

# John 14:31-15:10

by St. John Chrysostom

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*The sermon emphasizes the importance of faith and works, and the role of the Father and the Son in our lives, encouraging us to continue in Christ's love and keep His commandments.*

**Scripture:** John 15:2-10

**Topics:** "Abiding In Christ", "Fruitful Discipleship"

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## Description

John Chrysostom preaches about the importance of abiding in Christ and bearing fruit, emphasizing the need for disciples to remain connected to Jesus to receive life and power. He explains that those who do not bear fruit will be taken away, while those who bear fruit will be purged to become even more fruitful. Chrysostom highlights the significance of love in actions, urging believers to love God and manifest it through their deeds, contrasting it with the prevalent love for material wealth and possessions. He encourages a focus on virtue, endurance, and heavenly rewards, rather than seeking approval or riches in this world.

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## Transcript

Arise, let us go hence. I am the true Vine, (you are the branches, ) and My Father is the Husbandman. 1. ' Ignorance' makes the soul timid and unmanly, just as instruction in heavenly doctrines makes it great and sublime. For when it has enjoyed no care, it is in a manner timid, not by nature but by will. For when I see the man who once was brave, now become a coward, I say that this latter feeling no longer belongs to nature, for what is natural is immutable. Again, when I see those who but now were cowards all at once become daring, I pass the same judgment, and refer all to will.

Since even the disciples were very fearful, before they had learned what they ought, and had been deemed worthy of the gift of the Spirit; yet afterwards they became bolder than lions. So Peter, who could not bear the threat of a damsel, was hung with his head downwards, and was scourged, and though he endured ten thousand dangers, would not be silent, but enduring what he endured as though it were a dream, in such a situation spoke boldly; but not so before the Crucifixion.

Wherefore Christ said, Arise, let us go hence. But why, tell me? Did he not know the hour at which Judas would come upon Him? Or perhaps He feared lest he should come and seize them, and lest the plotters should be upon him before he had furnished his most excellent teaching. Away with the thought! These things are far from His dignity. If then He did not fear, why did He remove them, and then after finishing His discourse lead them into a garden known to Judas? And even had Judas come, could He not have

blinded their eyes, as He also did when the traitor was not present?

Why did He remove them? He allows the disciples a little breathing time. For it was likely that they, as being in a conspicuous place, would tremble and fear, both on the account of the time and the place, (for it was the depth of night,) and would not give heed to His words, but would be continually turning about, and imagining that they heard those who were to set upon them; and that more especially when their Master's speech made them expect evil. For, yet a little while, He says, and I am not with you, and, the ruler of this world comes.

Since now when they heard these and the like words they were troubled, as though they should certainly be taken immediately, He leads them to another place, in order that thinking themselves in safety, they might listen to Him without fear. For they were about to hear lofty doctrines. Therefore He says, Arise, let us go hence. Then He adds, and says, I am the Vine, you are the branches. What wills He to imply by the comparison? That the man who gives no heed to His words can have no life, and that the miracles about to take place, would be wrought by the power of Christ.

My Father is the Husbandman. How then? Does the Son need a power working within? Away with the thought! This example does not signify this. Observe with what exactness He goes through the comparison. He says not that the root enjoys the care of the Husbandman, but, the branches. And the foot is brought in in this place for no other purpose, but that they may learn that they can work nothing without His power, and that they ought to be united with Him by faith as the branch with the vine.

John 15:2

Every branch in Me that bears not fruit the Father takes away.

Here He alludes to the manner of life, showing that without works it is not possible to be in Him.

And every branch that bears fruit, He purges it.

That is, causes it to enjoy great care. Yet the root requires care rather than the branches, in being dug about, and cleared, yet about this He says nothing here, but all about the branches. Showing that He is sufficient to Himself, and that the disciples need much help from the Husbandman, although they be very excellent. Wherefore He says, that which bears fruit, He purges it. The one branch, because it is fruitless, cannot even remain in the Vine, but for the other, because it bears fruit, He renders it more fruitful. This, some one might assert, was said with relation also to the persecutions then coming upon them. For the purges it, is prunes, which makes the branch bear better. Whence it is shown, that persecutions rather make men stronger. Then, lest they should ask concerning whom He said these things, and lest He should throw them back into anxiety, He says,

John 15:3

Now you are clean through the word which I have spoken unto you.

Do you see how He introduces Himself as tending the branches? I have cleansed you, He says; yet above He declares that the Father does this. But there is no separation between the Father and the Son. And now your part also must be performed. Then to show that He did not this as needing their ministry, but for their advancement, He adds,

John 15:4

As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself except it abide in the vine, so neither can he who abides not in Me.

For that they might not be separated from Him by timidity, He fastens and glues to Himself their souls slackened through fear, and holds out to them good hopes for the future. For the root remains, but to be taken away, or to be left, belongs to the branches. Then having urged them on in both ways, by things pleasant and things painful, He requires first what is to be done on our side.

John 15:5

He that abides in Me, and I in him.

Do you see that the Son contributes not less than the Father towards the care of the disciples? The Father purges, but He keeps them in Himself. The abiding in the root is that which makes the branches to be fruit-bearing. For that which is not purged, if it remain on the root, bears fruit, though perhaps not so much as it ought; but that which remains not, bears none at all. But still the purging also has been shown to belong to the Son, and the abiding in the root, to the Father, who also begot the Root. Do you see how all is common, both the purging, and the enjoying the virtue which is from the root?

2. Now it were a great penalty, the being able to do nothing, but He stays not the punishment at this point, but carries on His discourse farther.

John 15:6

He is cast forth . . .

No longer enjoying the benefit of the husbandman's hand. And is withered. That is, if he had anything of the root, he loses it; if any grace, he is stripped of this, and is bereft of the help and life which proceed from it. And what the end? He is cast into the fire. Not such he who abides with Him. Then He shows what it is to abide, and says,

John 15:7

If My words abide in you.

Do you see that with reason I said above, that He seeks the proof by works? For when He had said, Whatsoever you shall ask I will do it c. xiv. 14, 15, He added, If you love Me, you will keep My commandments. And here, If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you.

You shall ask what you will, and it shall be done unto you.

This He said to show that they who plotted against Him should be burnt up, but that they should bear fruit. Then transferring the fear from them to the others, and showing that they should be invincible, He says,

John 15:8

Herein is My Father glorified, that you be My disciples, and bear much fruit.

Hence He makes His discourse credible, for if the bearing fruit pertains to the glory of the Father, He will not neglect His own glory. And you shall be My disciples. Do you see how he that bears fruit, he is the

disciple? But what is, In this is the Father glorified? He rejoices when you abide in Me, when you bear fruit.

John 15:9

As the Father has loved Me, so have I loved you.

Here at length He speaks in a more human manner, for this, as spoken to men, has its peculiar force. Since what a measure of love did He manifest, who chose to die, who counted worthy of such honor those who were His slaves, His haters, His open enemies, and led them up to the heavens! If then I love you, be bold; if it be the glory of My Father that you bear fruit, imagine nothing ill. Then that He may not make them supine, observe how He braces them again,

Continue ye in My love.

For this you have the power to do. And how shall this be?

John 15:10

If you keep My commandments, even as I have kept my Father's commandments.

Again, His discourse proceeds in a human way; for certainly the Lawgiver would not be subject to commandments. Do you see that here also, as I am always saying, this is declared because of the infirmity of the hearers? For He chiefly speaks to their suspicions, and by every means shows them that they are in safety, and that their enemies are being lost, and that all, whatever they have, they have from the Son, and that, if they show forth a pure life, none shall ever have the mastery over them. And observe that He discourses with them in a very authoritative manner, for He said not, abide in the love of My Father, but, in Mine; then, lest they should say, when You have set us at war with all men, Thou leavest us, and departest, He shows that He does not leave them, but is so joined to them if they will, as the branch in the vine. Then, lest from confidence they should become supine, He says not that the blessing cannot be removed if they are slack-minded. And in order not to refer the action to Himself, and so make them more apt to fall, He says, Herein is My Father glorified. For everywhere He manifests His own and His Father's love towards them. Not the things of the Jews, then, were glory, but those which they were about to receive. And that they might not say, we have been driven from the possessions of our fathers, we have been deserted, we have become naked, and destitute of all things, Look, He says, on Me. I am loved by the Father, yet still I suffer these things appointed. And so I am not now leaving you because I love you not. For if I am slain, and take not this for a proof of not being loved by the Father, neither ought ye to be troubled. For, if you continue in My love, these dangers shall not be able to do you any mischief on the score of love.

3. Since then love is a thing mighty and irresistible, not a bare word, let us manifest it by our actions. He reconciled us when we were His enemies, let us, now that we have become His friends, remain so. He led the way, let us at least follow; He loves us not for His own advantage, (for He needs nothing,) let us at least love Him for our profit; He loved us being His enemies, let us at least love Him being our friend. At present we do the contrary; for every day God is blasphemed through us, through our plunderings, through our covetousness.

And perhaps one of you will say, Every day your discourse is about covetousness. Would that I could speak about it every night too; would that I could do so, following you about in the market-place, and at your table; would that both wives, and friends, and children, and domestics, and tillers of the soil, and

neighbors, and the very pavement and walls, could ever shout forth this word, that so we might perchance have relaxed a little. For this malady has seized upon all the world, and occupies the souls of all, and great is the tyranny of Mammon.

We have been ransomed by Christ, and are the slaves of gold. We proclaim the sovereignty of the one, and obey the other. Whatever he commands we readily obey, and we have refused to know family, or friendship, or nature, or laws, or anything, for him. No one looks up to Heaven, no one thinks about things to come. But there will be a time, when there will be no profit even in these words. In the grave, it says, who shall confess to You? Gold is a desirable thing, and procures us much luxury, and makes us to be honored, but not in like manner as does Heaven.

For from the wealthy man many even turn aside, and hate him, but him who lives virtuously they respect and honor. But says some one the poor man is derided, even though he be virtuous. Not among men, but brutes. Wherefore he ought not so much as to notice them. For if asses were to bray and daws chatter at us, while all wise men commended us, we should not, losing sight of this latter audience, have regard to clamors of the brutes; for like to daws, and worse than asses, are they who admire present things.

Moreover, if an earthly king approve you, you make no account of the many, though they all deride you; but if the Lord of the universe praise you, do you seek the good words of beetles and gnats? For this is what these men are, compared with God, or rather not even this, but something viler, if there be anything such. How long do we wallow in the mire? How long do we set sluggards and belly-gods for our judges? They can prove dicers well, drunkards, those who live for the belly, but as for virtue and vice, they cannot imagine so much as a dream.

If any one taunt you because you have not skill to draw the channels of the watercourses, you will not think it any terrible thing, but will even laugh at him who objects to your ignorance of this kind; and do you, when you desire to practice virtue, appoint as judges those who know nothing of it? On this account we never reach that art. We commit our case not to the practiced, but to the unlearned, and they judge not according to the rules of art, but according to their own ignorance.

Wherefore, I exhort you, let us despise the many; or rather let us desire neither praises, nor possessions, nor wealth, nor deem poverty any evil. For poverty is to us a teacher of prudence, and endurance, and all true wisdom. Thus Lazarus lived in poverty, and received a crown; Jacob desired to get bread only; and Joseph was in the extreme of poverty, being not merely a slave, but also a prisoner; and on this account we admire him the more, and we do not so much praise him when he distributed the grain, as when he dwelt in the dungeon: not when he wore the diadem, but when the chain; not when he sat upon the throne, but when he was plotted against and sold.

Considering then all these things, and the crowns twined for us after the conflicts, let us admire not wealth, and honor, and luxury, and power, but poverty, and the chain, and bonds, and endurance in the cause of virtue. For the end of those things is full of troubles and confusion, and their lot is bound up with this present life; but the fruit of these, heaven, and the good things in the heavens, which neither eye has seen, nor ear heard; which may we all obtain, through the grace and lovingkindness of our Lord Jesus Christ, to whom be glory forever. Amen.

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