

# Homily 9 on Romans

by St. John Chrysostom

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*Through faith in Jesus Christ, we are justified by God's love and can rejoice in the hope of glory, even in the midst of tribulations.*

**Scripture:** Romans 4:23, Romans 5:1, Romans 5:5, Romans 5:8, Romans 5:10

**Topics:** "Gods Love", "Justification Through Faith"

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## Description

John Chrysostom preaches on the profound love and sacrifice of God, emphasizing that Christ died for sinners and enemies, demonstrating the immense depth of God's love for humanity. He highlights the importance of faith and justification through Christ's blood, leading to reconciliation and salvation from wrath. Chrysostom encourages believers to find joy in God through Jesus Christ, reflecting on the atonement received and the overflowing love of God shed abroad in our hearts through the Holy Spirit.

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## Transcript

Rom. IV. 23

Now it was not written for his sake alone, that it was imputed to him for righteousness; but for us also, to whom it shall be imputed, if we believe in Him that raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead.

After saying many great things of Abraham, and his faith, and righteousness, and honor before God, lest the hearer should say, What is this to us, for it is he that was justified? He places us close to the Patriarch again. So great is the power of spiritual words. For of one of the Gentiles, one who was recently come near, one who had done no work, he not only says that he is in nothing inferior to the Jew who believes (i.e. as a Jew), but not even to the Patriarch, but rather, if one must give utterance to the wondrous truth, even much greater. For so noble is our birth, that his faith is but the type of ours. And he does not say, If it was reckoned unto him, it is probable it will be also to us, that he might not make it matter of syllogism. But he speaks in authentic words of the divine law, and makes the whole a declaration of the Scripture. For why was it written, he says, save to make us see that we also were justified in this way? For it is the same God Whom we have believed, and upon the same matters, if it be not in the case of the same persons. And after speaking of our faith, he also mentions God's unspeakable love towards man, which he ever presents on all sides, bringing the Cross before us. And this he now makes plain by saying,

Ver. 25. Who was delivered for our offenses, and was raised again for our justification.

See how after mentioning the cause of His death, he makes the same cause likewise a demonstration of the resurrection. For why, he means, was He crucified? Not for any sin of His own. And this is plain from the Resurrection. For if He were a sinner, how should He have risen? But if He rose, it is quite plain that He was not a sinner. But if He was not a sinner, how came He to be crucified?-- For others -- and if for others, then surely he rose again. Now to prevent your saying, How, when liable for so great sins, came we to be justified? He points out One that blots out all sins, that both from Abraham's faith, whereby he was justified, and from the Saviour's Passion, whereby we were freed from our sins, he might confirm what he had said. And after mentioning His Death, he speaks also of His Resurrection. For the purpose of His dying was not that He might hold us liable to punishment and in condemnation, but that He might do good unto us. For for this cause He both died and rose again, that He might make us righteous.

Chap. v. ver. 1. Therefore being justified by faith, let us have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.

What does Let us have peace mean? Some say, Let us not be at variance, through a peevish obstinacy for bringing in the Law. But to me he seems to be speaking now of our conversation. For after having said much on the subject of faith, he had set it before righteousness which is by works, to prevent any one from supposing what he said was a ground for listlessness, he says, let us have peace, that is, let us sin no more, nor go back to our former estate. For this is making war with God. And how is it possible, says one, to sin no more? How was the former thing possible? For if when liable for so many sins we were freed from all by Christ, much more shall we be able through Him to abide in the estate wherein we are. For it is not the same thing to receive peace when there had been none, and to keep it when it has been given, since to acquire surely is harder than to keep. Yet nevertheless the more difficult has been made easy, and carried out into effect. That which is the easier thing then will be what we shall easily succeed in, if we cling to Him who has wrought even the other for us. But here it is not the easiness only which he seems to me to hint at, but the reasonableness. For if He reconciled us when we were in open war with Him, it is reasonable that we should abide in a state of reconciliation, and give unto Him this reward for that He may not seem to have reconciled untoward and unfeeling creatures to the Father.

Ver. 2. By Whom also we have access, he says, by faith unto this grace. (7 manuscripts add, unto, etc.)

If then He has brought us near to Himself, when we were far off, much more will He keep us now that we are near. And let me beg you to consider how he everywhere sets down these two points; His part, and our part. On His part, however, there be things varied and numerous and diverse. For He died for us, and farther reconciled us, and brought us to Himself, and gave us grace unspeakable. But we brought faith only as our contribution. And so he says, by faith, unto this grace.

What grace is this? Tell me. It is the being counted worthy of the knowledge of God, the being forced from error, the coming to a knowledge of the Truth, the obtaining of all the blessings that come through Baptism. For the end of His bringing us near was that we might receive these gifts. For it was not only that we might have simple remission of sins, that we were reconciled; but that we might receive also countless benefits. Nor did He even pause at these, but promised others, namely, those unutterable blessings that pass understanding alike and language.

And this is why he has set them both down also. For by mentioning grace he clearly points at what we have at present received, but by saying, And we rejoice in hope of the glory of God, he unveils the whole of things to come. And he had well said, wherein also we stand. For this is the nature of God's grace. It

has no end, it knows no bound, but evermore is on the advance to greater things, which in human things is not the case. Take an instance of what I mean. A person has acquired rule and glory and authority, yet he does not stand therein continuously, but is speedily cast out of it.

Or if man take it not from him, death comes, and is sure to take it from him. But God's gifts are not of this kind; for neither man, nor occasion, nor crisis of affairs, nor even the Devil, nor death, can come and cast us out of them. But when we are dead we then more strictly speaking have possession of them, and keep going on enjoying more and more. And so if you feel in doubt about those to come; from those now present, and what you have already received, believe in the other also.

For this is why he says, And we rejoice (καυχ■μεθα) in hope of the glory of God, that you may learn, what kind of soul the faithful ought to have. For it is not only for what has been given, but for what is to be given, that we ought to be filled with confidingness, as though it were already given. For one rejoices in what is already given. Since then the hope of things to come is even as sure and clear as that of what is given, he says that in that too we in like manner rejoice.

For this cause also he called them glory. For if it contributes unto God's glory, come to pass it certainly will, though it do not for our sakes, yet for Him it will. And why am I saying (he means) that the blessings to come are worthy of being gloried in (καυχ■σεως)? Why even the very evils of this time present are able to brighten up our countenances, and make us find in them even our repose. Wherefore also he added,

Ver. 3. And not only so, but we glory in tribulations also.

Now, consider how great the things to come are, when even at things that seem to be distressful we can be elated; so great is God's gift, and such a nothing any distastefulness in them! For in the case of external goods, the struggle for them brings trouble and pain and irksomeness along with it; and it is the crowns and rewards that carry the pleasure with them. But in this case it is not so, for the wrestlings have to us no less relish than the rewards. For since there were sundry temptations in those days, and the kingdom existed in hopes, the terrors were at hand, but the good things in expectation, and this unnerved the feebler sort, even before the crowns he gives them the prize now, by saying that we should glory even in tribulations. And what he says is not you should glory, but we glory, giving them encouragement in his own person. Next since what he had said had an appearance of being strange and paradoxical, if a person who is struggling in famine, and is in chains and torments, and insulted, and abused, ought to glory, he next goes on to confirm it. And (what is more), he says they are worthy of being gloried in, not only for the sake of those things to come, but for the things present in themselves. For tribulations are in their own selves a goodly thing. How so? It is because they anoint us unto patient abiding. Wherefore after saying we glory in tribulations, he has added the reason, in these words, Knowing that tribulation works patience. Notice again the argumentative spirit of Paul, how he gives their argument an opposite turn. For since it was tribulations above all that made them give up the hopes of things to come, and which cast them into despondency, he says that these are the very reasons for confidingness, and for not desponding about the things to come, for tribulation, he says, works patience.

Ver. 4, 5. And patience experience, and experience hope; and hope makes not ashamed.

Tribulations, that is, are so far from confuting these hopes, that they even prove them. For before the things to come are realized, there is a very great fruit which tribulation has -- patience; and the making of the man that is tried, experienced. And it contributes in some degree too to the things to come, for it gives hope a vigor within us, since there is nothing that so inclines a man to hope for blessings as a good

conscience. Now no man that has lived an upright life is unconfiding about things to come, as of those who have been negligent there are many that, feeling the burden of a bad conscience, wish there were neither judgment nor retribution. What then? Do our goods lie in hopes? Yes, in hopes -- but not mere human hopes, which often slip away, and put him that hoped to shame; when some one, who was expected to patronize him, dies, or is altered though he lives. No such lot is ours: our hope is sure and unmoveable. For He Who has made the promise ever lives, and we that are to be the enjoyers of it, even should we die, shall rise again, and there is absolutely nothing which can put us to shame, as having been elated at random, and to no purpose, upon unsound hopes. Having then sufficiently cleared them of all doubtfulness by these words of his, he does not let his discourse pause at the time present, but urges again the time to come, knowing that there were men of weaker character, who looked too for present advantages, and were not satisfied with these mentioned. And so he offers a proof for them in blessings already given. For lest any should say, But what if God be unwilling to give them to us? For that He can, and that He abides and lives, we all know: but how do we know, that He is willing, also, to do it? From the things which have been done already. What things done? The Love which He has shown for us. In doing what? Some may say. In giving the Holy Ghost. Wherefore after saying hope makes not ashamed, he goes on to the proof of this, as follows:

Because the love of God is, he does not say given, but shed abroad in our hearts, so showing the profusion of it. That gift then, which is the greatest possible, He has given; not heaven and earth and sea, but what is more precious than any of these, and has rendered us Angels from being men, yea sons of God, and brethren of Christ. But what is this gift? The Holy Spirit. Now had He not been willing to present us after our labors with great crowns, He would never have given us such mighty gifts before our labors. But now the warmth of His Love is hence made apparent, that it is not gradually and little by little that He honors us; but He has shed abroad the full fountain of His blessings, and this too before our struggles. And so, if you are not exceedingly worthy, despond not, since you have that Love of your Judge as a mighty pleader for you. For this is why he himself by saying, hope makes not ashamed, has ascribed everything not to our well-doings, but to God's love. But after mentioning the gift of the Spirit, he again passes to the Cross, speaking as follows:

Ver. 6-8. For while we were yet without strength, Christ in due time died for the ungodly. For scarcely for a righteous man will one die: yet pervadenture for a good man some would even dare to die. But God commends His love towards us.

Now what he is saying is somewhat of this kind. For if for a virtuous man, no one would hastily choose to die, consider your Master's love, when it is not for virtuous men, but for sinners and enemies that He is seen to have been crucified -- which he says too after this, In that, if when we were sinners Christ died for us,

Ver. 9, 10. Much more then, being now justified by His Blood, we shall be saved from wrath through Him. For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of His Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by His life.

And what he has said looks indeed like tautology, but it is not to any one who accurately attends to it. Consider then. He wishes to give them reasons for confidence respecting things to come. And first he gives them a sense of shame from the righteous man's decision, when he says, that he also was fully persuaded that what God had promised He was able also to perform; and next from the grace that was given; then from the tribulation, as sufficing to lead us into hopes; and again from the Spirit, whom we

have received. Next from death, and from our former viciousness, he makes this good. And it seems indeed, as I said, that what he had mentioned was one thing, but it is discovered to be two, three, and even many more. First, that He died: second, that it was for the ungodly; third, that He reconciled, saved, justified us, made us immortal, made us sons and heirs. It is not from His Death then only, he says, that we draw strong assertions, but from the gift which was given unto us through His Death. And indeed if He had died only for such creatures as we be, a proof of the greatest love would what He had done be! But when He is seen at once dying, and yielding us a gift, and that such a gift, and to such creatures, what was done casts into shade our highest conceptions, and leads the very dullest on to faith. For there is no one else that will save us, except He Who so loved us when we were sinners, as even to give Himself up for us. Do you see what a ground this topic affords for hope? For before this there were two difficulties in the way of our being saved; our being sinners, and our salvation requiring the Lord's Death, a thing which was quite incredible before it took place, and required exceeding love for it to take place. But now since this has come about, the other requisites are easier. For we have become friends, and there is no further need of Death. Shall then He who has so spared his enemies as not to spare His Son, fail to defend them now they have become friends, when He has no longer any need to give up his Son? For it is either because a person does not wish it, or because though he may wish it perhaps, yet he is unable to do it, that he does not save. Now none of these things can be said of God. For that He is willing is plain from His having given up His Son. But that He is able also is the very thing He proved likewise, from the very fact of His having justified men who were sinners. What is there then to prevent us any more from obtaining the things to come? Nothing! Then again, lest upon hearing of sinners, and enemies, and strengthless ones, and ungodly, you should be inclined to feel abashed and blush; hear what he says.

Ver. 11. And not only so, but we also joy in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, by Whom we have now received the atonement.

What means the not only so? Not only were we saved, he means, but we even glory for this very reason, for which some suppose we ought to hide our faces. For, for us who lived in so great wickedness to be saved, was a very great mark of our being exceedingly beloved by Him that saved us. For it was not by angels or archangels, but by His Only-begotten Son Himself, that He saved us. And so the fact of His saving us, and saving us too when we were in such plight, and doing it by means of His Only-begotten, and not merely by His Only-begotten, but by His Blood, weaves for us endless crowns to glory in. For there is not anything that counts so much in the way of glory and confidence, as the being treated as friends (φιλεσθαί) by God, and finding a Friend (φιλεῖν) in Him that loves (γαπῶντα) us. This it is that makes the angels glorious, and the principalities and powers. This is greater than the Kingdom, and so Paul placed it above the Kingdom. For this also I count the incorporeal powers blessed, because they love Him, and in all things obey Him. And on this score the Prophet also expressed his admiration at them. You that excel in strength, that fulfil His Word. Psalm 103:20 And hence too Isaiah extols the Seraphim, setting forth their great excellency from their standing near that glory, which is a sign of the greatest love.

Let us then emulate the powers above, and be desirous not only of standing near the throne, but of having Him dwelling in us who sits upon the Throne. He loved us when we hated Him, and also continues to love us. For He makes His sun to rise on the evil and on the good and sends rain on the just and on the unjust. Matthew 5:45 As then He loves us, do thou love Him. For He is our Friend (φιλεῖ γαρ). And how comes it, some will say, that one who is our Friend threatens hell, and punishment, and vengeance?

It is owing to His loving us alone. For all He does and is busied with, is with a view to strike out your wickedness, and to refrain with fear, as with a kind of bridle, your inclinableness to the worse side, and by

blessings and by pains recovering you from your downward course, and leading you up to Him, and keeping you from all vice, which is worse than hell. But if you mock what is said, and would rather live continually in misery, than be punished for a single day, it is no marvel.

For this is but a sign of your unformed judgment (■ τελο■ζ γν■μηζ), drunkenness, and incurable disorder. Since little children even when they see the physician going to apply burning or the knife, flee and leap away screaming and convulsed, and choose to have a continual sore eating into their body, rather than to endure a temporary pain, and so enjoy health afterwards. But those who have come to discretion, know that to be diseased is worse than submitting to the knife, as also to be wicked is worse than to be punished.

For the one is to be cured and to be healthy, the other to ruin one's constitution and to be in continual feebleness. Now that health is better than feebleness, surely is plain to every one. Thieves then ought to weep not when they have their sides pierced through, but when they pierce through walls and murder. For if the soul be better than the body (as it is), when the former is ruined there is more reason to groan and lament; but if a man does not feel it, so much the more reason to bewail it.

For those that love with an unchastened love ought to be more pitied than those who have a violent fever, and those that are drunken, than those that are undergoing torture. But if these are more painful (some may say), how come we to give them the preference? Because there are many of mankind, who, as the proverb says, like the worse, and they choose these, and pass by the better. And this one may see happening as well in victuals as in forms of government, in emulous aims of life too, and in the enjoyment of pleasure, and in wives, and in houses, and in slaves, and in lands, and in the case of all other things.

For which is more pleasurable pray, cohabiting with women or with males? With women or with mules? Yet still we shall find many that pass over women, and cohabit with creatures void of reason, and abuse the bodies of males. Yet natural pleasures are greater than unnatural ones. But still many there are that follow after things ridiculous and joyless, and accompanied with a penalty, as if pleasurable. Well but to them, a man may say, these things appear so. Now this alone is ground enough to make them miserable, that they think those things to be pleasurable which are not so.

Thus they assume punishment to be worse than sin which it is not, but just the contrary. Yet, if it were an evil to the sinner, God would not have added evils to the evil; for He that does everything to extinguish evil, would not have increased it. Being punished then is no evil to the man who has done wrong, but not being punished, when in that plight, is evil, just as for the infirm not to be cured. (Plat. Gorg. p. 478, sqq.) For there is nothing so evil as extravagant desire.

And when I say, extravagant, I mean that of luxury, and that of ill-placed glory, and that of power, and in general that of all things which go beyond what is necessary. For such is he who lives a soft and dissolute life, who seems to be the happiest of men, but is the most wretched, as superinducing upon his soul harsh and tyrannical sovereigns. For this cause has God made the present a life of labor to us, that He may rid us of that slavery, and bring us into genuine freedom.

For this cause He threatened punishment, and made labors a part of our portion in life, so muzzling our vaunting spirit. In this way the Jews also, when they were fettered to the clay and brick making, were at once self-governed, and called continually upon God. But when they were in the enjoyment of freedom, then they murmured, and provoked the Lord, and pierced themselves through with countless evils. What then, it may be said, will you say to those frequent instances of men being altered for the worse by

tribulations?

Why, that this is no effect of tribulation, but of their own imbecility. For neither if a man had a weak stomach and could not take a bitter medicine which would act as a purgative, but was made even worse by it, would it be the drug we should find fault with, but the weakness of the part, as we should therefore here too with the yieldingness of temper. For he who is altered so by tribulation, is much more likely to be affected in this way by laxity. If he fails even when splinted, (or tied) (this is what affliction is), much more will he when the bandage is removed.

If when braced up he is altered, much more when in a state of tumor (χαυνο■μενος). And how am I, one may ask, to keep from being so altered by tribulation? Why, if you reflect that, wish it or not, you will have to bear the thing inflicted: but if you dost it with a thankful spirit, you will gain very greatly thereby; but if you are indignant at it, and ragest and blaspheme, you will not make the calamity lighter, but you will render its wave more troublous. By feeling then in this way, let us turn what is necessary into a matter of our own choice.

What I mean is this -- suppose one has lost his own son, another all his property: if you reflect that it is not in the nature of things for what has taken place to be undone; while it is to gain fruit from the misfortune, though irremediable, even that of bearing the circumstance nobly; and if instead of using blasphemous words, thou were to offer up words of thanksgiving to the Lord, so would evils brought upon you against your will become to you the good deeds of a free choice.

Have you seen a son taken prematurely away? Say, the Lord has given, the Lord has taken away. Do you see your fortune exhausted? Say, naked came I out of my mother's womb, and naked shall I return there. Job 1:21 Do you see evil men faring well, and just men faring ill and undergoing ills without number, and do you not know where to find the cause? Say, I became even as it were a beast before You. Yet I am ever with You. Psalm 73:22 But if you will search out the cause, reflect that He has fixed a day in which He will judge the world, and so you will throw off perplexity, for then every man will meet his deserts, even as Lazarus and the rich man.

Call to mind the Apostles, for they too rejoiced at being scourged, at being driven about and undergoing numberless sufferings, because they were counted worthy to suffer shame for His Name's sake. Acts 5:41 And do thou, then, if you are sick, bear it nobly, and own yourself indebted to God for it, and you shall receive the same reward with them. But how, when in feebleness and pain, are you to be able to feel grateful to the Lord? You will if you love Him sincerely. For if the Three Children who were thrown into the furnace, and others who were in prisons, and in countless other evils, ceased not to give thanks, much more will they who are in a state of disease, be able to do this.

For there is not, assuredly there is not, anything which vehement desire does not get the better of. But when the desire is even that of God, it is higher than anything, and neither fire, nor the sword, nor poverty, nor infirmity, nor death, nor anything else of the kind appears dreadful to one who has gotten this love, but scorning them all, he will fly to heaven, and will have affections no way inferior to those of its inhabitants, seeing nothing else, neither heaven, nor earth, nor sea, but gazing only at the one Beauty of that glory.

And neither the vexations of this life present will depress him, nor the things which are goodly and attended with pleasure elate him or puff him up. Let us then love with this love (for there is not anything equal unto it) both for the sake of things present and for the sake of things to come. Or rather, more than for these, for the nature of the love itself. For we shall be set free both from the punishments of this life and

of that which is to come, and shall enjoy the kingdom.

Yet neither is the escape from hell, nor the fruition of the kingdom, anything great in comparison of what is yet to be said. For greater than all these things is it to have Christ our beloved at once and our lover. For if when this happens with men it is above all pleasure; when both happen from God, what language or what thought is able to set before one the blessedness of this soul? There is none that can, save the experience of it only. That then we may by experience come to know what is this spiritual joy, and life of blessedness, and untold treasure of good things, let us leave everything to cling to that love, with a view as well to our own joy as to the glory of God. For unto Him is the glory and power, with His Only-begotten, and the Holy Ghost, now, and ever, and unto all ages evermore. Amen.

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