

Titus 2:11-14

by St. John Chrysostom

The sermon emphasizes the importance of living soberly, righteously, and godly in the present world, and looking forward to the blessed hope and glorious appearing of our great God and Saviour Jesus Christ.

Scripture: John 15:22, 1 Corinthians 6:9, Titus 2:11, Titus 3:4

Topics: "Gods Grace", "Christian Living"

Description

John Chrysostom preaches about the transformative power of God's grace, emphasizing the need to deny ungodliness and worldly lusts, and to live a life of sobriety, righteousness, and godliness while eagerly awaiting the glorious return of Jesus Christ. He highlights the importance of being zealous for good works, as a response to the grace we have received through Christ's sacrifice. Chrysostom urges believers to live in a manner that reflects the kindness and love of God, being justified by His grace and looking forward to the hope of eternal life.

Transcript

For the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared unto all men, Teaching them that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world; Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ; who gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto Himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works.

Having demanded from servants so great virtue, for it is great virtue to adorn the doctrine of our God and Saviour in all things, and charged them to give no occasion of offense to their masters, even in common matters, he adds the just cause, why servants should be such: For the grace of God, that brings salvation, has appeared. Those who have God for their Teacher, may well be such as I have described, seeing their numberless sins have been forgiven to them. For you know that in addition to other considerations, this in no common degree awes and humbles the soul, that when it had innumerable sins to answer for, it received not punishment, but obtained pardon, and infinite favors. For if one, whose servant had committed many offenses, instead of scourging him with thongs, should grant him a pardon for all those, but should require an account of his future conduct, and bid him beware of falling into the same faults again, and should bestow high favors upon him, who do you think would not be overcome at hearing of such kindness? But do not think that grace stops at the pardon of former sins-- it secures us against them in future, for this also is of grace. Since if He were never to punish those who still do amiss, this would not

be so much grace, as encouragement to evil and wickedness.

For the grace of God, he says, has appeared, teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in the present world; looking for the blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ. See, how together with the rewards he places the virtue. And this is of grace, to deliver us from worldly things, and to lead us to Heaven. He speaks here of two appearings; for there are two; the first of grace, the second of retribution and justice.

That denying ungodliness, he says, and worldly lusts.

See here the foundation of all virtue. He has not said avoiding, but denying. Denying implies the greatest distance, the greatest hatred and aversion. With as much resolution and zeal as they turned from idols, with so much let them turn from vice itself, and worldly lusts. For these too are idols, that is, worldly lusts, and covetousness, and this he names idolatry. Whatever things are useful for the present life are worldly lusts, whatever things perish with the present life are worldly lusts. Let us then have nothing to do with these. Christ came, that we should deny ungodliness. Ungodliness relates to doctrines, worldly lusts to a wicked life.

And should live soberly, righteously, and godly in the present world.

Do you see, what I always affirm, that it is not sobriety only to abstain from fornication, but that we must be free from other passions. So then he who loves wealth is not sober. For as the fornicator loves women, so the other loves money, and even more inordinately, for he is not impelled by so strong a passion. And he is certainly a more powerless charioteer who cannot manage a gentle horse, than he who cannot restrain a wild and unruly one. What then? Says he, is the love of wealth weaker than the love of women? This is manifest from many reasons. In the first place, lust springs from the necessity of nature, and what arises from this necessity must be difficult to restrain, since it is implanted in our nature. Secondly, because the ancients had no regard for wealth, but for women they had great regard, in respect of their chastity. And no one blamed him who cohabited with his wife according to law, even to old age, but all blamed him who hoarded money. And many of the Heathen philosophers despised money, but none of them were indifferent to women, so that this passion is more imperious than the other. But since we are addressing the Church, let us not take our examples from the Heathens, but from the Scriptures. This then the blessed Paul places almost in the rank of a command. Having food and raiment, let us be therewith content. 1 Timothy 6:8 But concerning women he says, Defraud not one the other, except it be with consent -- and come together again. 1 Corinthians 7:5 And you see him often laying down rules for a lawful intercourse, and he permits the enjoyment of this desire, and allows of a second marriage, and bestows much consideration upon the matter, and never punishes on account of it. But he everywhere condemns him that is fond of money. Concerning wealth also Christ often commanded that we should avoid the corruption of it, but He says nothing about abstaining from a wife. For hear what He says concerning money; Whosoever forsakes not all that he has Luke 14:33; but he nowhere says, Whosoever forsakes not his wife; for he knew how imperious that passion is. And the blessed Paul says, Marriage is honorable in all, and the bed undefiled Hebrews 13:4; but he has nowhere said that the care of riches is honorable, but the reverse. Thus he says to Timothy, They that will be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts. 1 Timothy 6:9 He says not, they that will be covetous, but, they that will be rich.

And that you may learn from the common notions the true state of this matter, it must be set before you generally. If a man were once for all deprived of money, he would no longer be tormented with the desire of it, for nothing so much causes the desire of wealth, as the possession of it. But it is not so with respect to lust, but many who have been made eunuchs have not been freed from the flame that burned within them, for the desire resides in other organs, being seated inwardly in our nature. To what purpose then is this said? Because the covetous is more intemperate than the fornicator, inasmuch as the former gives way to a weaker passion. Indeed it proceeds less from passion than from baseness of mind. But lust is natural, so that if a man does not approach a woman, nature performs her part and operation. But there is nothing of this sort in the case of avarice.

That we should live godly in this present world.

And what is this hope? What the reward of our labors?

Looking for the blessed hope and the appearing.

For nothing is more blessed and more desirable than that appearing. Words are not able to represent it, the blessings thereof surpass our understanding.

Looking for the blessed hope and glorious appearing of our great God and Saviour.

Where are those who say that the Son is inferior to the Father?

Our great God and Saviour. He who saved us when we were enemies. What will He not do then when He has us approved?

The great God. When he says great with respect to God, he says it not comparatively but absolutely, after Whom no one is great, since it is relative. For if it is relative, He is great by comparison, not great by nature. But now He is incomparably great.

Ver. 14. Who gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto Himself a peculiar people.

Peculiar: that is, selected from the rest, and having nothing in common with them.

Zealous of good works.

Do you see that our part is necessary, not merely works, but zealous; we should with all alacrity, with a becoming earnestness, go forward in virtue. For when we were weighed down with evils, and incurably diseased, it was of His lovingkindness that we were delivered. But what follows after this is our part as well as His.

Ver. 15. These things speak and exhort, and rebuke with all authority.

These things speak and exhort. Do you see how he charges Timothy? Reprove, rebuke, exhort. But here, Rebuke with all authority. For the manners of this people were more stubborn, wherefore he orders them to be rebuked more roughly, and with all authority. For there are some sins, which ought to be prevented by command. We may with persuasion advise men to despise riches, to be meek, and the like. But the adulterer, the fornicator, the defrauder, ought to be brought to a better course by command. And those who are addicted to augury and divination, and the like, should be corrected with all authority. Observe

how he would have him insist on these things with independence, and with entire freedom.

Let no man despise you. But

Chap. iii. 1. Put them in mind to be subject to principalities and powers, to obey magistrates, to be ready to every good work, to speak evil of no man, to be no brawlers.

What then? Even when men do evil, may we not revile them? Nay, but to be ready to every good work, to speak evil of no man. Hear the exhortation, To speak evil of no man. Our lips should be pure from reviling. For if our reproaches are true, it is not for us to utter them, but for the Judge to enquire into the matter. For why, he says, do you judge your brother? Romans 14:10 But if they are not true, how great the fire. Hear what the thief says to his fellow-thief. For we are also in the same condemnation. Luke 23:40 We are running the same hazard. If you revile others, you will soon fall into the same sins. Therefore the blessed Paul admonishes us: Let him that stands, take heed lest he fall. 1 Corinthians 10:12

To be no brawlers, but gentle, showing all meekness unto all men.

Unto Greeks and Jews, to the wicked and the evil. For when he says, Let him that stands take heed lest he fall, he wakens their fears from the future; but here, on the contrary, he exhorts them from the consideration of the past, and the same in what follows;

Ver. 3. For we ourselves also were sometimes foolish.

Thus also he does in his Epistle to the Galatians, where he says, Even so we, when we were children, were in bondage under the elements of the world. Galatians 4:4 Therefore he says, Revile no one, for such also you were yourself.

For we ourselves also were sometimes foolish, disobedient, deceived, serving various lusts and pleasures, living in malice and envy, hateful, and hating one another.

Therefore we ought to be thus to all, to be gently disposed. For he who was formerly in such a state, and has been delivered from it, ought not to reproach others, but to pray, to be thankful to Him who has granted both to him and them deliverance from such evils. Let no one boast; for all have sinned. If then, doing well yourself, you are inclined to revile others, consider your own former life, and the uncertainty of the future, and restrain your anger. For if you have lived virtuously from your earliest youth, yet nevertheless you may have many sins; and if you have not, as you think, consider that this is not the effect of your virtue, but of the grace of God. For if He had not called your forefathers, you would have been disobedient. See here how he mentions every sort of wickedness. How many things has not God dispensed by the Prophets and all other means? Have we heard?

For we, he says, were once deceived.

Ver. 4. But after that the kindness and love of God our Saviour toward man appeared. How? Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost.

Strange! How were we drowned in wickedness, so that we could not be purified, but needed a new birth? For this is implied by Regeneration. For as when a house is in a ruinous state no one places props under it, nor makes any addition to the old building, but pulls it down to its foundations, and rebuilds it anew; so

in our case, God has not repaired us, but has made us anew. For this is the renewing of the Holy Ghost. He has made us new men. How? By His Spirit; and to show this further, he adds,

Ver. 6. Which He shed on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Saviour.

Thus we need the Spirit abundantly.

That being justified by His grace-- again by grace and not by debt -- we may be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life.

At the same time there is an incitement to humility, and a hope for the future. For if when we were so abandoned, as to require to be born again, to be saved by grace, to have no good in us, if then He saved us, much more will He save us in the world to come.

For nothing was worse than the brutality of mankind before the coming of Christ. They were all affected towards each other as if enemies and at war. Fathers slew their own sons, and mothers were mad against their children. There was no order settled, no natural, no written law; everything was subverted. There were adulteries continually, and murders, and things if possible worse than murders, and thefts; indeed we are told by one of the heathen, that this practice was esteemed a point of virtue.

And naturally, since they worshipped a god of such character. Their oracles frequently required them to put such and such men to death. Let me tell you one of the stories of that time. One Androgeus, the son of Minos, coming to Athens, obtained a victory in wrestling, for which he was punished and put to death. Apollo therefore, remedying one evil by another, ordered twice seven youths to be executed on his account. What could be more savage than this tyrannical command? And it was executed too.

A man undertook to atone the mad rage of the demon, and slew these young men, because the deceit of the oracle prevailed with them. But afterwards, when the young men resisted and stood upon their defense, it was no longer done. If now it had been just, it ought not to have been prevented, but if unjust, as undoubtedly it was, it ought not to have been commanded at all. Then they worshipped boxers and wrestlers. They waged constant wars in perpetual succession, city by city, village by village, house by house.

They were addicted to the love of boys, and one of their wise men made a law that Pædrasty, as well as anointing for wrestling, should not be allowed to slaves, as if it was an honorable thing; and they had houses for this purpose, in which it was openly practiced. And if all that was done among them was related, it would be seen that they openly outraged nature, and there was none to restrain them. Then their dramas were replete with adultery, lewdness, and corruption of every sort.

In their indecent nocturnal assemblies, women were admitted to the spectacle. There was seen the abomination of a virgin sitting in the theater during the night, amidst a drunken multitude of young men madly reveling. The very festival was the darkness, and the abominable deeds practiced by them. On this account he says, For we ourselves also were sometimes foolish, disobedient, deceived, serving various lusts and pleasures. One man loved his stepmother, a woman her step-son, and in consequence hung herself.

For as to their passion for boys, whom they called their Pædica, it is not fit to be named. And would you see a son married to his mother? This too happened among them, and what is horrible, though it was done in ignorance, the god whom they worshipped did not prevent it, but permitted this outrage to nature

to be committed, and that though she was a person of distinction. And if those, who, if for no other reason, yet for the sake of their reputation with the multitude, might have been expected to adhere to virtue; if they rushed thus headlong into vice, what is it likely was the conduct of the greater part, who lived in obscurity?

What is more diversified than this pleasure? The wife of a certain one fell in love with another man, and with the help of her adulterer, slew her husband upon his return. The greater part of you probably know the story. The son of the murdered man killed the adulterer, and after him his mother, then he himself became mad, and was haunted by furies. After this the madman himself slew another man, and took his wife. What can be worse than such calamities as these? But I mention these instances taken from the Heathens, with this view, that I may convince the Gentiles, what evils then prevailed in the world.

But we may show the same from our own writings. For it is said, They sacrificed their sons and daughters unto devils. Psalm 106:37 Again, the Sodomites were destroyed for no other cause than their unnatural appetites. Soon after the coming of Christ, did not a king's daughter dance at a banquet in the presence of drunken men, and did she not ask as the reward of her dancing the murder and the head of a Prophet? Who can utter the mighty acts of the Lord? Psalm 6:2

Hateful, he says, and hating one another. For it must necessarily happen, when we let loose every pleasure on the soul, that there should be much hatred. For where love is, with virtue, no man overreaches another in any matter. Mark also what Paul says, Be not deceived, neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, shall inherit the kingdom of God. And such were some of you. 1 Corinthians 6:9-10 Do you see how every species of wickedness prevailed? It was a state of gross darkness, and the corruption of all that was right. For if those who had the advantage of prophecies, and who saw so many evils inflicted upon their enemies, and even upon themselves, nevertheless did not restrain themselves, but committed numberless foolish crimes, what would be the case with others? One of their lawgivers ordered that virgins should wrestle naked in the presence of men. Many blessings on you! That you cannot endure the mention of it; but their philosophers were not ashamed of the actual practice. Another, the chief of their philosophers, approves of their going out to the war, and of their being common, as if he were a pimp and pander to their lusts.

Living in malice and envy.

For if those who professed philosophy among them made such laws, what shall we say of those who were not philosophers? If such were the maxims of those who wore a long beard, and assumed the grave cloak, what can be said of others? Woman was not made for this, O man, to be prostituted as common. O you subverters of all decency, who use men, as if they were women, and lead out women to war, as if they were men! This is the work of the devil, to subvert and confound all things, to overleap the boundaries that have been appointed from the beginning, and remove those which God has set to nature. For God assigned to woman the care of the house only, to man the conduct of public affairs. But you reduce the head to the feet, and raise the feet to the head. You suffer women to bear arms, and are not ashamed. But why do I mention these things? They introduce on the stage a woman that murders her own children, nor are they ashamed to stuff the ears of men with such abominable stories.

Ver. 4. But after that the kindness and love of God our Saviour towards man appeared, Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost, which He shed on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our

Saviour, that being justified by His grace we should be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life.

What means, according to the hope? That, as we have hoped, so we shall enjoy eternal life, or because you are even already heirs.

This is a faithful saying.

Because he had been speaking of things future and not of the present, therefore he adds, that it is worthy of credit. These things are true, he says, and this is manifest from what has gone before. For He who has delivered us from such a state of iniquity, and from so many evils, will assuredly impart to us the good things to come, if we abide in grace. For all proceeds from the same kind concern.

Moral. Let us then give thanks to God, and not revile them; nor accuse them, but rather let us beseech them, pray for them, counsel and advise them, though they should insult and spurn us. For such is the nature of those who are diseased. But those who are concerned for the health of such persons do all things and bear all things, though it may not avail, that they may not have themselves to accuse of negligence. Do you not know that often, when a physician despairs of a sick man, some relative standing by addresses him, Bestow further attendance, leave nothing undone, that I may not have to accuse myself, that I may incur no blame, no self-reproach. Do you not see the great care that near kinsmen take of their relations, how much they do for them, both entreating the physicians to cure them, and sitting perseveringly beside them? Let us at least imitate them. And yet there is no comparison between the objects of our concern. For if any one had a son diseased in his body, he could not refuse to take a long journey to free him from his disease. But when the soul is in a bad state, no one concerns himself about it, but we all are indolent, all careless, all negligent, and overlook our wives, our children, and ourselves, when attacked by this dangerous disease. But when it is too late, we become sensible of it. Consider how disgraceful and absurd it is to say afterwards, we never looked for it, we never expected that this would be the event. And it is no less dangerous than disgraceful. For if in the present life it is the part of foolish men to make no provision for the future, much more must it be so with respect to the next life, when we hear many counseling us, and informing us what is to be done, and what not to be done. Let us then hold fast that hope. Let us be careful of our salvation, let us in all things call upon God, that He may stretch forth His hand to us. How long will you be slothful? How long negligent? How long shall we be careless of ourselves and of our fellow-servants? He has shed richly upon us the grace of His Spirit. Let us therefore consider how great is the grace he has bestowed upon us, and let us show as great earnestness ourselves, or, since this is not possible, some, although it be less. For if after this grace we are insensible, the heavier will be our punishment. For if I, He says, had not come and spoken unto them, they had not had sin, but now they have no cloak for their sin. John 15:22 But God forbid that this should be said of us, and grant that we may all be thought worthy of the blessings promised to those who have loved Him, in Jesus Christ our Lord, etc.

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