

Excerpts from "On Zeal and Piety, and On the Man Born Blind"

by St. John Chrysostom

The word of God is a spring of light. The light therefore fills, and the light shines, and illumines the senses of the faithful. For from Him and in Him shines, and those who partake of Him shine. And He does not only enlighten the minds of the faithful, but grants the name of light. For the divine Scripture, for those who dwell with the ignorant and who live in disbelief, rightly calls them darkness, not receiving the lamp of truth, that they might be sons of light. Therefore, the divine Apostle Paul writes: "We were not sons of the night, nor of the darkness, but sons of the light and day." And regarding the sons of light was the evangelical word spoken from the mouth of God: "I am," as Christ said, "the light of the world. He who follows me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life."

His word is light, that if any of us might believe in him, that they might be made to be born as a son of light. Therefore the Savior said: "As long as you have the light, believe in the light, that you be born sons of the light." For as this sensible light is for the body, thus noetically is the word of God for souls. And as there is the darkness at night, thus is there delusion in ignorant souls. Because of this, the blessed David writes of this, saying: "They did not know, nor did they perceive that they were walking in darkness..."

It is right therefore for good students to imitate the teacher, as Paul says: "Be imitators of me, as I am of Christ." Do you wish to learn how the simple student can benefit from the zeal of piety? Hearken to how Christ healed the man born blind. Likely you have heard this story from the beginning. Among other things, the evangelical word says: "As Jesus was passing by, He saw a man blind from birth. And His disciples asked Him..." "And he spat, and made clay, and anointed his eyes and told him: 'Go, wash in the pool of Siloam.' And having washed, he began to see. The Judeans recognized him and said: 'Was not this the man who was sitting blind and receiving alms?' Some said yes, others said no, but he is like him. He said: 'It is me.'"

The Pharisees therefore and the rulers of the Judeans, beholding that this wonder was drawing many to Christ, overcome with the zeal of impiety, and struck by the sting of the truth, asked him how long he was blind. And behold this evil theater that has gathered to try piety, and the evil judges who judge, and the great gathering that has gathered, to look into and study God. They called him who was once blind, and when the children of the Judeans saw him in the council, they asked him: "How did you see, and who opened your eyes, and who accomplished it?" This they said not that they might learn, but that the form of the question might give way to fear. For many times, by the form of the question, the teacher who is asking [seeks] an answer, or silence. But he told them that he might bear witness to the reality. "Did you see this deed? Were you there? How did you see the reality?" The form of this teaches denial. Therefore they asked: "How did you see? Who opened your eyes?" But he, having cultivated fearlessness, or more so the truth, said: "A man named Jesus took clay and anointed my eyes and told me: 'Go, wash at Siloam.' And I went and washed, and I began to see..."

Because they could not deny the miracle, they hastened to cover it, saying: "Give glory to God. We know that that man is a sinner." The Son is the glory of the Father, and His glory is inseparable. And he fought the good fight against the Judeans to defend Christ ...

Though they spoke with him till now, they then commanded that he be cast out. And they cast him out, as the Evangelist said. Blessed is he who hastens from the council of evil men. And behold what happened. Because he fought the good fight, and gave glory to God, and confessed the Savior gloriously with much boldness, and completed the battle in the stadium, being cast out as a wrestler, without receiving the crown, the Referee called to him outside. Jesus, hearing therefore that they cast him out, found him and spoke to him. The Word found him who spoke of Him, whom He delivered from delusion, and found the Truth...

For when He sent him to the pool of Siloam to wash, He sent him blind. And when he began to see, he did not see the Savior among the multitude that had gathered around him, but immediately, before he saw the Master, he was called to struggle in the contest. For the Master put clay on his eyes before this, that the following might be fulfilled. For when they cast him out, Christ found him and said to him: "Do you believe in the Son of God?" For he did not see him as a prophet and struggle, but as the Son of God. He did not recognize His face, but he recognized His voice. "Do you believe," He said, "in the Son of God?"

He hearkened to the voice, and with joy he said: "And who is He, O Lord, that I might believe in Him?" Why did He ask "Do you believe" of him? "Do you believe in the Son of God?" I see that Your word is truth. However, if you give me the knowledge, I will not neglect to believe You. "And who is He, O Lord, that I might believe in Him?" And the Foreseer was before him. And he looked upon Him, Who spoke to you previously. He Who was with you within the council, and outside speaks with you. "Do you believe in the Son of God?" He who was enlightened in body and in mind said: "And who is He, O Lord, that I might believe in Him?" He replied to him: "You have seen Him, and it is He Who is speaking to you." He, therefore, said: "I believe, O Lord," And he worshiped Him.

I said these things, that all of you might learn, and that I might call all to fall before the teacher, and to imitate the Good Shepherd, and to struggle on behalf of the Truth...