

John 6:28-40

by St. John Chrysostom

Christ teaches that the work of God is to believe in Him whom He has sent, and that the Resurrection is a reminder of the future judgment and the importance of living a life of righteousness.

Scripture: Matthew 10:28, John 6:31-32, John 6:37-38, John 6:40, John 14:23, 1 Corinthians 15:24, 2 Corinthians 5:10, Hebrews 10:37

Topics: "Faith In Christ", "Eternal Salvation"

Description

John Chrysostom preaches about the importance of faith in Jesus Christ as the true Bread of Life, contrasting it with the material desires and unbelief of the Jews who sought signs and miracles for their own satisfaction. He emphasizes the need for spiritual nourishment that leads to everlasting life, pointing out that Jesus came not to do His own will but the will of the Father, which includes offering salvation to all who believe in Him. Chrysostom also highlights the significance of the Resurrection and Judgment Day, urging believers to live in anticipation of these events and not be swayed by the temporary pleasures or challenges of this world.

Transcript

Then said they unto Him, What shall we do, that we might work the works of God? Jesus answered and said to them, This is the work of God, that you believe in Him whom He has sent. They said therefore unto Him, What sign do you show then, that we may see and believe you? What do you work?

1. There is nothing worse, nothing more shameful, than gluttony; it makes the mind gross, and the soul carnal; it blinds, and permits not to see clearly. Observe, for instance, how this is the case with the Jews; for because they were intent upon gluttony, entirely occupied with worldly things, and without any spiritual thoughts, though Christ leads them on by ten thousand sayings, sharp and at the same time forbearing, even thus they arise not, but continue groveling below. For consider; He said to them, You seek Me, not because ye saw the miracles, but because ye did eat of the bread, and were filled; He touched them by the reproof, He showed them what food they ought to seek, saying, Labor not for the meat that perishes; He set before them the prize, saying, but that which endures unto everlasting life; then provided a remedy for what might have been an objection, by declaring that He was sent from the Father.

What then did they? As though they had heard nothing, they said, What shall we do, that we might work the works of God? This they said, not that they might learn and do them, (as the sequel shows,) but to induce Him again to supply them with food, and desiring to persuade Him to satisfy them. What then says

Christ? This is the work of God, that you believe in Him whom He has sent. On this they asked, What sign do you show, that we may see and believe?

John 6:31

Our fathers did eat manna in the wilderness.

Nothing more senseless, nothing more unreasonable, than these men! While the miracle was yet in their hands, as though none had been done, they spoke after this manner, What sign do you show? and having thus spoken, they do not even allow Him the right of choosing the sign, but think to force Him to exhibit none other than such a one as was wrought in the days of their fathers; wherefore they say, Our fathers did eat manna in the wilderness, thinking by this to provoke Him to work such a miracle as might supply them with carnal nourishment. Else why did they mention none other of the miracles of old, though many took place in those times, both in Egypt and at the sea and in the wilderness, but only that of the manna? Was it not because they greatly desired that one by reason of the tyranny of their bellies? You who when you saw His miracle called him a Prophet, and attempted to make Him a king, how is that now, as though none had been wrought, you have become thankless and ill-minded, and ask for a sign, uttering words fit for parasites, or hungry dogs? Does the manna now seem wonderful to you? Your soul is not now parched up.

Mark too their hypocrisy. They said not, Moses did this sign, what doest thou? thinking it would annoy Him; but for a while they address Him with great reverence, through expectation of food. So they neither said, God did this, what doest thou? that they might not seem to make Him equal with God; nor did they bring forward Moses, that they might not seem to lower Him, but put the matter in an intermediate form, Our fathers did eat manna in the wilderness. He indeed might have replied, I, but now, have wrought greater wonders than did Moses, requiring no rod, having no need of prayer, but doing all of Myself; and, if you call to remembrance the manna, see, I have given you bread. But this was not the season for such speeches; and the one thing He earnestly desired was, to bring them to spiritual food. And observe His infinite wisdom and His manner of answering.

John 6:32

Moses gave you not that bread from heaven; but My Father gives you the true bread from heaven.

Why said He not, It was not Moses that gave it to you, but I; but puts God in the place of Moses, and Himself instead of manna? Because the infirmity of His hearers was great. As is seen from what follows. For not even when He had spoken thus did He secure their attention, although He said at first, You seek Me, not because ye saw the miracle, but because ye did eat of the loaves, and were filled. John 6:26 Now because they sought these (carnal) things, He would have corrected them by His succeeding words, yet not even so did they desist. When He promised the Samaritan woman that He would give her the water, He made no mention of the Father. What says He? If you knew who it is that says unto you, Give Me to drink, you would have asked of Him, and He would have given unto you living water John 4:10; and again, The water which I shall give. He refers her not to The Father. But here He makes mention of The Father, that you may understand how great was the faith of the Samaritan woman, and how great the infirmity of the Jews.

Was then the manna not from heaven? How then is it said to be from heaven? In the same manner as Scripture speaks of fowls of heaven Psalm 8:8; and again, The Lord thundered from heaven. Psalm 18:13

And He calls that other the true bread, not because the miracle of the manna was false, but because it was a type, and not the very truth. But in mentioning Moses, He does not compare Himself to him, for the Jews did not as yet prefer Him to Moses, of whom they still had a higher opinion. So that after saying, Moses gave not, He adds not that I give, but says that The Father, and not Moses, gives. They, when they heard this, replied, Give us this bread to eat; for they yet thought that it was something material, they yet expected to gratify their appetites, and so hastily ran to Him. What does Christ? Leading them on little by little, He says,

John 6:33

The bread of God is He which comes down from heaven, and gives life unto the world.

Not, says He, to Jews alone, but to all the world, not mere food, but life, another and an altered life. He calls it life, because they all were dead in sins. Yet they still kept downward bent, saying,

John 6:34

Give us this bread.

Then He, to rebuke them, because while they supposed that the food was material they ran to Him, but not when they learned that it was a spiritual kind, said,

John 6:35-36

I am the bread of life; he that comes to Me shall never hunger, and he that believes in Me shall never thirst. But I said to you, that you also have seen Me, and believe Me not.

2. Thus also John cries, saying beforehand, He speaks that He knows, and testifies that He has seen, and no man receives His testimony John 3:32; and again Christ Himself, We speak that We do know, and testify that We have seen John 3:11, and you believe not. This He does to prevent them, and to show them that the matter does not trouble Him, that He desires not honor, that He is not ignorant of the secrets of their minds, nor of things present, nor of things to come.

I am the bread of life. Now He proceeds to commit unto them mysteries. And first He discourses of His Godhead, saying, I am the bread of life. For this is not spoken of His Body, (concerning that He says towards the end, And the bread which I shall give is My flesh,) but at present it refers to His Godhead. For That, through God the Word, is Bread, as this bread also, through the Spirit descending on it, is made Heavenly Bread. Here He uses not witnesses, as in His former address, for He had the miracle of the loaves to witness to Him, and the Jews themselves for a while pretending to believe Him; in the former case they opposed and accused Him. This is the reason why here He declares Himself. But they, since they expected to enjoy a carnal feast, were not disturbed until they gave up their hope. Yet not for that was Christ silent, but uttered many words of reproof. For they, who while they were eating called Him a Prophet, were here offended, and called Him the carpenter's son; not so while they ate the loaves, then they said, He is The Prophet, and desired to make Him a king. Now they seemed to be indignant at His asserting that He came down from heaven, but in truth it was not this that caused their indignation, but the thought that they should not enjoy a material table. Had they been really indignant, they ought to have asked and enquired how He was the bread of life, how He had come down from heaven; but now they do not this, but murmur. And that it was not this which offended them is plain from another circumstance. When He said, My Father gives you the bread, they exclaimed not, Beseech Him that He give; but what?

Give us that bread; yet He said not, I give, but, My Father gives; nevertheless, they, from desire of the food, thought Him worthy to be trusted to for its supply. Now how should they, who deemed Him worthy of their trust for giving, be afterward offended when they also heard that the Father gives? What is the reason? It is that when they heard that they were not to eat, they again disbelieved, and put forth by way of a cloak for their disbelief, that it was a high saying. Wherefore He says, You have seen Me, and believe not John 5:39; alluding partly to His miracles, partly to the testimony from the Scriptures; For they, He says, are they which testify of Me c. v. 43, 44; and, I have come in My Father's Name, and you receive Me not; and, How can you believe which receive honor of men?

John 6:37

All that the Father gives Me shall come to Me, and him that comes to Me I will in nowise cast out.

Observe how He does all things for the sake of them that are saved; therefore He added this, that He might not seem to be trifling and speaking these things to no purpose. But what is it that He says, All that the Father gives Me shall come unto Me John 6:37, and I will raise it up in the last day? John 6:40 Wherefore speaks He of the common resurrection, in which even the ungodly have a part, as though it were the peculiar gift of those who believe in Him? Because He speaks not simply of resurrection, but of a particular kind of resurrection. For having first said, I will not cast him out, I shall lose nothing of it, He then speaks of the resurrection. Since in the resurrection some are cast out, (Take him, and cast him into outer darkness, Matthew 22:13) and some are destroyed. (Rather fear Him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell.) Matthew 10:28 And the expression, I give eternal life John 10:28, declares this; for they that have done evil shall go forth to the resurrection of damnation, and they that have done good to the resurrection of life. John 5:29 This then, the resurrection to good things, is that which He here designed. But what means He by saying, All that the Father gives Me, shall come to Me? He touches their unbelief, showing that whosoever believes not on Him transgresses the will of the Father. And thus He says it not nakedly, but in a covert manner, and this He does everywhere, wishing to show that unbelievers are at variance with the Father, not with Him alone. For if this is His will, and if for this He came, that He might save man, those who believe not transgress His will. When therefore, He says, the Father guides any man, there is nothing that hinders him from coming unto Me; and in another place, No man can come unto Me, except the Father draw him. John 6:44 And Paul says, that He delivers them up unto the Father; When He shall have delivered up the kingdom to God, even the Father. 1 Corinthians 15:24 Now as the Father when He gives does so without first depriving Himself, so the Son when He delivers up does so without excluding Himself. He is said to deliver us up, because through Him we have access (to the Father).

3. And the by whom is also applied to the Father, as when the Apostle says, By whom you were called unto the fellowship of His Son 1 Corinthians 1:9: and, By the will of the Father. And again; Blessed are you, Simon Barjona, for flesh and blood has not revealed it unto you. Matthew 16:17 What He here intimates is something of this kind, that faith in Me is no ordinary thing, but needs an impulse from above; and this He establishes throughout His discourse, showing that this faith requires a noble sort of soul, and one drawn on by God.

But perhaps some one will say, If all that the Father gives, and whomsoever He shall draw, comes unto You, if none can come unto You except it be given him from above, then those to whom the Father gives not are free from any blame or charges. These are mere words and pretenses. For we require our own deliberate choice also, because whether we will be taught is a matter of choice, and also whether we will

believe. And in this place, by the which the Father gives Me, He declares nothing else than that the believing on Me is no ordinary thing, nor one that comes of human reasonings, but needs a revelation from above, and a well-ordered soul to receive that revelation. And the, He that comes to Me shall be saved, means that he shall be greatly cared for. For on account of these, He says, I came, and took upon Me the flesh, and entered into the form of a servant. Then He adds;

John 6:38

I came down from heaven not to do My own will, but the will of Him that sent Me.

What sayest Thou? Why, is Your will one, and His another? That none may suspect this, He explains it by what follows, saying;

John 6:40

And this is the will of Him that sent Me, that every one which sees the Son, and believes in Him, may have everlasting life.

Is not then this Your will? And how sayest Thou, I have come to send fire upon the earth, and what have I desired to see, if that be already kindled? Luke 12:49 For if Thou also desirest this, it is very clear that Your will and the Father's is one. In another place also He says, For as the Father raises up the dead and quickens them, even so the Son quickens whom He will. John 5:21 But what is the will of the Father? Is it not, that not so much as one of them should perish? This Thou willest also. Matthew 18:14 So that the will of the One differs not from the will of the Other. So in another place He is seen establishing yet more firmly His equality with the Father, saying, I and My Father 'will come, and will make Our abode with him.' John 14:23 What He says then is this; I came not to do anything other than that which the Father wills, I have no will of My own different from that of the Father, for all that is the Father's is Mine, and all that is Mine is the Father's. If now the things of the Father and the Son are in common, He says with reason, Not that I might do My own will. But here He speaks not so, but reserves this for the end. For, as I have said, He conceals and veils for a while high matters, and desires to prove that had He even said, This is My will, they would have despised Him. He therefore says, that I co-operate with that Will, desiring thus to startle them more; as though He had said, What do you think? Do ye anger Me by your disbelief? Nay, you provoke My Father. For this is the will of Him that sent Me, that of all which He has given Me I should lose nothing. John 6:39 Here He shows that He needs not their service, that He came not for His own advantage, but for their salvation; and not to get honor from them. Which indeed He declared in a former address, saying, I receive not honor from men John 5:41; and again, These things I say that you may be saved. John 5:34 Since He everywhere labors to persuade them that He came for their salvation. And He says, that He obtains honor to the Father, in order that He may not be suspected by them. And that it is for this reason He thus speaks, He has more clearly revealed by what follows. For He says, He that seeks his own will seeks his own glory; but He that seeks His glory that sent Him is true, and there is no unrighteousness in Him. John 7:18 And this is the will of the Father, that every one which sees the Son, and believes in Him, may have everlasting life. John 6:40

And I will raise him up at the last day. Why does He continually dwell upon the Resurrection? Is it that men may not judge of God's providence by present things alone; that if they enjoy not results here, they become not on that account desponding, but wait for the things that are to come, and that they may not, because their sins are not punished for the present, despise Him, but look for another life.

Now those men gained nothing, but let us take pains to gain by having the Resurrection continually sounded in our ears; and if we desire to be grasping, or to steal, or to do any wrong thing, let us straightway take into our thoughts that Day, let us picture to ourselves the Judgment-seat, for such reflections will check the evil impulse more strongly than any bit. Let us continually say to others, and to ourselves, There is a resurrection, and a fearful tribunal awaits us. If we see any man insolent and puffed up with the good things of his world, let us make the same remark to him, and show him that all those things abide here: and if we observe another grieving and impatient, let us say the same to him, and point out to him that his sorrows shall have an end; if we see one careless and dissipated, let us say the same charm over him, and show that for his carelessness he must render account. This saying is able more than any other remedy to heal our souls. For there is a Resurrection, and that Resurrection is at our doors, not afar off, nor at a distance. For yet a little while, and He that shall come will come, and will not tarry. Hebrews 10:37 And again, We must all appear before the judgment-seat of Christ 2 Corinthians 5:10; that is, both bad and good, the one to be shamed in sight of all, the other in sight of all to be made more glorious. For as they who judge here punish the wicked and honor the good publicly, so too will it be there, that the one sort may have the greater shame, and the other more conspicuous glory. Let us picture these things to ourselves every day. If we are ever revolving them, no care for present things will be able to sting us. For the things which are seen are temporal, but the things which are not seen are eternal. 2 Corinthians 4:18 Continually let us say to ourselves and to others, There is a Resurrection, and a Judgment, and a scrutiny of our actions; and let as many as deem that there is such a thing as fate repeat this, and they shall straightway be delivered from the rottenness of their malady; for if there is a Resurrection, and a Judgment, there is no fate, though they bring ten thousand arguments, and choke themselves to prove it. But I am ashamed to be teaching Christians concerning the Resurrection: for he that needs to learn that there is a Resurrection, and who has not firmly persuaded himself that the affairs of this world go not on by fate, and without design, and as chance will have them, can be no Christian. Wherefore, I exhort and beseech you, that we cleanse ourselves from all wickedness, and do all in our power to obtain pardon and excuse in that Day.

Perhaps some one will say, When will be the consummation? When will be the Resurrection? See how long a time has gone by, and nothing of the kind has come to pass? Yet it shall be, be sure. For those before the flood spoke after this manner, and mocked at Noah, but the flood came and swept away all those unbelievers, but preserved him who believed. And the men of Lot's time expected not that stroke from God, until those lightnings and thunderbolts came down and destroyed them all utterly.

Neither in the case of these men, nor of those who lived in the time of Noah, was there any preamble to what was about to happen, but when they were all living daintily, and drinking, and mad with wine, then came these intolerable calamities upon them. So also shall the Resurrection be; not with any preamble, but while we are in the midst of good times. Wherefore Paul says, For when they shall say, Peace and safety; then sudden destruction comes upon them, as travail upon a woman with child; and they shall not escape. 1 Thessalonians 5:3 God has so ordered this, that we may be always struggling, and be not confident even in time of safety.

What do you say? Do you not expect that there will be a Resurrection and a Judgment? The devils confess these, and are you shameless? Have You come, they say, to torment us before the time? Matthew 8:29; now they who say that there will be torment; are aware of the Judgment, and the reckoning, and the vengeance. Let us not then besides daring evil deeds, anger God by disbelieving the word of the Resurrection. For as in other things Christ has been our beginning, so also has He in this; wherefore He is

called the first-born from the dead.

Colossians 1:18 Now if there were no Resurrection, how could He be the first-born, when no one of the dead was to follow Him? If there were no Resurrection, how would the justice of God be preserved, when so many evil men prosper, and so many good men are afflicted and die in their affliction? Where shall each of these obtain his deserts, if so be that there is no Resurrection? No one of those who have lived aright disbelieves the Resurrection, but every day they pray and repeat that holy sentence, Your Kingdom come.

Who then are they that disbelieve the Resurrection? They who have unholy ways and an unclean life: as the Prophet says, His ways are always polluted. Your judgments are far above out of his sight. Psalm 10:5 For a man cannot possibly live a pure life without believing in the Resurrection; since they who are conscious of no iniquity both speak of, and wish for, and believe in it, that they may receive their recompense. Let us not then anger Him, but hear Him when He says, Fear Him which is able to destroy both body and soul in hell Matthew 10:28; that by that fear we may become better, and being delivered from that perdition, may be deemed worthy of the Kingdom of Heaven.

Which may we all attain to, through the grace and loving-kindness of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom and with whom to the Father and the Holy Ghost be glory, now and ever and to the endless ages of eternity. Amen.

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