

# Sermon on Dying to Sin

By John Chrysostom

*John Chrysostom (345-407) was an important early church father who served as archbishop of Constantinople. He was known for public speaking and his denunciation of abuse of authority by ecclesiastical and political leaders. His rhetorical skills made him one of the finest preachers in the history of Christianity, often referred to as Chrysostom the "golden-mouthed" for his celebrated eloquence in speaking.*

## Excerpts from a sermon titled "Dead to Sin"

### 1. Baptized into His Death

"Know ye not my brethren, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into His death? Therefore, we are buried with Him by baptism into death" (Romans 6:3-4). What does being baptized into His death mean? It has to do with our dying as He did.

We do this by our baptism, for baptism is the cross. What the cross is to Christ, baptism is to us. Christ died in the flesh; we have died to sin. Both are deaths, and both are real.

But if it is real, what is our part, what must we contribute? Paul goes on to say, "As Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life" (Romans 6:4). Here Paul tells of the importance of resurrection.

Do you believe that Christ was raised from the dead? Believe the same of yourself. Just as His death is yours, so also is His resurrection; if you have shared in the one, you shall share in the other. As of now the sin is done away with.

Paul sets before us a demand: to bring about a newness of life by a changing of habits. For when the fornicator becomes chaste, when the covetous person becomes merciful, when the harsh become subdued, a resurrection has taken place, a prelude to the final resurrection which is to come.

How is it a resurrection? It is a resurrection because sin has been mortified, and righteousness has risen in its place; the old life has passed away, and new, angelic life is now being lived.

### 2. The Old Age of Sin

But tears come into my eyes when I think of how much Paul is asking of us and how little we have changed after our baptism, yielding ourselves to sin, going back to the oldness we had before, returning to Egypt, and remembering the onions after the manna. We undergo a change for only ten or twenty days after our baptism, but then take up former things again. But we must see that it is not for a few days that we are required to change, but rather, for a whole lifetime. The youth of grace must not lead to the old age of sin. The love of money, the slavery to wrong desires, or any sin whatsoever, makes us grow old in soul and body. Our souls become rheumatic, distorted, decayed, and tottering with many sins.

Such, then, are the souls of sinners. Not so those of the righteous, for they are youthful and strong, always in the prime of life, ready for any fight. Not so for the sinners, for they are subject to fall at the least resistance. The sinful lose their ability to see, to hear, and to speak, for they spew forth words that are foul.

### **3. Suddenly Young**

Like the prodigal son, the sinful end up in the mire of the pig's slop, reduced to the greatest wretchedness, and are in a worse state than any disordered person. But when the prodigal was willing, he became suddenly young by his decision. As soon as he had said, "I will return to my Father," this one word conveyed to him all the blessings; or rather, not the word alone, but the deed which he added to the word. He did not say, "I will return," and then stay where he was.

Thus, let us also do this, no matter how far we have gotten carried away in our journey. Let us go back to our Father's house, not lingering over the length of the journey. For we shall find, if we be willing, that the way back again is very easy and very speedy. Only let us leave this strange land of sin where we have been drawn away from the Father. For our Father has a natural yearning toward us and will honor us if we are changed. He finds great pleasure in receiving back His children.

### **4. The Easier It Will Be**

And how am I to go back again? Start back by avoiding vice, going no farther into it, and you have come home. When a person who is sick does not get any worse, it is a sign that he is getting better, and so is the case with vice. Go no further and your deeds of wickedness will have an end.

If you do so for two days, you will keep off on the third more easily; and after three days you will add ten, then twenty, then a hundred, then your whole life. For the further you journey back, the easier it will be to see how you should be, and the more you will begin to see of your great rewards.

So it was with the prodigal who, when he returned, was greeted with flutes and harps and dancing and feasts. His father, who might have chided him for his ill-timed extravagance, did nothing of the sort. He did not even mention it, but rather, looked at him as without stain, throwing himself upon him and kissing him.

### **5. God's Exceeding Desire**

Let us, then, as we have such examples before us, be of good cheer and keep from despair. For God is not so well pleased with being our Master as He is with being Our Father; He is not so pleased with our being His slaves as He is with our being His Children. This is what God truly wants. This is why He did all that He has done, not sparing His only begotten Son, that we, as adopted sons and daughters, might love Him as a Father.

God's exceeding desire to be loved comes from loving exceedingly. This is why Jesus said, "Anyone who loves their father or mother more than me, is not worthy of me." He even calls us to esteem that which is most precious to us—our soul—as second to the love of God, for our Father wishes to be loved by us entirely.

When we do not love a person, we do not wish to be with them, no matter how great or noble that person may be. But when we love someone, we want to be with them, and we view their love for us with great honor, even if they are not a person of great rank. For this reason—and not because of our great rank—God values our love. So much, in fact, that He suffered greatly on our behalf.

## **6. What Is There to Fear?**

Let us, then, incur dangers for Him, running as if for the greatest of crowns. Let us have no fear of poverty or disease, nor hardship or even death itself. For what is there to fear? Losing all of your money? If you bear it nobly, it will be as great a reward to you as if you gave it all to the poor—as long as you freely lose it because you know you have a greater reward in heaven.

What else is there to fear? Having people revile and persecute you? If so, those people have weaved a great crown for you if you bear it meekly. Rejoice and be glad, Jesus said, when people speak evil against you falsely, for great is your reward in heaven. And even if they speak the truth against us, it is to our advantage if we bear it humbly, just as the Pharisee spoke rightly about the publican, but only the publican went home justified because he bore it in humility.

Why do we seek profit? What did Judas profit for being with Christ? Or what profit was the law to the Jews? Or paradise to Adam? Or the promised land to the Israelites? We should keep our mind fixed on one point only: How we may do what is best with the resources we have been given.

## **7. A Serpent Nestling in Our Bed**

If we do this, not even the devil himself will get the better of us. We must remember that we deal with a crafty enemy. If we were suddenly aware of a serpent nestling in our bed, we would go to great lengths to kill it. But when the devil nestles in our souls, we tell ourselves we are in no danger, and thus we lie at ease. Why? Because we do not see him and his intent with our mortal eyes.

This is why we must rouse ourselves and be more sober. Fighting an enemy we can see makes it easy to be on guard, but one that cannot be seen we will not easily escape. Also, know that the devil has no desire for open combat (for he would surely be defeated), but rather, under the appearance of friendship, intends to insinuate the venom of his malice.

For example, he used Job's wife under the guise of love for her husband; Jephtha, too, he persuaded under the pretext of religion to slay his daughter, offering a sacrifice the law forbade. It was the same with Adam, for he put on the air of being concerned for his well-being, saying that his eyes "shall be opened" by eating from the tree.

Be on your guard, and arm yourself with weapons of the Spirit. Become acquainted with the devil's plans that you may keep from getting caught in his traps, and instead, expose him. Paul got the better of him because he was "not ignorant of his devices." Learn and avoid the devil's stratagems, so that after obtaining victory over him, we may, whether in this present life or in that which is to come, be proclaimed conquerors and obtain those unalloyed blessings.

**Read the following Bible selection: Luke 15:11-32**