

# Homily 29 on Romans

by St. John Chrysostom

*St. John Chrysostom's Homily 29 on Romans emphasizes the importance of humility, love, and the Holy Spirit in the ministry of spreading the Gospel.*

**Scripture:** John 10:11, Romans 1:8, Romans 11:13, Romans 12:16, Romans 14:4, Romans 15:14, 1 Corinthians 11:2, Galatians 5:10, Hebrews 6:9

**Topics:** "Christian Humility", "Gospel Ministry"

## Description

John Chrysostom preaches about the importance of being full of goodness, knowledge, and the ability to admonish one another, highlighting the need to avoid conceit and judgment towards others. He emphasizes the kindness and persuasion in his words, showing a balance of boldness and gentleness in his approach. Chrysostom humbly acknowledges the grace given to him by God to minister to the Gentiles, focusing on preaching the Gospel and making the souls of those taught acceptable in the Holy Spirit. He expresses his desire to preach the Gospel where Christ was not named, demonstrating his selfless dedication to fulfilling his priestly duty and loving the salvation of others.

## Transcript

Rom. XV. 14

And I myself also am persuaded of you, my brethren, that you also are full of goodness, filled with all knowledge, able also to admonish one another. (So most: S. Chrys. others.)

He had said, Inasmuch as I am the Apostle of the Gentiles, I magnify mine office. Romans 11:13 He had said, Take heed lest He also spare not you. Romans 11:21 He had said, Be not wise in your own conceits Romans 12:16; and again, Why do you judge your brother? Romans 14:10 And, Who are you that judgest another man's servant? Romans 14:4 And several other like things besides. Since then he had often made his language somewhat harsh, he now speaks kindly ( ἰμῶν ἐπιμῶν ) . And what he said in the beginning, that he does in the end also. At the beginning he said, I thank my God for you all, that your faith is spoken of throughout the whole world. Romans 1:8 But here he says, I am persuaded that you also are full of goodness, being able also to admonish others; and this is more than the former. And he does not say, I have heard, but, I am persuaded, and have no need to hear, from others. And, I myself, that is, I that rebuke, that accuse you. That you are full of goodness, this applies to the exhortation lately given. As if he said, It was not as if you were cruel, or haters of your brethren, that I gave you that exhortation, to receive, and not to neglect, and not to destroy the work of God. For I am aware that you are full of goodness. But

he seems to me here to be calling their virtue perfect. And he does not say you have, but you are full of. And the sequel is with the same intensives: filled with all knowledge. For suppose they had been affectionate, but yet did not know how to treat those they loved properly. This was why he added, all knowledge. Able to admonish others, not to learn only, but also to teach.

Ver. 15. Nevertheless, I have written the more boldly unto you in some sort.

Observe the lowly-mindedness of Paul, observe his wisdom, how he gave a deep cut in the former part, and then when he had succeeded in what he wished, how he uses much kindness next. For even without what he has said, this very confession of his having been bold were enough to unstring their vehemency. And this he does in writing to the Hebrews also, speaking as follows, But, beloved, I am persuaded better things of you, and things which belong unto salvation, though we thus speak. Hebrews 6:9 And to the Corinthians again, Now I praise you, brethren, that you remember me in all things, and keep the ordinances, as I delivered them to you. 1 Corinthians 11:2 And in writing to the Galatians he says, I have confidence in you, that you will be none otherwise minded. Galatians 5:10 And in all parts of his Epistles one may find this to be frequently observed. But here even in a greater degree. For they were in a higher rank, and there was need to bring down their fastidious spirit, not by astringents only, but by laxatives also. For he does this in different ways. Wherefore he says in this place too, I have written the more boldly unto you, and with this even he is not satisfied, but has added, in some sort, that is, gently; and even here he does not pause, but what does he say? As putting you in mind. And he does not say as teaching, nor simply putting in mind, (ἀλλά ἐπιτίθειν ὑμῶν τὸν νοῦν) but he uses a word (ἀλλά ἡσυχαστικῶς ἐπιτίθειν ὑμῶν τὸν νοῦν) which means putting you in mind in a quiet way. Observe the end falling in with the introduction. For as in that passage he said, that your faith is made known in all the world. Romans 1:8 So in the end of the Epistle also, For your obedience has reached unto all. Romans 16:19 And as in the beginning he wrote, For I long to see you, that I may impart unto you some spiritual gift, to the end that you may be established; that is, that I may be comforted together with you (ib. 1:11, 12); so here also he said, As putting you in mind. And having come down from the seat of the master, both there and here, he speaks to them as brethren and friends of equal rank. And this is quite a Teacher's duty, to give his address that variety which is profitable to the hearers. See then how after saying, I have written the more boldly, and, in some sort, and, as putting you in mind, he was not satisfied even with these, but making his language still more lowly, he proceeds:

Because of the grace that is given me of God. As he said at the beginning, I am a debtor. Romans 1:14 As if he had said, I have not snatched at the honor for myself, neither was I first to leap forward to it, but God commanded this, and this too according unto grace, not as if He had separated me for this office because I deserved it. Do not ye then be exasperated, since it is not I that raise myself up, but it is God that enjoins it. And as he there says, whom I serve in the Gospel of His Son Romans 1:9, so also here, after saying, because of the grace given unto me by God, he adds,

Ver. 16. That I should be the minister of Jesus Christ to the Gentiles, ministering (ἀλλά ἐπιτίθειν ὑμῶν τὸν νοῦν) the Gospel of God.

For after his abundant proof of his statements, he draws his discourse to a more lofty tone, not speaking of mere service, as in the beginning, but of service and priestly ministering (ἀλλά ἐπιτίθειν ὑμῶν τὸν νοῦν) the Gospel of God. For to me this is a priesthood, this preaching and declaring. This is the sacrifice I bring. Now no one will find fault with a priest, for being anxious to offer the sacrifice without blemish. And he says this at once to elevate (ἀλλά ἐπιτίθειν ὑμῶν τὸν νοῦν) their thoughts, and show them that they are a sacrifice, and

in apology for his own part in the matter, because he was appointed to this office. For my knife, he says, is the Gospel, the word of the preaching. And the cause is not that I may be glorified, not that I may appear conspicuous, but that the offering up (ἱεὺς ἱερῶν ἁγίων) of the Gentiles may be acceptable, being sanctified by the Holy Ghost.

That is, that the souls of those that are taught by me, may be accepted. For it was not so much to honor me, that God led me to this pitch, as out of a concern for you. And how are they to become acceptable? In the Holy Ghost. For there is need not only of faith, but also of a spiritual way of life, that we may keep the Spirit that was given once for all. For it is not wood and fire, nor altar and knife, but the Spirit that is all in us. For this cause, I take all means to prevent that Fire from being extinguished, as I have been also enjoined to do. Why then do you speak to those that need it not? This is just the reason why I do not teach you, but put you in mind, he replies. As the priest stands by stirring up the fire, so I do, rousing up your ready-mindedness. And observe, he does not say, that the offering up of you may be etc. but of the Gentiles. But when he says of the Gentiles, he means the whole world, the land, and the whole sea, to take down their haughtiness, that they might not disdain to have him for a teacher, who was putting himself forth (ἐκείνην ἄνωγειν ἕως ἁπείρου) to the very end of the world. As he said in the beginning, as among the other Gentiles also, I am a debtor to Greeks, and also to barbarians, to wise, and to foolish. Romans 1:13-14

Ver. 17. I have therefore whereof I may glory, through Jesus Christ, in those things which pertain to God.

Inasmuch as he had humbled himself exceedingly, he again raised his style, doing this also for their sakes, lest he should seem to become readily an object of contempt. And while he raises himself, he remembers his own proper temper, and says, I have therefore whereof to glory. I glory, he means, not in myself, not in our zeal, but in the grace of God.

Ver. 18. For I will not dare to speak of any of those things which Christ has not wrought by me, to make Gentiles obedient by word and deed, through mighty signs and wonders, by the power of the Spirit of God.

And none, he means, can say that my words are a mere boast. For of this priestly ministry of mine, the signs that I have, and the proofs of the appointment too, are many. Not the long garment (ἱμάτιον μακρόν) and the bells as they of old, nor the mitre and the turban (καπέλον), but signs and wonders, far more awful than these. Nor can it be said that I have been entrusted indeed with the charge, but yet have not executed it. Or rather, it is not I that have executed, but Christ.

Wherefore also it is in Him that I boast, not about common things, but about spiritual. And this is the force of, in things which pertain to God. For that I have accomplished the purpose for which I was sent, and that my words are not mere boast, the miracles, and the obedience of the Gentiles show. For I will not dare to speak of any of those things which Christ has not wrought by me, to make the Gentiles obedient by word and deed, through signs and wonders, by the power of the Spirit of God.

See how violently he tries to show that the whole is God's doing, and nothing his own. For whether I speak anything, or do anything, or work miracles, He does all of them, the Holy Spirit all. And this he says to show the dignity of the Holy Spirit also. See how these things are more wondrous and more awful than those of old, the sacrifice, the offering, the symbols. For when he says, in word and deed, through mighty signs and wonders, he means this, the doctrine, the system (ἡ δόξα τοῦ βασιλείου) relating to the Kingdom, the exhibition of actions and conversation, the dead that were raised, the devils that were cast out, and the blind that were healed, and the lame that leaped, and the other marvellous acts, all whereof the Holy Spirit

wrought in us.

Then the proof of these things (since all this is yet but an assertion) is the multitude of the disciples. Wherefore he adds, So that from Jerusalem, and round about unto Illyricum, I have fully preached the Gospel of Christ. Count up then cities, and places, and nations, and peoples, not those under the Romans only, but those also under barbarians. For I would not have you go the whole way through Phœnicia, and Syria, and the Cilicians, and Cappadocians, but reckon up also the parts behind, the country of the Saracens, and Persians, and Armenians, and that of the other savage nations.

For this is why he said, round about, that you might not only go through the direct high road, but that you should run over the whole, even the southern part of Asia in your mind. And as he ran over miracles thick as snow, in a single word, by saying, through mighty signs and wonders, so he has comprehended again endless cities, and nations, and peoples, and places, in this one word round about. For he was far removed from all boasting. And this, he said on their account, so that they should not be conceited about themselves.

And at the beginning he said, that I might have some fruit among you also, even as among other Gentiles. But here he states the compulsion of his priesthood. For as he had spoken in a sharper tone, he shows also by it his power more clearly. This is why he there only says, even as among other Gentiles. But here he insists on the topic fully, so that the conceit may be pruned away on all grounds. And he does not merely say, preached the Gospel, but have fully preached the Gospel of Christ.

Ver. 20. Yea, so have I strived to preach the Gospel, not where Christ was named.

See here another preeminence; that he had not only preached the Gospel to so many, and persuaded them, but he did not even go to those who had become disciples. So far was he from thrusting himself upon other men's disciples, and from doing this for glory's sake, that he even made it a point to teach those who had not heard. For neither does he say where they were not persuaded, but where Christ was not even named, which is more. And what was the reason why he had this ambition? Lest I should build, he says, upon another man's foundation.

This he says to show himself a stranger to vanity, and to instruct them that it was not from any love of glory, or of honor from them, that he came to write, but as fulfilling his ministry, as perfecting his priestly duty, as loving their salvation. But he calls the foundation of the Apostles another man's, not in regard to the quality of the person, or the nature of preaching, but in regard to the question of reward. For it was not that the preaching was that of another man, but so far as it went to another man's reward. For the reward of the labors of others was, to this man, another man's. Then he shows that a prophecy was fulfilled also saying,

Ver. 21. As it is written, To whom He was not spoken of, they shall see, and they that have not heard shall understand. Isaiah 3:15 [Septuagint]

You see he runs to where the labor is more, the toil greater.

Ver. 22. For which cause also I have been much hindered from coming to you.

Observe again, how he makes the end of the like texture with the introduction. For while he was quite at the beginning of the Epistle, he said, Oftentimes I purpose to come unto you, but was let hitherto. Romans 1:13 But here he gives the cause also by which he was let, and that not once, but twice even, aye, and

many times. For as he says there, oftentimes I purposed to come to you, so here too, I have been much (or often, ἢ, ἀ½° ἱεὶλῆ ἵ»ἵ»ἀ½°) hindered from coming to you. Now it is a thing which proves a very strong desire, that he attempted it so often.

Ver. 23. But now having no more place in these parts.

See how he shows that it was not from any coveting of glory from them, that he both wrote and was also coming. And having a great desire to come to you these many years,

Ver. 24. Whenever I take my journey into Spain, I trust to see you in my journey; and to be brought on my way thitherward by you, if first I be somewhat filled with your company,

For that he might not seem to be holding them very cheap, by saying, Since I have not anything to do, therefore I am coming to you, he again touches on the point of love by saying, I have a great desire, these many years, to come unto you. For the reason why I desire to come, is not because I am disengaged, but that I may give birth to that desire wherewith I am travailling so long. Then that this again should not puff them up, consider how he lowers them by saying, Whenever I take my journey into Spain, I trust to see you in my journey. For this was why he stated this, that they should not be high-minded. For what he wants is to show his love, and at the same time to prevent them from being dainty. And so he places this close on the other, and uses things confirmative of either alternately. For this reason again that they might not say, Do you make us a by-object of your journey? He adds, and to be brought on my way thitherward by you: that is, that you may be my witnesses that it is not through any slight of you, but by force of necessity, that I run by you. But as this is still distressing, he heals it over more carefully, by saying, If I be first somewhat filled with your company. For by his saying, in my journey, he shows that he did not covet their good opinion. But by saying be filled, that he was eager for their love, and not only was eager for it, but exceedingly so; and this is why he does not say be filled, but be somewhat so. That is, no length of time can fill me or create in me a satiety of your company. See how he shows his love, when even though in haste he does not rise up until he be filled. And this is a sign of his great affectionateness, that he uses his words in so warm a way. For he does not say even I will see, but shall be filled, imitating thus the language of parents. And at the beginning he said, that I might have some fruit. Romans 1:13 But here that I may be filled. And both these are like a person who is drawing others to him. For the one was a very great commendation of them, if they were likely to yield him fruit from their obedience; and the other, a genuine proof of his own friendship. And in writing to the Corinthians he thus says, That ye may bring me on my journey wherever I go 1 Corinthians 16:6, so in all ways exhibiting an unrivalled love to his disciples. And so at the beginning of all his Epistles it is with this he starts, and at the end in this he concludes again. For as an indulgent father does an only and true born son, so did he love all the faithful. Whence it was that he said, Who is weak, and I am not weak? Who is offended, and I burn not? 2 Corinthians 11:29

For before everything else this is what the teacher ought to have. Wherefore also to Peter Christ says, If you love Me, feed My sheep. John 21:16 For he who loves Christ loves also His flock. And Moses too did He then set over the people of the Jews, when he had shown a kindly feeling towards them. And David in this way came to be king, having been first seen to be affectionately-minded towards them; so much indeed, though yet young, did he grieve for the people, as to risk his life for them, when he killed that barbarian.





See on Romans 8:36 And therefore do ye, as being acquainted with what the labor is, cooperate with them, with prayers, with zeal, with readiness, with affection, that both we may have to boast of you, and you of us. For on this ground He entrusted this to the chief of the Apostles, who also loved Him more than the rest; after first asking him if He was loved by him, that you may learn that this before other things, is held as a proof of love to Him. For this requires a vigorous soul.

This I have said of the best shepherds; not of myself and those of our days, but of any one that may be such as Paul was, such as Peter, such as Moses. These then let us imitate, both the rulers of us and the ruled. For the ruled may be in the place of a shepherd to his family, to his friends, to his servants, to his wife, to his children: and if we so order our affairs we shall attain to all manner of good things. Which God grant that we may all attain unto, by the grace and love toward man, etc.

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