

AND THIS [*ingratitude*] springs from pride, and from thinking one's self worthy of something. But he that is contrite will acknowledge grounds of thanksgiving to God, not for good things only, but also for what seem to be adverse; and how much soever he may suffer, will count none of his sufferings undeserved. Let us then also, the more we advance in virtue, so much the more make ourselves contrite; for indeed this, more than anything else, is virtue. Because, as the sharper our sight is, the more thoroughly do we learn how distant we are from the sky; so the more we advance in virtue, so much the more are we instructed in the difference between God and us. And this is no small part of true wisdom, to be able to perceive our own desert. For he best knows himself, who accounts himself to be nothing.

Thus we see that both David and Abraham, when they were come up to the highest pitch of virtue, then best fulfilled this; and would call themselves, the one, "earth and ashes," the other, "a worm;" and all the saints too, like these, acknowledge their own wretchedness. So that he surely who is lifted up in boasting, is the very person to be most ignorant of himself. Wherefore also in our common practice we are wont to say of the proud, "he knows not himself," "he is ignorant of himself." And he that knows not himself, whom will he know? For as he that knows himself will know all things, so he who knows not this, neither will he know the rest.

St John Chrysostom,
Homily XXV on the Gospel of Saint Matthew, p. 175
Nicene & Post-Nicene Fathers, First Series, Volume X

THERE MANY WHO, in spite of grace being with them, are cheated by sin without observing it. Suppose there is a maid in a house, and also a young man; and she is wheedled into consenting to him, and falls, and loses her character. So the dreadful serpent of sin is always with the soul, tickling and enticing it; and if it consents, the incorporeal soul enters into connection with the incorporeal evil of that spirit. Spirit enters into connection with spirit, and he who gives consent commits adultery in his heart, admitting the suggestion of the wicked one. This then is the measure of your conflict, not to commit this crime in your thoughts, but to resist with your mind, and do battle and conflict within, and not to comply, and to take no pleasure in the thought of what is wrong; and if the Lord finds in you this preparation, at the last day He takes you to Himself in His kingdom.

Saint Macarius the Great, *Fifty Spiritual Homilies*,
Homily XV.28, pp. 119–20

Pearls from the Holy Fathers

April 23–29, 2012

