

# Homily 43 on the Acts of the Apostles

by St. John Chrysostom

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*St. John Chrysostom's Homily 43 emphasizes the importance of preaching, compassion, and the nature of suffering in the Christian life.*

**Scripture:** Psalm 78:50, Ezekiel 9:8, Ezekiel 16:2, Micah 1:11, Matthew 10:40, Matthew 25:21, Acts 20:1, Acts 20:7, 1 Corinthians 9:22, 2 Corinthians 6:3

**Topics:** "Persecution And Suffering", "Christian Discipleship"

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## Description

John Chrysostom preaches on the events in Acts 20:1-16, focusing on Paul's journey through Macedonia and Greece, emphasizing the importance of preaching and comforting believers amidst persecution. Chrysostom highlights Paul's dedication to teaching and the miraculous event of Eutychus being raised from the dead after falling asleep during Paul's midnight sermon. He encourages the congregation to imitate Paul's sacrificial love for Christ and willingness to endure hardships for the sake of others, urging them to have a compassionate heart and to weep for those who suffer unjustly, following the example of the prophets.

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## Transcript

Acts XX. 1

And after the uproar was ceased, Paul called unto him the disciples, and embraced them, and departed for to go into Macedonia.

There was need of much comforting after that uproar. Accordingly, having done this, he goes into Macedonia, and then into Greece. For, it says, when he had gone over those parts, and had given them much exhortation, he came into Greece, and there abode three months. And when the Jews laid wait for him, as he was about to sail into Syria, he purposed to return through Macedonia. (v. 2, 3.) Again he is persecuted by the Jews, and goes into Macedonia. And there accompanied him into Asia Sopater of Berea; and of the Thessalonians, Aristarchus and Secundus; and Gaius of Derbe, and Timotheus; and of Asia, Tychicus and Trophimus.

These going before tarried for us at Troas. (v. 4, 5.) But how does he call Timothy a man of Thessalonica? This is not his meaning, but, Of Thessalonians, Aristarchus and Secundus and Gaius: of Derbe, Timothy, etc., these, he says, went before him to Troas, preparing the way for him. And we sailed away from Philippi after the days of unleavened bread, and came unto them to Troas in five days; where we abode

seven days. Acts 20:6 For it seems to me that he made a point of keeping the feasts in the large cities.

From Philippi, where the affair of the prison had taken place. This was his third coming into Macedonia, and it is a high testimony that he bears to the Philippians, which is the reason why he makes some stay there. And upon the day of the week, when the disciples came together to break bread, Paul preached unto them, ready to depart on the morrow; and continued his speech until midnight. Acts 20:7 It was then the (season between Easter and) Pentecost. See how everything was subordinate to the preaching.

It was also, it says, the Lord's day. Not even during night-time was he silent, nay he discoursed the rather then, because of stillness. Mark how he both made a long discourse, and beyond the time of supper itself. But the Devil disturbed the feast -- not that he prevailed, however -- by plunging the hearer in sleep, and causing him to fall down. And, it says, there were many lights in the upper chamber, where they were gathered together. And there sat in a window a certain young man named Eutychus, being fallen into a deep sleep: and as Paul was long preaching, he sunk down with sleep, and fell down from the third loft, and was taken up dead.

And Paul went down, and fell on him, and embracing him, said, Trouble not yourselves; for his life is in him. When he therefore had come up again, and had broken bread, and eaten, and talked a long while, even till break of day, so he departed. And they brought the young man alive, and were not a little comforted. Acts 20:8-12 But observe, I pray you, the theatre, how crowded it was: and the miracle, what it was. He was sitting in a window, at dead of night. Such was their eagerness to hear him!

Let us take shame to ourselves! Aye, but a Paul say you, was discoursing then. Yes, and Paul discourses now, or rather not Paul, either then or now, but Christ, and yet none cares to hear. No window in the case now, no importunity of hunger, or sleep, and yet we do not care to hear: no crowding in a narrow space here, nor any other such comfort. And the wonderful circumstance is, that though he was a youth, he was not listless and indifferent; and though (he felt himself) weighed down by sleep, he did not go away, nor yet fear the danger of falling down.

It was not from listlessness that he slumbered, but from necessity of nature. But observe, I beseech you, so fervent was their zeal, that they even assembled in a third loft: for they had not a Church yet. Trouble not yourselves, he says. He said not, He shall come to life again, for I will raise him up: but mark the unassuming way in which he comforts them: for his life, says he, is in him. When he had come up again, and had broken bread, and eaten. This thing cut short the discourse; it did no harm, however.

When he had eaten, it says, and discoursed a long while, even till break of day, so he departed. Do you mark the frugality of the supper? Do you observe how they passed the whole night? Such were their meals, that the hearers came away sober, and fit for hearing. But we, in what do we differ from dogs? Do you mark what a difference (between us and those men)? And they brought the young man alive, and, it says, were not a little comforted, both because they received him back alive, and because a miracle had been wrought.

And we went before to ship, and sailed unto Thasos, there intending to take in Paul: for so had he appointed, minding himself to go afoot. Acts 20:13 We often find Paul parting from the disciples. For behold again, he himself goes afoot: giving them the easier way, and himself choosing the more painful. He went afoot, both that he might arrange many matters, and by way of training them to bear a parting from him. And when he had joined us at Thasos, having taken him on board, we came to Mytilene; and having sailed thence on the morrow, we come over against Chios -- then they pass the island -- and on the

next day we touched at Samos, and having stopped at Trogylium, on the following day we came to Miletus.

For Paul had determined to sail by Ephesus, because he would not spend the time in Asia: for he hasted, if it were possible for him, to be in Jerusalem the day of Pentecost. Acts 20:14-16 Why this haste? Not for the sake of the feast, but of the multitude. At the same time, by this he conciliated the Jews, as being one that did honor the feasts, wishing to gain even his adversaries: at the same time also he delivers the word. Accordingly, see what great gain accrued, from all being present. But that the interests of the people of Ephesus might not be neglected on that account, he managed for this in a different way. But let us look over again what has been said.

(Recapitulation.) And having embraced them, it says, he departed for to go into Macedonia. Acts 20:1 By this again he refreshed them (■ νεκτ■σατο), giving them much consolation. And having exhorted the Macedonians, with much discourse, he came into Greece. Acts 20:2 Observe how we everywhere find him accomplishing all by means of preaching, not by miracles. And we, sailed, etc. The writer constantly shows him to us as hasting to get to Syria; and the reason of it was the Church, and Jerusalem, but still he restrained his desire, so as to set all right in those parts also.

And yet Troas is not a large place: why then do they pass seven days in it? Perhaps it was large as regarded the number of believers. And after he had passed seven days there, on the following day he spent the night in teaching: so hard did he find it to tear himself away from them, and they from him. And when we came together it says, to break bread. Acts 20:7-12 At the very time (of breaking bread) the discourse having taken its commencement,\* extended: as representing that they were hungry, and it was not unseasonable: for the principal object (which brought them together) was not teaching, but they came together to break bread; discourse however having come up, he prolonged the teaching.

See how all partook also at Paul's table. It seems to me, that he discoursed while even sitting at table, teaching us to consider all other things as subordinate to this. Picture to yourselves, I beseech you, that house with its lights, with its crowd, with Paul in the midst, discoursing, with even the windows occupied by many: what a thing it was to see, and to hear that trumpet, and behold that gracious countenance! But why did he discourse during night time? Since he was about to depart, it says, and was to see them no more: though this indeed he does not tell them, they being too weak (to bear it), but he did tell it to the others.

At the same time too the miracle which took place would make them evermore to remember that evening; so that the fall turned out to the advantage of the teacher. Great was the delight of the hearers, and even when interrupted it was the more increased. That (young man) was to rebuke all that are careless (of the word), he whose death was caused by nothing else than this, that he wished to hear Paul. And we went before to ship, etc. Acts 20:13 Wherefore does the writer say where they came, and where they went to?

To show in the first place that he was making the voyage more leisurely -- and this upon human grounds -- and sailing past (some): also (for the same reason he tells) where he made a stay, and what parts he sailed past; (namely,) that he might not have to spend the time in Asia. Acts 20:16 Since had he come there, he could not have sailed by; he did not like to pain those who would have begged him to remain. For he hasted, it says, if it were possible for him to keep the day of Pentecost in Jerusalem: and (this) was not possible (if he stayed).

Observe, how he is also moved like other men. For therefore it is that all this is done, that we may not fancy that he was above human nature: (therefore) you see him desiring (something), and hasting, and in

many instances not obtaining (his object): for those great and holy men were partakers of the same nature with us; it was in the will and purpose that they differed, and so it was that also they attracted upon themselves the great grace they did. See, for instance, how many things they order by an economy of their own.

That we give not offense 2 Corinthians 6:3 to those who wish (to take offense), and, That our ministry be not blamed. Behold, both an irreproachable life and on the other hand condescension. This is (indeed to be) called economy, to the (very) summit and height (of it). For he that went beyond the commandments of Christ, was on the other hand more humble than all. I am made all things to all men, he says, that I might gain all. 1 Corinthians 9:22 He cast himself also upon dangers, as he says in another place; In much patience, in afflictions, in necessities, in distresses, in stripes, in imprisonments. 2 Corinthians 6:4-5 And great was his love for Christ.

For if there be not this, all else is superfluous, both the economy (of condescending accommodation), and the irreproachable life, and the exposing himself to dangers. Who is weak, he says, and I am not weak? Who is offended, and I burn not? 2 Corinthians 11:29 These words let us imitate, and let us cast ourselves upon dangers for our brethren's sake. Whether it be fire, or the sword, cast yourself on it, beloved, that you may rescue (him that is) your member: cast yourself, be not afraid.

You are a disciple of Christ, Who laid down His life for His brethren: a fellow disciple with Paul, who chose to suffer numberless ills for his enemies, for men that were warring against him; be thou filled with zeal, imitate Moses. He saw one suffering wrong, and avenged him; he despised royal luxury, and for the sake of those who were afflicted he became a fugitive, a wanderer, lonely and deserted; he passed his days in a foreign land; and yet he blamed not himself, nor said, What is this?

I despised royalty, with all that honor and glory: I chose to avenge those who were wronged, and God has overlooked me: and not only has He not brought me back to my former honor, but even forty years am I passing in a foreign land. Truly, handsomely have I received my wages, have I not! But nothing of the kind did he say or think. So also do thou: be it that thou suffer any evil for doing good, be it that (thou have to wait) a long time, be not thou offended, be not discomposed: God will of a surety give you your reward.

The more the recompense is delayed, the more is the interest of it increased. Let us have a soul apt to sympathize, let us have a heart that knows how to feel with others in their sorrows: no unmerciful temper (■ μ■v), no inhumanity.

Though thou be able to confer no relief, yet weep thou, groan, grieve over what has happened: even this is not to no purpose. If it behooves us to feel for those who are justly punished by God, much more for those who suffer unjustly at the hands of men. (They of) Ænan, it says, came not forth to mourn for the house which was near her Micah 1:11: they shall receive pain, in return for that they built for derision. And again, Ezekiel makes this an accusation against them, that they did not grieve for (the afflicted).

Ezekiel 16:2 What do you say, O Prophet? God punishes, and shall I grieve for those that He is punishing? Yea verily: for God Himself that punishes wishes this: since neither does He Himself wish to punish, nay, even Himself grieves when punishing. Then be not thou glad at it. You will say, If they are justly punished, we ought not to grieve. Why, the thing we ought to grieve for is this -- that they were found worthy of punishment. Say, when you see your son undergoing cautery or the knife, do you not grieve?

And do you not say to yourself, What is this? It is for health this cutting, to quicken his recovery; it is for his deliverance, this burning? but for all that, when you hear him crying out, and not able to bear the pain, you grieve, and the hope of health being restored is not enough to carry off the shock to nature. So also in the case of these, though it be in order to their health that they are punished, nevertheless let us show a brotherly feeling, a fatherly disposition.

They are cuttings and cauteries, the punishments sent by God: but it is for this we ought to weep, that they were sick, that they needed such a mode of cure. If it be for crowns that any suffer these things, then grieve not; for instance, as Paul, as Peter suffered: but when it is for punishment that one suffers justice, then weep, then groan. Such was the part the prophets acted; thus one of them said, Ah! Lord, do you destroy the residue of Israel? Ezekiel 9:8 We see men-slayers, wicked men, suffering punishment, and we are distressed, and grieve for them.

Let us not be philosophical beyond measure: let us show ourselves pitiful, that we may be pitied; there is nothing equal to this beautiful trait: nothing so marks to us the stamp of human nature as the showing pity, as the being kind to our fellow-men. In fact, therefore do the laws consign to public executioners the whole business of punishment: having compelled the judge to punish so far as to pronounce the sentence, thereafter they call forth those to perform the act itself.

So true is it, that though it be justly done, it is not the part of a generous (φιλοσφου) soul to inflict punishment, but it requires another sort of person for this: since even God punishes not by His own hand, but by means of the angels. Are they then executioners, the angels? God forbid: I say not this, but they are avenging powers. When Sodom was destroyed, the whole was done by them as the instruments: when the judgments in Egypt were inflicted, it was through them. For, He sent, it says, evil angels among them.

Psalms 78:50 But when there is need of saying, God does this by Himself: thus, He sent the Son: -- (b) but, He that receives you, receives Me, and he that receives Me, receives Him that sent Me. Matthew 10:40 (a) And again He says, Then will I say unto the angels, Gather together them that do iniquity, and cast them into the furnace. Matthew 13:30-42 But concerning the just, not so. (c) And again, Bind him hand and foot, and cast him into outer darkness. Matthew 22:13 Observe how in that case His servants minister: but when the point is to do good, see Himself doing the good, Himself calling: Come, you blessed of My Father, inherit the Kingdom prepared for you.

Matthew 25:34 When the matter is, to converse with Abraham, then Himself comes to him: when it is, to depart to Sodom, He sends His servants, like a judge raising up those who are to punish. You have been faithful over a few things, I will make you ruler over many things Matthew 25:21; I (will make you): but that other, not Himself, but His servants bind. Knowing these things, let us not rejoice over those who are suffering punishment, but even grieve: for these let us mourn, for these let us weep, that for this also we may receive a reward.

But now, many rejoice even over those who suffer evil unjustly. But not so, we: let us show all sympathy: that we also may have God vouchsafed us, through the grace and mercy of His only-begotten Son, with Whom to the Father and the Holy Ghost together be glory, might, honor, now and ever, world without end. Amen.

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