

# Inner Peace

by St. Theophan the Recluse

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*To attain inner peace, one must destroy inner disorder by restoring the spirit's original foundation in God, establishing order and harmony, and persevering with patience and hope.*

**Scripture:** Psalm 46:10, Proverbs 3:5, Galatians 5:22, Philipians 4:6, 1 Peter 5:7

**Topics:** "Inner Peace", "Spiritual Growth"

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## Description

St. Theophan the Recluse preaches about the importance of instilling peace within oneself after Repentance and Communion, emphasizing the need to address inner disturbances by remembering God unceasingly, acting according to one's conscience, and patiently expecting success. He describes the fallen state of the spirit, the confusion within, and the necessity to stop wrongful thoughts and emotions. St. Theophan highlights the disorder in thoughts, emotions, and desires, stressing the need to establish order, harmony, and inner peace through intensified labor over oneself and remembrance of God.

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## Transcript

One who sets out on the path of true life after Repentance and Communion should instill peace within himself. Rules for dispersing inner disturbance: unceasing remembrance of God, a resolve to act according to one's conscience in every matter great or small and patient expectation of success.

I would like to add a few more instructions for you on what you must do now as you enter your new path.

Anyone who has undertaken a careful observation of what goes on inside himself just during the course of a single day will acknowledge as very obvious the fact that the spirit is fallen. I told you about this a very long time ago. You will recall that we have this confusion within us, that the confusion came about wrongfully, and must therefore be stopped. You yourself also wrote that you could not cope with the unrestrained inner motion. I will briefly review the description of this condition.

The mind's thoughts are all directed toward the earth, and there is no way to raise them to Heaven. Their object is vain, sensual, sinful. You have seen how fog drifts along the valley. This is a precise picture of our thoughts. They all crawl and drift along the earth. In addition to this downward drifting, they constantly seethe, not standing still in a single place; they jostle each other, like a swarm of mosquitoes in the summer. In addition, they are always in motion.

Beneath these there lies the heart. It is from the thoughts that blows are continually struck in the heart and corresponding actions are produced. Whatever the thought, there is a corresponding action of the heart. From this is joy, anger, envy, fear, hope, pride, despair--they arise in the heart one after the other. There is no stopping them; just as with the thoughts, there is no order whatsoever. The heart continually trembles from the emotions like an aspen leaf.

It does not end here. Thought with emotion always engenders desire that is more or less powerful. Beneath the confused thoughts and emotions are desires that are also randomly confused. One person is acquisitive, another squanders everything; one is well-wishing, another vengeful; one runs away from everyone, another goes out into the middle of the crowd; a person obeys in one thing, but in another he acts on his own; and so on and so forth. It is not that all of these things take place like this, but uncertainties--first one thing, then another--do continually swarm about in the soul. (Watch yourself, for example, when you are sitting at work; you will see all of this going on inside of yourself as if it were on a stage.)

Thus is our inner disorder and confusion. From this also comes the disorder in our lives, and the sort of gloom that lingers about us. Do not expect an orderly life until you have destroyed this inner disorder. In and of itself, it is the cause of much evil, but it is especially bad because the demons settle themselves in it and whip up things even more, directing everything for the worse and toward our destruction.

During *govenie\**, when you examined yourself and set out to remove one thing or add another, then of course you could not help but turn the attention toward your inner confusion and arm yourself with the necessary zeal against it. Allow me once again to place stress on the internal enemy.

You established a firm intention to work for the Lord and belong to Him Alone from this point on. The Mystery of Repentance gave you forgiveness in everything, and you appeared pure before the face of God. Holy Communion brought you into the closest communion, or renewed your communion, with the Lord Jesus Christ, and filled you with every beneficial power. Here you are then, prepared for the job.

If only it were sufficient for the correction of our inner life to make a wish and have everything appear in the best way, or to say a word and have everything suddenly come true; then there would be no more reason for you to go to such trouble. Everything would happen for the best, and you would not have to desire it. However, such is the law of moral, free-willed life, all the more in its damaged essence, that there be steadfast perseverance. Beneficial help is available, but you still have to exert yourself and struggle, and struggle with yourself above all.

Our inner lives never get put into the proper order all of a sudden. What is always required and what lies ahead is intensified labor over oneself, over one's inner self, by the assimilation of good intention and by the enabling of grace through the Mysteries. This labor and effort is directed toward destroying the disorder that reigns inside, in its place it establishes order and harmony, after which follows inner peace and a continual joyful mood of the heart.

That is what lies ahead of you now! Do not think, however, that for this you must re-do everything, or bind yourself to a lot of rules. Absolutely not. Two or three little rules, two or three precautions, is all you need.

There is disorder within; this you know from experience. You must destroy it; this is what you want, and you have decided to do this. Begin by directly removing the cause of all this disorder. The cause of the disorder is that our spirit has lost its original foundation. Its foundation is in God. The spirit gets back to it

again through remembrance of God. Thus, the first thing is this: It is necessary to get in the habit of unceasing remembrance of God, along with fear and reverence.\*\*

I wrote you about this last time, and you agreed to it. You know what method is required for this. and you have already begun Lord give the blessing! And allow the continuation of this labor unhindered. Be with the Lord, no matter what you do; and turn to Him with your whole mind, trying to conduct yourself as you would in front of a king. You will soon get in the habit, just do not give up or break off. If you carry out this little rule conscientiously, it will reduce inner confusion and, although there will be disruptions, sometimes in the form of idle and unnecessary thoughts, or at other times in the form of emotions and inappropriate desires, you will immediately notice this error and drive out these uninvited guests, rushing each time to renew the oneness of mind concerning the One Lord.

May you be inspired! Set about this a little more enthusiastically, continue without interruption, and you will soon attain what you are seeking. Reverential attention in the one God will be established, and inner peace will come with Him. I say that it will be soon; however, this will take more than a day or two. These things require maybe a few months. Sometimes it takes years! Ask the Lord and He Himself will help you.

As an aid, add the following rule to this: Do not do anything that your conscience prohibits, and do not omit anything that it says to do, whether great or small. The conscience is always our moral guide. The cherished thoughts, emotions, and desires that are within us give us over to improper whims; this is caused, incidentally, by the fact that our conscience has lost its force. Restore its force, and express full obedience to it. You have now educated it by finding out all that you must and must not do. Follow it undeviatingly, and with such perseverance that you would not allow yourself to do anything against it even if you were to die. The more decisively you act, then, the more powerful your conscience will become. The more powerful your conscience becomes, the more completely and forcefully it will inspire you with what is necessary and steer you away from what is unnecessary in words, deeds, and thoughts, and the more quickly your inner being will be put in order. A conscience with reverential remembrance of God is the wellspring of true spiritual life. Recall how we talked about the spirit in the beginning of our correspondence.

Nothing more is required besides these two rules. Just supplement them with patience. Success will not come suddenly; you must wait, toiling persistently. You must toil and, most importantly, do not give in to pleasing yourself or the world. There will be constant opposition to what you have begun. You must overcome this; therefore, you must exert more force and, consequently, be patient. Clothe yourself in this all-powerful armor and never allow your spirits to fall when you encounter misfortune. Everything will come with time. Be encouraged in your patience through this hope. That this is what happens is borne out by the experiences of all people who have sought and accomplished salvation.

That, then, is all! Remember God with reverence, obey your conscience, and arm yourself with hope through patience. May the Lord bless you to be so inclined and to be in this frame of mind.

\* Govenie: this is a Slavonic term that is difficult to translate into English. It basically means the ascetic struggles associated with a period of fasting, especially at the start of Great Lent [--webmaster]

\*\* In a later letter (Ch. 46) St. Theophan says the following: "May the fear of death and of the judgment at death never leave you. From morning, at the same time you are renewing the memory of the Lord in your heart, take care to add to this the memory of these final things. Then you will have this thought continually the entire day, just as you have the thought of the Lord; and as you are falling asleep, say, The grave is

before me! Death awaits me! You will see what safeguards these are."

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