

Letter to a Prisoner

Our life is lived in our thoughts

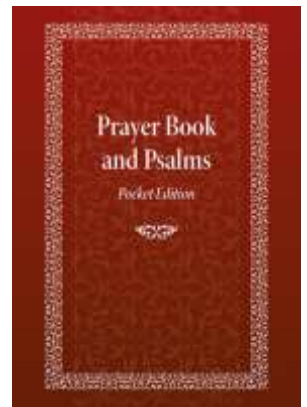
Amazing things happen on ordinary days.

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Blessed is God, whose grace is sufficient for every trial that we encounter in life! Blessed is God who brings us to perfection even as we take every step imperfectly! Blessed is God, who renews our spirit! Blessed is God, Who is the only constant in our life, as He always loves, is always present, and never changes! Blessed is God who hears our prayers, even if they are only groans and not even intelligible to ourselves!

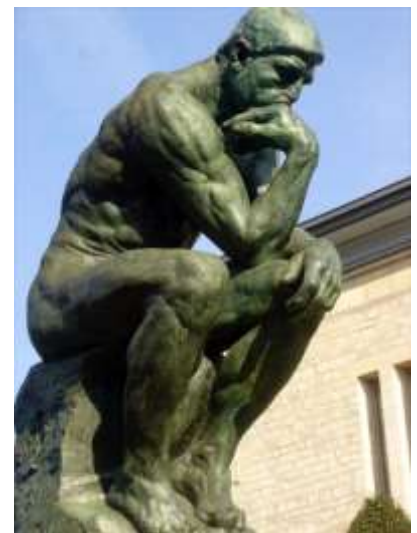
I came to the unit today, and called you out, and was sad that I didn't get to see you. I really love to see you. I brought a really good book for you. I gave it to the other guys too. I think ... has one for you. It is very small, but it is mighty. It has an enormous amount of prayers and the entire Psalter. I hope you read the Psalter. That book is like bread to me.



I'm sorry that I crashed and burned the last time that I would've visited. Interestingly enough, the previous Thursday that I would've visited, I got sick at 5:00 PM. I would've still been driving home if I had actually come. I ended up taking three weeks off. I canceled two trips and then there was a 5th week which I never travel on. Now I'm ready to go, I hope. I've been going through a tough time, with lots of problems with counts and other things and not seeing very many people when I travel, and other things. Things sometimes do not go well. That's the way it is in life. Things often don't go well. We make it worse when we have bad thoughts about these things.

Life is lived in our thoughts

As I grow older, and perhaps slightly wiser, I am convinced that all of our life is lived in our thoughts. If our thoughts are good, our life is good, and our actions are good. If our thoughts are bad, our life is bad, and we make poor decisions that lead to worse conditions. One even might be able to say that salvation is for a person to learn to have thoughts that are good. Of course, if we have good thoughts, we are good, and since God is good, this means that we become like God. That's the whole point of our life, to become like God, so that we can know Him intimately. I'm quite sure that we cannot know God intimately when we have bad thoughts.



These bad thoughts of course are anything that disturbs our heart. There are the "big ticket" items, like anger, lust, resentment, deep depression, and despondency, but really, anytime we don't think correctly about something, it is a bad thought. If we don't think the truth about something, then were not thinking like God would think, since He always knows the truth. It's a mystery

to me how we obtain perfect thoughts. I guess that's because they are obtained by grace, with God coming into our heart as we let Him.

God's grace is like rain. The Scripture talks about rain, in the context of the Holy Spirit, and of course God transmits His energy to us with the Holy Spirit especially, since we are temples of the Holy Spirit. In Texas, when it is summer time and the weather is hot and dry, the ground is so hard that when it rains water runs off the ground into the gutter and into streams and the only thing the rain causes is great cracks in the ground. If there's any vegetation, it does not receive the benefit of the water because the ground is too hard. But if the ground is plowed, and soft, even if it is hot outside, when the rain comes the thirsty ground is able to hold in the water. The ground is like our soul. If we do things so that our soul is soft and aerated and ready to receive the water, when the grace of God comes to us, we are able to retain Him, and grow. This is all because of our thoughts. If our thoughts are bad, our ground is dry and hard. If our thoughts are good, our ground is soft. And the rain will always come, and indeed it is always coming.



I have struggled with bad thoughts regarding prison ministry. I have allowed myself to get tired and demoralized. Someone recently wrote me about this: "my hope at this time is that you are well and have not let life's setbacks get you down." Well, sometimes I think I do let things get me down but that's because of my immature spiritual state.

Amazing things happen on ordinary days.

I recently did a sermon about the great catch of fish. The first great catch of fish was on a day when the apostles were just cleaning their nets. They were not yet apostles and followers of Christ. It was just another day for them. When the Lord told them to launch out into the deep, it was after they had had a terrible night of fishing where they caught nothing. Sometimes something amazing happens. I think actually amazing things happen all the time, but we don't have our eyes open to see these things. So, I try to look at prison ministry is having a great catch of fish on an otherwise ordinary day. I might visit and serve when there are very few people present, but God is making everything work to the good, in an invisible way. I can't say that emotionally I am always successful in doing this.

I pray for you every day. I covet your prayers for me. Hope very much that I will be able to travel two weeks and see you again, may God bless you and help you in all things. I would love to get a letter from you!