

*And Jesus looked up, and saw the rich men casting their gifts into the treasury. And He saw also a certain poor widow casting in thither two mites. And He said, Of a truth I say unto you, that this poor widow hath cast in more than they all: For all these have of their abundance cast in unto the offerings of God: but she of her penury hath cast in all the living that she had.*

Luke 21:1–4

**T**HIS WORLD is the course of the contest and the arena of the courses. This time is the time of combat; and there is no law laid down in the field of combat and in the time of contest. That is to say, the King lays no limit on His warriors until the contest is finished and all men are brought to the gate of the King of kings, where each is examined whether he persevered in the contest and refused to admit defeat, or turned his back. For it oftentimes happens that a man who is altogether useless, who, because of his lack of training, is constantly pierced and thrown down, who is feeble at all times, suddenly seizes the banner from the hands of the mighty warriors, the sons of the giants, and makes his name famous. He thus gains greater renown than those who always contend and are known for their victories, and he receives a crown and gifts esteemed precious by all his companions. For this reason no man should despair; only, let us not be negligent in prayer, nor be slothful to beseech the Lord for succor.

St Isaac the Syrian, *Ascetical Homily 70*, pp. 489–90  
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**S**OME, I KNOW NOT WHY (for I have not learned to pry conceitedly into the gifts of God) are by nature, I might say, prone to temperance, or stillness, or purity, or modesty, or meekness, or contrition. But others, although almost their own nature itself resists them in this, to the best of their power force themselves; and though they occasionally suffer defeat yet, as men struggling with nature, they are in my opinion higher than the former.

*The Ladder of Divine Ascent*, St. John Climacus, Step 26:28  
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