

John 8:31-46

by St. John Chrysostom

St. John Chrysostom's sermon emphasizes the necessity of enduring faith in Christ to attain true freedom from sin and the importance of living righteously as true disciples.

Scripture: John 8:33-39, John 8:41-42, John 8:45-46

Topics: "Discipleship", "True Freedom"

Description

John Chrysostom preaches about the importance of enduring in God's word to become true disciples, emphasizing the need to be deeply rooted in God's teachings to withstand trials and temptations. He highlights how Jesus confronted the Jews' pride and lack of endurance, pointing out their tendency to turn away despite believing initially. Chrysostom delves into the concept of true freedom in Christ, contrasting it with the bondage of sin and the devil, urging believers to seek genuine freedom through faith and obedience to God's truth.

Transcript

Then said Jesus to those Jews which believed on Him, If you continue in My word, then are you My disciples indeed. And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.

1. Beloved, our condition needs much endurance; and endurance is produced when doctrines are deeply rooted. For as no wind is able by its assaults to tear up the oak, which sends down its root into the lower recesses of the earth, and is firmly clenched there; so too the soul which is nailed by the fear of God none will be able to overturn. Since to be nailed is more than to be rooted. Thus the Prophet prays, saying, Nail my flesh by Your fear Psalm 119:120, Septuagint; do Thou so fix and join me, as by a nail riveted into me. For as men of this kind are hard to be captured, so the opposite sort are a ready prey, and are easily thrown down. As was the case of the Jews at that time; for after having heard and believed, they again turned out of the way. Christ therefore desiring to deepen their faith that it might not be merely superficial, digs into their souls by more striking words. For it was the part of believers to endure even reproofs, but they immediately were angry. But how does He this? He first tells them, If you continue in My word, you are My disciples indeed: and the truth shall make you free. All but saying, I am about to make a deep incision, but be not ye moved; or rather by these expressions He allayed the pride of their imagination. Shall make you free: from what, tell me? From your sins. What then say those boasters?

John 8:33

We be Abraham's seed, and were never in bondage to any man.

Immediately their imagination dropped, and this happened from their having been fluttered about worldly things. If you continue in My word, was the expression of One declaring what was in their heart, and knowing that they had indeed believed, but had not continued. And He promises a great thing, that they should become His disciples. For since some had gone away from Him before this, alluding to them He says, If you continue, because they also had heard and believed, and departed because they could not continue. For many of His disciples went back, and walked no more openly with Him. John 6:66

You shall know the truth, that is, shall know Me, for I am the truth. All the Jewish matters were types, but you shall know the truth from Me, and it shall free you from your sins. As to those others He said, You shall die in your sins, so to these He says, shall make you free. He said not, I will deliver you from bondage, this He allowed them to conjecture. What then said they?

We be Abraham's seed, and were never in bondage to any man. And yet if they must needs have been vexed, it might have been expected that they would have been so at the former part of His speech, at His having said, You shall know the truth; and that they would have replied, What! Do we not now know the truth? Is then the Law and our knowledge a lie? But they cared for none of these things, they are grieved at worldly things, and these were their notions of bondage. And certainly even now, there are many who feel shame at indifferent matters, and at this kind of bondage, but who feel none for the bondage of sin, and who would rather be called servants to this latter kind of bondage ten thousand times, than once to the former. Such were these men, and they did not even know of any other bondage, and they say, Bondsmen do you call those who are of the race of Abraham, the nobly born, who therefore ought not to be called bondsmen? For, says one, we were never in bondage to any man. Such are the boastings of the Jews. We are the seed of Abraham, we are Israelites. They never mention their own righteous deeds. Wherefore John cried out to them, saying, Think not to say that we have Abraham to our father. Matthew 3:9 And why did not Christ confute them, for they had often been in bondage to the Egyptians, Babylonians, and many others? Because His words were not to gain honor for Himself, but for their salvation, for their benefit, and toward this object He was pressing. For He might have spoken of the four hundred years, He might have spoken of the seventy, He might have spoken of the years of bondage during the time of the Judges, at one time twenty, at another two, at another seven; He might have said that they had never ceased being in bondage. But He desired not to show that they were slaves of men, but that they were slaves of sin, which is the most grievous slavery, from which God alone can deliver; for to forgive sins belongs to none other. And this too they allowed. Since then they confessed that this was the work of God, He brings them to this point, and says,

John 8:34

Whosoever commits sin is the servant of sin.

Showing that this is the freedom of which He speaks, the freedom from this service.

John 8:35

The servant abides not in the house, but the Son abides forever.

Gently too from this He casts down the things of the Law, alluding to former times. For that they may not run back to them and say, We have the sacrifices which Moses commanded, they are able to deliver us,

He adds these words, since otherwise what connection would the saying have? For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God, being justified freely by His grace Romans 3:23-24, even the priests themselves. Wherefore Paul also says of the priest, that he ought as for the people so also for himself to offer for sins, for that he also is compassed about with infirmity. Hebrews 5:3 And this is signified by His saying, The servant abides not in the house. Here also He shows His equal honor with the Father, and the difference between slave and free. For the parable has this meaning, that is, the servant has no power, this is the meaning of abides not.

2. But why when speaking of sins does He mention a house? It is to show that as a master has power over his house, so He over all. And the, abides not, is this, has not power to grant favors, as not being master of the house; but the Son is master of the house. For this is the, abides forever, by a metaphor drawn from human things. That they may not say, who are you? All is Mine, (He says,) for I am the Son, and dwell in My Father's house, calling by the name of house His power. As in another place He calls the Kingdom His Father's house, In My Father's house are many mansions. Hebrews 14:2 For since the discourse was of freedom and bondage, He with reason used this metaphor, telling them that they had no power to set free.

John 8:36

If the Son therefore shall make you free.

Do you see the consubstantiality of the Son with the Father, and how He declares that He has the same power as the Father? If the Son make you free, no man afterwards gain-says, but you have firm freedom. For it is God that justifies, who is He that condemns? Romans 8:33-34 Here He shows that He Himself is pure from sin, and alludes to that freedom which reached only to a name; this even men give, but that God alone. And so he persuaded them not to be ashamed at this slavery, but at that of sin. And desiring to show that they were not slaves, except by repudiating that liberty, He the more shows them to be slaves by saying,

You shall be free indeed.

This is the expression of one declaring that this freedom was not real. Then, that they might not say, We have no sin, (for it was probable that they would say so,) observe how He brings them beneath this imputation. For omitting to convict all their life, He brings forward that which they had in hand, which they yet desired to do, and says,

John 8:37

I know that you are Abraham's seed but you seek to kill Me.

Gently and by little does He expel them from that relationship, teaching them not to be high-minded because of it. For as freedom and bondage depend on men's actions, so also does relationship. He said not directly, You are not the seed of Abraham, you the murderers of the righteous; but for a while He even goes along with them, and says, I know that you are Abraham's seed. Yet this is not the matter in question, and during the remainder of this speech He uses greater vehemence. For we may for the most part observe, that when He is about to work any great thing, after He has wrought it, He uses greater boldness of speech, as though the testimony from His works shut men's mouths. But ye seek to kill Me. What of that, says some one, if they sought to do so justly. But this was not so either; wherefore also He puts the reason;

Because My word has no place in you.

How then was it, says some one, that they believed on Him? As I before said, they changed again. On which account He touched them sharply. If you boast the relationship of Abraham ye ought also to show forth his life. And He said not, You do not contain my words, but, My word has no place in you, thus declaring the sublimity of His doctrines. Yet not for this ought they to have slain, but rather to have honored and waited on Him so as to learn. But what, says some one, if you speak these things of yourself? On this account He added,

John 8:38

I speak that which I have seen with My Father, and you do that which you have heard from your father.

As, He says, I both by My words and by the truth declare the Father, so also do ye by your actions (declare yours). For I have not only the same Substance, but also the same Truth with the Father.

John 8:39-40

They said to Him, Abraham is our father. Jesus says unto them, If you had Abraham to your father, you would do the works of Abraham. But now ye seek to kill Me.

He here repeatedly handles their murderous intention, and makes mention of Abraham. And this He does desiring to draw off their attention from this relationship, and to take away their excessive boasting, and also to persuade them no longer to rest their hopes of salvation in Abraham, nor in the relationship which is according to nature, but in that which is according to the will. For what hindered their coming to Christ was this, their deeming that relationship to be sufficient for them to salvation. But what is the truth of which He speaks? That He is equal with the Father. For it was on this account that the Jews sought to slay Him; and He says,

You seek to kill Me because I have told you the truth, which I have heard of My Father.

To show that these things are not opposed to the Father, He again betakes Himself to Him. They say unto Him,

John 8:41

We be not born of fornication, we have one Father, even God.

3. What do you say? You have God for your Father, and do ye blame Christ for asserting this? Do you see that He said that God was His Father in a special manner? When therefore He had cast them out of their relationship to Abraham, having nothing to reply, they dare a greater thing, and betake themselves to God. But from this honor also He expels them, saying,

John 8:42-44

If God were your Father, you would love Me; for I proceeded forth and came from God; neither came I of Myself, but He sent Me. Why do ye not understand My speech? Even because ye cannot hear My word. You are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do: he was a murderer from the beginning, and abode not in the truth: when he speaks a lie, he speaks of his own.

He had driven them out of their relationship to Abraham, and when they dared greater things, He then adds a blow, telling them that they not only are not Abraham's children, but that they are even children of the devil, and inflicting a wound which might counterbalance their shamelessness; nor does He leave it unsupported, but establishes it by proofs. For, He says, to murder belongs to the wickedness of the devil. And He said not merely, ye do his works, but, ye do his lusts, showing that both he and they hold to murder, and that envy was the cause. For the devil destroyed Adam, not because he had any charge against him, but only from envy. To this also He alludes here.

And abode not in the truth. That is, in the right life. For since they continually accused Him of not being from God, He tells them that this also is from thence. For the devil first was the father of a lie, when he said, In the day that you eat thereof your eyes shall be opened Genesis 3:5, and he first used it. For men use a lie not as a thing proper, but alien to their nature, but he as proper.

John 8:45

And because I tell you the truth, you believe Me not.

What kind of consequence is this? Having no charge against Me, you desire to kill Me. For because you are enemies of the truth, therefore ye persecute Me. Since had this not been the reason, you would have named your charge. Wherefore He added,

John 8:46

Which of you convinces Me of sin?

Then they said, We be not born of fornication. Yet in fact many of them were born of fornication, for they practiced unbefitting unions. Still He does not convict them of this, but sets Himself to the other point. For when He has proved them to be, not of God, but of the devil, by all these signs, (for to do murder is of the devil, and to lie is of the devil, both which you do,) then He shows that to love is the sign of being of God. Why do ye not understand My speech? Since they were always doubting, saying, What is it that he says, 'Whither I go ye cannot come'? therefore He tells them, You do not understand My speech, because you have not the word of God. And this comes to you, because that your understanding is groveling, and because what is Mine is far too great for you. But what if they could not understand? Not to be able here means not to be willing; for you have trained yourselves to be mean, to imagine nothing great. Because they said that they persecuted Him as being themselves zealous for God, on this account He everywhere strives to show that to persecute Him is the act of those who hate God, but that, on the contrary, to love Him is the act of those who know God.

We have one Father, even God. On this ground they pride themselves, on their honor not their righteous deeds. Therefore your not believing is no proof that I am an enemy to God, but your unbelief is a sign that you do not know God. And the reason is, from your being willing to lie and to do the works of the devil. But this is the effect of meanness of soul; (as the Apostle says, 'For whereas there is among you envying and strife, are you not carnal?') 1 Corinthians 3:3 And why is it that you cannot ? Because you will to do the lusts of your father, you are eager, you are ambitious (to do them). Do you see that ye cannot express a want of will? For this did not Abraham. What are his works? Gentleness, meekness, obedience. But ye set yourselves on the contrary part, being hard and cruel.

But how came it into their thoughts to betake themselves to God? He had shown them unworthy of Abraham; desiring therefore to escape this charge, they mounted higher. For when He reproached them with murder, they said this, making it, as it were, a kind of excuse for themselves that they were avenging God. Therefore He shows that this very thing is the act of men opposing God. And the, I came forth, shows that He was from thence. He says, I came forth, alluding to His arrival among us. But since they would probably say to Him, Thou speaks certain things strange and new, He tells them that He had come from God. And therefore with good reason ye hear them not, because you are of the devil. For on what account would ye kill Me? What charge have ye to bring against Me? If there be none, why do ye not believe Me? Thus then having proved them to be of the devil by their lying and their murder, He shows them also to be alien from Abraham and from God, both because they hated One who had done no wrong, and because they would not hear His word; and in every way He proves that He was not opposed to God, and that it was not on this account that they refused to believe, but because they were aliens from God. For when One who had done no sin, who said that He came from God and was sent of God, who spoke the truth, and so spoke it as to challenge all to the proof, after this was not believed, it is clear that He was not believed because of their being carnal. Since sins do use, yea they do use to debase a soul. Wherefore It says, Seeing you have become dull of hearing. Hebrews 5:11 For when a man cannot despise earthly things, how shall he ever be wise concerning heavenly things?

4. Wherefore, I exhort you, use we every means that our life may be righteous, that our minds may be cleansed, so that no filthiness be a hindrance to us; kindle for yourselves the light of knowledge, and sow not among thorns. For how shall one who knows not that covetousness is an evil, ever know the greater good? How shall one who refrains not from these earthly things ever hold fast to those heavenly? It is good to take by violence, not the things that perish, but the Kingdom of heaven.

The violent, it says, take it by force. Matthew 11:12 It is then not possible to attain to it by sluggishness, but by zeal. But what means the violent? There is need of much violence, (for strait is the way,) there is need of a youthful soul and a noble. Plunderers desire to outstrip all other, they look to nothing, neither to conviction, nor accusation, nor punishment, but are given up to one thing only, the getting hold of what they desire to seize, and they run past all that are before them in the way.

Seize we then the Kingdom of heaven, for here to seize is no fault but rather praise, and the fault is the not seizing. Here our wealth comes not from another's loss. Haste we then to seize it. Should passion disquiet us, should lust disquiet us, let us do violence to our nature, let us become more gentle, let us labor a little, that we may rest forever. Seize not thou gold, but seize that wealth which shows gold to be but mud. For tell me, if lead and gold were laid before you, which would you take?

Is it not clear that you would take the gold? Do you then, where one who seizes is punished, prefer that which is the more valuable, but where one who seizes is honored, give up what is the more valuable? If there were punishment in both cases, would you not rather aim at this latter? But in this case there is nothing like punishment, but even blessedness. And, How, says some one, may one seize it? Cast away the things which you have already in your hands; for so long as you grasp them you will not be able to seize the other.

For consider, I pray you, a man with his hands full of silver, will he be able, as long as he retains it, to seize on gold, unless he first cast away the silver, and be free? Because he that seizes a thing must be well-girt so as not to be detained. And even now there are adverse powers running down against us to rob us, but let us fly them, let us fly them, trailing after us nothing that may give a hold, let us cut asunder the cords,

let us strip ourselves of the things of earth.

What need of silken garments? How long shall we be unrolling this mockery? How long shall we be burying gold? I desired to cease from always saying these things, but you will not suffer me, continually supplying me with occasions and arguments. But now at least let us desist, that having instructed others by our lives, we may obtain the promised good things, through the grace and lovingkindness of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom and with whom to the Father and the Holy Ghost be glory, now and ever and world without end. Amen.

Source: <https://sermonindex.net/speakers/st-john-chrysostom/john-831-46/>

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