

Face yourself

*• God •
is Light*

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God is Light. This definition of the Lord has become so customary to us that we rarely think of its true deep meaning. And, this meaning is deep indeed, deep incredibly.

The Highest of Heights.

A human being tends to look for ‘better’: for a more handsome and kind spouse, for a more loyal friend, for a more gifted writer or singer, more talented artist or sculptor. We all are involuntarily aspiring to everything high and beautiful, but...

How often do we miss the very basis of all the beauty! A singer receives his talent from God who is the best Singer, and an artist receives his talent from the Greatest of Artists who, by the way, is the most reliable Friend and the most loving Father. For those who like joy, He is the Source of it. And for all lovers of a high-flown poetry, He is the most Heartfelt of the Poets, and so on.

So often we do not see the gist of everything we hold dear in this world. So often we do not notice the Author of all that we use of habitually and that which we are pleased with everyday.

God is Love.

God is love. This definition of the Lord has become so customary to us that we rarely think of its true, deep meaning. And, this meaning is deep indeed, deep incomprehensibly.

Each of us has loved somebody. And each of us is certain that knows what love is. Partially, this is true. Love is a kind of a beautiful summit amidst the vanities of our time. And, the higher the love that we have managed to experience in our lives is, the higher the summit we have managed to rise to.

But, is there a limit to love? Is there a limit to the height of these summits? If there is, only the God knows the answer to this question, who

is the Height of all the Heights. As for us, even the smallest of the heights are often covered by the clouds of our passions.

The Freedom of Choice.

God has given us freedom of will and freedom of choice in this life. And, it is not so difficult to understand that. Only he who has chosen and has not lost the Lord in this endless sea of temptations and passions will not lose Him in the future. And, only such - His son or daughter can the Father always trust indeed.

By all means possible and throughout our lives, the God leads us to understand the necessity of following the way of love, kindness and forgiveness. He does this all exclusively for us so that we can attain joy, harmony and happiness.

But, if we do not agree with Him, if we prefer to go a different way in this life, the Father will not hinder us; He would respect our choice. Having once given the freedom of choice to us, He will always keep it safe and sacred.

The Soul.

The world is becoming more modern. However, our souls cannot get “more modern”. Just as it was a thousand years ago, our souls receive joy from love, kind deeds and forgiving other people. And, in the same way, our souls are unhappy because of our lies, bad acts, deprecations and division. The soul cast in us by God cannot become more “modern”. It is perfect but, simply, we rarely listen to it.

No modern *playthings* of our times can ever satisfy the needs of our souls, fill it or lead us to happiness. They may be a temporary distraction, but what can imbue a soul is completely different.

Feeling happy or unhappy, thus, by the voice of conscience, our soul always lets us know whether we are doing the right thing or not. So, by committing good acts time after time again, we gradually progress towards happiness while the place and the circumstances we are in do not matter much. God created the world so that a human being can be absolutely happy or totally unhappy at any place in it. It is the soul that fills us with happiness, not the circumstances.

By doing bad deeds and judging other people, we may throw our soul into such a swelter that no external circumstances will ever bring it joy.

The Faith.

There is a good saying: ‘We are what we believe in.’ And, there is a pretty good lot of the truth in it because, namely the set of our beliefs and principles is what we habitually call ‘personality’.

Obviously, when there are changes in our beliefs, our personality changes itself as well. And, these changes may go in different directions, especially today when there are so many theories, religions and beliefs!

When a person starts believing in God, in the supremacy of love, kindness, help and beauty over all other senses of this life, he or she starts going in the only and right direction that will really lead him to happiness, joy and light in this life and beyond it.

If a person chooses to believe in something else, then all the changes will distance him as much away from happiness and joy, as much he retreats from the commandments of this world’s Creator.

Just like beacons on the right way, the Lord left us thousands of proofs that He does exist and directed us to the right way to Him. Many volumes of books have been written about miracles that happened to the Lord, prophets and many of His saints and righteous men, starting from the times of ancient Israel and up to this day. All these facts were left for us by the Lord “on the surface”, so to say, in case we want to see them indeed.

However, if we decide to have some other interests, if some new electronic toy attracts us more than the miracles of the Lord and the way to the Kingdom of God, then it is our own choice. Although, judging fairly, the toy too comes from Him...

The Light.

At times, the world seems dark and gloomy to us, but it is not so at all; it is not that bad. The Lord still rules the world as He has done before, and He is the Light. Our whole trouble is that we do not look at this light, nor seek it. For most of our time, we prefer digging in the spots that are far from the light. We do not ever miss a piece of bad news on TV or in newspapers and after we sincerely wonder, why our lives are unhappy.

Although, in fact, it is not so at all. There is much more of light in this world. Much more than that! Look around your: is it all dark and gloomy? We merely manage to accumulate all the negative side of the world, which the Lord has prepared for seven billion people in order to bring them up and then, we wonder how much of it there is.

Why don't we begin to gather all the light and all the positive sides of this world with the same enthusiasm? Then, we would see their real proportion. But, for some reason, the negative side attracts us more. Is it not so because it is closer to us? This is a serious issue we all need to think about. It is no secret that like attracts like.

Though, if we look at the light much more, we will see it. If we seek and see the good in this world, we will gradually be filled with it. The beauty of what we seek will gradually fill our soul. Similarly, the darkness of all the negative things will finally fill us if we always choose to see it.

The light is, has been, and will always be in this world and beyond it – the only and permanent reality. This is God’s world and nobody else’s. The question is: how often do we strive for it in this life and choose it?

Gratitude.

Cognition of the Lord is the most interesting thing, which can be. Of course, our Father is unfathomable. But to some rays of His light and love we can and we must touch. Otherwise, where else would we find both light and love?

Why does the whole angelic world glorify the Lord? If we reckon that God wants it to be so, then we are deeply mistaken. The One, who teaches us to reject vanity in us, is completely free of it. Everyone in Heaven glorifies the Lord for a different reason.

For instance, if we meet a good person in our life who has helped us, we cannot but be grateful to him. This gratefulness lies higher above us; it comes from the heart.

What are we then to say about all those who owe everything to the Lord while staying close to Him always? – The ones, to whom He gives His love, His joy and much, much more. The best they have comes from God. And, seeing this, they cannot help but glorify Him.

Similarly, it is with us on earth. All the best that we have received comes from God and all the best that we had or shall have comes from Him as well. But often, we do not see this and do not remember Him.

However still, He gives and gives, and gives. He cannot do otherwise. He will give always and everywhere, despite everything. Meanwhile, gratitude is mostly needed for us. It warms our hearts, though the Father, of course, will always smile in return...

Forgiveness.

We do not really like to forgive. But, let us learn about that a little from our Father.

There are several billion people on earth already. And, hardly anyone manages not to commit a sin, willingly or not, at least once a day. Often, we manage to live a life not knowing about Him, and often, we consciously turn away from Him. But, the Lord never remembers offences. For every one of His children, He fights as hard as He can from the first to the last day in order to bring them to His light and goodness. He fights for each of the seven billion.

Therefore, He is God and the Source of happiness for everyone!

As for us, sometimes we cannot even forgive one person, and we keep moaning and wondering long after that why we do feel so unhappy.

Seeing Kindness in the People.

It's very important for us in this life to learn to see kindness in people. Such vision brings great happiness to our soul, which then we can draw out anywhere people are. The Lord loves us always wherever we are, despite anything in the world. It means, it is possible and that we too must strive for it.

There is no doubt that we can see a lot of bad in people. Yes, there is a lot of evil sometimes, but there is so much more good! Evil is like an intrusive advertising: always clamorous, always on the surface, always eye-catching. An angry person can be seen a hundred meters away, whereas we might not even notice a thousand of quiet people around us. The good is quiet, humble, and unpretentious. Often, it is not so noticeable in a person, so only the closest people can see it well. It is not so obvious, therefore we might not even guess it is in there.

We must learn to look at people from the right angle. If we wish indeed to see the good in this or that person, the Lord will always help us do that, because, unlike us, He can see a soul!

The World.

Father gave this world to us to live here happily. Seas and mountains, forests and rivers, fishes and birds, animals and reptiles – all that is our one beautiful home and our closest neighbors. People must learn to co-exist peacefully and continue to develop this world for the good of each and every one.

The commandments that the Father left us through His Son will always show us the way to happiness and cheer on earth: love and respect for other people, help and forgiveness, repentance from all our bad deeds and acts, honesty always and everywhere.

Following this principles, people, in all cases, will become happier at any place on the planet, because then, God Himself will be with them. And, we know many places in this world, where the people living there, have made serious advance in this direction. These kinder and friendly countries are well-known and many people like to travel there.

And vice versa: the farther people step aside from the principles of hospitality and support, respect and honesty inside the country and beyond

it, the more apparent becomes unhappiness of people living there. One cannot become happy in God's world and stay far away from His principles. It is the myth that God has been dispelling year after year and century after century in different parts of the world.

Only in love and unity, mutual respect and help lies a happy future for all human beings on earth. And beyond this world, those living by these principles will not be abandoned by the Father.

Family.

Family is the little world, given to us by the Lord where every soul can and must obtain happiness and love. Although, it is not a secret that families have become more brittle today. Nowadays, young people believe less and less in a lasting and happy family relationship; divorce statistics confirms this. But, why are families so weak? Where do they lose their stability?

The answer is quite obvious here and again leads us to the desires and passions of our soul. We often forget about them in family life. Our souls want love, quick resolution of conflicts in the family, absolute forgiveness of our loved ones and ultimate sincerity and honesty in the relationship. But often, with our lies and insults, jealousy and stubbornness day by day, we build the wall of distrust, coldness and alienation. Though often, not to a lesser degree or at times, we are even more guilty of many conflicts and quarrels in the family.

Is it possible to have a true lifelong love in the family? Of course! But, for that, each of the consorts must want this and cherish this love, remembering that any insults and criticism inevitably leads to loss of warmth, division and coldness, while love must always be in the place above all meaningless offenses and reproaches. Each spouse must cherish their loved one, forgiving all mistakes and sins, thereby restoring the

initial purity of the relationship. And, such love will not be scared of anything, neither of time nor of circumstances.

A strong and close-knit family, where such love appears, will always be an untethered source of light and joy for every day; it will be the place where is always warm and homelike.

On Unity and Division.

The Lord always wants us to be together; He always calls us to unite. Any passions in us such as deprecation, lie, anger, greed and others always lead to division. And they surely will do it, if we do not start countering them.

Being alone, a person is always weaker. Let us remember a well-known rule of all conquerors: “Divide and conquer”. It is so, because we are always weaker staying separately. It is the same with spiritual issues.

Our souls, purified from passions, always want to be together as they start striving involuntary for the one center – God, who is present in this world through love and friendship, honesty and sincerity, beauty and harmony, happiness and light. And, we will inevitably be drawn to people in whom all these qualities start opening.

Each time escaping the “stinging” of this world and other people “who do not understand us”, we, in fact, flee away from an honest and sincere look upon ourselves, on our imperfections. But, escaping will never help us find the answers that can indeed lead us to our happiness.

Happiness.

Happiness is always inside us. It is our soul that makes us happy and free, if it is purified from passions and addictions of different sorts. And then God fills it up well with light, joy and happiness.

This light penetrates all spheres of our lives and gives a warm and happy hue to everything we do and to everyone we meet. It is all as different from a grey, routine life as a colour photograph differs from a black-and-white one.

It certainly takes effort and sometimes, a great effort. But, do we not sometimes make a considerable effort for the sake of various trifles? However, here is our soul and future, so it is merely unreasonable to be lazy here. Consequently, we will always regret a missed opportunity.

It does not matter how old we are or how many worries we have and things we have to do. All of that does not matter! There is always the time and the place to begin spiritual growth. It only takes being attentive to oneself, to one's deeds, thoughts and wishes. One needs to be very sensitive to the voice of one's conscience; through it, the Father help us to see events as they truly are. One must become completely honest with oneself and others, realizing that any lie does not come from the Lord at all. One must do his best not to judge people, but always seek and find goodness and kindness in them.

And then, it will not take long for the results to manifest. The Lord always gives support and strengthens those who choose the right path in this life. He will never leave any good wish or a good thought without support.

Conscience.

There is a just and uncorrupted judge inside each and every one of us – our conscience. It has been given to us by the Lord. It is a spiritual

compass that we received from Him, helping us to stay on the right way in this complicated world.

If we do something wrong, our conscience will inevitably “nag” us until we do the right thing. And, there is no kind of self-justification that can save us from its voice. Whenever we do the right thing, our conscience will always keep silent.

Still, if we do something despite our conscience, often justifying our wrong deeds, then the voice of conscience will become quieter and quieter and can disappear altogether. And then, after some time, we might see the worst sins as “mere weaknesses of human nature”. The Father always wants to help us and tries to point us at the right decision. Although, if we decide to act contrary to his advice, He will not hinder us.

In this life, everyone may pursue the goals that are close to him or her, and the Lord, even after seeing our mistakes, still allows us to do as we want. Freedom of our will is the sign of His respect for His children and their choice. Yes, we will always be His children. But, will He become the beloved Father to us at all? This is the question that each of us must answer him or herself, as is our choice too.

Everything is rightly so. We can make a choice, even despite the voice of our conscience, of anything in this life. However, we must not be surprised if this “anything” lead us to place, there we are not wanted to come to.

Our passions.

Now, let us discuss in details what keeps us from pushing through to light and joy in our lives. Nobody will deny that on the way to the Lord, we have to overcome resistance, constantly choosing between good and evil, between truth and lie, between love and deprecation, and often, the right choice does not come to us easily at all!

Why is that so? What force stands against natural wishes of our souls and leads us astray and even backwards? The answer to this question has been known for a long time. This force is the devil that is inside us - if he manages to fill us up with passions and sins. It is worth noting here that any passion and sin is absolutely alien to our soul which can and must live without them. But until the Lord – helping our will and effort – frees us from them, they are still ours.

What can these passions and sins be compared with? Figuratively, they could be well compared to a sticky dark paint that covers our soul like a light bulb. And, the more passions we have, the less the light of our soul. If we let those passions fill us more and more, this light can disappear completely.

But this does not mean that our soul, a piece of God, would disappear at all. No, it is not possible. We just consciously choose to live without it by ourselves. Then, in this case, why do we wonder that true love, joy and happiness can hardly be felt at the heart?

It must be noted that this “paint” is not just very sticky, but it is very cunning as well. Oh, it is not an easy thing to wash off! This path requires perseverance, time and firmness. But, if the work is done and done properly, the results will always be well noticeable. It is impossible not to notice the growing brightness of our “light bulb” if we have made continuous effort.

Types of passions.¹

Let us look closer at the types of the “paints” that covers our souls. This knowledge is very important as it helps us to wash it off quicker and better. Of course, only the Lord can rid us of passions, but it is we who

¹ For more details on types of passions and ways to overcome them, please, see the book “Face yourself. How to overcome your passions”.

must want this, rubbing our soul with a scrub, washing off the layers of the “paint”, aiming at inner purity. Only this way, through such collaboration, can the light of our soul will become brighter day by day.

And, let us speculate in detail about passions themselves. We shall begin with the passion of deprecation. Despite its seeming harmlessness and even popularity nowadays, it is one of the darkest “paints” that our souls may be covered with. It is not a coincidence that the Lord mentions it nine times during the Sermon on the Mount, whereas other passions He mentions once or twice only. There cannot be any randomness with the Lord.

And here is the thing: Deprecation is the opposite of love. It is impossible to criticize someone without closing one’s heart to them. Where deprecation grows, love fades, and where there is true love, there is no deprecation. If a person does something wrong, a truly loving person will experience other feelings toward him: forgiveness, compassion, desire to help and support. And therefore, there is always light in such a heart.

There are other passions that keep our hearts closed from each other, such as jealousy and lie.

Any lie always separates us and deprives our hearts of love and sincerity. After a lie, the hearts can no longer beat to the beat as before. The more lies arise, the farther hearts draw away from each other. This wall of lies can only be broken if one confesses sincerely and the other forgives sincerely. The Lord always comes to our rescue if we repent or forgive someone. And, there is no other way to eliminate the consequences of lies for our hearts. Even if the mind has long forgotten about a lie, the heart still remembers it because the lie remains a burden.

Now about jealousy. A sense of ownership open a way to poisonous jealousy and mistrust that arise in us. But it is only the threads of love and trust that keep people’s hearts together. All other “threads” are breakable. Similarly, as we do not like being someone’s property, so do not like this

the others. These two feelings – love and sense of ownership come from totally different sources. And, all our sorrows in love come just from losing our “property” which we create only in our heads. A truly loving heart never suffers.

Love is from the Lord and it lives exclusively by the laws of trust, concession and forgiveness. Therefore, all those who wish to “tie” their loved ones firmer must merely love them truly as they are. Let us be ourselves, and let others be themselves. There is so much interesting in our differences!

There are many other passions and addictions besides the ones mentioned above, for instance: despondency, pride, vanity, greed and so on. The Lord will always prompt us and point towards the passions that hinder us from being happy. We must struggle against all of them as hard as we can, with the Lord’s help.

It is also important to understand that by putting out our passions, we do not out our nature and personality. We remain the same – lively and ardent, but we eliminate sinfulness in ourselves.

Dependencies.

Problem of dependencies is, probably, one of the most serious issues of today’s spiritual work. How much is sold and offered around us today! And often, following our uncontrollable desires, we become “overgrown” with so many needless things and activities that are just stealing our time.

After that, we might try to look light and free, although, in some cases, we with our “freedom” look more like a moth in the center of a cobweb. And, in this case, we created it ourselves.

Dependencies always deprive us of freedom to this or that extent. The core of dependencies is not in the things, which we have, although, having

too many of them, we can hardly keep the lightness. The essence of dependencies lies only in our attitude towards those things and different matters. And here, everything is pretty simple: for example, if we have something, but we do not depend on it, then we really own it. And we are ready to be without it. If there is no such lightness, there is the dependency, and the thing we own begins to own us.

How to struggle against the dependencies? As with everything else, here, we should develop a peaceful and reasonable look upon things and more often remember about the temporality of this world and everything earthly. It is not about the things themselves, but the point is in our inner mindset for them, to which passion like to cling. So, one can be absolutely free while possessing a lot, and vice versa, one can be a slave of a couple of useless things.

And if we get into the “cobweb” of our dependencies, what to speak about spirituality? In this case, we are already must to manage all our “threads” on time.

Light and Despondency.

All the gloomy states of the soul such as despondency, melancholy, depression and others do not exist by themselves. It is just the absence of something. It is an absence of light, love, happiness, joy which can only be given to us by the Lord. Like darkness - it is just the absence of light in a given place.

Therefore, there is no point in countering despondency and depression by methods other than seeking happiness, love and joy in this life. Despite plenty of various other methods for fighting depression, its high rates speak for themselves well.

When we criticize someone continuously, when we become annoyed, when we tell a lie and become frightened by everything, when we

voluntarily wrap ourselves in a great number of needless addictions, then we step further away from the ways of light, the ways of the Lord. So why are we surprised that any light and joy then disappears and depression and despondency comes instead? It is quite obvious that in order to scramble from all these dark states of our soul, we must start moving in the right - the opposite way – towards forgiveness, honesty, freedom from addictions, etcetera. Only so we will be able to return the light and joy to our lives.

How to overcome the passions.

It is a well-known fact that often we face serious attacks from our passions. Moreover, the waves of deprecation, irritation or, for example, despondency will roll on us long after, even if we are doing everything right in our spiritual work.

What should we do, if our old “dwellers” are not willing to leave so simply their warm and cozy shelter that we have been for them for many years. We will have to prove many times that we go on without them. Certainly, with the course of time, these waves will become weaker, especially if we counter them in the right way.

Firstly, we should realize that if we give in to them and begin to deprecate someone indeed or become irritated for some reason, we protract the process of their expelling. The best thing we can do in such circumstances is to try to go as hard as we can against these waves.

If, for instance, our passions try to throw us into deprecating someone, we must try to do the contrary and set ourselves on warm attitude towards that person, remembering something good about him or her. Certainly, it is not simple to do so in such moments. However, if we do manage to do this, we will learn how short-lived defense of the passions is, if the Lord

helps us. And, He will always help us, if we fight our passions sincerely and bravely.

If we cannot find powers in us to think well of someone, and sometimes, such happens too, we must try hard at least not to disapprove them. We must turn to the Lord for help and ask Him to cast a true light upon the situation and help us to overcome the wave of deprecation and irritation. Ask necessarily.

With this, seemingly simple oration to the Lord, we call His light in for help. And, of course, He comes to us and begins to disperse the darkness in our souls. The best reward for our perseverance and proof of the rightness of our actions is the warmth and light that we then feel instead of the irritation wave. And often, looking at the person we have been deprecating recently, we will think: “How nice it is to have him here!”

What sin is.

Our sins are the “creations” of our passions. Any passion wants to manifest in us somehow and for that, it pushes us towards certain actions, words, thoughts. If it succeeds, a sin appears in our hearts, and the more times we cede passions, the more sins we collect in our lives.

What is it like and what does it resemble? We have all heard some information about overweight people. It's no secret that people with each extra kilo lose their attractiveness, lightness and often, their health. And, the more the extra weight is, the stronger these consequences are.

The same is with the sins. Actually, they are the extra weight for our souls, taking away its lightness, joy, light and love. As with the overweight of human bodies, the more the “weight” of sins lies in our soul, the heavier it becomes for us.

Of course, we can adapt to living with this weight somehow, as some overweight people do, but, look at how happy they are when they manage to lose a few kilograms! Needless to say, how happy our soul will become when it manages to be purified from old sins.

The Lord gave us a very simple and efficient way of cleaning our souls – to repent sincerely from the sins we have committed. Deeply and very sincerely. Without sincerity in repentance, we will only add new, sly sins of lie to the old ones.

Repentance may be different. Sometimes, we must apologize to the person and sometimes, apologize to the Lord; somewhere, we must correct something or do something else. Through our conscience, the Lord will always point us towards the right decision in one situation or the other.

It is very good if we wish to confess in a church. The more we despise a sin and the more reliably we want to get rid of it, the better it is.

There is no other way to get rid of sins. Even if we embark on a spiritual path and begin to fight our passions, our old sins will still prevent us from getting through to true light and joy. Is it easy to learn to dance beautifully with weights around one's neck?

Or another example. Let's assume we have decided to take care of the cleanness of our flat from today and start to ensure closely that we do not bring rubbish inside. That is good, but what about the garbage that we used to bring into our flat for a long time? Because with it, our room will not be clean anyway. Similarly, with our soul - we have to get all the old rubbish out of it. God has long ago put "garbage cans" in our flat with the inscription "Repentance" on it. But we only need to lift our old rubbish from the floor and put it in the garbage can with the repentance.

The Fruits.

Normally, any of our activities yield results. For instance, salary is the fruit of our work and knowledge is the fruit of our studying. Our spiritual work must yield results as well. The Lord spoke a lot about this in His time.

The spiritual fruits are all the good qualities of our soul that open when the Lord banishes all our passions. They include love, not only for the nearest and dearest, but for many other people; they include light and joy that begin to dwell inside us; they include a constantly peaceful mindset, independent of all circumstances; they include living and warm faith and love towards the Lord, who helped us to attain all this.

These fruits do not grow very fast. Nobody finishes school in a week or grows a tree in a month. It takes time, patience, perseverance; moreover, spiritual work is the hardest of all. But, the fruits will come, they will for certain, if, day by day, we do our work with faith and patience.

We can reach Heavenly joy already here on earth. The true Heaven, which is always with us, and given by the Lord: it our heart, free of passions, when love and light live in it.

The Joyful Way to the Lord.

The way to the Lord is the most joyous of all because it leads to the Height of all joys and light.

Let us remember ourselves at the moments, when we go to visit someone or to some place, where we feel very good. Does not the very thought of future joy fill us with happiness long ahead of the event?

So, how can we not be happy going to the best of place, where the Host is waiting for us, His children, with the utmost love and warmth?

Often, we do not feel happy on this way, because we spend little time on understanding all this. The opening of the most positive and joyful qualities of the Father, seeing His help and love towards us at every moment turns our drab and often joyless existence into a beautiful fairytale.

Which, by the way, never ends...

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