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**Edifying Stories
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Ancient and Modern Times**

Human Abandonment and Godly Sorrow*

A Letter of St. Tikhon of Zadonsk

(Commemorated on 13 July)

My beloved friend and brother in Christ!

It is written: *“and my nearest of kin stood afar off”* (Ps. 37:13). For white does not go with black and darkness is not in accord with light. Piety is in constant conflict with impiety. What concord can there be when one is trying and struggling to climb a mountain, while the other is tumbling down?



“And my nearest of kin stood afar off,” because you have stood far away from them. You stand far away because you find nothing in common with them. We avoid smoke and pitch lest we dirty ourselves; we distance ourselves from an epidemic lest we catch an illness; we flee from lepers lest we suffer the same as them.

That is why it has been said: *“come out from among them...and touch not the unclean”* (II Cor. 6:17, Is. 52:11, Rev. 18:4).

Every person who avoids such ones draws near to God; and the nearer he draws to Him, the more people avoid him. And the more people avoid him, the nearer God draws near to him, like someone who has been abandoned. *“The poor man has been left to thee; Thou wast a helper to the orphan”* (Ps. 9:35). You must be the type of poor person that people abandon.

“O my God, Who hast all things! May everyone abandon me, until the last person; only do Thou not abandon me! I shall have all things in Thee; Thou art my help, comfort, strengthening, protection, refuge, counsel, and my consolation.” When you are abandoned by people, turn to God, as you do and as you write. For He shall find the way to accomplish His work, when people can do nothing. Now, that is the *first thing*.

Secondly. We must be sorrowful because we have saddened God; this wound is healed with such a bandage. When one has saddened God (O my God! Who are we? Worms, earth, dust, and ashes, and we sadden Thy Majesty! Do not allow us to do such a thing again, by Thy Grace!), when, as I was saying, one has saddened God, this is healed by being sorrowful for God’s sake. Sin induces sorrow, and with this sorrow, it is cured. A bitter thing is sorrow, which nevertheless swallows up its malevolent progenitor, sin. Such is the wondrous wisdom of God: the wound is healed by a wound! “*For godly sorrow worketh repentance to salvation not to be repented of*” (II Cor. 7:10), says the Apostle.

Thy mercy, O Lord, shall pursue me all the days of my life! Save, O Christ God, all of those you came to save, because for their sakes didst Thou shed Thine All-Holy Blood!

Closing here, and entrusting myself to the mercy of God, I remain...



(*) Source: Ἅγιος Κυπριανός, No. 321 (July-August 2004), p. 88. Letter No. 18 from the *Complete Works of St. Tikhon of Zadonsk* (in Russian), Vol. V, 2nd ed. (Moscow:1994), pp. 305-306.

