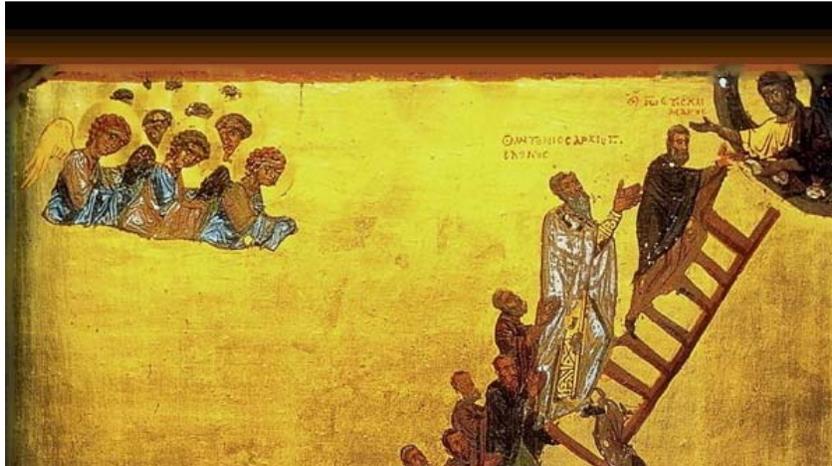


Great Lent: Our Walk on the Ladder of Virtues



Temperate [self-control] is the one who lives in the midst of temptations, in the snares and disturbances of the world, yet struggles with all his strength to imitate the life of those who are free from such disruptions. Lapses into carnal sins occur when novices [in the spiritual life] pamper themselves with over-eating.ⁱ

Lapses occur among those somewhat more advanced because of pride. Those approaching perfection fall, solely because they condemn others. Don't become overconfident and think that, because of your temperance, you will be spared a fall. Satan, without eating a bite fell, from heaven!

Pride, for superfluous things, is a disgrace. The most foolish thing, is for people to boast about some charisma they received from God. Whatever achievements they made prior to their birth, are all they should brag about. Because, whatever takes place after birth is a gift from God. Nothing benefits more than a humble, sincere manner and a positive word.ⁱⁱ

Prayer, in regards to its quality, is union of man with God, reconciliation with Him, the mother and daughter of tears, as well as forgiveness of sins. It is a bridge that saves from temptations, a wall that protects from sorrows, a work of Angels, the sustenance of all the bodiless powers, work that never ends, the wellspring of virtues, an agent for charismas, food of the soul, light for the mind, a weapon against despair, proof of hope, the dissolution of mourning, wealth of monastics, treasure of hesychasts, reduction of anger, mirror of spiritual progress, disclosure of moderation, a statement of the spiritual condition, the revelation of future things. Prayer is a bridge that frees us from countless temptations and dangers. It is heavenly work, sustenance of Angels and Saints, a celebration and joy of the righteous, the source of every good, progress of the heart, the enlightenment of the mind, a heavenly flame, an announcement for hope in God, an opening through which comes heavenly light revealing the hidden mysteries of God.ⁱⁱⁱ

Slander [gossip, backbiting] is the offspring of hatred, a counterfeit love, the cause of depravity. Judging is a rude confiscation of God's right [to judge], whereas judging [condemning] is destruction for the soul of the one who judges. The judicious and wise person notes carefully whatever virtues he sees in others, whereas the fool looks for faults and accusations.^{iv}

Privation is faith in the commandments of the Lord. Privation, as freedom from material possessions, is to remove every anxiety from one's self, so as to become a spiritual traveler without impediments.^v

Loquacity [superfluous chatter] is the seat of vanity, evidence of ignorance, a door to leading to judging and condemning others.^{vi}

(from Bema Orthodoxias, April 4, 2019. Translated from the Greek by Fr. George A. Alexson)

ⁱ “And beside this, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue; and to virtue knowledge; And to knowledge temperance; and to temperance patience; and to patience godliness...”(2 Peter 1:5-6)

ⁱⁱ “But he gives more grace. Therefore it says, "God opposes the proud, but gives grace to the humble." (James 4:6)

ⁱⁱⁱ “And pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests. With this in mind, be alert and always keep on praying for all the Lord's people.” (Ephesians 6:18)

^{iv} “Do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouths, but only what is helpful for building others up according to their needs, that it may benefit those who listen.” (Ephesians 4:29)

^v “Consider the lilies how they grow: they toil not, they spin not; and yet I say unto you, that Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. If then God so clothe the grass, which is to day in the field, and tomorrow is cast into the oven; how much more will he clothe you, O ye of little faith?” (Luke 12:27-28)

^{vi} “There are six things the LORD hates, seven that are detestable to him: haughty eyes, a lying tongue, hands that shed innocent blood, a heart that devises wicked schemes, feet that are quick to rush into evil, a false witness who pours out lies and a person who stirs up conflict in the community.” (Proverbs 6: 16-19)