

“Then Jesus
was led up by
the Spirit into
the wilderness
to be tempted
by the devil.”

– Matthew 4:1



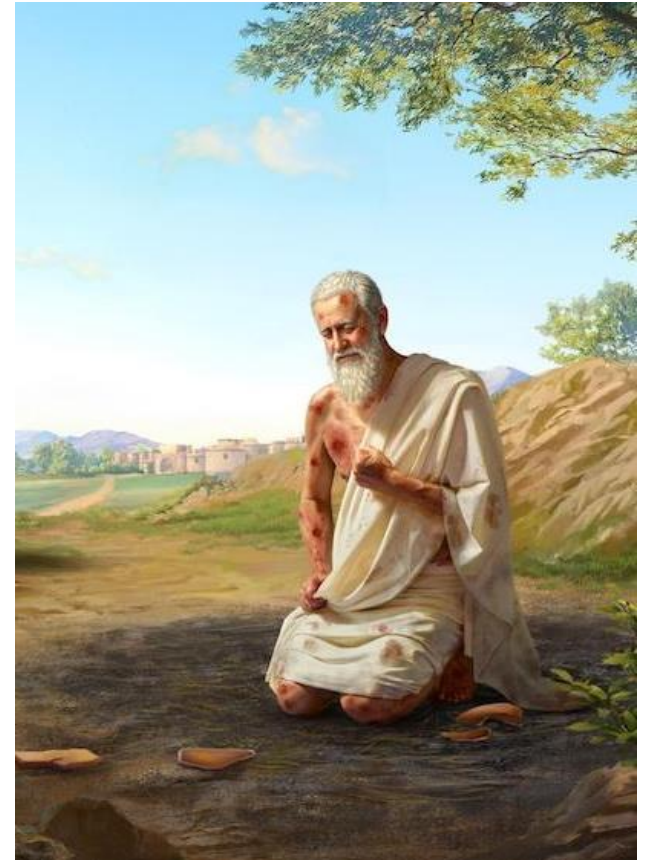
The Hidden Blessings of Temptations



2nd Sunday of the Great Fast

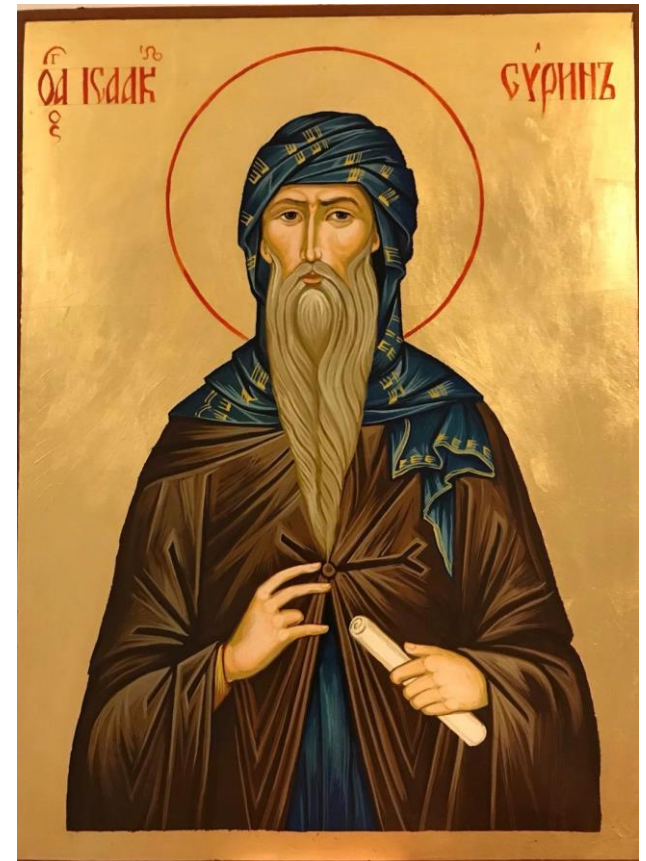
Trials and Temptations

- Trials
 - EX: Job
 - "My brethren, count it all joy when you fall into various trials, knowing that the testing of your faith produces patience." (James 1:2-3)
- Temptations
 - "Let no one say when he is tempted, 'I am tempted by God'; for God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does He Himself tempt anyone. But each one is tempted when he is drawn away by his own desires and enticed" (James 1:13-14)



1. Understanding and Knowledge

- “It is not possible for us to know the truth unless temptations are allowed to come upon us.” (St. Isaac the Syrian)
- What understanding is gained?



What understanding is gained?

- The difficulty and tiresomeness of temptations
 - Ex: Joseph
 - “So it was, as she spoke to Joseph day by day, that he did not heed her, to lie with her or to be with her.” (Gen. 39:10)
- Cunningness of the enemy
 - “Now the serpent was more cunning than any beast of the field which the LORD God had made.” (Gen. 3:1)



What understanding is gained?

- Awareness of one's own weakness
 - Ex: St. Peter
 - But he said to Him, "Lord, I am ready to go with You, both to prison and to death." Then He said, "I tell you, Peter, the rooster shall not crow this day before you will deny three times that you know Me." (Lk. 22:33-34)
- Recognition of God's protective grace
 - "No temptation has overtaken you except such as is common to man; but God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will also make the way of escape." (1 Cor. 10:13).

2. Humility

- *“The shortcomings of those who watch over themselves are the custodians of their righteousness and are permitted by God so that their transgressions and failings should be a cause of humility. This humility protects the labor of great men, not only by preserving them from pride, but also by humbling them with the recollection of their failings; in this manner they also receive a greater recompense.”* (St. Isaac the Syrian)
- EX: St. Paul’s thorn in his side
- EX: David’s sin with Bathsheba
- *“For I am conscious of my iniquity; and my sin is at all times before me.”* (Ps. 50:3 LXX)

3. Brings us closer to God

“He permits man to be tempted, that this trial may become to him a cause for drawing near to God, and also that he may be instructed, and have the experience of temptations.”
(St. Isaac the Syrian)

Bless my Enemies, O Lord

“Bless my enemies, O Lord. Even I bless them and do not curse them. Enemies have driven me into Your embrace more than friends have. Friends have bound me to earth, enemies have loosed me from earth and have demolished all my aspirations in the world... Bless my enemies, O Lord. Even I bless them and do not curse them. Whenever I have made myself wise, they have called me foolish. Whenever I have made myself mighty, they have mocked me as though I were a dwarf. Whenever I have wanted to lead people, they have shoved me into the background. Whenever I have rushed to enrich myself, they have prevented me with an iron hand. Whenever I thought that I would sleep peacefully, they have wakened me from sleep. Whenever I have tried to build a home for a long and tranquil life, they have demolished it and driven me out. Truly, enemies have cut me loose from the world and have stretched out my hands to the hem of Your garment.” - St. Nikolai Velimirovich

4. Develops our faith and boldness before the Lord

- *“Prepare yourself with all your soul to receive bodily temptations; voyage in them with all your members and fill your eyes with tears, so that the angel who guards you does not depart from you. **For without trials God’s providence is not seen, and you cannot obtain boldness before God, nor learn the wisdom of the Spirit, nor can divine longing be established in you.**” (St. Isaac the Syrian)*
- *“...so that with a pure heart, we may dare with boldness, without fear, to cry to Your holy Father, who is in the heavens, and say...” (Fraction to the Son, Divine Liturgy)*

5. Gift of Discernment

- *“Without entering into temptations, no man will ever gain the wisdom of the Spirit... If the soul does not taste Christ’s sufferings consciously, she will never have communion with Him.”* (St. Isaac the Syrian)
- *“But solid food belongs to those who are of full age, that is, those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil.”* (Heb. 5:14)

6. Reveals one's path

“Whenever in your path you find unchanging peace, beware: you are very far from the divine paths trodden by the weary feet of the saints. For as long as you are journeying in the way to the city of the Kingdom and are drawing nigh the city of God, this will be a sign for you: the strength of the temptations that you counter. And the nearer you draw nigh and progress, the more temptations will multiply against you.”
(St. Isaac the Syrian)



7. Source of one's reward

- “Blessed is the man who endures temptation; for when he has been approved, he will receive the crown of life which the Lord has promised to those who love Him.” (James 1:12).



Summary

- **The Hidden Blessings of Temptation**
 - Understanding and Knowledge
 - Humility
 - Brings us closer to God
 - Develops our faith and boldness before the Lord
 - Gift of Discernment
 - Reveals one's path
 - Source of one's reward
- These blessings come when we faithfully endure temptations NOT by subjecting ourselves to temptations.
- Jesus said to him, "It is written again, You shall not tempt the LORD your God." (Matt. 4:7)
- "And do not lead us into temptation, But deliver us from the evil one." (Matt. 6:13)

