

John 10:22-42

by St. John Chrysostom

St. John Chrysostom's sermon on John 10:22-42 explores the themes of gentleness, the nature of belief, and the significance of Jesus' works as evidence of His divine authority.

Scripture: John 10:25-27, John 10:37, John 10:39, John 10:42, 1 Corinthians 7:16, 1 Timothy 2:9

Topics: "Christlike Character", "Unity With God"

Description

John Chrysostom preaches about the importance of meekness and gentleness, highlighting how Jesus exemplified these virtues through His actions and teachings, even when faced with hostility and deceitful questioning. Chrysostom emphasizes the significance of believing in Jesus through His works, as they bear witness to His identity as the Son of God. He also discusses the unity between Jesus and the Father, emphasizing that knowing Jesus is knowing the Father, and vice versa. Chrysostom encourages women to focus on inner adornment of the soul with virtues like modesty, piety, and kindness, rather than external adornments, to influence and guide their husbands towards goodness and harmony in the household.

Transcript

And it was at Jerusalem, the Feast of the dedication, and it was winter. And Jesus walked in the temple in Solomon's porch. Then came the Jews round about Him, and said to Him, How long do you make us to doubt?

1. Every virtue is a good thing, but most of all gentleness and meekness. This shows us men; this makes us to differ from wild beasts; this fits us to vie with Angels. Wherefore Christ continually expends many words about this virtue, bidding us be meek and gentle. Nor does He merely expend words about it, but also teaches it by His actions; at one time buffeted and bearing it, at another reproached and plotted against; yet again coming to those who plotted against Him. For those men who had called Him a demoniac, and a Samaritan and who had often desired to kill Him, and had cast stones at Him, the same surrounded and asked Him, Are you the Christ? Yet not even in this case did He reject them after so many and so great plots against Him, but answered them with great gentleness.

But it is necessary rather to enquire into the whole passage from the beginning.

It was, It says, at Jerusalem, the Feast of the dedication, and it was winter. This feast was a great and national one. For they celebrated with great zeal the day on which the Temple was rebuilt, on their return from their long captivity in Persia. At this feast Christ also was present, for henceforth He continually

abode in Judaea, because the Passion was near. Then came the Jews round about Him, and said, How long do you make us to doubt?

If you be the Christ, tell us plainly.

He did not reply, What enquire ye of Me? Often have ye called Me demoniac, madman, and Samaritan, and have deemed me an enemy of God, and a deceiver, and you said but now, You bear witness of yourself, your witness is not true; how is it then that you seek and desire to learn from Me, whose witness ye reject? But He said nothing of the kind, although He knew that the intention with which they made the enquiry was evil. For their surrounding Him and saying, How long do you make us to doubt? seemed to proceed from a certain longing and desire of learning, but the intention with which they asked the question was corrupt and deceitful. For since His works admitted not of their slander and insolence, while they might attack His sayings by finding out in them a sense other than that in which they were spoken, they continually proposed questions, desiring to silence Him by means of His sayings; and when they could find no fault with His works, they wished to find a handle in His words. Therefore they said, Tell us; yet He had often told them. For He said to the woman of Samaria, I Am that speak unto you John 4:26; and to the blind man, You have both seen Him, and it is He that talks with you. John 9:37 And He had told them also, if not in the same, at least in other words. And indeed, had they been wise, and had they desired to enquire aright, it remained for them to confess Him by words, since by works He had often proved the point in question. But now observe their perverse and disputations temper. When He addresses them, and instructs them by His words, they say, What sign do you show us? John 6:30 But when He gives them proofs by His works, they say to Him, Are you the Christ? Tell us plainly; when the works cry aloud, they seek words, and when the words teach, then they betake themselves to works, ever setting themselves to the contrary. But that they enquired not for the sake of learning, the end showed. For Him whom they deemed to be so worthy of credit, as to receive His witness of Himself, when He had spoken a few words they straightway stoned; so that their very surrounding and pressing upon Him was done with ill intent.

And the mode of questioning was full of much hatred. Tell us plainly, Are you the Christ? Yet He spoke all things openly, being ever present at their feasts, and in secret He said nothing; but they brought forward words of deceit, How long do you make us to doubt? in order that having drawn Him out, they might again find some handle against Him. For that in every case they questioned Him not in order to learn, but to find fault with His words, is clear, not from this passage only, but from many others also. Since when they came to Him and asked, Is it lawful to give tribute unto Caesar or not? Matthew 22:17, when they spoke about putting away a wife Matthew 19:3, when they enquired about her who, they said, had had seven husbands Matthew 22:23, they were convicted of bringing their questions to Him, not from desire of learning, but from an evil intention. But there He rebuked them, saying, Why do you tempt Me, you hypocrites? showing that He knew their secret thoughts, while here He said nothing of the kind; teaching us not always to rebuke those who plot against us, but to bear many things with meekness and gentleness.

Since then it was a sign of folly, when the works proclaimed Him aloud, to seek the witness of words, hear how He answers them, at once hinting to them that they made these enquiries superfluously, and not for the sake of learning, and at the same time showing that He uttered a voice plainer than that by words, namely, that by works.

John 10:25

I told you often, and you believe not: the works that I do in My Father's Name, they are they that bear witness of Me.

2. A remark which the more tolerable among them continually made to one another; A man that is a sinner cannot do such miracles. And again, A devil cannot open the eyes of the blind: and, No man can do such miracles except God be with him. John 3:2 And beholding the miracles that He did, they said, Is not this the Christ? Others said, When Christ comes, will He do greater miracles than those which this Man has done? John 7:31 And these very persons as many as then desired to believe in Him, saying, What sign do you show us, that we may see, and believe you? John 6:30 When then they who had not been persuaded by such great works, pretended that they should be persuaded by a bare word, He rebukes their wickedness, saying, If you believe not My works, how will you believe My words? So that your questioning is superfluous.

John 10:26

But I told you, and you believe not, because you are not of My sheep.

For I on My part have fulfilled all that it behooved a Shepherd to do, and if you follow Me not, it is not because I am not a Shepherd, but because you are not My sheep.

John 10:27-30

For My sheep hear My voice, and follow Me; and I give unto them eternal life ; neither can any man pluck them out of My hand. The Father, which gave them Me, is greater than all, and no man is able to pluck them out of My Father's hand. I and the Father are One.

Observe how in renouncing He excites them to follow Him. You hear Me not, He says, for neither are you sheep, but they who follow, these are of the flock. This He said, that they might strive to become sheep. Then by mentioning what they should obtain, He makes these men jealous, so as to rouse them, and cause them to desire such things.

What then? Is it through the power of the Father that no man plucks them away, and have you no strength, but art too weak to guard them? By no means. And in order that you may learn that the expression, The Father which gave them to Me, is used on their account, that they might not again call Him an enemy of God, therefore, after asserting that, No man plucks them out of My hand, He proceeds to show, that His hand and the Father's is One. Since had not this been so, it would have been natural for Him to say, The Father which gave them to Me is greater than all, and no man can pluck them out of My hand. But He said not so, but, out of My Father's hand. Then that you may not suppose that He indeed is weak, but that the sheep are in safety through the power of the Father, He adds, I and the Father are One. As though He had said I did not assert that on account of the Father no man plucks them away, as though I were too weak to keep the sheep. For I and the Father are One. Speaking here with reference to Power, for concerning this was all His discourse; and if the power be the same, it is clear that the Essence is also. And when the Jews used ten thousand means, plotting and casting men out of their synagogues, He tells them that all their contrivances are useless and vain; For the sheep are in My Father's hand; as the Prophet says, Upon My hand I have pictured your walls. Isaiah 49:16 Then to show that the hand is One, He sometimes says that it is His own, sometimes the Father's. But when you hear the word hand, do not understand anything material, but the power, the authority. Again, if it was on this account that no one could pluck away the sheep, because the Father gave Him power, it would have been superfluous to say

what follows, I and the Father are One. Since were He inferior to Him, this would have been a very daring saying, for it declares nothing else than an equality of power; of which the Jews were conscious, and took up stones to cast at Him. John 10:31 Yet not even so did He remove this opinion and suspicion; though if their suspicion were erroneous, He ought to have set them right, and to have said, Wherefore do ye these things? I spoke not thus to testify that my power and the Father's are equal; but now He does quite the contrary, and confirms their suspicion, and clenches it, and that too when they were exasperated. For He makes no excuse for what had been said, as though it had been said ill, but rebukes them for not entertaining a right opinion concerning Him. For when they said,

John 10:33-36

For a good work we stone you not, but for blasphemy; and because that thou being a man makest yourself God; hear His answer; If the Scripture called them gods unto whom the word of God came, blasphemest, "&c., N.T. The comment looks as if this had been read.}--> how say ye that I blaspheme, because I said, I am the Son of God?

What He says is of this kind: If those who have received this honor by grace, are not found fault with for calling themselves gods, how can He who has this by nature deserve to be rebuked? Yet He spoke not so, but proved it at a later time, having first relaxed and yielded somewhat in His discourse, and said, Whom the Father has sanctified and sent. And when He had softened their anger, He brings forward the plain assertion. For a while, that His speech might be received, He spoke in a humbler strain, but afterwards He raised it higher, saying,

John 10:37-38

If I do not the works of My Father, believe Me not; but if I do, though ye believe not Me, believe the works.

Do you see how He proves what I said, that He is in nothing inferior to the Father, but in every way equal to Him? For since it was impossible to see His Essence, from the equality and sameness of the works He affords a proof of unvaryingness as to Power. And what, tell me, shall we believe?

3. That I am in the Father, and the Father in Me.

For I am nothing other than what the Father is, yet still Son; He nothing other than what I am, yet still Father. And if any man know Me, he knows the Father, and if he knows the Father, he has learned also the Son. Now were the power inferior, then also what relates to the knowledge would be false, for it is not possible to become acquainted with one substance or power by means of another.

John 10:39-41

Therefore they sought again to take Him, but He escaped out of their hands, and went away again beyond Jordan, into the place where John at first baptized. And many resorted unto Him, and said, John did no miracle, but all things that John spoke of this man were true.

When He has uttered anything great and sublime, He quickly retires, giving way to their anger, so that the passion may abate and cease through His absence. And thus He acted at that time. But wherefore does the Evangelist mention the place? That you may learn that He went there to remind them of the things there done and said by John, and of his testimony; at least when they came there, they straightway remembered John. Wherefore also they said, John indeed did no miracle, since how did it follow that they

should add this, unless the place had brought the Baptist to their memory, and they had come to remember his testimony. And observe how they form incontrovertible syllogisms. John indeed did no miracle, but this man does, says some one; hence therefore his superiority is shown. If therefore men believed him who did no miracles, much more must they believe this man. Then, since it was John who bore the witness, lest his having done no miracle might seem to prove him unworthy of being a witness, they added, Yet if he did no miracle, still he spoke all things truly concerning this man; no longer proving Christ to be trustworthy by means of John, but John to be so by what Christ had done.

John 10:42

Many therefore believed on Him.

There were many things that attracted them. They remembered the words which John had spoken, calling Christ mightier than himself, and light, and life, and truth, and all the rest. They remembered the Voice which came down from heaven, and the Spirit which appeared in the shape of a dove, and pointed Him out to all; and with this they recollected the demonstration afforded by the miracles, looking to which they were for the future established. For, says some one, if it was right that we should believe John, much more ought we to believe this man; if him without miracles, much more this man, who besides the testimony of John, has also the proof from miracles. Do you see how much the abiding in this place, and the being freed from the presence of evil men, profited them? Wherefore Jesus continually leads and draws them away from the company of those persons; as also He seems to have done under the old Covenant, forming and ordering the Jews in all points, in the desert, at a distance from the Egyptians.

And this He now advises us also to do, bidding us avoid public places, and tumults, and disturbances, and pray peacefully in the chamber. For the vessel which is free from confusion, sails with a fair wind, and the soul which is separated from worldly matters rests in harbor. Wherefore women ought to have more true wisdom than men, because they are for the most part riveted to keeping at home. So, for instance, Jacob was a plain man, because he dwelt at home, and was free from the bustle of public life; for not without a cause has Scripture put this, when It says, dwelling in a house. Genesis 25:27 But, says some woman, even in a house there is great confusion. Yes, when you will have it so, and bringest about yourself a crowd of cares. For the man who spends his time in the midst of the market-places and courts of justice is overwhelmed, as if by waves, by external troubles; but the women who sits in her house as in some school of true wisdom, and collects her thoughts within herself, will be enabled to apply herself to prayers, and readings, and other heavenly wisdom. And as they who dwell in deserts have none to disturb them, so she being continually within can enjoy a perpetual calm. Nor even if at any time she need to go forth, is there then any cause for confusion. For the necessary occasions for a women to leave her house are, either for the purpose of coming hither, or when the body need to be cleansed in the bath; but for the most part she sits at home, and it is possible for her both to be herself truly wise, and receiving her husband when agitated to calm and compose him, to abate the excess and fierceness of his thoughts, and so to send him forth again, having put off all the mischiefs which he collected from the market-place, and carrying with him whatever good he learned at home. For nothing, nothing is more powerful than a pious and sensible women to bring a man into proper order, and to mould his soul as she will. For he will not endure friends, or teachers, or rulers, as he will his partner advising and counseling him, since the advice carries even some pleasure with it, because she who gives the counsel is greatly loved. I could tell of many hard and disobedient men who have been softened in this way. For she who shares his table, his bed, and his embraces, his words and secrets, his comings in and goings out, and many other things, who is entirely given up and joined to him, as it is likely that a body would be joined to a head, if she happen to

be discreet and well attuned, will go beyond and excel all others in the management of her husband.

4. Wherefore I exhort women to make this their employment, and to give fitting counsel. For as they have great power for good, so have they also for evil. A woman destroyed Absalom, a woman destroyed Amnon, a woman was like to have destroyed Job, a woman rescued Nabal from the slaughter. Women have preserved whole nations; for Deborah and Judith exhibited successes worthy of men; so also do ten thousand other women. Wherefore Paul says, For what do you know, O wife, whether you shall save your husband? 1 Corinthians 7:16 And in those times we see Persis and Mary and Priscilla taking part in the labors of the Apostles Romans 16; whom we also needs must imitate, and not by words only, but also by actions, bring into order him that dwells with us.

But how shall we instruct him by our actions? When he sees that you are not evilly disposed, not fond of expense or ornament, not demanding extravagant supplies of money, but content with what you have, then will he endure you counseling him. But if you are wise in word, and in actions doest the contrary, he will condemn you for very foolish talking. But when together with words you afford him also instruction by your works, then will he admit you and obey you the more readily; as when you desire not gold, nor pearls, nor costly clothing, but instead of these, modesty, sobriety, kindness; when you exhibit these virtues on your part and requirest them on his.

For if you must needs do somewhat to please your husband, you should adorn your soul, not adorn and so spoil your person. The gold which you put about you will not make you so lovely and desirable to him, as modesty and kindness towards himself, and a readiness to die for your partner; these things most subdue men. Indeed, that splendor of apparel even displeases him, as straitening his means, and causing him much expense and care; but those things which I have named will rivet a husband to a wife; for kindness and friendship and love cause no cares, give rise to no expense, but quite the contrary.

That outward adornment becomes palling by use, but that of the soul blooms day by day, and kindles a stronger flame. So that if you would please your husband, adorn your soul with modesty, piety, and management of the house. These things both subdue him more, and never cease. Age destroys not this adornment, sickness wastes it not. The adornment of the body length of time is wont to undo, sickness and many other things to waste, but what relates to the soul is above all this.

That adornment causes envy, and kindles jealousy, but this is pure from disease, and free from all vainglory. Thus will matters at home be easier, and your income without trouble, when the gold is not laid on about your body or encircling your arms, but passes on to necessary uses, such as the feeding of servants, the necessary care of children, and other useful purposes. But if this be not the case, if the (wife's) face be covered with ornaments, while the (husband's) heart is pressed by anxiety, what profit, what kind of advantage is there?

The one being grieved allows not the marvelous beauty of the other to be seen. For you know, you know that though a man see the most beautiful of all women, he cannot feel pleasure at the sight while his soul is sorrowful, because in order to feel pleasure a man must first rejoice and be glad. And when all his gold is heaped together to adorn a woman's body, while there is distress in his dwelling, her partner can have no pleasure. So that if we desire to be agreeable to our husbands, let us give them pleasure; and we shall give them pleasure, if we remove our ornaments and fineries.

For all these things at the actual time of marriage appear to afford some delight, but this afterwards fades by time. Since if when the heaven is so beautiful, and the sun, to which you can not name any body that is

equal, so bright, we admire them less from habitually seeing them, how shall we admire a body tricked out with gewgaws? These things I say, desiring that you should be adorned with that wholesome adornment which Paul enjoined; Not with gold, or pearls, or costly array; but (which becomes women professing godliness) with good works. 1 Timothy 2:9-10 But do you wish to please strangers, and to be praised by them?

Then assuredly this is not the desire of a modest woman. However, if you wish it, by doing as I have said, you will have strangers also to love you much, and to praise your modesty. For the woman who adorns her person no virtuous and sober person will praise, but the intemperate and lascivious; nay, rather neither will these praise her, but will even speak vilely of her, having their eyes inflamed by the wantonness displayed about her; but the other all will approve, both the one sort and the other, because they receive no harm from her, but even instruction in heavenly wisdom.

And great shall be her praise from men, and great her reward with God. After such adornment then let us strive, that we may live here without fear, and may obtain the blessings which are to come; which may we all obtain through the grace and loving-kindness of our Lord Jesus Christ, to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen.

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