



Healing all that were oppressed of the devil

Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house.

Acts of the Apostles 16: 31

How God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Ghost and with power: who went about doing good, and **healing all that were oppressed of the devil**; for God was with him.

Acts of the Apostles 10: 38

Then was Jesus led up of the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted of the devil. And when he had fasted forty days and forty nights, he was afterward an hungred. And when the tempter came to him, he said, If thou be the Son of God, command that these stones be made bread. But he answered and said, It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God. Then the devil taketh him up into the holy city, and setteth him on a pinnacle of the temple, And saith unto him, If thou be the Son of God, cast thyself down: for it is written, He shall give his angels charge concerning thee: and in their hands they shall bear thee up, lest at any time thou dash thy foot against a stone. Jesus said unto him, It is written again, Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God. Again, the devil taketh him up into an exceeding high mountain, and sheweth him all the kingdoms of the world, and

the glory of them; And saith unto him, All these things will I give thee, if thou wilt fall down and worship me. Then saith Jesus unto him, Get thee hence, Satan: for it is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve. **Then the devil leaveth him, and, behold, angels came and ministered unto him.**

Matthew 4: 1-11

St. John Chrysostom:

Having then found Him in the wilderness, and in a pathless wilderness (for that the wilderness was such, Mark hath declared, saying, that He "was with the wild beasts"), behold with how much craft he draws near, and wickedness; and for what sort of opportunity he watches. For not in his fast, but in his hunger he approaches Him; to instruct thee how great a good fasting is, and how it is a most powerful shield against the devil, and that after the font, men should give themselves up, not to luxury and drunkenness, and a full table, but to fasting. For, for this cause even He fasted, not as needing it Himself, but to instruct us. Thus, since our sins before the font were brought in by serving the belly: much as if any one who had made a sick man whole were to forbid his doing those things, from which the distemper arose; so we see here likewise that He Himself after the font brought in fasting. For indeed both Adam by the incontinence of the belly was cast out of paradise; and the flood in Noah's time, this produced; and this brought down the thunders on Sodom. For although there was also a charge of whoredom, nevertheless from this grew the root of each of those punishments; which Ezekiel also signified when he said, "But this was the iniquity of Sodom, that she waxed wanton in pride and in fullness of bread, and in abundance of luxury." Thus the Jews also perpetrated the greatest wickedness, being driven upon transgression by their drunkenness and delicacy.

On this account then even He too fasts forty days, pointing out to us the medicines of our salvation; yet proceeds no further, lest on the other hand, through the exceeding greatness of the miracle the truth of His Economy should be discredited. For as it is, this cannot be, seeing that both Moses and Elias, anticipating Him, could advance to so great a length of time, strengthened by the power of God. And if He had proceeded farther, from this among other things His assumption of our flesh would have seemed incredible to many.

Having then fasted forty days and as many nights,

"He was afterwards an hungered;"

affording him a point to lay hold of and approach, that by actual conflict He might show how to prevail and be victorious. Just so do wrestlers also: when teaching their

pupils how to prevail and overcome, they voluntarily in the lists engage with others, to afford these in the persons of their antagonists the means of seeing and learning the mode of conquest. Which same thing then also took place. For it being His will to draw him on so far, He both made His hunger known to him, and awaited his approach, and as He waited for him, so He dashed him to earth, once, twice, and three times, with such ease as became Him.

But that we may not, by hurrying over these victories, mar your profit, let us begin from the first assault, and examine each with exact care.

Thus, after He was an hungered, it is said, "The tempter came, and said unto Him, If Thou be Son of God, command that these stones be made bread."

For, because he had heard a voice borne from above, and saying, "This is My beloved Son;" and had heard also John bearing so large witness concerning Him, and after that saw Him an hungered; he was thenceforth in perplexity, and neither could believe that He was a mere man, because of the things spoken concerning Him; nor on the other hand receive it that He was Son of God, seeing Him as he did in hunger. Whence being in perplexity he utters ambiguous sounds. And much as when coming to Adam at the beginning, he feigns things that are not, that he may learn the things that are; even so here also, not knowing clearly the unutterable mystery of the Economy, and who He may be that is come, he attempts to weave other nets, whereby he thought to know that which was hidden and obscure. And what saith he? "If Thou be Son of God, command that these stones be made bread." He said not, because thou art an hungered, but, "if Thou be Son of God;" thinking to cheat Him with his compliments. Wherefore also he was silent touching the hunger, that he might not seem to be alleging it, and upbraiding Him. For not knowing the greatness of the Economy which was going on, he supposed this to be a reproach to Him. Wherefore flattering Him craftily, he makes mention of His dignity only.

What then saith Christ? To put down his pride, and to signify that there was nothing shameful in what had happened, nor unbecoming His wisdom; that which the other had passed over in silence to flatter Him, He brings forward and sets it forth, saying, "Man shall not live by bread alone."

So that He begins with the necessity of the belly. But mark, I pray thee, the craft of that wicked demon, and whence he begins his wrestlings, and how he doth not forget his proper art. For by what means he cast out also the first man, and encompassed him with thousands of other evils, with the same means here likewise he weaves his deceit; I mean, with incontinence of the belly. So too even now one may hear many foolish ones say their bad words by thousands because of the belly. But Christ, to show that the virtuous man is not compelled even by this tyranny to do anything that

is unseemly, first hungers, then submits not to what is enjoined Him; teaching us to obey the devil in nothing. Thus, because the first man did hereby both offend God, and transgress the law, as much and more doth He teach thee:--though it be no transgression which he commands, not even so to obey.

And why say I, "transgression"? "Why, even though something expedient be suggested by the devils, do not thou," saith He, "even so give heed unto them." Thus, for instance, He stopped the mouths of those devils also, proclaiming Him Son of God. And Paul too again rebuked them, crying this self-same thing; and yet what they said was profitable; but he more abundantly dishonoring them, and obstructing their plot against us, drove them away even when doctrines of salvation were preached by them, closing up their mouths, and bidding them be silent.

And therefore neither in this instance did He consent to what was said. But what saith He? "Man shall not live by bread alone." Now His meaning is like this: "God is able even by a word to nourish the hungry man;" bringing him a testimony out of the ancient Scripture, and teaching us, though we hunger, yea, whatever we suffer, never to fall away from our Lord.

But if a man say, "still He should have displayed Himself;" I would ask him, with what intent, and for what reason? For not at all that he might believe did the other so speak, but that he might, as he thought, over-argue Him into unbelief. Since the first of mankind were in this way beguiled and over-argued by him, not putting earnest faith in God. For the contrary of what God had said he promised them, and puffed them up with vain hopes, and brought them to unbelief, and so cast them out of the blessings they actually possessed. But Christ signifies Himself not to have consented, either to him then or afterwards to the Jews his partisans, in their demand of signs: invariably instructing us, whatever we may have power to do, yet to do nothing vainly and at random; nor even when want urges to obey the devil.

What then doth this accursed one? Overcome, and unable to persuade Him to do his bidding, and that when pressed by such violent hunger, he proceeds to another thing, saying,

"If Thou be Son of God, cast Thyself down; for it is written, He shall give His angels charge concerning Thee, and in their hands they shall bear Thee up."

What can the reason be, that at each temptation He adds this, "If Thou be Son of God?" Much the same as he did in that former case, he doth also at this time. That is, as he then slandered God, saying, "In the day ye eat, your eyes shall be opened;" 2thereby intending to signify, that they were beguiled and overreached, and had received no benefit; even so in this case also he insinuates this same thing, saying, "in vain God hath called Thee Son, and hath beguiled Thee by His gift; for, if this be not

so, afford us some clear proof that Thou art of that power." Then, because Christ had reasoned with him from Scripture, he also brings in a testimony of the prophet.

How then doth Christ? He is not indignant, nor provoked, but with that extreme gentleness He reasons with him again from the Scriptures, saying, "Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God:" teaching us that we must overcome the devil, not by miracles, but by forbearance and long-suffering, and that we should do nothing at all for display and vainglory.

But mark thou his folly, even by the very testimony which he produced. For while the testimonies cited by the Lord were both of them spoken with exceeding fitness: his, on the other hand, were chance and random sayings, neither did he bring forward on his part that which applied to the matter in hand. For that it is written, "He shall give His angels charge concerning Thee," this surely is not advice to dash and toss one's self down headlong; and moreover, this was not so much as spoken concerning the Lord. However, this for the time He did not expose, although there was both insult in his manner of speech, and great inconsistency. For of God's Son no man requires these things: but to cast one's self down is the part of the devil, and of demons. Whereas God's part is to raise up even them that are down. And if He ought to have displayed His own power, it would not have been by casting and tossing Himself down at random, but by saving others. But to cast ourselves down precipices, and into pits, pertains properly to his troop. Thus, for example, the juggler among them doth everywhere.

But Christ, even when these things are said, doth not yet reveal Himself, but as man for a while discourses with him. For the sayings, "Man shall not live by bread alone;" and, "Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God," suited one not greatly revealing Himself, but representing Himself as one of the many.

But marvel thou not, if he in reasoning with Christ oftentimes turn himself about. For as pugilists, when they have received deadly blows, reel about, drenched in much blood, and blinded; even so he too, darkened by the first and the second blow, speaks at random what comes uppermost: and proceeds to his third assault.

"And he leadeth Him up into a high mountain, and showeth Him all the kingdoms, and saith, All these things will I give Thee, if Thou wilt fall down and worship me. Then saith He, Get thee behind me, Satan, for it is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and Him only shalt thou serve."

For since he was now come to sinning against the Father, saying, that all that is the Father's was his, and was endeavoring to make himself out to be God, as artificer of the universe; He then rebuked him: but not even then with vehemence, but simply, "Get thee hence, Satan;" which itself had in it something of command rather than of

rebuke. For as soon as He had said to him, "Get thee hence," He caused him to take to flight; since he brought not against Him any other temptations.

And how saith Luke, that "he ended all temptation." To me it seems that in mentioning the chief of the temptations, he had spoken of all, as though the rest too were included in these. For the things that form the substance of innumerable evils are these: to be a slave to the belly, to do anything for vainglory, to be in subjection to the madness of riches. Which accordingly that accursed one considering, set last the most powerful of all, I mean the desire of more: and though originally, and from the beginning, he was travailing to come to this, yet he kept it for the last, as being of more force than the rest. For in fact this is the manner of his wrestling, to apply those things last, which seem more likely to overthrow. And this sort of thing he did with respect to Job likewise. Wherefore in this instance too, having begun with the motives which seem to be viler and weaker, he goes on to the more prevailing.

How then are we to get the better of him? In the way which Christ that taught us, by fleeing to God for refuge; and neither to be depressed in famine, as believing in God who is able to feed even with a word; nor amidst whatever good things we may receive to tempt Him who gave them, but to be content with the glory which is from above, making no account of that which is of men, and on every occasion to despise what is beyond our need. For nothing doth so make us fall under the power of the devil, as longing for more, and loving covetousness. And this we may see even by what is done now. For now also there are those who say, "All these things will we give thee, if thou wilt fall down and worship;" who are indeed men by nature, but have become his instruments. Since at that time too he approached Him, not by himself only, but also by others. Which Luke also was declaring, when he said, that "he departed from Him for a season;" showing that hereafter he approached Him by his proper instruments.

"And, behold, angels came and ministered unto Him." For when the assault was going on, He suffered them not to appear, that He might not thereby drive away the prey; but after He had convicted him in all points, and caused him to take to flight, then they appear: that thou also mayest learn, that after thy victories which are copied from His, angels will receive thee also, applauding thee, and waiting as guards on thee in all things. Thus, for example, angels take Lazarus away with them, after the furnace of poverty and of famine and of all distress. For as I have already said, Christ on this occasion exhibits many things, which we ourselves are to enjoy.

Forasmuch then as all these things have been done for thee, do thou emulate and imitate His victory. And should any one approach thee of those who are that evil spirit's servants, and savor the things that be of him, upbraiding thee and saying, "If

thou art marvellous and great, remove the mountain;" be not troubled, nor confounded, but answer with meekness, and say some such thing as thou hast heard thy Lord say: "Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God."

Or should he, offering glory and dominion, and an endless amount of wealth, enjoin thee to worship him, do thou stand again manfully. For neither did the devil deal so with the common Lord of us all only, but every day also he brings these his machinations to bear on each of His servants, not in mountains only and in wildernesses, nor by himself: but in cities likewise, in market-places, and in courts of justice, and by means of our own kindred, even men. What then must we do?

Disbelieve him altogether, and stop our ears against him, and hate him when he flatters, and when he proffers more, then so much the more shun him. Because in Eve's case also, when he was most lifting her up with hopes, then he cast her down, and did her the greatest evils. Yea, for he is an implacable enemy, and hath taken up against us such war as excludes all treaty. And we are not so earnest for our own salvation, as he is for our ruin. Let us then shun him, not with words only, but also with works; not in mind only, but also in deed; and let us do none of the things which he approves, for so shall we do all those which God approves. Yea, for he makes also many promises, not that he may give, but that he may take. He promises by rapine, that he may deprive us of the kingdom, and of righteousness; and sets treasures in the earth as a kind of gins or traps, that he may deprive us both of these and of the treasures in Heaven, and he would have us be rich here, that we may not be rich there.

And if he should not be able by wealth to cast us out of our portion there, he comes another way, the way of poverty; as he did with respect to Job. That is, when he saw that wealth did him no harm, he weaves his toils by poverty, expecting on that side to get the better of him. But what could be more foolish than this? Since he that hath been able to bear wealth with moderation, much more will he bear poverty with manliness; and he who desires not riches when present, neither will he seek them when absent; even as that blessed man did not, but by his poverty, on the other hand, he became still more glorious. For of his possessions that wicked demon had power indeed to deprive him, but his love toward God he not only could not take away, but made it even stronger, and when he had stripped him of all, he caused him to abound with more blessings; wherefore also he was in perplexity. For the more plagues he brought upon him, the more mighty he then saw him become. And therefore, as you know, when he had gone through all, and had thoroughly tried his metal, because he made no way, he ran to his old weapon, the woman, and assumes a mask of concern, and makes a tragical picture of his calamities in most pitiable tone, and feigns that for removal of his evil he is introducing that deadly counsel. But neither so did he

prevail; nay, for his bait was perceived by that wondrous man, who with much wisdom stopped the mouth of the woman speaking at his instigation.

Just so we likewise must act: though it be a brother, a tried friend, a wife, whom you will of those nearest to us, whom he hath entered into, and so utters something not convenient, we must not receive the counsel for the person of him who so speaks, but for the deadly counsel turn away from the speaker. Since in fact now also he doth many such things, and puts before him a mask of sympathy, and while he seems to be friendly, he is instilling his pernicious words, more grievous than poisons. Thus, as to flatter for evil is his part, so to chastise for our good, is God's.

Let us not then be deceived, neither let us by every mean seek after the life of ease. For "whom the Lord loveth," it is said, "He chasteneth." Wherefore when we enjoy prosperity, living in wickedness, then most of all should we grieve. For we ought ever to be afraid while we sin, but especially when we suffer no ill. For when God exacts our penalties by little and little, he makes our payment for these things easy to us; but when he is long-suffering for each of our negligences, He is storing us up, if we continue in such things, unto a great punishment. Since, if for the well-doers affliction be a necessary thing, much more for them that sin.

See for instance how much long-suffering Pharaoh met with, and afterwards underwent for all most extreme punishment: in how many things Nebuchadnezzar offended, yet at the end expiated all; and the rich man, because he had suffered no great ill here, for this very cause chiefly became miserable, for that having lived in luxury in the present life, he departed to pay the penalty of all these things there, where he could not obtain anything at all to soothe his calamity.

Yet for all this some are so cold and senseless, as to be always seeking only the things that are here, and uttering those absurd sayings, "Let me enjoy all things present for a time, and then I will consider about things out of sight: I will gratify my belly, I will be a slave to pleasures, I will make full use of the present life; give me to-day, and take tomorrow." Oh excess of folly! Why, wherein do they who talk so differ from goats and swine? For if the prophet permits not them to be accounted men, that "neigh after their neighbors wife," who shall blame us for esteeming these to be goats and swine, and more insensible than asses, by whom those things are held uncertain, which are more evident than what we see? Why, if thou believest nothing else, attend to the devils in their scourging, to them who had our hurt for their object in all their practice, both in word and deed. For thou wilt not, I am sure, contradict this, that they do all to increase our security, and to do away with the fear of hell, and to breed disbelief of the tribunals in that world. Nevertheless, they that are so minded, by cryings and wailings do oftentimes proclaim the torments that are there. Whence is it

then that they so speak, and utter things contrary to their own will? From no other cause, but because they are under the pressure of stronger compulsion. For they would have not been minded of their own accord to confess either that they are tormented by dead men, or that they at all suffer anything dreadful.

Wherefore now have I said this? Because evil demons confess hell, who would fain have hell disbelieved; but thou who enjoyest honor so great, and hast been a partaker in unutterable mysteries, dost not so much as imitate them, but art become more hardened even than they.

"But who," one will say, "hath come from those in hell, and hath declared these things?" Why, who hath arrived here from heaven, and told us that there is a God who created all things? And whence is it clear that we have a soul? For plainly, if thou art to believe the things only that are in sight, both God and angels, and mind and soul, will be matter of doubting to thee, and in this way thou wilt find all the doctrines of the truth gone.

Yet surely, if thou art willing to believe what is evident, the things invisible ought to be believed by thee, rather than those which are seen. Even though what I say be a paradox, nevertheless it is true, and among men of understanding is fully acknowledged. For whereas the eyes are often deceived, not in the things unseen only (for of those they do not so much as take cognizance), but even in those which men think they actually see, distance and atmosphere, and absence of mind, and anger, and care, and ten thousand other things impeding their accuracy; the reasoning power of the soul on the other hand, if it receive the light of the divine Scriptures, will prove a more accurate, an unerring standard of realities.

Let us not then vainly deceive ourselves, neither in addition to the carelessness of our life, which is the offspring of such doctrines as these, heap up to ourselves, for the very doctrines themselves, a more grievous fire. For if there be no judgment, and we are not to give account of our deeds, neither shall we receive rewards for our labors. Observe which way your blasphemies tend, when ye say, that God, who is righteous, and loving, and mild, overlooks so great labors and toils. And how can this be reasonable? Why, if by nothing else, at any rate by the circumstances of thine own house, I bid thee weigh these things, and then thou wilt see the absurdity. For though thou wert thyself savage and inhuman beyond measure, and wilder than the very wild beasts, thou wouldest not choose at thy death to leave unhonored the servant that had been affectionate to thee, but requitest him both with freedom, and with a gift of money; and forasmuch as in thine own person hereafter, having departed, thou wilt be able to do him no good, thou givest charge concerning him to the future inheritors of

thy substance, beseeching, exhorting, doing everything, so that he may not remain unrewarded.

So then thou, who art evil, art so kind and loving towards thy servant; and will the Infinite Goodness, that is, God, the Unspeakable Love to man, the kindness so vast: will He overlook and leave uncrowned His own servants, Peter and Paul, and James, and John, those who every day for His sake suffered hunger, were bound, were scourged, were drowned in the sea, were given up to wild beasts, were dying, were suffering so great things as we cannot so much as reckon up? And whereas the Olympic judge proclaims and crowns the victor, and the master rewards the servant, and the king the soldier, and each in general him that hath done him service, with what good things he can; shall God alone, after those so great toils and labors, repay them with no good thing great or small? shall those just and pious men, who have walked in every virtue, lie in the same state with adulterers, and parricides, and manslayers, and violators of tombs? And in what way can this be reasonable? Since, if there be nothing after our departure hence, and our interests reach no further than things present, those are in the same case with these, or rather not so much as in the same. For what though hereafter, as thou sayest, they fare alike? yet here, the whole of their time, the wicked have been at ease, the righteous in chastisement. And this what sort of tyrant, what savage and relentless man did ever so devise, touching his own servants and subjects?

Didst thou mark the exceeding greatness of the absurdity, and in what this argument issues? Therefore if thou wilt not any other way, yet by these reasonings be instructed to rid thyself of this wicked thought, and to flee from vice, and cleave to the toils which end in virtue: and then shalt thou know certainly that our concerns are not bounded by the present life. And if any one ask thee, "Who hath come from thence and brought word what is there?" say unto him, "of men not one; for surely he would have been often disbelieved, as vaunting, and exaggerating the thing; but the Lord of the angels hath brought word with exactness of all those things. What need then have we of any man, seeing He, that will demand account of us, crieth aloud every day, that He hath both made ready a hell, and prepared a kingdom; and affords us clear demonstrations of these things? For if He were not hereafter to judge, neither would he have exacted any penalty here.

"Well, but as to this very point how can it be reasonable? that of the wicked some should be punished, others not? I mean, if God be no respecter of persons, as surely He is not, why can it be that of one He exacts a penalty, but another He suffers to go away unpunished? Why, this is again more inexplicable than the former."

Yet if you are willing to hear what we say with candor, we will solve this difficulty also.

What then is the solution? He neither exacts penalty of all here, lest thou shouldst despair of the resurrection, and lose all expectation of the judgment, as though all were to give account here; nor doth He suffer all to go away unpunished, lest on the other hand thou shouldst account all to be without His providence; but He both punishes and abstains from punishing: by those whom He punishes, signifying that in that world also He will exact a penalty of such as are unpunished here; and by those whom He doth not punish, working upon thee to believe that there is some fearful trial after our departure hence.

But if He were altogether indifferent about our former deeds, He neither would have punished any here, nor have conferred benefits. But now thou seest Him for thy sake stretching out the heaven, kindling the sun, founding the earth, pouring forth the sea, expanding the air, and appointing for the moon her courses, setting unchangeable laws for the seasons of the years, and all other things too performing their own courses exactly at a sign from Him. For both our nature, and that of creatures irrational, of them that creep, that walk, that fly, that swim, in marshes, in springs, in rivers, in mountains, in forests, in houses, in the air, in plains; plants also, and seeds, and trees, both wild and cultivated, both fruitful and unfruitful; and all things in general, moved by that unwearied Hand, make provision for our life, affording to us of themselves their ministry, not for our need only, but also for our feeling of high station.

Seeing therefore order so great and fair (and yet we have not mentioned so much as the least portion thereof), darest thou say, that He who for thy sake hath wrought things so many and great will overlook thee in the most critical points, and suffer thee when dead to lie with the asses and swine: and that having honored thee with so great a gift, that of godliness, whereby He hath even equaled thee with the angels, He will overlook thee after thy countless labors and toils?

And how can this be reasonable? Why, these things, if we be silent "the stones will immediately cry out;" so plain are they, and manifest, and more lucid than the sunbeam itself.

Having then considered all these things, and having convinced our own soul, that after our departure hence, we shall both stand at the fearful judgment-seat, and give account of all that we have done, and shall bear our penalty, and submit to our sentence, if we continue in our negligences; and shall receive crowns and unutterable blessings, if we are willing to give a little heed to ourselves; let us both stop the mouths of them who gainsay these things, and ourselves choose the way of virtue; that with due confidence departing to that tribunal, we may attain unto the good

things that are promised us, by the grace and love towards man of our Lord Jesus Christ, to whom be glory and dominion, now and ever, world without end. Amen.

The Homilies of St. John Chrysostom on the Gospel of St. Matthew

<https://bkv.unifr.ch/de/works/cpg-4424-1/versions/the-homilies-of-st-john-chrysostom-on-the-gospel-of-st-matthew/divisions/134>