

The Confessor's Tongue for March 4, A. D. 2018

Second Sunday of Lent; St. Gregory Palamas; Venerable Gerasim

In honor of St. Maximus the Confessor, whose tongue and right hand were cut off in an attempt by compromising authorities to silence his uncompromising confession of Christ's full humanity & divinity.

A Prayer for Tears and Compunction

O Master Christ God, who hast healed my passions by Thy Passion and hast cured my wounds by Thy Wounds, grant tears of remorse unto me who have sinned greatly against Thee. Prepare for my body some of the fragrance of Thy life-creating Body, and sweeten the bitterness of my soul by Thy precious Blood, wherewith vouchsafe me, who doth resist Thee, to drink. Raise aloft to Thee my mind which is drawn downwards, and lead it up from the depths of destruction, for I have no repentance, I have no remorse, I have no tears of comfort which lead children to their inheritance. I have been darkened in mind amid the passions of life, and am unable to lift up mine eyes to Thee in my pain; I cannot warm myself with tears of love for Thee. Yet, O Lord and Master, Jesus Christ, Treasury of blessings, grant me complete repentance and a heart diligent in searching for Thee. Grant me Thy grace, and renew in me the lineaments of Thine image. I have forsaken Thee; do not forsake me! Come Thou in search of me, and lead me up to Thy green pasture, and number me among the sheep of Thy chosen flock. Feed me with them on the grass of Thy divine mysteries, through the prayers of Thy most pure Mother and of all Thy saints. *Amen.*
Prayer after the 19th Kathisma in the Psalter

From St. Basil the Great

I exhort you, then, drive out of your mind the idea that you need communion with no one else. To cut one's self off from connection with the brethren is not the mark of one who is walking by love, nor yet the fulfilling of the commandment of Christ. *Letter 65*

He who subjects himself to his neighbor in love can never be humiliated. *Letter 65*

The difference between a friend and a flatterer is this: The flatterer speaks to please; the friend will not leave out even what is disagreeable. *Letter 20*

God is the Lord

Fr. Justin Frederick

If you have been present at Matins or a Molioben, you are familiar with "God is the Lord and hath revealed Himself unto us" (Psalm 117:27) "Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord" (Psalm 117:26; Matthew 21:9) and the choir's repeated singing of "God is the Lord". This text in Matins and Moliobens also appears at the Divine Liturgy right before Communion.

Though we are long familiar with "God is the Lord," this is not the best way to translate it. For years the argument has been made by a few that this should be rendered "The Lord is God", but long established practice and lack of official guidance to make a change kept us using what was familiar. But

now that St. Tikhon's Press has with the Metropolitan's blessing published new Priest's Service Books that incorporate this change, the time has come for us to follow.

The three languages from which the Psalm comes down to us use inversion, putting the predicate of the implied verb "is" first and the subject second. The widespread English translation of the verse has followed the word order of the original languages, but clear understanding of the meaning in English requires the word order of the original languages to be reversed.

Understanding the context will make this clear. The whole relevant text from Psalm 117 (118) reads thus: Blessed be he that cometh in the name of the LORD: we have blessed you out of the house of the LORD. God is the LORD..." By modern convention, in the Old Testament, when the Tetragrammeton, or the four-consonant name of God revealed to Moses at the Burning Bush, YHWH, occurs, it is rendered as "Lord" set in all capitals to distinguish the name of God YHWH from his title "Lord", or Adonai, in Hebrew. The Hebrews did not pronounce the sacred name of God, and no one knows how it was to be pronounced. We do know, that when a Hebrew reader saw YHWH in the text, he read it as "Adonai" to avoid speaking the holy name of God. To distinguish in the Old Testament the use of one of God's titles, "Adonai", or "Lord", from His revealed but unpronounceable name YHWH, the latter is set in all capital letters.

Psalm 117 speaks prophetically of Christ. "Blessed is he who comes in the name of YHWH. YHWH is God and hath revealed himself unto us." The Jews on Palm Sunday cried out "Blessed is he who comes in the name of YHWH" as Jesus entered Jerusalem on the foal of the ass, thereby attaching the text to Christ at the time of its first fulfillment.

Yet there is another connected reason for making the translational change. In the Gospels, Christ is referred to repeatedly as "the Lord", *ho kurios*, by his disciples. For example, when he comes to Galilee while the disciples are fishing without catching anything and directs them to put their net on the other side of the boat, after they realize their nets are full of fish, Peter recognizes who is on the shore and declares "It is the Lord," before plunging in to swim to shore.

If we understand "the Lord" as a common reference to Christ on earth and we link it to the Divine Name YHWH, or, as it is rendered in Greek, *ho on*, "He who Is", we understand the importance of the word order. To declare "God is the Lord"—well, who else would be the Lord but God? What, really, is the point of saying that? But to say, "The Lord (Jesus) is God"—that is an essential confession of the Christian faith and the Church's proclamation to the

world, just as Israel's proclamation of YHWH as being the one true God was in their day. When the Prophet Elijah had his showdown with the prophets of Baal, he called upon YHWH, who sent fire upon the altar and its sacrifice. Seeing YHWH manifest His power this way after Baal had done nothing in response to his 450 prophets calling upon him all day, the people fell on their faces and cried, "The LORD, he is the God; the LORD, he is the God." Then the issue was who was the true God among many proclaimed deities in the world. The issue today remains the same, only YHWH the one true God has revealed Himself by taking upon Himself human flesh in the Person of Jesus Christ—who is fully God and fully man. Truly, the Lord Jesus is God who has revealed himself to us. Blessed is He who comes in the name of the LORD!

The Kontakion for the Sunday of the Paralytic makes an excellent prayer for us to use in our private prayers. It is short and to the point.

Paralytic, Kontakion, Tone 3

As of old Thou didst raise up the paralytic, / O Lord God, by Thy God-like care and might, raise up my soul / which is palsied by diverse sins and transgressions / and by unseemly deeds and acts, / that saved I may also cry out: / O Compassionate Redeemer, / O Christ God, / glory to Thy dominion and might.

The Eight Principal Vices, Part III

St. John Cassian

How to Fight Them

Although these eight vices, then, disturb the whole human race, nonetheless they do not assail everyone in the same way. In one person the spirit of fornication is dominant, in another wrath rides roughshod, in a third vainglory tyrannizes, and in still another pride holds sway. And although it is evident that we are all attacked by all of these, yet we each suffer in different ways and manners.

Therefore we must so join battle against them that everyone spies out the vice by which he is particularly besieged and struggles chiefly against it, fixing all the care and attention of his mind on fighting it and keeping watch on it, brandishing the sighs of his heart and the many darts of his groans against it at every moment, employing the effort of his vigils and the meditations of his heart against it, pouring out the unceasing tears of his prayers to God, and insistently and continually demanding an end to the assault on him.

For it is impossible for a person to deserve to triumph over a passion before he has understood that he is not able to obtain victory in the struggle by his own diligence and his own effort, even though in order to be cleansed he must always be careful and attentive, day and night.

When he finds himself freed from it, he should once again and with similar intensity shine light on

the hidden places of his heart, locate for himself whatever is still more horrible that he notices remaining, and move against it in particular with all the arms of the Spirit. Thus, when he has consistently overcome more powerful foes, he will have a quick and easy victory over the ones that remain, because the mind too becomes stronger through a succession of triumphs, and subsequent struggles with weaker foes make for readier successes in the battle. So it is with those who are accustomed to fight for prizes against all sorts of beasts in the presence of the kings of this world.

These persons, I say, make their first attack against the beasts that they have noticed are stronger and fiercer, and when these have been killed they more easily destroy the ones that are left, which are less terrible and less aggressive. Likewise, it is always the case that when the more powerful vices have been overthrown and are succeeded by weaker ones we shall obtain a perfect victory without any hardship. Yet it must not be thought that whoever struggles chiefly against one vice and seemingly does not pay much heed to the darts of others can be more easily wounded at an unexpected moment.

This will never happen. It is impossible for one who is concerned about the purification of his heart and has armed the attention of his mind for fighting any given vice not to have a certain fear of all the other vices and a similar watchfulness with respect to them as well. How indeed will a person deserve to obtain victory over the passion from which he yearns to be freed if he makes himself unworthy of the prize of cleansing by being contaminated with other vices? But when our heart's chief concern has been directed to fighting against one passion in particular, so to speak, we shall pray more intently about it and be especially careful and assiduous in our supplication, so that we may be worthy to watch out for it more diligently and thus obtain a swift victory.

The Lawgiver himself teaches us that we must keep to this plan of battle and not trust in our own strength in these words: "You shall not fear them, because the Lord your God is in your midst, a God great and terrible. He himself will consume these nations in your sight, little by little and by degrees. You will not be able to destroy them all at once, lest perhaps the beasts of the earth multiply against you. And the Lord your God will deliver them over in your sight, and he will slay them until they are completely destroyed."

But he likewise warns that we must not be proud of our victory over them: "Lest when thou hast eaten and art full," he says, "and hast built goodly houses, and dwelt therein. And when thy herds and thy flocks multiply, and thy silver and thy gold is multiplied, and all that thou hast is multiplied, then thine heart be lifted up, and thou forget the LORD thy God, which brought thee forth out of the land of Egypt, from the house of bondage, Who led thee through that great and terrible wilderness, wherein were fiery serpents, and scorpions, and drought, where there was no

water; who brought thee forth water out of the rock of flint (Deuteronomy 8:12-15). Solomon also says in Proverbs: "Rejoice not when thine enemy falleth, and let not thine heart be glad when he stumbleth: Lest the LORD see it, and it displease him, and he turn away his wrath from him." (Proverbs 24:17-18) -- that is, lest seeing your proud heart he cease to assail him and you be forsaken by him and begin to be troubled once again by the passion that you had previously vanquished by the grace of God.

For the prophet would not have prayed and said: "O deliver not the soul of thy turtledove unto the multitude of the wicked: forget not the congregation of thy poor for ever" (Psalms 74:19), unless he had known that, because of their pride of heart, some would be delivered over again to vices that they had overcome, so that they would be humbled.

Therefore we should be certain from experience and have learned from innumerable scriptural texts that we cannot conquer such great enemies by our own strength but only with the support of God's help, and that every day we must attribute to him the sum of our victory. This is recalled thus by the Lord speaking through Moses: "Speak not thou in thine heart, after that the Lord thy God hath cast them out from before thee, saying, For my righteousness the Lord hath brought me in to possess this land: but for the wickedness of these nations the Lord doth drive them out from before thee. Not for thy righteousness, or for the uprightness of thine heart, dost thou go to possess their land; but for the wickedness of these nations the Lord thy God doth drive them out from before thee, and that he may perform the word which the Lord swore unto thy fathers, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob." (Do not say in your heart, when the Lord your God has destroyed them in your sight: Because of my righteousness the Lord has led me in to possess this land, while those nations were wiped out because of their sins. For it was not because of your righteous deeds and the uprightness of your heart that you were led in to possess their land, but because they acted wickedly they were destroyed as you entered in. . .) (Deuteronomy 9:4-5).

I ask, what could be said more dearly against that pernicious opinion and presumption of ours, by which we want to attribute everything that we do to our free will and to our own effort? "Do not say in your heart, when the Lord your God has destroyed them in your sight: Because of my righteousness the Lord has led me in to possess this land."

Did he not express himself dearly to those whose souls' eyes are open and whose ears hear? Namely, when you have enjoyed a notable success in warring against the carnal vices and you see that you have been freed from their filthiness and from this world's way of life, you should not be puffed up with the success of the struggle and the victory and ascribe this to your own strength and wisdom, believing that you were able to obtain victory over evil spirits and carnal vices through your own efforts and application and

free will. There is no doubt that you would never have been able to prevail over these if the Lord's help had not fortified and protected you. *End*

Homily Against Anger, Part III

St. Basil the Great

...How, then, can we flee the damage caused by anger? We can persuade temper not to act before thought, but let us first take care that it never runs ahead of reason; let us keep it like a horse under a yoke, and let it obey reason as if it were a kind of bridle, never stepping outside its own place, but being led by reason wherever it guides it. Further, the soul's faculty of temper is useful to us in many of the acts of virtue. When like a soldier who has placed his arms in the custody of his commander, it readily offers help in what is ordered, it can perhaps be an ally to reason against sin. For the temper is a sinew of the soul, producing vigor in it for the accomplishment of good actions. When the soul is relaxed through pleasure, as when iron is hardened by tempering, this faculty leads it from being soft and slack to become austere and courageous. If your temper is not roused against the Evil One, you will not be able to hate him as much as he deserves. For I hold that it is necessary to have equal zeal for the love of virtue and for the hatred of sin. For this above all temper is useful. Whenever like a dog beside a shepherd it follows the rational faculty closely, it remains meek and tame toward those helping it, and readily available at the call of reason, while it is savage toward the strange voice and face, even if he seems to provide a service, but bows down when called by a companion or friend. The cooperation of the faculty of temper with the prudent part of the soul is most excellent and appropriate. For such a person will be irreconcilable and implacable toward things plotted against him, never accepting fondness toward what is harmful, but like a wolf ever howling and tearing to pieces the proposed pleasure. Such indeed is the usefulness of temper for those who know how to handle it.

For by the way it is used each of the other faculties also becomes either evil or good for the one who possesses it. As for the soul's faculty of desire, one who uses it for the enjoyment of the flesh and the consumption of impure pleasure is disgusting and licentious, while one who turns it toward the love of God and the longing for eternal good things is enviable and blessed. And again, as for the rational faculty, one who handles it well is prudent and intelligent, while one who sharpens his mind for the harm of his neighbor is a worker of mischief and evil.

...Therefore, let us not make the faculties given us for salvation by the Creator into starting points of sin for ourselves. So also, indeed, the temper, moved when it is necessary and as it is necessary, produces courage and perseverance and self-restraint; but when acting against right reason it becomes insanity. For this reason also the Psalm advises, "Be angry, but do not sin" [Ps 4.5]. And the Lord threatens judgment for those who are angered without purpose [Mt 5.22],

but he does not reject the use of anger for things that are necessary, as a medicine. For the words, "I will place enmity between you and the serpent" [Gen 3.15], and "Be enemies of the Midianites" [Num 25.17], teach us to use temper as a weapon. For this reason Moses, the meekest of all people [Num 12.3], when punishing idolatry, placed weapons in the hands of the Levites for the slaughter of their brothers. He said, "Let each put his sword on his thigh, and go through from gate to gate, and return through the encampment; and let each kill his brother, and each his neighbor, and each the one near him" [Ex 32.27]. And a little later he says, "You have consecrated your hands today to the Lord, each in his son, and in his brother, that a blessing may be given to you" [Ex 32.29, LXX]. And what made Phineas just? Was it not his just anger against the fornicators? He, being very kind and gentle, when he saw that the fornication of Zambri and the Midianite woman had become open and shameless, and they did not hide the unseemly sight of their shame, did not hold back but used his temper for a needful purpose, driving his javelin through them both [Num 25.6-8]. And did not Samuel, when Agag the king of Amalek was kept alive by Saul contrary to the command of God, in just anger lead him forward and slaughter him [1 Sam 15.33]? So, often temper becomes a helper in good acts. And Elijah the zealot killed four hundred and fifty men, priests of shame, and four hundred men, priests of the groves, who ate at Jezebel's table, through considered and prudent temper, for the benefit of all Israel [1 Kgs 18.22-40].

But you are angry at your brother without purpose. For how is it not without purpose when one acts because the other provokes him? And you act like dogs who bite the stones when they cannot reach the one throwing them. The one acted upon is to be given compassion, the one acting is to be hated. Redirect your temper onto the murderer of human beings, the father of lies, the worker of sin; but sympathize also with your brother, because if he continues in sin, with the devil he will be delivered up to eternal fire.

...Yet as temper and anger are different words, so also their meanings differ greatly from each other. For temper is a certain kind of heating and quick rising in steam of passion; but anger is an abiding sorrow and lasting impulse toward vengeance against the wrongdoers, as if the soul lusts for requital. Therefore it is necessary to know that human beings offend through both dispositions, either moved insanely and capriciously by provocations, or deceitfully and treacherously lying in wait for those who grieved them. We must guard against both these errors.

How, then, can the passion avoid being directed toward what it must avoid? How? It can if you are taught beforehand the humility which the Lord both prescribed in word and modeled in action, at one time saying, "Let the one who wishes to be first among you be last of all" [cf. Mt 9:35], and at another time, meek and unmoved, bearing with the one who struck him

[Jn 18:22-23]. For the Maker and Master of heaven and earth, who is worshiped by all the intelligible and sense-perceptible creation, who "upholds all things by the word of his power" [Heb 1:8], did not send him alive into Hades, with the earth cleft beneath the impious one. Rather, he admonished and taught, "If I have spoken evilly, bear witness regarding the evil; but if I have spoken well, why do you strike me?" [Jn 18:23] For if you have become accustomed to being last of all in accord with the commandment of the Lord, when will you be irritated at having your dignity affronted? When a small child abuses you, the insults are an occasion for laughter; and when one driven out of his mind by inflammation of the brain speaks words of disdain, you think him worthy of compassion rather than hatred. Thus the movement of grief is engendered not by the insulting words but by our arrogance toward the one who has abused us and the fantasy each one of us has about himself. So if you put aside from your mind both of these, the noise of the words hurled at you will appear instead as an empty echo. Therefore, "Cease from anger, and leave behind temper" [Ps 37:8], that you may escape the judgment against anger, which "is revealed from heaven upon all the impiety and injustice of human beings" [Rom 1:18]. For if by prudent thought you could cut out the bitter root of temper, you would remove with it many of the passions that begin from this source. For deceit and suspicion and faithlessness and malice and treachery and rashness, and the whole swarm of such wickednesses, are offshoots of this evil. Therefore, indeed, let us not bring to ourselves so great an evil. It is sickness of soul, darkening of thoughts, estrangement from God, ignorance of kinship, cause of conflict, fullness of misfortunes, a wicked demon coming to birth in our very souls. It is indeed as if a certain shameless inhabitant has taken possession beforehand of our inner self and closed the entrance to the Holy Spirit. For where enmity, strife, temper, quarreling, contentiousness and never-silent clamor are produced in the soul, there the Spirit of meekness does not rest. But let us listen to the advice of the blessed Paul and put away from us all anger and temper and clamor with all malice [Eph 4.31], and become kind and compassionate to each other, awaiting the blessed hope promised to the meek. For "blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth" [Mt 5.5], in Christ Jesus our Lord, to whom be glory and dominion unto the ages. Amen. *End*

Upcoming Events 2018

8 March: Men's Meeting at Church, 7:00 p.m.

25 March: Annunciation

1-7 April: Holy Week

8 April: Pascha: All-Night Vigil, Agape Vespers, Picnic

GLORY BE TO GOD IN ALL THINGS!