

Prayer Leads to
Dispassion & Love

Prayer

- * Gregory puts great emphasis on prayer
- * What is Prayer?
 - * Intimate personal relationship with God.
 - * being in awareness of real presence of God
 - * Not some simple one way communication.
 - * More than words or thoughts.



Prayer

- * Gregory defended Tradition that in true prayer we **join with uncreated energies of God.**



*If you raise your mind above every thought, however good, and turn it towards itself, by means of **constant attention and unceasing prayer**, you too will truly enter into the divine rest...* (Homily 17)

- * What Peter means when he says “*Gird up the **loins of your mind.***” (1 Peter 13:8)
- * Still, many with Western mind reject this possibility.

Unceasing Prayer

- * To be united with God it is **necessary** to cultivate pure **unceasing prayer**.
- * What must we do if we are to be blessed with this union?
 - * **purify our soul** of passions and evil thoughts.
- * When the veil of the passions is removed from the soul, the **nous descends** into the depth of the soul where it prays to God in secret.
- * This is when God **brings peace** to the believer's thoughts, and sends **uncreated grace** that is the source of other divine gifts.
- * This is called - **Prayer of the Heart**

Prayer



Is this something just for monks in monasteries?

* Gregory says, “*it is the **duty of all of us Christians to remain always in prayer.***”

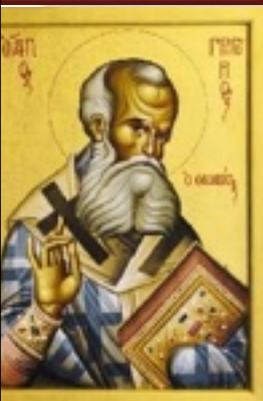
* Paul also commands **all** Christians, “***Pray without ceasing***” (I Thessalonians 5:17),



Prophet David says of himself, although he was a king and had to concern himself with his whole kingdom:

“***I foresaw the Lord always before my face***” (Psalms 15:8),

that is, in my prayer I **always** mentally see the Lord before me.



Gregory the Theologian teaches **all** Christians to say God’s name in prayer **more often than to breathe.**

Aim

- * What is our aim in **unceasing prayer**?
- * Our soul is **never distracted and separated** from God by any intruding thought.
- * Our soul **cleaves to God** and **continually converse** with Him.
- * That we walk with mind and heart literally **connected with divine energy**.
- * We inwardly collect ourselves, body and soul, and orient our whole existence **toward God**.

Tame the Mind



Gregory writes:

*When the believer keeps his nous concentrated inward and by force attempts to **tame his mind**, that can easily stray off in so many directions,*

* *he will then “**draw noetically close to God**,*

* *will reap things ineffable,*

* ***taste the age to come***

* *and by noetic perception will know that the Lord is full of bounty.”* (On Prayer and Purity of the Heart)

* Notice the emphasis on “**to tame the mind**” ?

Unceasing Prayer

- * Why is this such a Big challenge?
 - * mind **blindly acts by habits** and presuppositions based on sensations of physical realm.

Gift from God

- * True prayer is not a simple habit.
- * A *gift from God* that is acquired through prayer.
- * Has as its beginning **in infinite love for God** -- divine eros.
- * How we **really**
get rid of bad habits &
gain good ones.
- * How does this differ from self help approaches?



Transforming

*“...so in the case of those who have **elevated their intellect** [nous] to God,*

*and who **through divine longing** have attached their soul to Him,*

the flesh** [attachment to passions] is also transformed, is exalted with the soul, **communes together with the soul in the Divine,

*and itself likewise becomes the **possession and dwelling place of God,***

no longer harboring any enmity towards Him or any desires that are contrary to the Spirit.” (Defense of Hesychasts 1.2.9)

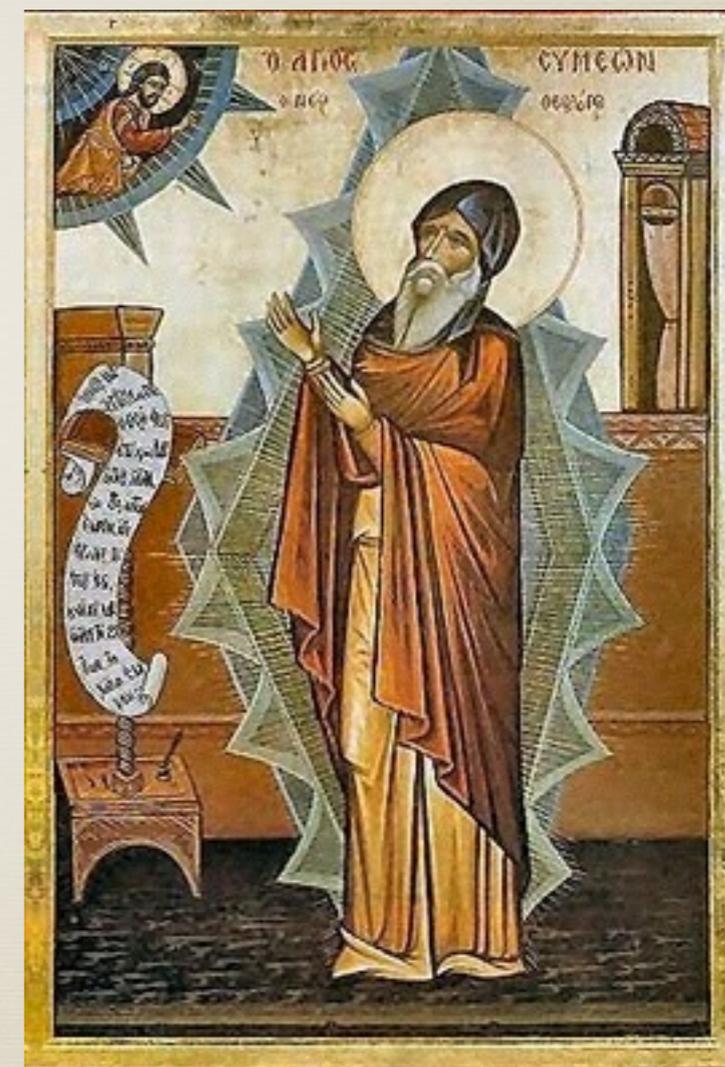
- * In this high level of prayer we are in **harmony** with God and able to carry out His will.
It's the **true path** to perfection, a pure heart.

Preconditions

- * There are necessary **preconditions** for this transformation.
- * **Faith** in Christ as Son of God and Savior &
- * **Love for Him** so with contrition we struggle to do all He asks.
- * **Humility:**
Acceptance of our weaknesses [spiritual sorrow] making us **worthy** to offer prayers of thanksgiving to God for blessings received and to seek **repentance**.

Fruits

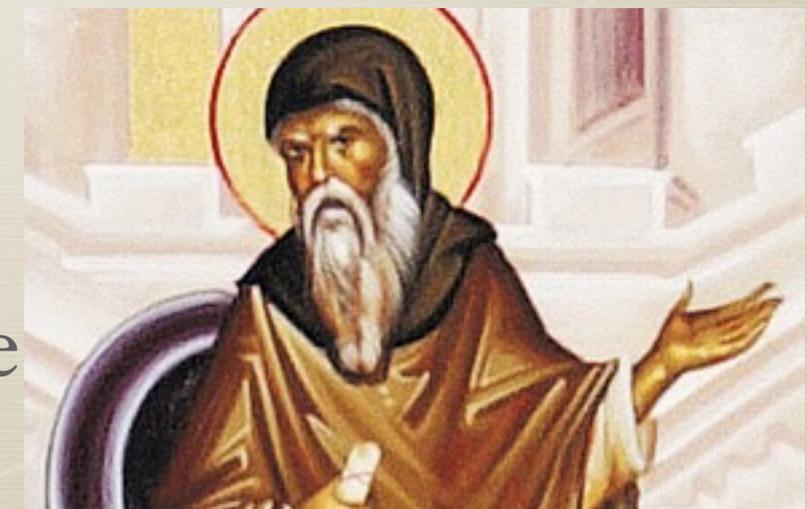
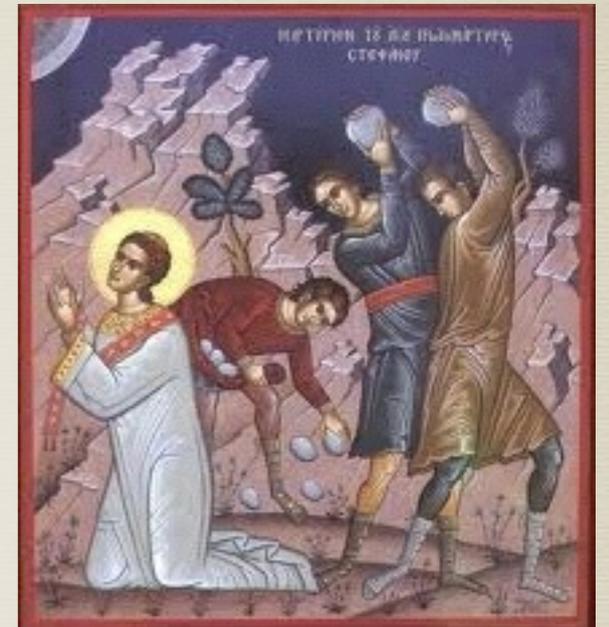
- * **Fruits of prayer -**
 - * an inward leaping and sweetness that are brought about by divine knowledge and illumination, stemming from the **vision of uncreated light.**



St Symeon the New Theologian

Divine Light

- * Why are saints are shown with the circle of gold about their heads?
- * How is Saint Stephen's face described as he was being stoned?
 - * *shone like an angel*
- * Not something that can be explained or gained by the intellect.
- * St John Climacus says that whoever prays without receiving his soul lit by such a flame and without receiving illumination, prays more **in a bodily way** like a Pharisee rather than in **a spiritual way**.



True Knowledge

- * This uncreated light is source of **true knowledge**. It's **knowing beyond knowledge**.
- * **Light of Tabor, light of the hesychasts** substance of **good things to come**.
- * Three phases of same thing, which make up **reality** of what is **above and beyond time**.



“The divine light seen then by the Apostles on Tabor, which purified souls see now, is one and the same with the substance of good things to come.” (Defense of the Hesychasts)

Blessed Passions

- * After pure (noetic) prayer, an entire series of ascents to the “**Blessed passions**” follow, which culminate in divine vision and mystical experience of the ineffable mysteries of theosis.



*Blessed passions **draw the flesh** to a dignity close to that of the Spirit and persuade it too to tend towards **what is above**... (Triads p51)*

- * It's also called **deification** of the flesh so the body can do God's will and enables it to experience things divine. Passions become “**divine passions.**”

Blessed Passions

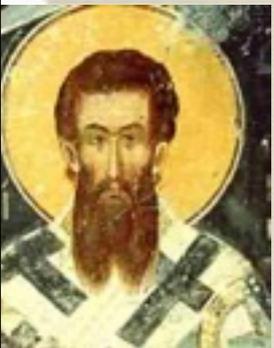
- * What is the nature of this kind of Prayer St. Gregory is discussing?

Dispassion

Dispassion

- * In the midst of these “blessed passions” that are fruits of pure unceasing prayer comes ‘**dispassion.**’
- * What is “dispassion”?
 - * Change in direction within our soul turning from evil passions to godly habits.
 - * Sign of purification of our heart.
 - * Conquering of all worldly or fleshly passions.
- * Is dispassion a mortification of our passions?

Dispassion



Gregory to Barlaam:

*'We have **not been taught**, O philosopher, that dispassion is the mortification of the passionate faculty,*

- * but a **change** in its direction from the worse to the better.*
- * It is an activity **habitually directed towards the divine,***
- * entirely turning away **from what is evil and towards what is good.***
- * The **dispassionate person**, then, is one who has **divested himself of evil habits and enriched himself with good ones.**'*

Dispassion

- * Dispassion **not mortification of faculties** of our soul
- * **Not simple denial of sinful desires** and tendencies.

*“Dispassion doesn’t mean to no longer feel the passions, but to **no longer accept them...***

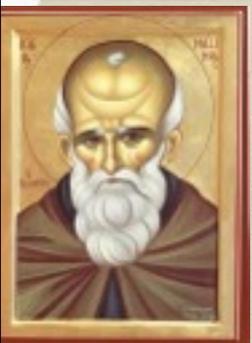
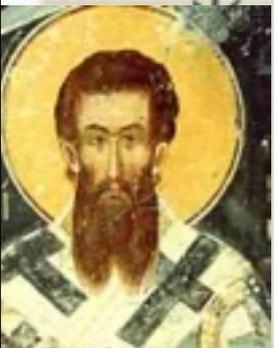
The mind no longer needs to be constantly concerned about them because all the time is filled with [good] thoughts... (Direction to

Hesychasts, Phil 1, p 253-4)

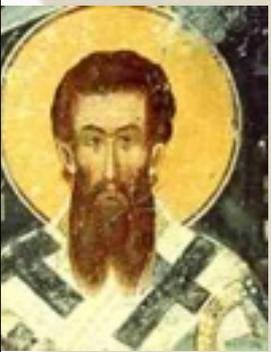
- * *“A dispassionate soul is immersed in virtues as a passionate being is in pleasure.”* St John Climacus

“Peaceful condition of the soul” (St Maximos, Chaps on Love, Phi 2, p6)

Freedom from all passions



Dispassion



Dispassion serves *'to draw the flesh to a dignity close to that of the spirit, and persuade it to tend towards what is above.'* (Defense of Hesychasts 2.2.12)

- * Gregory tells us that dispassion is the aim and the destiny which was apparent from very beginning of man's creation.
- * May be difficult to attain but What???
- * We are created with ability to abide in dispassion.

Dispassion

- * Can see things in their **simple meaning**
- * No longer see and think things through lens of a passion which wants to be satisfied
- * Things appear to have their own purpose independent of our egotism, not in reference to our needs.
- * Others appear as human beings with own purpose **needing our help.**
- * Implies love and absence of egotism
- * Realize we are **not the center of all things** & realize all things gravitate towards God.

Dispassion

- * Discover we influence others more **by our quietness**
- * Now work for **salvation of others** with confidence in plan God has for every soul.
- * Are led to the innermost part of the mind, the heart, where Christ is found and peaceful breezes of love are found.
- * Prepares us for yet a higher level of spirituality - **contemplation** of God.
- * Beginning of **holy person**. Begin to become Christ like.

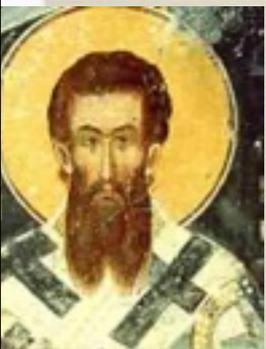
Christ Like

* Think about nature of Christ ???

* Divinity takes on flesh and sanctifies flesh.

*“Just as the divinity of the Word of God incarnate is common to the **soul and body**, since He has **deified the flesh through the mediation of the soul** to make it also accomplish the works of God;*

* *Similarly, in the spiritual man, the **grace of Spirit, transmitted to the body** through the soul, grants to the body also the experience of things divine, and allows it the **same blessed experiences as the soul undergoes.**”* (Defense of Hesychasts 2.2.12)



Dispassion

- * Soul begins to act on body in a divine way.
Now in control of the passions.
- * No longer moved by material passions, The body severs its **passionate relationship** with matter.
- * Flesh becomes sanctified and deified. It makes a shift from interest of things of this world to things on high.

Dispassion

- * This transformation is verified by miracles wrought through holy relics.
- * Like St. Stephen's face shone like the face of an angel and Gregory's body gave off a light at his death.
- * This light is commonly associated with spiritual persons.

Dispassion

- * Good News: Dispassion is accessible to all believers who live in the world.
- * **But**, how is it attained?
 - * Cannot be attained if intensity and perseverance in **ascetic endeavor and prayer** are not present
- * We must prepare with God's help and then cooperate and participate in work of divine grace.

Dispassion

- * Does this mean we must have a lifeless life?
 - * About **joyful life** where joy of God's presence is with you **always in all you do**
- * If you choose to follow Christ you will be led to a different life than most of us now live.
- * How will it differ?
 - * What will happen to all the stresses and negative thoughts we experience in our daily life?
 - * Our situations will not change, but our normal response will be replaced with the comfort of God's grace and joy and thoughts of His kingdom.

Your Life

- * What are some of the common efforts people undertake today to get peace of mind?
- * Exercise, yoga classes, self-help programs of all kinds, TV, vacations and other escapes like alcohol and drugs, none of which eliminate our basic problems of being controlled by our bad habits and passions.
- * Change this time into time into prayer and ascetic practices - not the easy path.
- * Make repentance a **habit** and regular participation in the **Sacraments** honoring the liturgical calendar;
- * With effort, you **can** transform your life.

Your Life

- * Lets reflect on this for a few minutes.
- * What are the stresses of daily life we would like to overcome?
- * What efforts and time are we putting into dealing with them?
- * How can we reorient this effort and time into the Orthodox way of life? What needs to be added to our life?

Practical Philosophy

- * Dispassion is **gateway** through which we must pass if we are to reach *'the height of desire'*: Which is?
 - * **theosis**, divine knowledge and the vision of God.
- * Path is called **Practical philosophy**,
- * Involves **repentance, prayer, fasting and cleansing from passions**
- * frees the human nous from the affects of the Fall, from passion and from sins, and broadens one so we are capable to receive theosis.

Dispassion

* Questions on Dispassion?

Love



Love

- * Love and Dispassion are **interrelated** and **interdependent**.
- * Why would Gregory say this?
- * In our dispassion we find a union of God and discover pure Love.
- * The 3 aspects of our soul become united with God.
 - * **Rational aspect** learns to seek the one and only God by means of spiritual knowledge, instead of intellectual knowledge.
 - * **Incensive aspect** struggles to attain God alone.
 - * **Desiring aspect** is driven by a longing for God.

Love

- * Holy Scripture emphasizes need for our **pure love for God** and places it in the context of praising Him inspiring us to glorify God for everything in our life.
- * St. Paul alludes, *“Therefore, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, **do all to the glory of God.**”* (1 Cor 10:31)
- * When love moves the three faculties of the soul (rational, incensive and desiring) in a direction consistent with true nature then it is no longer possible to avoid the goal for which they were created.

Love

- * When soul is purified, love abandons every self-centered inclination, it then becomes **'divine eros'**. This is an unquenchable thirst that the Fathers refer to in defining holiness.

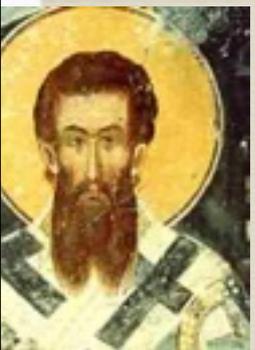
St Gregory of Nyssa writes, *"To truly see God is to never satisfy one's desire [for Him]."*

Apostle Paul describes as *"Reaching toward those things which are ahead."* (Phil 3:13)



Love

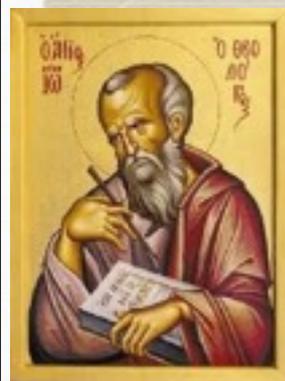
- * In earlier stages, love for God is identified in the struggle against passions and the attempt to acquire virtues.



Love is the fruit of repentance - *a humble disposition... a gentle and merciful heart that loves righteousness and pursues purity, peaceful, peace-making, patient in toil, glad to endure persecution, loss, outrage,lander and suffering for the sake of truth.*

- * With love we want to cleave to God through our acts of repentance and patient endurance.
- * *“Absence of the passions and the possession of virtue constitute love for God; for hatred of evil, resulting in the absence of passions, introduces in its place the desire for and acquisition of spiritual blessings.”* (Natural Chapters 58)

Love



St John the Theologian, *“God is love, and he who abides in love abides in God, and God in him.”* (1 John 4:16)

- * The Lord himself teaches: *“He who has my commandments and keeps them, it is he who loves me.”* (John 14:21) and conversely *“If anyone loves me, he will keep my word.”* (John 14:23)



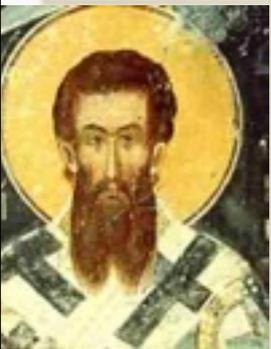
God only becomes visible to those who are changed by their love for God and experience the purification of divine love... (Homilies 43)



Without love, the works of virtue are not praiseworthy or profitable... same is true for love without works. (Phil 4, p 373)

Love

- * Love is the “summit of the virtues”



Love is the fullness of the virtues and it makes use of the image to preserve the perfect resemblance to God. (Defense of Hesychasts 2.3.76)

- * You cannot receive the acquisition of spiritual love as a self-directed feat independent from life in Spirit.

Love

- * **Love** for God is the only **valid reason** why man fulfills the commandments of God.
- * The source and root of every virtue.
- * Love gives the believer a unique strength that ennobles his love for his fellow man.

Merciful Heart

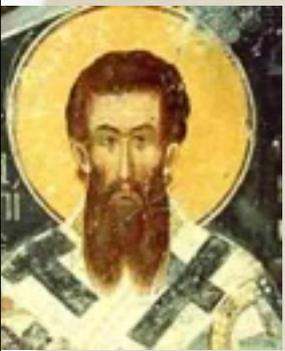


Saint Isaac the Syrian writes,
“And what is a merciful heart?”

*It is the **heart’s burning for the sake of the entire creation**, for men, for birds, for animal, for demons, and for every created thing...*

- * *For this reason he offers up **tearful prayer** continually...*
- * *he even prays for the family of reptiles because of the great **compassion that burns without measure in his heart in the likeness of God.**”* (Ascetical Homilies 71)

Love



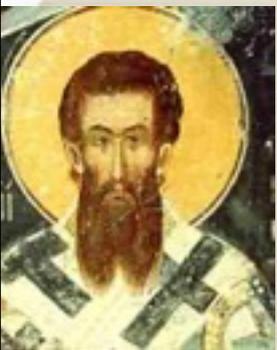
How can Gregory say, *Love outside this context becomes the “cause of every vice.”* (Homilies 22) ?

Love for God and love for the world can be seen as the two antithetical poles that positively or negatively define the content of man’s ethical life.

- * Love for world is caused by **love for his body**, while love for God is caused by **love for his soul**.
- * Gregory writes, “*We love the world for the sake of the body and its comfort, while each of us loves God for the sake of his own soul, in order to find rest and a good portion **in the age to come.***” (Homilies 33)

Love

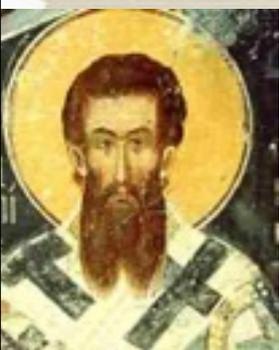
- * True love for God and one's neighbor leads man to a spiritual maturity and to spiritual stages that presuppose much struggle, labor and ascetic endeavor.



*“When the soul renounces its attachment to inferior things and cleaves through love to God and submits itself to Him through acts and modes of virtue, it is **illuminated** and made beautiful by God and is raised to a higher level.”* (Natural Chapters 39)

- * This is a surrender of ego based on Faith to Christ and His Church.

Love

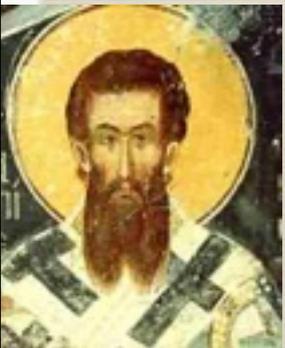


Gregory sees 'severity' with oneself as the first precondition for the cultivation of true love. (Defense of Hesychasts 2.2.20, 2.3.77)

- * What do you suppose he means by "severity"?
- * Hatred for evil
- * Over time this 'severity' becomes a **divine habit** that graces one with a permanent **hatred for evil conduct and harmful relationships**. This bears fruit in our soul in the form of dispassion which then gives birth to love for the good.

Love

- * **Ascetic endeavor** for virtue is **God's plan** as an activity that is both natural to man and restores him to natural life.



He who denies the vision of God and fails to look forward to the hope of theosis is condemned to remain eternally in the vicious cycle of a fleshly pleasure and blindness to the truth trapped in a world of finitude and absurdity. (defense of Hesychasts 1.3.52)

Love

- * What happens when we turn our rational aspect towards things divine and abide in truth, and when our desiring aspect casts aside the desires of the flesh?
- * Grace of the Holy Spirit calmly meets the soul in order to initiate it into the future and ineffable bounties of theosis which *“eye has not seen nor ear heard, nor have entered into the heart of man.”* (1 Cor 2:9)

Theosis



Theosis

- * Church Fathers consistently teach that victory over passions is brought to perfection in theosis.
- * Purification of the nous enables the light of the Holy Trinity to shine throughout the soul so the vision of God grants permanence to the virtuous life.
- * Believer in the state of theosis lives as a present experience what is a pledge of a future reality.

Theosis

- * When Apostle Paul declares *“It is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in Me,”* (Gal 2:20) he expresses the fullness of the Orthodox experience of the life in Christ.
- * The life of Christ interpenetrates the life of the believer and in the life of Paul and *“the entire Divinity comes to dwell in fullness in those deemed worthy and all the saints in their entire being dwell in God, receiving God in His wholeness.”* (Defense of Hesychasts 3.1.27)
- * The vision of God is not only God’s gift to man, but it is also the fruit of man’s striving and cooperation or synergy in the work of His perfection. This explains why not all believers attain to the vision of God.

Theosis

- * The more we know God, the more we become aware of His incomprehensibility:
- * St John of Damascus relates: *“The divine is infinite and incomprehensible, and the one thing that is comprehensible about it is its infinity and incomprehensibility.”* (Exposition of the Orthodox Faith 1.4)

Essence & Energies

- * Difference between East and west
- * In West God is defined solely by His essence. Whatever is not God's essence cannot belong to God. Consequently, the energies of God are either identified with the essence or they are by necessity another essence whatever their external appearance may be.
- * This perspective makes theosis and our participation in the divine life impossible since the grace that deifies Saints is created even though it may be called supernatural.

Essence & Energies

- * In the East there is a distinction between the essence of God and His energies. His essence is unknowable but we can participate and experience His energies.
- * Grace is not created but uncreated.

Essence & Energies

- * The divine light Gregory talks about is an energy of God and a goal in the life of every believer.
- * These energies are called light because when the believer beholds God they appear as an ineffable and inexpressible reality that the word “light” suggests better than any other.
- * The perfect vision belongs to the future age where we shall see ‘God face to face.’

Essence & Energies



The light of the Transfiguration is the natural radiance of His divinity that was hidden in human flesh: *“Christ was transfigured, **not** by the addition of something He was not, but by the **manifestation** to His disciples of What He really was. He opened their eyes so that instead of being blind they could see.”* (Homilies 34)

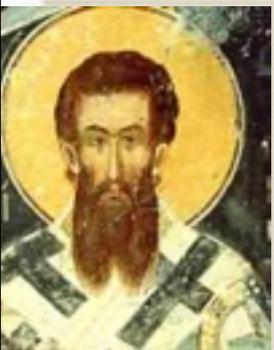
- * *Disciples saw the divine light because their fleshly and bodily senses, were ‘exchanged’ for Spiritual ones, even as our senses, together without entire selves, will become spiritual when ‘mortality will be exchanged for immortality’ on the day of the general resurrection when the bodies of the righteous will be clothed with an incorrupt and spiritual body.* (Homilies 35)

Essence & Energies

- * Makes clear that we do not experience theosis and union with God simply by imitating Him. It is necessary to acquire God's uncreated grace in the Holy Spirit.
- * Moses and David reach such a state because they clothed themselves from the ways of the flesh and clothed themselves with the purity that comes from grace.

Essence & Energies

- * When soul receives radiance of Holy Spirit you become spiritual and convey grace to others.



“from this comes foreknowledge of things future, understanding of mysteries, apprehension of things hidden, distribution of spiritual gifts, citizenship in heave, the dance with the angels, unending joy, divine largesse, likeness to God, and the desire of all desires, to become god.” (Philokalia 4, p. 381)

- * The more you advance in passion of theosis, more you acquires an increasingly steadfast knowledge of God.
- * True theology is the fruit of theosis and communion with God.

Summary



Summary

- * Basis of St Gregory's teaching on passions and virtues is the distinction between human life **according to nature** and that which is **contrary to nature**. Passions do not belong to human nature.
- * He characterizes passions as the '**perverse and crooked ways**, that are conditions that ravage our life. Our sins are merely symptoms of these conditions.

Summary

- * We can divide soul into three faculties: rational, incensive and desiring.
One single nature.
- * If one of the faculties is infected by sin then entire soul is affected
- * When soul gives into passions, rational faculty is first to move away from rational life.
- * Leads to an inability to control and direct the other faculties.
- * The desiring faculty is led astray into slavery to the passions. Then the passions capture the incensive faculty feeding anger, envy...

Summary

- * At the root of our difficulty is the Fall of Adam which is the source of passions and sin.
- * Gave up world of dispassion for life of suffering and fear of death
- * The path back to our natural state in the realm of love of God is continual **repentance**.
- * Repentance means for Gregory to **hate sin and to love virtue**.
- * Without repentance we remain a slave to sin and separated from God.

Summary

- * Through repentance we perceive the **unclean nature of our soul** and the beauty that was lost due to Adam and Eve and we mourn with tears about our soul's condition.
- * We feel **intensely** the need for this **mourning** due to our state of deprivation and desiring to be cleansed and purified from our sinfulness.
- * This purification involves **cooperation or synergy** between our free-will and the grace of God.
- * This does not depend on our intellectual abilities but on the **purity of our heart** and willingness to carry out the will of God.

Summary

- * The fullness of this purification can be found in the holy mysteries of the Church: **Holy Confession** and **Holy Communion**.

Summary

- * Purification is directly connected to the **exercise of the virtues**.
- * But the source of virtues is not our efforts but God's grace. The **fruit** and evidence of our participation in the life of God.

Summary

- * Sin is seen as a kind of ‘monstrosity’ that comes from our misuse of our freedom. Virtue transcends time and is eternal.
- * A virtuous life is a phenomenon that reflects our **ability to govern ourselves**. A fruit of communion with God.

Summary

- * The Incarnation is the greatest sign of God's plan for man's salvation and theosis. God taking on flesh and sanctifying it makes for the possibility for the transformation of human nature.
- * Keeping of His commandments is the expression of this transformation and proof of Christ's presence in us. Its a sign and measure of our love for God.
- * When we struggle to purify ourselves we cultivate **love** for that which is truly good and the cause of that good God himself.

Summary

- * **Asceticism** is the **pathway** and means for our self governing with love for Him. It is interwoven with **repentance** and **mourning** for our sins.
- * It is not thought of as in opposition of the body or to human nature but rather as the **liberation** of the body and human nature from sin.
- * Man is both soul and body so with purification we gain the Kingdom of God **with and in** our body as well.

Summary

- * When we are purified through **repentance, spiritual mourning and asceticism** we begin to live the divine passion of theosis through the deifying virtue of pure prayer.
- * Together with **unceasing prayer** we will be granted the gift of **dispassion** which signifies the control of the incensive and desiring faculties of the soul and return to pure love and desire for God.
- * **Theosis is the fruit** of real communion between man and uncreated grace.

Summary

- * When sanctified through prayer within the **ascetic and sacramental life of the Church** we become **aflame** with the 'divine eros' of **pure love for God**.
- * We are able to commune with Him and experience the 'divine passion' of **theosis**.
- * This is the **ultimate goal** for all believers

Summary

* Questions ?