

**D**ESPONDENCY IS ESPECIALLY SINFUL when it rejects God's consolation. When a capricious child gets cross he breaks his favorite toys, and some abnormal people find satisfaction in aggravating small wounds on their hands and so causing themselves pointless suffering. In such a state of soul a sinful feeling is already playing part, insubmission to Providence and anger, if not directly against God, then at least opposed to God, approaching grumbling. You must fear this state and ask God's forgiveness and help. Then the spirit of despondency will depart from you, and your soul will no longer turn away from consolation. The exhortations of your close ones and their very sympathy seemed inept to you and they themselves stupid and burdensome. In this case value holy love even in a stupid person, and turn a kind face to him. He takes it as a kind deed done to himself that you do not reject his sympathy: see how much humility and patience he has and how much better he is than you, who are tormenting him and others with your sadness; and how easy it is for you to replace this common torment with common joy and mutual love.

*Confession*, by Metropolitan Anthony Khrapovitsky,  
pp. 77–8.

**I**N THE OUTER WORLD, the husbandman tills the ground; but in spite of his tilling, he needs rain and showers from above. If no moisture comes from above, the husbandman has no profit from his tilling of the ground. So is it with the spiritual world. There are two factors to be taken into consideration. The man must cultivate with a will the ground of his heart, and labour upon it—for God requires the man's labour and toil and travail. But unless clouds of heaven make their appearance from above, and showers of grace, the husbandman does not profit by his toil.

Saint Macarius the Great, Homily XXVI, §10, pp. 189–90

**I**F YOU DESIRE TO BE DELIVERED FROM SORROW, do not let your heart be attached to anything or anyone. Sorrow comes from attachments to visible things.

Saint Nikon of Optina,  
*Living Without Hypocrisy, Spiritual Counsels of the Holy Elders of Optina*,  
page 109