

LET THE PRESBYTERS be compassionate and merciful to all, bringing back those that wander, visiting all the sick, and not neglecting the widow, the orphan, or the poor, but always “providing for that which is becoming in the sight of God and man;” abstaining from all wrath, respect of persons, and unjust judgment; keeping far off from all covetousness, not quickly crediting [*an evil report*] against any one, not severe in judgment, as knowing that we are all under a debt of sin. If then we entreat the Lord to forgive us, we ought also ourselves to forgive; for we are before the eyes of our Lord and God, and “we must all appear at the judgment-seat of Christ, and must every one give an account of himself.” Let us then serve Him in fear, and with all reverence, even as He Himself has commanded us, and as the apostles who preached the Gospel unto us, and the prophets who proclaimed beforehand the coming of the Lord [*have alike taught us*]. Let us be zealous in the pursuit of that which is good, keeping ourselves from causes of offence, from false brethren, and from those who in hypocrisy bear the Name of the Lord, and draw away vain men into error.

Epistle of St Polycarp to the Philippians, ch. vi,
Ante-Nicene Fathers, Vol. I, p. 34

WHEN WE FORGIVE NOT OTHERS, we forgive not ourselves. And so let us not merely say to God, “remember not our offenses”; but let each also say to himself, “let us not remember the offenses of our fellow-servants done against us.” For thou first givest judgment on thine own sins, and God judgeth after; thou proposest the law concerning remission and punishment, thou declarest thy decision on these matters, and therefore whether God shall or shall not remember, rests with thee.

St John Chrysostom, *Commentaries on St John’s Gospel*,
Homily XXXIX, NPNF, Second Series, Vol. XIV, p. 142

THROUGH EXPERIENCE AND GOD’S GRACE I have learned that the foundation of all good things, the return of the soul from the enemy’s captivity, and the path which leads to the light, and itself brings life, are these two virtuous activities: to remain collected in one place, and to fast perpetually.

St Isaac the Syrian, *Ascetical Homily 40*, p. 329

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FREQUENT AND FIERCE is the devil in his attacks, on all sides besieging our salvation; we therefore must watch and be sober, and everywhere fortify ourselves against his assault, for if he but gain some slight vantage ground, he goes on to make for himself a broad passage, and by degrees introduces all his forces. If then we have any care at all for our salvation, let us not allow him to make his approaches even in trifles, that thus we may check him beforehand in important matters; for it would be the extreme of folly, if, while he displays such eagerness to destroy our souls, we should not bring even an equal amount in defense of our own salvation.

St John Chrysostom, *Commentaries on St John’s Gospel*,
Homily XXIII, NPNF, Second Series, Vol. XIV, p. 79

THE OLD MAN MACARIUS SAID, “If thou hast not the prayer of the spirit, strive for the prayer of the body, and then shall be added unto thee the prayer of the spirit. If thou hast not humility in the spirit, strive for the humility which is in the body, and then shall be added unto thee the humility which is in the spirit. For it is written, ‘Ask, and ye shall receive.’” (Matt. vii, 7; xxi, 22)

Paradise of the Holy Fathers, tr. Budge, Vol. II, p. 192, # 174

A LOVER OF ASCETIC LABOURS saw a man carrying a dead man on a bier, and he said unto him, “Dost thou carry a dead man? Go and carry the living.”

Ibid., p. 49, # 222

Pearls from the Holy Fathers

First Week of Lent, March 4–10, 2013

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