

John 9:1-5

by St. John Chrysostom

Jesus heals the blind man to manifest the glory of God and to show His power as the Creator, and He emphasizes the importance of faith and spiritual preparation for eternal life.

Scripture: Deuteronomy 24:16, Ezekiel 18:3, John 9:3-5, John 12:36, Romans 5:20, Romans 13:12, 1 Corinthians 12:16

Topics: "Divine Healing", "Eternal Glory"

Description

John Chrysostom preaches about Jesus healing a man born blind, emphasizing that the man's blindness was not a punishment for sin but an opportunity for God's glory to be revealed. Chrysostom explains that Jesus' miracles, like restoring sight to the blind, demonstrate His power as the Creator and the Light of the world. He contrasts the temporary nature of earthly dwellings with the eternal glory of heavenly homes, urging believers to invest in building their spiritual houses in heaven through acts of charity and faith. Chrysostom encourages his audience to prioritize their eternal dwelling place in God's kingdom, where there is no envy, malice, or decay, and where the presence of saints and angels brings eternal joy.

Transcript

And as Jesus passed by, He saw a man which was blind from his birth. And His disciples asked Him, saying, Master, who did sin, this man, or his parents, that he was born blind?

1. And as Jesus passed by, He saw a man which was blind from his birth. Being full of love for man, and caring for our salvation, and desiring to stop the mouths of the foolish, He omits nothing of His own part, though there be none to give heed. And the Prophet knowing this says, That You might be justified when You speak, and be clear when You are judged. Psalm 51:4 Wherefore here, when they would not receive His sublime sayings, but said that He had a devil, and attempted to kill Him, He went forth from the Temple, and healed the blind, mitigating their rage by His absence, and by working the miracle softening their hardness and cruelty, and establishing His assertions. And He works a miracle which was no common one, but one which took place then for the first time. Since the world began, says he who was healed, was it not heard that any man opened the eyes of one that was born blind. John 9:32 Some have, perhaps, opened the eyes of the blind, but of one born blind never. And that on going out of the Temple, He proceeded intentionally to the work, is clear from this; it was He who saw the blind man, not the blind man who came to Him; and so earnestly did He look upon him, that even His disciples perceived it. From this, at least, they came to question Him; for when they saw Him earnestly regarding the man, they asked Him, saying, Who did sin, this man, or his parents? A mistaken question, for how could he sin before he

was born? And how, if his parents had sinned, would he have been punished? Whence then came they to put this question? Before, when He healed the paralytic, He said, Behold, you are made whole, sin no more. John 5:14 They therefore, having understood that he was palsied on account of sin, said, Well, that other was palsied because of his sins; but concerning this man, what would You say? Has he sinned? It is not possible to say so, for he is blind from his birth. Have his parents sinned? Neither can one say this, for the child suffers not punishment for the father. As therefore when we see a child evil entreated, we exclaim, What can one say of this? What has the child done? not as asking a question, but as being perplexed, so the disciples spoke here, not so much asking for information, as being in perplexity. What then says Christ?

John 9:3

Neither has this man sinned, nor his parents.

This He says not as acquitting them of sins, for He says not simply, Neither has this man sinned, nor his parents, but adds, that he should have been born blind -- but that the Son of God should be glorified in him. For both this man has sinned and his parents, but his blindness proceeds not from that. And this He said, not signifying that though this man indeed was not in such case, yet that others had been made blind from such a cause, the sins of their parents, since it cannot be that when one sins another should be punished. For if we allow this, we must also allow that he sinned before his birth. As therefore when He declared, neither has this man sinned, He said not that it is possible to sin from one's very birth, and be punished for it; so when He said, nor his parents, He said not that one may be punished for his parents' sake. This supposition He removes by the mouth of Ezekiel; As I live says the Lord, this proverb shall not be, that is used, The fathers have eaten sour grapes, and the children's teeth are set on edge. Ezekiel 18:3 And Moses says, The father shall not die for the child, neither shall the child die for the father. Deuteronomy 24:16 And of a certain king Scripture says, that for this very reason he did not this thing, observing the law of Moses. But if any one argue, How then is it said, 'Who visits the sins of the parents upon the children unto the third and fourth generation'? Deuteronomy 5:9; we should make this answer, that the assertion is not universal, but that it is spoken with reference to certain who came out of Egypt. And its meaning is of this kind; Since these who have come out of Egypt, after signs and wonders, have become worse than their forefathers who saw none of these things, they shall suffer, It says, the same that those others suffered, since they have dared the same crimes. And that it was spoken of those men, any one who will give attention to the passage will more certainly know. Wherefore then was he born blind?

That the glory of God should be made manifest, He says.

Lo, here again is another difficulty, if without this man's punishment, it was not possible that the glory of God should be shown. Certainly it is not said that it was impossible, for it was possible, but, that it might be manifested even in this man. What, says some one, did he suffer wrong for the glory of God? What wrong, tell me? For what if God had never willed to produce him at all? But I assert that he even received benefit from his blindness: since he recovered the sight of the eyes within. What were the Jews profited by their eyes? They incurred the heavier punishment, being blinded even while they saw. And what injury had this man by his blindness? For by means of it he recovered sight. As then the evils of the present life are not evils, so neither are the good things good; sin alone is an evil, but blindness is not an evil. And He who had brought this man from not being into being, had also power to leave him as he was.

2. But some say, that this conjunction is not at all expressive of cause, but relates to the consequence of the miracle; as when He says, For judgment I have come into this world, that they which see not might see, and that they which see might be made blind John 9:39; and yet it was not for this He came, that those who saw might be made blind. And again Paul, Because that which may be known of God is manifested in them, that they may be without excuse Romans 1:19-20; yet He showed it not unto them for this, that they might be deprived of excuse, but that they might obtain excuse. And again in another place, The Law entered, that the offense might abound Romans 5:20; yet it was not for this that it entered, but that sin might be checked. Do you see everywhere that the conjunction relates to the consequence? For as some excellent architect may build part of a house, and leave the rest unfinished, so that to those who believe not he may prove, by means of that remnant, that he is author of the whole; so also God joins together and completes our body, as it were a house decayed, healing the withered hand, bracing the palsied limbs, straightening the lame, cleansing the lepers, raising up the sick, making sound the crippled, recalling the dead from death, opening the eyes that were closed, or adding them where before they were not; all which things, being blemishes arising from the infirmity of our nature, He by correcting showed His power.

But when He said, That the glory of God might be manifested, He spoke of Himself, not of the Father; His glory was already manifest. For since they had heard that God made man, taking the dust of the earth, so also Christ made clay. To have said, I am He who took the dust of the earth, and made man, would have seemed a hard thing to His hearers; but this when shown by actual working, no longer stood in their way. So that He by taking earth, and mixing it with spittle, showed forth His hidden glory; for no small glory was it that He should be deemed the Architect of the creation.

And after this the rest also followed; from the part, the whole was proved, since the belief of the greater also confirmed the less. For man is more honorable than any created thing, and of our members the most honorable is the eye. This is the cause that He fashioned the eyes, not in a common manner, but in the way that He did. For though that member be small in size, yet it is more necessary than any part of the body. And this Paul showed when he said, If the ear shall say, Because I am not the eye, I am not of the body; is it therefore not of the body? 1 Corinthians 12:16 For all indeed that is in us is a manifestation of the wisdom of God, but much more the eye; this it is that guides the whole body, this gives beauty to it all, this adorns the countenance, this is the light of all the limbs. What the sun is in the world, that the eye is in the body; quench the sun, and you destroy and confound all things; quench the eyes, and the feet, the hands, the soul, are useless. When these are disabled, even knowledge is gone, since by means of these we know God. For the invisible things of Him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made. Romans 1:20 Wherefore the eye is not only a light to the body, but beyond the body to the soul also. On which account it is established as in a royal fortress, obtaining the higher condition, and presiding over the other senses. This then Christ forms.

And that you may not deem that He needs matter when He works, and that you may learn that He had not need at all of clay, (for He who brought into being the greater existences when as yet they were not, would much more have made this without matter,) that I say you may learn that He did not this through necessity, but to show that He was the Creator at the beginning, when He had spread on the clay He says, Go, wash, that you may know that I need not clay to create eyes, but that My glory may be manifested hereby. For to show that He spoke of Himself when He said, That the glory of God may be manifested, He added,

John 9:4

I must work the works of Him that sent Me.

That is, I must manifest Myself, and do the things which may show that I do the same things with the Father; not things similar, but, the same, an expression which marks greater unvaryingness, and which is used of those who do not differ ever so little. Who then after this will face Him, when he sees that He has the same power with the Father? For not only did He form or open eyes, but gave also the gift of sight, which is a proof that He also breathed in the soul. Since if that did not work, the eye, though perfected, could never see anything; so that He gave both the energy which is from the soul, and gave the member also possessing all things, both arteries and nerves and veins, and all things of which our body is composed.

I must work while it is day.

What mean these words? To what conclusion do they lead? To an important one. For what He says is of this kind. While it is day, while men may believe in Me, while this life lasts, I must work.

The night comes, that is, futurity, when no man can work.

He said not, when I cannot work, but, when no man can work: that is, when there is no longer faith, nor labors, nor repentance. For to show that He calls faith, a work, when they say unto Him, What shall we do, that we might work the works of God? John 6:28, He replies, This is the work of God, that you believe in Him whom He has sent. How then can no man work this work in the future world? Because there faith is not, but all, willingly, or unwillingly, will submit. For lest any one should say that He acted as He did from desire of honor, He shows that He did all to spare them who had power to believe here only, but who could no longer there gain any good thing. On this account, though the blind man came not to Him, He did what He did: for that the man was worthy to be healed, that had he seen he would have believed and come to Christ, that had he heard from any that He was present, he would not even so have been neglectful, is clear from what follows, from his courage, from his very faith. For it was likely that he would have considered with himself, and have said, What is this? He made clay, and anointed my eyes, and said to me, 'Go, wash;' could he not have healed me, and then have sent me to Siloam? Often have I washed there with many others, and have gained no good; had he possessed any power, he would while present have healed me. Just as Naaman spoke respecting Elisha; for he too being commanded to go wash in Jordan, believed not, and this too when there was such a fame abroad concerning Elisha. 2 Kings 5:11 But the blind man neither disbelieved, nor contradicted, nor reasoned with himself, What is this? Ought he to have put on clay? This is rather to blind one the more: who ever recovered sight so? But he used no such reasonings. Do you see his steadfast faith and zeal?

The night comes. Next He shows, that even after the Crucifixion He would care for the ungodly, and bring many to Himself. For it is yet day. But after that, He entirely cuts them off, and declaring this, He says,

John 9:5

As long as I am in the world, I am the Light of the world.

3. As also He said to others, Believe while the light is with you. John 12:36 Wherefore then did Paul call this life night and that other day? Not opposing Christ, but saying the same thing, if not in words yet in sense; for he also says, The night is far spent, the day is at hand. Romans 13:12 The present time he calls night, because of those who sit in darkness, or because he compares it with that day which is to come,

Christ calls the future night, because there sin has no power to work; but Paul calls the present life night, because they are in darkness who continue in wickedness and unbelief. Addressing himself then to the faithful he said, The night is far spent, the day is at hand, since they should enjoy that light; and he calls the old life night. Let us put away, he says, the works of darkness. Do you see that he tells them that it is night? Wherefore he says, Let us walk honestly as in the day, that we may enjoy that light. For if this light be so good, consider what that will be; as much as the sunlight is brighter than the flame of a candle, so much and far more is that light better than this. And signifying this, Christ says, that the sun shall be darkened. Because of the excess of that brightness, not even the sun shall be seen.

If now in order to have here well-lighted and airy houses, we expend immense sums, building and toiling, consider how we ought to spend our very bodies themselves, that glorious houses may be built for us in the heavens where is that Light ineffable. Here there are strifes and contentions about boundaries and walls, but there will be nothing of the kind there, no envy, no malice, no one will dispute with us about settling boundaries. This dwelling too we assuredly needs must leave, but that abides with us forever; this must decay by time, and be exposed to innumerable injuries, but that must remain without growing old perpetually; this a poor man cannot build, but that other one may build with two mites, as did the widow.

Wherefore I choke with grief, that when so many blessings are laid before us, we are slothful, and despise them; we use every exertion to have splendid houses here, but how to gain in heaven so much as a little resting-place, we care not, we think not. For tell me, where would you have your dwelling here? In the wilderness, or in one of the smaller cities? I think not; but in some of the most royal and grand cities, where the traffic is more, where the splendor is greater. But I will lead you into such a City, whose Builder and Maker is God; there I exhort you to found and build, at less cost [with less labor].

That house the hands of the poor build, and it is most truly building, just as the structures made here are the work of extreme folly. For if a man were to bring you into the land of Persia, to behold what is there and to return, and were then to bid you build houses there, would you not condemn him for excessive folly, as bidding you spend unseasonably? How then do you this very same thing upon the earth which you shall shortly leave? But I shall leave it to my children, says some one.

Yet they too shall leave it soon after you; nay, often even before you; and their successors the same. And even here it is a subject of melancholy to you that you see not your heirs retain their possessions, but there you need apprehend nothing of the sort; the possession remains immovable, to you, to your children, and to their descendants, if they imitate the same goodness. That building Christ takes in hand, he who builds that needs not to appoint care-takers, nor be thoughtful, nor anxious; for when God has undertaken the work, what need of thought?

He brings all things together, and raises the house. Nor is this the only thing wonderful, but also that He so builds it as is pleasing to you, or rather even beyond what is pleasing, beyond what you desire, for He is the most excellent Artist, and cares greatly for your advantage. If you are poor, and desirest to build this house, it brings you no envy, produces against you no malice, for none of those who know how to envy behold it, but the Angels who know how to rejoice at your blessings; none will be able to encroach upon it, for none dwell near it of those who are diseased with such passions.

For neighbors you have there the saints, Peter and Paul with their company, all the Prophets, the Martyrs, the multitude of Angels, of Archangels. For the sake then of all these things, let us empty our substance upon the poor, that we may obtain those tabernacles; 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, now and ever and world without end. Amen.

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