

John 16:4-15

by St. John Chrysostom

Christ consoles the disciples by explaining the role of the Comforter and the importance of unanimity and concord.

Scripture: John 16:7-13, Hebrews 10:25

Topics: "Holy Spirit", "Christian Courage"

Description

John Chrysostom preaches about the importance of courageously standing against despondency, highlighting the usefulness of grief in sin but the uselessness of despondency in human struggles. He emphasizes Christ's rebuke to the disciples for their sorrow, pointing out the dangers of immoderate sorrow and the need to trust in God's plan. Chrysostom delves into the significance of Christ's departure and the coming of the Holy Spirit, explaining how the Spirit will reprove the world, convict of sin, righteousness, and judgment, and guide believers into all truth. He underscores the unity and power of love, illustrating how friendship and unity among believers multiply strength, protection, and joy.

Transcript

These things I said not unto you at the beginning, because I was with you. But now I go My way to Him that sent Me; and none of you asks Me, Where are You going? But because I have said these things unto you, sorrow has filled your heart.

1. Great is the tyranny of despondency, and much courage do we need so as to stand manfully against the feeling, and after gathering from it what is useful, to let the superfluous go. It has somewhat useful; for when we ourselves or others sin, then only is it good to grieve; but when we fall into human vicissitudes, then despondency is useless. And now when it has overthrown the disciples who were not yet perfect, see how Christ raises them again by His rebuke. They who before this had asked Him ten thousand questions, (for Peter said, Where are You going? [c. xiii. 36]; and Thomas, We know not whither You go, and how can we know the way? [100:xiv. 5 and 8]; and Philip, Show us Your Father;) these men, I say, now hearing, they will put you out of the synagogues, and will hate you, and whosoever kills you will think that he does God service, were so cast down as to be struck dumb, so that they spoke nothing to Him. This then He makes a reproach to them, and says, These things I said not unto you at the beginning, because I was with you; but now I go unto Him that sent Me, and none of you asks Me, Where are You going? But because I have said these things unto you, sorrow has filled your heart. For a dreadful thing is immoderate sorrow, dreadful and effective of death. Wherefore Paul said, Lest perhaps such a one should be

swallowed up by overmuch sorrow. 2 Corinthians 2:7

And these things, says He, I told you not at the beginning. Why did He not tell them at the beginning? That none might say that He spoke guessing from the ordinary course of events. And why did He enter on a matter of such unpleasantness? I knew these things, He says, from the beginning, and spoke not of them; not because I did not know them, but 'because I was with you.' And this again was spoken after a human manner, as though He had said, Because you were in safety, and it was in your power to question Me when you would, and all the storm blew upon Me, and it was superfluous to tell you these things at the beginning. But did He not tell them this? Did He not call the twelve, and say unto them, 'You shall be brought before governors and kings for My sake,' and, 'they shall scourge you in the synagogues'? Matthew 10:18. How then says He, 'I told you not at the beginning'? Because He had proclaimed before the scourgings and bringing before princes, still not that their death should appear so desirable that the action should even be deemed a service to God. For this more than anything was suited to terrify them, that they were to be judged as impious and corrupters. This too may be said, that in that place He spoke of what they should suffer from the Gentiles, but here He has added in a stronger way the acts of the Jews also, and told them that it was at their doors.

But now I go to Him that sent Me, and no man of you says, Where are You going? But because I have said these things unto you, sorrow has filled your heart. It was no slight comfort to them to learn that He knew the excess of their despondency. For they were beside themselves from the anguish caused by their being left by Him, and from their awaiting the terrible things which were to come, since they knew not whether they should be able to bear them manfully. Why then after this did He not tell them that they had been vouchsafed the Spirit? That you might learn that they were exceedingly virtuous. For if, when they had not yet been vouchsafed the Spirit, they started not back, though overwhelmed with sorrow, consider what sort of men they were likely to be after having enjoyed the grace. If they had heard this at that time, and so had endured, we should have attributed the whole to the Spirit, but now it is entirely the fruit of their own state of mind, it is a clear manifestation of their love for Christ, who applies a touchstone to their mind as yet defenseless.

John 16:7

But I tell you the truth.

Observe how He consoles them again. I speak not, He says, to please you, and although you be grieved ten thousand fold, yet must ye hear what is for your good; it is indeed to your liking that I should be with you, but what is expedient for you is different. And it is the part of one caring for others, not to be over gentle with his friends in matters which concern their interests, or to lead them away from what is good for them.

For if I go not away, the Comforter will not come.

What here say those who hold not the fitting opinion concerning the Spirit? Is it expedient that the master depart, and the servant come? Do you see how great is the honor of the Spirit?

But if I depart, I will send Him unto you. And what the gain?

John 16:8

He, when He has come, will reprove the world.

That is, they shall not do these things unpunished if He come. For indeed, the things that have been already done, are sufficient to stop their mouths; but when these things are also done by Him, when doctrines are more perfect and miracles greater, much more shall they be condemned when they see such things done in My Name, which make the proof of the Resurrection more certain. For now they are able to say, 'this is the carpenter's son, whose father and mother we know'; but when they see the bands of death loosed, wickedness cast out, natural lameness straightened, devils expelled, abundant supply of the Spirit, and all this effected by My being called on, what will they say? The Father has borne witness of Me, and the Spirit will bear witness also. Yet He bore witness at the beginning. Yea, and shall also do it now. But the, will convince,

John 16:9

Of sin.

This means, will cut off all their excuses, and show that they have transgressed unpardonably.

John 16:10

Of righteousness, because I go to the Father, and you see Me no more.

That is, I have exhibited a blameless life, and this is the proof, that, 'I go to the Father.' For since they continually urged this against Him, that He was not from God, and therefore called Him a sinner and transgressor, He says, that the Spirit shall take from them this excuse also. For if My being deemed not to be from God, shows Me to be a transgressor, when the Spirit shall have shown that I have gone there, not merely for a season, but to abide there, (for the, 'You see Me no more,' is the expression of one declaring this,) what will they say then? Observe how by these two things, their evil suspicion is removed; since neither does working miracles belong to a sinner, (for a sinner cannot work them,) nor does the being with God continually belong to a sinner. So that you can no longer say, that 'this man is a sinner,' that 'this man is not from God.'

John 16:11

Of judgment, because the prince of this world is judged.

Here again He moots the argument concerning righteousness, that He had overthrown His opponent. Now had He been a sinner, He could not have overthrown him; a thing which not even any just man had been strong enough to do. But that he has been condemned through Me, they shall know who trample on him hereafter, and who clearly know My Resurrection, which is the mark of Him who condemns him. For he was not able to hold Me. And whereas they said that I had a devil, and that I was a deceiver, these things also shall hereafter appear to be false; for I could not have prevailed against him, had I been subject to sin; but now he is condemned and cast out.

John 16:12

I have yet many things to say unto you, but you cannot bear them now.

Therefore it is expedient for you that I depart, if you then will bear them when I departed. And what has come to pass? Is the Spirit greater than You, that now indeed we bear not, but It will fit us to bear? Is It working more powerful and more perfect? Not so; for He too shall speak My words. Wherefore He says,

John 16:13-15

He shall not speak of Himself; but whatsoever He shall hear, that shall He speak; and He will show you things to come. He shall glorify Me; for He shall receive of Mine, and shall show it unto you. All things that the Father has are Mine.

For since He had told them, that 'He shall teach you, and bring to your remembrance' John 14:26, and shall comfort you in your afflictions, (which He Himself did not,) and that it is expedient for you that I should depart John 16:7, and that He should come, and, 'now you are not able to bear' John 16:12, but then ye shall be able, and, that He shall lead you into all truth John 16:13; lest hearing these things they should suppose the Spirit to be the greater, and so fall into an extreme opinion of impiety, therefore He says, He shall receive of Mine, that is, whatsoever things I have told you, He shall also tell you. When He says, He shall speak nothing of Himself, He means, nothing contrary, nothing of His own opposed to My words. As then in saying respecting Himself, I speak not of Myself John 14:10, He means that He speaks nothing beside what the Father says, nothing of His own against Him, or differing from Him, so also with respect to the Spirit. But the, of Mine, means, of what I know, of My own knowledge; for the knowledge of Me and of the Spirit is one.

And He will tell you things to come. He excited their minds, for the race of man is for nothing so greedy, as for learning the future. This, for instance, they continually asked Him, Where are you going? Which is the way? To free them therefore from this anxiety, He says, He shall foretell you all things, so that you shall not meet with them without warning.

He shall glorify Me. How? In My name He shall grant His inward workings. For since at the coming of the Spirit they were about to do greater miracles, therefore, again introducing the Equality of Honor, He says, He shall glorify Me.

What means He by, all truth? For this also He testifies of Him, that He shall guide us into all truth. John 16:13 Because He was clothed with the flesh, and because He would not seem to speak concerning Himself, and because they did not yet know clearly concerning the Resurrection, and were too imperfect, and also because of the Jews, that they might not think they were punishing Him as a transgressor; therefore He spoke no great thing continually, nor plainly drew them away from the Law. But when the disciples were cut off from them, and were for the future without; and when many were about to believe, and to be released from their sins; and when there were others who spoke of Him, He with good reason spoke not great things concerning Himself. So that it proceeded not from ignorance of Mine, He says, that I told you not what I should have told you, but from the infirmity of the hearers. On this account having said, He shall lead you into all truth, He added, He shall not speak of Himself. For to show that the Spirit needs not teaching, hear Paul saying, So also the things of God knows no man, but the Spirit of God. 1 Corinthians 2:11 As then the spirit of man, not learning from another, knows; so also the Holy Spirit 'shall receive of Mine,' that is, shall speak in unison with what is Mine.

All things that the Father has are Mine. Since then those things are Mine, and He shall speak from the things of the Father, He shall speak from Mine.

3. But why did not the Spirit come before He departed? Because the curse not having yet been taken away, sin not yet loosed, but all being yet subject to vengeance, He could not come. It is necessary then, says He, that the enmity be put away, that we be reconciled to God, and then receive that Gift. But why says He, I will send Him? John 16:7 It means, I will prepare you beforehand to receive Him. For, how can

that which is everywhere, be sent? Besides, He also shows the distinction of the Persons.

On these two accounts He thus speaks; and also, since they were hardly to be drawn away from Himself, exhorting them to hold fast to the Spirit, and in order that they might cherish It. For He Himself was able to have wrought these things, but He concedes to the Spirit the working of miracles, on this account, that they might understand His dignity. For as the Father could have brought into being things which are, yet the Son did so, that we might understand His power, so also is it in this case.

On this account He Himself was made Flesh, reserving the inward working for the Spirit, shutting up the mouths of those who take the argument of His ineffable love for an occasion of impiety. For when they say that the Son was made flesh because He was inferior to the Father, we will reply to them, what then will you say of the Spirit? He took not the flesh, and yet certainly on this account ye will not call Him greater than the Son, nor the Son inferior to Him. Therefore, in the case of baptism also the Trinity is included.

The Father is able to effect the whole, as is the Son, and the Holy Ghost; yet, since concerning the Father no man doubts, but the doubt was concerning the Son, and the Holy Ghost, They are included in the rite, that by Their community in supplying those unspeakable blessings, we may also fully learn Their community in dignity. For that both the Son is able by Himself to do that which in the case of baptism He is able to do with the Father, and the Holy Ghost the same, hear these things said plainly.

For to the Jews He said, That ye may know that the Son of Man has power on earth to forgive sins Mark 2:10; and again, That ye may become children of light John 12:36: and, I give to them eternal life. John 10:28 Then after this, That they might have life, and might have it more abundantly. John 10:10 Now let us see the Spirit also performing the same thing. Where can we see it? But the manifestation of the Spirit, it says, is given to every man to profit withal 1 Corinthians 12:7; c. vi. 63; He then that gives these things, much more remits sins.

And again, It is the Spirit that quickens; and, Shall quicken you by His Spirit which dwells in you Romans 8:11; and, The Spirit is Life because of righteousness Romans 8:10; and, If you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the Law. Galatians 5:18 For you have not received the Spirit of bondage again to fear, but you have received the Spirit of adoption. Romans 8:15 All the wonders too which they then wrought, they wrought at the coming of the Spirit. And Paul writing to the Corinthians, said, But you have been washed, but you have been sanctified in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, and by the Spirit of our God. 1 Corinthians 6:11 Since then they had heard many things of the Father, and had seen the Son work many things, but as yet knew nothing clearly of the Spirit, that Spirit does miracles, and brings in the perfect knowledge.

But (as I said before) that He may not thence be supposed to be greater, on this account Christ says, Whatsoever He shall hear, that shall He speak; and He will show you things to come. Since, if this be not so, how could it be otherwise than absurd, if He was about to hear then, and on account of those who were being made disciples? For according to you, He would not even then know, except on account of those who were about to hear. What could be more unlawful than this saying?

Besides, what would He have to hear? Did He not speak all these things by the Prophets? For if He was about to teach concerning the dissolution of the Law, it had been spoken of: if concerning Christ, His Divinity and the Dispensation, these had been spoken of also. What could He say more clearly after this?

And shall show you things to come. Here most of all Christ shows His Dignity, for to foretell things to come is especially the property of God. Now if He also learn this from others, He will have nothing more than the Prophets, but here Christ declares a knowledge brought into exact accordance with God, that it is impossible that He should speak anything else. But the, shall receive of Mine, means, shall receive, either of the grace which came into My Flesh, or of the knowledge which I also have, not as needing it, nor as learning it from another, but because it is One and the same. And wherefore spoke He thus, and not otherwise? Because they understand not yet the word concerning the Spirit, wherefore He provides for one thing only, that the Spirit should be believed and received by them, and that they should not be offended. For since He had said, One is your Teacher, even Christ Matthew 23:10, that they might not deem that they should disobey Him in obeying the Spirit, He says, His teaching and Mine are One; of what I should have taught, of those things shall He also speak. Do not suppose His words are other than Mine, for those words are Mine, and confirm My opinion. For One is the will of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. Thus also He wills us to be, when He says, That they may be one, as You and I are One. John 17:11

4. There is nothing equal to unanimity and concord; for so one is manifold. If two or ten are of one mind, the one is one no longer, but each one is multiplied tenfold, and you will find the one in the ten, and the ten in the one; and if they have an enemy, he who attacks the one, as having attacked the ten, is vanquished; for he is the mark not for one, but for ten opponents. Is one in want? No, he is not in want, for he is wealthy in his greater part, that is, in the nine; and the needy part, the lesser, is concealed by the wealthy part, the greater.

Each of these has twenty hands, twenty eyes, and as many feet. For he sees not with his own eyes alone, but with those of others; he walks not with his own feet alone, but with those of others; he works not with his own hands alone, but with theirs. He has ten souls, for not only does he take thought for himself, but those souls also for him. And if they be made a hundred, it will still be the same, and their power will be extended. Do you see the excess of love, how it makes the one both irresistible and manifold, how one can even be in many places, the same both in Persia and in Rome, and that what nature cannot do, love can?

For one part of him will be here, and one there, or rather he will be wholly here and wholly there. If then he have a thousand or two thousand friends, consider again whither his power will extend. Do you see what an increase-giving thing is love? For the wonderful thing is this, its making one a thousand. Why then do we not acquire this power and place ourselves in safety? This is better than all power or riches, this is more than health, than light itself, it is the groundwork of good courage.

How long do we set our love on one or two? Consider also the action in the contrary way. Suppose a man without a friend, a mark of the utmost folly, (for a fool will say, I have no friend,) what sort of life will such a one lead? For though he be infinitely rich, in plenty and luxury, possessed of ten thousand good things, yet is he desolate and bare of all. But in the case of friends not so; though they be poor men, yet are they better provided than the wealthy; and the things which a man undertakes not to say for himself, a friend will say for him, and whatever gratifications he is not able to procure for himself, he will be enabled to obtain by means of another, and much more; and it will be to us the groundwork of all enjoyment and safety, since one who is guarded by so many spearmen cannot suffer harm.

For the king's body guards are not equal in their strictness to these. The one perform their watch through compulsion and fear, the others through kindness and love; and love is far mightier than fear. The king

fears his own guards; the friend is more confident in them than in himself, and by reason of them fears none of those that plot against him. Let us then engage in this traffic; the poor man, that he may have consolation in his poverty; the rich, that he may possess his wealth in safety; the ruler, that he may rule with safety; the ruled, that he may have benevolent rulers.

This is the source of kindness, this the groundwork of gentleness; since even among beasts, those are the most fierce and untamable which are not gregarious. For this cause we dwell in cities, and have public places, that we may converse with one another. This also Paul commanded, saying, Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together Hebrews 10:25; for no evil is so great as solitariness, and the state which is without compact and intercourse. What then, says some one, of the solitaries, and of those who have occupied the summits of the mountains?

That neither are they without friends; they have indeed fled from the turmoil of common life, but they have many of one soul with them, and closely bound together one to another; and they have retired that they might rightly accomplish this thing. For since the rivalry of business causes many disputes, therefore, removing from among men, they cultivate love with much exactness. But how, says some one, if a man be alone can he have ten thousand friends? I, for my part, desire, if it be possible, that men should know how to dwell one with another; but for the present let the properties of friendship remain unshaken.

For it is not place which makes friends. They, for instance, have many who admire them; now these would not have admired had they not loved them. Again, they pray for all the world, which is the greatest proof of friendship. For this cause we salute one another at the Mysteries, that being many we may become one; and in the case of the uninitiated, we make our prayers common, supplicating for the sick, and for the produce of the world, for land and sea. Do you see all the power of love?

In the prayers, in the Mysteries, in the exhortations? This is that which causes all good things. If we hold carefully to this, we shall both rightly dispense things present, and also obtain the Kingdom; which may we all obtain through the grace and lovingkindness of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom and with whom, to the Father and the Holy Ghost, be glory, for ever and ever. Amen.

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