

# John 13:36-14:7

by St. John Chrysostom

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*Jesus teaches His disciples about the importance of love, faith, and trust in Him, and promises them a place in heaven.*

**Scripture:** Psalm 38:5, John 13:37 - 14:7

**Topics:** "Following Christ", "Humility And Obedience"

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## Description

John Chrysostom preaches about the fervent love of Peter towards Jesus, as seen in his desire to follow Him even when told he cannot, and how this love was tested through Peter's denial and subsequent restoration by Jesus. Chrysostom emphasizes the importance of humility, obedience, and faith in following Christ, highlighting how Peter's love was genuine but needed the guidance and strength from above. He also discusses the significance of almsgiving as a means of cleansing sins and the importance of having a pure heart and mind in worship and service to God.

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## Transcript

Simon Peter said to Him, Lord, where are you going? Jesus answered him, Whither I go you can not follow Me now, but you shall follow Me afterwards.

1. A great thing is love, and stronger than fire itself, and it goes up to the very heaven; there is no hindrance which can restrain its tearing force. And so the most fervent Peter, when he hears, Whither I go ye cannot come, what says he? Lord, where are you going? and this he said, not so much from wish to learn, as from desire to follow. To say openly, I go, he dared not yet, but, Where are you going? Christ answered, not to his words, but to his thoughts. For that this was his wish, is clear from what Christ said, Whither I go you can not follow Me now. Do you see that he longed for the following Him, and therefore asked the question? And when he heard, you shall follow Me afterwards, not even so did he restrain his longing, and, though he had gained good hopes, he is so eager as to say,

John 13:37

Why cannot I follow You now? I will lay down my life for You.

When he had shaken off the dread of being the traitor, and was shown to be one of His own, he afterwards asked boldly himself, while the others held their peace. What do you say, Peter? He said, you can not,' and you say, 'I can'? Therefore you shall know from this temptation that your love is nothing without the

presence of the impulse from above. Whence it is clear that in care for him He allowed even that fall. He desired indeed to teach him even by the first words, but when he continued in his vehemence, He did not indeed throw or force him into the denial, but left him alone, that he might learn his own weakness. Christ had said that He must be betrayed; Peter replied, Be it far from You, Lord; this shall not happen unto You. Matthew 16:22 He was rebuked, but not instructed. On the contrary, when Christ desired to wash his feet, he said, You shall never wash my feet. John 13:8 Again, when he hears, You can not follow Me now, he says, Though all deny You, I will not deny You. Since then it was likely that he would be lifted up to folly by his practice of contradiction, Jesus next teaches him not to oppose Him. This too Luke implies, when he tells us that Christ said, And I have prayed for you, that your faith fail not Luke 22:32; that is, that thou be not finally lost. In every way teaching him humility, and proving that human nature by itself is nothing. But, since great love made him apt for contradiction, He now sobers him, that he might not in after times be subject to this, when he should have received the stewardship of the world, but remembering what he had suffered, might know himself. And look at the violence of his fall; it did not happen to him once or twice, but he was so beside himself, that in a short time thrice did he utter the words of denial, that he might learn that he did not so love as he was loved. And yet, to one who had so fallen He says again, Lovest thou Me more than these? So that the denial was caused not by the cooling of his love, but from his having been stripped of aid from above. He accepts then Peter's love, but cuts off the spirit of contradiction engendered by it. For if you love, you ought to obey Him who is beloved. I said to you and to those with you, 'You can not'; why are you contentious? Do you know what a thing it is to contradict God? But since you will not learn in this way that it is impossible that what I say should not come to pass, you shall learn it in the denial. And yet this appeared to you to be much more incredible. For this thou did not even understand, but of that you had the knowledge in your heart. Yet still that came to pass which was not even expected.

I will lay down my life for You. For since he had heard, Greater love than this has, no man, he straightway sprang forward, insatiably eager and desirous to reach even to the highest pitch of virtue. But Christ, to show that it belonged to Himself alone to promise these things with authority, says,

John 13:38

Before the cock crow.

That is, now; there was but a little interval. He spoke when it was late at night, and the first and second watch was past.

John 14:1

Let not your heart be troubled.

This He says, because it was probable that when they heard they would be troubled. For if the leader of their band, one so entirely fervent, was told that before the cock crew he should thrice deny his Master, it was likely that they would expect to have to undergo some great reverse, sufficient to bend even souls of adamant. Since then it was probable that they considering these things would be astounded, see how He comforts them, saying, Let not your heart be troubled. By this first word showing the power of His Godhead, because, what they had in their hearts He knew and brought to light.

You believe in God, believe also in Me. That is, All dangers shall pass you by, for faith in Me and in My Father is more powerful than the things which come upon you, and will permit no evil thing to prevail against you. Then He adds,

John 14:2

In My Father's house are many mansions.

As He comforts Peter when bewildered by saying, but you shall follow afterwards, so also He gives this glimpse of hope to the others. For lest they should think that the promise was given to him alone, He says, In My Father's house are many mansions.

If it were not so I would have said to you, I go to prepare a place for you.

That is, The same place which receives Peter shall receive you. For a great abundance of dwellings is there, and it may not be said that they need preparation. When He said, You cannot follow Me now, that they might not deem that they were finally cut off, He added,

John 14:3

That where I am, there ye may be also.

So earnest have I been concerning this matter, that I should already have been given up to it, had not preparation been made long ago for you. Showing them that they ought to be very bold and confident. Then that He may not seem to speak as though enticing them, but that they may believe the thing to be so, He adds,

John 14:4

And whither I go ye know, and the way ye know.

Do you see that He gives them proof that these things were not said without a meaning? And He used these words, because He knew in Himself that their souls now desired to learn this. For Peter said what he said, not in order to learn, but that he might follow. But when Peter had been rebuked, and Christ had declared that to be possible which for the time seemed impossible, and when the apparent impossibility led him to desire to know the matter exactly, therefore He says to the others, And the way ye know. For as when He has said, You shall deny Me, before any one spoke a word, searching into their hearts, He said, Be not troubled, so here also by saying You know, He disclosed the desire which was in their heart, and Himself gives them an excuse for questioning. Now the, Where are You going? Peter used from a very loving affection, Thomas from cowardice.

John 14:5

Lord, we know not whither You go.

The place, he says, we know not, and how shall we know the way leading there? And observe with what submissiveness he speaks; he says not, tell us the place, but, we know not whither You go; for all had long yearned to hear this. If the Jews questioned among themselves when they heard (of His departure), although desirous to be rid of Him, much more would those desire to learn, who wished never to be separated from Him. They feared therefore to ask Him, but yet they asked Him, from their great love and anxiety. What then says Christ?

John 14:6

I am the Way, and the Truth, and the Life; no man comes unto the Father, but by Me.

Why then, when He was asked by Peter, 'Where are You going,' did He not say directly, 'I go to the Father, but you cannot come now'? Why did He put in a circuit of so many words, placing together questions and answers? With good reason He told not this to the Jews; but why not to these? He had indeed said both to these and to the Jews, that He came forth from God, and was going to God, now He says the same thing more clearly than before. Besides, to the Jews He spoke not so clearly; for had He said, You cannot come to the Father but by Me, they would straightway have deemed the matter mere boasting; but now by concealing this, He threw them into perplexity. But why, says some one, did He speak thus both to the disciples and to Peter? He knew his great forwardness, and that he would by reason of this the more press on and trouble Him; in order therefore to lead him away, He hides the matter. Having then succeeded in what He wished by the obscurity and by veiling His speech, He again discloses the matter. After saying, Where I am, no man can come, He adds, In My Father's house are many mansions; and again, No man comes to the Father but by Me. This He would not tell them at first, in order not to throw them into greater despondency, but, now that He has soothed them, He tells them. For by Peter's rebuke He cast out much of their despondency; and dreading lest they should be addressed in the same way, they were the more restrained. I am the Way. This is the proof of the, No man comes to the Father but by Me; and, the Truth, and the Life, of this, that these things shall surely be. There is then no falsehood with Me, if I am 'the Truth'; if I am 'Life' also, not even death shall be able to hinder you from coming to Me. Besides; if I am 'the Way,' you will need none to lead you by the hand; if I am also 'the Truth,' My words are no falsehoods; if I am also 'Life,' though ye die you shall obtain what I have told you. Now His being the Way, they both understood and allowed, but the rest they knew not. They did not indeed venture to say what they knew not. Still they gained great consolation from His being the Way. If, says He, I have sole authority to bring to the Father, you shall surely come there; for neither is it possible to come by any other way. But by saying before, No man can come to Me except the Father draw him; and again, If I be lifted up from the earth, I shall draw all men unto Me John 12:32; and again, No man comes to the Father but by Me John 14:6; He shows Himself equal to Him who begot Him. But how after saying, Whither I go ye know, and the way ye know, has He added,

John 14:7

If you had known Me, you should have known My Father also; and from henceforth ye know Him, and have seen Him?

He does not contradict Himself; they knew Him indeed, but not so as they ought. God they knew, but the Father not yet. For afterwards, the Spirit having come upon them wrought in them all knowledge. What He says is of this kind. Had ye known My Essence and My Dignity, you would have known that of the Father also; and henceforth you shall know Him, and have seen Him, (the one belonging to the future, the other to the present,) that is, by Me. By sight, He means knowledge by intellectual perception. For those who are seen we may see and not know; but those who are known we cannot know and not know. Wherefore He says, and you have seen Him; just as it says, was seen also of Angels. 1 Timothy 3:16 Yet the very Essence was not seen; yet it says that He was seen, that is, as far as it was possible for them to see. These words are used, that you may learn that the man who has seen Him knows Him who begot Him. But they beheld Him not in His unveiled Essence, but clothed with flesh. He is wont elsewhere to put sight for knowledge; as when He says, Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God. Matthew 5:8 By pure, He means not those who are free from fornication only, but from all sins. For every sin brings filth upon the soul.

3. Let us then use every means to wipe off the filthiness. But first the font cleanses, afterwards other ways also, many and of all kinds. For God, being merciful, has even after this given to us various ways of reconciliation, of all which the first is that by alms-doing. By almsdeeds, it says, and deeds of faith sins are cleansed away. Sirach 3:30 By alms-doing I do not mean that which is maintained by injustice, for this is not alms-doing, but savageness and inhumanity. What profits it to strip one man and clothe another?

For we ought to begin the action with mercy, but this is inhumanity. If we give away everything that we have got from other people, it is no gain to us. And this Zacchaeus shows, who on that occasion said, that he propitiated God by giving four times as much as he had taken. Luke 19:8 But we, when we plunder unboundedly, and give but little, think that we make God propitious, whereas we do rather exasperate Him. For tell me, if you should drag a dead and rotten ass from the waysides and lanes, and bring it to the altar, would not all stone you as accursed and polluted?

Well then, if I prove that a sacrifice procured by plunder is more polluted than this, what defense shall we obtain? Let us suppose that some article has been obtained by plunder, is it not of fouler scent than a dead ass? Would you learn how great is the rottenness of sin? Hear the Prophet saying, My wounds stank, and were corrupt. Psalm 38:5, Septuagint And do you in words entreat God to forget your misdeeds, and do you by what you yourself do, robbing and grasping, and placing your sin upon the altar, cause Him to remember them continually?

But now, this is not the only sin, but there is one more grievous than this, that you defile the souls of the saints. For the altar is but a stone, and is consecrated, but they ever bear with them Christ Himself; and do you dare to send there any of such impurity? No, says one, not the same money, but other. Mockery this, and trifling. Do you not know, that if one drop of injustice fall on a great quantity of wealth, the whole is defiled? And just as a man by casting dung into a pure fountain makes it all unclean, so also in the case of riches, anything ill-gotten entering in makes them to be tainted with the ill savor from itself.

Then we wash our hands when we enter into church, but our hearts not so. Why, do our hands send forth a voice? It is the soul that utters the words: to that God looks; cleanness of the body is of no use, while that is defiled. What profits it, if you wipe clean your outward hands, while you have those within impure? For the terrible thing and that which subverts all good is this, that while we are fearful about trifles, we care not for important matters. To pray with unwashed hands is a matter indifferent; but to do it with an unwashed mind, this is the extreme of all evils.

Hear what was said to the Jews who busied themselves about such outward impurities. Wash your heart from wickedness, how long shall there be in you thoughts of your labors? Jeremiah 4:14 Let us also wash ourselves, not with mire, but with fair water, with alms-doing, not with covetousness. First get free from rapine, and then show forth almsdeeds. Let us decline from evil, and do good. Psalm 37:27 Stay your hands from covetousness, and so bring them to almsgiving. But if with the same hands we strip one set of persons, though we may not clothe the others with what has been taken from them, yet we shall not thus escape punishment.

For that which is the groundwork of the propitiation is made the groundwork of all wickedness. Better not show mercy, than show it thus; since for Cain also it had been better not to have brought his offering at all. Now if he who brought too little angered God, when one gives what is another's, how shall not he anger Him? I commanded you, He will say, not to steal, and do you honor Me from that you have stolen? What do you think? That I am pleased with these things? Then shall He say to you, You thought wickedly that I

am even such an one as yourself; I will rebuke you, and set before your face your sins.

Psalm 50:21, Septuagint But may it not come to pass that any one of us hear this voice, but having wrought pure almsdeeds, and having our lamps burning, so may we enter into the bride-chamber by the grace and lovingkindness of our Lord Jesus Christ, to whom with the Father and the Holy Ghost be glory for ever and ever. Amen.

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