

# Hebrews 10:26-31

by St. John Chrysostom

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*The sermon emphasizes the importance of being patient in suffering and grateful in prosperity, and warns against the dangers of willful sin and despising the Son of God.*

**Scripture:** Hebrews 10:29

**Topics:** "Repentance", "Judgment"

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## Description

John Chrysostom emphasizes the importance of bearing fruit through good works after receiving the knowledge of the truth, warning against willful sin which leads to a fearful judgment and fiery indignation. He highlights the significance of repentance and the dangers of delaying baptism, stressing that there is no second sacrifice for sins. Chrysostom urges believers to be patient in suffering, generous in kindness, and to prioritize spiritual wealth over material possessions, reminding them of the consequences of falling into the hands of the Living God.

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## Transcript

For if we sin willfully, after we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remains no more sacrifice for sins, but a certain fearful looking for of judgment, and fiery indignation which shall devour the adversaries.

1. Trees which have been planted, and have had the advantage of all other care, and the hands and the labors of the cultivator, and yet yield no return for the labors, are pulled up by the roots, and handed over to the fire. So somewhat of this kind takes place also in the case of our Illumination. For when Christ has planted us, and we have enjoyed the watering of the Spirit, and then show no fruit; fire, even that of Hell, awaits us, and flame unquenchable.

Paul therefore having exhorted them to love and to bringing forth the fruit of good works, and having urged them from the kindlier [considerations] (What are these? That we have an entrance into the holy of holies, the new way which He has inaugurated for us. Hebrews 10:20), does the same again from the more gloomy ones, speaking thus. For having said, not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is, but exhorting one another, and so much the more, as you see the day approaching Hebrews 10:25, this being sufficient for consolation, he added, For if we sin willfully after we have received the knowledge of the truth. There is need, he means, of good works, yea, very great need, For if we sin willfully after we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remains no more sacrifice for sins. You were cleansed; you were set free from the charges against you, you have become a son. If then thou

return to your former vomit, there awaits you on the other hand excommunication and fire and whatever such things there are. For there is no second sacrifice.

2. At this place we are again assailed by those who take away repentance, and by those who delay to come to baptism. The one saying, that it is not safe for them to come to baptism, since there is no second remission: And the other asserting that it is not safe to impart the mysteries to those who have sinned, if there is no second remission.

What shall we say then to them both? That he does not take away repentance, nor the propitiation through repentance, nor does he thrust away and cast down with despair the fallen. He is not thus an enemy of our salvation; but what? He takes away the second Washing. For he did not say, no more is there repentance, or no more is there remission, but no more is there a sacrifice, that is, there is no more a second Cross. For this is what he means by sacrifice. For by one sacrifice, he says, He has perfected forever them that are sanctified Hebrews 10:14; not like the Jewish [rites.]. For this reason he has treated so much throughout concerning the Sacrifice, that it is one, even one; not wishing to show this only, that herein it differed from the Jewish [rites], but also to make [men] more steadfast, so that they might no longer expect another sacrifice according to the Jewish law.

For, says he, if we sin willfully. See how he is disposed to pardon. He says, if we sin willfully, so that there is pardon for those [who sin] not willfully. After the knowledge of the truth: He either means, of Christ, or of all doctrines. There remains no more sacrifice for sins, but what? A certain fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation which shall devour the adversaries. By Adversaries he means not the unbelievers, but those also who do what is against virtue; or [else he means] that the same fire shall receive them of the household also, which [receives] the adversaries. Then expressing its devouring nature, he says, as if giving it life, fiery indignation which shall devour the adversaries. For as a wild beast when irritated and very fierce and savage, would not rest till it could lay hold on some one and eat him up; so also that fire, like one goaded by indignation, whatever it can lay hold of does not let go, but devours and tears it to pieces.

3. Next he adds also the reason of the threat, that it is on good grounds, that it is just; for this contributes to confidence, when we show that it is just.

Hebrews 10:28

For, he says, Hebrews 10:28 He that has despised Moses' law dies without mercy, under two or three witnesses. Without mercy, he says; so that there is no pardon, no pity there although the law is of Moses; for he ordained the most of it.

What is under two or three? If two or three bore witness, he means, they immediately suffered punishment.

Hebrews 10:29

If then under the Old [Covenant], when the law of Moses is set at nought, there is so great punishment, Hebrews 10:29 Of how much sorer punishment, suppose ye, shall he be thought worthy, who has trodden under foot the Son of God and has counted the blood of the covenant an unholy [a common] thing, and has done despite unto the Spirit of grace?

And how does a man tread under foot the Son of God? When partaking of Him in the mysteries (he would say) he has wrought sin, has he not trodden Him under foot? Has he not despised Him? For just as we make no account of those who are trodden under foot, so also, they who sin have made no account of Christ; and so they have sinned. You are become the Body of Christ, and givest you yourself to the devil, so that he treads you under foot.

And accounted the blood a common thing, he says. What is common? It is unclean, or the having nothing beyond other things.

And done despite unto the Spirit of grace. For he that accepts not a benefit, does despite to the benefactor. He made you a son: and you wish to become a slave. He came to dwell with you, and you bring in wicked imaginations to Him. Christ wished to stay with you: and you tread Him down by surfeiting, by drunkenness.

Let us listen, whoever partake of the mysteries unworthily: let us listen, whoever approach that Table unworthily. Give not (He says) that which is holy unto the dogs, lest in time they trample them under their feet Matthew 7:6, that is, lest they despise, lest they repudiate [them]. Yet he did not say this, but what was more fearful than this. For he constrains their souls by what is fearful. For this also is adapted to convert, no less than consolation. And at the same time he shows both the difference, and the chastisement, and sets forth the judgment upon them, as though it were an evident matter. Of how much sorer punishment, suppose ye, shall he be thought worthy? Here also he appears to me to hint at the mysteries.

Hebrews 10:30-31

4. Next he adds testimony, saying, Hebrews 10:30-31 It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the Living God. For it is written: Vengeance [belongs] unto Me, I will recompense, says the Lord. And again, The Lord shall judge His people. Let us fall, it is said, into the hands of the Lord, and not into the hands of men. Sirach 2:18 But if you repent not, you shall fall into the hands of God: that is fearful: it is nothing, to fall into the hands of men. When, he means, we see any man punished here, let us not be terrified at the things present, but shudder at the things to come. For according to His mercy, so is His wrath. And, His indignation will rest upon sinners. Sirach 5:6

At the same time too he hints at something else. For Vengeance [belongs] unto Me, he says, I will recompense. This is said in regard to their enemies, who are doing evil, not to those who are suffering evil. Here he is consoling them too, all but saying, God abides for ever and lives, so that even if they receive not [their reward] now, they will receive it hereafter. They ought to groan, not we: for we indeed shall fall into their hands, but they into the hands of God. For neither is it the sufferer who suffers the ill, but he that does it; nor is it he who receives a benefit that is benefited, but the benefactor.

5. Knowing then these things, let us be patient as to suffering evil, forward as to kindnesses. And this will be, if we think lightly of wealth and honor. He that has stripped himself of those affections, is of all men most generous, and more wealthy even than he who wears the purple. Do you see not how many evils come through money? I do not say how many through covetousness, but merely by our attachment to these things. For instance, if a man has lost his money, he leads a life more wretched than any death. Why do you grieve, O man? Why do you weep? Because God has delivered You from excessive watching? Because thou dost not sit trembling and fearful? Again, if any one chain you to a treasure, commanding you to sit there perpetually, and to keep watch for other people's goods, you are grieved, you

are disgusted; and do you, after you have bound yourself with most grievous chains, grieve when you are delivered from the slavery? Truly sorrows and joys are [matters] of fancy. For we guard them as if we had another's.

Now my discourse is for the women. A woman often has a garment woven with gold, and this she shakes, wraps up in linen, keeps with care, trembles for it, and has no enjoyment of it. For either she dies, or she becomes a widow. Or, even if none of these things happen, yet from fear lest wearing it out by continual use, she should deprive herself of it, she deprives herself of it in another way, by sparing it. But she passes it on [you say] to another. But neither is this clear: and even if she should pass it on, the other again will also use it in the same way. And if any one will search their houses, he will find that the most costly garments and other choice things, are tended with special honor, as if they were living masters. For she does not use them habitually, but fears and trembles, driving away moths and the other things that are wont to eat them, and laying most of them in perfumes and spices, nor permitting all persons to be counted worthy of the sight of them, but oftentimes carefully putting them in order herself with her husband.

Tell me: did not Paul with reason call covetousness idolatry? Colossians 3:5 For these show as great honor to their garments, their gold, as they to their idols.

6. How long shall we stir up the mire? How long shall we be fixed to the clay and the brickmaking? For as they toiled for the King of the Egyptians, so do we also toil for the devil, and are scourged with far more grievous stripes. For by how much the soul surpasses the body, by so much does anxiety the weals of scourging. We are scourged every day, we are full of fear, in anxiety, in trembling. But if we will groan, if we will look up to God, He sends to us, not Moses, nor Aaron, but His own Word, and compunction. When this [word] has come, and taken hold of our souls, He will free from the bitter slavery, He will bring us forth out of Egypt, from unprofitable and vain zeal, from slavery which brings no gain. For they indeed went forth after having at least received golden [ornaments], the wages for building, but we [receive] nothing: and would it were nothing. For indeed we also receive, not golden ornaments, but the evils of Egypt, sins and chastisements and punishments.

Let us then learn to be made use of, let us learn to be spitefully treated; this is the part of a Christian. Let us think lightly of golden raiment, let us think lightly of money, that we may not think lightly of our salvation. Let us think lightly of money and not think lightly of the soul. For this is chastised, this is punished: those things remain here, but the soul departs yonder. Why, tell me, do you cut yourself to pieces, without perceiving it?

7. These things I say to the overreaching. And it is well to say also to those who are overreached. Bear their overreachings generously; they are ruining themselves, not you. You indeed they defraud of your money, but they strip themselves of the good will and help of God. And he that is stripped of that, though he clothe himself with the whole wealth of the world, is of all men most poor: and so he who is the poorest of all, if he have this, is the wealthiest of all. For the Lord (it is said) is my shepherd, and I shall lack nothing. Psalm 23:1

Tell me now, if you had had a husband, a great and admirable man, who thoroughly loved you and cared for you, and then knew that he would live always, and not die before you, and would give you all things to enjoy in security, as your own: would you then have wished to possess anything? Even if you had been stripped of all, would you not have thought yourself the richer for this?

Why then do you grieve? Because you have no property? But consider that you have had the occasion of sin taken away. But is it because you had [property] and have been deprived of it? But you have acquired the good will of God. And how have I acquired it (you say)? He has said, Wherefore do ye not rather suffer wrong? 1 Corinthians 6:7 He has said, Blessed are they who bear all things with thankfulness. Consider therefore how great good will you will enjoy, if you show forth those things by [your] works. For one thing only is required from us, in all things to give thanks to God, and [then] we have all things in abundance. I mean, for instance: have you lost ten thousand pounds of gold? Forthwith give thanks unto God, and you have acquired ten times ten thousand, by that word and thanksgiving.

8. For tell me when do you account Job blessed? When he had so many camels, and flocks, and herds, or when he uttered that saying: The Lord gave, the Lord has taken away? Job 1:21 Therefore also the devil causes us losses, not that he may take away our goods only, for he knows that is nothing, but that through them he may compel us to utter some blasphemy. So in the case of the blessed Job too, he did not strive after this only, to make him poor, but also to make him a blasphemer. At any rate, when he had stripped him of every thing, observe what he says to him through his wife, Say some word against the Lord, and die. Job 2:9 And yet, O accursed one, you had stripped him of everything. 'But' (he says) 'this is not what I was striving for; for I have not yet accomplished that for which I did all. I was striving to deprive him of God's help: for this cause I deprived him of his goods too. This is what I wish, that other is nothing. If this be not gained, he not only has not been injured at all, but has even been benefited.' You see that even that wicked demon knows how great is the loss in this matter?

And see him plotting the treachery through the wife. Hear this, you husbands, as many as have wives that are fond of money, and compel you to blaspheme God. Call Job to mind. But let us see, if it please you, his great moderation, how he silenced her. Wherefore (he says) have you spoken as one of the foolish women [speaks]? Job 2:10 Of a truth evil communications corrupt good manners 1 Corinthians 15:33, at all times indeed, but particularly in calamities: then they who give evil advice have strength. For if the soul is even of itself prone to impatience, how much more, when there is also an adviser. Is it not thrust into a pit? A wife is a great good, as also a great evil. For because a wife is a great [good], observe from what point he [Satan] wishes to break through the strong wall. 'The depriving him of his property' (he says) 'did not take him; the loss has produced no great effect.' Therefore he says, 'If indeed he will curse you to your face.' Job 2:5 You see whither he was aspiring.

If then we bear [losses] thankfully, we shall recover even these things; and if we should not recover them, our reward will be greater. For when he had wrestled nobly, then God restored to him these things also. When He had shown the devil, that it is not for these things that he serves Him, then He restored them also to him.

9. For such is He. When God sees that we are not riveted to things of this life, then He gives them to us. When He sees that we set a higher value on things spiritual, then He also bestows on us things carnal. But not first, lest we should break away from things spiritual: and to spare us He does not give carnal things, to keep us away from them, even against our will.

Not so (you say) but if I receive [them], I am satisfied, and am the more thankful. It is false, O man, for then especially will you be thoughtless.

Why then (you say) does He give [them] to many? Whence is it clear, that He gives [them]? But who else, you say, gives? Their overreaching, their plundering. How then does He allow these things? As He also

[allows] murders, thefts, and violence.

What then (you will say) as to those who receive by succession an inheritance from their fathers, being themselves full of evils innumerable? And what of this? How does God suffer them (you say) to enjoy these things? Surely just as He allows thieves, and murderers, and other evil doers. For it is not now the time of judgment, but of the best course of life.

And what I just now said, that I repeat, that they shall suffer greater punishment, who, when they have enjoyed all good things, do not even so become better. For all shall not be punished alike; but they who, even after His benefits, have continued evil, shall suffer a greater punishment, while they who after poverty [have done this] not so. And that this is true, hear what He says to David, Did I not give you all your master's goods? 2 Samuel 12:8 Whenever then you see a young man that has received a paternal inheritance without labor and continues wicked, be assured that his punishment is increased and the vengeance is made more intense. Let us not then emulate these; but if any man has succeeded to virtue, if any man has obtained spiritual wealth, [him let us emulate]. For (it is said) Woe to them that trust in their riches cf. Psalm 49:6: Blessed are they that fear the Lord. Psalm 128:1 To which of these, tell me, would you belong? Doubtless to those who are pronounced blessed. Therefore emulate these, not the other, that you also may obtain the good things which are laid up for them. Which may we all obtain, in Christ Jesus our Lord, with whom to the Father be glory together with the Holy Ghost, now and for ever, and world without end. Amen.

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