

THUS WHEN He had set the soul free from anxiety, then He made mention also of Heaven. For indeed He came to do away with the old things, and to call us to a greater country. Therefore He doeth all, to deliver us from things unnecessary, and from our affection for the earth. For this cause He mentioned the heathens also, saying that “the Gentiles seek after these things;” they whose whole labor is for the present life, who have no regard for the things to come, nor any thought of Heaven. But to you not these present are the chief things, but other than these. For we were not born for this end, that we should eat and drink and be clothed, but that we might please God, and attain unto the good things to come.

Therefore as things here are secondary in our labor, so also in our prayers let them be secondary. Therefore He also said, “Seek ye the kingdom of Heaven, and all these things shall be added unto you.” And He said not, “shall be given,” but “shall be added,” that thou mightest learn, that the things present are no great part of His gifts, compared with the greatness of the things to come. Accordingly, He doth not bid us so much as ask for them, but while we ask for other things, to have confidence, as though these also were added to those. Seek then the things to come, and thou wilt receive the things present also; seek not the things that are seen, and thou shalt surely attain unto them.

Yea, for it is unworthy of thee to approach thy Lord for such things. And thou, who oughtest to spend all thy zeal and thy care for those unspeakable blessings, dost greatly disgrace thyself by consuming it on the desire of transitory things. “How then?” saith one, “did He not bid us ask for bread?” Nay, He added, “daily,” and to this again, “this day,” which same thing in fact He doth here also. For He said not, “Take no thought,” but, “Take no thought for the morrow,” at the same time both affording us liberty, and fastening our soul on those things that are more necessary to us. For to this end also He bade us ask even those, not as though God needed reminding by us, but that we might learn that by His help we accomplish whatever we do accomplish, and that we might be made more His own by our continual prayer for these things.

St John Chrysostom,
Homily XXII on the Gospel of Saint Matthew, p. 153

PRESENT YOUR PETITIONS to God so as to accord with His glory, that your honour may be magnified before Him, and He rejoice over you. For if a man should beseech the king for a measure of dung, he not only dishonours himself by his miserable petition (since he has shown great lack of sense), but also he has heaped insult upon the king because of what he asked for; even so he that seeks earthly things from God in his prayers does the same. For lo, angels and archangels, who are the King’s great officials, are gazing steadfastly upon you at the time of your prayer to see what petition you will make of their Master; and they are astonished and exultant whenever they behold one who is made of earth forsake his dunghill and ask for what is heavenly.

The Ascetical Homilies of Saint Isaac the Syrian, Homily 3, p. 23

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NEVER belittle the significance of your thoughts, for not one of them escapes God’s notice.

St Mark the Ascetic, *On the Spiritual Law*, #89,

Philokalia, Vol. I, p. 116, Faber & Faber

Pearls from the Holy Fathers

Week of April 13–19, 2009

