



Fire & Light

St. Symeon Orthodox Church

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March 19, 2017

Veneration of the Cross

Martyrs Chrysanthus and Daria at Rome (283)

Fourth Week of Great Lent

"The fruit of the tree brought sorrow to the first formed man, for Thou hast banished him from Paradise. But, nailed upon the Tree as man, O Savior, Thou hast called him back to Paradise again! Therefore, I cry out to Thee, O Deliverer: Set me free from all my sorrow, cleansing me by fasting, tears and penitence, O most loving Jesus, the Savior of our souls!"

- ✠ Wed. Mar. 22 ~ 6:30pm – Presanctified Liturgy
- ✠ Friday, Mar. 24~ 6:30pm - Great Vespers – Feast of the Annunciation
- ✠ Sat. March 25 ~ 10:00am - Divine Liturgy – Feast of the Annunciation

➤ *Many Years! Newly Illumined!* ~ Andrew McIntosh, John Chambers, & Akylina Miller!

The Power of the Cross

✠ "Unspeakable is the power of the Cross. For that being actually in the midst of horrors, He should have shown Himself above all horrors; and being in the enemy's hold should have overcome; this comes of Infinite Power. For as in the case of the Three Children, their not entering the furnace would not have been so astonishing, as that having entered in they trampled upon the fire—and in the case of Jonah, it was a greater thing by far, after he had been swallowed by the fish, to suffer no harm from the monster, than if he had not been swallowed at all—so also in regard of Christ; His not dying would not have been so inconceivable, as that having died He should loose the bands of death. Say not then, why did He not help Himself on the Cross? for He was hastening on to close conflict with death himself. (See Hooker, E. P. v. 48. 9.) He descended not from the Cross, not because He could not, but because He would not. For Him Whom the tyranny of death restrained not, how could the nails of the Cross restrain?"

-St. John Chrysostom

St. Porphyrios of Kavsoalyvia (+1991)

✠ We should seek that the will of God be done. This is the most beneficial, the safest way for us and for everyone to pray.

Christ will give us all riches. When there is even a little egotism, however, nothing occurs. When God does not give us something which we are persistently asking for, He has His reason. God has His "secrets". If you do not show obedience (to your priest or spiritual father), and you don't have humility, the prayer (i.e. "Lord Jesus Christ, have mercy on me") does not come, and there is a fear of delusion.

The (Jesus) prayer should not become chore. Pressuring can bring opposition within us, and cause something bad. Many have sickened with the prayer, because they said it with pressure. And also, of course, when you make it a chore. But this isn't healthy.

Wherever you are, on a stool, on a chair, in the car, everywhere, on the road, in school, in the office, at work, you can say the prayer, the "Lord Jesus Christ, have mercy on me," gently, without pressure, without asphyxiation.

Meaning in prayer comes not from length of time, but from the state. You may only pray for five minutes, but it should be offered to God with love and longing. One can pray the whole night, and this five-minute prayer can surpass it. This is a mystery, of course, but this is how it is. ✠

St. Paisios on Envy

“...Each person should look to see if they actually have within themselves the very same blessing they envy in someone else, or that perhaps God has given them a different one. You see, God is not unjust to anyone. He has given each person a unique gift, which will help him with his spiritual progress.”

“*In other words, Geronda, is there such a thing as good envy?*” Yes. When one is envious for the good others have, and - at the same time - rejoices in their progress, then such envy is good. If, however, one is upset when he sees someone else progressing, or if one is secretly pleased by another’s hardship, then that kind of envy is bad. Let’s say that you are envious of a sister because she has a good voice and chants beautifully. If you hear that her throat is sore and she cannot chant and you feel joy, this means that your envy is malevolent; it is poisonous. But if you feel sorrow and worry over her, this indicates that your envy has no malevolence; you simply wish that you too could chant well.”

“Look, if you are having trouble walking, you should rejoice, and not be upset about the Sister who is able to run. If you want to make spiritual progress, you should rejoice when the Sisters are progressing and beseech God that they continue to progress, and that you too may achieve their progress. When I was a novice in the Cenobitic Monastery [*of Esphigmenou on Mt. Athos*], there was another novice - about my age - who had attained a great spiritual state. His face was radiant. He was a model novice, an exemplar in everything he did - very well disciplined and of ‘*great violence*’ [*cf. Matthew 11:12*]. He was very devout, and even the older monks would rise out of respect when he passed by them. I benefited more from that novice than from all the books I had read up to that time, because he was a living example. One time, my heart was aching. It just so happened that this Brother was passing by my cell, and I asked him to pray for me. The moment that he left, the pain was gone.”

“Another time, a possessed person had come to us - asking the Fathers to heal him. The Elder said to the novice: ‘*Go and pray for this person to be delivered from the demon.*’ And he responded: ‘*May Christ expel the demon through your prayers, Father.*’ As soon as the novice walked away, the demon was expelled. Such was the boldness he had before God. He had attained such a spiritual condition! So I prayed that this novice attain the heights of the Saint whose name he had, and that I, in turn, attain the height of the blessed novice. Once you do the same, you will clearly see the action of God.”

“A woman ought to be especially careful about envy. She must remove her own self from her love, in order to keep her abundant love pure. [*A spiritual child replies:*] ‘*How can this be done, Geronda?*’ It can be done by rising above the daily trifles and cultivating *leventia* (generosity of heart,) and spiritual nobility - a sense of sacrifice. The antidote for envy is spiritual nobility. Unfortunately, however, there are few who possess it.”

St Gregory Palamas, in his sermon on the Prodigal, in speaking of the elder son, indicates that the righteous can sometimes be scandalized and angered by the things they encounter because they are ignorant of the riches of God’s surpassing goodness. To illustrate this, he notes the story of the vision of St Carpus: When he cursed certain wicked men and said it was unjust that unbelieving men who pervert the straight ways of the Lord should live, not only was he not heard, but he experienced God’s displeasure. He heard terrifying words which led him to acknowledge God’s unspeakable, incomprehensible forbearance and persuaded him not curse those leading wicked lives but rather to pray for them, as God still grants them time to repent. To show this, and at the same time to prove that He gives great and enviable gifts to those who return to Him in repentance, the God of the penitent, the Father of Mercies, devised this parable.

The Mystery of Repentance and Confession

The period of Great Lent is for many of us a time to prayerfully prepare to go to the Sacrament of Holy Confession. For others, Confession is an experience to be avoided due to fear or a lack of understanding of how and why it is practiced. And yet for others it is a "must do" requirement of the Church that we have been practicing, perhaps since childhood, but seems to bring little or no benefit to our daily life. It is probably not an understatement to say that all of us are in need of some instruction in this life-giving gift that Christ has given to us through the Holy Church.

Since Confession is the Sacrament of repentance, let us begin by taking a look at repentance, what it means and what it brings with it. Sometimes the word repentance conjures up an image of beating one's breast, hanging one's head low and feeling like the scum of the earth. However, Christ began His public ministry with the words, "Repent, for the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand" (Mt. 4: 17). Certainly news of the Kingdom of Heaven being among us is good news - a cause for rejoicing. This joyous news, linked with the command to repent, tells us that repentance is a joyous and positive thing.

At the beginning of Great Lent we sing, "Let us begin the fast with joy, " and, "The springtime of the Fast has dawned, the flower of repentance has begun to open" (Lenten Triodion). We could say that Christ is calling us to look up - to look up to Him for an image of life and joy. As we sing each year during the feast of the Transfiguration, "Awake, O sluggards. Do not lie forever on the ground! And thoughts that draw my soul towards earth, arise and go up to the high slope of the divine ascent" (Ikos Hymn of the Feast). Most simply put, repentance is a change of mind - a change of how we look at things, how we do things, a change of attitude "because the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand."

Bishop Kallistos Ware, a contemporary Orthodox theologian, has stated this so well:

"Repentance is not a paroxysm of remorse and self-pity, but conversion, the re-centering of our life upon the Holy Trinity To repent is not to look downward at my own shortcomings, but upward at God's love; not backward with self-reproach, but forward with trustfulness. It is to see, not what I have failed to be, but what by the grace of Christ I can yet become" (The Inner Kingdom, SVS Press, 2000).

So the joy of repentance comes from looking at Christ and at the love, peace and joy that He offers to us for our own lives. We are capable of receiving these gifts and attaining these virtues. This is possible because we are made in the image and likeness of God. We can become by grace what God is by nature. This is truly good and joyous news.

Yet we may ask, how do we do it? A very important model comes from the Parable of the Prodigal Son that is read every year just two weeks before the beginning of Great Lent (Luke 15:11-32). The younger son who wasted his inheritance on loose living, "came to himself" and took courage to return to his father's house. He practiced his words of repentance on the way back home, "Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you; I am no longer worthy to be called your son; treat me as one of your hired servants." But his father, who apparently had been watching and hoping for his son's return, "had compassion, and ran and embraced him and kissed him." A loving father, waiting, hoping, embracing - so much does our Lord offer to us when we come to ourselves and take a step toward Him. This is a good "icon" of what happens in confession. We repent by changing our mind, our ways, and returning to the Father. We return not so much because we have broken some laws, but we return because we wish that our unique relationship with the Father be restored. He rejoices, welcomes and heals us:

Seeing and experiencing repentance in this positive light, let us now look specifically at the Sacrament, or Mystery, of Repentance, usually called Holy Confession. The Prodigal Son, mentioned above, already knew the father's love and made the decision to return. We too, being baptized in Christ, have received this light, this love, but through our sin, our falling away from God, have been in a "far country." We must return to the light and love of God. It is to Him that we come to confess our sins. The priest who hears the confession is "but a witness" (prayer before Confession). Christ is present (represented by the presence of the Gospel Book and Cross) and it is to Him that we confess; it is He Who forgives and Who heals us. Bishop Kallistos comments on the action of the three who are present, priest, penitent, and Christ:

"What does each of these do, and whose action is the most important? Many people tend to put the greatest emphasis on what the priest does, on his words of counsel and encouragement; and if the priest fails to say anything eloquent or unexpected, they tend to assume that little or nothing has been achieved. Or else they overstress the second aspect, what they themselves are doing, They imagine that they must be deeply stirred on an emotional level - even though, as we have said repentance is not primarily a matter of the emotions. And because they put the main emphasis on their own efforts, they are in danger of regarding Confession in bleak and discouraging terms, as something to be got over and done with, necessary yet disagreeable, like a cold bath. But in reality the most important action is not that of penitent or priest, but that of God. While the penitent is required to prepare himself by self-examination and to conduct a searching scrutiny of his conscience, in the last resort he comes to Confession empty-handed, helpless, not claiming to be able to heal himself, but asking for healing from another. And this other whose help he invokes is not the priest but God. The priest is simply a witness, bearing testimony before God of what we have to say (ibid., p.50)."

Finally, and perhaps most often, people ask, "How do I prepare? What questions should I ask myself and what should I say in Confession?" This, like so many other things in our spiritual life, takes practice and instruction. For those who grew up in the Orthodox Church, our instruction may have come when we were young children, with none since. It is proper to teach children about Confession and to prepare them with age-appropriate questions and reflections, such as whether they have lied, whether they fought with their siblings, disobeyed their parents, etc. Yet as a person enters the teenage years, the temptations will change, as should the questions and preparation for Confession. Again as that same person grows through life's stages - young adult, newly married, a parent of children, an elderly parishioner - he will continue to need some direction and guidance for looking at his spiritual life and how he has strayed from God's will, from the house of the Father.

With age and experience the questions will probably evolve from rather legalistic rules, such as violation of Church laws and practices, to a more comprehensive look at our relationship with God, with other people and with ourselves. We will learn to look at the things in our lives that keep us from an open and loving relationship with our Lord and Savior. We will learn to come not to be judged, but to be healed, supported and strengthened in our spiritual struggle.

The spiritual life is a lifelong process. Our relationship with Christ is organic and changing. Our way of looking at things, of reacting to situations and struggles, our relationships with others all need to be reviewed in the light of Christ, with help and assistance from others in the faith. Then, as the Icos Hymn of the Transfiguration invites us, we can "run with Peter, James and John, and go with them to Mount Tabor and with them see the glory of our God and hear the voice they heard from Heaven and ... proclaim that Thou art the light of the Father!"

A Word from St. Innocent

Jesus Christ, being God and the Almighty Whom heaven and earth and myriads of angels obey, Himself throughout His earthly life obeyed His Mother, who is His own creation.

Jesus Christ, Who has in His right hand all the treasures of the worlds, during His earthly life had no place on earth to lay His head.

Jesus Christ, Whom all Angels and creatures serve, Himself served men and washed the feet of His disciples who were chosen from the most uneducated and simplest of the people.

Jesus Christ suffered during His preaching a countless multitude of insults of every kind from his enemies. They called Him a sinner and a transgressor of the law of Moses, an idle fellow, and a carpenter's son, and a friend and comrade of gluttons, wine-drinkers, and tax collectors. At one time the malice and fury of His enemies reached such a pitch that they wanted to throw Him down a mountain. On another occasion they wanted to stone Him to death. They called his most holy teaching lies and deception. When He healed the sick or raised the dead His enemies said that He did all of that with the help of Satan and suggested to the people that even He Himself had a demon in Him.

In short, from His birth to his very death **Jesus Christ** suffered and saw sorrows and outrages on all sides. He suffered both from men and for men. He was grieved not only because people would not listen to Him and offended Him, but also because they were perishing and were unwilling to be saved from their perdition. **Jesus Christ** suffered, so to speak, both visibly and invisibly, because He saw and endured not only open insults and outrages from men, but at the same time He saw the secret evil thoughts and intentions of His enemies, and He saw that the very people who apparently loved and listened to Him, either did not believe in Him or were indifferent to their salvation.

From whom did **Jesus Christ** suffer most? From the Jewish chief priests and from the scribes, that is, from the learned and from their chiefs who knew and expected the Savior's coming to them but were unwilling to receive **Jesus Christ** or to listen to Him, but on the contrary, delivered Him to death as if He were a deceiver and lawbreaker; and when the Jewish people were ready to deliver **Jesus** from crucifixion, they (the priests and scribes) incited them to ask rather for the robber Barabbas and to deliver **Jesus**, Who is holier than all the saints, to death. To what lengths can the envy and malice of men go! But what is most horrible, **Jesus Christ** was betrayed by a man who was His disciple, who knew Him, who had eaten and drunk with Him, and had seen with his own eyes His life, His miracles, and the power of His teaching. And how was he betrayed? By treachery and a kiss. And for what price? For thirty pieces of silver.

For whom did Jesus suffer? For all sinners, from Adam till the end of the world. He suffered also for those very men who tortured Him, and for His enemies who had delivered Him to that torture, and for those who, having received from Him countless benefits, not only did not thank Him but even hated and persecuted Him. He also suffered for all of us who offend Him daily by our untruths, wickedness, and terrible indifference to His sufferings for us who, by our ingratitude and abominable sins, as it were, crucify Him a second time.

St. Innocent, Bishop of Kamchatka, the Kurilian and Aleutian Islands, and Apostle to America - Indication of the Way into the Kingdom of Heaven

Humility - Teachings of the Holy Fathers

✚ My beloved in the Lord, before every other thing set humility in your mouth when you are ready to make answer, for, forgive me, you know that by humility all the power of the Enemy is brought to naught. And you know the goodness of your Master, Whom they blasphemed, and how He became humble, and obedient, even unto death. You yourself, my son, set your humility in your mouth, and in your heart, and in your neck, for there is a commandment which instills humility. Consider David, who boasted himself of his humility, and said, "Because I humbled myself the Lord delivered me, and He did good unto me." [Ps. 29:8-12] My son, array yourself in humility, and you shalt make the virtues of God be with you. And if, my son, you are in a state of humility, no passion whatsoever shall have power to draw near you. There is no measure (or limit) to the beauty of the man who is humble. No passion whatsoever shall be able to draw nigh unto the man who is humble, and there is no measure to his beauty. The humble man is a sacrifice of God. With him that is humble the hearts of God and His angels rest. **Epistle of St. Ephraim to a Beloved Disciple**

✚ The Lord does not reveal himself to many men because of their intellectual pride, yet they still think they possess much knowledge. But what is their knowledge worth, if they know not the Lord, know not the grace of the Holy Spirit, know not how this grace comes and wherefore it is lost? But let us humble ourselves, brethren, and the Lord will show us all things, as a loving father shows all things to his children.

St. Silouan the Athonite

✚ You always ask that the Lord would grant you humility. But you see, it is not given as a gift from the Lord. The Lord is always ready to help people to acquire humility, as well as all good things, but it is necessary that the person work on himself. As the Holy Fathers say, "Give blood, and receive the Spirit." This means you have to labor to the spilling of blood, and then you will receive spiritual gifts. You seek and request spiritual gifts, but you are stingy about spilling your blood; that is, you do not want anyone to touch you or disturb you. How can you obtain humility in an undisturbed life? For humility consists in seeing yourself as below all creatures. When people bother you and you see that you cannot endure it, and get angry with them, then you will have to consider yourself lower. If at this you lament and reproach yourself for your exaltation and incorrigibility and sincerely repent about it before God, then you are on the path to humility.

St. Ambrose of Milan

✚ The first stage of blessed patience is to accept dishonor with bitterness and anguish of soul. The intermediate stage is to be free from pain amid all such things. The perfect stage, if that is attainable, is to think of dishonor as praise. Let the first rejoice, let the second be strong, but blessed be the third, for he exults in the Lord.

St. John Climacus

✚ It is not the clever, the noble, the polished speakers, or the rich who win, but whoever is insulted and forbears, whoever is wronged and forgives, whoever is slandered and endures, whoever becomes a sponge and mops up whatever they might say to him. Such a person is cleansed and polished even more. He reaches great heights. He delights in the theoria of mysteries. And finally, it is he who is already inside paradise, while still in this life.

Elder Joseph the Hesychast - Monastic Wisdom

✚ Learn to love humility, for it will cover all your sins. All sins are repugnant before God but the most repugnant of all is pride of the heart. Do not consider yourself learned and wise; otherwise, all your effort will be destroyed and your boat will reach the harbor empty.

St. Anthony the Great

✚ A man who is truly humble is not troubled when he is wronged and he says nothing to justify himself against the injustice, but he accepts slander as truth; he does not attempt to persuade men that he is slandered, but he begs forgiveness.

St. Isaac the Syrian

✚ Therefore, don't despair when you fall, but get up eagerly and do a metanoia saying, "Forgive me dear Christ. I am human and weak." The Lord has not abandoned you. But since you still have a great deal of worldly pride, a great deal of vainglory, our Christ lets you make mistakes and fall, so that you perceive and come to know your weaknesses every day, so that you become patient with others who make mistakes, and so that you do not judge the brethren when they make mistakes, but rather put up with them. **Elder Joseph**

"LORD JESUS CHRIST, HAVE MERCY ON ME." Elder Ephraim

These words contain our whole faith. In saying "Lord," we believe that we are servants of God and that He is our Lord. This honors Christ, that we make Him our Lord, but it also honors us, who are servants of such a Lord, Who is God.

When we say "Jesus," which is the human name of God, all the earthly life of Christ, from His birth to His Ascension, comes to mind.

In saying "Christ," which means anointed by God, King of Heaven and earth, we confess and believe that Christ is our God, Who created everything and is in Heaven and will come again to judge the world.

In saying "have mercy on me," we entreat God to send us His help and His mercy, for we acknowledge that without Divine help we are not able to do anything. This, in brief, is the explanation of these holy words. Whoever says them experiences many things.

With my whole heart I pray that our sweet Jesus will give you this prayer within your soul, that you may taste the spiritual ambrosia of prayer and are replenished overall.

Saying them constantly does not tire us. In the beginning one must persist a little; but later, one becomes accustomed to it and says the Prayer with great ease and does not want to stop. When he says it, he feels so much spiritual exultation that even at the most difficult moments, if there are any, he is not disturbed or troubled. Rather, with patience he takes refuge in Christ, Whom he entreats to have mercy on him, and Christ consoles him and gives him joy. What is more beautiful than to entreat Christ at every moment and to say His holy name with these lips of clay? Is there a greater honor?

THE JESUS PRAYER

Article by Rod Dreher, crunchycon.com

"I'm thinking these days about stillness, order and calm in one's mind and soul. It's something I desperately need, but given my job and my interests, find hard to locate and achieve. But I've been reading a book called "The Instinct to Heal" by the psychiatrist David Servan-Schreiber, who discusses the effectiveness of non-traditional therapies. I was particularly interested in his chapter about medical discoveries involving the heart's role in helping govern the nervous system. It was revealing how the method and practice of the Jesus Prayer, which is a basic part of Orthodox Christian spirituality, can be clinically shown to be healing. Don't get me wrong, Dr. Servan-Schreiber never once mentions the Jesus Prayer. But he talks about the amazing results doctors have seen in people who do the kind of rhythmic breathing and meditation that is required when you pray the Jesus Prayer in the way of the Desert Fathers. There's something physiological that happens; it's as if the heart coheres, and the nervous system is rebooted and refocused by the committed practice of stillness and meditateness. It turns out that "Be still and know I am God" is actually a good prescription for basic health.

When I was on the road to Orthodoxy, I was very faithful to saying the Jesus Prayer daily, for nearly half an hour. It had an astonishing impact on my physical and mental health. My wife said I was a different person then -- that I was so much more calm and focused, as opposed to my usual jangly, at wit's end self. Of course as is usual with me, I got lazy, and quit praying it, with the expected result. But lately, having read the Servan-Schreiber book and having talked with a doctor friend about the importance of stillness, I've returned to the Jesus Prayer. I cannot recommend it highly enough, not only for your soul, but for your body."

Note: Orthodoxy teaches that we engage in this prayer not for psychological benefit, but to help us come closer to God. The healing that is observed clinically is the work of the Holy Spirit. The Prayer opens our heart so spiritual healing can take place within us. It allows us to overcome the automatic responses that are programmed into our brain causing anger and other forms of stress. The practice of the prayer must be coupled with regular attendance in worship services, the Holy Sacraments and fasting. One should seek the guidance of a spiritual father when engaging in such a practice to avoid spiritual pride.

St. Paisios of Mt. Athos ~ What are the Passions?

“For instance, anger indicates that the soul possesses manliness [i.e., to be brave, courageous, strong], which helps in the spiritual life. One who is not hot-tempered and lacks manliness won't be able to put his self (ego) into place. If an irascible person utilizes this power of his in his spiritual life, then he's like a car racing steadily on a straight road. But if this power is not properly utilized, and one leaves himself unrestrained, then he's like a car spinning out of control on a rough terrain.”

“One has to become aware of his powers and ultimately utilize them for what is good. This is how he can attain, with the help of God, a good spiritual state. Egotism, for example, should be turned against the devil, so that one does not succumb to temptations. The tendency to talk too much ought to be cultivated by saying the Jesus Prayer [*Lord Jesus Christ have mercy on me.*]. Isn't it better to talk with Christ and be sanctified, rather than to chatter away and sin? In other words, one can become good or bad — depending on how he will utilize the powers of the soul.”

“Look, let me tell you. Each person has hereditary qualities, both good and evil. One must struggle to be delivered from his weaknesses and cultivate what is good in him, in order to become a true grace-filled image [ikon] of God. The negative inherited traits are not a hindrance to spiritual progress. For when one is struggling - even slightly, but with great *philotimo* (spontaneous, self-sacrificing love) - then he's moving in the spiritual realm, in the miraculous, and all the unpleasant traits are dispelled by the Grace of God.”

“I have noticed that some people, while smart and capable of knowing what is right, nevertheless favor what is wrong, only because it is convenient for them. And thus, they can justify their passions. Then there are others who do not justify themselves, but fall into despair just thinking that there is something incorrigible in their character. This is how the devil works: He hinders one from making spiritual progress by prompting him to justify himself, while he exploits the over sensitivity of another — throwing him into despair.”

“I think that one who inherited bad traits but struggles to acquire virtues will receive a greater reward than one who inherited virtues from his parents and doesn't have to struggle to acquire them. You see, he had them handed down; whereas the other had to struggle hard to acquire them. Most of us have a greater appreciation for those who not only struggle hard to pay off debts inherited from their parents, but created their own fortune, as opposed to those who inherited fortunes from their parents and merely maintained them.”

[Geronda responds to the question: *‘What is happening when a soul is struggling for years, but sees no progress?’*] “When we do not see progress in our struggle, it means that either we are not vigilant in our struggle; or God does not allow us to advance anymore, so that we will not be harmed by becoming prideful.”

[Geronda responds to the question: *‘As I see myself, I am getting worse every day. What will happen to me?’*] “Look, blessed one, there are three stages. In the first stage, God gives out caramels and chocolates because He sees the need and weakness of the soul. In the second stage, God slightly removes His Grace, for training purposes, so that we can realize that without God's help, we cannot accomplish even the least. And, therefore, [we] must humble ourselves and feel the need to take refuge in Him. The third stage is a permanent and steadfast good spirit.”

When there is no danger of becoming conceited and prideful, then God will certainly help. The Good God desires that we be delivered from the passions. But if we have pride, or the disposition to become prideful, then He does not help us to be delivered from our passions. For then we will imagine that we achieved it without His help.” ❖ ❖ ❖