



Being Mindful of Every Thought and Action

An American (Orthodox Christian):

The Holy Elder Sebastian of Optina (Russia) would sometimes teach:

"Why do some people suffer, become ill, endure sorrows and offenses, etc., almost all of their lives? Because of the sins of their parents and grandparents. These sufferers are like a living sacrifice offered up to atone for the sins of their parents and grandparents."

The words of this holy elder remind me to be on guard, being mindful of every thought and action so as not to pave a path of unrighteousness for my children to follow. I find this to be difficult. God has revealed to me the elephant I am to eat (all those things which I am holding onto, keeping me from receiving the love of the all Holy Trinity), and I shall focus on eating this elephant one bite at a time, so as not to become overwhelmed and paralyzed by the magnitude of the task.

Why do I find it so important to eat this elephant? Proverbs has the answer:

"Evil men will seek me, but not find me, for they hate wisdom, and choose not the fear of the Lord. Neither do they wish to follow my counsels, but despise my reproofs. Therefore, they shall eat the fruits of their own way and be filled with their own ungodliness...But he who obeys me shall dwell in hope, and shall be at rest without fear from every evil" (1:31-33, 35).

Saint Gregory of Nyssa teaches:

"The man who has once chosen pleasure in this life, and has not cured his inconsiderateness by repentance, places the land of the good beyond his own reach; for he has dug against himself the yawning impassable abyss of a necessity that nothing can break through."

We as a people learn a lot of what we do through what we observe from others. If my children see me live as a hypocrite, then all I am associated with becomes discredited before them. But, if I am able to humble myself before the Lord, and walk blamelessly before our God in my home and in the market place, passing on the piety of faith; then through the prayers and guidance of the most pure

and holy Mother of God, their holy guardian angles, and their patron saints, may they dwell in the hope of our God.

Lord, grant unto me true repentance, humility and contrition of heart; guiding my hands and feet unto your commandments.

P. N.

What I'm Aiming For

From the introduction to Blessed Paisius Velichkovsky:

"Our times, above all, call for humble and quiet labors, with love and sympathy for other strugglers on the path of the Orthodox Spiritual life and a deep resolve that does not become discouraged because the atmosphere is unfavorable. We Christians of the latter times are still called to work persistently on ourselves, to be obedient to spiritual fathers and authorities, to lead an orderly life with at least a minimum of spiritual discipline and with regular reading of the Orthodox spiritual literature, to watch over our sins and failings and not judge others. If we do this, even in our terrible times we may have hope-in God's mercy-of the salvation of our souls. For as our saviour has warned us, even in the last times when 'the love of many shall grow cold,' he that endureth to the end shall be saved" (Matt. 24:13).

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