

2 Timothy 4:9-13

by St. John Chrysostom

St. John Chrysostom's sermon emphasizes the importance of companionship in ministry, the challenges of faithfulness, and God's unwavering support in trials.

Scripture: 2 Timothy 4:10-11, 2 Timothy 4:14, 2 Timothy 4:17, 2 Timothy 4:22

Topics: "Spiritual Warfare", "Kingdom Priorities"

Description

John Chrysostom preaches about the importance of seizing spiritual riches with violence and fortitude, urging believers to prioritize God's kingdom over worldly possessions. He emphasizes the need for watchfulness, sobriety, and readiness to overcome obstacles in the pursuit of spiritual blessings. Chrysostom highlights the examples of the Apostles who prioritized the affairs of God over personal interests, encouraging believers to imitate their zeal and dedication. He reminds the audience that true riches lie in heavenly treasures and that grace and spiritual gifts are obtained through obedience and pleasing God.

Transcript

Do your diligence to come shortly unto me: For Demas has forsaken me, having loved this present world, and is departed unto Thessalonica; Crescens to Galatia, Titus unto Dalmatia. Only Luke is with me. Take Mark, and bring him with you: for he is profitable to me for the ministry. And Tychicus have I sent to Ephesus. The cloak that I left at Troas with Carpus, when you come, bring with you, and the books, but especially the parchments.

It is worth while to enquire why he calls Timothy to him, inasmuch as he was entrusted with a Church, and a whole nation. It was not from arrogance. For Paul was ready to come to him; for we find him saying, But if I tarry long, that you may know how you ought to behave yourself in the house of God. 1 Timothy 3:15 But he was withholden by a strong necessity. He was no longer master of his own movements. He was in prison, and had been confined by Nero, and was all but on the point of death. That this might not happen before he saw his disciple, he therefore sends for him, desiring to see him before he dies, and perhaps to deliver much in charge to him. Wherefore he says, Hasten to come to me before the winter.

For Demas has forsaken me, having loved this present world. He does not say, That I may see you before I depart this life, which would have grieved him, but because I am alone, he says, and have no one to help or support me.

For Demas has forsaken me, having loved this present world, and is departed to Thessalonica; that is, having loved his own ease and security from danger, he has chosen rather to live luxuriously at home, than to suffer hardships with me, and share my present danger. He has blamed him alone, not for the sake of blaming him, but to confirm us, that we may not be effeminate in declining toils and dangers, for this is, having loved this present world. At the same time he wishes to draw his disciple to him.

Crescens to Galatia, Titus to Dalmatia.

These he does not censure. For Titus was one of the most admirable men, so that to him he entrusted the affairs of the island, no small island, I mean, but that great one of Crete.

Only Luke is with me. For he adhered to him inseparably. It was he who wrote the Gospel, and the General Acts; he was devoted to labors, and to learning, and a man of fortitude; of him Paul writes, whose praise is in the Gospel throughout all the Churches. 2 Corinthians 8:18

Take Mark, and bring him with you, for he is profitable to me for the ministry.

It is not for his own relief, but for the ministry of the Gospel that he wanted him. For though imprisoned, he did not cease to preach. So it was on the same account he sent for Timothy, not for his own, but for the Gospel's sake, that his death might occasion no disturbance to the faithful, when many of his own disciples were present to prevent tumults, and to console those who would scarce have endurance to bear up at his death. For it is probable that the believers at Rome were men of consequence.

And Tychicus have I sent to Ephesus. The cloak that I left at Troas with Carpus, when you come bring with you, and the books, but especially the parchments.

The word here translated cloak may mean a garment, or, as some say, a bag, in which the books were contained. But what had he to do with books, who was about to depart and go to God? He needed them much, that he might deposit them in the hands of the faithful, who would retain them in place of his own teaching. All the faithful, then, would suffer a great blow, but particularly those who were present at his death, and then enjoyed his society. But the cloak he requires, that he might not be obliged to receive one from another. For we see him making a great point of avoiding this; and elsewhere, when he was addressing those from Ephesus, he says, You know that these hands have ministered to my necessities, and to those that were with me Acts 20:34-35; and again, It is more blessed to give than to receive.

Ver. 14. Alexander the coppersmith did me much evil; the Lord reward him according to his works.

Here he again makes mention of his trial, not wishing merely to censure and accuse the man, but to prepare his disciple for the conflicts, that he might bear them firmly. Though they be mean and contemptible persons, and without honor, who cause these trials, they ought all, he says, to be borne with fortitude. For he who suffers wrong from any great personage, receives no little distinction from the superiority of him who does the wrong. But he who is injured by a vile and abject person, suffers the greater annoyance. He did me much evil, he says, that is, he persecuted me in various ways. But these things will not go unpunished! For the Lord will reward him according to his works. As he said above: What persecutions I endured, but out of them all the Lord delivered me. 2 Timothy 3:11 So also here he consoles his disciples by a double consideration, that he himself had suffered wrong, and that the other would be rewarded for his evil deeds. Not that the Saints rejoice in the punishment of their persecutors, but that the cause of the Gospel required it, and the weaker would derive consolation from it.

Ver. 15. Of whom also beware; for he has greatly withstood our words.

That is, he is hostile to us, and opposes us. He has not said, Revenge, punish, expel him, although by the grace given him he might have so done, but he does no such thing; nor does he arm Timothy against him, but only commands him to avoid him, leaving vengeance to God, and for the consolation of the weaker he has said that He will reward him, which is a prophecy rather than an imprecation. And that he says these things to prepare the mind of his disciple, is manifest also from what follows. But see how he mentions other of his trials.

Ver. 16. At my first answer, he says, no man stood with me, but all men forsook me: I pray God that it may not be laid to their charge.

Do you see how he spares his friends, notwithstanding it was a grievous thing they had done? For it is not the same thing to be despised by aliens, as by our own friends. Do you see his intense dejection? It cannot be said, that I was assailed by those without, but had comfort in the attention and support of my friends; for these also betrayed me. All men, he says, forsook me. And this was no light offense. For if he that in war abandons one who is exposed to danger, and shrinks from meeting the hands of his enemies, is justly smitten by his friends, as having utterly betrayed their cause, much more in the case of the Gospel. But what first answer, does he speak of? He had stood before Nero, and had escaped. But afterwards, because he had converted his cup-bearer, he was beheaded. And here again is encouragement for his disciple in what follows.

Ver. 17. Notwithstanding the Lord stood with me, and strengthened me.

Though deserted by man, God does not permit him to suffer any harm. He strengthened me, he says, that is, He gave me boldness in speaking. He suffered me not to sink.

That by me the preaching might be fully known.

That is, might be fulfilled. Observe his great humility. He does not say He strengthened me as deserving of His gift, but that the preaching, with which I was entrusted, might be fully known. As if any one should wear a purple robe and a diadem, and to that circumstance should owe his safety.

And that all the Gentiles might hear.

What is this? That the luster of the Gospel, and the care of His Providence for me, might be known to all.

And I was delivered out of the mouth of the lion.

Ver. 18. And the Lord shall deliver me from every evil work.

See how near he had been to death. He had fallen into the very jaws of the lion. For he calls Nero a lion from his ferocity, and the violent and daring character of his government. The Lord delivered me, he says, and will deliver. But if he says, He will deliver me, why does he say, I am ready to be offered? Attend to the expression, He delivered me, he says, from the lion's mouth; and again, He will deliver me, not from the lion's mouth, but from every evil work. For then He delivered me from the danger; but now that enough has been done for the Gospel, He will yet again deliver me from every sin, that is, He will not suffer me to depart with condemnation. For that he should be able to resist unto blood striving against sin Hebrews 12:4, and not yield, is a deliverance from another lion, even the devil, so that this preservation is greater

than the former when he seems to be given up.

And will preserve me unto His heavenly kingdom; to Whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen.

This then is salvation, when we shine forth there. But what means, He will preserve me unto His kingdom? He will deliver me from all blame, and preserve me there. For this is to be preserved unto His kingdom, to die here on account of it. For He that hates his life in this world shall keep it unto life eternal. John 12:25

To whom be glory. Lo, here is a doxology to the Son.

Ver. 19. Salute Priscilla and Aquila, and the household of Onesiphorus.

For he was then in Rome, of whom he said The Lord grant unto him that he may find mercy of the Lord in that day. 2 Timothy 1:18 By this naming of him, he makes those of his household also more zealous in such good actions.

Salute Priscilla and Aquila. These are they of whom he makes continual mention, with whom too he had lodged, and who had taken Apollos to them. He names the woman first, as being I suppose more zealous, and more faithful, for she had then received Apollos; or it might be done indifferently. And it was to them no slight consolation to be thus saluted. It conveyed a demonstration of esteem and love, and a participation in much grace. For the bare salutation of that holy and blessed man was sufficient to fill with grace him who received it.

Ver. 20. Erastus abode at Corinth: but Trophimus have I left at Miletum sick.

This Trophimus and Tychicus, we know from the book of the Acts, sailed away with him from Judea, and were everywhere his companions, perhaps as being more zealous than the rest.

Trophimus I have left at Miletum sick. Why then did you not heal him, instead of leaving him? The Apostles could not do everything, or they did not dispense miraculous gifts upon all occasions, lest more should be ascribed to them than was right. The same thing is observable of those blessed and righteous men, who were before them, as in the case of Moses, whose voice was weak. Why was not this defect removed? Nay, he was often afflicted with grief and dejection, and he was not admitted into the Land of Promise.

For many things were permitted by God, that the weakness of human nature might be manifested. And if with these defects the insensible Jews could ask, Where is Moses who brought us out of the land of Egypt Exodus 32:1? How would they not have been affected towards him if he had brought them also into the Land of Promise? If he had not been suffered to be overpowered by the fear of Pharaoh, would they not have thought him a God? We see that the people of Lystra were thus affected in the case of Paul and Barnabas, thinking them to be Gods, when they rent their clothes, and ran in among the people, crying out and saying, Sirs, why do you do these things? We also are men of like passions with you. Acts 14:14-15 Peter, again, when he had healed the man lame from his birth, when all were amazed at the miracle, answered and said, You men of Israel, why do you marvel at this, or why do you look so earnestly on us, as though by our own power or holiness we had made this man to walk? Acts 3:12 Hear also the blessed Paul, saying, There was given to me a thorn in the flesh, lest I should be exalted above measure. 2 Corinthians 12:7 But this, you say, was an expression of humility. Far from it. The thorn was not sent him that he might be humble, nor does he say this only out of humility. There are other causes besides to be assigned for it. Observe therefore how God, accounting for it, says, My grace is sufficient for you; not that

you may not be exalted above measure, but what? For my strength is made perfect in weakness. Two ends therefore were answered at once: what was doing was made clearly manifest, and the whole was ascribed to God. For this cause he has said elsewhere, We carry this treasure in earthen vessels 2 Corinthians 4:7; that is, in bodies weak and liable to suffering. Why? That the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us. If our bodies were not subject to infirmity, all would be ascribed to them. And elsewhere we see him grieving at the infirmity of Epaphroditus, concerning whom he writes, He was sick near unto death, but God had mercy on him. Philippians 2:27 And many other instances there are of his ignorance of events, which was profitable both for him and his disciples.

Trophimus I have left at Miletum sick. Miletus was near Ephesus. Did this happen then when he sailed to Judea, or upon some other occasion? For after he had been in Rome, he returned to Spain, but whether he came thence again into these parts, we know not. We see him however deserted by all. For Demas, he says, has forsaken me. Crescens is departed into Galatia, Titus to Dalmatia. Erastus abode at Corinth. Trophimus have I left at Miletum sick.

Ver. 21. Do your diligence to come before winter. Eubulus greets you, and Pudens and Linus, and Claudia.

This Linus, some say, was second Bishop of the Church of Rome after Peter. And Claudia. You see how zealous for the faith the women were, how ardent! Such was Priscilla and this Claudia, already crucified, already prepared for the battle! But why, when there were so many faithful, does he mention only these women? Manifestly because they in purpose had already withdrawn from worldly affairs, and were illustrious above other. For a woman, as such, meets not with any impediments. It is the work of divine grace, that this sex should be impeded only in the affairs of this life, or rather not even in them. For a woman undertakes no small share of the whole administration, being the keeper of the house. And without her not even political affairs could be properly conducted. For if their domestic concerns were in a state of confusion and disorder, those who are engaged in public affairs would be kept at home, and political business would be ill managed. So that neither in those matters, as neither in spiritual, is she inferior. For she is able, if so inclined, to endure a thousand deaths. Accordingly many women have suffered martyrdom. She is able to practice chastity even more than men, no such strong flame disturbing her; and to show forth modesty and gravity, and holiness, without which no one shall see the Lord Hebrews 12:14; and contempt of wealth, if she will, and in short all other virtues.

Do your diligence to come before winter. See how he urges him, yet he does not say anything to grieve him. He does not say, Before I die, lest he should afflict him; but, Before winter, that thou be not detained.

Eubulus, he says, greets you, and Pudens, and Linus, and Claudia, and all the brethren. He does not mention the rest by name. Do you see that those were the most zealous?

Ver. 22. The Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit.

There can be no better prayer than this. Grieve not for my departure. The Lord will be with you. And he says, not with you, but with your spirit. Thus there is a twofold assistance, the grace of the Spirit, and God helping it. And otherwise God will not be with us, if we have not spiritual grace. For if we be deserted by grace, how shall He be with us?

Grace be with us. Amen.

Thus he prays for himself too, that they may always be well-pleasing to Him, that they may have grace together with the spiritual gift, for where this is, nothing will be grievous. For as he who beholds the king, and is in favor with him, is sensible of no uneasiness; so though our friends forsake us, though we be overtaken by calamity, we shall feel no distress, if that grace be with us and fortify us.

Moral . But how shall we draw down grace upon us? By doing what is pleasing to God, and obeying Him in all things. In great houses do we not see those domestics in favor, who do not regard their own interest, but with all zeal and alacrity promote their masters', and who not from the compulsion of the master, but from their own affection and good disposition, order all things well. When they are always before their eyes, when they are engaged in the house, when they are not occupied in any private concerns, nor caring for their own, but rather consider their masters' concerns as their own. For he who makes what is his own his master's, does not really give up his own to his master, but makes his interest his own; he commands even as himself in his affairs, and rules equally with him. He is often as much feared by the domestics, and whatever he says his master says too, and he is henceforth dreaded by all his enemies.

And if he who in worldly concerns prefers his masters interests to his own, does not really neglect his own interest, but rather advance it the more; much more is this the case in spiritual matters. Despise your own concerns, and you will receive those of God. This He Himself wills. Despise each, and seize upon the kingdom of heaven. Dwell there, not here. Be formidable there, not here. If you are formidable there you will be formidable not to men, but to demons, and even to the devil himself. But if your dependence is on worldly wealth, you will be contemptible to them, and often to men too. Whatever be your riches, you will be rich in servile things. But if you despise these, you will be radiant in the house of the King.

Such were the Apostles, despising a servile house and worldly wealth! And see how they commanded in the affairs of their Master. Let one, they said, be delivered from disease, another from the possession of devils: bind this man, and loose that. This was done by them on earth, but it was fulfilled as in Heaven. For, whatever you shall bind on earth, said He, shall be bound in Heaven. Matthew 18:18 And greater power than His own did He give them. And that I lie not, appears from His own words. He that believes in Me, greater works shall he do than these which I do. John 14:12 Why so? Because this honor is reflected upon the Master. As in our own affairs, if the servant has great power, the master is the more admired, for if the servant is so powerful, much more is he who commands him. But if any man, neglecting his master's service thinks only of his wife, his son, or his servant, and seeks to be rich, and to lay up treasure there, by stealing and robbing his master of his possessions, he is presently ruined, and his wealth perishes with him.

Wherefore having these examples, I beseech you, let us not regard our possessions, that we may regard ourselves: nay, let us despise them, that we may obtain them. If we despise them, He will take care of them; if we take care of them, God will despise them. Let us labor in the concerns of God, not in our own, or rather really in our own, for His are our own. I speak not of heaven, nor of earth, nor of the things of this world: these are unworthy of Him. And they belong alike to the faithful and the unbelievers. What then do I speak of as His? His glory and His kingdom. These are His, and ours for His sake. How? If we be dead with Him, He says, we shall also live with Him. If we suffer, we shall also reign with Him. 2 Timothy 2:11 We have become joint heirs, and are called His brethren. Why do we sink below, when He is drawing us upward towards Himself? How long shall we be poor, and beggarly? Heaven is set before us; and do we linger on earth? Is His kingdom opened to us, and do we choose such poverty as is here? Is life immortal offered us, and do we spend ourselves for lands, for wood and stones? Be truly rich. I would wish you to be so. Be covetous and rapacious, I blame you not for it. Here it is a fault not to be covetous, here it is

blameworthy not to be grasping. What then is this? The kingdom of Heaven suffers violence, and the violent take it by force. Matthew 11:12 There be thou violent! Be grasping! It is not diminished by being seized upon. For neither is virtue divided, nor piety lessened, nor the kingdom of Heaven. Virtue is increased when you seize upon it, while temporal goods are lessened when they are seized upon. And this appears from hence: Let there be ten thousand men in a city; if all seize on virtue, it is multiplied, for they become righteous in ten thousand things. If no one seizes upon it, it is diminished, for it is nowhere to be found.

You see then that good things are multiplied on being possessed by many, but earthly goods are rather diminished by seizing. Let us not therefore sit down content with poverty, but let us choose riches. God is then rich, when those who enjoy His kingdom are many. For He is rich, it is said, unto all that call upon Him. Romans 10:12 Increase then His substance; and you will increase it by taking possession of it, by being covetous of it, by violently seizing it. And truly there is need of violence. Wherefore? Because there are so many impediments, as wives and children, cares and worldly business; besides those demons, and him who is the ruler of them, the devil. There is need then of violence, there is need of fortitude. He who takes by violence is exposed to toils. How? He endures all things, he contends against necessities. How? He almost attempts impossibilities. If such are those who take by violence, and we shrink from attempting even what is possible, how shall we ever win? Or when shall we enjoy the things for which we strive? The violent, it is said, take the kingdom of heaven by force. Violence and rapacity are needed. For it is not simply set before us, and ready to our hands. He who seizes by violence, is ever sober and watchful, he is anxious and thoughtful, that he may make his seizure at a seasonable time. Do you not see that in war he who is about to make a seizure keeps watch and is under arms the whole night? If then they who aim at seizing upon worldly goods, watch and are armed all the night long, should we, who wish to seize upon spiritual things, sleep and snore in the day, and continue always naked and unarmed? For he who is engaged in sin is unarmed; as he who practices righteousness is armed. We do not fortify ourselves with almsgiving. We do not prepare for ourselves lamps that are burning, we do not fence ourselves in spiritual armor. We do not learn the way that leads there. We are not sober and watchful, and therefore we can seize no spoil.

If a man wishes to make an attempt on a kingdom, does he not set death before him in a thousand shapes? Is he not armed at all points, does he not practice the art of war, does he not do everything with this view, and so rush on to the attack? But we do not act thus. We wish to take the spoil while we are sleeping, and therefore we come off with empty hands. Do you not see plunderers, how they flee, how rapidly they move? How they force their way through everything? And there is need of expedition here. The devil is in pursuit of you. He orders those before to detain you. But if you are strong, if you are watchful, you will spurn one, and thrust aside another, and escape from all, as a bird. Yea, if you depart hence, if you escape from the market and the tumult, I mean this life, and arrive at those higher regions beyond these, in the world to come. For there, as in a solitude, there is no tumult, no one to disturb, or to stay your course.

Have you seized? Yet a little exertion is needed after the seizure, that what you have seized may not be taken from you. If we run on, if we look to none of those things that are set before our eyes, if we consider nothing but how we may escape from those who would hinder us, we shall be able to retain with all security what we have seized. Have you seized on chastity? Tarry not; flee beyond the reach of the devil. If he sees that he cannot overtake you, he will cease to pursue; as we, when we can no longer see those who have robbed us, despair of the pursuit, and do not pursue, nor call on others to stop thief, but suffer

them to escape. So do thou run vigorously at the beginning, and when you are beyond the reach of the devil, he will not afterwards attack you, but you will be in safety, securely enjoying those unspeakable blessings, which God grant that we may all obtain through Jesus Christ our Lord. To whom with the Father, and the Holy Ghost, be glory, power, honor, and worship, now and for ever, and world without end. Amen.

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