



73rd Year

October 19, 2025

Pamphlet #42 (3777)

THE SUNDAY EPISTLE (2 Corinthians 11:31-12:9)

"My power is made perfect in weakness"

Brethren, the God and Father of the Lord Jesus, he who is blessed for ever, knows that I do not lie. At Damascus, the governor under King Aretas guarded the city of Damascus in order to seize me, but I was let down in a basket through a window in the wall, and escaped his hands. I must boast; there is nothing to be gained by it, but I will go on to visions and revelations of the Lord. I know a man in Christ who fourteen years ago was caught up to the third heaven – whether in the body or out of the body I do not know, God knows. And I know that this man was caught up into Paradise – whether in the body or out of the body I do not know, God knows – and he heard things that cannot be told, which man may not utter. On behalf of this man I will boast, but on my own behalf I will not boast, except of my weaknesses. Though if I wish to boast, I shall not be a fool, for I shall be speaking the truth. But I refrain from it, so that no one may think more of me than he sees in me or hears from me. And to keep me from being too elated by the abundance of revelations, a thorn was given me in the flesh, a messenger of Satan, to harass me, to keep me from being too elated. Three times I besought the Lord about this, that it should leave me; but he said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness." I will all the more gladly boast of my weaknesses, that the power of Christ may rest upon me.

THE TEMPTATION OF SPIRITUAL ARROGANCE

The Apostle Paul, my brethren, is honored and recognized by our Church as the First after the One, the missionary to the

world. However, he would have been none of these things had he succumbed to the temptation of spiritual self-sufficiency and arrogance. Such temptations could easily have arisen, considering the divine revelations he experienced and the miracles of God's protection that shielded him from the fury of his persecutors.

Boasting in weakness

This is what he speaks about in the Epistle reading we heard today: his miraculous rescue in Damascus, but above all, his rapture into Paradise – a profound event which, in humility, he attributes to another, nonexistent person – where he saw, heard, and experienced things that no human language can describe and no human brush can depict. And yet, he avoids the justifiable, perhaps, but unwise boasting that such a transcendent experience might provoke – an experience that, if any of us had lived through, we might flaunt as a banner of personal glory and vindication. Instead of this, he chooses to boast in his weaknesses, through which he perceives the presence of God, who keeps him grounded, changing his bodily affliction, which tormented him, into a shield of protection against the danger of spiritual haughtiness and arrogance.

Avoiding praise

A hallmark of the saints is their humility and discreet stance toward extraordinary manifestations of God's grace, through which the mysteries of God are revealed. They avoid speaking about such experiences; they keep them secret. Yet they are vividly portrayed in the serenity of their faces, the grace of their words, their shouting silence, or even in the streams of their tears. It is truly admirable for someone to preserve such deep humble-mindedness, avoiding the praise of people, even though they could easily be at the center of conversations and admiration from the mortal and perishable, risking however the loss of grace from the incorruptible and immortal God.

Illusion and arrogance

On the opposite end lies arrogance, which arises from the illusion of spiritual self-sufficiency – when someone considers themselves a minor deity. In this state, a person seeks universal recognition of their worth, their promotion and validation; they pursue high positions, believing themselves to be incomparably superior to everyone else. They yearn always to be ahead of others, to be more highly regarded, to be rewarded more generously than others. They struggle to admit their mistakes and to apologize for them. As a result, they grieve, suffer, become enraged, and live in the hell they themselves have built around them, especially when they feel they are being treated unfairly and their “greatness” has not been recognized. And at the same time, because of their arrogance, they give rise to countless other sins that destroy communion with God and with our fellow human beings. “What should I do, since arrogance consumes me?” a young hermit once asked an elder during the early years of monasticism. “Well, you are rightly arrogant,” the elder replied. “Didn’t you create the heavens and the earth?” That one sentence was enough; the young man was healed of his arrogance.

The trap of autonomy

Ultimately, as a contemporary hierarch points out, “there is no greater sin than this, especially when it concerns the Shepherds. It was this sin that drove man out of Paradise. Spiritual shepherds, otherwise devout, become autonomous from their Bishop and, essentially, from the Church itself, even attributing a character of ‘holiness’ to this autonomy of theirs. This is the great trap. They perceive this state as ‘holiness,’ believing they stand apart from others. When the devil cannot lead people of the Church into moral failings, he sows the pride of self-sufficiency and autonomy. He seeks to divide people from God and from one another, and although the Church has unity at its very core, it sees that unity destroyed because of pride and self-sufficiency.”

The attitude of Paul, my brethren, is entirely instructive, for shepherds and the flock alike. Let us adopt it, rejecting the illusion of personal superiority, so that we may enjoy the feeling of divine love and honor. Let it be so!

Archimandrite E. Oik.

October 19, 2025: 3rd Sunday of Luke

Prophet Joel (630 B.C.), Martyr Varus (+ 307).

2nd Tone – Eothinon: 8 – Epistle: 2 Corinthians 11:31-12:9
– Gospel: Luke 7:11-16

NEXT SUNDAY: October 26, 6th Sunday of Luke
Epistle: 2 Timothy 2:1-10 – Gospel: Luke 8:27-39

CATECHIST TRAINING SEMINAR

The Apostolic Ministry, wishing to contribute to the better training of those who assist in the catechetical and parish work of our Church, continues the online operation of the Catechist Training Seminar.

For more information, you may contact:

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