

Step 17 on Poverty (That Hastens Heavenwards).

by St. John Climacus

Poverty is the key to spiritual freedom, characterized by detachment from material things, obedience to God, and renunciation of one's will.

Scripture: Matthew 6:19, Mark 8:34, Luke 12:15, Philippians 3:7, 1 Timothy 6:10

Topics: "Spiritual Detachment", "Christian Poverty"

Description

St. John Climacus preaches on the virtues of poverty and detachment, emphasizing the freedom from anxiety and worldly cares that come with entrusting everything to God. He highlights the purity in prayer and the detachment from material possessions that monks and ascetics should strive for, as well as the dangers of avarice and the love of money. Climacus encourages a life of pilgrimage for the Lord, renouncing possessions and one's own will to inherit eternal life and experience true joy in spiritual treasures.

Transcript

1. Poverty is the resignation of cares, life without anxiety, an unencumbered traveller, alienation from sorrow, fidelity to the commandments.
2. A poor monk is lord of the world. He has entrusted his cares to God and by faith has obtained all men as his slaves. He will not tell his need to man, and he receives what comes to him, as from the hand of the Lord.
3. The poor ascetic is a son of detachment and thinks of what he has as if it were nothing. When he becomes a solitary, he regards everything as refuse. But if he worries about something, he has not yet become poor.
4. A poor man is pure during prayer, but an acquisitive man prays to material images.
5. Those who live in obedience are strangers to love of money. For where even the body has been given up, what is left to be one's own? Only in one way can they do wrong, namely by being ready and quick to go from place to place. I have seen material possessions make monks patient to remain in one place. But I praise those who are pilgrims for the Lord.

6. He who has tasted the things on high easily despises what is below. But he who has not tasted the things above finds joy in possessions.

7. A man who impoverishes himself for no reason suffers a double harm: he abstains from present goods and is deprived of future ones.

8. Let us monks, then, be as trustful as the birds are; for they do not have cares, and they do not collect.

9. Great is he who piously renounces possessions, but holy is he who renounces his will. The one will receive a hundredfold, either in money or in graces, but the other will inherit eternal life.

10. Waves never leave the sea, nor do anger and grief leave the avaricious.

11. He who despises what is material, is rid of quarrels and controversies; but the covetous man will fight till death for a needle.

12. Unwavering faith cuts off cares, and remembrance of death denies the body as well.

5 The words in parenthesis are so printed in P.G. 88.

13. In Job there was no trace of avarice; therefore, when he lost everything, he remained undisturbed.

14. The love of money is (and is called) the root of all evils,¹ because it produces hatred, thefts, envy, separations, enmities, storms, remembrance of wrong, hard-heartedness, murders.

15. Some have burned much wood with a small fire; and with the help of one virtue some have escaped all the passions just mentioned. This virtue is called detachment, and it is born of experience and a taste of God and meditation on the account to be given at death.

16. The attentive reader will remember the history of the mother of all evil. When she enumerated her wicked and cursed children she said that her second offspring was the stone of insensibility. But the many-headed snake of idolatry prevented me from giving it its own special place. I do not know why, but the discerning Fathers gave it the third place in the chain of the eight deadly sins. Having said sufficient about avarice, we now intend to speak about insensibility, as the third infirmity (though the second born). And after this, we shall treat briefly of sleep and watchfulness, and also of puerile and cowardly fear; for these are the failings of beginners.

This is the seventeenth step. He who has mounted it is journeying to Heaven stripped of material things.

1 1 Timothy vi, 10.

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