

John 15:11-16:4

by St. John Chrysostom

St. John Chrysostom emphasizes the importance of joy, love, and perseverance in the face of persecution, rooted in the teachings of Christ.

Scripture: Matthew 5:11, John 15:14-16

Topics: "Persecution", "Sacrificial Love"

Description

John Chrysostom preaches about the importance of enduring struggles and persecutions for the sake of Christ, emphasizing that joy comes from remaining steadfast in faith and love for one another. He highlights how Christ's departure was an act of love, and encourages believers to imitate His sacrificial love. Chrysostom reminds the disciples that they are chosen by Christ to bear fruit and testify about Him, with the assurance of the Holy Spirit's guidance and truth. He urges the listeners to remember Christ's teachings and promises, preparing them for the challenges and persecutions they will face for their faith.

Transcript

These things have I spoken unto you, that My joy might remain in you, and that your joy might be full. This is My commandment, that you love one another, as I have loved you. 1. All things good then have their reward, when they arrive at their proper end, but if they be cut off midway, shipwreck ensues. And as a vessel of immense burden, if it reach not the harbor in time, but founder in the midst of the sea, gains nothing from the length of the voyage, but even makes the calamity greater, in proportion as it has endured more toils; so are those souls which fall back when near the end of their labors, and faint in the midst of the struggle.

Wherefore Paul said, that glory, and honor, and peace, should meet those who ran their course with patient continuance in well-doing. A thing which Christ now effects in the case of the disciples. Romans 2:7 For since He had accepted them, and they rejoiced in Him, and then the sudden coming of the Passion and His sad words were likely to cut short their pleasure; after having conversed with them sufficiently to soothe them, He adds, These things have I spoken unto you, that My joy might remain in you, and that your joy might be fulfilled; that is, that you might not be separated from Me, that you might not cut short your course.

You were rejoicing in Me, and you were rejoicing exceedingly, but despondency has fallen upon you. This then I remove, that joy may come at the last, showing that your present circumstances are fit cause, not for pain, but for pleasure. I saw you offended; I despised you not; I said not, 'Why do ye not continue

noble?' But I spoke to you words which brought comfort with them. And so I wish ever to keep you in the same love. You have heard concerning a kingdom, you rejoiced. In order therefore that your joy might be fulfilled, I have spoken these things unto you.

But this is the commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you. Do you see that the love of God is intertwined with our own, and connected like a sort of chain? Wherefore it sometimes says that there are two commandments, sometimes only one. For it is not possible that the man who has taken hold on the first should not possess the second also. For at one time He said, On this the Law and the Prophets hang Matthew 22:40; and at another, Whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them, for this is the Law and the Prophets.

Matthew 7:12 And, Love is the fulfilling of the Law. Romans 13:10 Which He says also here; for if to abide proceeds from love, and love from the keeping of the commandments, and the commandment is that we love one another, then the abiding in God proceeds from love towards each other. And He does not simply speak of love, but declares also the manner, As I have loved you. Again He shows, that His very departure was not of hatred but of love. So that I ought rather to be admired on this account, for I lay down My life for you.

Yet nowhere does He say this in these words, but in a former place, by sketching the best shepherd, and here by exhorting them, and by showing the greatness of His love, and Himself, who He is. But wherefore does He everywhere exalt love? Because this is the mark of the disciples, this the bond of virtue. On this account Paul says such great things of it, as being a genuine disciple of Christ, and having had experience of it.

John 15:14-15

You are My friends -- henceforth I call you not servants, for the servant knows not what his lord does. You are My friends, for all things which I have heard of My Father I have made known unto you.

How then says He, I have many things to tell you, but you cannot bear them now? John 16:12 By the all and the hearing He shows nothing else, but that He uttered nothing alien, but only what was of the Father. And since to speak of secrets appears to be the strongest proof of friendship, you have, He says, been deemed worthy even of this communion. When however He says all, He means, whatever things it was fit that they should hear. Then He puts also another sure proof of friendship, no common one. Of what sort was that?

John 15:16

You have not chosen Me, but I have chosen you.

That is, I ran upon your friendship. And He stayed not here, but,

I set you, He says, (that is, I planted you,) that you should go, (He still uses the metaphor of the vine,) that is, that you should extend yourselves; and bring forth fruit, and that your fruit should remain.

Now if your fruit remain, much more shall you. For I have not only loved you, He says, but have done you the greatest benefits, by extending your branches through all the world. Do you see in how many ways He shows His love? By telling them things secret, by having in the first instance run to meet their friendship, by granting them the greatest blessings, by suffering for them what then He suffered. After this, He shows

that He also remains continually with those who shall bring forth fruit; for it is needful to enjoy His aid, and so to bear fruit.

That whatsoever you shall ask of the Father in My Name, He may give it you.

Yet it is the part of the person asked to do the thing asked; but if the Father is asked, how is it that the Son does it? It is that you may learn that the Son is not inferior to the Father.

John 15:17

These things I command you, that you love one another.

That is, It is not to upbraid, that I tell you that I lay down My life for you, or that I ran to meet you, but in order to lead you into friendship. Then, since the being persecuted and insulted by the many, was a grievous and intolerable thing, and enough to humble even a lofty soul, therefore, after having said ten thousand things first, Christ entered upon this matter. Having first smoothed their minds, He thus proceeds to these points, showing that these things too were for their exceeding advantage, as He had also shown that the others were. For as He had told them that they ought not to grieve, but rather to rejoice, because I go to the Father, (since He did this not as deserting but as greatly loving them,) so here also He shows that they ought to rejoice, not grieve. And observe how He effects this. He said not, I know that the action is grievous, but bear for My sake, since for My sake also ye suffer, for this reason was not yet sufficient to console them; wherefore letting this pass, He puts forward another. And what is that? It is that this thing would be a sure proof of their former virtue. And, on the contrary, you ought to grieve, not because you are hated now but if you were likely to be loved; for this He implies by saying,

John 15:19

If you were of the world, the world would love its own.

So that had ye been loved it would be very clear that you had shown forth signs of wickedness. Then, when by saying this first, He did not effect his purpose, He goes on again with the discourse.

John 15:20

The servant is not greater than his lord. If they have persecuted Me, they will also persecute you.

He showed that in this point they would be most His imitators. For while Christ was in the flesh, men had war with Him, but when He was translated, the battle came in the next place upon them. Then because owing to their fewness they were terrified at being about to encounter the attack of so great a multitude, He raises their souls by telling them that it was a special subject of joy that they were hated by them; For so you shall share My sufferings. You should not therefore be troubled, for you are not better than I, as I before told you, The servant is not greater than his lord. Then there is also a third source of consolation, that the Father also is insulted together with them.

John 15:21

But all these things will they do unto you for My Name's sake, because they know not Him that sent Me.

That is, they insult Him also. Besides this, depriving those others of excuse, and putting also another source of comfort, He says,

John 15:22

If I had not come and spoken unto them, they had not had sin.

Showing that they shall do unjustly both what they do against Him and against them. Why then did You bring us into such calamities? Did You not foreknow the wars, the hatred? Therefore again He says,

John 15:23

He that hates Me, hates My Father also.

From this also proclaiming beforehand no small punishment against them. For, since they continually pretended that they persecuted Him on account of the Father, to deprive them of this excuse He spoke these words. They have no excuse. I gave them the teaching which is by words, that by works I added, according to the Law of Moses, who bade all men obey one speaking and doing such things, when he should both lead to piety, and exhibit the greatest miracles. And He spoke not simply of signs, but,

John 15:24

Which none other man did.

And of this they themselves are witnesses, speaking in this way; It was never so seen in Israel Matthew 9:33; and, Since the world began was it not heard that any man opened the eyes of one that was born blind John 9:32; and the matter of Lazarus was of the same kind, and all the other acts the same, and the mode of wonder-working new, and all beyond thought. Why then, says one, do they persecute both You and us? Because you are not of the world. If you were of the world, the world would love its own. John 15:19 He first reminds them of the words which He spoke also to His own brethren John 7:7; but there he spoke more by way of a reflection, lest He should offend them, while here, on the contrary, He revealed all. And how is it clear that it is on this account that we are hated? From what was done to Me. For, tell Me, which of My words or deeds could they lay hold on, that they would not receive Me? Then since the thing would be astounding to us, He tells the cause; that is, their wickedness. And He stays not here either, but introduces the Prophet Psalm 35:19; 69:4, showing him proclaiming before of old time, and saying, that,

John 15:25

They hated Me without a cause.

3. Which Paul does also. For when many wondered how that the Jews believed not, he brings in Prophets foretelling it of old, and declaring the cause; that their wickedness and pride were the cause of their unbelief. Well then; if they kept not Your saying, neither will they keep ours; if they persecuted You, therefore they will persecute us also; if they saw signs, such as none other man wrought; if they heard words such as none other spoke, and profited nothing; if they hate Your Father and You with Him, wherefore, says one, have You sent us in among them? How after this shall we be worthy of belief? Which of our kindred will give-heed to us? That they may not therefore be troubled by such thoughts, see what sort of comfort he adds.

John 15:26-27

When the Comforter has come, whom I will send unto you from the Father, even the Spirit of Truth, which proceeds from the Father, He shall testify of Me. And ye also shall bear witness, because you have been

with Me from the beginning.

He shall be worthy of belief, for He is the Spirit of Truth. On this account He called It not Holy Spirit, but Spirit of Truth. But the, proceeds from the Father, shows that He knows all things exactly, as Christ also says of Himself, that I know whence come and whither I go John 8:14, speaking in that place also concerning truth. Whom will send. Behold, it is no longer the Father alone, but the Son also who sends. And ye too, He says, have a right to be believed, who have been with Me, who have not heard from others. Indeed, the Apostles confidently rely on this circumstance, saying, We who ate and drank with Him. Acts 10:41 And to show that this was not merely said to please, the Spirit bears witness to the words spoken. Acts 10:44

John 16:1

These things have I spoken unto you, that you should not be offended.

That is, when you see many disbelieve, and yourselves ill-treated.

John 16:2

They shall put you out of the synagogues.

(For the Jews had already agreed, that if any one should confess Christ, he should be put out of the synagogues John 9:22)

Yea, the time comes, that whosoever kills you will think that he does God service.

They shall so seek after your murder, as of an action pious and pleasing to God. Then again He adds the consolation,

John 16:3

And these things will they do, because they have not known the Father, nor Me.

It is sufficient for your comfort that you endure these things for My sake, and the Father's. Here He reminds them of the blessedness of which He spoke at the beginning, Blessed are you, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for My sake. Rejoice, and be exceeding glad; for great is your reward in heaven. Matthew 5:11-12

John 16:4

These things have I told you, that when the time shall come, you may remember them.

So, judging from these words, deem the rest also trustworthy. For you will not be able to say, that I flatteringly told you only those things which would please you, nor that the words were words of deceit; for one who intended to deceive, would not have told you beforehand of matters likely to turn you away. I have therefore told you before, that these things might not fall upon you unexpectedly, and trouble you; and for another reason besides, that you might not say, that I did not foreknow that these things would be. Remember then that I have told you. And indeed the heathen always covered their persecutions of them by a pretense of their wickedness, driving them out as corrupters; but this did not trouble the disciples who had heard beforehand, and knew for what they suffered. The cause of what took place was sufficient to

rouse their courage. Therefore He everywhere handles this, saying, they have not known Me; and, for My sake they shall do it; and, for My Name's sake, and for the Father's sake; and, I suffered first; and, from no just cause they dare these things.

4. Let us too consider these things in our temptations, when we suffer anything from wicked men, looking to the Beginner and Finisher of our faith Hebrews 12:2, and considering that it is by wicked men, and that it is for virtue's sake, and for His sake. For if we reflect on these things, all will be most easy and tolerable. Since if one suffering for those he loves is even proud of it, what feeling of things dreadful will he have who suffers for the sake of God? For if He, for our sake, calls that shameful thing, the Cross, glory John 13:31, much more ought we to be thus disposed.

And if we can so despise sufferings, much more shall we be able to despise riches, and covetousness. We ought then, when about to endure anything unpleasant, to think not of the toils but of the crowns; for as merchants take into account not the seas only, but also the profits, so ought we to reckon on heaven and confidence towards God. And if the getting more seem a pleasant thing, think that Christ wills it not, and straightway it will appear displeasing. And if it be grievous to you to give to the poor, stay not your reckoning at the expense, but straightway transport your thoughts to the harvest which results from the sowing; and when it is hard to despise the love of a strange woman, think of the crown which comes after the struggle, and you shall easily bear the struggle.

For if fear diverts a man from unseemly things, much more should the love of Christ. Difficult is virtue; but let us cast around her form the greatness of the promise of things to come. Indeed those who are virtuous, even apart from these promises, see her beautiful in herself, and on this account go after her, and work because it seems good to God, not for hire; and they think it a great thing to be sober-minded, not in order that they may not be punished, but because God has commanded it.

But if any one is too weak for this, let him think of the prizes. So let us do in respect of alms-doing, let us pity our fellow-men, let us not, I entreat, neglect them when perishing with hunger. How can it be otherwise than an unseemly thing, that we should sit at the table laughing and enjoying ourselves, and when we hear others wailing as they pass through the street, should not even turn at their cries, but be angry with them, and call them cheat? What do you mean, man?

Does any one plan a cheat for a single loaf of bread? Yes, says some one. Then in this case above all let him be pitied; in this case above all let him be delivered from his need. Or if you are not minded to give, do not insult either; if you will not save the wreck, do not thrust it into the gulf. For consider, when you push away the poor man who comes to you, who you will be when you call upon God. With what measure you measure, it shall be measured to you again. Matthew 7:2 Consider how he departs, crushed, bowed down, lamenting; besides his poverty having received also the blow from your insolence.

For if you count the begging a curse, think what a tempest it makes, begging to get nothing, but to go away insulted. How long shall we be like wild beasts, and know not nature itself through greediness? Many groan at these words; but I desire them not now, but always, to have this feeling of compassion. Think, I pray you, of that day when we shall stand before the judgment-seat of Christ, when we shall beg for mercy, and Christ, bringing them forward, shall say, For the sake of a single loaf, of a single obol, so great a surge did ye raise in these souls!

What shall we reply? What defense shall we make? To show that He will bring them forward, hear what He says; Inasmuch as you did it not to one of these, you did it not to Me. Matthew 25:45 They will no more

say anything to us, but God on their behalf will upbraid us. Since the rich man saw Lazarus too, and Lazarus said nothing to him, but Abraham spoke for him; and thus it will be in the case of the poor who are now despised by us. We shall not see them stretching out their hands in pitiful state, but being in rest; and we shall take the state which was theirs (and would that it were that state only, and not one much more grievous) as a punishment.

For neither did the rich man desire to be filled with crumbs there, but was scorched and tormented sharply, and was told, You in your lifetime received your good things, and likewise Lazarus evil things. Luke 16:25 Let us not then deem wealth any great thing; it will help us on our way to punishment, if we take not heed, just as, if we take heed, poverty also becomes to us an addition of enjoyment and rest. For we both put off our sins if we bear it with thankfulness, and gain great boldness before God.

5. Let us then not be ever seeking security here, in order that we may enjoy security there; but let us accept the labors which are in behalf of virtue, and cut off superfluities, and seek nothing more than we need, and spend all our substance on those who want. Since what excuse can we have, when God promises heaven to us, and we will not even give Him bread? When He indeed for you makes the sun to rise, and supplies all the ministry of the Creation, but thou dost not even give Him a garment, nor allow Him to share your roof? But why speak I of sun and moon? He has set His Body before you, He has given you His Precious Blood; and do you not even impart to Him of your cup? But have you done so for once? This is not mercy; as long as, having the means, you help not, you have not yet fulfilled the whole duty. Thus the virgins who had the lamps, had oil, but not in abundance. Why, you ought, even did you give from your own, not to be so miserly, but now when you give what is your Lord's, why do you count every little? Will ye that I tell you the cause of this inhumanity? When men get together their wealth through greediness, these same are slow to give alms; for one who has learned so to gain, knows not how to spend. For how can a man prepared for rapine adapt himself to its contrary? He who takes from others, how shall he be able to give up his own to another? A dog accustomed to feed on flesh cannot guard the flock; therefore the shepherds kill such. That this be not our fate, let us refrain from such feasting. For these men too feed on flesh, when they bring on death by hunger. Do you see not how God has allowed to us all things in common? If amid riches He has suffered men to be poor, it is for the consolation of the rich, that they may be able by showing mercy towards them to put off their sins. But thou even in this hast been cruel and inhuman; whence it is evident, that if you had received this same power in greater things, you would have committed ten thousand murders, and would have debarred men from light, and from life altogether. That this might not take place, necessity has cut short insatiableness in such matters.

If you are pained when you hear these things, much more I when I see them taking place. How long shall you be rich, and that man poor? Till evening, but no farther; for so short is life, and all things so near their end, and all things henceforth so stand at the door, that the whole must be deemed but a little hour. What need have you of bursting storehouses, of a multitude of domestics and house-keepers? Why have you not ten thousand proclaimers of your almsdoing? The storehouse utters no voice, yet will it bring upon you many robbers; but the storehouses of the poor will go up to God Himself, and will make your present life sweet, and put away all your sins, and you shall gain glory from God, and honor from men. Why then grudgest you yourself such good things? For you will not do so much good to the poor, as to yourself, when you benefit them. You will right their present state; but for yourself you will lay up beforehand the glory and confidence which shall be hereafter. And this may we all obtain, by the grace and lovingkindness of our Lord Jesus Christ, to whom with the Father and the Holy Ghost be the glory and the might forever. Amen.

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