

# John 1:11-13

by St. John Chrysostom

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*God's love and persuasion are not enough; we must also live a pure life to act worthily of His calling.*

**Scripture:** John 1:12-13, 1 Corinthians 15:9, 1 Corinthians 15:49, Galatians 1:13, 1 Timothy 1:13, 1 Timothy 1:15

**Topics:** "Gods Love", "Faith And Obedience"

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## Description

John Chrysostom preaches about God's loving and beneficent nature, emphasizing that God draws people to Himself through persuasion and benefits, not force, allowing individuals to willingly choose to serve Him. Despite some rejecting Him, God continues to care for those who disobey, offering them the opportunity for repentance and forgiveness. Chrysostom highlights the infinite goodness of God, who came to His own people for their benefit, even though they rejected Him, showcasing His boundless love and compassion. He also discusses the importance of faith and living a life worthy of the calling to remain pure and enjoy the blessings of being children of God.

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## Transcript

He came unto His own, and His own received Him not.

1. Beloved, God being loving towards man and beneficent, does and contrives all things in order that we may shine in virtue, and as desiring that we be well approved by Him. And to this end He draws no one by force or compulsion: but by persuasion and benefits He draws all that will, and wins them to Himself. Wherefore when He came, some received Him, and others received Him not. For He will have no unwilling, no forced domestic, but all of their own will and choice, and grateful to Him for their service. Men, as needing the ministry of servants, keep many in that state even against their will, by the law of ownership; but God, being without wants, and not standing in need of anything of ours, but doing all only for our salvation makes us absolute in this matter, and therefore lays neither force nor compulsion on any of those who are unwilling. For He looks only to our advantage: and to be drawn unwilling to a service like this is the same as not serving at all.

Why then, says one, does He punish those who will not listen to Him, and why has He threatened hell to those who endure not His commands? Because, being Good exceedingly, He cares even for those who obey Him not, and withdraws not from them who start back and flee from Him. But when we had rejected the first way of His beneficence, and had refused to come by the path of persuasion and kind treatment, then He brought in upon us the other way, that of correction and punishments; most bitter indeed, but still necessary, when the former is disregarded.

Now lawgivers also appoint many and grievous penalties against offenders, and yet we feel no aversion to them for this; we even honor them the more on account of the punishments they have enacted, and because though not needing a single thing that we have, and often not knowing who they should be that should enjoy the help afforded by their written laws, they still took care for the good ordering of our lives, rewarding those who live virtuously, and checking by punishments the intemperate, and those who would mar the repose of others.

And if we admire and love these men, ought we not much more to marvel at and love God on account of His so great care? For the difference between their and His forethought regarding us is infinite. Unspeakable of a truth are the riches of the goodness of God, and passing all excess. Consider; He came to His own, not for His personal need, (for, as I said, the Divinity is without wants,) but to do good unto His own people. Yet not even so did His own receive Him, when He came to His own for their advantage, but repelled Him, and not this only, but they even cast Him out of the vineyard, and slew Him.

Yet not for this even did He shut them out from repentance, but granted them, if they had been willing, after such wickedness as this, to wash off all their transgressions by faith in Him, and to be made equal to those who had done no such thing, but are His special friends. And that I say not this at random, or for persuasion's sake, all the history of the blessed Paul loudly declares. For when he, who after the Cross persecuted Christ, and had stoned His martyr Stephen by those many hands, repented, and condemned his former sins, and ran to Him whom he had persecuted, He immediately enrolled him among His friends, and the chiefest of them, having appointed him a herald and teacher of all the world, who had been a blasphemer, and persecutor, and injurious. 1 Timothy 1:13 Even as he rejoicing at the lovingkindness of God, has proclaimed aloud, and has not been ashamed, but having recorded in his writings, as on a pillar, the deeds formerly dared by him, has exhibited them to all; thinking it better that his former life should be placarded in sight of all, so that the greatness of the free gift of God might appear, than that he should obscure His ineffable and indescribable lovingkindness by hesitating to parade before all men his own error.

Wherefore continually he treats of his persecution, his plottings, his wars against the Church, at one time saying, I am not meet to be called an Apostle, because I persecuted the Church of God 1 Corinthians 15:9; at another, Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief. 1 Timothy 1:15 And again, You have heard of my conversation in time past in the Jews' religion, how that beyond measure I persecuted the church of God, and wasted it. Galatians 1:13

2. For making as it were a kind of return to Christ for His longsuffering towards him, by showing who it was, what a hater and enemy that He saved, he declared with much openness the warfare which at the first with all zeal he warred against Christ; and with this he holds forth good hopes to those who despaired of their condition. For he says, that Christ accepted him, in order that in him first He might show forth all longsuffering 1 Timothy 1:16, and the abundant riches of His goodness, for a pattern to them that should hereafter believe in Him to life everlasting. Because the things which they had dared were too great for any pardon which the Evangelist declaring, said,

He came to His own, and His own received Him not. Whence came He, who fills all things, and who is everywhere present? What place did He empty of His presence, who holds and grasps all things in His hand? He exchanged not one place for another; how should He? But by His coming down to us He effected this. For since, though being in the world, He did not seem to be there, because He was not yet known, but afterwards manifested Himself by deigning to take upon Him our flesh, he (St. John) calls this

manifestation and descent a coming. One might wonder at the disciple who is not ashamed of the dishonor of his Teacher, but even records the insolence which was used towards Him: yet this is no small proof of his truth-loving disposition. And besides, he who feels shame should feel it for those who have offered an insult, not for the person outraged. Indeed He by this very thing shone the brighter, as taking, even after the insult, so much care for those who had offered it; while they appeared ungrateful and accursed in the eyes of all men, for having rejected Him who came to bring them so great goods, as hateful to them, and an enemy. And not only in this were they hurt, but also in not obtaining what they obtained who received Him. What did these obtain?

John 1:12

As many as received Him, to them gave He power to become the sons of God.

Why then, O blessed one, do you not also tell us the punishment of them who received Him not? You have said that they were 'His own,' and that when 'He came to His own, they received Him not'; but what they shall suffer for this, what punishment they shall undergo, you have not gone on to add. Yet so you would the more have terrified them, and have softened the hardness of their insanity by threatening. Wherefore then have you been silent? And what other punishment, he would say, can be greater than this, that when power is offered them to become sons of God, they do not become so, but willingly deprive themselves of such nobility and honor as this? Although their punishment shall not even stop at this point, that they gain no good, but moreover the unquenchable fire shall receive them, as in going on he has more plainly revealed. But for the present he speaks of the unutterable goods of those who received Him, and sets these words in brief before us, saying, As many as received Him, to them gave He power to become sons of God. Whether bond or free, whether Greeks or barbarians or Scythians, unlearned or learned, female or male, children or old men, in honor or dishonor, rich or poor, rulers or private persons, all, He says, are deemed worthy the same privilege; for faith and the grace of the Spirit, removing the inequality caused by worldly things, has moulded all to one fashion, and stamped them with one impress, the King's. What can equal this lovingkindness? A king, who is framed of the same clay with us, does not deign to enrol among the royal host his fellow-servants, who share the same nature with himself, and in character often are better than he, if they chance to be slaves; but the Only-Begotten Son of God did not disdain to reckon among the company of His children both publicans, sorcerers, and slaves, nay, men of less repute and greater poverty than these, maimed in body, and suffering from ten thousand ills. Such is the power of faith in Him, such the excess of His grace. And as the element of fire, when it meets with ore from the mine, straightway of earth makes it gold, even so and much more Baptism makes those who are washed to be of gold instead of clay; the Spirit at that time falling like fire into our souls, burning up the image of the earthy 1 Corinthians 15:49, and producing the image of the heavenly, fresh coined, bright and glittering, as from the furnace-mould.

Why then did he say not that He made them sons of God, but that He gave them power to become sons of God? To show that we need much zeal to keep the image of sonship impressed on us at Baptism, all through without spot or soil ; and at the same time to show that no one shall be able to take this power from us, unless we are the first to deprive ourselves of it. For if among men, those who have received the absolute control of any matters have nearly as much power as those who gave them the charge; much more shall we, who have obtained such honor from God, be, if we do nothing unworthy of this power, stronger than all; because He who put this honor in our hands is greater and better than all. At the same time too he wishes to show, that not even does grace come upon man irrespectively, but upon those who desire and take pains for it. For it lies in the power of these to become (His) children since if they do not

themselves first make the choice, the gift does not come upon them, nor have any effect.

3. Having therefore everywhere excluded compulsion and pointing to (man's) voluntary choice and free power, he has said the same now. For even in these mystical blessings, it is, on the one hand, God's part, to give the grace, on the other, man's to supply faith; and in after time there needs for what remains much earnestness. In order to preserve our purity, it is not sufficient for us merely to have been baptized and to have believed, but we must if we will continually enjoy this brightness, display a life worthy of it. This then is God's work in us. To have been born the mystical Birth, and to have been cleansed from all our former sins, comes from Baptism; but to remain for the future pure, never again after this to admit any stain belongs to our own power and diligence. And this is the reason why he reminds us of the manner of the birth, and by comparison with fleshly pangs shows its excellence, when he says,

John 1:13

Who were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, but of God.

This he has done, in order that, considering the vileness, and lowness of the first birth, which is of blood, and the will of the flesh, and perceiving the highness and nobleness of the second, which is by grace, we may form from thence some great opinion of it, and one worthy of the gift of Him who has begotten us, and for the future exhibit much earnestness.

For there is no small fear, lest, having sometime defiled that beautiful robe by our after sloth and transgressions, we be cast out from the inner room and bridal chamber, like the five foolish virgins, or him who had not on a wedding garment. Matthew 25; Matthew 22 He too was one of the guests, for he had been invited; but because, after the invitation and so great an honor, he behaved with insolence towards Him who had invited him, hear what punishment he suffers, how pitiable, fit subject for many tears. For when he comes to partake of that splendid table, not only is he forbidden the least, but bound hand and foot alike, is carried into outer darkness, to undergo eternal and endless wailing and gnashing of teeth. Therefore, beloved, let not us either expect that faith is sufficient to us for salvation; for if we do not show forth a pure life, but come clothed with garments unworthy of this blessed calling, nothing hinders us from suffering the same as that wretched one. It is strange that He, who is God and King, is not ashamed of men who are vile, beggars, and of no repute, but brings even them of the cross ways to that table; while we manifest so much insensibility, as not even to be made better by so great an honor, but even after the call remain in our old wickedness, insolently abusing the unspeakable lovingkindness of Him who has called us. For it was not for this that He called us to the spiritual and awful communion of His mysteries, that we should enter with our former wickedness; but that, putting off our filthiness, we should change our raiment to such as becomes those who are entertained in palaces. But if we will not act worthily of that calling this no longer rests with Him who has honored us, but with ourselves; it is not He that casts us out from that admirable company of guests, but we cast out ourselves.

He has done all His part. He has made the marriage, He has provided the table, He has sent men to call us, has received us when we came, and honored us with all other honor; but we, when we have offered insult to Him, to the company, and to the wedding, by our filthy garments, that is, our impure actions, are then with good cause cast out. It is to honor the marriage and the guests, that He drives off those bold and shameless persons; for were He to suffer those clothed in such a garment, He would seem to be offering insult to the rest. But may it never be that one, either of us or of other, find this of Him who has called us! For to this end have all these things been written before they come to pass, that we, being sobered by the

threats of the Scriptures, may not suffer this disgrace and punishment to go on to the deed, but stop it at the word only, and each with bright apparel come to that call; which may it come to pass that we all enjoy, through the grace and lovingkindness of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom and with whom, to the Father and the Holy Ghost, be glory for ever and ever. Amen.

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