth and worldly desires.

Transcript

This know also, that in the last days perilous times shall come. For men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, Without natural affection, truce-breakers, false accusers, incontinent, fierce, despisers of those that are good, Traitors, heady, high-minded, lovers of pleasure more than lovers of God; Having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof; from such turn away. For of this sort are they, which creep into houses, and lead captive silly women laden with sins, led away with various lusts and pleasures, Ever learning, and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth.

He had said in the former Epistle, that the Spirit speaks expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith 1 Timothy 4:1-2; and elsewhere in this Epistle he foretells that something of this kind will afterwards happen; and here again he does the same thing: This know, that in the last days perilous times shall come. And this he pronounces not only from the future, but from the past; As Jannes and Jambres withstood Moses. And again from reasoning; In a great house there are not only vessels of gold and of silver. But why does he do this? In order that Timothy may not be troubled, nor any one of us, when there are evil men. If there were such in the time of Moses, and will be hereafter, it is no wonder that there are such in our times.

In the last days perilous times shall come, he says, that is, exceeding bad times. How shall times be perilous? He says it not blaming the days, nor the times, but the men of those times. For thus it is

customary with us to speak of good times or evil times, from the events that happen in them, caused by men. Immediately he sets down the root and fountain, whence these and all other evils spring, that is, overweeningness. He that is seized with this passion is careless even of his own interests. For when a man overlooks the concerns of his neighbor, and is careless of them, how should he regard his own? For as he that looks to his neighbor's affairs will in them order his own to advantage, so he that looks down upon his neighbor's concerns will neglect his own. For if we are members one of another, the welfare of our neighbor is not his concern only, but that of the whole body, and the injury of our neighbor is not confined to him, but distracts with pains all else as well. If we are a building, whatever part is weakened, it affects the whole, while that which is solid gives strength and support to the rest. So also in the Church, if you have slighted your neighbor, you have injured yourself. How? In that one of your own members has suffered no small hurt. And if he, who does not impart of his possessions, goes into Hell, much more will he be condemned, who sees a neighbor suffering severer evils, and does not stretch out his hand, since in this case the loss is more grievous.

For men shall be lovers of their own selves. He that loves himself may be said not to love himself, but he that loves his brother, loves himself in the truest sense. From self-love springs covetousness. For the wretched niggardly temper of self-love contracts that love which should be widely extended, and diffused on every side. Covetousness. From covetousness springs boastfulness, from boastfulness pride, from pride blasphemy, from blasphemy defiance and disobedience. For he who exalts himself against men, will easily do it against God. Thus sins are produced. Often they ascend from below. He that is pious towards men, is still more pious towards God. He who is meek to his fellow-servants, is more meek to his Master. He that despises his fellow-servants, will end with despising God Himself. Moral . Let us not then despise one another, for that is an evil training which teaches us to despise God. And indeed to despise one another is in effect to despise God, Who commanded us to show all regard to one another. And this may be otherwise manifested by an example. Cain despised his brother, and so, immediately after, he despised God. How despised Him? Mark his insolent answer to God; Am I my brother's keeper? Genesis 4:9 Again, Esau despised his brother, and he too despised God. Wherefore God said, Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated. Romans 9:13; Malachi 1:2-3 Hence Paul says, Lest there be any fornicator or profane person as Esau. Hebrews 12:16 The brethren of Joseph despised him, and they also despised God. The Israelites despised Moses, and they also despised God. So too the sons of Eli despised the people, and they too despised God. Would you see it also from the contrary? Abraham, who was tender of his brother's son, was obedient to God, as is manifest in his conduct with respect to his son Isaac, and in all his other virtues. Again, Abel was meek to his brother, and he also was pious towards God. Let us not therefore despise one another, lest we learn also to despise God. Let us honor one another, that we may learn also to honor God. He that is insolent with respect to men, will also be insolent with respect to God. But when covetousness and selfishness and insolence meet together, what is wanting to complete destruction? Everything is corrupted, and a foul flood of sins bursts in. Unthankful, he says. For how can the covetous man be thankful? To whom will he feel gratitude? To no one. He considers all men his enemies, and desires the goods of all. Though you spend your whole substance upon him, he will feel no gratitude. He is angry that you have not more, that you might bestow it upon him. And if you made him master of the whole world, he would still be unthankful, and think that he had received nothing. This desire is insatiable. It is the craving of disease; and such is the nature of the cravings of disease.

He who has a fever can never be satisfied, but with constant desire of drinking, is never filled, but suffers a continual thirst; so he who is mad after wealth never knows the fulfillment of his desire; whatever is bestowed upon him, he is still unsatisfied, and will therefore never be thankful. For he will feel no gratitude

to him, who does not give him as much as he wishes, and this no one can ever do. And as there is no limit to his wishes, he will feel no gratitude. Thus no one is so unthankful as the covetous, so insensible as the lover of money.

He is the enemy of all the world. He is indignant that there are men. He would have all one vast desert, that he might have the property of all. And many wild imaginations does he form. O that there were an earthquake, he says, in the city, that all the rest being swallowed up, I might be left alone, to have, if possible, the possessions of all! O that a pestilence would come and destroy everything but gold! O that there might be a submersion, or an eruption of the sea! Such are his imaginations.

He prays for nothing good, but for earthquakes, and thunderbolts, for wars, and plagues, and the like. Well, tell me now, thou wretched man, more servile than any slave, if all things were gold, would you not be destroyed by your gold, and perish with hunger? If the world were swallowed up by an earthquake, you also would perish by your fatal desire. For if there were no other men than yourself, the necessaries of life would fail you. For suppose that the other inhabitants of the earth were destroyed at once, and that their gold and silver came of its own accord to you. (For such men fancy to themselves absurdities, and impossibilities.)

But if their gold and silver, their vests of silk and cloth of gold, came into your hands, what would it profit you? Death would only the more certainly overtake you, when there were none to prepare bread or till the earth for you; wild beasts would prowl around, and the devil agitate your soul with fear. Many devils indeed now possess it, but then they would lead you to desperation, and plunge you at once into destruction. But you say, I would wish there should be tilling of the land and men to prepare food.

Then they would consume somewhat. But I would not have them consume anything. So insatiable is this desire! For what can be more ridiculous than this? Do you see the impossibility of the thing? He wishes to have many to minister to him, yet he grudges them their share of food, because it diminishes his substance! What then? Would you then have men of stone? This is all a mockery; and waves, and tempest, and huge billows, and violent agitation, and storm, overwhelm the soul. It is ever hungry, ever thirsty.

Shall we not pity and mourn for him? Of bodily diseases this is thought a most painful one, and it is called by physicians bulimy, when a man being filled, is yet always hungry. And is not the same disorder in the soul more lamentable? For avarice is the morbid hunger of the soul, which is always filling, never satisfied, but still craving. If it were necessary to drink hellebore, or submit to anything a thousand times worse, would it not be worth our while to undertake it readily, that we might be delivered from this passion?

There is no abundance of riches that can fill the belly of greediness. And shall we not be ashamed, that men can be thus transported with the love of money, while we show not any proportion of such earnestness in love to God, and honor Him not as bullion is honored? For money men will undergo watchings, and journeyings and continual perils, and hatred, and hostility, and, in short, everything. But we do not venture to utter a mere word for God, nor incur an enmity, but if we are required to assist any of those who are persecuted, we abandon the injured person, withdrawing ourselves from the hatred of the powerful, and the danger it involves.

And though God has given us power that we might succor him, yet we allow him to perish, from our unwillingness to incur men's hatred and displeasure. And this many profess to justify, saying, Be loved for nothing, but be not hated for nothing. But is this to be hated for nothing? Or what is better than such

hatred? For to be hated on account of God is better than to be loved on His account: for when we are loved for God's sake, we are debtors for the honor, but when we are hated for His sake, He is our debtor to reward us.

The lovers of wealth know no limit to their love, be it never so great; but we, if we have done ever so little, think that we have fulfilled everything. We love not God as much, no, not by many times over so much, as they love gold. Their inordinate rage for gold is a heavy accusation against them. It is our condemnation that we are not so beside ourselves for God; that we do not bestow upon the Lord of all as much love as they bestow upon mere earth, for gold from the mine is no better.

Let us then behold their madness, and be ashamed of ourselves. For what though we are not inflamed with the love of gold, while we are not earnest in our prayers to God? For in their case men despise wife, children, substance, and their own safety, and that when they are not certain that they shall increase their substance. For often, in the very midst of their hopes, they lose at once their life and their labor. But we, though we know that, if we love Him as we ought to love Him, we shall obtain our desire, yet love Him not, but are altogether cold in our love both to our neighbor and to God; cold in our love to God, because cold in our love to our neighbor. For it is not, indeed it is not possible that a man, who is a stranger to the feeling of love, should have any generosity or manly spirit, since the foundation of all that is good is no other than love. On this, it is said, hang all the law and the prophets. Matthew 22:40 For as fire set to a forest is wont to clear away everything, so the fire of love, wherever it is received, consumes and makes way through everything that is hurtful to the divine harvest, and renders the soil pure and fit for the reception of the seed. Where there is love, all evils are removed. There is no love of money, the root of evil, there is no self-love : there is no boasting; for why should one boast over his friend? Nothing makes a man so humble as love. We perform the offices of servants to our friends, and are not ashamed; we are even thankful for the opportunity of serving them. We spare not our property, and often not our persons; for dangers too are encountered at times for him that is loved. No envy, no calumny is there, where there is genuine love. We not only do not slander our friends, but we stop the mouth of slanderers. All is gentleness and mildness. Not a trace of strife and contention appears. Everything breathes peace. For Love, it is said, is this fulfilling of the law. Romans 13:10 There is nothing offensive with it. How so? Because where love exists, all the sins of covetousness, rapine, envy, slander, arrogance, perjury, and falsehood are done away. For men perjure themselves, in order to rob, but no one would rob him whom he loved, but would rather give him his own possessions. For we are more obliged than if we received from him. You know this, all you that have friends, friends, I mean, in reality, not in name only, but whoever loves as men ought to love, whoever is really linked to another. And let those who are ignorant of it learn from those who know.

I will now cite you from the Scriptures a wonderful instance of friendship. Jonathan, the son of Saul, loved David, and his soul was so knit to him, that David in mourning over him says, Your love to me was wonderful, passing the love of women. You were wounded unto death. 2 Samuel 1:25-26 What then? Did he envy David? Not at all, though he had great reason. How? Because, by the events he perceived that the kingdom would pass from himself to him, yet he felt nothing of the kind. He did not say, This is he that is depriving me of my paternal kingdom, but he favored his obtaining the sovereignty; and he spared not his father for the sake of his friend. Yet let not any one think him a parricide, for he did not injure his father, but restrained his unjust attempts. He rather spared than injured him. He did not permit him to proceed to an unjust murder. He was many times willing even to die for his friend, and far from accusing him, he restrained even his father's accusation. Instead of envying, he joined in obtaining the kingdom for him.

Why do I speak of wealth? He even sacrificed his own life for him. For the sake of his friend, he did not even stand in awe of his father, since his father entertained unjust designs, but his conscience was free from all such. Thus justice was conjoined with friendship.

Such then was Jonathan. Let us now consider David. He had no opportunity of returning the recompense, for his benefactor was taken away before the reign of David, and slain before he whom he had served came to his kingdom. What then? As far as it was allowed him and left in his power, let us see how that righteous man manifested his friendship. Very pleasant, he says, have you been to me, Jonathan; you were wounded unto death. 2 Samuel 1:25, Septuagint Is this all? This indeed was no slight tribute, but he also frequently rescued from danger his son and his grandson, in remembrance of the kindness of the father, and he continued to support and protect his children, as he would have done those of his own son. Such friendship I would wish all to entertain both towards the living and the dead.

Let women listen to this (for it is on their account especially that I refer to the departed) who enter into a second marriage, and defile the bed of their deceased husband, though they have loved him. Not that I forbid a second marriage, or pronounce it a proof of wantonness, for Paul does not allow me, stopping my mouth by saying to women, If she marry she has not sinned. 1 Corinthians 7:28-40 Yet let us attend to what follows, But she is happier if she so abide. This state is much better than the other. Wherefore? For many reasons. For if it is better not to marry at all than to marry, much more in this case. But some, you say, could not endure widowhood, and have fallen into many misfortunes. Yes; because they know not what widowhood is. For it is not widowhood to be exempt from a second marriage, as neither is it virginity to be altogether unmarried. For as that which is comely, and that you may attend upon the Lord without distraction, is the mark of the one state, so it is the mark of the other to be desolate, to continue in supplications and prayers, to renounce luxury and pleasure. For she that lives in pleasure is dead while she lives. 1 Timothy 5:6 If remaining a widow, you would have the same pomp, the same show, the same attire, as you had while your husband was living, it were better for you to marry. For it is not the union that is objectionable, but the multitude of cares that attend it. But that which is not wrong, thou dost not: but that which is not indifferent, which is liable to blame, in that you involve yourself. On this account some have turned aside after Satan, because they have not been able to live properly as widows.

Would you know what a widow is, and what a widow's dignity, hear Paul's account of it. If she have brought up children, if she have lodged strangers, if she have washed the Saints' feet, if she have relieved the afflicted, if she have diligently followed every good work. 1 Timothy 5:10 But when after the death of your husband, you are arrayed in the same pomp of wealth, no wonder if you can not support widowhood. Transfer this wealth, therefore, to heaven, and you will find the burden of widowhood tolerable. But, you say, what if I have children to succeed to their father's inheritance? Instruct them also to despise riches. Transfer your own possessions, reserving for them just a sufficiency. Teach them too to be superior to riches. But what if besides my silver and gold, I am surrounded by a crowd of slaves, oppressed by a multitude of affairs, how shall I be equal to the care of all these things, when deprived of the support of my husband? This is but an excuse, a pretense, as appears from many causes. For if you do not deserve wealth, nor seek to increase your present possessions, your burden will be light. To get riches is much more laborious than to take care of them. If therefore you cut off this one thing, accumulating, and suppliest the needy out of your substance, God will hold over you His protecting hand. And if you say this from a real desire to preserve the inheritance of your fatherless children, and art not, under this pretense, possessed with covetousness; He who searches the heart knows how to secure their riches, even He who commanded you to bring up children.

For it is not possible, indeed it is not, that a house established by almsgiving should suffer any calamity. If it should be unfortunate for a time, in the end it will prosper. This will be more than spear and shield to all the household. Hear what the devil says concerning Job. Have you not made an hedge about him and about his house, and about all that he has on every side? Job 1:10 Wherefore? Hear Job himself saying, I was eyes to the blind, and feet was I to the lame. I was a father to the orphans. Job 29:15 As he who does not turn aside from the calamities of others, will not suffer even in his own misfortunes, because he has learned to sympathize; so he who will not bear the griefs of sympathy, will learn all sorrow in his own person. And, as in the case of a bodily disease, if, when the foot is mortified, the hand does not sympathize by cleansing the wound, washing away the discharge, and applying a plaster, it will suffer the like disease of its own; so she who will not minister to another when she is not herself afflicted, will have to bear sufferings of her own. For the evil spreading from the other part will reach to this also, and the question will not be of ministering to the other, but of its own cure and relief. So it is here also. He that will not relieve others, will be a sufferer himself. You have hedged him in, says Satan, within and without, and I dare not attack him! But he suffered afflictions, you say. True. But those afflictions were the occasion of great good. His substance was doubled, his reward increased, his righteousness enlarged, his crown was splendid, his prize glorious. Both his spiritual and temporal blessings were augmented. He lost his children, but he received, not these restored, but others in their room, and those too he had safe for the Resurrection. Had they been restored, the number would have been diminished, but now having given others in their stead, He will present them also at the Resurrection. All these things happened to him, because of his openhandedness in almsgiving. Let us then do likewise, that we may obtain the same rewards by the grace and lovingkindness of our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

Source: <https://sermonindex.net/speakers/st-john-chrysostom/2-timothy-31-7/>

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