

John 9:34-10:12

by St. John Chrysostom

Jesus teaches that He is the good shepherd who lays down His life for the sheep, and that those who follow Him will find salvation and protection.

Scripture: Matthew 5:3, Matthew 25:34, John 9:37, John 10:1, John 10:9, John 10:11

Topics: "Suffering For Christ", "Following The Shepherd"

Description

John Chrysostom preaches about the honor and rewards of suffering for the truth and confessing Christ, using the example of the blind man cast out by the Jews but found and honored by Jesus. He emphasizes the importance of believing in the Son of God and the blessings of truth, such as finding confidence in the next life and receiving honor for enduring insults. Chrysostom delves into the parable of the good Shepherd, highlighting the contrast between the true Shepherd, Jesus, who lays down His life for the sheep, and the hireling who flees when danger comes. He urges the listeners to remain obedient to the Shepherd's voice, avoid the tyranny of material wealth, and embrace a life of service and charity to experience the abundant life offered by Christ.

Transcript

And they cast him out. And Jesus heard that they had cast him out; and when He had found him, He said to him, Do you believe in the Son of God? He answered and said, Who is He, Lord, that I might believe in Him? And the rest.

1. They who for the sake of the truth and the confession of Christ suffer anything terrible and are insulted, these are especially honored. For as he who loses his possessions for His sake, the same it is who most finds them; as he who hates his own life, the same it is who most loves it; so too he who is insulted, is the same who is most honored. As fell out in the case of the blind man. The Jews cast him out from the Temple, and the Lord of the Temple found him; he was separated from that pestilent company, and met with the Fountain of salvation; he was dishonored by those who dishonored Christ, and was honored by the Lord of Angels. Such are the prizes of truth. And so we, if we leave our possessions in this world, find confidence in the next; if here we give to the afflicted, we shall have rest in heaven; if we be insulted for the sake of God, we are honored both here and there.

When they had cast him out from the Temple, Jesus found him. The Evangelist shows, that He came for the purpose of meeting him. And observe how He recompenses him, by that which is the chiefest of blessings. For He made Himself known to him who before knew Him not, and enrolled him into the

company of His own disciples. Observe also how the Evangelist describes the exact circumstances; for when Christ had said, Do you believe in the Son of God? the man replied, Lord, who is He? For as yet he knew Him not, although he had been healed; because he was blind before he came to his Benefactor, and after the cure, he was being worried by those dogs. Therefore, like some judge at the games, He receives the champion who had toiled much and gained the crown. And what says He? Do you believe in the Son of God? What is this, after so much arguing against the Jews, after so many words, He asks him, Do you believe? He spoke it not from ignorance, but desiring to make Himself known, and showing that He gently valued the man's faith. This great multitude, He says, has insulted Me, but of them I make no account; for one thing I care, that you should believe. For better is one who does the will of God, than ten thousand transgressors. Do you believe in the Son of God? As having both been present, and as approving what had been said by him, He asks this question; and first, He brought him to a state of longing for Himself. For He said not directly, Believe, but in the way of an enquiry. What then said the man? Lord, who is He, that I might believe in Him? The expression is that of a longing and enquiring soul. He knows not Him in whose defense he had spoken so much, that you may learn his love of truth. For he had not yet seen Him.

John 9:37

Jesus says unto him, You have both seen Him, and it is He that talks with you.

He said not I am He, but as yet in an intermediate and reserved manner, You have both seen Him. This was still uncertain; therefore He adds more clearly, It is He that talks with you.

John 9:38

He says, Lord, I believe; and he worshipped Him (straightway).

He said not, I am He that healed you, that bade you, Go, wash in Siloam; but keeping silence on all these points, He says, Do you believe in the Son of God? and then the man, showing his great earnestness, straightway worshipped; which few of those who were healed had done; as, for instance, the lepers, and some others; by this act declaring His divine power. For that no one might think that what had been said by him was a mere expression, he added also the deed. When he had worshipped, Christ said,

John 9:39

For judgment I have come into the world, that they which see not might see, and that they which see might be made blind.

So also says Paul; What shall we say then? That the Gentiles which followed not after righteousness have attained to righteousness, even the righteousness which is of the faith of Jesus; but Israel, which followed after the law of righteousness, has not attained to the law of righteousness. Romans 9:30-31 By saying, For judgment I have come into this world, He both made the man stronger respecting the faith, and aroused those who followed Him; for the Pharisees were following Him. And the, For judgment, He spoke with reference to a greater punishment; showing that they who had given sentence against Him, had received sentence against themselves; that they who had condemned Him as a sinner, were themselves the persons condemned. In this passage He speaks of two recoveries of sight, and two blindnesses; one sensible, the other spiritual.

John 9:40

Some of them that followed Him, say unto Him, Are we also blind?

As in another place they said, We were never servants to any man; and, We be not born of fornication c. viii. 33, 41; so now they gape on material things alone, and are ashamed of this kind of blindness. Then to show that it was better for them to be blind than seeing, He says,

John 9:41

If you were blind, you should have no sin.

Since they deemed the calamity a matter to be ashamed of, He turns this back upon their own head, telling them, that this very thing would have rendered your punishment more tolerable; cutting away on every side their human thoughts, and leading them to a notion high and marvelous.

But now ye say, We see.

As He says in that other place, Of whom you said that He was your God John 8:54; so too here, Now ye say that you see, but you see not. He shows that what they deemed a great matter for praise, brought punishment upon them. He also comforted him who was blind from his birth, concerning his former maimed state, and then speaks concerning their blindness. For He directs His whole speech to this end, that they may not say, We did not refuse to come to you owing to our blindness, but we turn away and avoid you as a deceiver.

2. And not without a cause has the Evangelist mentioned, that they of the Pharisees who were with Him heard these things, and said, Are we blind also? but to remind you that these were the men who first withdrew from and then stoned Him, for they were persons who followed Him superficially, and who easily changed to the contrary opinion. How then does He prove that He is not a deceiver, but a Shepherd? By laying down the distinguishing marks both of the shepherd, and of him who is a deceiver and a spoiler, and from these affording them opportunity of searching into the truth of the matter. And first He shows who is a deceiver and a spoiler, calling him so from the Scriptures, and saying,

John 10:1

Verily, verily, I say unto you, he that enters not by the door into the sheepfold, but climbs up some other way, the same is a thief and a robber.

Observe the marks of a robber; first, that he does not enter openly; secondly, not according to the Scriptures, for this is the, not by the door. Here also He refers to those who had been before, and to those who should be after Him, Antichrist and the false Christs, Judas and Theudas, and whatever others there have been of the same kind. And with good cause He calls the Scriptures a door, for they bring us to God, and open to us the knowledge of God, they make the sheep, they guard them, and suffer not the wolves to come in after them. For Scripture, like some sure door, bars the passage against the heretics, placing us in a state of safety as to all that we desire, and not allowing us to wander; and if we undo it not, we shall not easily be conquered by our foes. By it we can know all, both those who are, and those who are not, shepherds. But what is into the fold? It refers to the sheep, and the care of them. For he that uses not the Scriptures, but climbs up some other way, that is, who cuts out for himself another and an unusual way, the same is a thief. Do you see from this too that Christ agrees with the Father, in that He brings forward the Scriptures? On which account also He said to the Jews, Search the Scriptures John 5:39; and brought forward Moses, and called him and all the Prophets witnesses, for all, says He, who hear the Prophets

shall come to Me; and, Had ye believed Moses, you would have believed Me. But here He has put the same thing metaphorically. And by saying, climbs up some other way, He alluded to the Scribes, because they taught for commandments the doctrines of men, and transgressed the Law Matthew 15:9; with which He reproached them, and said, None of you does the Law. John 7:19 Well did He say, climbs up, not enters in, since to climb is the act of a thief intending to overleap a wall, and who does all with danger. Have you seen how He has sketched the robber? Now observe the character of the shepherd. What then is it?

John 10:2-4

He that enters in by the door, the same is the shepherd of the sheep; to him the doorkeeper opens, and the sheep hear his voice, and he calls his own by name. And when he has brought them out, he goes before them.

3. He has set down the marks of the shepherd, and of the evil doer; let us now see how He has fitted to them what follows. To him, He says, the doorkeeper opens; He continues in the metaphor to make the discourse more emphatic. But if you should be minded to examine the parable word by word, there is nothing to hinder you from supposing Moses to be the doorkeeper, for to him were entrusted the oracles of God. Whose voice the sheep hear, and he calls his own by name. Because they everywhere said that He was a deceiver, and confirmed this by their own unbelief, saying, Which of the rulers has believed on him? John 7:48 He shows that they ought not on account of the unbelief of those persons to call Him a spoiler and deceiver, but that they, because they gave no heed to Him were consequently even excluded from the rank of sheep. For if a shepherd's part is to enter through the usual door, and if He entered through this, all they who followed Him might be sheep, but they who rent themselves away, hurt not the reputation of the Shepherd, but cast themselves out from the kindred of the sheep. And if farther on He says that He is the door, we must not again be disturbed, for He also calls Himself Shepherd, and Sheep, and in different ways proclaims His dispensations. Thus, when He brings us to the Father, He calls Himself a Door, when He takes care of us, a Shepherd; and it is that you may not suppose, that to bring us to the Father is His only office, that He calls Himself a Shepherd. And the sheep hear his voice, and he calls his own sheep, and leads them out, and goes before them. Shepherds indeed do the contrary, for they follow after them; but He to show that He will lead all men to the truth, does differently; as also when He sent the sheep, He sent them, not out of the way of wolves, but in the midst of wolves. Matthew 10:16 For far more wonderful is this manner of keeping sheep than ours. He seems to me also to allude to the blind man, for him too, having called, He led out from the midst of the Jews, and the man heard His voice, and knew it.

John 10:5

And a stranger will they not follow, for they know not the voice of strangers.

Certainly here He speaks of Theudas and Judas, (for all, as many as believed on them, were scattered [Acts v. 36], It says,) or of the false Christs who after that time should deceive. For lest any should say that He was one of these, He in many ways separates Himself from them. And the first difference He sets down is His teaching from the Scriptures; for He by means of these led men to Him, but the others did not from these draw men after them. The second is, the obedience of the sheep; for on Him they all believed, not only while He lived, but when He had died; the others they straightway left. With these we may mention a third difference, no trifling one. They did all as rebels, and to cause revolts, but He placed Himself so far from such suspicion, that when they would have made Him a king, He fled; and when they

asked, Is it lawful to give tribute unto CÆsar? He bade them pay it, and Himself gave the two drachm piece. Matthew 17:27 Besides this, He indeed came for the saving of the sheep, That they might have life, and that they might have more abundantly John 10:10, but the others deprived them even of this present life. They betrayed those who were entrusted to them and fled, but He withstood so nobly as even to give up His life. They unwillingly, and by compulsion, and desiring to escape, suffered what they suffered, but He willingly and by choice endured all.

John 10:6

This parable spoke Jesus unto them, but they understood not what things they were which He spoke unto them.

And wherefore spoke He obscurely? Because He would make them more attentive; when He had effected this, He removes the obscurity, saying,

John 10:9

I am the door, by Me if any man enter in, he shall go in and out, and find pasture.

As though He had said, shall be in safety and security, (but by pasture, He here means His nurturing and feeding the sheep, and His power and Lordship,) that is, shall remain within, and none shall thrust him out. Which took place in the case of the Apostles, who came in and went out securely, as having become lords of all the world, and none was able to cast them out.

John 10:8

All that ever came before Me are thieves and robbers, but the sheep did not hear them.

He does not here speak of the Prophets, (as the heretics assert,) for as many as believed on Christ did hear them also, and were persuaded by them; but of Theudas and Judas, and the other excitors of sedition. Besides, He says, the sheep did not hear them, as praising them; now nowhere is He seen to praise those who refused to hearken to the Prophets, but, on the contrary, to reproach and accuse them vehemently; whence it is evident that the, did not hear, refers to those leaders of sedition.

John 10:10

The thief comes not but for to steal, and to kill, and to destroy.

Which then took place when all (their followers) were slain and perished.

But I have come that they might have life, and that they might have more.

And what is more than life, tell me? The kingdom of heaven. But He does not as yet say this, but dwells on the name of life, which was known to them.

John 10:11

I am the good Shepherd.

Here He next speaks concerning the Passion, showing that this should be for the salvation of the world, and that He came to it not unwillingly. Then again He mentions the character of the shepherd and the

hireling.

For the shepherd lays down his life.

John 10:12

But he that is an hireling and not a shepherd, whose own the sheep are not, sees the wolf coming, and leaves the sheep and flees, and the wolf comes and catches them.

Here He declares Himself to be Master even as the Father, if so be that He is the Shepherd, and the sheep are His. Do you see how He speaks in a more lofty tone in His parables, where the sense is concealed; and gives no open handle to the listeners? What then does this hireling? He sees the wolf coming, and leaves the sheep, and the wolf comes, and scatters them. This those false teachers did, but He the contrary. For when He was taken, He said, Let these go their way, that the saying might be fulfilled c. xviii. 8, 9, that not one of them was lost. Here also we may suspect a spiritual wolf to be intended; for neither did Christ allow him to go and seize the sheep. But he is not a wolf only, but a lion also. Because our adversary the devil, It says, walks about as a roaring lion. 1 Peter 5:8 He is also a serpent, and a dragon; for, Tread ye on serpents and scorpions. Luke 10:19

4. Wherefore, I beseech you, let us remain pasturing beneath this Shepherd; and we shall remain, if we obey Him, if we hear His voice, if we follow not a stranger. And what is His voice? Blessed are the poor in spirit, blessed are the pure in heart, blessed are the merciful. Matthew 5:3-8 If thus we do, we shall remain beneath the Shepherd, and the wolf will not be able to come in; or if he come against us, he will do so to his own hurt. For we have a Shepherd who so loves us, that He gave even His life for us.

When therefore He is both powerful and loves us, what is there to hinder us from being saved? Nothing, unless we ourselves revolt from Him. And how can we revolt? Hear Him saying, You cannot serve two masters, God and mammon. Matthew 6:24 If then we serve God, we shall not submit to the tyranny of mammon. And truly a bitterer thing than any tyranny is the desire of riches; for it brings no pleasure, but cares, and envyings, and plottings, and hatred, and false accusations, and ten thousand impediments to virtue, indolence, wantonness, greediness, drunkenness, which make even freemen slaves, nay, worse than slaves bought with money, slaves not to men, but even to the most grievous of the passions, and maladies of the soul.

Such a one dares many things displeasing to God and men, dreading lest any should remove from him this dominion. O bitter slavery, and devilish tyranny! For this is the most grievous thing of all, that when entangled in such evils we are pleased and hug our chain, and dwelling in a prison house full of darkness, refuse to come forth to the light, but rivet evil upon ourselves, and rejoice in our malady. So that we cannot be freed, but are in a worse state than those that work the mines, enduring labors and affliction, but not enjoying the fruit.

And what is in truth worse than all, if any one desire to free us from this bitter captivity, we do not suffer it, but are even vexed and displeased, being in this respect in no better case than madmen, or rather in a much more miserable state than any such, inasmuch as we are not even willing to be delivered from our madness. What? Was it for this, O man, that you were brought into the world? Was it for this that you were made a man, that you might work in these mines, and gather gold?

Not for this did God create you in His Image, but that you might please Him, that you might obtain the things to come, that you might join the choir of Angels. Why now do you banish yourself from such a relationship, and thrust yourself into the extreme of dishonor and meanness? He who came by the same birth pangs with you, (the spiritual birth pangs I mean,) is perishing with hunger, and you are bursting with fullness: your brother goes about with naked body, but you provide garments even for your garments, heaping up all this clothing for the worms.

How much better would it have been to put them on the bodies of the poor; so would they have remained undestroyed, would have freed you from all care, and have won for you the life to come. If you will not have them to be moth-eaten, give them to the poor, these are they who know how to shake these garments well. The Body of Christ is more precious and more secure than the coffer, for not only does It keep the garments safe, not only does It preserve them unconsumed, but even renders them brighter.

Oftentimes the coffer taken with the garments causes you the utmost loss, but this place of safety not even death can harm. With It we need neither doors nor bolts, nor wakeful servants, nor any other such security, for our possessions are free from all treacherous attacks, and are laid up under guard, as we may suppose things laid up in heaven would be; for to all wickedness that place is inaccessible. These things we cease not continually to say to you, and you hearing are not persuaded.

The reason is, that we are of a soul which is mean, gaping upon the earth, groveling on the ground. Or rather, God forbid that I should condemn you all of wickedness, as though all were incurably diseased. For even if those who are drunk with riches stop their ears against my words, yet they who live in poverty will be able to look clearly to what I say. But what, says some one, has this to do with the poor? For they have no gold, or any such garments. No, but they have bread and cold water, but they have two obols, and feet to visit the sick, but they have a tongue and speech to comfort the bedridden, but they have house and shelter to make the stranger their inmate.

We demand not from the poor such and such a number of talents of gold, these we ask from the rich. But if a man be poor, and come to the doors of others, our Lord is not ashamed to receive even an obol, but will say that He has received more from the giver, than from those who cast in much. How many of those who now stand here would desire to have been born at that time, when Christ went about the earth in the flesh, to have conversed and sat at meat with Him? Lo, this may be done now, we may invite Him more than then to a meal, and feast with Him, and that to greater profit.

For of those who then feasted with Him many even perished, as Judas and others like him; but every one of those who invite Him to their houses now, and share with Him table and roof, shall enjoy a great blessing. Come, it says, ye blessed of My Father, inherit the Kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world. For I was an hungered, and you gave Me meat: I was thirsty, and you gave Me drink: I was a stranger, and you took Me in; sick, and you visited Me; I was in prison, and you came unto Me.

Matthew 25:34-36 That then we may hear these words, let us clothe the naked, let us bring in the stranger, feed the hungry, give the thirsty drink, let us visit the sick, and look upon him that is in prison, that we may have boldness and obtain remission of our sins, and share those good things which transcend both speech and thought. Which may we all obtain, through the grace and lovingkindness of our Lord Jesus Christ, to whom be the glory and the might forever. Amen.

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