



Brief Patristic Messages



Abandonment By God*

His Eminence, Metropolitan
Cyprian of Oropos and Fili

IN ORDER for the believer to become a true Christian, one must go through a veritable furnace of trials and sorrows.

He must struggle against ambition, avarice, and the love of pleasure, to the point of shedding blood.

During the course of this battle against his own self, the Devil, and the world, a Christian begins to sense the sweetness of Divine Grace in his heart, which—with time, and provided that his spirit of struggle does not wane—blazes up and becomes a longing and love for God.

The believer then finds himself in a condition of indescribable bliss: prayer is his life; the holy Mysteries are his Paradise; and the study of the Divine word is his illumination!

But the danger of falling and returning to the inferno of sin does not disappear.

The enemy is lurking: he has three snares laid out, hoping to entrap with them the soul which is preparing itself to soar into Eternity.

The first snare: pride, self-complacency, and self-praise.

The second snare: disparagement and judgment of one's neighbor.

The third snare: negligence, slothfulness, and indolence.

St. Macarios of Egypt writes that once a brother was praying together with another when he was captivated by Divine power, fell into ecstasy, and saw the Jerusalem on High with shining images and an infinite light. He heard a voice saying: “This is the place of repose for the righteous.” He soon grew proud and believed that all of those things concerned him. He was subsequently found to have fallen into the very depths of sin and into countless evils, because he had been abandoned by Divine Grace, which rests only in the humble.

Abba Philemon tells of a certain monk who had reached such a level of dispassion and saintliness that he would receive bread from the hand of an Angel. But, because of his negligence, he was deprived of this honor; for when the soul relaxes its watchfulness and struggle, a spiritual darkness reigns and the illuminating Grace departs.

Finally, Abba Mark the Ascetic informs us that “One who has a spiritual gift and commiserates with those who do not, guards his gift through his sympathy; but the arrogant person will lose it.”

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A great struggle is therefore needed, not only to acquire the Grace of the Holy Spirit, but also to maintain it by humility, watchfulness, and sympathy, so that we might not find ourselves in the tragic condition of being abandoned by God.

Let us always remember the Divinely illumined Patristic words:

“God does not abandon the negligent person when he is negligent or the proud when he acts with pride so much as he abandons the pious person when he is negligent and the humble when he acts with pride.”



*Source: Άγιος Κυπριανός, No. 145 (January 1981), p. 1.