

John 1:43-49

by St. John Chrysostom

St. John Chrysostom's sermon on John 1:43-49 emphasizes the importance of immediate obedience to Christ, the role of Scripture in faith, and the joy of recognizing Jesus as the Messiah.

Scripture: John 1:45-46, John 1:48-49, 2 Corinthians 5:20

Topics: "Following Jesus", "Obedience To God"

Description

John Chrysostom preaches about the calling of Philip and Nathanael by Jesus, highlighting Philip's immediate obedience and Nathanael's thoughtful consideration of the Scriptures. Despite doubts, Nathanael's sincerity and desire for truth lead him to recognize Jesus as the Son of God. Chrysostom emphasizes the importance of rejoicing in knowing Christ and showing that joy through obedience and actions, likening it to preparing a feast for a beloved guest.

Transcript

The day following Jesus would go forth into Galilee and finds Philip, and says unto him, Follow Me. Now Philip was of Bethsaida, the city of Andrew and Peter.

1. To every careful thinker there is a gain Proverbs 14:23, Septuagint, says the proverb; and Christ implied more than this, when He said, He that seeks finds. Matthew 7:8 Wherefore it does not occur to me any more to wonder how Philip followed Christ. Andrew was persuaded when he had heard from John, and Peter the same from Andrew, but Philip not having learned anything from any but Christ who said to him only this, Follow Me, straightway obeyed, and went not back, but even became a preacher to others. For he ran to Nathanael and said to him, We have found Him of whom Moses in the Law and the Prophets did write. Do you see what a thoughtful mind he had, how assiduously he meditated on the writings of Moses, and expected the Advent? For the expression, we have found, belongs always to those who are in some way seeking. The day following Jesus went forth into Galilee. Before any had joined Him, He called no one; and He acted thus not without cause, but according to his own wisdom and intelligence. For if, when no one came to Him spontaneously, He had Himself drawn them, they might perhaps have started away; but now, having chosen this of themselves, they afterwards remained firm. He calls Philip, one who was better acquainted with Him; for he, as having been born and bred in Galilee, knew Him more than others. Having then taken the disciples, He next goes to the capture of the others, and draws to Him Philip and Nathanael. Now in the case of Nathanael this was not so wonderful, because the fame of Jesus had gone forth into all Syria. Matthew 4:24 But the wonderful thing was respecting Peter and James and Philip, that

they believed, not only before the miracles, but that they did so being of Galilee, out of which arises no prophet, nor can any good thing come; for the Galilæans were somehow of a more boorish and dull disposition than others; but even in this Christ displayed forth His power, by selecting from a land which bore no fruit His choicest disciples. It is then probable that Philip having seen Peter and Andrew, and having heard what John had said, followed; and it is probable also that the voice of Christ wrought in him somewhat; for He knew those who would be serviceable. But all these points the Evangelist cuts short. That Christ should come, he knew; that this was Christ, he knew not, and this I say that he heard either from Peter or John. But John mentions his village also, that you may learn that God has chosen the weak things of the world. 1 Corinthians 1:27

John 1:45

Philip finds Nathanael, and says unto him, We have found Him of whom Moses in the Law and the Prophets did write, Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph.

He says this, to make his preaching credible, which it must be if it rests on Moses and the Prophets besides, and by this to abash his hearer. For since Nathanael was an exact man, and one who viewed all things with truth, as Christ also testified and the event showed, Philip with reason refers him to Moses and the Prophets, that so he might receive Him who was preached. And he not troubled though he called Him the son of Joseph; for still he was supposed to be his son. And whence, O Philip, is it plain that this is He? What proof do you mention to us? For it is not enough merely to assert this. What sign have you seen, what miracle? Not without danger is it to believe without cause in such matters. What proof then have you? The same as Andrew, he replies; for he though unable to produce the wealth which he had found, or to describe his treasure in words, when he had discovered it, led his brother to it. So too did Philip. How this is the Christ, and how the prophets proclaimed Him beforehand, he said not; but he draws him to Jesus, as knowing that he would not afterwards fall off, if he should once taste His words and teaching.

John 1:46-47

And Nathanael said to him, Can there any good thing come out of Nazareth? Philip says unto him, Come and see. Jesus saw Nathanael coming to Him, and says of him, Behold an Israelite indeed, in whom is no guile.

He praises and approves the man, because he had said, Can any good thing come out of Nazareth? and yet he ought to have been blamed. Surely not; for the words are not those of an unbeliever, nor deserving blame, but praise. How so, and in what way? Because Nathanael had considered the writings of the Prophets more than Philip. For he had heard from the Scriptures, that Christ must come from Bethlehem, and from the village in which David was. This belief at least prevailed among the Jews, and the Prophet had proclaimed it of old, saying, And thou, Bethlehem, art by no means the least among the princes of Judah, for out of you shall come a Governor, that shall feed My people Israel. Matthew 2:6; Micah 5:2 And so when he heard that He was from Nazareth, he was confounded, and doubted, not finding the announcement of Philip to agree with the prediction of the Prophet.

But observe his wisdom and candor even in his doubting. He did not at once say, Philip, you deceive me, and speakest falsely, I believe you not, I will not come; I have learned from the prophets that Christ must come from Bethlehem, you say, 'from Nazareth'; therefore this is not that Christ. He said nothing like this; but what does he? He goes to Him himself; showing, by not admitting that Christ was of Nazareth, his accuracy respecting the Scriptures, and a character not easily deceived; and by not rejecting him who

brought the tidings, the great desire which he felt for the coming of Christ. For he thought within himself that Philip was probably mistaken about the place.

2. And observe, I pray you, his manner of declining, how gentle he has made it, and in the form of a question. For he said not, Galilee produces no good; but how said he? Can any good thing come out of Nazareth? Philip also was very prudent; for he is not as one perplexed, angry, and annoyed, but perseveres, wishing to bring over the man, and manifesting to us from the first of his preaching the firmness which becomes an Apostle. Wherefore also Christ says, Behold an Israelite indeed, in whom is no guile. So that there is such a person as a false Israelite; but this is not such an one; for his judgment, Christ says, is impartial, he speaks nothing from favor, or from ill-feeling. Yet the Jews, when they were asked where Christ should be born, replied, In Bethlehem Matthew 2:5, and produced the evidence, saying, And thou, Bethlehem, art by no means the least among the princes of Judah. Micah 5:2 Before they had seen Him they bore this witness, but when they saw Him in their malice they concealed the testimony, saying, But as for this fellow, we know not whence He is. John 9:29 Nathanael did not so, but continued to retain the opinion which he had from the beginning, that He was not of Nazareth.

How then do the prophets call Him a Nazarene? From His being brought up and abiding there. And He omits to say, I am not 'of Nazareth,' as Philip has told you, but of Bethlehem, that He may not at once make the account seem questionable; and besides this, because, even if He had gained belief, He would not have given sufficient proof that He was the Christ. For what hindered Him without being Christ, from being of Bethlehem, like the others who were born there? This then He omits; but He does that which has most power to bring him over, for He shows that He was present when they were conversing. For when Nathanael had said,

John 1:48

Whence know Thou me? . . . Before that Philip called you, when you were under the fig-tree, I saw you.

Observe a man firm and steady. When Christ had said, Behold an Israelite indeed, he was not made vain by this approbation, he ran not after this open praise, but continues seeking and searching more exactly, and desires to learn something certain. He still enquired as of a man, but Jesus answered as God. For He said, I have known you from the first, (him and the candor of his character, this He knew not as a man, from having closely followed him, but as God from the first,) and but now I saw you by the fig-tree; when there was no one present there but only Philip and Nathanael who said all these things in private. It is mentioned, that having seen him afar off, He said, Behold an Israelite indeed; to show, that before Philip came near, Christ spoke these words, that the testimony might not be suspected. For this reason also He named the time, the place, and the tree; because if He had only said, Before Philip came to you, I saw you, He might have been suspected of having sent him, and of saying nothing wonderful; but now, by mentioning both the place where he was when addressed by Philip, and the name of the tree, and the time of the conversation, He showed that His foreknowledge was unquestionable.

And He did not merely show to him His foreknowledge, but instructed him also in another way. For He brought him to a recollection of what they then had said; as, Can there any good thing come out of Nazareth? And it was most especially on this account that Nathanael received Him, because when he had uttered these words, He did not condemn, but praised and approved him. Therefore he was assured that this was indeed the Christ, both from His foreknowledge, and from His having exactly searched out his sentiments, which was the act of One who would show that He knew what was in his mind; and besides,

from His not having blamed, but rather praised him when he had seemed to speak against Himself. He said then, that Philip had called him; but what Philip had said to him or he to Philip, He omitted, leaving it to his own conscience, and not desiring farther to rebuke him.

3. Was it then only before Philip called him that He saw him? Did He not see him before this with His sleepless eye? He saw him, and none could gainsay it; but this is what it was needful to say at the time. And what did Nathanael? When he had received an unquestionable proof of His foreknowledge, he hastened to confess Him, showing by his previous delay his caution, and his fairness by his assent afterwards. For, said the Evangelist,

John 1:49

He answered and says unto Him, Rabbi, You are the Son of God, You are the King of Israel:

Do you see how his soul is filled at once with exceeding joy, and embraces Jesus with words? You are, says he, that expected, that sought-for One. Do you see how he is amazed, how he marvels? How he leaps and dances with delight?

So ought we also to rejoice, who have been thought worthy to know the Son of God; to rejoice, not in thought alone, but to show it also by our actions. And what must they do who rejoice? Obey Him who has been made known to them; and they who obey, must do whatever He wills. For if we are going to do what angers Him, how shall we show that we rejoice? Do you not see in our houses when a man entertains one whom he loves, how gladly he exerts himself, running about in every direction, and though it be needful to spend all that he has, sparing nothing so that he please his visitor? But if one who invites should not attend to his , and not do such things as would procure him ease, though he should say ten thousand times that he rejoices at his coming, he could never be believed by him. And justly; for this should be shown by actions. Let us then, since Christ has come to us, show that we rejoice, and do nothing that may anger him; let us garnish the abode to which He has come, for this they do who rejoice; let us set before Him the meal which He desires to eat, for this they do who hold festival. And what is this meal? He says Himself; My meat is, that I may do the will of Him that sent me. John 4:34 When He is hungry, let us feed Him; when He is thirsty, let us give Him drink: though thou give Him but a cup of cold water, He receives it; for He loves you, and to one who loves, the offerings of the beloved, though they be small, appear great. Only be not thou slothful; though you cast in but two farthings, He refuses them not, but receives them as great riches. For since He is without wants, and receives these offerings, not because He needs them, it is reasonable that all distinction should be not in the quantity of the gifts, but the intention of the giver. Only show that you love Him who has come, that for His sake you are giving all diligence, that you rejoice at His coming. See how He is disposed toward you. He came for you, He laid down His life for you, and after all this He does not refuse even to entreat you. We are ambassadors, says Paul, for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us. 2 Corinthians 5:20 And who is so mad, says some one, as not to love his own Master? I say so too, and I know that not one of us would deny this in words or intention; but one who is beloved desires love to be shown, not by words only, but by deeds also. For to say that we love, and not to act like lovers, is ridiculous, not only before God, but even in the sight of men. Since then to confess Him in word only, while in deeds we oppose Him, is not only unprofitable, but also hurtful to us; let us, I entreat you, also make confession by our works; that we also may obtain a confession from Him in that day, when before His Father He shall confess those who are worthy in Christ Jesus our Lord, by whom and with whom, to the Father and the Holy Ghost be glory, now and ever, and world without end. Amen.

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