

Principles in Spiritual Life Series

Part (5\12)

First Collection

How Can I Accept
God's Unconditioned Love?
(The Real Key to Spiritual Life)

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* We have a hope in Christ that this series reaches the hands of each Christian young person

* You can share us this hope by presenting it to your friends and beloved ones



His Holiness Pope Tawadros II

Introduction

God says in the Holy Bible: “I will love them freely,” (Hosea 14:4) and also “But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.” (Romans 5:8) That is why the real key to spiritual life is accepting God’s unconditioned love since He loves you while you are praying in the same way he does while you are sleeping, and while you are receiving the Eucharist in the same way He does while you are falling into sin.

How can I accept and live this without complacency or irreverence? This is what you will find in this booklet.

This series is practical steps in the spiritual path of which it was issued: “How can I start?,” “How Can I Control my Thought?,” “How can I read the Bible?” and “How Can I be freed from Repeated Falling into Sin?”

If you want to find a meaning for life, please read this booklet in the spirit of prayer, in the same order of the parts, and apply them continuously to your everyday life. Attempt and you will find, with Christ’s grace, a depth and a gradual growth in your spiritual life.

May our beloved and Heavenly Father Jesus Christ give us continuous acceptance of his love, with the intercession of our Virgin Mother Mary and the prayers of our Reverend Father His Holiness Pope Tawadros II. Glory be to our God forever. Amen.

While I was walking along the way to my father, I proceeded freely with my thoughts, asking, "If I had not taken this alley leading to my father's cave, where would have I gone?!" Of course, it has been possible that I would have been lost in the desert and devoured by wild beasts, or I would have died from hunger and thirst. Thank you, my Lord, because You are saving me in the way! When I arrived, I found my father, and recounted to him the story of the way and the loss.

He said that similarly, spiritual life is a way, and this way has a gate, and the gate has a key. If I do not take this way, I will not arrive, and if I do not enter by this gate, I will not be in the way, and if I do not have the key, I will remain outside and will not be able to enter.

I asked: What do these words mean, father?

He answered: There is a verse said by Jesus Christ in (John 4) which we understand in reverse to have our entire life reversed as well.

He continued: When Jesus Christ said:

"If you love Me, keep My commandments" (John 14:15).

We attempt to keep the commandments in order to love Jesus Christ. However, they are so elevated, and that is why we attempt and fail. One commandment says: "Judge not," but we all judge! Another says: "Love your enemies," shall we really love our enemies?! Whenever anyone just tries to tease us, our old nature immediately surfaces clearly. A third commandment is "when you have done all those things which you are

commanded, say, 'We are unprofitable servants,'" but whenever we only pray with tears, we think that we have become saints.

We attempt to keep the commandments in order to love God, but we cannot do that, and fall. Consequently, we make one more and many other attempts, but we fail as well, and instead of getting closer to God, we find ourselves getting far away from Him on account of our failure and falling. We keep on moving in this vicious circle, and never be able to get closer to God, but rather feel cursed as St. Paul the Apostle says.

I exclaimed: Excuse me, Father, feel cursed!!

He answered: Yes. St. Paul in (Galatians 3: 10) says, "For as many as are of the works of the law are under the curse."

**That is to say that everyone who attempts to keep the commandment is
cursed**

I interrupted him: shall we not keep the commandments then?

He answered: Let me continue, Son. Anyone who attempts to keep the commandments with his own personal power in order to please God is cursed since he cannot because it is written, "So then, those who are in the flesh cannot please God" (Romans 8:8). It is also written, "Cursed is everyone who does not continue in all things which are written in the book of the law" (Galatians 3:10).

I asked: So, what is the solution, Father?

He answered: The solution lies in understanding the verse correctly.

I asked: What is the correct meaning?

He answered: Jesus Christ says, “He who has My commandments and keeps them, it is he who loves Me,” and does not say that you have to keep His commandments in order to love Him. Rather, the one who loves Him is the one who is able to keep His commandments. The one who loves Him and accepts this love is the one who can keep His commandments. It is written, “Jesus answered and said to him, ‘If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word’” (John 14: 23). Nonetheless, who of us does really love God since our human nature is more inclined towards laziness, desires and sins?!

I said: Today is very harsh, Father. That is why we can neither keep the commandments, nor love God. It is so cloudy, and it seems that the way is extremely hard.

He said: No, Son since **the true key to spiritual life** is there in (1 John 4:19) which is *the new beginning*. Without this beginning, it is really difficult, if not impossible, and any attempts to enter without this key are just a fiasco.

I asked: What is this key, Father?

He answered: the verse reads,

“We love Him because He first loved us”

**The true beginning is accepting God’s
unconditional love**

God is the one who has begun this love, which is unconditioned, freely as mentioned in (Hosea 14:4), “I will love them freely.”

God loves me while I am sleeping in the same way He does while I am praying.

God loves me while I am playing in the same way He does while I am serving.

God loves me while I am falling into sin in the same way He does while I am receiving the Eucharist.

I wondered: Oh, Father! What difficult and new words! God loves me both while I am praying, and while I am sleeping. Why shall I pray, then? When it is cold, I may sleep and say that God loves me anyway. Similarly, I can fall into sin and do whatever I want since God loves me at all times.

He smilingly said in confidence: Whoever really accepts God’s love cannot commit sin (1 John 5: 18). Besides, if he goes weak one day, he will immediately return, and will not fall into despair, self-justification or carelessness.

I asked: How, Father?

He answered: There is a theory in nature that holds that for every action, there is an equal and opposite reaction. Do you know it, son?

I answered: I do, Father.

He said: Well, whoever accepts God’s love will have a reaction equal to this acceptance, not in his own direction, but rather in God’s direction.

Once upon a time, there was a father walking down the street with his son whom he was truly loving. While they were in the way, they disagreed so that the son started insulting his father. A passerby asked him, “Why are you doing this with your father?” “Because he is a kind man,” the son answered slapping his father in the face. “He is very kind,” continued the son laughingly, “We will reconcile at home, anyway,” and he started to spit on his father’s face. Do you think that this son has accepted his father’s love?

I answered in surprise and dissatisfaction: Of course not. We cannot even call him a son.

He remarked: This is the case with everyone who has accepted God’s love. They **Cannot** commit sin carelessly or intentionally. If they go weak one day (and we all do), they will immediately return, and according to St. John Chrysostom:

“God looks at the sinner as a patient who needs treatment, rather than as a criminal who deserves punishment.”

I asked: How?

He said: A very famous physician returned home and asked about his little son. They answered him that he has caught a cold and has a fever. Is it possible that he asks about his place, takes a stick and starts beating him while asking, “how come that my son gets ill?! I am the most famous physician in the country, and a disease afflicts my son!”

I said: Of course not. He would rather pat on his shoulder, Wishing him a speedy recovery, give him the medicine and take a special care of him.

He said: In the same way, son, Jesus Christ is “a friend of. . . sinners.” (Luke 7: 34) When you fall into sin, he keeps on loving you sincerely, and takes care of you as an ill son.

I said: I understood, father that God loves me while I am falling into sin (patient) in the same way He does while I am receiving the Eucharist (taking the medicine.) However, how come that He loves me while I am sleeping or dying in the same way He does while I am praying? Certainly, when I pray, He will become pleased with and love me a little more; doing spiritual practices is different from doing earthly matters.

He answered: This is what we have learned from the world and influenced some preachers at churches. That is why people have thought that they please God exclusively when they pray or go to church while other things in life displease Him, or at least do not concern Him. He, they believe, does not care about our studies or work, and can only be pleased by spending the nights raising our hands in prayers, and keeping on kneeling in front of Him all the time while when we sleep or study, He frowns, becomes dissatisfied, and tells us, “Leave Me for your trivial worldly matters!”

I remarked: It is my first time to hear such words, father.

He said: Once, there was a student in the final year of his high school. He sat down to have lunch with his parents. After lunch, he excused himself to study, so that his father told him, "Studying is not important, son. Stay with me; what really matters is being with your father." He stayed for half an hour then said, "Excuse me! The exams are very close, and I have to go to study." His father replied, "Exams! To hell with exams! The most important thing is your father. Stay with me; your father is more important than the entire world." So the son stayed for one hour, then he said, "I will excuse myself to get high marks and be able to join a good college." The father answered, "colleges are not important. The most important thing is that you are with me."

(At this point, my father looked at me, asking,) What do you think about this father?

I answered: Actually, I do not know; a strange father, or maybe psychopathic (pardon me for saying this, father.)

He said: **Similar to this is everyone who thinks that God cares only for prayers and spiritualities because deep inside them, these are God's traits in their viewpoint.**

I asked (surprisingly): Really, father?!

He confirmed: Yes. God Himself is the one who created sleeping as a part of our nature in order to sleep, food in order to eat and fun in order to play. He constantly loves us at all times. This corresponds with the words of St. Paul the Apostle, "Therefore, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you

do, do all to the glory of God,” (1 Corinthians 10: 31) “Therefore if there is any consolation in Christ, if any comfort of love,” (Philippians 2:1) “that whether we wake or sleep, we should live together with Him” (1 Thessalonians 5:10) and “For bodily exercise profits a little.” (1 Timothy 4:8)

In the same way a father loves his son when he is with him, and also when he is studying, playing and sleeping

Also, God loves us when we are praying and talking with Him as He does when we are playing and having fun, studying and surpassing, eating and enjoying our food and sleeping and having rest.

Because He is with us at all these times, for He is inside us, and never leaves us for even a moment. This is the benefit of the intermittent prayer (as we have mentioned in Part I) that it makes you feel the need to have God always with you.

I said: Your words are very comforting, father. They make Man live in happiness, peace and confidence in God’s unending love. Besides, he will do everything with a faith that God exists with him, looking at him happily. Consequently, Man becomes overjoyed and does not commit any sin, and if he goes weak and falls, he will quickly return back to the hug of his Father who is waiting him.

He said: This is the Bible, son, and these are its teachings since Jesus Christ said, “Take My yoke upon you. . . For My yoke is easy and My burden is light.” (Matthew 11: 29-30) Accepting God’s unconditional love makes us love him; and when we do, we will keep his commandments happily.

I asked: Why does God love us to that great extent?

He answered: **First, God loves us because He is our Creator:**

God is the Creator. He created all creatures that were good while Man was very good. He was created in His image and according to His likeness, and was granted power over all the creation. This resembles an inventor who invented many things, but his last invention was the greatest for which he was awarded the Nobel Prize. What, do you think, does this invention mean to him?

I answered: Of course, it will mean a lot to him, and he will cherish it.

He said: This is the case with you and every Man whom is held very dear by God. You are honoured and very precious in God's sight, pursuant with the words of the Bible: "Since you were precious in My sight, You have been honored, And I have loved you," (Isaiah 43:4) and "'I have loved you,' says the LORD." (Malachi 1:2)

Second, God loves you because He has redeemed you:

To the extent that some people think that He did not exert as much effort in our Creation as He did in our Redemption.

"We had peace with God, not because of our righteousness, but rather because of our acceptance of His Divine love declared on the cross." St. John Chrysostom¹

1. *The Divine Love* by Father Tadrous Yacob Malaty (p. 13)

He was crucified, tortured and died in order to redeem us, and this Redemption is for all people.

I asked: Even for the unchristian, father?

He answered: God has redeemed the whole world, but no one benefits from this Redemption but for those who accept and believe in it. This Redemption is a historical event that has existed at all times, and up to the present day, Jesus' Tomb is still there in Jerusalem (Al- Quds) where every year on the Holy Saturday, light comes out of this tomb. This is a fact that if you mention to an atheist, they will become very angry or will turn the table on you and departs.

I asked: Why, father?

He answered: As they do not believe in spiritualities; everything must be subject to the natural and physical laws. This is not the case with the light that appears by itself out of the tomb by the testimony of many and at the sight of thousands. Besides, it does not burn those who put it on their faces and eyes, and then after some time, it turns into ordinary fire. It is supernatural. It makes them doubt their beliefs through providing them with the tangible evidence of the existence of the spiritual world which is not subject to the natural laws. God saved us with his blood while when someone pays too much to attain something, he says, "It costed me an arm and a leg." This shows how great God's love for us is since He has paid His precious blood, and not merely an arm and a leg!

Third, God loves you because He has adopted you:

I asked: How, father?

He replied: The Holy Book says, “to them He gave the right to become children of God, to those who believe in His name,” “Behold what manner of love the Father has bestowed on us, that we should be called children of God!” and Jesus Christ teaches us, saying, “When you pray, say: Our Father in heaven.” We have to stop to reflect on this sonship.

I asked: What is it, father?

He said: Imagine that your father and you were standing in front of your home. Suddenly, an 11-year-old child came and knelt down in front of your father, saying, “Uncle, uncle. . . Please adopt me, uncle; I will mop in front of the house, clean the stairs and do all the house chores.” Do you think that your father would adopt him?

I answered: I think no.

He asked: You think or is it impossible?

God loves you, loves you and loves you while you are in the deepest depth of sin. He loves you even at the moments of your blasphemy and denial of Him. He loves you regardless of your hatred of Him. He wants you to be His son to redeem you of your evil and the corruption of your nature, so that you might know His fatherhood and accept Him as your Father.

Origen Adamantius²

2. *The Divine Love* by Father Tadrus Yacob Malaty (p. 365)

I said: It is difficult.

He said: Well, is it possible that one night your father tells you, “X, this is your new brother Ihsan- Ihsan, this is your new brother- so that God may do good to us, and you find him with you at home, sharing you everything”?

I said: This is really impossible, father.

He continued: If Ihsan kept on crying, got out a razor and started gashing himself, saying, “If you do not adopt me, I will kill myself.” Do you think that your father will do?

I answered: Of course not. He may give him five or ten pounds, but to adopt him is impossible!!

He said: But what if you were not home for some time, then you came back after a month so that they welcomed you and made you a good dinner. You sat down with them for a while and then slept. Late at night, you woke up and went on washing the dishes in the kitchen, then you entered the bathroom to clean it, then the living room where you kept on dusting and cleaning.

Man’s relationship with God is not that of a statue with its maker, or a rigid creation with a powerful mighty god. Rather, it is a relationship of mutual love, or, you might say, of passion between two lovers; one of whom is the image of the other who is the origin.

St. Augustine³

3. *The Divine Love* by Father Tadrous Yacob Malaty (p. 13)

All the people at home woke up and asked you, “What are you doing?” So you kneeled down and told your father, “Dad, Dad, adopt me; I will mob the bathroom, clean the kitchen and wash the cookwares. Adopt me, Mom!” What will be their reaction?

I said (smilingly): Of course they will say that he went mad!

He said: This is the case in our relationship with God. “If I give my body to be burnt,” (1 Corinthians 13: 3) I will never be able to please God, however numerous my fastings, prayers, prostrations and services might be. These things do not qualify me to be a son. I would rather accept this sonship for free.

God adopted us, and this is a gift from God that cannot be bought but rather granted

Who thinks that he can buy it will keep on fighting so that he will get tired but never attains it. He will remain a jerboa that will be dismissed out of there.

I wondered: What is the story of the jerboa, father?

He answered: Do you know what is jerboa?

I said: No, but I think it carries bad connotations as an adjective to describe people.

He explained: Jerboa is a kind of mice called “Weasel,” that eats chicks.

I said: Yes, yes, I know it. I do see it in the streets a lot.

He said: Once, I was sitting with one of the brothers at night in the church. While were sitting, there came a jerboa that wanted to enter the church. We took a stick and ran after it, crying, “A jerboa! A jerboa!” I believe that angels as well run after us, saying, “A jerboa! A jerboa!” They also dismiss everyone who proceeds to God with his prayer, service or Eucharist, thinking that these offerings qualify him to be a son who deserves God’s grace and satisfaction with his works. That is why the Holy Book says, “all our righteousnesses are like filthy rags,” (Isaiah 64: 6) and “when you have done all those things which you are commanded, say, ‘We are unprofitable servants. We have done what was our duty to do.’” (Luke 17: 10) It is also said in the Agpeya, “With a compassionate eye, O Lord, look at my weakness, for shortly my life will end, and in my deeds I shall have no salvation.” ***Consequently, be cautious, son, not to be a jerboa, i.e., counting on your personal works in order to attain God’s satisfaction and fatherhood.***

I asked: Shall not I do anything because I am a son?

He answered: The rest of the story is that after you reached home, had dinner and slept, in the morning they needed to buy bread and vegetables. Will you shop for them or not? When they clean the house, will you take part with them or leave your parents get tired alone?

I said: Of course I will take part and help them.

He said: Thus, son, **the beginning is to accept for free** since you are a son not because you have done anything, but because this is a gift from God that is to be accepted through faith, then you live as a son. When you pray, it means that you love to speak with your father. When you fast, it means that you control your body in order not to be haunted by your desires so that it distances you from your father. You serve because you love your brothers and take care of them according to your father's will.

I said: There is a vast difference between being a son who does all this out of love, on the one hand, and doing them in order to become a son, on the other hand, so that they are difficult, heavy and can never make me a son.

He asked: Does God love you in the same way he loves St. George?

I exclaimed: What difficult questions, father! Of course not; there is no comparison between him and me!

He said: If an (ideal) father has seven children, might he discriminate among them?

I said: Of course not, but some children may be more obedient than others.

He asked: I am talking in terms of the father and his love, do they change?

I answered: Of course not. A fair father loves all his children equally.

He said: The Nile River flows through Ethiopia, Aswan and El Minya Governorate in Egypt. Although the water passes through all of them, some of them receive much of it and some less, and each starts growing plants according to its share.

I asked: Does this mean that the only difference between us and the saints is the acceptance of God's love?

He answered: Exactly, son, since the acceptance of God's love that is free and available for all enables you to bear fruit and love God. Do you accept God's unconditioned love, son?

I said: Yes, yes, father. Who shall refuse His love as long as He loves me this way at all times and for free. I do accept, I do accept.

He said: Since acceptance is not only verbal, and in order to test yourself whether you have

truly accepted or not, there are three indicators for this.

I asked: What are these?

There is no one who denies God. Even those atheists, deep inside themselves, they feel His existence. However, in their own perspective, He is a tyrant unfair god. Therefore, they fight Him and attempt to get rid of Him. That is why, nowadays we need not to prove God's existence as much as we need to bear witness for His love of Man in our practical life because these hearts broken with sin are in a bad need for knowing the one who heals the brokenhearted. He is God who distinguishes between the sinner and his sin, between the ill and his illness. A father does not hate his beloved son at the moments of his weakness and depression. Instead, he opens his heart to him and uncovers his love for him until he rids him of his weakness and evil.

Origen Adamantius⁴

4. *The Divine Love* by Father Tadrous Yacob Malaty (p. 365)

He said: There are

Three measurements for accepting God's love

The first one is what will you do when you fall into sin?

I asked: What does this mean, father?

He said: When the one who has accepted God's unconditioned love falls into sin, he immediately comes back without succumbing to depression or carelessness because he cannot make his father whom he loves angry. Consequently, he arises, goes back and prays quickly.

While the one who has not accepted God's love falls into depression and frustration. He cannot pray, but rather thinks that God has hidden His face from him since he has been capable of this love, but now he is a sinner who has lost this capability.

But we have explained before, son, that the one who thinks that he deserves is. . . .

I said: I got it, father. I got it.

He said: No one deserves because we are all sinners, son. We all have condemnation, pride, anger and laziness, but we do not feel that.

The modest person who places his trust in God alone, when he falls into some violations, he feels that they are heavy and grieves, but he does neither get upset nor despair because he knows that these things are a result of his inability and weakness.

Theophan the Recluse⁵

5. *Spiritual Wars* by Theophan the Recluse, part 1 (P. 37)

Only when we fall into a sin of impurity, we grieve and get depressed; but when we do not fall, we believe ourselves to be saints and better than others while, in fact, we do have a lot of other sins. I think that Satan, along with his wars against us on these matters, does us a favour.

I asked: How, father?

He answered: He exposes us in front of ourselves and makes us know that we are impure and sinners so that we run to God in order to forgive and purify us.

I said: This is true. In the days when I do not either fight or fall, I do not feel that I need God, and my prayers become cold and I feel that I am doing God good with my prayers. By contrast, when I fall, I feel that I need God and that I am unworthy, impure and evil; however, in all cases I am full of judgement, pride and many other evils.

He said: Truly- said, son. When you fall into sin, return quickly and pray, depending on Christ's love and permanent acceptance of you.

While he who despairs believes that he was a saint who deserved God's love through his deeds, but when he showed his true colours, he despaired.

Besides, when the one who accepts God's unconditioned love returns to God, he trusts His forgiveness based on Christ's Blood and not on his worthiness or deeds.

I asked: How, father?

He said: Someone has told me, “When you fall, make prostrations until blood drops out of your hands. Then say, ‘forgive me, God. Forgive me, God, for my blood.’”

I remarked: A modest, hard-working person.

He said: But angels look at him, saying, “A jerboa!”

I exclaimed: Jerboa! Why shall this happen, father, although he works hard to reach God?

He said: “For the wages of sin is death,” (Romans 6: 23) it is either that you accept that Christ has died for you, or you die yourself instead. It is Christ’s Blood only that purifies of all sin, and we accept this for free while the dependence on these deeds is totally refused before God.

I asked: So shall I commit sin, and say that I have committed sin?

He said: As we have explained before, the one who accepts God’s love cannot do this as it surfaces clearly in the story of the son who insults his father then reconciles him. Moreover, St. Ambrose says, “The one who says, ‘I will commit sin, then I will repent’ has a frail hope”⁶ since he might not have time to repent, or might not know how to do so.

I said: Will you clarify this for me, father?

He said: At any time Man returns to God, whatever his sins might be, God will accept him, but there are two points:

First, there might not be enough time for him to

repent; Man can die at any moment. That is why I cannot say that I will sin today and repent after graduation, I will sin during my studies and repent during vacation, or even I will sin today and repent tomorrow. There are a lot of examples on this like those many children and youth who unexpectedly died very young. That is why the one who says that he will sin then repent risks everything; risks his eternal life for a temporal pleasure.

I asked: Is it a must to be sinless in order to attain eternal life?

He answered: Let us repeat once more. There are sins of will: they are our topic and are regarded as treason. There is also that I do not want to commit sin, but I got frail, so that I have become a martyr (as it is the case in the story of the military police.)

I said: I remembered, father. Forgive me.

He continued: **The second point concerning that who says that he will sin then repent is that he might not know how to repent.**

I asked: How? Is not repentance as you have told me before, “regret at what has passed, I intend not to sin again. . . etc.,)

He said: That who willingly sins, and says, “Whenever I want to return, I will do” attaches himself to sin, and when he wants to return, he will find that

6. *The Divine Love* by Father Tadrous Yacob Malaty (p. 750)

very difficult. Once, a brother was travelling to Upper Egypt, and because the trains were very crowded, he took a microbus instead. While in the desert road, the microbus suddenly flipped. He says, “Some people were bleeding, and others were dying, and I did not know what to do. That is why I said that I will repent and say as they say before death, ‘Lord, remember me when You come into Your kingdom,’ or ‘Forgive me, Lord, for all my sins.’ But I found myself unable to utter a single word either with my tongue or inside my heart! Whenever I tried, my mind was telling me, ‘Don’t you remember that you smoked drugs yesterday? Don’t you remember what have you watched this morning?’ Therefore, I could never utter even one single word of repentance.” He continues, “God rescued me that I got only some slight bruises, but I had a brand new beginning and knew what it means that life is not to be taken for granted, that repentance is not mere words, and that I will not always have the chance to repent.”

I asked: Is it a true story, father?

He answered: Yes, son. Therefore, keep in your heart not to sin, and if you do, return quickly with a confidence in an immediate forgiveness and a paternal hug without even one look of blame or a word of offence⁷. This is what we have been taught by Jesus Christ in the Parable of the Lost Son. He did not tell him, “So, you came back with your awful smell. Keep him outside, wash him off the swine smell and deprive him of the Eucharist for a month!”

7. An article by Dr. Magdy Isaac, *Al- Keraza Magazine*, April 2013.

I asked: Shall I receive the Eucharist right after repentance?

He answered: One of the holy fathers said that if a person who is a thief, a murderer or an adulterer came to me, saying that he has repented, I will immediately allow him to receive the Eucharist. He is similar to a patient in the intensive care who urgently needs strength and abidance in Christ.

When one of the fathers mentioned the deprivation of sinners from the Eucharist in front of Father Beshoy Kamel, the latter answered, "This is not how it goes." Then he explained that it is through love and mercy that sinners return⁸.

St. John Chrysostom says, "If someone has deviated from the good way, this requires a great effort, persistence and patience since no one can return to God by force, be made to stop their behavior by intimidation, but by winning over and love, they return to the faith from which they have deviated. That is why the shepherd should be a noble person who does neither waiver nor lose hope in the redemption of those lost of the flock. Rather, he always tells himself, "May God give them repentance for the knowledge of the truth so that they wake up from Satan's trap."⁹

8. *The Cross Holder* by Father Beshoy Kamel (P. 34)

9. *Pastoral Love* by Father Tadros Yacoub Malaty (P. 166)

He also says, “We do receive the Eucharist not because of being worthy of that, but because we need it.” Similarly, During the holy mass, the priest says, “Make us worthy,” and “He made us unto Himself a congregation” since no one, however high his spiritual level might be, is worthy of receiving the Eucharist, Instead, it is God who grants us this worthiness and makes us a congregation.

The time when you deserve receiving the Eucharist the most is when you feel that you are impure, evil, guilty and unworthy of it. Just repent and go to receive the Eucharist

Since it is given to sinners for the remission of their sins (this is to be discussed in detail while explaining the conditions of the Eucharist and the benefits of confession.)

I said: **This means that the measurements for accepting God’s unconditioned love are that when I fall into sin, I:**

1. Return quickly without succumbing to despair or depression.
2. Pray immediately and do not depend on my works to be accepted.

He said: This is right, son. I also trust in complete forgiveness.

I asked: How, father?

He said: Some people believe that God will punish them for their sins after their return and repentance.

I affirmed: I hear some people saying so, father.

He said: When God forgives, His forgiveness is full, eternal, temporal and is not bent on evil or punishment. He who says that God will punish him after his return has not accepted God's unconditioned love and still depends on his works, i.e., (.....) He believes that he has to do something in order to attain forgiveness. This makes some

people afraid of returning to God. Someone said, "When they told me, 'God will punish you for your sins, even after you repent and return,' I told myself that I have a multitude of sins that could cause me to spend the rest of my life punished. Besides, nothing is to be taken for granted. So I will remain a sinner as I am!" The father did not punish the Lost Son, but rather accepted him happily, put a ring on his hand and sandals on his feet and they killed the calf and celebrated. Jesus did not punish either the woman caught in adultery or the Samaritan woman, neither did he expose them in front of people. The same is applicable to Mary the Egyptian, Augustine and many others. He accepted all happily, and, on the contrary, turned every point of weakness into a point of strength (as we have explained while discussing the benefits of the repeated fall.)

Doesn't despair push many towards leaving the church and being deprived of the enjoyment with the Holy Body and Blood. If they had known the truth of the Devil and sin, they wouldn't have despaired because the devil is similar to an attacking dog which goes wild and bites the enemy if it finds them afraid and coward, but if the enemy rebels against it, it gets scared and escapes .

St. John Chrysostom

***Pastoral Love by Father Tadros Yacoub
Malaty (P. 488)***

I asked: Doesn't this cause us to take things lightly?

He said: I will answer you by asking you to go back to St. Ambrose's words and the story of the military police. You have to know that, son, he who has tasted God's grace cannot accept the pods, and he who has lived in the palace of grace cannot live in the landfill of sin.

I said: Right, father!

He said: Those who advocate the temporal punishment cause those who return to God to experience great fear, wondering, "Will You punish me, Lord, in my children, studies or health? Please, answer me, Lord, to be satisfied!" And they remain scared like someone who walks down a dark street, waiting for someone who must hit him at the back of his neck, but he does not know either the place or the time of this. He remains scared not only of being hit, but also due to the element of surprise.

Once, I discussed this point with a very good person who told me after we finished, "You have warmed my heart, father. When I was a child, I had a dog with which I used to play. One day, I hit him with a stick strongly so that I broke his leg unintentionally. Since I heard about the temporal punishment, I have lived in fear so that whenever I fall down, I expect my leg to be broken."

I said: The temporal punishment is really terrifying, but are not there consequences for sin?

He said: Yes, sin does have consequences. Someone might drink so that his liver fails. When he returns to God, He will accept him. However, his liver

will remain the same. But if he returned without a liver failure, God will accept him as well, but will not let his liver fail as a punishment!

I said: I understood, father, that:

Sin has consequences and not punishment for whoever returns to God will be accepted the way they are, forgiven and not punished or taken revenge from.

He continued: On the contrary, whoever returns to God will be fully forgiven, and if they have consequences for their sins, God will help and strengthen them to bear it. Each point of weakness will be turned into strength, and the harrowing experiences will be harnessed by God in service. Moses the Black, as an illustration, returned with consequences for his sins: a contaminated mind, evil, impurity, horrific memories, and the enemy kept on fighting him with all this painful past. Nonetheless, through continuous prayer and asking for Christ's grace, all these wars came to an end, the past was wiped out and he became a great Saint with a holy mind and a pure heart. The same can be said about Mary of Egypt, who had spent long years in sin. When she repented, she was haunted by her past for some time, but Christ's grace sustained her, and gave her consolation and power to go on. Later, she became St. Mary the anchoress, who spent 47 years of anchorism in the wilderness. This is also true of so many others who came to God repentant, so that He didn't only accept them, but also helped them to put the past behind so that their weaknesses turned into strength, their previous impurity to holiness and their previous pains to consolation.

I said: Your speech is so satisfying, father. It makes Man return quickly to throw himself in Christ's lap without either being afraid of Him or thinking about his past, its influence and how to get rid of it. Rather, he takes courage since God will help him do so.

But is there a proof of this in the Holy Bible to further reassure me?

He answered: Sure, son, and we have mentioned them in the repeated fall and will not repeat them again. The Bible says:

† "Instead of the thorn shall come up the cypress tree, and instead of the brier shall come up the myrtle tree" (Isaiah 55:13).

† "So I will restore to you the years that the swarming locust has eaten" (Joel 2:25).

† "Behold, I will bring it health and healing; I will heal them and reveal to them the abundance of peace and truth" (Jeremiah 33: 6).

† "I will cleanse them from all their iniquity by which they have sinned against Me, and I will pardon all their iniquities by which they have sinned and by which they have transgressed against Me" (Jeremiah 33: 8).

Those who return after repentance shine forth twice brilliantly as those who have not fallen. I reached this conclusion from the Bible where, at least, tax collectors and harlots have inherited the Kingdom of God more than the rest.

St. John Chrysostom¹⁰

10. *Pastoral Love* by Father Tadros Yacoub Malaty (P. 475)

I remarked: All these verses that you have mentioned, father, are from the Old Testament. Are not there similar verses in the New Testament as well?

He replied: The New Testament does not only include verses, but also living examples and fulfillment of the Old Testament verses and promises. This surfaces clearly when we witness Saul turning into Paul, and after destroying churches and killing Christians, he becomes the greatest preacher. We also see Zacchaeus, Matthew, Mary Magdalene, the Samaritan woman, Mary of Egypt, Augustine and Moses the Black with whom all the promises were fulfilled so that adulterers turned into virgins, the most ferocious sinners into the greatest saints and stones into children to Abraham. How beautiful is God's grace when we accept it for free so that we die in our fight for the fire of Divine love (Songs of Solomon 8: 6). All this takes place gradually (as we have explained in the first part), but the beginning remains the free acceptance. To tell you the truth, son, there is a verse in the Bible that includes

The Secret of Transformation

If we accept it inside us, real transformation starts to take place in our entire essence.

I asked: What is this verse that includes the secret of transformation?

He answered: In (Romans 5:8):

“But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.”

God's love was demonstrated to us while we were in sin. The epitome of this love was Christ's death for us.

We accept the fact that God loves us when we pray, fast or serve.

But when we fall into sin, we lose our certainty about this love, think that God has become our enemy, and forget that He is the **"friend of sinners,"** and that He is the Redeemer who has come to redeem the perishing, and the compassionate and healing physician of the patients of impurity and sin. Honestly speaking, a major part of this depends on the upbringing and the surrounding environment, son.

I asked: How, father?

He said: Because we were brought up and lived, believing that there is nothing for free; we have to do something in order to be loved and desirable. It is only that when we succeed, they bring us presents, or when we do something extraordinary, we hear a word of praise. Nonetheless, with Christ everything is different since He is patient and His love is free. He loves us more than we love ourselves and views the sinner as a patient who needs treatment rather than a criminal whom He waits on the lookout to punish. Besides, there is something else that is important and very necessary, son.

I asked: What is it, father?

He said: Is there a day when the holiest person on earth can say that they are sinless?

The first measurement: What shall we do when we fall into sin?		
Repentance and no despair	Forgiveness with Jesus' blood	Faith in acceptance

I answered: I do not think so.

He said: Then who dare say he deserves God's love!

**If we don't accept that God loves us while we are sinners,
we can never say that He loves us**

because we are weak and fall a lot. So do you accept God's love for you, son, at all times?

I said: I do, father.

He said: **The second measurement for my acceptance of God's unconditioned love is that I trust that God loves me when I am praying during the period of compulsion as He does during the period of longing and tears** (as we will explain in detail in the discussion of the stages of prayer)

I said: I think that this is somehow difficult. When I cry and pray fervently and emotionally, I feel God to be closer to me more than the period when I miss all that and pray mere words against my will and without feelings.

He said: Yes, son. It is difficult for the ego and the ancient nature that loves to do something, and doesn't take anything for free, and he who does something to take is (.....)

God does not either give us because of our works, or accept us because of our feelings or tears, but because of being His children.

I asked: Doesn't this make us lose enthusiasm for prayer?

He said: On the contrary, when you feel that God accepts you at the stage of compulsion as He does at the stage of tears and longing, you will fight more, and your eyes will not be upon yourself, but entirely upon Christ. The same is true of your happiness that will be with Christ's acceptance of you rather than with your emotions and feelings. And as we previously mentioned, the deepest Eucharist that you will ever receive is when you feel guilty and unworthy.

With the cross Jesus destroyed sin, announcing our weakness and inability to be justified by ourselves, but by His mercy announced in His bearing the wages of our sins. Therefore, He has rid worship of the dim image that people create for themselves that acquiring a merit at God's sight is to be done by self-righteousness. Consequently, works acquired a true spiritual meaning that we do not worship because of religious obligations, but due to our adoration of a loving God crucified for us; this who loved us while we were still sinners.

St. John Crysostom¹¹

11. *Pastoral Love* by Father Tadros Yacoub Malaty (P. 301)

Similarly, the deepest prayer is when you compel yourself to pray without feelings and be sure that you are accepted before God, and that your acceptance does not depend upon either your emotions or works, but only on His compassion and unconditioned love for you because of being his child who returned to Him.

I asked: Shall I continue to fight so as to attain Christ's favour and love, although I am doing this unemotionally?

He answered: On doing this, you will be (.....). You should fight because God loves and accepts you at any time and in any condition. Therefore, you love to be close to Him regardless of your varying emotions.

I said: Because God loves me, this makes me always pray, and feel happy with my being next to Him, and His acceptance of Me.

He said: Exactly! **As for the third measurement for accepting God's unconditioned love, it is accepting others as they are; a strong measurement for my faith in God's acceptance of me the way I am.**

I said: But some people are hard to accept. How can I accept them?

He said: When you remember that despite the multitude of your sins, God accepts you, you can accept others.

I asked: Is there something that I can do in order to be able to accept others the way they are?

He answered: You cannot do anything but for remembering that despite your sins, God has accepted you. Besides, what might help you to do so, as

we have mentioned before, is what we call the Aspocid of spiritual life, which is that you say 100 times every day,

"God, open my eyes to the hideousness of my sin, and make me accept Your love."

I asked: Is this "Aspocid" biblically supported?

He answered: Yes, son. The secret behind David's strength is that he was always asking God for guidance: "Prove me, O Lord, and try me," "Teach me Your way, O LORD," "And see if there is any wicked way in me, And lead me in the way everlasting," "LORD, make me to know my end, And what is the measure of my days, That I may know how frail I am" and "I was so foolish and ignorant; I was like a beast before You." Moreover, the mission of the Holy Spirit in the New Testament is to rebuke us for sin, console us and make us aware of how far God loves us. It is only that we ask Him to work in us, and pay attention to His voice so that we grow in the acceptance of His love for us, and the acceptance of others the way they are.

I asked: Does accepting others the way they are mean accepting their actions, behaviours and existing with them?

He answered: Christ accepted tax collectors as they are, but He did not encourage them to continue what they were doing. We accept others because God has accepted us. As for dealing and existence, the Bible says that we should not exist in stumbling environments (this is to be discussed in detail when we come to talk about the environment.)

Nonetheless, here we are discussing the inner acceptance, i.e., we do not judge others inside us because God has accepted us and does not blame us, but has redeemed us.

The Msurements for Accepting God's Unconditioned Love		
Trust and acceptance of God's complete forgiveness	Trust in the acceptance of my prayer regardless of my feelings	Acceptance of others the way they are

I said: I want something practical that I can do on daily basis in order to accept God's love.

He said: Keep on praying intermittently (i.e., pray every time and everywhere as we have mentioned in part one.) Deal with God as your friend who shares yo everything, and every day before you go to bed, make **alignment.**

I asked: What do you mean by alignment, father?

He said: While walking down the street, have you ever seen a sign that reads, "Balance and Alignment?"

I answered: I have, father, but this is for cars, and I do not have a one.

Do never postpone the works of inner purity even for a brief while. Rather, once you become aware of your own sins, rise and repent (and trust in complete forgiveness.)

Theophan the Recluse,

Part 2, P. 89

He said: Yes, son, but a car has to have balance and alignment in order not to veer left and right while running. Similarly, sit with yourself every day, meticulously check yourself over and give an account of everything: your prayers, studies, dealings, mistakes. Display everything about you, small or big, before Jesus, saying, “You are the Pantocrator; adjust my life, Lord.”

I asked: Is it a must to do that daily?

He answered: Both Saint Shenoute the Archimandrite and Ephrem the Syrian say:

“Do not pass the night with your sin”

Do not be negligent in this important matter or delay it. Repent every day, lest after a week, a month or a year, you find yourself very far away, and the return very difficult and costly, and you discover that you have wasted your entire life in vain.

Once upon the time, there was a person travelling from Cairo to Alexandria on the Desert Road before it was paved. Halfway, a sandstorm raged so that the road contours disappeared. He did not know how to walk, but he had to before the night. He walked the road, but deviated five degrees from the original direction.

As long as we are in this world, our sins, even if countless, can be wiped off by sincere repentance, but when we depart from this world, the deepest repentance would be of no use for us.

St. John Crysostom¹²

12. *You Will Return more Powerful* by Father Tadros Yacoub Malaty (p. 15)

Do you think that he will reach Alexandria?

I answered: Of course, not. He must be lost.

He continued: If he returned after five kilometers, the return would be easy; if after twenty, it would be possible, but if he continued until the end of the road, do you think that he would reach Alexandria?

I said: He might reach Lybia instead of Alexandria.

He remarked: He might really reach Lybia so that they think him to be a spy, and beat him a lot. Likewise, stay with yourself every night in order not to gradually deviate, get lost, waste your life and the return becomes costly and difficult.

I said: Great! And how can I live while feeling Christ's love all the time?

He answered: I will tell you about a training that will make you live always in Christ's love, and make everything meaningful in your life.

I asked: What is it, father?

He answered: Do everything **for Jesus**. In everything you do, say, "**for Jesus.**"

**How great is this guarantee
God has given us! Existing
among the temptations of
this world, we might
stumble after the
forgiveness of all our sins.
Consequently, we have to
do our utmost: to confess
our status (everyday) as it is
in order to be healed by the
unchanging Christ.**

St. Augustine¹³

13. *Divine Love* by Father Tadros Yacoub Malaty (P. 473)

For Jesus, I will eat well in order to be able to pray and work. For Jesus as well, I will not sleep much in order not to be fought with laziness. In all your matters and dealings say, “For Jesus.” While studying, say, “For Jesus I will study this difficult subject in order get a good grade that glorifies His name.” You also say, “For Jesus, I will deal with this boring brother lovingly since he is His son.” **If you do this, you will find yourself doing even the most difficult things happily, and completing them meticulously, for Jesus.** I think that you do love Jesus, and he who loves someone does anything for the one whom he loves happily and meticulously, and attempts to satisfy him by any possible means. For example, when you are travelling, and any of your parents tells you, “Please eat, for my sake” while you feel absolutely full, but you eat in order not to make them upset. Likewise, for Jesus, do everything so that you find yourself satisfied, and the blessings of God will come on you.

I said: Thank you, father, that for Jesus you do all that, and bother yourself for me. . .

He interrupted: The next time I will tell you another story, but now I will leave you to enjoy God’s unconditioned love. Besides, remember that **the beginning is never enough** since these parts are one connected whole. If you want to find growth in and meaning for your spiritual life, take this series as a spiritual path, always remembering the collection of “Good Morning,” “The Intermittent,” “Spiritual Bullying,” “Fixing the Tapes,” “Feeding on the Bible” and “The Aspid.”

* If this series has been the source of a blessing in your life, please, pray for the continuation of the printing of the other parts.

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