

Colossians 2:6, 7

by St. John Chrysostom

St. John Chrysostom's sermon emphasizes the importance of living rooted in Christ, warning against false teachings, and celebrating the new life through faith and baptism.

Topics: "Christian Living", "Victory Over Sin"

Description

John Chrysostom preaches about the importance of walking in Christ, being rooted and built up in Him, and established in faith, while abounding in thanksgiving. He warns against being deceived by false philosophies and traditions of men that lead away from Christ. Chrysostom emphasizes the significance of being circumcised in Christ through baptism, being buried and raised with Him through faith in God's power. He highlights the victory of Christ over sin and death, the forgiveness of trespasses, and the abolishment of the bond of sin through His sacrifice on the Cross.

Transcript

As therefore ye received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in Him, rooted and built up in Him, and established in your faith, even as you were taught, abounding in thanksgiving.

Again, he takes hold on them beforehand with their own testimony, saying, As therefore ye received. We introduce no strange addition, he says, neither do ye. Walk ye in Him, for He is the Way that leads to the Father: not in the Angels; this way leads not there. Rooted, that is, fixed; not one while going this way, another that, but rooted: now that which is rooted, never can remove. Observe how appropriate are the expressions he employs. And built up, that is, in thought attaining unto Him. And established in Him, that is, holding Him, built as on a foundation. He shows that they had fallen down, for the word built has this force. For the faith is in truth a building; and needs both a strong foundation, and secure construction. For both if any one build not upon a secure foundation it will shake; and even though he do, if it be not firm, it will not stand. As you were taught. Again, the word As. Abounding, he says, in thanksgiving; for this is the part of well-disposed persons, I say not simply to give thanks, but with great abundance, more than ye learned, if possible, with much ambition.

Ver. 8. Take heed lest there shall be any one that makes spoil of you.

Do you see how he shows him to be a thief, and an alien, and one that enters in softly? For he has already represented him to be entering in. Beware. And he well said makes spoil. As one digging away a mound from underneath, may give no perceptible sign, yet it gradually settles, so do you also beware; for this is

his main point, not even to let himself be perceived. As if some one were robbing every day, and he (the owner of the house) were told, Beware lest there be some one; and he shows the way -- through this way -- as if we were to say, through this chamber; so, through philosophy, says he.

Then because the term philosophy has an appearance of dignity, he added, and vain deceit. For there is also a good deceit; such as many have been deceived by, which one ought not even to call a deceit at all. Whereof Jeremiah speaks; O Lord, You have deceived me, and I was deceived Jeremiah 20:7; for such as this one ought not to call a deceit at all; for Jacob also deceived his father, but that was not a deceit, but an economy. Through his philosophy, he says, and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ. Now he sets about to reprove their observance of particular days, meaning by elements of the world the sun and moon; as he also said in the Epistle to the Galatians, How turn ye back again to the weak and beggarly elements? Galatians 4:9 And he said not observances of days, but in general of the present world, to show its worthlessness: for if the present world be nothing, much more then its elements. Having first shown how great benefits and kindnesses they had received, he afterwards brings on his accusation, thereby to show its greater seriousness, and to convict his hearers. Thus too the Prophets do. They always first point out the benefits, and then they magnify their accusation; as Esaias says, I have begotten children, and exalted them, but they have rejected me Isaiah 1:2, Septuagint; and again, O my people, what have I done unto you, or wherein have I grieved you, or wherein have I wearied you? Micah 6:3 and David; as when he says, I heard you in the secret place of the tempest Psalm 81:7, Septuagint; and again, Open your mouth, and I will fill it. Psalm 81:10 And everywhere you will find it the same.

That indeed were most one's duty, not to be persuaded by them, even did they say anything to the purpose; as it is, however, obligations apart even, it would be our duty to shun those things. And not after Christ, he says. For were it in such sort a matter done by halves, that you were able to serve both the one and the other, not even so ought ye to do it; as it is, however, he suffers you not to be after Christ. Those things withdraw you from Him. Having first shaken to pieces the Grecian observances, he next overthrows the Jewish ones also. For both Greeks and Jews practiced many observances, but the former from philosophy, the latter from the Law. First then, he makes at those against whom lay the heavier accusation. How, not after Christ?

Ver. 9, 10. For in Him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily: and in Him you are made full, who is the head of all principality and power.

Observe how in his accusing of the one he thrusts through the other, by first giving the solution, and then the objection. For such a solution is not suspected, and the hearer accepts it the rather, that the speaker is not making it his aim. For in that case indeed he would make a point of not coming off worsted, but in this, not so. For in Him dwells, that is, for God dwells in Him. But that you may not think Him enclosed, as in a body, he says, All the fullness of the Godhead bodily: and you are made full in Him. Others say that he intends the Church filled by His Godhead, as he elsewhere says, of Him that fills all in all Ephesians 1:23, and that the term bodily is here, as the body in the head. How is it then that he did not add, which is the Church? Some again say it is with reference to The Father, that he says that the fullness of the Godhead dwells in Him, but wrongly. First, because to dwell, cannot strictly be said of God: next, because the fullness is not that which receives, for the earth is the Lord's, and the fullness thereof Psalm 24:1; and again the Apostle, until the fullness of the Gentiles be come in. Romans 11:25 By fullness is meant the whole. Then the word bodily, what did it intend? As in a head. But why does he say the same thing over again? And you are made full in Him. What then does it mean? That you have nothing less than He. As it

dwelt in Him, so also in you. For Paul is ever straining to bring us near to Christ; as when he says, Hath raised us up with Him, and made us to sit with Him Ephesians 2:6: and, If we endure, we shall also reign with Him 2 Timothy 2:12: and, How shall He not also with Him freely give us all things Romans 8:32: and calling us fellow-heirs. Then as for His dignity. And He is the head of all principality and power. Ephesians 3:6 He that is above all, The Cause, is He not Consubstantial? Then he has added the benefit in a marvelous way; and far more marvelous than in the Epistle to the Romans. For there indeed he says, circumcision of the heart in the spirit, not in the letter Romans 2:29, but here, in Christ.

Ver. 11. In whom you were also circumcised with a circumcision not made with hands, in the putting off of the body of the flesh in the circumcision of Christ.

See how near he has come to the thing. He says, In the putting quite away, not putting off merely. The body of sins. He means, the old life. He is continually adverting to this in different ways, as he said above, Who delivered us out of the power of darkness, and reconciled us who were alienated, that we should be holy and without blemish. Colossians 1:13-21 No longer, he says, is the circumcision with the knife, but in Christ Himself; for no hand imparts this circumcision, as is the case there, but the Spirit. It circumcises not a part, but the whole man. It is the body both in the one and the other case, but in the one it is carnally, in the other it is spiritually circumcised; but not as the Jews, for you have not put off flesh, but sins. When and where? In Baptism. And what he calls circumcision, he again calls burial. Observe how he again passes on to the subject of righteous doings; of the sins, he says, of the flesh, the things they had done in the flesh. He speaks of a greater thing than circumcision, for they did not merely cast away that of which they were circumcised, but they destroyed it, they annihilated it.

Ver. 12. Buried with him, he says, in Baptism, wherein you were also raised with Him, through faith in the working of God, who raised Him from the dead.

But it is not burial only: for behold what he says, Wherein you were also raised with Him, through faith in the working of God, who raised Him from the dead. He has well said, of faith, for it is all of faith. You believed that God is able to raise, and so you were raised. Then note also His worthiness of belief, Who raised Him, he says, from the dead.

He now shows the Resurrection. And you who sometime were dead through your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, you, I say, did He quicken together with Him. For you lay under judgment of death. But even though ye died, it was a profitable death. Observe how again he shows what they deserved in the words he subjoins:

Ver. 13, 14, 15. Having forgiven us all our trespasses; having blotted out the bond written in ordinances that was against us, which was contrary to us: and he has taken it out of the way, nailing it to the Cross; having put off from himself the principalities and the powers, He made a show of them openly, triumphing over them in it.

Having forgiven us, he says, all our trespasses, those which produced that deadness. What then? Did He allow them to remain? No, He even wiped them out; He did not scratch them out merely; so that they could not be seen. In doctrines [ordinances], he says. What doctrines? The Faith. It is enough to believe. He has not set works against works, but works against faith. And what next? Blotting out is an advance upon remission; again he says, And has taken it out of the way. Nor yet even so did He preserve it, but rent it even in sunder, by nailing it to His Cross. Having put off from himself the principalities and the powers, He made a show of them openly, triumphing over them in it. Nowhere has he spoken in so lofty a strain.

Do you see how great His earnestness that the bond should be done away? To wit, we all were under sin and punishment. He Himself, through suffering punishment, did away with both the sin and the punishment, and He was punished on the Cross. To the Cross then He affixed it; as having power, He tore it asunder. What bond? He means either that which they said to Moses, namely, All that God has said will we do, and be obedient Exodus 24:3, or, if not that, this, that we owe to God obedience; or if not this, he means that the devil held possession of it, the bond which God made for Adam, saying, In the day you eat of the tree, you shall die. Genesis 2:17 This bond then the devil held in his possession. And Christ did not give it to us, but Himself tore it in two, the action of one who remits joyfully.

Having put off from himself the principalities and the powers. He means the diabolical powers; because human nature had arrayed itself in these, or because they had, as it were, a hold, when He became Man He put away from Himself that hold. What is the meaning of He made a show of them? And well said he so; never yet was the devil in so shameful a plight. For while expecting to have Him, he lost even those he had; and when That Body was nailed to the Cross, the dead arose. There death received his wound, having met his death-stroke from a dead body. And as an athlete, when he thinks he has hit his adversary, himself is caught in a fatal grasp; so truly does Christ also show, that to die with confidence is the devil's shame.

For he would have done everything to persuade men that He did not die, had he had the power. For seeing that of His Resurrection indeed all succeeding time was proof demonstrative; while of His death, no other time save that whereat it happened could ever furnish proof; therefore it was, that He died publicly in the sight of all men, but He arose not publicly, knowing that the aftertime would bear witness to the truth. For, that while the world was looking on, the serpent should be slain on high upon the Cross, herein is the marvel. For what did not the devil do, that He might die in secret? Hear Pilate saying, Take ye Him away, and crucify Him, for I find no fault in Him John 19:6, and withstanding them in a thousand ways. And again the Jews said to Him, If You are the Son of God, come down from the Cross. Matthew 27:40 Then further, when He had received a mortal wound, and He came not down, for this reason He was also committed to burial; for it was in His power to have risen immediately: but He did not, that the fact might be believed. And yet in cases of private death indeed, it is possible to impute them to a swoon, but here, it is not possible to do this either. For even the soldiers broke not His legs, like those of the others, that it might be made manifest that He was dead. And those who buried The Body are known; and therefore too the Jews themselves seal the stone along with the soldiers. For, what was most of all attended to, was this very thing, that it should not be in obscurity. And the witnesses to it are from enemies, from the Jews. Hear them saying to Pilate, That deceiver said, while he was yet alive, After three days I rise again. Command therefore that the sepulchre Matthew 26:63-64 be guarded by the soldiers. This was accordingly done, themselves also sealing it. Hear them further saying even afterwards to the Apostles, You intend to bring this Man's blood upon us. Acts 5:28 He suffered not the very fashion of His Cross to be put to shame. For since the Angels have suffered nothing like it, He therefore does everything for this, showing that His death achieved a mighty work. There was, as it were, a single combat. Death wounded Christ: but Christ, being wounded, did afterwards kill death. He that seemed to be immortal, was destroyed by a mortal body; and this the whole world saw. And what is truly wonderful is, that He committed not this thing to another. But there was made again a second bond of another kind than the former.

Beware then lest we be condemned by this, after saying, I renounce Satan, and array myself with You, O Christ. Rather however this should not be called a bond, but a covenant. For that is a bond, whereby one is held accountable for debts: but this is a covenant. It has no penalty, nor says it, If this be done or if this

be not done: what Moses said when he sprinkled the blood of the covenant, by this God also promised everlasting life. All this is a covenant. There, it was slave with master, here it is friend with friend: there, it is said, In the day that you eat thereof you shall die Genesis 2:17; an immediate threatening; but here is nothing of the kind.

God arrives, and here is nakedness, and there was nakedness; there, however, one that had sinned was made naked, because he sinned, but here, one is made naked, that he may be set free. Then, man put off the glory which he had; now, he puts off the old man; and before going up (to the contest), puts him off as easily, as it were his garments. He is anointed, as wrestlers about to enter the lists. For he is born at once; and as that first man was, not little by little, but immediately. (He is anointed,) not as the priests of old time, on the head alone, but rather in more abundant measure.

For he indeed was anointed on the head, the right ear, the hand Leviticus 8:23-24; to excite him to obedience, and to good works; but this one, all over. For he comes not to be instructed merely; but to wrestle, and to be exercised; he is advanced to another creation. For when one confesses (his belief) in the life everlasting, he has confessed a second creation. He took dust from the earth, and formed man Genesis 2:7: but now, dust no longer, but the Holy Spirit; with This he is formed, with this harmonized, even as Himself was in the womb of the Virgin.

He said not in Paradise, but in Heaven. For deem not that, because the subject is earth, it is done on earth; he is removed there, to Heaven, there these things are transacted, in the midst of Angels: God takes up your soul above, above He harmonizes it anew, He places you near to the Kingly Throne. He is formed in the water, he receives spirit instead of a soul. And after he is formed, He brings to him, not beasts, but demons, and their prince, and says, Tread upon serpents and scorpions.

Luke 10:19 He says not, Let Us make man in our image, and after our likeness Genesis 1:26, but what? He gives them to become the sons of God; but of God, he says, they were born. John 1:12-13 Then that thou give no ear to the serpent, straightway he teaches you to say, I renounce you, that is, whatsoever you say, I will not hear you. Then, that he destroy you not by means of others, it is said, and your pomp, and your service, and your angels. He has set him no more to keep Paradise, but to have his citizenship in heaven.

For straightway when he comes up he pronounces these words, Our Father, Which art in Heaven,...Your will be done, as in Heaven, so on earth. The plain falls not on your sight, you see not tree, nor fountain, but straightway you take into you the Lord Himself, you are mingled with His Body, you are intermixed with that Body that lies above, whither the devil cannot approach. No woman is there, for him to approach, and deceive as the weaker; for it is said, There is neither female, nor male.

Galatians 3:28 If you go not down to him, he will not have power to come up where you are; for you are in Heaven, and Heaven is unapproachable by the devil. It has no tree with knowledge of good and evil, but the Tree of Life only. No more shall woman be formed from your side, but we all are one from the side of Christ. For if they who have been anointed of men take no harm by serpents, neither will you take any harm at all, so long as you are anointed; that you may be able to grasp the Serpent and choke him, to tread upon serpents and scorpions.

Luke 10:19 But as the gifts are great, so is the punishment great also. It is not possible for him that has fallen from Paradise, to dwell in front of Paradise Genesis 3:24, nor to reascend there from whence we have fallen. But what after this? Hell, and the worm undying. But far be it that any of us should become

amenable to this punishment! But living virtuously, let us earnestly strive to do throughout His will. Let us become well-pleasing to God, that we may be able both to escape the punishment, and to obtain the good things eternal, of which may we all be counted worthy, through the grace and love toward man, etc.

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