

LET US NOT THEREFORE BE ANXIOUS, for we shall gain nothing by it, but to torment ourselves. For whereas He gives both when we take thought, and when we do not, and more of the two, when we do not; what dost thou gain by thy anxiety, but to exact of thyself a superfluous penalty? Since one on the point of going to a plentiful feast, will not surely permit himself to take thought for food; nor is he that is walking to a fountain anxious about drink. Therefore seeing we have a supply more copious than either any fountain, or innumerable banquets made ready – the providence of God – let us not be beggars, nor little minded.

St John Chrysostom,
Homily XXII on the Gospel of Saint Matthew, p. 152

WATCH YOUR HEART DURING ALL YOUR LIFE—examine it, listen to it, and see what prevents its union with the most blessed Lord. Let this be for you the science of all sciences, and with God’s help you will easily observe what estranges you from God, and what draws you towards Him and unites you to Him. It is the evil spirit more than anything else that stands between our hearts and God; he estranges God from us by various passions, or by the desires of the flesh, by the desires of the eyes, and by worldly pride.

Saint John of Kronstadt, *My Life in Christ*, p. 13

THE CONSUMMATION of the entire course consists in these three things: in repentance, in purity, and in perfection. What is repentance? It is the abandoning of former deeds and grieving over them. What, succinctly, is purity? It is a heart that shows mercy to all created nature. And what is perfection? It is profound humility, which is the abandoning of everything visible and invisible: by visible [*I mean that one abandons*] all things perceived by the senses and by invisible [*I mean that one abandons*] all thought concerning them.

Once an elder was asked, ‘What is repentance?’ And he replied, ‘Repentance is a contrite and humble heart.’ ‘And what is humility?’ ‘It is a twofold voluntary death to all things.’ ‘And what is a merciful heart?’ ‘It is the heart’s burning for the sake of the entire creation, for men, for birds, for animals, for demons, and for every created thing; and by the recollection and sight of them the eyes of a merciful man pour forth abundant tears. From the strong and vehement mercy which grips his heart and from his great compassion, his heart is humbled and he cannot bear to hear or to see any injury or slight sorrow in creation. For this reason he offers up tearful prayer continually even for irrational beasts, for the enemies of the truth, and for those who harm him, that they be protected and receive mercy. And in like manner he even prays for the family of reptiles because of the great compassion that burns without measure in his heart in the likeness of God.’

The Ascetical Homilies of Saint Isaac the Syrian, Homily 71, pp. 344–5

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*Pearls
from
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