

ASCETICALLY SPEAKING, pp. 15-16

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HUMILITY AND ASCETICISM FREE US

St. Maximos the Confessor

Humility and ascetic hardship free a man from all sin, for the one cuts out the passions of the soul, the other those of the body. This is what the blessed David indicates when he prays to God, saying, 'Look on my humility and my toil, and forgive my sins' (Ps. 25:18).

SINNERS AND SUFFERINGS

St. Maximos the Confessor

No sinner can escape future judgment without experiencing in this life either voluntary hardships or afflictions he has not chosen.

PEACE IS NOT 'GOOD'

St. Isaac the Syrian

When you find unchanging peace on your way, then fear, because you are far from the right path by which the righteous go with suffering feet.

ACCEPT CORRECTION: RECEIVE REMISSION OF YOUR SINS

St. John of the Ladder

He who will not accept a reproof (correction), just or unjust, renounces his own salvation. But he who accepts it with pain, or even without pain, will soon receive the remission of his sins.

UNION OF THE MIND AND THE HEART

St. Ignatius (Brianchaninov)

The union of the mind with the heart is the union of the spiritual thoughts of the mind with the spiritual feelings of the heart.... Mind and heart cannot be united otherwise than by the mediation of the Spirit and Truth. This means that the mind and heart cannot be united unless we completely renounce our fallen nature,

unless we surrender ourselves entirely to the guidance of the Gospel, unless we attract the grace of the Holy Spirit to heal us by constant and increased obedience to the Gospel commandments, unless we are healed and restored to life by the touch of grace, by the overshadowing of the Spirit.

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HOW TRUE PRAYER BEGINS

St. Ignatius (Brianchaninov)

Through humility in your dealings with your neighbour, and through love for your neighbour, hardness and callousness is expelled from the heart. It is rolled away like a heavy rock from the entrance to a tomb, and the heart revives for spiritual relations with God for which it has been hitherto dead. A new vista opens to the gaze of the mind: the multitudinous wounds of sin with which the whole of fallen nature is riddled. It begins to confess its wretched state to God and implore Him for mercy. The heart assists the mind with mourning and compunction. This is the *beginning* (emphasis supplied) of true prayer.

CHRIST DOESN'T SAVE 'CONVENIENTLY'

St. Ignatius (Brianchaninov)

God desires and seeks the salvation of all. And He is always saving all who wish to be saved from drowning in the sea of life and sin. But He does not always save in a boat or in a convenient, well-equipped harbour. He promised to save the Holy Apostle Paul and all his fellow-travellers, and he did save them. But the Apostle and his fellow-passengers were not saved in the ship, which was wrecked; they were saved with great difficulty, some by swimming and others on boards and various bits of the ship's wreckage.

TAKE ACTION TODAY!

St. Cyril of Jerusalem

For God seeks nothing else from us, save a good purpose. Say not, How are my sins blotted out? I tell thee, by willing, by believing. What can be shorter than this? But if, while thy lips declare thee willing, thy heart be silent, He knoweth the heart, who judgeth thee. Cease from this day from every evil deed. Let not thy tongue speak unseemly words, let thine eye abstain from sin, and from roving after things unprofitable.

LOOK INWARD

Dr. Alexandre Kalomiros

The call of the world is never sent naked but cloaked in the delusion of love. 'Go save your brothers. Don't you see that they need help?' And the hesychast goes into the world or concerns himself with the world, and ceases to be a hesychast. And once a Christian believes he can save and help people, he has become a victim of the evil one. None of us can help or save anyone. The only saviour and helper is God. And once we lose this truth, we lose everything.... Orthodox Christians do not seek after the salvation of others. They labour for their own salvation and leave the salvation of others to God. And thus if they are made worthy of becoming an abode of God, and God speaks through their eyes and their mouths and their hearts, they might become instruments of the salvation of others. But they will never seek on their own to become such an instrument. And if in fact they were to become instruments of the salvation of others, only God would know it.