

My son, help thy father in his age,  
and grieve him not as long as he liveth.  
And if his understanding fail, have patience with him;  
and despise him not when thou art in thy full strength.  
For the relieving of thy father shall not be forgotten:  
and instead of sins it shall be added to build thee up.  
In the day of thine affliction it shall be remembered;  
thy sins also shall melt away, as the ice in the fair warm weather.

Ecclesiasticus, or,  
The Wisdom of Jesus, the Son of Sirach 3:12–15

**I** AM VERY SORRY FOR YOU, exceedingly sorry. I am sorry and fear that you will be deprived of the mercy of God for your stubbornness over the fact that your self-love was offended on some empty pretexts. I also pity myself because I, a weak and exhausted man, must work in vain for the same reason, i.e., unless you desire truly to humble yourselves and make up. For this I ask each of you and beseech the Lord sincerely and diligently. Spare yourself and me, that we may not repent when everything is futile and irrevocable. He who for the sake of selfish, foolish pretexts does not have mercy on himself will be guilty not only before God and men but also before himself when repentance will be out of place.

Letter of the Elder Ambrose of Optina, October 16, 1866  
*Staretz Amvrosy* by John Dunlop, p. 145

**H**OW MANY KINGS HAVE APPEARED of the race of Adam, possessing all the earth, thinking great things because of their royal power; and yet none of them, for all this kind of advantages, had the power to discern the evil which had invaded the soul in consequence of the first man's transgression, and had darkened it, that it knew not the change which had passed over it – that the mind at first was pure and saw its Master, being in honour, and now, because of its banishment, is clothed with shame, the eyes of the heart being blinded, that it may not behold that glory, which our father Adam before his disobedience beheld.

St Macarius the Great, *Fifty Spiritual Homilies*, A.J. Mason,  
Homily XLV, §1, p. 281

PEARLS FROM THE HOLY FATHERS

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