

Colossians 3:16, 17

by St. John Chrysostom

The sermon emphasizes the importance of letting the word of Christ dwell in us richly, teaching and admonishing one another with psalms and hymns, and doing all in the name of the Lord Jesus.

Scripture: Proverbs 9:10, Philippians 2:3, Colossians 3:16-17, 1 Timothy 4:13

Topics: "Christian Living", "Spiritual Growth"

Description

John Chrysostom emphasizes the importance of letting the word of Christ dwell richly in believers, guiding them to focus on heavenly teachings rather than worldly matters. He encourages the faithful to teach and admonish one another with psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs, singing with grace in their hearts to God. Chrysostom urges believers to immerse themselves in the Scriptures, especially the New Testament, Acts, and the Gospels, for constant spiritual nourishment and guidance. He highlights the significance of wisdom in all aspects of life, teaching that virtue, humility, almsgiving, and other godly attributes are essential for a fruitful Christian walk. The preacher stresses the power of the Name of the Lord Jesus, urging believers to do everything in word and deed in His name, giving thanks to God the Father through Him.

Transcript

Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom; teaching and admonishing one another with psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to God. And whatsoever you do in word or in deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through Him.

Having exhorted them to be thankful, he shows also the way, that, of which I have lately discoursed to you. And what does he say? Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly; or rather not this way alone, but another also. For I indeed said that we ought to reckon up those who have suffered things more terrible, and those who have undergone sufferings more grievous than ours, and to give thanks that such have not fallen to our lot; but what does he say? Let the word of Christ dwell in you; that is, the teaching, the doctrines, the exhortation, wherein He says, that the present life is nothing, nor yet its good things. If we know this, we shall yield to no hardships whatever. Matthew 6:25, etc./span> Let it dwell in you, he says, richly, not simply dwell, but with great abundance. Harken ye, as many as are worldly, and have the charge of wife and children; how to you too he commits especially the reading of the Scriptures and that not to be done lightly, nor in any sort of way, but with much earnestness. For as the rich in money can bear fine and damages, so he that is rich in the doctrines of philosophy will bear not poverty only, but all

calamities also easily, yea, more easily than that one. For as for him, by discharging the fine, the man who is rich must needs be impoverished, and found wanting, and if he should often suffer in that way, will no longer be able to bear it, but in this case it is not so; for we do not even expend our wholesome thoughts when it is necessary for us to bear anything we would not choose, but they abide with us continually. And mark the wisdom of this blessed man. He said not, Let the word of Christ be in you, simply, but what? dwell in you, and richly.

In all wisdom, teaching and admonishing one another. In all, says he. Virtue he calls wisdom, and lowliness of mind is wisdom, and almsgiving, and other such like things, are wisdom; just as the contraries are folly, for cruelty too comes of folly. Whence in many places it calls the whole of sin folly. The fool, says one, has said in his heart, There is no God Psalm 14:1; and again, My wounds stink and are corrupt from the face of my foolishness. Psalm 38:5, Septuagint For what is more foolish, tell me, than one who indeed wraps himself about in his own garments, but regards not his brethren that are naked; who feeds dogs, and cares not that the image of God is famishing; who is merely persuaded that human things are nought, and yet clings to them as if immortal. As then nothing is more foolish than such an one, so is nothing wiser than one that achieves virtue. For mark; how wise he is, says one. He imparts of his substance, he is pitiful, he is loving to men, he has well considered that he bears a common nature with them; he has well considered the use of wealth, that it is worthy of no estimation; that one ought to be sparing of bodies that are of kin to one, rather than of wealth. He that is a despiser of glory is wholly wise, for he knows human affairs; the knowledge of things divine and human, is philosophy. So then he knows what things are divine, and what are human, and from the one he keeps himself, on the other he bestows his pains. And he knows how to give thanks also to God in all things, he considers the present life as nothing; therefore he is neither delighted with prosperity, nor grieved with the opposite condition.

Tarry not, I entreat, for another to teach you; you have the oracles of God. No man teaches you as they; for he indeed oft grudges much for vainglory's sake and envy. Hearken, I entreat you, all you that are careful for this life, and procure books that will be medicines for the soul. If you will not any other, yet get you at least the New Testament, the Apostolic Epistles, the Acts, the Gospels, for your constant teachers. If grief befall you, dive into them as into a chest of medicines; take thence comfort of your trouble, be it loss, or death, or bereavement of relations; or rather dive not into them merely, but take them wholly to you; keep them in your mind.

This is the cause of all evils, the not knowing the Scriptures. We go into battle without arms, and how ought we to come off safe? Well contented should we be if we can be safe with them, let alone without them. Throw not the whole upon us! Sheep you are, still not without reason, but rational; Paul commits much to you also. They that are under instruction, are not for ever learning; for then they are not taught. If you are for ever learning, you will never learn. Do not so come as meaning to be always learning; (for so you will never know;) but so as to finish learning, and to teach others. In the arts do not all persons continue for set times, in the sciences, and in a word, in all the arts? Thus we all fix definitely a certain known time; but if you are ever learning, it is a certain proof that you have learned nothing.

This reproach God spoke against the Jews. Borne from the belly, and instructed even to old age. Isaiah 46:3-4, Septuagint If you had not always been expecting this, all things would not have gone backward in this way. Had it been so, that some had finished learning, and others were about to have finished, our work would have been forward; you would both have given place to others, and would have helped us as well. Tell me, were some to go to a grammarian and continue always learning their letters, would they not give their teacher much trouble? How long shall I have to discourse to you concerning life? In the Apostles'

times it was not thus, but they continually leaped from place to place, appointing those who first learned to be the teachers of any others that were under instruction. Thus they were enabled to circle the world, through not being bound to one place. How much instruction, do you think, do your brethren in the country stand in need of, [they] and their teachers? But you hold me riveted fast here. For, before the head is set right, it is superfluous to proceed to the rest of the body. You throw everything upon us. You alone ought to learn from us, and your wives from you, your children from you; but you leave all to us. Therefore our toil is excessive.

Teaching, he says, and admonishing one another with psalms and hymns and spiritual songs. Mark also the considerateness of Paul. Seeing that reading is toilsome, and its irksomeness great, he led them not to histories, but to psalms, that you might at once delight your soul with singing, and gently beguile your labors. Hymns, he says, and spiritual songs. But now your children will utter songs and dances of Satan, like cooks, and caterers, and musicians; no one knows any psalm, but it seems a thing to be ashamed of even, and a mockery, and a joke. There is the treasury house of all these evils. For whatsoever soil the plant stands in, such is the fruit it bears; if in a sandy and salty soil, of like nature is its fruit; if in a sweet and rich one, it is again similar. So the matter of instruction is a sort of fountain. Teach him to sing those psalms which are so full of the love of wisdom; as at once concerning chastity, or rather, before all, of not companying with the wicked, immediately with the very beginning of the book; (for therefore also it was that the prophet began on this wise, Blessed is the man that has not walked in the counsel of the ungodly; Psalm 1:1, and again, I have not sat in the council of vanity; Psalm 26:4, Septuagint, and again, in his sight a wicked doer is contemned, but he honors those that fear the Lord, Psalm 15:4, Septuagint of companying with the good, (and these subjects you will find there in abundance,) of restraining the belly, of restraining the hand, of refraining from excess, of not overreaching; that money is nothing, nor glory, and other things such like.

When in these you have led him on from childhood, little by little you will lead him forward even to the higher things. The Psalms contain all things, but the Hymns again have nothing human. When he has been instructed out of the Psalms, he will then know hymns also, as a diviner thing. For the Powers above chant hymns, not psalms. For a hymn, says one, is not comely in the mouth of a sinner Sirach 15:9; and again, My eyes shall be upon the faithful of the land, that they sit together with me Psalm 101:6-7, Septuagint; and again, he that works haughtiness has not dwelt in the midst of my house; and again, He that walks in a blameless way, he ministered unto me. Psalm 101:6, Septuagint

So that you should safely guard them from intermixing themselves, not only with friends, but even with servants. For the harm done to the free is incalculable, when we place over them corrupt slaves. For if when enjoying all the benefit of a father's affection and wisdom, they can with difficulty be preserved safe throughout; when we hand them over to the unscrupulousness of servants, they use them like enemies, thinking that they will prove milder masters to them, when they have made them perfect fools, and weak, and worthy of no respect.

More than than all other things together, let us attend seriously to this. I have loved, says he, those that love your law. Psalm 119:165, not exact This man then let us too emulate, and such let us love. And that the young may further be taught chastity, let them hear the Prophet, saying, My loins are filled with illusions Psalm 38:7, Septuagint; and again let them hear him saying, You will utterly destroy every one that goes a whoring from You. Psalm 73:27, Septuagint And, that one ought to restrain the belly, let them hear again, And slew, he says, the more part of them while the meat was yet in their mouths. Psalm 78:30, Septuagint And that they ought to be above bribes, If riches become abundant, set [not] your heart upon

them Psalm 62:10; and that they ought to keep glory in subjection, Nor shall his glory descend together after him. Psalm 49:17 And not to envy the wicked, Be not envious against them that work unrighteousness. Psalm 37:1 And to count power as nothing, I saw the ungodly in exceeding high place, and lifting himself up as the cedars of Libanus, and I passed by, and lo! He was not. Psalm 37:35 And to count these present things as nothing, They counted the people happy, that are in such a case; happy are the people, whose helper is the Lord their God. Psalm 144:15, Septuagint That we do not sin without notice, but that there is a retribution, for, he says, You shall render to every man according to his works. Psalm 62:12, Septuagint But why does he not so requite them day by day? God is a judge, he says, righteous, and strong, and longsuffering. Psalm 7:11 That lowliness of mind is good, Lord, he says, my heart is not lifted up Psalm 131:1: that pride is evil, Therefore, he said, pride took hold on them wholly Psalm 73:6, Septuagint; and again, The Lord resists the proud; and again, Their injustice shall come out as of fatness. That almsgiving is good, He has dispersed, he has given to the needy, his righteousness endures forever. Proverbs 3:34 And that to pity is praiseworthy, He is a good man that pities, and lends. Psalm 73:7, Septuagint And you will find there many more doctrines than these, full of true philosophy; such as, that one ought not to speak evil, Him that privily slanders his neighbor, him did I chase from me. Psalm 112:9

What is the hymn of those above? The Faithful know. What say the cherubim above? What say the Angels? Glory to God in the highest. Psalm 112:5 Therefore after the psalmody come the hymns, as a thing of more perfection. With psalms, he says, with hymns, with spiritual songs, with grace singing in your hearts to God. Psalm 101:5, Septuagint He means either this, that God because of grace has given us these things; or, with the songs in grace; or, admonishing and teaching one another in grace; or, that they had these gifts in grace; or, it is an exegesis and he means, from the grace of the Spirit. Singing in your hearts to God. Not simply with the mouth, he means, but with heedfulness. For this is to sing to God, but that to the air, for the voice is scattered without result. Not for display, he means. And even if you be in the market-place, you can collect yourself, and sing unto God, no one hearing you. For Moses also in this way prayed, and was heard, for He says, Why do you cry unto Me? Exodus 14:15 albeit he said nothing, but cried in thought -- wherefore also God alone heard him -- with a contrite heart. For it is not forbidden one even when walking to pray in his heart, and to dwell above.

Ver. 17. And whatsoever you do, he says, in word or in deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through Him.

For if we thus do, there will be nothing polluted, nothing unclean, wherever Christ is called on. If you eat, if you drink, if you marry, if you travel, do all in the Name of God, that is, calling Him to aid you: in everything first praying to Him, so take hold of your business. Would you speak somewhat? Set this in front. For this cause we also place in front of our epistles the Name of the Lord. Wheresoever the Name of God is, all is auspicious. For if the names of Consuls make writings sure, much more does the Name of Christ. Or he means this; after God say ye and do everything, do not introduce the Angels besides. Do you eat? Give thanks to God both before and afterwards. Do you sleep? Give thanks to God both before and afterwards. Launchest thou into the forum? Do the same -- nothing worldly, nothing of this life. Do all in the Name of the Lord, and all shall be prospered to you. Whereonsoever the Name is placed, there all things are auspicious. If it casts out devils, if it drives away diseases, much more does it render business easy.

And what is to do in word or in deed? Either requesting or performing anything whatever. Hear how in the Name of God Abraham sent his servant; David in the Name of God slew Goliath. Marvelous is His Name and great. Again, Jacob sending his sons says, My God give you favor in the sight of the man. Genesis

43:14 For he that does this has for his ally, God, without whom he dared do nothing. As honored then by being called upon, He will in turn honor by making their business easy. Invoke the Son, give thanks to the Father. For when the Son is invoked, the Father is invoked, and when He is thanked, the Son has been thanked.

These things let us learn, not as far as words only, but to fulfill them also by works. Nothing is equal to this Name, marvelous is it everywhere. Your Name, he says, is ointment poured forth. Canticles 1:3 He that has uttered it is straightway filled with fragrance. No man, it is said, can call Jesus Lord, but by the Holy Ghost. 1 Corinthians 12:3 So great things does this Name Work. If you have said, In the Name of Father, and Son, and Holy Ghost, with faith, you have accomplished everything. See, how great things you have done! You have created a man, and wrought all the rest (that comes) of Baptism! So, when used in commanding diseases, terrible is The Name. Therefore the devil introduced those of the Angels, envying us the honor. Such incantations are for the demons. Even if it be Angel, even if it be Archangel, even if it be Cherubim, allow it not; for neither will these Powers accept such addresses, but will even toss them away from them, when they have beheld their Master dishonored. I have honored you, He says, and have said, Call upon Me; and do you dishonor Him? If you chant this incantation with faith, you will drive away both diseases and demons, and even if you have failed to drive away the disease, this is not from lack of power, but because it is expedient it should be so. According to Your greatness, he says, so also is Your praise. Psalm 48:10 By this Name has the world been converted, the tyranny dissolved, the devil trampled on, the heavens opened. We have been regenerated by this Name. This if we have, we beam forth; This makes both martyrs and confessors; This let us hold fast as a great gift, that we may live in glory, and be well-pleasing to God, and be counted worthy of the good things promised to them that love Him, through the grace and lovingkindness, etc.

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