

John 12:25-32

by St. John Chrysostom

The sermon emphasizes the importance of following Christ, hating one's life in this world, and glorifying God through faith and obedience.

Scripture: Matthew 12:29, Matthew 16:24, John 12:25-26, John 12:32

Topics: "Eternal Life", "Self Denial"

Description

John Chrysostom preaches about the importance of prioritizing eternal life over the pleasures of this world, emphasizing the need to detach from worldly desires and follow Christ wholeheartedly. He explains that by hating our own sinful desires and being willing to endure hardships for the sake of serving Christ, we can attain eternal life. Chrysostom encourages believers to imitate Christ's example of obedience and selflessness, even in the face of death, as a way to glorify God and draw others to Him. He warns against living in sin and causing God's name to be blasphemed, urging listeners to live a life that brings glory to God and avoids harming others.

Transcript

He that loves his life shall lose it, and he that hates his life in this world shall keep it unto life eternal. If any man serve Me, let him follow Me.

1. Sweet is the present life, and full of much pleasure, yet not to all, but to those who are riveted to it. Since, if any one look to heaven and see the beautiful things there, he will soon despise this life, and make no account of it. Just as the beauty of an object is admired while none more beautiful is seen, but when a better appears, the former is despised. If then we would choose to look to that beauty, and observe the splendor of the kingdom there, we should soon free ourselves from our present chains; for a kind of chain it is, this sympathy with present things. And hear what Christ says to bring us in to this, He that loves his life shall lose it, and he that hates his life in this world shall keep it unto life eternal; if any man serve Me let him follow Me; and, Where I am, there is My servant also. The words seem like a riddle, yet they are not so, but are full of much wisdom. But how shall he that loves his life, lose it? When he does its unseemly desires, when he gratifies it where he ought not. Wherefore one exhorts us, saying, Walk not in the desires of your soul Sirach 18:30; for so will you destroy it since it leads away from the path leading to virtue; just as, on the contrary, he that hates it in this world, shall save it. But what means, He that hates it? He who yields not to it when it commands what is pernicious. And He said not, he that yields not to it, but, He that hates it; for as we cannot endure even to hear the voice of those we hate, nor to look upon

them with pleasure, so from the soul also we must turn away with vehemence, when it commands things contrary to what is pleasing to God. For since He was now about to say much to them concerning death, His own death, and saw that they were dejected and desponding, He spoke very strongly, saying, What say I? If you bear not valiantly My death? Nay, if you die not yourselves, you will gain nothing. Observe also how He softens the discourse. It was a very grievous and sad thing to be told, that the man who loves life should die. And why speak I of old times, when even now we shall find many gladly enduring to suffer anything. in order to enjoy the present life, and this too when they are persuaded concerning things to come; who when they behold buildings, and works of art, and contrivances, weep, uttering the reflection, How many things man invents, and yet becomes dust! So great is the longing after this present life. To undo these bonds then, Christ says, He that hates his soul in this world, shall keep it unto life eternal. For that you may know that He spoke as exhorting them, and dissipating their fear, hear what comes next.

If any man serve Me, let him follow Me.

Speaking of death, and requiring the following which is by works. For certainly he that serves must follow him who is served. And observe at what time He said these things to them; not when they were persecuted, but when they were confident; when they thought they were in safety on account of the honor and attention of the many, when they might rouse themselves and hear, Let him take up his cross, and follow Me Matthew 16:24; that is, Be ever, He says, prepared against dangers, against death, against your departure hence. Then after He had spoken what was hard to bear, He puts also the prize. And of what kind was this? The following Him, and being where He is; showing that Resurrection shall succeed death. For, says He,

Where I am, there is My servant also.

But where is Christ? In heaven. Let us therefore even before the Resurrection remove there in soul and mind.

If any man serve Me, the Father shall love him.

Why said He not, I? Because they did not as yet hold a right opinion concerning Him, but held a higher opinion of the Father. For how could they imagine anything great concerning Him, who did not even know that He was to rise again? Wherefore He said to the sons of Zebedee, It is not mine to give, but it shall be given to them for whom it is prepared by my Father Mark 10:40, yet He it is that judges. But in this passage He also establishes His genuine sonship. For as the servants of His own Son, so will the Father receive them.

John 12:27

Now is My soul troubled; and what shall I say? Father, save me from this hour.

But surely this is not the expression of one urging them to go even to death. Nay, it is that of one greatly so urging them. For lest they should say, that He being exempt from mortal pains easily philosophizes on death, and exhorts us being himself in no danger, He shows, that although feeling its agony, on account of its profitableness He declines it not. But these things belong to the Dispensation, not the Godhead. Wherefore He says, Now is My soul troubled; since if this be not the case, What connection has that which was spoken, and His saying, Father, save Me from this hour? And so troubled, that He even sought deliverance from death, if at least it were possible to escape. These were the infirmities of His human

nature.

2. But, He says, I have not what to say, when asking for deliverance.

For for this cause came I unto this hour.

As though He had said, Though we be confounded, though we be troubled, let us not fly from death, since even now I though troubled do not speak of flying; for it behooves to bear what is coming on. I say not, Deliver Me from this hour, but what?

John 12:28

Father, glorify Your Name.

Although My trouble urges Me to say this, yet I say the opposite, 'Glorify Your Name,' that is, Lead Me henceforth to the Cross; which greatly shows His humanity, and a nature unwilling to die, but clinging to the present life, proving that He was not exempt from human feelings. For as it is no blame to be hungry, or to sleep, so neither is it to desire the present life; and Christ indeed had a body pure from sin, yet not free from natural wants, for then it would not have been a body. By these words also He taught something else. Of what kind is that? That if ever we be in agony and dread, we even then start not back from that which is set before us; and by saying, Glorify Your Name He shows that He dies for the truth calling the action, glory to God. And this fell out after the Crucifixion. The world was about to be converted, to acknowledge the Name of God, and to serve Him, not the Name of the Father only, but also that of the Son; yet still as to this He is silent.

There came therefore a Voice from Heaven, I have both glorified it, and will glorify it again.

When had He glorified it? By what had been done before; and I will glorify it again after the Cross. What then said Christ?

John 12:30

This Voice came not because of Me, but for your sakes.

They thought that it thundered, or that an Angel spoke to Him. And how did they think this? Was not the voice clear and distinct? It was, but it quickly flew away from them as being of the grosser sort, carnal and slothful. And some of them caught the sound only, others knew that the voice was articulate, but what it meant, knew not. What says Christ? This Voice came not because of Me, but for your sakes. Why said He this? He said it, setting Himself against what they continually asserted, that He was not of God. For He who was glorified by God, how was He not from that God whose name by Him was glorified? Indeed for this purpose the Voice came. Wherefore He says Himself, This Voice came not because of Me, but for your sakes, not that I may learn by it anything of which I am ignorant, (for I know all that belongs to the Father,) but for your sakes. For when they said, An Angel has spoken unto Him, or It has thundered, and gave not heed to Him, He says, it was for your sakes, that even so ye might be led to enquire what the words meant. But they, being excited, did not even so enquire, though they heard that the matter related to them. For to one who knew not wherefore it was uttered, the Voice naturally appeared indistinct. The Voice came for your sakes. Do you see that these lowly circumstances take place on their account, not as though the Son needs help?

John 12:31

Now is the judgment of this world, now shall the prince of this world be cast down.

What connection has this with, I have glorified, and will glorify? Much, and closely harmonizing. For when God says, I will glorify, He shows the manner of the glorifying. What is it? That one should be cast down. But what is, the judgment of this world? It is as though He said, there shall be a tribunal and a retribution. How and in what way? He slew the first man, having found him guilty of sin, (for 'by sin death entered' Romans 5:12) but in Me this he found not. Why then did he spring upon Me and give Me over to death? Why did he put into the mind of Judas to destroy Me? (Tell me not that it was God's dispensation, for this belongs not to the devil, but His wisdom; for the present let the disposition of that evil one be enquired into.) How then is the world judged in Me? It shall be said, as if a court of justice were sitting, to Satan, Well, you have slain all men, because you found them guilty of sin. But why did you slay Christ? Is it not clear that you did it wrongfully? Therefore in Him the whole world shall be avenged. But, that this may be still more clear, I will make it plain by an example. Suppose there is some cruel tyrant, bringing ten thousand evils on all those who fall into his hands. If such a one engaging with a king, or a king's son, slay him unjustly, his death will have power to get revenge for the others also. Suppose there is one who demands payment of his debtors, that he beats them and casts them into prison; then from the same recklessness that he leads to the same dungeon one who owes him nothing: such a man shall suffer punishment for what he has done to the others. For that one shall destroy him.

3. So also it is in the case of the Son; for of those things which the devil has done against us, of these shall the penalty be required by means of what he has dared against Christ. And to show that He implies this, hear what He says; Now shall the prince of this world be cast down, by My Death.

John 12:32

And I, if I be lifted up, will draw all men unto Me.

That is, even those of the Gentiles. And that no one may ask, How shall he be cast down, if he is stronger even than You are? He says, He is not stronger; how can he be stronger than One who draws others to Him? And He speaks not of the Resurrection, but of what is more than the Resurrection, I will draw all men to Myself. For had He said, I shall rise again, it was not yet clear that they would believe; but by His saying, they shall believe, both are proved at once, both this, and also that He must rise again. For had He continued dead, and been a mere man, no one would have believed. I will draw all men to Myself. John 6:44 How then said He that the Father draws? Because when the Son draws, the Father draws also. He says, I will draw them, as though they were detained by a tyrant, and unable of themselves alone to approach Him, and to escape the hands of him who keeps hold of them. In another place He calls this spoiling; no man can spoil a strong man's goods, except he first bind the strong man, and then spoil his goods. Matthew 12:29 This He said to prove His strength, and what there He calls spoiling, He has here called drawing.

Knowing then these things, let us rouse ourselves, let us glorify God, not by our faith alone, but also by our life, since otherwise it would not be glory, but blasphemy. For God is not so much blasphemed by an impure heathen, as by a corrupt Christian. Wherefore I entreat you to do all that God may be glorified; for, Woe, it says, to that servant by whom the Name of God is blasphemed, (and wherever there is a woe, every punishment and vengeance straightway follows,) but blessed is he by whom that Name is glorified. Let us then not be as in darkness, but avoid all sins, and especially those which tend to the hurt of others,

since by these God is most blasphemed. What pardon shall we have, when, being commanded to give to others, we plunder the property of others? What shall be our hope of salvation? You are punished if you have not fed the hungry; but if you have even stripped one who was clothed, what sort of pardon shall you obtain? These things I will never desist from saying, for they who have not heard today perhaps will hear tomorrow, and they who take no heed tomorrow perhaps will be persuaded the next day; and even if any be so disposed as not to be persuaded, yet for us there will be no account to give of them at the Judgment. Our part we have fulfilled; may we never have cause to be ashamed of our words, nor you to hide your faces, but may all be able to stand with boldness before the judgment-seat of Christ, that we also may be able to rejoice over you, and to have some compensation of our own faults, in your being approved in Christ Jesus our Lord, with whom to the Father and the Holy Ghost be glory forever. Amen.

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