

The Struggle in Prayer

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What does the devil do? The devil relentlessly acts in accordance with his hope and never stops. Hoping to ruin you, in accordance with this hope he is in a constant action and he never stops. While we hope to be saved, we unfortunately do not always act in accordance with our hopes. As per great Saint Theophan the Recluse, those who act in accordance with their hopes to be saved are like a violin string, tuned to a precise note, without slackness. Such a man is in a state of constant vigilance (meaning the mental vigilance, not the physiological one), thus staying safe from the devil's temptation as the devil does not rest. Like I told you once, "he doesn't even take a vacation", he doesn't get tired, he's not sleepy. You sleep - he doesn't. You're hungry - he's not. You have certain physiological needs - he doesn't. You're lazy to be loyal to God - he's not lazy to hate God. You can't fulfill your duty - he does his. He's a restless enemy. Glory to God for this! Since he's a restless enemy, I get a chance to be a restless warrior against the enemy. The restless warrior gets a crown, while the lazy and the sleepy warrior does not get one. Therefore we should always act in accordance with our hopes. In other words, we should always struggle and this primarily relates to prayer. As I've mentioned before, it's hard for us to pray and this is the problem. This is a terrible burden for a beginner, maybe not for a couple of months, but later this turns into a heavy burden. Look back at yourselves. Today maybe many of you get excited about a prayer but take a look at your past, even a week ago, what was it like. This means that we are in a state which is abnormal for a Christian. When we are lazy to pray, when praying becomes intolerable for us, when by the end of the day: "I'll pray a little later...let me read something else first...let me watch the tv..." and later when you get there you end up with being incapable of doing anything. Then you start negotiating, "Let me read a short version of a prayer." Then your alarm goes off in the morning and you say, "I'll get up now...in a bit...now...at least I'll read a short version of a prayer, they're not going to hang me for this" and then you don't even have time for that and this goes on and on for years, not just a day or two. Why? This is because there's a strange thing going on. Even if they hang you upside down for 15-20 minutes you'll be able to endure it. So let me read it and if worse comes to worst, I'll go to my spiritual father and tell him, "Father, I can't focus on prayer." The father will say: "It takes a great effort to tame the mind, my child." This will calm you down and now what? At least you're not saying, "Father, it's been a long time already since I prayed." This way you might not be able to receive a communion. What if you just read through the prayer? No, there's something else happening there. This is a state when we're lazy and can't pray. We're not talking about exploring the depth of the prayer which we discussed before. What we're talking about is at least following the prayer and after reading it realizing what we've just read, the morning prayers or the evening ones. This is the minimum that we deal with at this stage and not having this minimum means that we as the Christians are in an abnormal state, because the thirst for prayer is considered to be a normal state of the Christian, when one can't wait till he gets there, till he jumps off the bed. Then the alarm goes off. Why do I keep mentioning the alarm? Because if you need to go to work, you get up at 8 am and hopefully you set your alarm to at least at 7 am, so you can pray for a while. Otherwise, if you get up whenever you wish then you won't have enough time. Since we do not have a spiritual mechanism turned on and an angel does not wake us up because of our impurity, thus we should keep setting the alarm and let's see what we're doing when it goes off. Oh no, here it goes off... instead we should be jumping up like someone's just pinched us or has poured the cold water over us. We can't make it. It makes no sense talking about prayer when a person is not able to jump up. Because prayer is a battle. So it's struggling time? Here goes the war and the battle begins. Imagine a warrior sleeping in a tent while there's a war alarm. The enemy will come up to him and slit his throat. There's no time to sleep. You have to jump up. We have to jump up, get ready, stand there

and start fighting whether it takes 15, 20, 30 minutes or an hour, whatever time we have. Let's start a war against ourselves, against our ferociousness, the devil inside us, the evil forces, the passions, the accumulated dirt, our past life. Let's start a war against all these, against the absence of love. Why? Because we want to be with Christ!