A Ladder of Divine Ascent

2019

### Prayers

† Blessed is our God always, as it is now, was in the beginning, and ever shall be, world without end. Amen. ... in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen. Through the prayers of our holy Ancestors, Lord Jesus Christ our God, have mercy on us and save us. Amen. Glory to You, our God, glory to You.

O Heavenly King, the Comforter, the Spirit of truth, You are everywhere and fill all things, Treasury of blessings, and Giver of life: come and abide in us, and cleanse us from every impurity, and save our souls, O Good One.

† Holy God, Holy Mighty, Holy Immortal, have mercy on us (three times).

† Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit, as it is now, was in the beginning, and ever shall be, world without end. Amen.

“Ὁ θεός, ἱλάσθητί μοι τῷ ἁμαρτωλῷ.” — Luke 18:13[[1]](#footnote-1)

“Ἰησοῦ, μνήσθητί μου ὅταν ἔλθῃς ἐν τῇ βασιλείᾳ σου.” — Luke 23:42[[2]](#footnote-2)

“David ascended in the Ascent of Olives, ascending and weeping, with head covered, he went barefoot; and each person with him covered his head, so they went up, ascending and weeping.” — 2 Samuel 15:30 LXX

“The sowers will reap in joy. The ones going, went and wept, casting their seeds; yet, the ones coming, will come in exultation, carrying their sheaves.” — Psalm 125:5-6 LXX [126:5-6][[3]](#footnote-3)

“Send away your bread on the surface of the water: because, in a multitude of days you will find it.” — Ecclesiastes 11:1 LXX

“Indisputably great is the good-worship mystery: Who was clearly displayed in [the] flesh; Who defended righteousness in [the] Spirit; Who was witnessed by messengers; Who was proclaimed internationally; Who was believed cosmically; Who was taken up in Glory.” — 1 Timothy 3:16

“…: for, when prophecy came, not by human will: but, being carried by [the] Holy Spirit, humans, spoke from God.” — 2 Peter 1:21

“These [Bereans] were better-begotten than the [people] in Thessaloníki; who welcomed the Word with all enthusiasm: daily examining the writings if He might have it so.” — Acts 17:11

“Similarly, younger people, be submitted to [your] elders; all of you be clothed with humble mindedness toward one another: because, God opposes [the] arrogant; but, gives grace to the humble. Therefore, be humbled under the strong hand of God, so that He would exalt you in due time: casting all your care on Him: because, He cares about you.” — 1 Peter 5:5-7

Be clothed with poverty, Peter says: for: humility and poverty are very close synonyms.

### Introduction

“I know that with my arrival[[4]](#footnote-4) fierce wolves will come in among you, not sparing the little flock. Out of you yourselves men will stand up, speaking well established perversions[[5]](#footnote-5), to wrench away the disciples after themselves.” — Acts 20:29-30

In our examination of Church history, we discovered a great deal of betrayal; not in little matters; but, in weighty matters: murders, adulteries, grand larcenies, and false witness… all sorts of violence… even rampant atheism… antichrist… among our highest and most trusted leaders. To whom shall we go? Where will we turn? When it seems as if there is no one left who is qualified to lead, when we have been left alone, seemingly to perish….

We will go where the Church has always gone in humility, and service. We will seek, *A Ladder of Divine Ascent*: not a ladder only for monastics; but, a ladder for everyone: Jacob’s Ladder.

### The Ladder

Its Foundation

We pride ourselves with the idea that we are the seekers of God. The foundational truth is that God has been seeking us, since before the creation of the world, from eternity past in the hidden recesses of His Own mind. Father, Son, and Spirit always wanted a family; planned a universe; foresaw that children endowed with free will would hurt themselves; provided for their healing; planned in the Son to become perfect humanity; anticipated every need for restoration.

Then Father, Son, and Spirit created such a universe, such a world, with every forgiving, healing, nurturing, redemptive need… either built into that world from the start… or to be met through the intervention of miracles along the way.

“What is mankind, that You remember him? Or the son of man, that You watch over[[6]](#footnote-6) him?” — Psalm 8:5 LXX, [8:4 KJV; Hebrews 2:6

God created angels, which have no such freedom. Such, He has assured us, are either frozen in obedience, or in disobedience.

We do not need to ask God for things, though we commonly think we do: for, there is nothing needful for our journey that He has not already foreseen, planned, and richly provided. We do not need to ask for things. We need only to trust our Father.

Long before we ever thought of seeking God; long before we were ever betrayed by the multiple treasons of our leaders: God knew where we were, knew our plight, knew our every wound, and, as the faithful Father He is, has been calling to us to turn around and look to Him.

“The Lord God called to Adam. He said to him, ‘Where are you?’ ” — Genesis 3:9 LXX

Thus, we begin with the tender voice of God reaching out to His injured and beloved child. *A Ladder of Divine Ascent*, stands on the foundation prepared by God.

Its Guide

We are lost. We are crying. We cannot find the way home, let alone begin the ascent. We cannot find our Father. We think of ourselves as orphans. Blind, it would seem, we grope to find the door, a door, any door…. In desperation, we cry out for help, and help is not wanting.

“I tell you, Ask, and it will be given you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you: for, everyone asking, receives; [everyone] seeking, finds; and to [everyone] knocking, it will be opened. What father among you, if a child will ask for fish, will give them a serpent instead of fish? Or if they will ask an egg, will give them a scorpion? Therefore, if you, being evil, had known to give good gifts to your children: how much more will the heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask Him?” — Luke 11:9-13

Our bishop may have betrayed us: we do not need to ask a bishop for the Spirit… or a priest… or a deacon… or a traitorous king. Our Father hears our cries; He has already answered our prayer, long before we thought to pray. The Spirit is freely offered to all. You will not be denied.

A first step is taken as God holds our hands and encourages us to begin to walk: He gives us the Spirit. We are toddlers. We learn to walk.

A second step is taken: we learn to pray without ceasing.

“Pray unceasingly.” — Acts 12:5; Romans 1:9; 1 Thessalonians 5:17; 2 Timothy 1:3

We cannot progress in the Spirit without learning to pray to Father, Son, and Spirit.

A third step is taken: we learn to listen.

“After the earthquake, fire; the Lord was not in the fire. After the fire, a sound of a gentle whisper … [the] Lord was there.” — 1 Kings 19:12 LXX

A fourth step: we learn to obey.

“If you love Me, you will protect My commandments.” — John 14:15, 21; 15:10; 1 John 2:3, 4; 3:22, 24; 5:2, 3; 2 John 6[[7]](#footnote-7)

“Although being Son, He learned from what He suffered, the obedience;” — Hebrews 5:8

We are mere babies; barely toddlers: just beginning to learn to walk as our Father holds our hands, urging us on, to take each new step. Before we know it, we will be flying up and down Jacob’s ladder as if we were ourselves angels.

“The ones waiting on God will regain strength; they will grow feathers as eagles; they will run, and they will not tire; they will walk, and they will not hunger.” — Isaiah 40:31 LXX

Its Entrance

The Spirit leads us to a door.

“Then Jesus said to them again, ‘Amen, amen, I tell you that ***I Am*** the door of the sheep.” — John 10:7, 9

“To the angel of the Philadelphia congregation write; ‘This is what the Holy, the True, the Key Holder of David, the Opener that no one will shut, the Shutter that no one opens, says. “I know your works. Look, I have placed before you an opening door, which no one is able to shut: because, you have little ability. You protected My word. You did not deny My Name.” ’ ” — Revelation 3:8

Its Pasture and Path

The door opens into a pasture and path.

“[The] Lord shepherds me. He will lack nothing for me. He made me dwell there in verdant pasture; upon water of rest He nurtured me; my soul He restored; He guided me upon paths of righteousness on behalf of His Name: for, even if I also would be carried in [the] midst of death’s shadow, I will not fear evils: because, You are with me; Your rod and Your staff, these accompany[[8]](#footnote-8) me; You prepared a table before me, confronting my oppressors; You anointed my head with oil. Your cup satiates me as if [the] best [of drinks].[[9]](#footnote-9) Your mercy will follow me all the days of my life … for me to dwell in [the] Lord’s house into eternity of days.” — Psalm 22 LXX

“Jesus said to him, ‘***I Am*** the path, the truth, and the life: no one comes to the Father if not through Me.’ ” — John 14:6

Its Beckoning

“Then Jesus said to His disciples, ‘If anyone wills to come after Me, let them deny themselves, take up their crosses, and follow Me.” — Matthew 16:24; Mark 8:34; 10:21; Luke 9:23

Discipleship.

Christianity is all about discipleship: which is to say following the One leader.

“So, while you are going, make disciples of all nations, baptizing them into the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to protect everything I have commanded you. Look, I am with you all the days until the end of the age.” — Matthew 28:19-20

Let’s be clear here. Discipleship is not about going, as so many falsely insist. Discipleship is for everybody: you don’t have to become a missionary to be a disciple, not that there is anything wrong with becoming a missionary, if that’s what God calls you to do. Where are people going anyway? Look at the context. These verses are being read in church. Both the disciples and everybody else are going about life after they leave church, after they leave Christ’s immediate presence for a little while.

Discipleship is all about following Me, that is Jesus, only. Discipleship is not about following Peter, Paul, the other Apostles, the Seventy, Mary, the Pied Piper of Hamelin,[[10]](#footnote-10) or anybody else: only Jesus must be followed; only Jesus is worthy of being followed. Don’t follow false leaders. This is why none of the Apostles or the Seventy imitated Jesus by establishing their own followings of thirteen and seventy-two. The Father has provided that we follow Jesus directly and immediately; He has given us open access through the Spirit so that we can contact Him or Jesus at any time from any place… no waiting… no excuses…. Be a follower of Jesus.

There are some caveats. Wives should follow their husbands, always supposing that their husbands know more about following Jesus than they, unless the contrary becomes obvious. Children should follow their parents, always giving their parents the same benefit of the doubt, that parents know best how to follow Jesus. The ultimate measure of any human leader is that he teaches us to follow Christ, as Paul teaches us to follow Christ. If this is not the case, the leader is a false prophet, and a traitor.

Discipleship is a matter of will, free will, “if anyone wills”. It’s your mind to make up. Don’t let anybody else push you into this. Don’t defy your conscience and damage it.[[11]](#footnote-11) Stay in the pasture and graze until you freely come to understand that this is the only way. You will know soon enough without human prodding.

“Let each one be fully convinced in his own mind.” — Romans 14:5

Discipleship is for everyone, “if anyone wills”. Don’t let people convince you that it’s too hard either. Discipleship is for you: come freely of your own will, when you realize that the Father has made you ready.

Discipleship has a cost, “let them deny themselves”. We can’t follow Jesus and ourselves at the same time. We can’t do or have what we want, after we decide that it’s best to do what God wants. We must not flip back and forth on this issue: “the double minded person is unstable in every way”.[[12]](#footnote-12) Make up your own mind; be completely firm about it; commit to it without reservation; do what you committed to: don’t turn back like Lot’s wife. Don’t move ahead until you are sure you are ready and that God is telling you, it’s time to move on.

“Remember Lot's wife! Whoever could have sought to preserve his soul will destroy it; whoever would have destroyed will bring it to life.”[[13]](#footnote-13) — Luke 17:32-33

Burdens.

Everybody has burdens to carry. Everybody has a cross to bear. There is no escaping this. Even if you don’t think you are ready for discipleship, the burdens come all by themselves. As soon as Adam fell in the garden it became necessary that you carry burdens: your appetites drive you to them. You tire and must rest. You hunger and thirst and must refresh yourself. You have sexual desires that demand to be met. You strive for success, but are confronted by repeated failures. You grow old and face pain. You fight with your spouse. Your children get sick. Life goes on and on and on and you are defeated by it: the endless toil is discouraging. Your possessions rot and rust to dust. Your friends die. You face loneliness.

“Do not treasure up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rotting[[14]](#footnote-14) devour; where thieves break through and thieve. Treasure up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth or rotting devour; where thieves do not break through or thieve: for, where your treasure is, there your heart will also be.” — Matthew 6:19-21

“But mankind is begotten to toil and trouble, as vulture’s nestlings [are begotten to] soar high above.”[[15]](#footnote-15) — Job 5:7 LXX

“I have told you this, so that in Me you could have peace; in the world, you have trouble: but, be of good cheer; I have conquered[[16]](#footnote-16) the world.” — John 16:33

Sexuality is one of mankind’s chiefest and first burdens. As the gift of God and therefore wonderfully sacramental; human sexuality was designed to be fully enjoyed in the marital union of one man and one woman, brought together, and joined by God Himself… there is no sin in this. However, mankind fell, thus distorting the whole sexual relationship and making it into yet another burden. Why did God give you a spouse, you might ask? In order to make a saint of you.[[17]](#footnote-17)

Together with sexuality comes the agony of pregnancy and offspring. You will have experienced no affliction, no angst, no anguish, as that when your firstborn is stricken and you labor for days without sleep over their small, fevered, and frail body. Why did God give children to parents?[[18]](#footnote-18) To make saints of them. Later, children become adolescents and wonder, why did God curse[[19]](#footnote-19) me with parents? To make you a saint.

There can be no doubt that marriage is a great burden that will keep you from prayer. Paul says as much.[[20]](#footnote-20) However, celibacy is another kind of burden. Celibacy escapes one set of burdens, to stumble into a different set of burdens.

“But if they cannot contain, let them marry: for it is better to marry than to burn.” — 1 Corinthians 7:9

Everybody has burdens to carry. What shall we ever do with them? Eventually, we realize that these burdens are part of discipleship training: custom designed for each of us to help us grow in grace. Eventually, we learn to embrace them as friends; not reject them as enemies. All of them are for our sanctification, our consecration, our dedication as saints. The more we embrace them, the lighter they are to carry. We cannot hope to climb Jacob’s Ladder with angels until we have been made strong by carrying burdens.

“Let my yoke be lifted up[[21]](#footnote-21) upon you. Learn from Me: because, I am gentle and humble[[22]](#footnote-22) in heart. You will discover rest for your souls.” — Matthew 11:29

We must take the yoke of Jesus. We must not shy away from it. This yoke is the key to our deliverance.

We must learn from Jesus; other teachers are optional: if they fail to point us to Jesus, they are false prophets… avoid them at all costs. Paul was a great teacher, he incessantly points us to Christ. The greatest teacher we have is the Spirit, Who, points us to Christ without fail. Learn all about Jesus from the Spirit.

Jesus is the greatest of leaders: He is gentle and humble. We must not follow leaders who are not gentle and humble. Follow Jesus.

Restraint

Many burdens are the result of desires, hungers. The fall has twisted these into wicked extremes: gluttony, sexual perversion, and the like. The cacophony of mortal sin was so bad in the fourth century, that many people saw monasticism as the only way to find quiet and peace to pray: that is still true for those called to it. However, this is not a choice for the sexually burdened person.

What the monastics discovered was that it is necessary to restrain the flesh by fasting, hard work, humility, and service mixed with their prayers. Today, few of us have a very good mental picture of what monastic life was like. At least the early monasteries were mostly like Amish farms today. The monastics worked the land, nurtured the crops, tended the orchards, working hard with their hands, pausing at the appointed hours to pray. Silence was viewed as a virtue. Spare time was mostly spent in the library studying. All of these methods and virtues will help prevent our sexuality from perverting us; from running away with our bodies.

Unfortunately, such monastic systems prospered because of their diligence, becoming quite wealthy; with wealth came hired surfs, until the serfs did all the menial work: the monastics retired to a life of scholarship and study and ever growing arrogance.[[23]](#footnote-23)

Monastic life improved when the monastics were returned to the fields, to hard work, and service, as with the Cistercians and their revival. To be brief, a gentle and humble, Christ-like, life requires the development of self-restraint.

Many have found fasting a necessary instrument in restraining gluttony and other sins of the body. Else, instead of owning a body, you find that your body owns you. Else, instead of owning things, you discover that your things own you. You are working for all those machines you’ve invented; instead of all those “labor saving” devices working for you.

Sexuality can also run away with the mind, resulting in a wide variety of sexual perversions operating in the world today. I was mildly amused when a preacher addressed this problem among the eldership: because, I couldn’t believe what I was hearing. Then, in an unguarded moment, I got caught in the same web: I was lucky to escape with my life: but Jesus found me floundering and struggling, and cut me free.

Some burdens are easier to restrain than others. The rich man can give away his wealth; the poor man cannot give away his poverty. The king may give away his crown; the surf cannot give away his bondage.

“Were you called [as] a servant? Do not let it bother[[24]](#footnote-24) you. But if you have power to become free, rather use [it].” — 1 Corinthians 7:21[[25]](#footnote-25)

“Not that I speak out of poverty: for, I learned, in whatever I am, to be self-sufficient[[26]](#footnote-26).” — Philippians 4:11

Marriage and celibacy are both burdens. Feast and famine are both burdens. Wealth and poverty are both burdens. Lordship and servitude are both burdens. Choose your burdens wisely. Exercise restraint with every burden.

Crosses

However, a cross is more than a burden: it is an instrument of death. With it, we put our own personal desires to death every day, so that we can do what God wants us to do. The worst days are those days when we forget the cross and wander aimlessly in sin: then, clothed in our shame as lost sheep, Jesus finds us and carries us home.

The cross is a constant reminder of our mortality. We cannot escape death. We cannot cross over into heaven without going through the experience of death: which is why this is sometimes called, “The Valley of Death’s Shadow”.

The cross is a clear declaration of our rights. We have the right to die for and with Jesus. We do not have the right to engage in physical war for Him.

The cross is a beacon, pointing to our homeward destination. The cross leads us to heaven.

Baptism

Jesus baptizes us in two ways: with the Spirit and with fire. Fire speaks of all those burdens, hardships, tribulations, crosses we must learn to embrace in life.[[27]](#footnote-27) Spirit refers to our Constant Companion, while we are away from the immediate presence of Christ. Get used to praying for the Spirit’s guidance, both night and day, every hour… minute… second. Grip the Spirit’s hand tightly so that you do not stumble and fall.

Teaching

The road of discipleship is all about learning: as we walk, Jesus and the Spirit teach us with every step we take.

“Look! That same day two of them are going[[28]](#footnote-28) to a village sixty stadia[[29]](#footnote-29) away from Jerusalem, which was named Emmaus. They were discussing with each other, all that had been happening among them.

“It began, during their discussion and debate, that Jesus himself, approaching, had gone with them; their eyes were glazed to not know Him.[[30]](#footnote-30)

“He said to them, ‘What words are you tossing around with one another, walking along?’ They stood downcast…. One named Cleopas, in replying said to Him, ‘Are you alone, a stranger in Jerusalem? Did you not know the beginnings in her in these days?’ He said to them, ‘What was done?’ They said to Him, ‘The things about Jesus of Nazareth, Who began as a heroic[[31]](#footnote-31) prophet, powerful in works and words, facing God and all the people: how our chief priests and archons delivered Him to a death sentence. They crucified Him. We have hoped that He is The One intending to deliver Israel: but, now also, with all these, this [is] the third day since these things began: but, some of our women also surprised us, beginning early at the tomb: not finding His body, they came saying to have seen a vision of angels saying that He lived. Some of those with us went away to the tomb. They also discovered, even as the women said: yet, they did not see Him.’[[32]](#footnote-32)

“He said to them, ‘Unthinking[[33]](#footnote-33), and slow of wit[[34]](#footnote-34) to believe in everything the prophets[[35]](#footnote-35) spoke. Must it not have been necessary for Christ to experience these, then to enter into His glory?’

“Starting first from Moses, with all the prophets[[36]](#footnote-36), He explained[[37]](#footnote-37) to them about Himself in all the writings.[[38]](#footnote-38)

“As they approached the village where they had been going: He intended to go further. They urged Him, saying, ‘Stay with us: because, vespers is approaching, the day has declined already.’ He came in to stay with them.

“It began when He was to recline with them, taking the bread, He blessed [it], and breaking [it], has given [it] to them; their eyes were opened, they recognized Him, and He became invisible to them.[[39]](#footnote-39)

“They said one to another, ‘Was not our heart[[40]](#footnote-40) igniting in us, as He has talked with us on the road, as He has opened[[41]](#footnote-41) the writings to us?’[[42]](#footnote-42)

“Standing up in the same hour, they returned to Jerusalem. They discovered the eleven and those with them were gathered together, saying that the Lord actually was awakened. He was seen by Simon. They have described the [events] on the road; and how He was known to them in the breaking[[43]](#footnote-43) of the bread;[[44]](#footnote-44) they are saying these [things], [when] He stood in their midst; being panicked with fear, at first[[45]](#footnote-45), they have thought to see a spirit.

“He said to them, ‘Why are you being upset? Why do plots[[46]](#footnote-46) arise in your hearts? See My hands and My feet, that ***I Am***[[47]](#footnote-47) He. Touch Me. See that a spirit does not have flesh and bones, even as you observe Me having.’[[48]](#footnote-48)

“Speaking thus, He showed them His hands and His feet: while they, incredulous with joy and amazement, He said to them, ‘Do you have anything edible here?’ So, they served Him a piece of broiled fish. Taking [it], He ate in their presence.

“He said to them, ‘These [are] My words which I told to you, while being with you, that it is necessary for everything in writing in the Law of Moses, Prophets, and Psalms[[49]](#footnote-49) about Me to be fulfilled.’[[50]](#footnote-50) Then He opened their minds, to understand the writings.[[51]](#footnote-51) He said to them, ‘Thus it was written [for] Christ to have suffered, and have stood up out of the dead in the third day.’[[52]](#footnote-52) (Change of mind and forgiveness of sins[[53]](#footnote-53) was to be proclaimed in His name to all the nations, starting from Jerusalem.)[[54]](#footnote-54) ‘You are witnesses of these things. Look, I send out My Father’s promise[[55]](#footnote-55) on you: Stay seated in the city until you would be robed[[56]](#footnote-56) with power out of heaven[[57]](#footnote-57).’ ” — Luke 24:13-49

From Luke, we discover that learning comes by walking with Jesus from two sources:

* One, from the Bible, specifically from the Greek Old Testament;
* Two, from breaking bread with Jesus, which is called Communion, Eucharist, or Mysteries. God calls it the Epiousion.

Its Word

We reserve the title, The Word, for Jesus Christ, Himself. What He spoke is words. This suggests that what is important is that Jesus words are not ordinary words; recording them with paper and ink does not suffice, they must be engraved on human hearts: this, the Scripture itself says, is the primary instrument of Scripture transmission.

“You are our epistle, having been written in our hearts, being known and being recited by all mankind: illuminating that you are an epistle of Christ, being delivered by us, having been written; not in ink, but with the Spirit of the living God; not in stone tablets, but in fleshy hearts tablets.” — 2 Corinthians 3:2-3; Jeremiah 31:33; Romans 2:15; Hebrews 8:10, 16

The Bible

Do not be deceived into merely reading or studying the Bible. Intellectual approaches are of no value: all they do is cater to pride. We will not learn from Jesus and the Spirit because we are smart; often we learn most by being humiliated, usually by our own stupidity.

We must consume, devour, eat the Bible as though we would die of starvation if we did not have it: for, surely, we will die of starvation if we do not have it.

“Your words by being consumed, You accomplished them. Your Word will be to me for [the] gladness and joy of my heart: because, Your Name had been called upon me, O Lord Almighty.” — Jeremiah 15:16 LXX

“I received the little book out of the angel’s hand. I swallowed it down. It has been in my mouth as honey sweet. When I swallowed it, my belly was made sour.” — Revelation 10:10

If the Word of God does not kindle a fire in our belly, unworthy as we will always be, we can never become effective godly leaders: we will only imitate the arrogant and the demonic.

Pray the Bible; let each word be a request for the Spirit’s teaching and understanding. If devouring and praying the Bible doesn’t draw forth blood, fears, sickness, tears, terrors, trembling, mingled with joy and the pounding of your heart, something is lacking.

“Thus says [the] Lord, ‘The heaven is My throne; the earth is footstool of My feet: what sort of house will you build Me? What kind of place is My rest? For, all these My hand made. All these things are Mine, says [the] Lord. Upon whom will I look? But, upon the humble and silent and trembling before My Words.” — Isaiah 66:1-2 LXX

Its Obedience

You say that it’s all by faith, and it is: but, even demons have faith and tremble.[[58]](#footnote-58) Why do demons tremble? Demons tremble because they cannot possibly obey; they cannot add works of faith to their faith: they can only watch helplessly as their disobedience multiplies: because, they have no Champion, they have no Savior … to die for them. God became man. God did not become angel.

“Do you have faith that God is One? You do well. The demons also have faith, and feel terror.” — James 2:19

So, all is for naught, if we do not learn to obey.

“teaching them to protect everything I have commanded you.” — Matthew 28:20a

“The Word was begotten flesh. He camped among us. We saw His Glory, Glory as Only-begotten in parity with [the] Father[[59]](#footnote-59), full of grace and truth.” — John 1:14

“What I have seen in parity with the Father, I say. So, you also, what you heard in parity with[[60]](#footnote-60) the Father, do.” — John 8:38

“No one takes it from Me; but, I lay it down from Myself. I have authority to lay it down. I have authority to take it again. This command I received in parity with[[61]](#footnote-61) My Father.” — John 10:18

We must become doers. How? To proceed without the Spirit in any holy quest, any educational endeavor, is pure vanity: for, the outcome will be pride, rather than wisdom.[[62]](#footnote-62) The unceasing request for the Spirit, who the Father gives to all without fail is absolutely necessary. Yet, if we would ask, we also must listen with great attention: for, the Spirit whispers more often than not.[[63]](#footnote-63) What we hear from the Spirit, we must do. That is how we become doers.

What is this deed we must do, above all others? We must take the cup of salvation.[[64]](#footnote-64) We must take the cup of Jesus’ crucifixion, embracing it as if it were our own: we gladly die with Him. This is the meaning of Communion.

Its Pitfalls

I paused from feasting and prayer, to glance at the horizon. I realized, cloud like, we had floated to a considerable altitude; seemingly, without much effort. We were many rungs above the valley floor: nearly at the top. I smiled as I took great pleasure in everything I had accomplished. I slept. I awoke. We were back at the lowest spot of the valley floor. My pride had ruined everything. That great elevation was achieved, only as the Spirit carried us aloft, as if on eagle’s wings. My pride had dashed every hope to the ground. The Spirit was very disappointed in me. Humiliated and ashamed, the next day I was commanded to do an investigation of the valley floor and its soils: it was part of my penance. Nothing destroys spiritual workmanship as pride destroys … so completely…. I got down on my hands and knees and began to examine the dirt.

“Look, the sower went out to sow. As he [began] to sow some fell beside the road. The birds, coming, consumed it. Other fell on the rocky place, [which] does not have much earth. Immediately, they sprouted: since, they did not have depth of earth. [The] rising sun burned: because it did not have root, it dried up. Other fell on the thorns. The thorns came up and choked it. Other fell on the good earth. It began to yield[[65]](#footnote-65) fruit: one an hundredfold, one sixty, one thirty.” — Matthew 13:3b-8

While I was digging in the dirt, Jesus began to teach by the voice of the Spirit, Who reminds us of everything Jesus did and taught.[[66]](#footnote-66)

“You, therefore, you listen to the Parable of the Sower. Everyone listening to the Word of the kingdom, not understanding: the evil would come, and he snatches away the sowing in his heart. This is the sowing beside the road. The sowing on the rocky, this is the listening to the Word, and immediately receiving it with joy; yet, he does not have root in himself: but, it is briefly; now, coming distress or persecution because of the Word, immediately he stumbles[[67]](#footnote-67). The sowing in the thorns, this is the listening to the Word, and the worry of time, this and the deception of wealth strangles the Word. It becomes fruitless. The sowing on the good earth, this is the listening to the Word and understanding: which carries fruit and yields: one an hundredfold, one sixty, one thirty.” — Matthew 13:18-23

As the scales slipped away from my eyes, I began to understand that this was not about the soils slipping through my fingers. This was not about an ineffective gardener, who was too dull to keep his efforts away from bad soils. This was about the Sower named the Word, Who, in love brings His proclamation to every variety of people: there is no one He does not love, no one He does not seek to reach.

This is about the hearts and attitudes and wills of people, as well: for, the heart is the core of the mind where thinking is done, and decisions are made.

This is about listening: Jesus repeats it five times. Listen to Jesus, and do what He says.

The birds and demons are just doing what birds and demons do: they clean up unwanted treasure. Hardness of the heart is a choice. Then I remembered the many times I had scorned the forgiveness of God. … the times I had kept my brothers and sisters in bondage to me; the grudges I had held; the bitternesses I had harbored; the hate and malice I had spewed forth… then I was ashamed and began to weep. Such was the state of my road-like, hardened heart.

“Thus, also, My heavenly Father will do to you if you do not forgive, each his brother from your hearts.” — Matthew 18:35

I slept and dreamed about all the many times I had bypassed a street beggar, refusing to give even a dime. I remembered the many times I had rebuked the poor for their sloth and stupidity: I blamed their poverty on them. I had refused to approve the slightest charity in church or in government… then I awaked, terrified by my own dreams: for I knew that I had turned Christ Himself away. Such was the state of my rocky shallow heart.

“For, I was hungry. You did not give Me to eat. I was thirsty. You did not quench Me. I had been a stranger. You did not gather Me in. … naked. You did not cover Me. … weak and in prison. You did not visit Me.” — Matthew 25:42-43

I became obsessed with my career, with success, and making money. I toiled, often double shifts. I worried that I might not be able to provide for my family. I fought to get ahead. I neglected the proclamation of the Gospel. My prayers were compressed. I had little time for the Bible. Preaching went in one ear and out the other: because, my thoughts were on career, money, providing, worries. I grew cold. A preacher rebuked me, and cut me free. I wept again. Such was the state of my thorn strangled heart. I had forgotten my first love. I had stopped listening to the Spirit. I had neglected the purpose for which God left me on earth.

“… make disciples of all nations….” Matthew 28:19b

It is probably inevitable that hard working young people would worry about money today. Modern standards of income are simply oppressive. Predatory lending surrounds us. Don’t let your true life in Christ be strangled.

“[It is] good for a man when he could pick up [the] yoke in his youth.” — Lamentations 3:27

… better than in old age. There is nothing of which to be ashamed in hard work. There is nothing of which to be ashamed in providing for your family. Just don’t let it deafen you to the sincere hearing of God’s Word.

“Make [the] profane word and lies far away from me, wealth and poverty, You should not give me. Appoint me praying and necessities; lest being wealthy, I could become a liar and I would say, Who sees me? Or, being poverty stricken, steal and curse the Name of God.” — Proverbs 30:8-9 LXX, found after 24:22ε

So it was, that in old age, having been delivered from many dangers and snares; having escaped death on many occasions: only by the deliverance and grace of God: for, my guardian angel must have been exceedingly put to the task; so, at last I stumbled, blindly and wounded, into what God wanted me to do with my life. It was not digging in the dirt examining soils. It had to do with digging in the heart with the Word of God: from the examination of my own wicked heart, I would learn what to say to others. In order to make disciples.

Its Enemies

Then a new problem surfaced:

“He set before them another parable, ‘The kingdom of heaven [is as] a man sowing good seed in his field. While his laborers went to sleep, his enemy came. He re-sowed tares[[68]](#footnote-68) in the midst of the wheat[[69]](#footnote-69). He escaped. Thus, the grass sprouted. It gave fruit. Then the tares also appeared. So, the servants of the house foreman approaching, said to him, “Lord, did you not sow good seed in your field? Then how does it have tares?” He began telling them, “An enemy laborer did this.” The servants say to him, “Then, do you want [us] going [that] we should collect them?” He says, “No, lest collecting the tares you should uproot the wheat together with them. Allow both to be grown together until the harvest. In the season of the harvest I will tell the harvesters, “Collect the tares first. Bundle them into bundles to burn them. Then, gather wheat into my storeroom.” ’ ” — Matthew 13:24-30

“Do not be deceived; God is not mocked: for, what a person would sow, that he will also reap: because, the one sowing in his own flesh, will reap corruption out of the flesh. But, the one sowing in the Spirit will reap everlasting life out of the Spirit.” — Galatians 6:7-8

Jesus explains that He, the Word, is the sower. The field is the world, not just Israel, not just the Roman Empire, not just Western Civilization. The good seed are the children of the kingdom: that is, Christians. The tares are the children of the evil one: that is, Satan. The enemy is the devil: namely, Satan himself. The harvest is the end of the world. The harvesters are the angels.[[70]](#footnote-70)

Several applications are clear. We are not to touch or harm the tares, since the laborers and servants are not to touch or harm the tares. The tares are an enemy, we are not to emulate them in any way. The tares will be with us until the end of the world: we need to get used to it. We are where God has planted us, we should be content with that as far as it is possible: circumstances do move some of us. The tares are none of our business. Our business is bearing fruit.

“Do not be vexed over evildoers, neither be jealous of the doers of lawlessness.” — Psalm 36:1, 7, 8; Proverbs 24:19 LXX; Psalm 37:1, 7, 8 KJV

Its Purpose

“***I Am*** the vine, you the branches; He abiding in Me… I also in him, this[[71]](#footnote-71) bears much fruit: because, apart from Me you most certainly[[72]](#footnote-72) do not have power to do anything.” — John 15:5

Its Soldiers

My master decided that I was now strong enough to join the ranks of soldiers and be fitted with a suit of armor.

“Henceforth, be filled with power in [the] Lord, and in the might of His strength. Put on all the armor of God; thus, to empower you to stand against the methods of the devil: because, our conflict is not against blood and flesh; but, against the rulers, against the authorities, against the world powers of this darkness, against the supernatural wickedness in the heavenlies. Because of this, take up all the armor of God, so that you would be empowered to stand against the evil day. Having accomplished everything, to stand. Be stood, therefore: girding your hips in truth; donning the breastplate of righteousness; under-binding the feet in readiness of the good news of peace; in all taking up the great shield of faith in which you will have power to extinguish all the flaming missiles of the evil; receive the helmet of salvation; and the sword of the Spirit, which is the speech of God; through every prayer and request, praying at all time in Spirit; unsleeping in every persistence and request for all of the consecrated.” — Ephesians 6:10-18

Here, we learn that our spiritual battle has always been against those very leaders who betrayed us: for, they were sold out to Satan from the beginning.

Its Song

We turned to hear and see a band of singing soldiers marching down the valley toward the ladder. We hastened to follow and listen: for, their singing had a heavenly purity about it, as if angels, rather than people, were singing.

“Happy, the poor in spirit: because, theirs is the kingdom of the heavens.

“Happy, the mourners: because, they will be comforted.

“Happy, the gentle: because, they will inherit the earth.

“Happy, the hungering and thirsting for justice: because, they will be satisfied.

“Happy, the merciful: because, they will be shown mercy.

“Happy, the clean in heart: because, they will see God.

“Happy, the peacemakers: because, they will be called the children of God.

“Happy, the persecuted for righteousness: because, theirs is the kingdom of the heavens.

“Happy are you, when they would condemn you, and would persecute, and would say all kinds of evil against you, lying because of Me.

“Rejoice, and be glad: because, great is your reward in the heavens: for, thus they persecuted the prophets before you.” — Matthew 5:3-12

Then I heard a strange Jody Call.

“You’re the salt of the earth.” You’re right.

“You’re the salt of the earth.” You’re right.

“Sound off….”

“You’re the light of the world.” You’re right.

“You’re the light of the world.” You’re right.

“Sound off….”

Its Race

Soon we were at double time. Then we were running.

“For, truly then, we also, having so great a cloud[[73]](#footnote-73) of witnesses surrounding us, setting aside every burden and the easily ensnaring sin, we should run the race being set before us with endurance and patience, concentrating on the Founder and Finisher of the faith, Jesus, Who, for the joy being set before Him, remained on [the] cross, ignoring [the] shame, He was enthroned at the right of God’s throne.” — Hebrews 12:1-2

Its Battles

We came to an abrupt halt as we were set upon by an angry mob dressed in priestly garments (false priests) and uniforms of government (traitors in leadership), who hurled great insults and rocks at us … injuring some. We set our shields in the square[[74]](#footnote-74), and unsheathed our swords. Our swords immediately sang out:

“Christ is risen!” All is forgiven.

“Christ is risen!” All is forgiven.

“Christ is risen!” All is forgiven.

The counterattack came quickly. We were assaulted with swords and spears, clubs and staves. God is dead, they shouted. We did not strike back.[[75]](#footnote-75) Some were beaten to death. Some were arrested and sent to prison camps. Others were tortured. I was left in the road to die. I thought my quest had ended. Then a gentle voice came to me:

For, consider such a contradiction remaining on sinners against themselves; so that, you would not be wearied in your souls, quitting. You have not yet defiantly resisted death[[76]](#footnote-76), struggling against sin.” — Hebrews 12:3-4

“Become faithful unto death, and I will give you the crown of life.” — Revelation 2:10b

I struggled to my feet, and pressed on down the road, limping … remembering Jacob….

“For, you have need of endurance and patience: so that, doing the will of God you would receive the promise.” — Hebrews 10:36

Patience comes easily for a child with toys, even broken ones. Endurance is simple with a helpless animal or child. Being patient with an enemy is a little harder to bear. But, when a supposed good friend, a longtime associate, a colleague attacked me, I exploded in anger. Later I broke down in tears. I had failed in endurance, becoming impatient, yet, once more. The disciple must struggle for mastery of patience and endurance.

It takes diligence, time, and toil to wage war against personal anger, even if it’s a losing battle. This is often a broken rung on the ladder.

I slept. I dreamed lascivious dreams. I awoke in terror. Months later, after many repetitions of similar lascivious dreams, I would come to realize that I was under demonic attack. Everybody has demons. Learn to recognize them. Look for ways to kill them by prayer.

Forgiveness, gratitude, humility, mercy, selflessness, and service are virtues that faithful disciples must cultivate in life. Each is a ladder rung.

“I say, ‘Walk in [the] Spirit.’ You should never ever complete [the] desire of flesh: for, flesh desires against the Spirit; the Spirit against the flesh: for, these oppose one another: so that, you should not do whatever you would wish. If you are led in [the] Spirit, you are not under law.

“The works of the flesh are visible[[77]](#footnote-77), which are: prostitution, demonism, violence, idolatry, drug abuse, hostility, strife, jealousy, tantrums, ambition, division, opinion, envy, drunkenness, reveling, and the like of these; of which I predict to you, just as I warned that [the ones] practicing such things will not inherit God’s kingdom.

“The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faith, gentleness, self-discipline[[78]](#footnote-78). There is not any law against such things.

“Christ’s ones crucified the flesh, with the experiences[[79]](#footnote-79) and the desires. If we would live in [the] Spirit, we should also walk in [the] Spirit. We should not become arrogant, provoking one another, envying one another.” — Galatians 5:16-26; Ephesians 5:9

“Similarly, younger people, be submitted to [your] elders; all of you be clothed with humble mindedness toward one another: because, God opposes [the] arrogant; but, gives grace to the humble. Therefore, be humbled under the strong hand of God, so that He would exalt you in due time: casting all your care on Him: because, He cares about you.” — 1 Peter 5:5-7

Be clothed with poverty, Peter says: for: humility and poverty are very close synonyms.

These are the marks of the true Christian; not domination, lying, pride, and show. We have lost nothing in the loss of our leaders: for, the true Church was never like them at all… we only pray for their sincere repentance….

Silence is golden. It too is a difficult ladder rung to grasp; as is sloth… it’s so easy to remain in the valley, never to run or climb… or say, “I’m wounded, it’s too hard to climb.”

All these things and their enemies block the path to following in the footsteps of Jesus; to becoming an effective, faithful evangelist; to becoming Christ-like.

“Christ is risen!” All is forgiven.

“Christ is risen!” All is forgiven.

“Christ is risen!” All is forgiven.

Its Tutor

These obstacles are our friends that train us in spiritual battle. We cannot grow without them.

“You have forgotten the conversation which coaches you as children. ‘My child, do not take casually [the] Lord’s tutoring, or quit at His correcting: for, whom [the] Lord loves, He tutors, He punishes every child whom He welcomes.’

“In tutoring, endure as children, it is offered to you by God: for, what child [exists] whom a father does not tutor? If you are without tutoring, in which all have become partners: then you are illegitimate, not children.

“On the one hand, we have had fleshly fathers [who] tutored [us] and we have revered [them]. Will we not much more submit to the Father of Spirits, and live? For, on the other hand, they, for a few days, tutored [us] according to whatever seemed [best] for them; He, in bearing with us, that we might share His consecration.

“All tutoring, for the [time] being, seems not to be joyous, but grievous, only later it yields [the] peace-ruling fruit of righteousness in those being trained by her. So, straighten up the sagging hands and the weakening knees. Make straight tracks for your feet; so that, the lame would not be thrown out [of joint]; rather, it could be healed.” — Hebrews 12:5-13

It is very easy to become discouraged in spiritual battle. When others attack us, we want to strike back, and sometimes we do, retaliating with physical force, which is wrong.[[80]](#footnote-80) We fail, and we fail, and we fail; which is why, at last, we succeed. So, it is important that we not allow ourselves to become casualties.

“We should not tire of doing good: for, in our own time, not quitting, we will reap.” — Galatians 6:9

“Pursue peace with everyone, and consecration and dedication[[81]](#footnote-81), without which no one will see the Lord.

“Jesus replied, ‘My kingdom is not of this world; if My kingdom were of this world: My servants would fight, so that I would not be delivered to the Jews: but now My kingdom is not from here.’” — John 18:36

“For although we walk in the flesh, we do not soldier by the standard of flesh: for, the armaments of our soldiering are not fleshly; but, powerful in God for[[82]](#footnote-82) razed[[83]](#footnote-83) fortresses: razing reasoning, and all haughtiness being lifted up against[[84]](#footnote-84) the knowledge of God, capturing every thought in the obedience of Christ.” — 2 Corinthians 10:3-5

**“There is no such a thing as just war.”**

The distinctive mark of Christians is their consecration or dedication to God: which is to say that they have picked up their crosses to follow Jesus. As He was a person of peace, so they also must be people of peace. A warmonger cannot be a Christian leader, let alone a Christian.

“He sat down, calling the twelve. He told them, ‘If anyone desires to be first, He will be last of all, and servant of all.” — Mark 9:35[[85]](#footnote-85)

“Christ is risen!” All is forgiven.

“Overseeing [that] no one is being left behind from the grace of God; [that] no one is growing up [as] a root of sourness [that] would disturb, and through it many could be defiled; [that] no one [is] a prostitute[[86]](#footnote-86), or worldly as Esau, who, for one dinner, gave away his own first-born rights: for, you know that also thereafter, wishing to inherit the blessing, he was rejected: for, he did not find a place of repentance, although seeking it with tears.” Hebrews 12:14-17

At last, we have reached the top rung of the ladder. We are at the gates of the true Church. We take one last look at the fallen world below. It was being ground into powder by a great stone. Our treacherous leaders in church and politics all perished… sad….

“You continued to observe until a stone was cut without hands out of a mountain. It struck the statue[[87]](#footnote-87) upon the iron and clay feet. It ground them into [their] end. Then the clay, the iron, the copper, the silver, the gold was ground into one. It became as if dust from a summer threshing floor. The violence of the wind lifted it up. It was not found anywhere. The stone striking the statue was begotten a great mountain. It filled all the earth.” — Daniel 2:34-35 LXX

“In the days of those kings, the God of heaven will stand up a kingdom, which will not be destroyed into the ages. His kingdom will not be left to a different[[88]](#footnote-88) people. It will grind and separate all the kingdoms. It will stand in the ages. In this turning point where you saw that a stone was cut without hands from a mountain; it ground the clay, the iron, the copper, the silver, the gold: the great God made known to the king what is necessary to be born with these. The dream [is] true. Its analysis [is] faithful.” — Daniel 2:44-45 LXX

We do well to give attention to the words of Daniel. Rome may have moved its Capital to Constantinople; it will later shift back to Rome again… and to Metz, Aachen, Vienna, Regensburg, Wetzlar, Weimar, Berlin, Moscow, and yet other cities: but the Word of God stands firm… Rome will crumble and fall to dust along with all other human arrogance. True Christianity is humble and seeks humility in service.

Its Destination

Finally, we turned and entered the gates of the true Church. This is what we saw.

“For, you had not come to a tangible [thing], to a [visibly] burning fire, to darkness, gloom, and storm; or to [audible] sound of trumpet, voice of speech: which, the hearers begged to not be subjected to [another] word to them: for, they had not carried what was being commanded, ‘if even a beast would touch the mountain it will be stoned.’ Thus, so terrible had been the appearing [that even] Moses said, ‘I am terrified and trembling.’

“But, you had come to mount Sion, to [the] city of the living God, to heavenly Jerusalem, to myriads of angels, to a festal assembly; to the calling out of the firstborn having been enrolled in heaven; to God, judge of all; to righteous spirits being made complete; to a new covenant mediator, Jesus; to sprinkled blood speaking better than Abel’s.

“See that you would not reject the speaker: for, if these did not escape on earth, rejecting the warning One, much more we [are not] escaping the One from heaven, by Whose voice the earth was shaken then; now He had promised, saying, ‘Yet once I will shake, not only the earth, but also the heaven;’ this ‘yet once’ makes clear about the shaking, the transformation, as of things being made over, that the not shaking things would remain: through which, receiving an unshaken kingdom, we would have grace through which we could serve God well-pleasingly, with respect and fear: for, our God [is] a consuming fire.” — Hebrews 12:18-29

“I saw a new heaven and a new earth: for, the first heaven and the first earth went away. The sea is not any longer. The consecrated city, new Jerusalem, I saw, descending out of the heaven from God, being prepared as a bride being adorned for her husband.

“I heard a loud voice out of the throne, ‘Look! The tabernacle of God is among the humans. He will tabernacle among them. They will be His people. God Himself will be among them.

“God will wipe every tear out of their eyes. Death will not be any longer; nor mourning, nor wailing, nor will pain be any longer. The first went away.” — Revelation 21:1-4

Our eyes must be fastened only upon the prize of the heavenly kingdom described by Paul in Hebrews and John in Revelation. All other worldly kingdoms must crumble to dust.

Then we saw Jesus Himself with His Father.

Without the Spirit there is no new life in Christ.[[89]](#footnote-89) We cannot walk with Jesus throughout our lives… it is the Spirit Who has guided us on the right track throughout our journey.

“The Spirit is the life-giver[[90]](#footnote-90); the flesh does not benefit absolutely anything[[91]](#footnote-91); the utterances that I had spoken to you: it is spirit; it is life.” — John 6:63

“Ἐλέησόν με, κύριε υἱὸς Δαυίδ….” — Matthew 15:22

“Κύριε, ἐλέησόν μου τὸν υἱόν….” — Matthew 17:15

“Κύριε, ἐλέησον ἡμᾶς, υἱὸς Δαυίδ.” — Matthew 20:30

“Our Father in the heavens,

“Your name was consecrated and dedicated; Your kingdom came; Your will was begotten; as in heaven, also on the earth. You gave us our bread today, the epiousion (the very glorious Body and like precious Blood of Jesus Christ, Your Son, our Savior and Lord). [For His sake] You forgave our debts; as we forgive our debtors. Even though You could not have led us into peril; even so You delivered us from the evil.

“For if you did forgive others their side-falls (stumbling), then your heavenly Father will forgive you. Yet, if you did not forgive others their side-falls, neither will your Father forgive your side-falls.” — Matthew 6:9-14

Amen.

### Other Resources

There is a wealth of excellent literature and movies on this topic. A few that come to mind are:

Bunyan, John, *The Pilgrim’s Progress*

Climacus, John, *The Ladder of Divine Ascent*
There is a free copy at: <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Ladder_of_Divine_Ascent>
Note that many comments in celibacy or monastic genres of literature contain things completely inapplicable to ordinary people: these should be disregarded. On the other hand, if read with prudence, there are many other comments of great value to all.

Hugo, Victor, *Les Misérables*

Lewis, C. S., *The Chronicles of Narnia*

Lewis, C. S., *The Pilgrim’s Regress*

Lewis, C. S., *The Screwtape Letters*

Lewis, C. S., *The Space Trilogy*

Sobolev, Dmitry, *Ostrov* (2006 Film)

Tolkien, J. R. R., *The Hobbit*

Tolkien, J. R. R., *The Lord of the Rings*

### Final Comments

Much has been written on the absolute necessity of having a Spiritual Father. This may have been the case in the first centuries, when pagan culture dominated everything, where the Christian converts could discover that even their own parents were seeking to kill them. Indeed, this may once again be the case, as our modern cultures become increasingly pagan and secular. However, if you were raised in a Christian home, where your parents brought you to Jesus from birth, this is not the case. Moreover, the Bible makes no such special point: the idea of Spiritual parentage barely arises in a few aside mentions of Paul. Everywhere, the Bible emphasizes, “honor father and mother”, even the pagan ones… this should be our first objective.

Still, it is inevitable that we move away from our parent’s house, where we benefit and are mentored by many advisors: these should be respected as well. Nevertheless, none of these ever replaces our parents.

If one enters a monastery, it is necessary that one be under a Spiritual Father: even that cannot replace Christian parents… indeed, it is an insult to God for even thinking of doing so.

All of these parents and mentors die, eventually leaving us orphaned. We are thus left to look only to God. Matthew exhorts us that we have only One Father, God (Matthew 23:9). We do well to remember that we do not approach the Father through an endless list of intermediaries. Christ has broken open the veil of the Oracle, and we have direct personal access to the Father (Romans 8:15; Galatians 4:6)

Those who are racked with pain over the spiritual betrayal perpetrated by all their leaders, both secular and ecclesiastical, need to be reminded that this direct access to the Father cannot be taken away: they can always, anywhere, enter into the secret inner chamber of the heart and pray, and remember this vision of Hebrews 12, the True Church of Jesus Christ.

“Whenever you pray, come into your private place.[[92]](#footnote-92) Closing your door, pray to your Father, the One in secret. Your Father, seeing in secret, will give away to you.” — Matthew 6:6

“Similarly, younger people, be submitted to [your] elders; all of you be clothed with humble mindedness toward one another: because, God opposes [the] arrogant; but, gives grace to the humble. Therefore, be humbled under the strong hand of God, so that He would exalt you in due time: casting all your care on Him: because, He cares about you.” — 1 Peter 5:5-7

Be clothed with poverty, Peter says: for: humility and poverty are very close synonyms.

[[93]](#footnote-93)

1. God, let me be pardoned, the sinner. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Jesus, let me be remembered when you come in your kingdom. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. The name, Jezreel (יִזְרְעֶ֑אל) means God spreads or scatters; in its positive connotation, it paints a picture of God sowing seed on the earth. In its more negative meaning, it suggests that God is dispersing a gainsaying, wicked people. Perhaps, these are not necessarily two different and distinct things. Matthew 13; Mark 4; Luke 8; Ecclesiastes 11:1 [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. Paul refers to his arrival in heaven; which would be a departure from earth. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. These διεστραμμένα are in the perfect passive: the most likely source of these is Jewish fables, such as Oral Torah. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. Ἐπισκέπτῃ: this is the same word as is used to title bishops. 1 Peter 2:25 uses the same word, speaking about Christ. [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. For many more passages on obedience: <https://www.biblegateway.com/quicksearch/?quicksearch=keep+commandments&qs_version=KJV> [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. παρεκάλεσαν: call beside, companion [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. The cup of the Lord is crucifixion. The Psalmist is many rungs above us to be able to describe such a thing with eagerly receptive gladness. [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
10. The tale of the Pied Piper of Hamelin is all about gullible and impressionable people (mental children) who follow any false leader who happens down the road. [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
11. Here are several verses on the conscience: <https://www.biblegateway.com/quicksearch/?quicksearch=conscience&qs_version=KJV> [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
12. James 1:8 [↑](#footnote-ref-12)
13. This is not a death wish; neither a destructive life style. Lot’s wife could not embrace the lifestyle of crucifixion and poverty that lay ahead, which would have resulted in her eternal joy: in turning back, she lost everything… she also harmed everyone around her in the process. Genesis 19:15-23, 26, 30-38 [↑](#footnote-ref-13)
14. literally eating [↑](#footnote-ref-14)
15. Mankind is as predestined to its lifestyle as a vulture chick is predestined to its behavior. [↑](#footnote-ref-15)
16. perfect tense <https://www.biblegateway.com/quicksearch/?quicksearch=overcome+the+world&qs_version=KJV> [↑](#footnote-ref-16)
17. I learned this from Fr. Basil McMurry of blessed memory. [↑](#footnote-ref-17)
18. ibid [↑](#footnote-ref-18)
19. Please take this as the jest it was intended to be: for, it is a grave sin to curse parents. But I know that in your hearts you will thus be tempted along these lines many times, as also will your parents be. So, remember the joke; put away your temporary tempest of temptation, and move on in peace and love. [↑](#footnote-ref-19)
20. 1 Corinthians 7:28, 32-40 [↑](#footnote-ref-20)
21. This verb has a self-contained play on words: it means both to lift up and to lift away. Thus in accepting and embracing the yoke of Christ, He helps carry our burdens with us, making them lighter: but, eventually, as we grow in grace, He is able to remove them entirely. Learn to love your burdens: they are blessings in disguise. [↑](#footnote-ref-21)
22. poor, not arrogant, proud, ruthless; not cruel or tyrannical; the opposite of human rulers. [↑](#footnote-ref-22)
23. Paul rejects the pride of his fleshly education, to embrace Christ. No one in the early church was more highly educated than Paul. Philippians 3:7-21; 1 Corinthians 8:1 [↑](#footnote-ref-23)
24. care [↑](#footnote-ref-24)
25. <https://www.biblegateway.com/quicksearch/?quicksearch=servant+free&qs_version=KJV> [↑](#footnote-ref-25)
26. This is being content to cope with every situation by the grace that God has already supplied. [↑](#footnote-ref-26)
27. our pathos [↑](#footnote-ref-27)
28. The present tense is used to intensify the wording, to engage the reader more closely with the action: this may be the climax of Luke, that Christ is risen. [↑](#footnote-ref-28)
29. just short of 7 miles: 6.90 miles [↑](#footnote-ref-29)
30. True worship begins when Jesus walks invisibly among us. [↑](#footnote-ref-30)
31. Literally, ἀνὴρ: man, male, masculine, manly, warrior; hence, hero heroic. Aner (ἀνὴρ) emphasizes the masculinity of man; anthropos only discusses the common humanity… both male and female. [↑](#footnote-ref-31)
32. Their volubility is explained by their fear, [↑](#footnote-ref-32)
33. They were without nous, not using their heads, not thinking. [↑](#footnote-ref-33)
34. Literally, heart: the heart appears to be the core of the rational spiritual function. See verse 32 for the repair of their heart or wit, with the partial rectification of their befuddlement. [↑](#footnote-ref-34)
35. This is the first inkling we get that the primary subject matter is the Old Testament. [↑](#footnote-ref-35)
36. The Old Testament is referenced again. [↑](#footnote-ref-36)
37. διερμήνευσεν [↑](#footnote-ref-37)
38. This is the essence of the Liturgy of the Word. [↑](#footnote-ref-38)
39. This is the essence of the Liturgy of the Body and Blood. [↑](#footnote-ref-39)
40. Heart, singular, a collective heart, the heart of The Church, not the heart of individuals: there is a power to right worship that brings symphonic agreement among the faithful: a greater agreement than that formed in compromise, in consensus, or even in unanimity. Matthew 18:19 (prayer); 20:2 (wages); Luke 5:36 (cloth patch); 15:25 (music); Acts 15:15 (prophets); 1 Corinthians 7:5 (marriage); 2 Corinthians 6:15 (Christ with evil; belief with unbelief); which is similar to 8:7 (grow together in a dangerous sense); 1 Thessalonians 2:14 (suffer together) [↑](#footnote-ref-40)
41. He did not merely explain: this is a new beginning, He revealed things that most had never seen or understood before. This is revelatory: He opened: διήνοιγεν. [↑](#footnote-ref-41)
42. This is the essence of the Liturgy of the Word. [↑](#footnote-ref-42)
43. This is the feminine dative noun, not the participle: the manner in which He broke… there was something about the way He did it that was distinctive… that gave Him away…. [↑](#footnote-ref-43)
44. This is the essence of the Liturgy of the Body and Blood. [↑](#footnote-ref-44)
45. beginning [↑](#footnote-ref-45)
46. Many were plotting to get out of that room by any means possible, they were so terrified. Within fractions of a second they ran through the full gamut of human emotions as He calmed them down. [↑](#footnote-ref-46)
47. Ἐγώ Εἰμι [↑](#footnote-ref-47)
48. A primary goal of worship is to see Jesus in our midst. [↑](#footnote-ref-48)
49. Law, Prophets, and Psalms constitute the three divisions of the Old Testament: together indicating the whole Old Testament. Interestingly, He does not mention the Deuterocanonical division: which does not appear to be essential in the formation of a Christology. [↑](#footnote-ref-49)
50. This is the foundation of the Christology of the Old Testament. [↑](#footnote-ref-50)
51. This is the essence of the Liturgy of the Word. [↑](#footnote-ref-51)
52. This is the essence of the Liturgy of the Body and Blood. [↑](#footnote-ref-52)
53. not condemnation and judgement [↑](#footnote-ref-53)
54. We do not generally support the idea of reading parenthetical expressions into the text. However, this is what it seems to be: we do not otherwise know how to handle this strange use of tense and change of topic. The correct Christology, which Jesus presents, forms the basis for this kind of Apostolic preaching of universal, global human amnesty: otherwise preaching is off base and corrupted to whatever extent it misses this standard of excellence. We all fall short. [↑](#footnote-ref-54)
55. Jesus sends out the promise: He does not send the Spirit. [↑](#footnote-ref-55)
56. It is necessary that all of the wedding guests be robed with the garment provided by the Bridegroom; which is the robe of Christ’s righteousness: the Holy Spirit is that robe. Lacking this gift is certain death. [↑](#footnote-ref-56)
57. The Holy Spirit brings the enabling and indwelling power with Him. [↑](#footnote-ref-57)
58. <https://www.biblegateway.com/quicksearch/?quicksearch=trembl&qs_version=KJV> [↑](#footnote-ref-58)
59. He is, Μονογενοῦς Παρὰ Πατρός, Only-begotten on par, or equal with the Father, not merely begotten of the Father…. [↑](#footnote-ref-59)
60. The Apostles heard on par with the Son as perfect Man; we hear on par with the Spirit and His indwelling presence. There are only two kinds of parallel behavior, or parity: one moving in the same direction, or absolute equality; and one moving in the opposite direction, or absolute adversity; a third use of παρά simply notes location, place or position: beside. [↑](#footnote-ref-60)
61. Παρὰ, is used here, which is most unusual: we expected ἀπό or ἐκ, with a preference for ἐκ. [↑](#footnote-ref-61)
62. 1 Corinthians 8:1 [↑](#footnote-ref-62)
63. 1 Kings 19:12 LXX [↑](#footnote-ref-63)
64. Psalms 114:1-9 and 115:1-10 LXX; Psalm 116:1-19 KJV [↑](#footnote-ref-64)
65. literally give [↑](#footnote-ref-65)
66. John 14:26 [↑](#footnote-ref-66)
67. Σκανδαλίζεται is the behavior of the trigger stick in any trap. The trigger strap falls away. Then the trap is sprung on the hapless victim. [↑](#footnote-ref-67)
68. darnel [↑](#footnote-ref-68)
69. grain, corn [↑](#footnote-ref-69)
70. condensed from Matthew 13:36-43 [↑](#footnote-ref-70)
71. This refers to the two-way abiding relationship, not to us. [↑](#footnote-ref-71)
72. The double negative, not … nothing, is emphatic: thus, most certainly … not … anything. [↑](#footnote-ref-72)
73. a crowd of witnesses as dense as a cloud [↑](#footnote-ref-73)
74. The square is an ancient battle formation. [↑](#footnote-ref-74)
75. It is wrong to strike back. [↑](#footnote-ref-75)
76. blood, not bloodshed, meaning death [↑](#footnote-ref-76)
77. If these visible sins terrorize us, which invisible sins are worse? [↑](#footnote-ref-77)
78. 1 Corinthians 9:27 [↑](#footnote-ref-78)
79. παθήμασιν: from pathos [↑](#footnote-ref-79)
80. Matthew 5:39; Luke 6:29 [↑](#footnote-ref-80)
81. ἁγιασμόν: being set apart to God’s service. [↑](#footnote-ref-81)
82. Πρὸς: toward, here it approaches the meaning of producing. [↑](#footnote-ref-82)
83. This is a noun, not a verb, functioning adjectively with fortresses. Descriptive actions follow. [↑](#footnote-ref-83)
84. This word would make an interesting study by itself; nevertheless, we are after Paul’s core thought that we never fight with weapons of flesh in mortal secular combat: we witness, we pray, we sing, we die. [↑](#footnote-ref-84)
85. Isaiah 41:9; Matthew 20:27; 23:11; Mark 10:44; Deuteronomy 34:5 (Moses); Joshua 24:29 (Joshua); 1 Samuel 3:9-10 (Samuel); 1 Kings 11:13 (David); Romans 1:1 (Paul); Titus 1:1 (Paul); James 1:1 (James); 2 Peter 1:1 (Peter); Jude 1:1 (Jude); Revelation 1:1 (The Church and John) [↑](#footnote-ref-85)
86. Who, male or female, Esau like, sell their own bodies for a lie in an idol temple, instead of selling their birthright as Esau sold his birthright . [↑](#footnote-ref-86)
87. εἰκόνα [↑](#footnote-ref-87)
88. ἑτέρῳ: another of a different kind [↑](#footnote-ref-88)
89. Romans 8:9 [↑](#footnote-ref-89)
90. ζῳοποιοῦν [↑](#footnote-ref-90)
91. The double negative, οὐδέν, nothing, intolerable in English is emphatic in Greek. [↑](#footnote-ref-91)
92. Not necessarily a physical earthly room; since Christ has given us full access to the Father, more likely the heavenly Oracle of God is intended. In the secrecy of your mind, considering yourself as in the presence of God, pray secretly and silently. Of course it may be necessary to seek out a physically quiet place to avoid distractions: but, when you are desperate, any place will do. [↑](#footnote-ref-92)
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