

On Suffering Temptations Calmly and Gladly (1) (Abba Dorotheos)

[Ξένες γλώσσες / In English](#)



Abba Pimin was right to say that the sign of a true monk is how he reacts to temptation. According to the Wisdom of Sirach (2, 1), a monk who truly comes to work for God should prepare his soul against temptations, so that he won't be surprised nor upset by anything, but will believe that whatever happens is because of God's providence. Where God's providence is, everything is good and everything that happens is for the benefit of the soul. Everything that God does for us, He does in our own best interest, because He loves us and spares us. As Saint Paul says (I Thess. 5, 18), we have a duty to be thankful for His goodness and should never lose heart or waver over what happens to us, but should accept it with humility and hope in God, certain, as I said, that whatever He does for us, He does so out of goodness, love and for our benefit. It's not possible for things to turn out well except through God's mercy.



If you have a friend and you're certain he or she loves you, then, if you suffer at their hand, even if it's terrible, you'll believe that they did it out of love. You'll never believe that your friend wanted to hurt you. How much more so should we believe that God, Who made us, brought us into being from nothing, became human and died for us, does everything for us out of goodness and love. For a friend, you might say: 'He or she did this out of love and pity. But obviously they don't have the insight to arrange all my affairs with proper perception and so have injured me without wishing to'. But you can't say that about God. Because He's the source of all wisdom and knows everything that will be of benefit to our soul, He takes care of everything to do with us, down to the smallest detail. You might also say of a friend: 'He or she loves and pities me, knows what's in the best interest of my soul and can handle matters efficiently. But they aren't powerful enough to help me as regards what they think I need'. But, again, we can't say that about God. Because everything's possible for Him and there's nothing He can't do.

So we know about God that He loves and shows mercy to His creation, that He's the source of wisdom, that He knows how to arrange our life, that nothing's impossible for Him and that everything's subject to His will. We should also know that, whatever He does, He does for our best interest. Therefore, let us accept it gladly, as we said before, as coming from a benefactor and good Master, even though it may seem harsh. Because everything happens according to His just assessment and He's so merciful that He doesn't overlook even our slightest

sadness.

Often though, we have doubts about this and say: 'But when disaster strikes, we then sin because of being upset, so how can we believe that what happens is in our best interest?' We wouldn't sin when disaster strikes, brothers, if we weren't lacking in patience and if we didn't refuse to suffer the slightest sorrow or unexpected setback. Because God never permits us to suffer anything that's beyond our powers to bear, as Saint Paul says: 'And God is faithful; he will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear' (I Cor. 10, 13). It's we who don't have patience, who don't want to suffer even a little, who won't accept anything with humility. This is why we're so distressed and the more we try to avoid temptations, then the more we're weighed down by them, lose patience and can't get rid of them.

There are people, who, for a variety of reasons, swim in the sea. If they're good swimmers, when a wave comes towards them, they duck underneath it and stay there till it passes. So they're able to continue swimming safely. But if they resist, the wave picks them up and casts them a long way off. All they've achieved is to be defeated, rather than make progress. But if, as I said, they duck below the wave and humble themselves, it passes and does them no harm. They continue swimming as they wish and finish whatever task they're about. The same is true of temptations. As long as you're prepared to suffer them with patience and humility, you'll get through them without harm. But if you remain sad and upset, reckoning everyone else to be the cause of your problems, you torture yourself by weighing yourself down with temptations. In this way, they don't bring you any benefit, but, rather, do you harm.

Because temptations really do benefit us, if we suffer them calmly. And if we're troubled by a passion, it doesn't serve us to become upset by it, because, if we do, that's a sign of pride and lack of awareness. It comes from ignorance of the situation, from avoiding pain, as the Fathers say: 'This is why we make no progress- because we don't know how much we can bear, we haven't the patience to complete any task we begin and we want to acquire virtue without effort'.

Why are people who are subject to the passions surprised when they're troubled by one? Why are they troubled when they put it into practice? You have the passion and are troubled by it? You're bound to it and ask 'Why is it troubling me?' Better to have patience, struggle against it and ask help from God. Because it's impossible not have the pain of a passion if you've given in to it.