

1 Corinthians 16:10

by St. John Chrysostom

Paul reminds the Corinthians to protect Timothy, set him forward in peace, and rebuke their indolence and divisions.

Scripture: Psalm 101:5, Proverbs 15:1, Matthew 7:1, Matthew 18:15, Romans 12:14, Romans 12:20, Ephesians 4:29

Topics: "Christian Discipline", "Edifying Speech"

Description

John Chrysostom preaches about the importance of correcting others with love and gentleness, emphasizing the need to approach reproof with care and compassion. He highlights the significance of speaking words that edify and build up others, rather than tearing them down with unsavory speech. Chrysostom urges believers to correct in a brotherly manner, using praise and commendation alongside reproof to soften the impact and promote understanding. He warns against the dangers of speaking evil of others, emphasizing the negative consequences it brings to the speaker, the hearer, and the one accused.

Transcript

Now if Timothy come to you , see that he be with you without fear.

Perhaps some one may think there is something unworthy of Timothy's courage in this piece of advice. But not on Timothy's account is this said, but for the hearers' sake: lest by their design against him they should hurt themselves: since he for his part had his station always in the way of dangers.

For as a child serves a father, says he, so he served with me in furtherance of the Gospel. Philippians 2:22 But lest from boldness towards the disciple they should proceed also to the teacher, and become worse, he checks them from afar off, saying, that he may be with you without fear; that is, that none of those desperate persons rise up against him. For he intended perhaps to rebuke them about the things concerning which Paul also had written: and indeed Paul professed to send him for this very reason. For I have sent Timothy unto you, says he, 1 Corinthians 4:17 who shall put you in remembrance of my ways in Christ even as I teach every where in every Church. In order then that they might not through confidence in their high birth and wealth, and the support of the people, and the wisdom from without, attack him and spit upon him and plot against him, being grieved at the reproofs which came from him; or lest in revenge for the teacher's rebuke they should demand satisfaction of him, so punishing the other; therefore he says, that he be without fear with you. As if he had said, Tell me not of those who are without, the Gentiles and unbelievers. It is your part that I require, you for whom also the whole Epistle was composed, the persons also whom in the beginning and the outset he had frightened. Wherefore he says, with you.

Then in virtue of his ministry he sets him forth as a person to be fully trusted; saying For the work of the Lord he works. That is; look not, says he, to this, his not being rich, namely, nor highly educated, nor old: but what commands are laid upon him, what work he is doing. 'For the work of the Lord he works.' And this serves him instead of all nobility and wealth and age and wisdom.

And he is not content with this, but adds, Even as I also. And some way above, Who is my beloved son and faithful in the Lord; he shall put you in remembrance of my ways in Christ. Seeing then that he was both young, and had been singly entrusted with the improvement of so numerous a people, both of which things tended to bring him into contempt, he adds, as we might expect,

1 Corinthians 16:11

Let no one therefore despise him. And not this only does he demand of them, but also greater honor; wherefore also he says, but set him forward in peace; that is, without fear; causing no fightings or contentions, no enmities or hatreds, but rendering all subjection as to a teacher.

That he may come unto me: for I expect him with the brethren. This also was the language of one that would alarm them. That is, in order that they might become more considerate, as knowing that all would be told him whatever Timothy's treatment might be, he adds therefore, for I expect him. And besides, hereby he both shows that Timothy is worthy of their confidence; since being on the point of departing he waits for him; and also signifies the love which he has towards them, it appearing that for their sakes he sent away one so useful to him.

1 Corinthians 16:12

But as touching Apollos the brother, I besought him much to come unto you with the brethren.

This man appears to have been both well-educated and also older than Timothy. Lest they should say then, For what possible reason did he not send the man grown, but the youth instead of him? observe how he softens down this point also, both calling him a brother, and saying that he had besought him much. For lest he should seem to have held Timothy in higher honor than him and to have exalted him more, and on this account not to have sent him, and cause their envy to burst out more abundantly, he adds, I besought him much to come. What then: did not the other yield nor consent? Did he resist and show himself contentious? He says not this, but that he might not excite prejudice against him, and also might make excuse for himself, he says, and it was not at all his will to come now. Then to prevent their saying that all this was an excuse and pretence, he added, but he will come to you when he shall have opportunity. This was both an excuse for him, and a refreshment to them who desired to see him, by the hope which it gave of his coming.

2. Afterwards indicating that not in the teachers but in themselves they ought to have their hopes of salvation, he says,

1 Corinthians 16:13-14

Watch ye, stand fast in the faith.

Not in the wisdom which is without: for there it is not possible to stand, but to be borne along; even as in the faith ye may stand. Quit you like men, be strong. Let all that you do be done in love. Now in saying these things, he seems indeed to advise; but he is reprimanding them as indolent. Wherefore he says,

Watch, as though they slept; Stand, as though they were rocking to and fro: Quit you like men, as though they were playing the coward: Let all that you do be done in love, as though they were in dissensions. And the first caution refers to the deceivers, viz., Watch, stand: the next, to those who plot against us, Quit you like men: the third, to those who make parties and endeavor to distract, Let all that you do be done in love; which thing is the bond of perfectness, and the root and fountain of all blessings.

But what means, All things in love? Whether any one rebuke, says he, or rule or be ruled, or learn or teach, let all be in love: since in fact all the things which have been mentioned arose from neglect of it. For if this had not been neglected, they would not have been puffed up, they would not have said, I am of Paul, and I of Apollos. If this had existed, they would not have gone to law before heathens, or rather they would not have gone to law at all. If this had existed, that notorious person would not have taken his father's wife: they would not have despised the weak brethren; there would have been no factions among them; they would not have been vain-glorious about their gifts. Therefore it is that he says, Let all things be done in love.

1 Corinthians 16:15-16

3. Now I beseech you, brethren;-- ye know the house of Stephanas, that it is the first-fruits of Achaia, and that they have set themselves to minister unto the saints.

In the beginning too he mentions this man, saying, I baptized also the home of Stephanas: and now he speaks of him as the first-fruits not of Corinth only, but also of all Greece. And this too is no small encomium that he was the first to come to Christ. Wherefore also in the Epistle to the Romans, praising certain persons on this account, he said, Who also were in Christ before me. Romans 16:7 And he said not, that they were the first who believed, but were the first-fruits; implying that together with their faith they showed forth also a most excellent life, in every way proving themselves worthy, as in the case of fruits. For so the first-fruits ought to be better than the rest of those things whereof they are the first-fruits: a kind of praise which Paul has attributed to these also by this expression: namely, that they not only had a genuine faith, as I was saying, but also they exhibited great piety, and the climax of virtue, and liberality in almsgiving.

And not from hence only, but from another topic likewise he indicates their piety, i.e., from their having filled their whole house also with godliness.

And that they flourished in good works also, he declares by what follows, saying, They have set themselves to minister unto the saints. Hear ye, how vast are the praises of their hospitality? For he did not say, they minister, but, have set themselves: this kind of life they have chosen altogether, this is their business in which they are always busy.

That ye also be in subjection unto such, that is, that you take a share with them both in expenditure of money, and in personal service: that you be partakers with them. For both to them the labor will be light when they have comrades, and the results of their active benevolence will extend to more.

And he said not merely, be fellow-helpers, but added, whatsoever directions they give, obey; implying the strictest obedience. And that he might not appear to be favoring them, he adds, and to every one that helps in the work and labors. Let this, says he, be a general rule: for I do not speak about them individually, but if there be any one like them, let him also have the same advantages. And therefore when he begins to commend, he calls upon themselves as witnesses, saying, I beseech you, you know the

house of Stephanas. For you also yourselves are aware, says he, how they labor, and have no need to learn from us.

1 Corinthians 16:17

But I was glad of the coming of Stephanas and Fortunatus and Achaicus, for that which was lacking on your part they supplied.

1 Corinthians 16:18

For they refreshed my spirit and yours.

Thus, since it was natural for them to be greatly irritated against these persons, for it was they who had come and showed him all about the division, inasmuch as by them also they had written the questions about the virgins, and about the married persons:-- mark how he softened them down; both in the beginning of his Epistle by saying, For it has been signified unto me by them which are of the house of Chloe; thus at once concealing these and bringing forward the others: (for it should seem that the latter had given their information by means of the former:) and in this place again, They have supplied your lack, and refreshed my spirit and yours: signifying that they had come instead of all, and had chosen to undertake so great a journey on their behalf. How then may this, their peculiar praise, become common? If you will solace me for what was wanting on your part by your kindness towards them; if you will honor, if you will receive, them, if you will communicate with them in doing good. Wherefore he says, Acknowledge ye then them that are such. And while praising those that came, he embraces also the others in his praise, the senders together with the sent: where he says, 'They refreshed my spirit and yours, therefore acknowledge such as these,' because for your sakes they left country and home. Do you perceive his consideration? He implies that they had obliged not Paul only, but the Corinthians likewise, in that they bore about in themselves the whole city. A thing which both added credit to them, and did not allow the others to sever themselves from them, inasmuch as in their persons they had presented themselves to Paul.

1 Corinthians 16:19

All the Churches of Asia salute you. He is continually making the members combine and cleave together in one by means of the salutation.

Aquila and Priscilla salute you much in the Lord; -- for with them he was lodging, being a tent-maker -- with the Church which is in their house. This thing too is no small excellency, that they had made their very house a Church.

1 Corinthians 16:20

4. All the brethren salute you. Salute one another with an holy kiss. This addition of the holy kiss he makes only here. What may the reason be? They had been widely at variance with one another on account of their saying, I am of Paul, and I of Apollos, and I of Cephas, and I of Christ; on account of one being hungry, and another drunken; on account of their having contentions and jealousies and suits. And from the gifts there was much envying and great pride. Having then knit them together by his exhortation, he naturally bids them use the holy kiss also as a means of union: for this unites, and produces one body. This is holy, when free from deceit and hypocrisy.

1 Corinthians 16:21

The salutation of me Paul with my own hand; intimates that the Epistle was composed with great seriousness; and therefore he added,

1 Corinthians 16:22

If any man love not our Lord Jesus Christ, let him be anathema.

By this one word he strikes fear into all: those who made their members the members of an harlot; those who put stumbling blocks in the way of their brethren by the things offered in sacrifice unto idols; those who named themselves after men; those who refuse to believe the resurrection. And he not only strikes fear, but also points out the way of virtue and the fountain of vice, viz. that as when our love towards Him has become intense, there is no kind of sin but is extinguished and cast out thereby; so when it is too weak, it causes the same to spring up.

Maran atha. For what reason is this word used? And wherefore too in the Hebrew-tongue? Seeing that arrogance was the cause of all the evils, and this arrogance the wisdom from without produced, and this was the sum and substance of all the evils, a thing which especially distracted Corinth; in repressing their arrogance he did not even use the Greek tongue, but the Hebrew: signifying that so far from being ashamed of that sort of simplicity, he even embraces it with much warmth.

But what is the meaning of Maran atha? Our Lord has come. For what reason then does he use this phrase in particular? To confirm the doctrine of the Economy: out of which class of topics more than any other he has put together those arguments which are the seeds of the Resurrection. And not only this, but also to rebuke them; as if he had said, The common Lord of all has condescended to come down thus far, and are you in the same state, and do ye abide in your sins? Are you not thrilled with the excess of His love, the crown of His blessings? Yea, consider but this one thing, says he, and it will suffice you for progress in all virtue, and you shall be able to extinguish all sin.

1 Corinthians 16:23

The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you.

This is like a teacher, to help not only with advice, but also with prayers.

1 Corinthians 16:24

My love be with you all in Christ Jesus, Amen.

Thus to hinder them from thinking that in flattery to them he so ended, he says, In Christ Jesus. It having nothing in it human or carnal, but being of a sort of spiritual nature. Wherefore it is thoroughly genuine. For indeed the expression was that of one who loves deeply. As thus; because he was separated from them as regards place, as it were by the stretching out of a right hand he incloses them with the arms of his love, saying, My love be with you all; just as if he said, With all of you I am. Whereby he intimates that the things written came not of wrath or anger, but of provident care, seeing that after so heavy an accusation he does not turn himself away, but rather loves them, and embraces them when they are afar off, by these epistles and writings throwing himself into their arms.

5. For so ought he that corrects to do: since he at least, who acts merely from anger is but satisfying his own feeling; but he who after correcting the sinner renders also the offices of love, shows that those words also, whatsoever he spoke in reproof, were words of fond affection. Just so let us too chasten one another; and let neither the corrector be angry, (for this belongs not to correction, but to passion,) nor let him that is corrected take it ill. For what is done is healing, not despite. Now if physicians use cautery and are not found fault with, and that too, frequently, though they quite miss their object; but even in their pain the subjects of the cautery and amputation esteem as benefactors those who excite this pain; much more ought he who receives reproof to be so disposed, and as to a physician so to give heed to the corrector, and not as to an enemy. And let us also who rebuke approach with great gentleness, with great prudence. And if you see a brother committing sin, as Christ commanded, make not your rebuke public, but between you and him alone: Matthew 18:15 not reproaching nor insulting over him when down, but in pain and with a melting heart. And show yourself ready also to receive reproof, if you commit error in any thing.

Now that what I say may be plainer, let us put an imaginary case and so try our rule. For God forbid that in very deed we should be provided with such an illustration of it. Suppose any brother dwelling in the same house with a virgin, in honor and chastity, and yet not even so quite escaping evil report. If then you should hear talk of this their dwelling together, be not contemptuous, nor say, Why, has he no understanding? Does he not himself know what is for his good? Get love for nothing, but do not for nothing get hatred. Why, what have I to do with taking up a gratuitous enmity? These are the doting words of wild beasts, or rather of demons: for it is not so that he is hated for nothing who does this for his brother's correction, rather it is for great blessings and crowns unutterable.

But if you say, What? Has he no understanding? you shall hear from me that he has not: drunken as he is with his passion. For if in the heathen courts of justice, those who are injured must not speak for themselves while glowing with wrath; (although there be no fault in that kind of sympathy;) how much more those whom evil habit holds in subjection. Wherefore I say that manifold as his wisdom may be, he has not his mind awake. For what can be wiser than David, the man who said, The dark and the hidden things of Your wisdom You have made known unto me? 267 li. 6. ap, Septuagint. I. 6 But when he looked on the wife of the soldier with unjust eyes, then according to what he himself said Psalm 107:27 of those who sail on the raging sea, all his wisdom was swallowed up; and he stood in need of others to correct him, and did not even perceive amidst what evils he was. Wherefore also, bewailing his offenses, he said, As a heavy burden they weighed grievously upon me: my wounds stank and were corrupt because of my folly. Psalm 38:5 He therefore that commits sin has no understanding. For he is drunken and is in darkness. Do not then say these things, neither add that other remark, I care not at all about it. 'For each man shall bear his own burden.' Galatians 6:5 Nay, against yourself also it grows up into a grievous accusation, that seeing one in error thou dost not restore him. For if it was not right according to the law of the Jews Exodus 23:4-5 to slight the beast of one's enemy; he who despises not the beast of burden nor yet the soul of an enemy perishing, but that of a friend, what pardon shall he obtain?

Yea, neither is it enough for our excuse that he has understanding: since we too after our many and manifold exhortations have not been sufficient, nor proved useful, unto ourselves. Bear this in mind then in regard to him also that is in error; that it is natural he should receive the best counsel rather from you than from himself.

And say not, But what care I about these things? Fear thou him who first spoke this word; for the saying, Am I my brother's keeper? Genesis 4:9 tends to the same point as this. This is the mother of all our evils that we esteem the concerns of our own body as foreign to us. What do you say? You care not for your

brother? Who then is to care for him? The unbeliever who rejoices over and reproaches and insults him? Or the devil who urges him on and supplants him?

And whence comes this? How do I know that I shall accomplish anything, says he, though I speak and advise what is right. But how is it clear that you will do no good? Why, this again is extreme folly, while the end remains in obscurity to incur the manifold blame of confessed indifference. And yet God who foresees the future often speaks and does no good; yet does He not even so give up; and that, knowing that He shall not even persuade men. Now if He who knows beforehand that He shall win no advantage, ceases not from the work of correction, what excuse will you have, who art completely ignorant of the future and yet faintest and art benumbed? Yea, and many have succeeded by frequent attempts: and when they most of all despaired, then did they most gain their point. And though you should gain no advantage, you have done your own part.

Be not then inhuman, nor unmerciful, nor careless: for that these words come of cruelty and indifference is plain from what follows: viz. What is the reason that when one of the members of your body is in pain, you say not, What care I? Yet whence is it plain, that if it be taken due care of, it is restored? And yet you leave nothing undone, that even although thou profit not, you may not have to blame yourself for the omission of any thing which ought to have been done. Hereupon I ask, are we to take such care for the members of our body and to neglect those of Christ? Nay, how can such things deserve pardon? For if I make no impression upon you by saying, Have a care of your own member; in order that you may become better were it only through fear, I put you in mind of the body of Christ. But how can it be other than a matter of horror to see His flesh putrefying, and neglect it? And if you had a slave or an ass afflicted with a mortifying sore, you could not have the heart to neglect it: but do you see the Body of Christ full of scurvy, and hurriest by? And thinkest not that such things deserve innumerable thunder-bolts? For this cause all things are turned upside down, because of this our inhumanity, because of our indifference. Wherefore now, I beseech you, let this cruelty be cast out from among us.

6. Draw near to him whom I speak of, as dwelling with a virgin, and speak some small praise of your brother, making it up from the other excellencies which he has. And foment him with your commendations as it were with warm water, and so mitigate the tumor of his wound. Speak of yourself also as wretched; accuse the common race of mankind; point out that we are all in sins; ask for pardon, saying, that you are undertaking things too great for you, but love persuades you to dare all things. Then in giving your advice, do it not imperiously, but in a brotherly way. And when by all these means you have reduced the swelling and soothed the pain arising from the cutting reproof which is in store for him, and when you have again and again deprecated and besought him not to be angry: when you have bound him down with these things, then use the knife; neither pressing the matter too close, nor yet undoing it; that he may neither fly off on the one hand, nor on the other think little of it. For if you strike not to the quick you have done no good, and if your blow be violent, you make him start away.

Wherefore, even after all this, being on the very point of the reproof, mix up again commendation with your censures. And seeing that this proceeding considered in itself cannot be matter of praise, (for it is not commendable to keep house with a damsel that is a virgin;) let the purpose of him who does so be your topic for effecting this; and say, I know indeed that you do it for God's sake, and that the desolation and unprotected state of that poor woman met your eye, and caused you to stretch out your hand to her. And although he may not be doing it with this intention, do thou speak so; and after this add what follows also; again excusing yourself and saying, These things I speak not to direct but to remind you. You do it for God's sake; I too know that. But let us see whether another evil be not produced thereby. And if there be

none, keep her in your house, and cling to this excellent purpose. There is no one to hinder you. But if any mischief arise from hence exceeding the advantage, let us take care, I beseech you, lest while we are earnest to comfort one soul, we put a stumbling-block in the way of ten thousand. And do not add immediately the punishments due to those who give offense, but take his own testimony also, saying, You have no need to learn these things from me: you yourself know, 'if any one offend one of these little ones,' how great a penalty is threatened. And thus, having sweetened your speech and smoothed down his wrath, apply the medicine of your correction. And should he again urge her forlorn condition, do not thou even so expose his pretence, but say to him, Let nothing of this sort make you afraid: you will have an ample plea, the offense given to others: since not for indifference, but in care towards them, did you cease from this your purpose.

And let the matter of your advice be brief, for there is no need of much teaching; but let the expressions of forbearance on the other hand be many and close upon one another. And continually have thou recourse to the topic of love; throwing into shade the painfulness of what you say, and giving him his full power, and saying, This is what I for my part advise and recommend; but about taking the advice you are only judge: for I do not compel and force you, but submit the whole thing to your own discretion.

If we so manage our reproof, we shall easily be able to correct those in error: even as what we now do is surely more like the conduct of wild beasts or irrational creatures than of men. For if any persons now perceive any one committing errors of this kind, with the person himself they do not at all confer, but themselves, like silly old women who have drunk too much, whisper with another. And the saying, Get love for nothing, but do not get hatred for nothing, has not here any place in their opinion. But, when they have a fancy to speak evil, they mind not being hated for nothing, rather I should say, being punished; since it is not hatred alone that is hereby produced, but also punishment. But when there is need of correction, they allege both this, and innumerable other pretexts. Whereas then would be the time to think of these things, when you speak evil, when you calumniate. I mean the saying, Be not hated for nothing, and I can do nothing, and it is no care of mine. But as things are, in the former case, you are vehemently and idly curious, and care not for hatred and ills innumerable; but when you should be taking thought for the salvation of your brother, then it is your pleasure to be a sort of unofficious, inoffensive person. And yet from evil speaking arises hatred both on God's part and on men's; and this is no great care to you: but by giving advice privately, and reproofs of that kind, both he and God will be made your friends. And even should he hate you, God goes on loving you the rather on this account. Nay, in fact, not even so will he hate you, as when his hatred came from your evil speaking: but in that case he will avoid you as a foe and an enemy, whereas now he will consider you more venerable than any father. And if he apparently take it ill, inwardly and privately he will feel much obliged to you.

7. Bearing in mind these things therefore let us have a care of our own members, and not sharpen the tongue against one another, nor speak words which may do hurt, undermining the fame of our neighbor, and as in war and battle, giving and receiving blows. For what after all is the good of fasting or watching, when the tongue is drunken, and feasts itself at a table more unclean than of dog's flesh; when it is grown ravening after blood, and pours out filth, and makes the mouth a channel of a sewer, nay rather something more abominable than that? For that which proceeds from thence pollutes the body: but what comes from the tongue often suffocates the soul.

These things I say, not in anxiety about those who have an ill report falsely: for they are worthy even of crowns, when they bear what is said nobly; but in anxiety for you that so speak. For him that is evil reported of falsely, the Scriptures pronounce blessed; but the evil-speaker they expel from the holy

Mysteries, nay even from the very precincts. For it is said, Psalm 101:5 Him that privily speaks against his neighbor, this man did I chase out. And he says too that such a one is unworthy to read the sacred books. For, Why, says He, Psalm 50:16 do you declare My righteous laws, and take My covenant in your mouth? Then, annexing the cause He says Psalm 49:20 Thou sat and spoke against your brother. And here indeed he does not distinctly add whether they be things true or false which he speaks. But elsewhere this too makes part of His prohibition: He implying, that even though thou speak truths, yet such things are not to be uttered by you. For, Judge not, says He, that you be not judged: Matthew 7:1 since he too who spoke evil of the publican was condemned, although it was true which he laid to his neighbor's charge.

What then, you will say, if any one be daring and polluted, must we not correct him? Must we not expose him? We must both expose and correct: but in the way which I mentioned before. But if you do it upbraiding him, take heed lest your imitation of that Pharisee cause you to fall into his state. For no advantage accrues from hence; none to you who speak, none to him who hears you, none to the person accused. But the latter, for his part, becomes more reckless: since as long as he is unobserved, he is sensible of shame; but as soon as he becomes manifest and notorious, he casts off the curb also which that feeling imposed on him.

And the hearer will in his turn be yet more injured. For whether he be conscious to himself of good deeds, he becomes puffed and swoln up with the accusation brought against another; or of faults, he then becomes more eager for iniquity.

Thirdly, the speaker too himself will both incur the bad opinion of the hearer, and will provoke God to more anger against himself.

Wherefore, I beseech you, let us cast from us every word that is unsavory. If there be any thing good unto edification, this let us speak.

But have you a fancy to avenge yourself on the other person? Why then punish yourself instead of him? Nay, do thou, who art so earnestly seeking redress from those who have annoyed you, avenge yourself as Paul recommended to take vengeance. If your enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirst, give him drink. Romans 12:20 But if you do not so, but only plot against him, you point the sword against yourself.

Wherefore if that other speak evil, answer him with praises and commendations. For so will you be able both to take vengeance on him, and will deliver yourself from evil surmising. Since he that feels pain at hearing ill of himself, is thought to be so affected because of some consciousness of evil: but he that laughs to scorn what is said, exhibits a most unquestionable token of his not being conscious to himself of any evil thing.

Seeing then that you profit neither your hearer, nor yourself, nor him that is accused, and dost but point your sword at your own self, even from such considerations do thou learn more soberness. For one ought indeed to be moved by the thought of the kingdom of heaven, and of what pleases God: but since you are of grosser disposition and bite like a wild beast, hereby even be thou instructed; that these arguments having corrected you, you may be able to order yourself simply from consideration of what pleases God; and having come to be above every passion, may obtain the heavenly blessings: -- which may God grant us all to obtain, through the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and His mercy towards mankind; with Whom, to the Father and the Holy Spirit, be glory, power, honor, now and henceforth, and unto everlasting ages. Amen.

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