

# John 9:17-34

by St. John Chrysostom

---

*The sermon emphasizes the importance of careful study of Scripture, the need for boldness in defense of the faith, and the significance of the blind man's declaration that Jesus is a Prophet.*

**Scripture:** Psalm 34:11, Psalm 94:12, John 9:17-39

**Topics:** "Defending The Faith", "Spiritual Growth"

---

## Description

John Chrysostom preaches on the story of the blind man healed by Jesus, highlighting the man's boldness in defending Christ against the accusations of the Pharisees. The blind man's wisdom and courage in testifying to the truth, even in the face of opposition and rejection, serve as an example for believers to boldly stand up for their faith. Chrysostom emphasizes the importance of diligently studying the Scriptures and being unashamed to proclaim the truth, even when faced with ridicule and persecution. He challenges the congregation to prioritize their spiritual growth and devotion to God over worldly distractions and to be vigilant in defending their faith against those who seek to undermine it.

---

## Transcript

They say unto the blind man again, What do you say of him, that he has opened your eyes? He said, He is a Prophet. The Jews then did not believe.

1. We must go over the Scriptures not in a chance way or carelessly, but with all exactness, that we be not entangled. Since even now in this place one might with show of reason question, how, when they had asserted, This man is not of God, because he keeps not the Sabbath, they now say to the man, What do you say of him, that he has opened your eyes? and not, What do you say of him, that he has broken the Sabbath? but put now that which was the ground of the defense, not that of the accusation. What then have we to reply? That these (who speak) are not the men who said, This man is not of God, but those who separated themselves from them, who also said, A man that is a sinner cannot do such miracles. For desiring to silence their opponents the more, in order that they may not seem to be partisans of Christ, they bring forward the man who had received proof of His power, and question him. Observe now the wisdom of the poor man, he speaks more wisely than them all. First he says, He is a Prophet; and shrank not from the judgment of the perverse Jews who spoke against Him and said, How can this man be of God, not keeping the Sabbath? but replied to them, He is a Prophet.

And they did not believe that he had been blind, and received his sight, until they had called his parents.

Observe in how many ways they attempt to obscure and take away the miracle. But this is the nature of truth, by the very means by which it seems to be assailed by men, by these it becomes stronger, it shines by means of that by which it is obscured. For if these things had not taken place, the miracle might have been suspected by the many; but now, as if desiring to lay bare the truth, so do they use all means, and would not have acted otherwise, supposing they had done all in Christ's behalf.

For they first attempted to cast Him down by occasion of this mode (of cure), saying, How opened he your eyes? that is, was it by some sorcery? In another place also, when they had no charge to bring against Him, they endeavored to insult the mode of the cure, saying, He does not cast out devils save by Beelzebub. Matthew 12:24 And here again, when they have nothing to say, they betake themselves to the time (of cure), saying, He breaks the Sabbath; and again, He is a sinner.

Yet He asked you, who would slay Him, and who were ready to lay hold of His actions, most plainly, saying, Which of you convinces Me of sin? John 8:46; and no man spoke, nor said Thou blaspheme because you make yourself without sin. But if they had had it in their power to say so, they would not have held their peace. For they who because they heard that He was before Abraham would have stoned Him, and said that He was not of God, who boasted that they, murderers as they were, were of God, but who said that One who did such wonders, after that He had wrought a cure, was not of God, because He kept not the Sabbath, if they had had but a shadow of a charge against Him, would never have let it pass.

And if they call Him a sinner because He seemed to break the Sabbath, this charge also is shown to be unsound, when those who are ranked with them condemn their great coldness and littleness of soul. Being therefore entangled on every side, they afterwards betake themselves to something else more shameless and impudent. What is that? They did not believe, It says, that he had been blind, and received his sight. How then did they charge Christ with not keeping the Sabbath? Plainly, as having believed.

But why gave ye not heed to the great number of people? To the neighbors who knew him? As I said, falsehood everywhere defeats itself by the very means by which it seems to annoy the truth, and makes the truth to appear more bright. Which was now the case. For that no one might say that his neighbors and those who had seen him did not speak with precision, but guessed from a likeness, they bring forward his parents, by whom they succeeded against their will in proving that what had taken place was real, since the parents best of all knew their own child.

When they could not terrify the man himself, but beheld him with all boldness proclaim his Benefactor, they thought to wound the miracle by means of his parents. Observe the malice of their questioning. For what says it? Having placed them in the midst so as to throw them into distress, they apply the questioning with great severity and anger,

John 9:19

Is this your son? (and they said not, who once was blind, but) of whom you say that he was born blind?

As if they were acting deceitfully, and plotting on behalf of Christ. O you accursed, utterly accursed! What father would choose to invent such falsehoods against his child? For they almost say, Whom you have made out blind, and not only so, but have spread abroad the report everywhere.

How then does he now see?

2. O folly! Yours, says one, is the trick and the contrivance. For by these two things do they attempt to lead the parents to a denial; by using the words, Whom ye say, and, How then does he now see? Now when there were three questions asked, whether he was their son, whether he had been blind, and how he received his sight, the parents only acknowledged two of them, but do not add the third. And this came to pass for the sake of the truth, in order that none other save the man that was healed, who was also worthy of credit, should acknowledge this matter. And how would the parents have favored (Christ), when even of what they knew some part they spoke not through fear of the Jews? What say they?

John 9:20-21

We know that this is our son, and that he was born blind; but by what means he now sees we know not, or who has opened his eyes we know not; he is of age, he shall speak for himself.

By making him to be worthy of credit, they begged off themselves; He is not a child, say they, nor incapable, but able to testify for himself.

John 9:22

These words spoke they, because they feared the Jews.

Observe how the Evangelist again brings forward their opinion and thoughts. This I say, because of that speech which they before uttered, when they said, He makes Himself equal to God. John 5:18 For had that also been the opinion of the Jews but not the judgment of Christ, he would have added and said, that it was a Jewish opinion. When therefore the parents referred them to him that had been healed, they called him again the second time, and did not say openly and shamelessly, Deny that Christ healed you, but would fain effect this under a pretense of piety.

John 9:24

Give the glory to God.

For to have said to the parents, Deny that he is your son, and that he was born blind, would have seemed very ridiculous. And again, to have said this to himself would have been manifest shamelessness. Wherefore they say not so, but manage the matter in another way, saying, Give God the glory, that is, confess that this man has wrought nothing.

We know that this man is a sinner.

Why then did ye not convict Him when He said, 'Which of you convinces Me of sin?' John 8:46 Whence know ye that He is a sinner? After that they had said, Give God the glory, and the man had made no reply, Christ meeting praised him, and did not rebuke him, nor say, Wherefore have you not given glory to God? But what said He? Do you believe in the Son of God? John 9:35, that you may learn that this is to give glory to God. Now had He not been equal in honor to the Father, this would not have been giving glory; but since he that honors the Son honors the Father also, the blind is with good reason not rebuked. Now while they expected that the parents would contradict and deny the miracle, the Pharisees said nothing to the man himself, but when they saw that they profited nothing by this, they again return to him, saying, This man is a sinner.

John 9:25

He answered and said, Whether he be a sinner or no, I know not; one thing I know, that, whereas I was blind, now I see.

Surely the blind man was not terrified? That be far from him. How then does he who said, He is a Prophet John 9:17, now say, Whether he be a sinner, I know not? He said so, not as being in such a state of mind, nor as having persuaded himself of this thing, but desiring to clear Him from their charges by the testimony of the fact, not by his own declaration, and to make the defense credible, when the testimony of the good deed done should decide the matter against them. Since if after many words when the blind man said, Except this were a righteous man he could not do such miracles John 9:33, they were so enraged as to reply, You were altogether born in sin, and do you teach us? what would they not have said, if he had spoken so from the beginning; what would they not have done? Whether he be a sinner or not, I know not; as though he had said, I say nothing in this man's favor, I make no declaration at present, yet this I certainly know and would affirm, that if he were a sinner he could not have done such things. Thus he kept himself free from suspicion, and his testimony uncorrupted, as not speaking from partiality, but as bearing witness according to the fact. When therefore they could neither upset nor remove what had been done, they again return to their former plan, making trifling enquiries about the manner of the cure, like men who search on every side about a prey which is before them, and cannot be hurt, hastening round now in one direction, now in another; and they recur to the man's former assertions, in order now to make them unsound by continual questions, and say,

John 9:26

What did he do to you? How opened he your eyes?

What was his reply? Having conquered and cast them down, he no longer speaks to them submissly. As long as the matter needed enquiry and arguments he spoke guardedly, while he supplied the proof; but when he had conquered and gained a splendid victory, he then takes courage, and tramples upon them. What says he?

John 9:27

I have told you once, and you did not hear; wherefore would ye hear it again?

Do you see the bold-speaking of a beggar towards Scribes and Pharisees? So strong is truth, so weak is falsehood. Truth, though she take hold but of ordinary men, makes them to appear glorious; the other, even though it be with the strong, shows them weak. What he says is of this kind: You give no heed to my words, therefore I will no longer speak or answer you continually, who question me to no purpose, and who do not desire to hear in order to learn, but that you may insult over my words.

Will ye also be His disciples?

3. Now he has ranked himself among the band of disciples, for the will you also? is the expression of one who is declaring himself to be a disciple. Then he mocked and annoyed them abundantly. For since he knew that this struck them hard, he said it, wishing to upbraid them with exceeding severity; the act of a soul courageous, soaring on high and despising their madness, pointing out the greatness of this dignity, in which he was very confident, and showing that they insulted him who was a man worthy to be admired, but that he took not the insult to himself, but grasped as an honor what they offered as a reproach.

John 9:28

You are his disciple, but we are Moses' disciples.

But this cannot be. You are neither Moses' nor this Man's; for were ye Moses', you would become this Man's also. Wherefore Christ before said to them, because they were continually betaking themselves to these speeches, Had ye believed Moses, you would have believed Me, for he wrote of Me. John 5:46

John 9:29

We know that God spoke unto Moses.

By whose word, whose report? That of our forefathers, says one. Is not He then more to be believed than your forefathers, who confirms by miracles that He came from God, and that He speaks things from above? They said not, We have heard that God spoke to Moses, but, We know. Do ye affirm, O Jews, what you have by hearing, as knowing it, but deem what you have by sight as less certain than what you have by hearing? Yet the one ye saw not, but heard, the other ye did not hear, but saw. What then says the blind man?

John 9:30

Why herein is a marvelous thing, that you know not whence He is, and He does such miracles.

That a Man, who is not one of the distinguished or noble or illustrious among you, can do such things; so that it is in every way clear that He is God, needing no human aid.

John 9:31

We know that God hears not sinners.

Since they had been the first to say, How can a man that is a sinner do such miracles? John 9:16, he now brings forward even their judgment, reminding them of their own words. This opinion, says he, is common to me and you. Stand fast now to it. And observe, I pray you, his wisdom. He turns about the miracle in every way, because they could not do away with it, and from it he draws his inferences. Do you see that at first he said Whether he be a sinner or not, I know not? Not doubting (God forbid!) but knowing that He was not a sinner. At least now, when he had an opportunity, see how he defended Him. We know that God hears not sinners:

But if any man be a worshiper of God, and does His will.

Here he not only has cleared Him from sin, but declares that He is very pleasing to God, and does all His will. For since they called themselves worshipers of God, he added, and does His will; since, says he, it is not sufficient to know God: men must also do His will. Then he magnifies what had been done, saying,

John 9:32

Since the world began was it not heard that any man opened the eyes of one that was born blind.

If now ye acknowledge that God hears not sinners, and this Person has wrought a miracle, and such a miracle as no man ever wrought, it is clear that He has surpassed all things in virtue, and that His power is greater than belongs to man. What then say they?

John 9:34

You were altogether born in sins, and do you teach us?

As long as they expected that he would deny Christ, they deemed him trustworthy, calling upon him once and a second time. If you deemed him not trustworthy, why did ye call and question him a second time? But when he spoke the truth, unabashed, then, when they ought most to have admired, they condemned him. But what is the, You were altogether born in sins? They here unsparingly reproach him with his very blindness, as though they had said, You are in sins from your earliest age; insinuating that on this account he was born blind; which was contrary to reason. On this point at least Christ comforting him said, For judgment I have come into the world, that they which see not might see, and that they which see might be made blind. John 9:39

You were altogether born in sins, and do you teach us? Why, what had the man said? Did he set forth his private opinion? Did he not set forth a common judgment, saying, We know that God hears not sinners? Did he not produce your own words?

And they cast him out.

Have you beheld the herald of the truth, how poverty was no hindrance to his true wisdom? Do you see what reproaches, what sufferings he bare from the beginning, and how by word and by deed he testified?

4. Now these things are recorded, that we too may imitate them. For if the blind man, the beggar, who had not even seen Him, straightway showed such boldness even before he was encouraged by Christ, standing opposed to a whole people, murderous, possessed, and raving, who desired by means of his voice to condemn Christ, if he neither yielded nor gave back, but most boldly stopped their mouths, and chose rather to be cast out than to betray the truth; how much more ought we, who have lived so long in the faith, who have seen ten thousand marvels wrought by faith, who have received greater benefits than he, have recovered the sight of the eyes within, have beheld the ineffable Mysteries, and have been called to such honor, how ought we, I say, to exhibit all boldness of speech towards those who attempt to accuse, and who say anything against the Christians, and to stop their mouths, and not to acquiesce without an effort.

And we shall be able to do this, if we are bold, and give heed to the Scriptures, and hear them not carelessly. For if one should come in here regularly, even though he read not at home, if he attends to what is said here, one year even is sufficient to make him well versed in them; because we do not today read one kind of Scriptures, and tomorrow another, but always and continually the same. Still such is the wretched disposition of the many, that after so much reading, they do not even know the names of the Books, and are not ashamed nor tremble at entering so carelessly into a place where they may hear God's word.

Yet if a harper, or dancer, or stage-player call the city, they all run eagerly, and feel obliged to him for the call, and spend the half of an entire day in attending to him alone; but when God speaks to us by Prophets and Apostles, we yawn, we scratch ourselves, we are drowsy. And in summer, the heat seems too great, and we betake ourselves to the market place; and again, in winter, the rain and mire are a hindrance, and we sit at home; yet at horse races, though there is no roof over them to keep off the wet, the greater number, while heavy rains are falling, and the wind is dashing the water into their faces, stand like madmen, caring not for cold, and wet, and mud, and length of way, and nothing either keeps them at home, or prevents their going there.

But here, where there are roofs over head, and where the warmth is admirable, they hold back instead of running together; and this too, when the gain is that of their own souls. How is this tolerable, tell me? Thus it happens, that while we are more skilled than any in those matters, in things necessary we are more ignorant than children. If a man call you a charioteer, or a dancer, you say that you have been insulted, and use every means to wipe off the affront; but if he draw you to be a spectator of the action, you do not start away, and the art whose name you shun, you almost in every case pursue.

But where you ought to have both the action and the name, both to be and to be called a Christian, you do not even know what kind of thing the action is. What can be worse than this folly? These things I have desired continually to say to you, but I fear lest I gain hatred in vain and unprofitably. For I perceive that not only the young are mad, but the old also; about whom I am especially ashamed, when I see a man venerable from his white hairs, disgracing those white hairs, and drawing a child after him. What is worse than this mockery? What more shameful than this conduct? The child is taught by the father to act unseemly.

5. Do the words sting? This is what I desire, that you should suffer the pain caused by the words, in order to be delivered from the disgrace caused by the actions. For there are some too far colder than these, who are not even ashamed at the things spoken of, nay, who even put together a long argument in defense of the action. If you ask them who was Amos or Obadiah, or what is the number of the Prophets or Apostles, they cannot even open their mouth but for horses and charioteers, they compose excuses more cleverly than sophists or rhetoricians, and after all this, they say, What is the harm? What is the loss? This is what I groan for, that you do not so much as know that the action is a loss, nor have a sense of its evils. God has given to you an appointed space of life for serving Him, and do you while you spend it vainly, and at random, and on nothing useful, still ask, What loss is there? If you have spent a little money to no purpose, you call it a loss: when you spend whole days of yours upon the devil's pageants, do you think that you are doing nothing wrong? You ought to spend all your life in supplications and prayers, whereas you waste your life and substance heedlessly, and to your own hurt, on shouts, and uproar, and shameful words, and fighting, and unseasonable pleasure, and actions performed by trickery, and after all this you ask, What is the loss? not knowing you should be lavish of anything rather than time. Gold, if you shall have spent, you may get again; but if you lose time, you shall hardly recover that. Little is dealt out to us in this present life; if therefore we employ it not as we ought, what shall we say when we depart there? For tell me, if you had commanded one of your sons to learn some art, and then he had continually stayed at home, or even passed his time somewhere else, would not the teacher reject him? Would he not say to you, You have made an agreement with me, and appointed a time; if now your son will not spend this time with me but in other places, how shall I produce him to you as a scholar? Thus also we must speak. For God will say also to us, I gave you time to learn this art of piety, wherefore have ye foolishly and uselessly wasted that time? Why did ye neither go constantly to the teacher, nor give heed to his words? For to show that piety is an art, hear what the Prophet says, Come, you children, hearken unto me; I will teach you the fear of the Lord. Psalm 34:11 And again, Blessed is the man whom You instruct, Lord, and teachest him out of Your Law. Psalm 94:12 When therefore you have spent this time in vain, what excuse will you have? And why, says some one, did He deal out to us but little time? O senselessness and ingratitude! That for which thou were most bounden to give thanks to Him, for that He has cut short your labors and abridged your toils, and made the rest long and everlasting, for this do you find fault, and art discontented?

But I know not how we have brought our discourse to this point, and have made it so long; we must therefore shorten it now. For this too is a part of our wretchedness, that here if the discourse be long, we

all become careless, while there they begin at noon, and retire by torch and lamp light. However, that we be not always chiding, we now entreat and beseech you, grant this favor to us and to yourselves; and getting free from all other matters, to these let us rivet ourselves. So shall we gain from you joy and gladness, and honor on your account, and a recompense for these labors; while you will reap all the reward, because having been aforetime so madly riveted to the stage, you tore yourselves away, through fear of God, and by our exhortations, from that malady, and broke your bonds, and hastened unto God. Nor is it there alone that you shall receive your reward, but here also you shall enjoy pure pleasure. Such a thing is virtue; besides giving us crowns in heaven, even here it makes life pleasant to us. Let us then be persuaded by what has been said, that we may obtain the blessings both here and hereafter, 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-917-34/>

# *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](http://www.sermonindex.net)**