

John 9:6-16

by St. John Chrysostom

Jesus heals a blind man by spitting on the ground and making clay, teaching us about the power of faith and the importance of separation from wicked men.

Topics: "Faith And Obedience", "Separation From Sin"

Description

John Chrysostom preaches on the miraculous healing of the blind man by Jesus, emphasizing the importance of obedience and faith in following God's commands without questioning. The blind man's unwavering obedience and truthfulness in recounting his healing demonstrate a powerful example of faith. Chrysostom delves into the division among the people and rulers regarding Jesus, highlighting the significance of separating from wicked companions to preserve one's faith and integrity. He urges the congregation to avoid the company of evil individuals to prevent corruption and maintain a righteous life that glorifies God.

Transcript

When Jesus had thus spoken, He spat on the ground, and made clay of the spittle, and He anointed the eyes of the blind man with the clay, and said, Go, wash in the pool of Siloam.

1. Those who intend to gain any advantage from what they read, must not pass by even any small portion of the words; and on this account we are bidden to search the Scriptures, because most of the words, although at first sight easy, appear to have in their depth much hidden meaning. For observe of what sort is the present case. Having said these words, It says, He spat on the ground. What words? That the glory of God should be made manifest, and that, I must work the works of Him that sent Me. For not without a cause has the Evangelist mentioned to us His words, and added that, He spat, but to show that He confirmed His words by deeds. And why used He not water instead of spittle for the clay? He was about to send the man to Siloam: in order therefore that nothing might be ascribed to the fountain, but that you might learn that the power proceeding from His mouth, the same both formed and opened the man's eyes, He spat on the ground; this at least the Evangelist signified, when he said, And made clay of the spittle. Then, that the successful issue might not seem to be of the earth, He bade him wash. But wherefore did He not this at once, instead of sending him to Siloam? That you may learn the faith of the blind man, and that the obstinacy of the Jews might be silenced: for it was probable that they would all see him as he departed, having the clay spread upon his eyes, since by the strangeness of the thing he would attract to himself all, both those who did and those who did not know him, and they would observe him exactly. And

because it is not easy to recognize a blind man who has recovered sight, He first makes by the length of way many to be witnesses, and by the strangeness of the spectacle exact observers, that being more attentive they may no longer be able to say, It is he: it is not he. Moreover, by sending him to Siloam, He desires to prove that He is not estranged from the Law and the Old (Covenant), nor could it afterwards be feared that Siloam would receive the glory, since many who had often washed their eyes there gained no such benefit; for there also it was the power of Christ that wrought all. On which account the Evangelist adds for us the interpretation of the name; for having said, in Siloam, he adds,

Which is, Sent.

That you may learn that there also it was Christ who healed him. As Paul says, They drank of that spiritual Rock that followed them, and that Rock was Christ. 1 Corinthians 10:4 As then Christ was the spiritual Rock, so also was He the spiritual Siloam. To me also the sudden coming in of the water seems to hint an ineffable mystery. What is that? The unlooked for (nature) of His appearance, beyond all expectation.

But observe the mind of the blind man, obedient in everything. He said not, If it is really the clay or the spittle which gives me eyes, what need of Siloam? Or if there be need of Siloam, what need of the clay? Why did he anoint me? Why bid me wash? But he entertained no such thoughts, he held himself prepared for one thing only, to obey in all things Him who gave the command, and nothing that was done offended him. If any one ask, How then did he recover his sight, when he had removed the clay? he will hear no other answer from us than that we know not the manner. And what wonder if we know it not, since not even the Evangelist knew, nor the very man that was healed? What had been done he knew, but the manner of doing it he could not comprehend. So when he was asked he said, that He put clay upon my eyes, and I washed, and do see; but how this took place he cannot tell them, though they ask ten thousand times.

John 9:8-9

The neighbors therefore, and they which had seen him, that he was a beggar, said, Is not this he that sat and begged? Some said, This is he.

The strangeness of what had been brought to pass led them even to unbelief, though so much had been contrived that they might not disbelieve. They said, Is not this he that sat and begged? O the lovingkindness of God! Whither did He descend, when with great kindness He healed even beggars, and so silenced the Jews, because He deemed not the illustrious, nor the distinguished, nor the rulers, but men of no mark to be fit objects of the same Providence. For He came for the salvation of all.

And what happened in the case of the paralytic, happened also with this man, for neither did the one or the other know who it was that healed him. And this was caused by the retirement of Christ, for Jesus when He healed always retired, that all suspicion might be removed from the miracles. Since how could they who knew not who He was flatter Him, or join in contriving what had been done? Neither was this man one of those who went about, but of those who sat at the doors of the Temple. Now when all were doubting concerning him, what says he?

I am he.

He was not ashamed of his former blindness, nor did he fear the wrath of the people, nor did he decline showing himself that he might proclaim his Benefactor.

John 9:10-11

They said to him, How were your eyes opened? He answered and said, A man that is called Jesus.

What do you say? Does a man work such deeds? As yet he knew nothing great concerning Him.

A man that is called Jesus made clay, and anointed my eyes.

2. Observe how truthful he is. He says not whence He made it, for he speaks not of what he does not know; he saw not that He spat on the ground, but that He spread it on he knew from sense and touch.

And said to me, Go, wash in the pool of Siloam.

This too his hearing witnessed to him. But how did he recognize His voice? From His conversation with the disciples. And saying all this, and having received the witness by the works, the manner (of the cure) he cannot tell. Now if faith is needed in matters which are felt and handled, much more in the case of things invisible.

John 9:12

They said to him, Where is he? He said, I know not.

They said, Where is he? having already murderous intentions against Him. But observe the modesty of Christ, how He continued not with those who were healed; because He neither desired to reap glory, nor to draw a multitude, nor to make a show of Himself. Observe too how truthfully the blind man makes all his answers. The Jews desired to find Christ to bring Him to the priests, but when they did not find Him, they brought the blind man to the Pharisees, as to those who would question him more severely. For which reason the Evangelist remarks, that it was the Sabbath John 9:14, in order to point out their wicked thoughts, and the cause for which they sought Him, as though forsooth they had found a handle, and could disparage the miracle by means of what appeared to be a transgression of the Law. And this is clear from their saying immediately on seeing him nothing but, How opened he your eyes? Observe also the manner of their speech; they say not, How did you receive your sight? but, How opened he your eyes? thus affording him an excuse for slandering Jesus, because of His having worked. But he speaks to them shortly, as to men who had already heard; for without mentioning His name, or that He said to me, Go, wash, he at once says,

John 9:15

He put clay upon my eyes, and I washed, and do see.

Because the slander was now become great, and the Jews had said, Behold what work Jesus does on the Sabbath day, he anoints with clay! But observe, I pray you, how the blind man is not disturbed. When being questioned he spoke in the presence of those others without danger, it was no such great thing to tell the truth, but the wonder is, that now when he is placed in a situation of greater fear, he neither denies nor contradicts what he had said before. What then did the Pharisees, or rather what did the others also? They had brought him (to the Pharisees), as being about to deny; but, on the contrary, that befell them which they desired not, and they learned more exactly. And this they everywhere have to endure, in the case of miracles; but this point we will more clearly demonstrate in what follows. What said the Pharisees?

John 9:16

Some said, (not all, but the more forward,) This man is not of God, because he keeps not the Sabbath day; others said, How can a man that is a sinner do such miracles?

Do you see that they were led up by the miracles? For hear what they say now, who before this had sent to bring Him. And if all did not so, (for being rulers through vainglory they fell into unbelief,) yet still the greater number even of the rulers believed on Him, but confessed Him not. Now the multitude was easily overlooked, as being of no great account in their synagogue, but the rulers being more conspicuous had the greater difficulty in speaking boldly, or some the love of rule restrained, others cowardice, and the fear of the many. Wherefore also He said, How can you believe who receive honor from men? John 5:44 And these who were seeking to kill Him unjustly said that they were of God, but that He who healed the blind could not be of God, because He kept not the Sabbath; to which the others objected, that a sinner could not do such miracles. Those first maliciously keeping silence about what had taken place, brought forward the seeming transgression; for they said not, He heals on the Sabbath day, but, He keeps not the Sabbath. These, on the other hand, replied weakly, for when they ought to have shown that the Sabbath was not broken, they rely only upon the miracles; and with reason, for they still thought that He was a man. If this had not been the case, they might besides have urged in His defense, that He was Lord of the Sabbath which Himself had made, but as yet they had not this opinion. Anyhow, none of them dared to say what he wished openly, or in the way of an assertion, but only in the way of doubt, some from not having boldness of speech, others through love of rule.

There was therefore a division among them. This division first began among the people, then later among the rulers also, and some said, He is a good man; others, Nay, but he deceives the people. John 7:12 Do you see that the rulers were more void of understanding than the many, since they were divided later than they? And after they were divided, they did not exhibit any noble feeling, when they saw the Pharisees pressing upon them. Since had they been entirely separated from them, they would soon have known the truth. For it is possible to do well in separating. Wherefore also Himself has said, I have come not to bring peace upon the earth but a sword. Matthew 10:34 For there is an evil concord, and there is a good disagreement. Thus they who built the tower Genesis 11:4, agreed together to their own hurt; and these same again were separated, though unwillingly, yet for their good. Thus also Corah and his company agreed together for evil, therefore they were separated for good; and Judas agreed with the Jews for evil. So division may be good, and agreement may be evil. Wherefore It says, If your eye offend you, smite it out, if your foot, cut it off. Matthew 5:29, and 18:8 Now if we must separate ourselves from an ill-joined limb, must we not much more from friends united to us for evil? So that agreement is not in all cases a good, just as division is not in all cases an evil.

3. These things I say, that we may shun wicked men, and follow the good; for if in the case of our limbs we cut off that which is rotten and incurable, fearing lest the rest of the body should catch the same disease, and if we do this not as having no care for that part, but rather as desiring to preserve the remainder, how much more must we do this in the case of those who consent with us for evil? If we can set them right without receiving injury ourselves, we ought to use every means to do so; but if they remain incorrigible and may injure us, it is necessary to cut them off and cast them away.

For so they will often be gainers rather (than losers). Wherefore also Paul exhorted, saying, And you shall put away from among yourselves that wicked person; and, that he that has done this deed may be put away from among you. 1 Corinthians 5:13 A dreadful thing, dreadful indeed, is the society of wicked men; not so quickly does the pestilence seize or the itch infect those that come in contact with such as are under the disease, as does the wickedness of evil men. For evil communications corrupt good manners. 1

Corinthians 15:33 And again the Prophet says, Come out from among them, and be ye separate.

Isaiah 52:11 Let no one then have a wicked man for his friend. For if when we have bad sons we publicly disclaim them, without regarding nature or its laws, or the constraint which it lays upon us, much more ought we to fly from our companions and acquaintances when they are wicked. Because even if we receive no injury from them, we shall anyhow not be able to escape ill report, for strangers search not into our lives, but judge us from our companions. This advice I address to young men and maidens.

Providing, It says, things honest, not only in the sight of the Lord, but also in the sight of all men. Romans 12:17 Let us then use every means that our neighbor be not offended. For a life, though it be very upright, if it offend others has lost all. But how is it possible for the life that is upright to offend? When the society of those that are not upright invests it with an evil reputation; for when, trusting in ourselves, we consort with bad men, even though we be not harmed, we offend others.

These things I say to men and women and maidens, leaving it to their conscience to see exactly how many evils are produced from this source. Neither I, perhaps, nor any of the more perfect, suspect any ill; but the simpler brother is harmed by occasion of your perfection; and you ought to be careful also for his infirmity. And even if he receive no injury, yet the Greek is harmed. Now Paul bids us be without offense, both to Jews and Greeks, and to the Church of God. 1 Corinthians 10:32 (I think no evil of the virgin, for I love virginity, and love thinks no evil 1 Corinthians 13:5; I am a great admirer of that state of life, and I cannot have so much as an unseemly thought about it.)

How shall we persuade those that are without? For we must take forethought for them also. Let us then so order what relates to ourselves, that none of the unbelievers may be able even to find a just handle of accusation against us. For as they who show forth a right life glorify God, so they who do the contrary cause Him to be blasphemed. May no such persons be among us: but may our works so shine, that our Father which is in Heaven may be glorified, and that we may enjoy the honor which is from Him. To which may we all attain, through the grace and lovingkindness of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom and with whom, to the Father and the Holy Ghost, be glory forever and ever. Amen.

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