

STRUGGLE & REPENTANCE

Elder Joseph the Hesychast (+1959).



I received your letter, my child, and I saw your anxiety. But don't be sad, my child. Don't worry so much. Even though you have fallen again, get up again. You have been called to a heavenly road. It is not surprising for someone running to stumble. It just takes patience and repentance at every moment.

Therefore, always do a *metanoia* when you are wrong and don't lose time, because the longer you wait to seek forgiveness, the more you allow the evil one to spread his roots within you. Don't let him make roots to your detriment.

Therefore, don't despair when you fall, but get up eagerly and do a *metanoia* saying, "Forgive me, my 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 weakness 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.

So every time you fall, get up again and at once seek forgiveness. Don't hide sorrow in your heart, because sorrow and despondency are the joy of the evil one. They fill one's soul with bitterness and give birth to many evils. Whereas the frame of mind of someone who repents says, "I have sinned! Forgive me Father!" and he expels the sorrow. He says, "Am I not a weak human? So what do I expect?" Truly, my child this is how it is. So take courage.

Only when the grace of God comes does a person stand on his feet. Otherwise, without grace, he always changes and always falls. So be a man and don't be afraid at all.

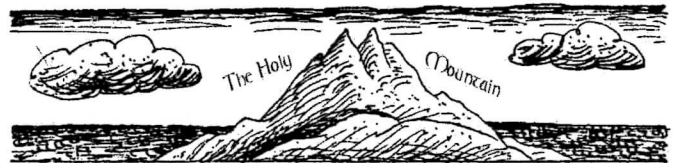
Do you see how that brother you wrote about endured the temptation? You, too, should do likewise. Acquire a brave spirit against the temptations that come. In any case, they will come. Forget about what your despondency and indolence tell you. Don't be afraid of them. Just as the previous temptations passed by the grace of God, these, too, will pass once they do their job.

Temptations are medicines and healing herbs that heal our visible passions and our invisible wounds. So have patience in order to profit every day, to store up wages, rest, and joy in the heavenly kingdom. For the night of death is com-

ing when no one will be able to work anymore. Therefore, hurry. Time is short.

You should know this too: A victorious life lasting only one day with trophies and crowns is better than a negligent life lasting many years. Because one man's struggle, with knowledge and spiritual perception that lasts one day, has the same value as another man's struggle, who struggles negligently without knowledge for fifty years.

Without a struggle and shedding your blood, don't expect freedom from the passions. Our earth produces thorns and thistles after the Fall. We have been ordered to clean it, but only with much pain, bloody hands, and many sighs are the thorns and thistles uprooted. So weep, shed streams of tears, and soften the earth of your heart. Once the ground is wet, you can easily uproot the thorns.



You may find yourself hampered by someone who sows tares of despondency. He tries to prevent you from climbing to such heights of holiness by discouraging you with various thoughts. For instance, he will tell you that it is impossible for you to be saved and to keep every single one of God's commandments while you live in this world. When this happens you should sit down in a solitary place by yourself, collect yourself, concentrate your thoughts and give good counsel to your soul, saying: *Why, my soul, are you dejected, and why do you trouble me? Put your hope in God, for I will give thanks to Him; for my salvation lies not in my actions but in God.* (Pss 42:5). *Who will be vindicated by actions done according to the law?* (Gal 2:16). *No living person will be vindicated before God* (Pss 143:2). Yet by virtue of my faith in God I hope that in His ineffable mercy He will give me salvation. *Get behind me, Satan!* (Mt 16:23). *I worship the Lord my God* (Mt 4:10) and serve Him from my youth; for He is able to save me simply through His mercy. Go away from me. The God who created me in His image and likeness will reduce you to impotence.

St. Symeon the New Theologian



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