

# The Acquisition of Grace

by St. Seraphim of Sarov

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*The sermon emphasizes the importance of deriving the utmost spiritual profit from good deeds in order to acquire the most abundant gifts of the Holy Spirit.*

**Scripture:** 1 Corinthians 14:19

**Topics:** "Holy Spirit", "Christian Virtues"

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## Description

St. Seraphim of Sarov emphasizes the importance of acquiring the grace of the Holy Spirit through practicing all virtues for Christ's sake, not just prayer. He compares spiritual trading with earthly trading, encouraging believers to invest in virtues that bring the greatest profit in God's eternal bank. St. Seraphim highlights the need to do good deeds with reverence and understanding, focusing on the quality rather than the quantity of our actions to receive abundant gifts of the Holy Spirit.

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## Transcript

"Yes, father, but what about other good deeds done for Christ's sake in order to acquire the grace of the Holy Spirit? You have only been speaking of prayer."

"Acquire the grace of the Holy Spirit also by practicing all the other virtues for Christ's sake. Trade spiritually with them; trade with those which give you the greatest profit. Accumulate capital from the superabundance of God's grace, deposit it in God's eternal bank which will bring you immaterial interest, not four or six per cent, but one hundred per cent for one spiritual ruble, and even infinitely more than that. For example, if prayer and watching gives you more of God's grace, watch and pray; if fasting gives you much of the spirit of God, fast; if almsgiving gives you more, give alms. Weigh every virtue done for Christ's sake in this manner.

"Now I will tell you about myself, poor Seraphim. I come of a merchant family in Kursk. So when I was not yet in the monastery we used to trade with the goods which brought us the greatest profit. Act like that, my son. And just as in business the main point is not merely to trade, but to get as much profit as possible, so in the business of the Christian life the main point is not merely to pray or to do some other good deed. Though the apostle says: Pray without ceasing (1 Thess. 5:17), yet, as you remember, he adds: I would rather speak five words with my understanding than ten thousand words with a tongue (1 Cor. 14:19). And the Lord says: Not everyone who says to Me: Lord, Lord, shall be saved, but he who does the will of My Father (Mt. 7:21), that is he who does the work of God and, moreover, does it with reverence, for cursed is he who does the work of God negligently (Jer. 48:10). And the work of God is: believe in God and in Him

Whom He has sent, Jesus Christ (John 14:1; 6:29). If we understand the commandments of Christ and of the Apostles aright, our business as Christians consists not in increasing the number of our good deeds which are only the means of furthering the purpose of our Christian life, but in deriving from them the utmost profit, that is in acquiring the most abundant gifts of the Holy Spirit.

"How I wish, your Godliness, that you yourself may acquire this inexhaustible source of divine grace, and may always ask yourself: Am I in the Spirit of God, or not?--there is nothing to grieve about. You are ready to appear before the awful judgment of Christ immediately. For 'In whatsoever I find you, in that will I judge you.' But if we are not in the Spirit, we must discover why not and what reason our Lord God the Holy Spirit has willed to abandon us. We must seek Him again and must go on searching until our Lord God the Holy Spirit has been found and is with us again, through His goodness. We must attack the enemies that drive us away from Him until even their dust is no more, as the Prophet David has said, I will pursue my enemies and overtake them; and I will not turn back till they are destroyed. I will crush them and they will be unable to stand; they will fall under my feet (Ps. 17[18]:38-39).

"That's it, my son. That is how you must spiritually trade in virtue. Distribute the Holy Spirit's gifts of grace to those in need of them, just as a lighted candle burning with earthly fire shines itself and lights other candles for the illumining of all in other places, without diminishing its own light. If it is so, with regard to the earthly fire, what shall we say about the fire of the grace of the All-Holy Spirit of God? For earthly riches decrease with distribution, but the more the heavenly riches of God's grace are distributed, the more they increase in the one who distributes them. Thus the Lord Himself was pleased to say to the Samaritan woman: All who drink this water will be thirsty again. But whoever drinks the water that I shall give him will never be thirsty any more; but the water that I shall give him will be in him a spring of water leaping up to eternal life (John 4:13-14)."

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