

Homily 28 on Romans

by St. John Chrysostom

St. John Chrysostom's Homily 28 on Romans emphasizes the fulfillment of God's promises through Christ and the call for unity and humility among believers.

Scripture: Deuteronomy 32:43, Psalm 18:46, Psalm 42:5, Psalm 44:22, Psalm 117:1, Isaiah 11:1, Romans 15:3-4, Romans 15:8-9, Romans 15:13

Topics: "Unity Of Believers", "Holy Spirit"

Description

John Chrysostom preaches on Romans 15:8, emphasizing how Jesus Christ, as a Minister of the circumcision, fulfilled the promises made to the fathers, showing His concern for both Jews and Gentiles. Chrysostom highlights the importance of unity between Jews and Gentiles, with Gentiles being saved by God's mercy and Jews by promises, urging them to glorify God together. He concludes with a prayer for believers to be filled with joy, peace, and hope through the power of the Holy Spirit, encouraging them to abound in hope and good works.

Transcript

Rom. XV. 8

Now I say that Jesus Christ was a minister of the circumcision for the truth of God, to confirm the promises made unto the fathers.

Again, he is speaking of Christ's concern for us, still holding to the same topic, and showing what great things He has done for us, and how He pleased not Himself. Romans 15:3 And besides this, there is another point which he makes good, that those of the Gentiles are debtors to a larger amount unto God. And if to a larger amount, then they ought to bear with the weak among the Jews. For since he had spoken very sharply to such, lest this should make these elated, he humbles their unreasonableness, by showing that it was by promise made to the fathers that they had the good things given them, while they of the Gentiles had them out of pity and love toward man only.

And this is the reason of his saying, And that the Gentiles might glorify God for his mercy. But that what is said may be made plainer, it is well to listen once more to the words themselves, that you may see what Christ's having been made a Minister of the circumcision for the truth of God, to confirm the promises made unto the fathers, means. What then is that which is stated? There had been a promise made to Abraham, saying, Unto you will I give the earth, and to your seed, and in your seed shall all the nations be

blessed.

Genesis 12:7; 22:18 But after this, they of the seed of Abraham all became subject to punishment. For the Law wrought wrath unto them by being transgressed, and thenceforward deprived them of that promise made unto the fathers. Therefore the Son came and wrought with the Father, in order that those promises might come true, and have their issue. For having fulfilled the whole Law in which He also fulfilled the circumcision, and having by it, and by the Cross, freed them from the curse of the transgression, He suffered not this promise to fall to the ground.

When then he calls Him a Minister of the circumcision, he means this, that by having come and fulfilled the Law, and been circumcised, and born of the seed of Abraham, He undid the curse, stayed the anger of God, made also those that were to receive the promises fit for them, as being once for all freed from their alienation. To prevent then these accused persons from saying, How then came Christ to be circumcised and to keep the whole Law? He turns their argument to the opposite conclusion.

For it was not that the Law might continue, but that He might put an end to it, and free you from the curse thereof, and set you entirely at liberty from the dominion of that Law. For it was because you had transgressed the Law, that He fulfilled it, not that you might fulfil it, but that He might confirm to you the promises made unto the fathers, which the Law had caused to be suspended, by showing you to have offended, and to be unworthy of the inheritance. And so thou also art saved by grace, since you were cast off.

Do not thou then bicker, nor perversely cling to the Law at this unsuitable time, since it would have cast you also out of the promise, unless Christ had suffered so many things for you. And He did suffer these, not because you were deserving of salvation, but that God might be true. And then that this might not puff up him of the Gentiles, he says.

Ver. 9. And that the Gentiles might glorify God for His mercy.

But what he means is this. Those of the Jews would have had promises, even though they were unworthy. But you had not this even, but wast saved from love towards man alone, even if, to put it at the lowest, they too would not have been the better for the promises, unless Christ had come. But yet that he might amalgamate (or temper, κερ■σ■) them and not allow them to rise up against the weak, he makes mention of the promises. But of these he says that it was by mercy alone that they were saved. Hence they are the most bound to glorify God. And a glory it is to God that they be blended together, be united, praise with one mind, bear the weaker, neglect not the member that is broken off. Then he adds testimonies, in which he shows that the man of the Jews ought to blend himself with those of the Gentiles; and so he says, As it is written, For this cause I will confess to You among the Gentiles, O Lord, and will sing unto Your Name. Psalm 18:46

Ver. 10-12. And, rejoice, you Gentiles, with His people. And, Praise the Lord, all you Gentiles Deuteronomy 32:43; and let all people laud Him. Psalm 117:1 And, There shall be a root of Jesse, and He that shall rise to reign over the Gentiles, in Him shall the Gentiles trust. Isaiah 11:1, 10

Now all these quotations he has given to show that we ought to be united, and to glorify God; and also, to humble the Jew, that he may not lift himself up over these, since all the prophets called these, as well as to persuade the man of the Gentiles to be lowly, by showing him that he had a larger grace to answer for. Then he concludes his argument with a prayer again.

Ver. 13. Now the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that you may abound in hope, through the power of the Holy Ghost.

That is, that you may get clear of that heartlessness (■ θυμ■ας) towards one another, and may never be cast down by temptations. And this will be by your abounding in hope. Now this is the cause of all good things, and it comes from the Holy Ghost. But it is not simply from the Spirit, but on condition of our contributing our part also. This is why he says, in believing. For this is the way for you to be filled with joy, if you believe, if you hope. Yet he does not say if you hope, but, if you abound in hope, so as not to find comfort in troubles only, but even to have joy through the abundance of faith and hope.

And in this way, you will also draw the Spirit to you. In this way, when He has come you will continually keep to all good things. For just as food maintains our life, and by this rules the body, so if we have good works, we shall have the Spirit; and if we have the Spirit, we shall also have good works. As also, on the other hand, if we have no works, the Spirit flies away. But if we be deserted by the Spirit, we shall also halt in our works. For when this has gone, the unclean one comes: this is plain from Saul.

For what if he does not choke us as he did him, still he strangles us in some other way by wicked works. We have need then of the harp of David, that we may charm our souls with the divine songs, both these, and those from good actions. Since if we do the one only, and while we listen to the charm, war with the charmer by our actions, as he did of old 1 Samuel 19:10; the remedy will even turn to judgment to us, and the madness become the more furious. For before we heard, the wicked demon was afraid lest we should hear it and recover.

But when after hearing it even, we continue the same as we were, this is the very thing to rid him of his fear. Let us sing then the Psalm of good deeds, that we may cast out the sin that is worse than the demon. For a demon certainly will not deprive us of heaven, but does in some cases even work with the sober-minded. But sin will assuredly cast us out. For this is a demon we willingly receive, a self-chosen madness. Wherefore also it has none to pity it or to pardon it. Let us then sing charms over a soul in this plight, as well from the other Scriptures, as also from the blessed David.

And let the mouth sing, and the mind be instructed. Even this is no small thing. For if we once teach the tongue to sing, the soul will be ashamed to be devising the opposite of what this sings. Nor is this the only good thing that we shall gain, for we shall also come to know many things which are our interest. For he discourses to you both of things present, and things to come, and of things seen, and of the invisible Creation. And if you would learn about the Heaven, whether it abides as it is or shall be changed, he gives you a clear answer, and will say, The heavens shall wax old as does a garment, and as a vesture shall you fold them up, O God, and they shall be changed.

Psalm 102:26 And if you wish to hear of the form of them again, you shall hear, That spreads forth the Heaven like a curtain (δ■ρπιν). And if you be minded to know further about the back of them, he will tell you again, that covers His upper chambers with waters. Psalm 104:2-3 And even here he does not pause, but will likewise discourse with you on the breadth and height, and show you that these are of equal measure. For, As far as the east, he says, is from the west, so far has He set our iniquities from us.

Like as the heaven's height above the earth, so is the Lord's mercy upon them that fear Him. (ib. 103:12, 11.) But if you would busy yourself with the foundation of the earth, even this he will not hide from you, but you shall hear him singing and saying, He has founded it upon the seas. Psalm 24:2 And if of earthquakes you are desirous to know, whence they come, he will free you from this difficulty also, by saying, That

looks upon the earth, and makes it tremble. Psalm 103:32 And if you enquire the use of the night, this too may thou learn, and know from him.

For therein all the beasts of the forest do move. Psalm 103:20 And in what way the mountains are for use, he will tell you, The high mountains are for the stags. And why there are rocks, The rocks are a refuge for the porcupines. Psalm 103:18 Why are there trees yielding no fruit? Learn from him, for there the sparrows build their nests. Psalm 103:17 Why are there fountains in the wildernesses? Hear, that by them the fowls of the heaven dwell, and the wild beasts. Psalm 103:12 Why is there wine?

Not that you may drink only (for water is of a nature to suffice for this), but that you may be gladdened also, For wine makes glad the heart of man. Psalm 103:15 And by knowing this you will know how far the use of wine is allowable. Whence are the fowls and the wild beasts nourished? You will hear from his words, All these wait upon You, to give them their meat in due season. Psalm 103:27 If you say, For what purpose are the cattle? He will answer you, that these also are for you, That causes the grass, he says, to grow for the cattle, and the green herb for the service (or retinue) of men.

Psalm 103:14 What is the use of the moon? Hear him saying, He made the moon for seasons. Psalm 104:19 And that all things seen and those not seen are made, is a thing that he has also clearly taught us by saying, Himself spoke, and they were made, He commanded, and they were created. Psalm 32:9 And that there is an end of death, this he also teaches when he says, God shall deliver my soul from the hand of hell when He shall receive me. Psalm 43:15 Whence was our body made? He also tells us; He remembers that we are dust Psalm 103:14; and again, whither goes it away?

It shall return to its dust. Psalm 104:29 Why was this universe made? For you: For you crown him with glory and honor, and settest him over the works of Your hands. (ib. 8:5, 6.) Have we men any community with the Angels? This he also tells us, saying as follows, You have made him a little lower than the Angels. Of the love of God, Like as a father pities his own children, even so is the Lord merciful to them that fear Him. Psalm 103:13 And of the things that are to meet us after our present life, and of that undisturbed condition, he teaches, Return unto your rest, O my soul.

Psalm 116:7 Why the Heaven is so great, this he will also say. For it is because the heavens declare the glory of God. Psalm 19:1 Why day and night were made -- not that they may shine and give us rest only, but also that they may instruct us. For there are no speeches nor words, the sounds of which (i.e. day and night) are not heard. Psalm 18:3 How the sea lies round about the earth, this too you will learn from hence. The deep as a garment is the envelopment thereof. For so the Hebrew has it.

But having a sample in what I have mentioned, you will have a notion of all the rest besides, the things about Christ, about the resurrection, about the life to come, about the resting, about punishment, about moral matters, all that concerns doctrines, and you will find the book filled with countless blessings. And if you fall into temptations, you will gain much comfort from hence. If you fall into sins even, you will find countless remedies stored up here, or if into poverty or tribulation, you will see many havens.

And if you be righteous you will gain much security hence, and if a sinner much relief. For if you be just and art ill-treated, you will hear him say, For Your sake are we killed all the day long, we are counted as sheep for the slaughter. Psalm 44:22 All these things have come upon us, and yet have we not forgotten You. Psalm 43:17 And if your well-doings make you high, you will hear him say, Enter not into judgment with Your servant, for in Your sight shall no man living be justified Psalm 143:2, and you will be straightway made lowly.

And if you be a sinner, and hast despaired of yourself, you will hear him continually singing, Today, if you will hear His voice, harden not your hearts, as in the provocation (ib. 95:7, 8), and you will be stayed up speedily. And if you have a crown even on your head, and art high-minded, you will learn that a king is not saved by a great host, neither shall a giant be saved by the greatness of his might Psalm 33:16: and you will find yourself able to be reasonable. If you be rich, and in reputation, again you will hear him singing, Woe to them that trust in their own might, and boast themselves in the multitude of their riches, Psalm 48:6 And, As for man, his days are as grass Psalm 103:15, And His glory shall not go down with him, after him Psalm 49:17: and you will not think any of the things upon the earth are great.

For when what is more splendid than all, even glory and power, is so worthless, what else of things on earth is worth accounting of? But are you in despondency? Hear him saying, Why are you so sorrowful, O my soul, and why do you so disturb me? Trust in God, for I will confess unto Him. Psalm 42:5 Or do you see men in honor who deserve it not? Fret not yourself at them that do wickedly. For as the grass shall they be dried up, and as the green herb shall they soon fall away. (ib. 37:1, 2) Do you see both righteous and sinners punished?

Be told that the cause is not the same. For many he says, are the plagues of sinners. Psalm 32:10 But in the case of the righteous, he does not say plagues, but, Many are the troubles of the righteous, but the Lord delivers them out of them all. Psalm 34:19 And again, The death of the sinner is evil. Psalm 33:21 And, Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of His saints. Psalm 116:15 These things do thou say continually: by these be instructed. For every single word of this has in it an undiscoverable ocean of meaning.

For we have been just running over them only: but if you were minded to give these passages accurate investigation, you will see the riches to be great. But at present it is possible even by what I have given, to get cleared of the passions that lie on you. For since he forbids our envying, or being grieved, or despondent out of season, or thinking that riches are anything, or tribulation, or poverty, or fancying life itself to be anything, he frees you from all passions. So for this let us give thanks to God, and let us have our treasure always in hand, that by patience and comfort of the Scriptures we may have hope Romans 15:4, and enjoy the good things to come. Which God grant that we may all attain, by the grace and love toward man of our Lord Jesus Christ. By Whom and with Whom, etc.

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