

On Getting Out of Ruts

by Hieromonk Damascene

To get out of our spiritual ruts, we must cast off everything that separates us from God and choose to follow Christ.

Scripture: Matthew 16:24, John 16:33, Ephesians 4:13, James 4:4, 1 John 2:16

Topics: "Spiritual Growth", "Overcoming Sin"

Description

Hieromonk Damascene emphasizes the hindrances to spiritual transformation, pointing out that our egos and passions often prevent us from growing into the fullness of Christ. He highlights how our favorite sins and passions become obstacles that we are reluctant to give up, but with Christ's help, we can overcome them. The preacher challenges the congregation to reflect on their desires and question whether they are willing to abandon their sinful pleasures for an authentic life in Christ.

Transcript

How can Fr. Isaaky's words not inspire us toward spiritual transformation? What hinders us from growing unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ, as St. Paul says (Eph. 4:13)? It is our egos, our passions, that hinder us.

Many of us get stuck in a rut in our spiritual lives. Usually this comes down to one thing: we have our central sins, our favorite passions that we just do not want to give up. These passions have become so much a part of us that we think it is impossible to be rid of them. But it is not impossible. Christ said, Be of good cheer; I have overcome the world (John 16:33). With His Grace-filled help, we can overcome the passions--which, as we have seen, comprise one of the meanings of the term "the world" in Holy Scripture.

The problem lies with us. The problem is that, deep down, we feel that we have a "right" to our favorite passions. "I have a right to be angry," "I have a right to be resentful," "I have a right to this sinful little pleasure," or whatever it is. Deep down, we do not want to give up our passions.

So the question comes down to this: What do we really want? Do we want to stay in our ruts, so that we can freely indulge our pride, our self-love, our self-righteousness, our desire to be right, our anger and resentments, our sinful pleasures? Are they so important to us that for their sake we will abandon the possibility of an authentic life in Christ, as Fr. Isaaky has so beautifully described?

What do we want? Do we want to be fashioned after the passions of this world, which pass away, or do we want to have Christ dwelling within us, re-creating us into new beings who will dwell with Him and in Him forever?

To get out of our ruts and get back on the path of transformation and deification, we must cast off everything that separates us from God. Spiritual life is like traveling upstream in a rowboat. The world, the flesh and the devil push against us and against our progress. If our boat is burdened with the weight of our cherished sins and passions, we will not get anywhere. In fact, we will go backwards, and we might even sink. So, what we have to do is to jettison the cargo which we cherish so much but which is holding us back. Then we will be able go forward, toward that which we were created for: union with God.

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