

John 1:9

by St. John Chrysostom

St. John Chrysostom emphasizes the importance of gradual revelation, obedience, and the dangers of curiosity in understanding the nature of the True Light and the ways of redemption.

Scripture: Hebrews 1:3

Topics: "Spiritual Growth", "Divine Revelation"

Description

John Chrysostom emphasizes the importance of gradually building up spiritual understanding, cautioning against rushing into deep theological matters beyond comprehension. He focuses on the eternal nature of Christ as the true Light that enlightens every person, urging believers to trust in God's mysteries without demanding human reasoning. Chrysostom warns against the devil's deception in leading people astray from the simplicity of faith by seeking knowledge beyond what is revealed in Scripture, ultimately causing them to lose what they already possess in Christ.

Transcript

That was the true Light, which lights every man that comes into the world.

1. The reason, O children greatly beloved, why we entertain you portion by portion with the thoughts taken from the Scriptures, and do not at once pour all forth to you, is, that the retaining what is successively set before you may be easy. For even in building, one who before the first stones are settled lays on others, constructs a rotten wall altogether, and easily thrown down: while one who waits that the mortar may first get hard, and so adds what remains little by little, finishes the whole house firmly, and makes it strong, not one to last for a short time, or easily to fall to pieces. These builders we imitate, and in like manner build up your souls. For we fear lest, while the first foundation is but newly laid, the addition of the succeeding speculations may do harm to the former, through the insufficiency of the intellect to contain them all at once.

What now is it that has been read to us today?

That was the true Light, which lights every man that comes into the world. For since above in speaking of John he said, that he came to bear witness of that Light; and that he was sent in these our days; lest any one at hearing this should, on account of the recent coming of the witness, conceive some like suspicion concerning Him, who is witnessed of, he has carried up the imagination, and transported it to that existence which is before all beginning, which has neither end nor commencement.

And how is it possible, says one, that being a Son, He should possess this (nature)? We are speaking of God, and do you ask how? And do you not fear nor shudder? Yet should any one ask you, How should our souls and bodies have endless life in the world to come? you will laugh at the question, on the ground that it does not belong to the intellect of man to search into such questions, but that he ought only to believe, and not to be over-curious on the subject mentioned, since he has a sufficient proof of the saying, in the power of Him who spoke it.

And if we say, that He, who created our souls and bodies, and who incomparably excels all created things, is without beginning, will you require us to say How? Who could assert this to be the act of a well-ordered soul, or of sound reason? You have heard that That was the true Light: why are you vainly and rashly striving to overshoot by force of reasoning this Life which is unlimited? You cannot do it. Why seek what may not be sought? Why be curious about what is incomprehensible?

Why search what is unsearchable? Gaze upon the very source of the sunbeams. You cannot; yet you are neither vexed nor impatient at your weakness; how then have you become so daring and headlong in greater matters? The son of thunder, John who sounds the spiritual trumpet, when he had heard from the Spirit the was, enquired no farther. And are you, who share not in his grace, but speak from your own wretched reasonings, ambitious to exceed the measure of his knowledge? Then for this very reason you will never be able even to reach to the measure of his knowledge.

For this is the craft of the devil: he leads away those who obey him from the limits assigned by God, as though to things much greater: but when, having enticed us by these hopes, he has cast us out of the grace of God, he not only gives nothing more, (how can he, devil as he is?) but does not even allow us to return again to our former situation, where we dwelt safely and surely, but leads us about in all directions wandering and not having any standing ground. So he caused the first created man to be banished from the abode of Paradise.

Having puffed him up with the expectation of greater knowledge and honor, he expelled him from what he already possessed in security. For he not only did not become like a god as (the devil) promised him, but even fell beneath the dominion of death; having not only gained no further advantage by eating of the tree, but having lost no small portion of the knowledge which he possessed, through hope of greater knowledge. For the sense of shame, and the desire to hide himself because of his nakedness, then came upon him, who before the cheat was superior to all such shame; and this very seeing himself to be naked, and the need for the future of the covering of garments, and many other infirmities, became thenceforth natural to him.

That this be not our case, let us obey God, continue in His commandments, and not be busy about anything beyond them, that we may not be cast out from the good things already given us. Thus they have fared (of whom we speak). For seeking to find a beginning of the Life which has no beginning, they lost what they might have retained. They found not what they sought, (this is impossible,) and they fell away from the true faith concerning the Only-Begotten.

Let us not then remove the eternal bounds which our fathers set, but let us ever yield to the laws of the Spirit; and when we hear that That was the true Light, let us seek to discover nothing more. For it is not possible to pass beyond this saying. Had His generation been like that of a man, needs must there have been an interval between the begetter and the begotten; but since it is in a manner ineffable and becoming God, give up the before and the after, for these are the names of points in time, but the Son is the Creator

even of all ages.

2. Then, says one, He is not Father, but brother. What need, pray? If we had asserted that the Father and the Son were from a different root, you might have then spoken this well. But, if we flee this impiety, and say the Father, besides being without beginning, is Unbegotten also, while the Son, though without beginning, is Begotten of the Father, what kind of need that as a consequence of this idea, that unholy assertion should be introduced? None at all. For He is an Effulgence: but an effulgence is included in the idea of the nature whose effulgence it is. For this reason Paul has called Him so, that you may imagine no interval between the Father and the Son. Hebrews 1:3 This expression therefore is declaratory of the point; but the following part of the proof quoted, corrects an erroneous opinion which might beset simple men. For, says the Apostle, do not, because you have heard that he is an Effulgence, suppose that He is deprived of His proper person; this is impious, and belongs to the madness of the Sabellians, and of Marcellus' followers. We say not so, but that He is also in His proper Person. And for this reason, after having called Him Effulgence, Paul has added that He is the express image of His Person Hebrews 1:3, in order to make evident His proper Personality, and that He belongs to the same Essence of which He is also the express image. For, as I before said, it is not sufficient by a single expression to set before men the doctrines concerning God, but it is desirable that we bring many together, and choose from each what is suitable. So shall we be able to attain to a worthy telling of His glory, worthy, I mean, as regards our power; for if any should deem himself able to speak words suitable to His essential worthiness, and be ambitious to do so, saying, that he knows God as God knows Himself, he it is who is most ignorant of God.

Knowing therefore this, let us continue steadfastly to hold what they have delivered unto us, which from the beginning were eye-witnesses, and ministers of the word. Luke 1:2 And let us not be curious beyond: for two evils will attend those who are sick of this disease, (curiosity,) the wearying themselves in vain by seeking what it is impossible to find, and the provoking God by their endeavors to overturn the bounds set by Him. Now what anger this excites, it needs not that you who know should learn from us. Abstaining therefore from their madness, let us tremble at His words, that He may continually build us up. For, upon whom shall I look Isaiah 66:2, Septuagint, says He, but upon the lowly, and quiet, and who fears my words? Let us then leave this pernicious curiosity, and bruise our hearts, let us mourn for our sins as Christ commanded, let us be pricked at heart for our transgressions, let us reckon up exactly all the wicked deeds, which in time past we have dared, and let us earnestly strive to wipe them off in all kinds of ways.

Now to this end God has opened to us many ways. For, Tell you first, says He, your sins, that you may be justified Isaiah 43:26 ; and again, I said, I have declared mine iniquity unto You, and You have taken away the unrighteousness of my heart Psalm 32:5, Septuagint; since a continual accusation and remembrance of sins contributes not a little to lessen their magnitude. But there is another more prevailing way than this; to bear malice against none of those who have offended against us, to forgive their trespasses to all those who have trespassed against us. Will you learn a third? Hear Daniel, saying, Redeem your sins by almsdeeds, and your iniquities by showing mercy to the poor. Daniel 4:27, Septuagint And there is another besides this; constancy in prayer, and persevering attendance on the intercessions made with God. In like manner fasting brings to us some, and that not small comfort and release from sins committed, provided it be attended with kindness to others, and quenches the vehemence of the wrath of God. 1 Timothy 2:1 For water will quench a blazing fire, and by almsdeeds sins are purged away. Sirach 3:30, Septuagint

Let us then travel along all these ways; for if we give ourselves wholly to these employments, if on them we spend our time, not only shall we wash off our bygone transgressions, but shall gain very great profit

for the future. For we shall not allow the devil to assault us with leisure either for slothful living, or for pernicious curiosity, since by these among other means, and in consequence of these, he leads us to foolish questions and hurtful disputations, from seeing us at leisure, and idle, and taking no forethought for excellency of living. But let us block up this approach against him, let us watch, let us be sober, that having in this short time toiled a little, we may obtain eternal goods in endless ages, by 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.

Source: <https://sermonindex.net/speakers/st-john-chrysostom/john-19/>

Grow in Your Walk with Christ

Listen and read messages that will stir your heart for Christ and point you to deeper repentance and devotion.

- 50,000+ Sermons from speakers past and present
- 3,900+ Classic Christian Books freely readable online
- 1,200+ Bible Translations and Commentaries
- Over 450k forum posts — Join our vibrant online Christian forum

www.sermonindex.net