

Without God's help, we can do nothing.¹

Our every endeavor is powerless without the grace and help of God. On his own, a man can easily become debauched and so destroy himself, but he cannot correct himself and be saved without God. As a boat floats down a river, a man can easily live according to the flesh, but of himself he cannot stand against the flesh and live spiritually, just as a vessel cannot of itself sail against the rush of the current. It must either have rowers or sails in the wind. In the work of salvation, a man must be victorious over his own self; but so great is the corruption of our nature, that this cannot happen without the power of God—He Who is able to do all things.

The devil incessantly fights against man and endeavors to lead him into sin, and to trap him in his snares. The temptations of the world surround man and entice him, and evil custom or habit draws him likewise. Hence we see that many people begin to repent and live well, but are then drawn off the good path and corrupted again.

So we cannot begin a good and Christian life and live as Christians unto the very end without the all-powerful help of God. Those who test themselves know this. For this reason the Lord says, *Without Me you can do nothing* (Jn. 15:5). At every hour and minute, then, we need God's help. For this reason, O Christian, when you wish to live piously and be a true Christian and so be saved, pray to God incessantly and fervently beg His help. Just as in His love for man, God commanded us to pray and ask of Him every good thing, so also He promised to give us what we ask for, and most of all what is necessary for our salvation.

Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you: For every one that asketh receiveth; and he that seeketh findeth; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened (Mt. 7:7-8). Know, beloved, that a Christian without prayer is as a bird without wings and as a warrior without weapons.

Pray fervently, then, to Christ the Lord and give yourself to Him for direction, and He will correct and guide you to eternal life and blessedness according to His love for man. Be careful and watch yourself, and seeing your care, He will help you in everything through His grace. The grace of God is the life of our souls. Our soul cannot live without the grace of God. For as our body lives by the soul, so our soul lives by the grace of God. Pray, then, always and sigh unto God, asking that He give you His grace, and that He preserve you in it. We need the grace of God every minute. For this reason, pray often from the depths of your heart, *Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me. Cast me not away from Thy presence, and take not Thine Holy Spirit from me. Restore unto me the joy of Thy salvation, and with Thy governing Spirit establish me* (Ps. 50:12-14).

St. John of Kronstadt on trusting in God.²

During Divine services, during prayer and the celebration of all the mysteries, be trustful as is a child in relation to his parents. Remember what great Fathers of the Church, what inspired luminaries, enlightened by the Holy Spirit, are guiding you. Be simple, trustful, and undoubting as a child in godly matters. Cast all your care upon the Lord, and be entirely free from sorrow. *Take no thought how or what ye shall speak, for it shall be given you in that same hour what ye shall speak. For it is not ye that speak, but the Spirit of your Father, which speaketh in you* (Mt. 10:19-20). The Lord has long ago freed us from care and sorrow, having taught our God-fearing Fathers by His Spirit, what to say and how to pray to the Lord at Divine services, at the

¹ From *Journey to Heaven* by St. Tikhon of Zadonsk, slightly edited.

² From *My Life in Christ*.

celebration of the mysteries and upon various other occasions which require prayer to bring down a blessing from above. It ought to be easy for us to pray; only the enemy troubles us. But his troubling doesn't matter if our heart is firmly established in the Lord. It is only a misfortune if we do not rest in God—if there is no firm faith in us, if we have bound ourselves by worldly attachments, if our intellect is proud and presumptuous. Then, even during the holy services and at the celebration and communion of the Holy Mysteries, the enemy will greatly hinder us.

Say inwardly, from your whole heart: “The Lord is everything to me; I myself am nothing; I am powerless, I am infirm.” *For without me ye can do nothing*, says the Lord Himself, and it might be added: *I am everything to you*. Be totally convinced of this every moment of your life, and have recourse to the Lord in absolutely everything, trusting to obtain from Him everything necessary for your salvation, and for this temporal life as well.

The Lord is my life, my breath, my strength, my light, peace and joy, my food and drink. What shall I bring to such a Benefactor, or what shall I render unto Him? I will render unto Him, with His help, obedience to His Will and the fulfillment of His commandments. *If ye love me*, says the Lord, *keep my commandments* (St. John 14:15). I will endeavor to please Him by seeking the Kingdom of God and His righteousness, and by counting earthly blessings as naught in comparison to heavenly ones; I will not let my heart cleave to anything earthly. O, Lord! Grant me strength to accomplish this. Strengthen me by Thy right hand. My Strength, do not forsake me! Grant that I may put my trust in Thee alone—in Thee, Who hast never forsaken me!

When the darkness of the accursed one covers you—doubt, despondency, despair, disturbance—then call with your whole heart upon the sweetest name of Jesus Christ, and in Him you shall find everything—light, strength, trust, comfort, and peace. In Him you shall find great mercy, goodness, and blessings. All these gifts you will find contained in His name alone, as though in a rich treasury.

I have received and receive everything from the Lord; how, then, shall I not turn to Him in prayer for everything that I need? How shall I not hope to receive everything from Him alone? I have received from Him life and all things; He alone can give me everything that is necessary to me for my temporal and eternal welfare. It is, so to say, His business to give me everything necessary: such is His merciful and bountiful nature.

Always believe and hope to promptly obtain from the Lord everything good and profitable “unto salvation.” Do not hesitate, and do not doubt even for a single moment, in the possibility of receiving what you pray for. *With God all things are possible, and all things are possible to him that believeth; and hope maketh not ashamed* (St. Matt. 19:26; St. Mark 9:23; 10:27; Romans 5:5). It is only the unbelief, the mistrust in our heart, that makes us ashamed.

If it is your lot to have to bear great misfortunes, sorrows and sicknesses, do not grow faint-hearted or despondent. Do not complain; do not desire death; and do not speak audaciously before the all-seeing God, saying such things as: “O, what a cruel affliction!” “O, what an unbearable misfortune; let me rather die!” or “I would rather kill myself than bear this.” May God save you from such faint-heartedness, complaining, and audacity! Rather, endure your affliction as something sent to you from God for your sins. Say with the wise malefactor, “We receive the due reward for our deeds,” and with your mental eyes contemplate the Saviour

suffering on the Cross. [Pray thus: “Help me to learn to hurt for our Saviour’s sake—to bear all things in return for His many blessings.”]

From St. Theophan the recluse on banishing anxiety.³

You have anxieties about your life. . . . Pray fervently to the Lord from your heart in this way: “I place my fate in Thy hands, O my Saviour. In the way that Thou knowest, arrange my life as is best. From now on I cut off every care about myself, having but one care, to do what is pleasing before Thee.” Speak to God in this way, and by doing so you will already have placed yourself completely in His hands, not being concerned about anything, but calmly accepting every sort of situation, pleasant or unpleasant, as being arranged for you purposely by God. Your only concern should be to act according to God’s commandments in everything. This is all that is required of you.

As soon as you have accepted that God should arrange your life, there will be an end to all your worries. Right now you are concerned about yourself and want to arrange all circumstances according to your own will. And since it is not all working out, you are troubled. When, however, you commit everything to the Lord and accept it as coming from Him and as needed by you for your good, then you will have no troubles, but will only have to look around you to see what the Lord sends, so that you may act in accordance with what is sent. In every situation one can act according to the commandments. So in each case try to do this, aiming to please God instead of exerting yourself to satisfy your own desires. Try to understand this and firmly resolve to achieve this state of mind. It is absolutely necessary to learn to do this, but it cannot be done all at once. You must pray about it.

³ From *The Spiritual Life and How to be Attuned to It*.