

**“Bless the Lord, O my soul; and all that is within me, bless His Holy Name! Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all His benefits: who forgives all your iniquities, who heals all your diseases, who redeems your life from destruction, who crowns you with loving kindness and tender mercies, who satisfies your mouth with good things, so that your youth is renewed like the eagle’s.” (Ps 103:1-5)**

✦ **Introduction** ✦

✦ **In The Beginning:**

One of the consequences of the fall of Adam and Eve is the corruption of the human nature. St. Paul said, “We were by nature children of wrath” (**Eph 2:3**), and King David said, “I was brought forth in iniquity, and in sin my mother conceived me” (**Ps 51:5**). Our human nature is formed of three elements:

1. The Body (Gr. *Soma*)
2. The Spirit (Gr. *Pnevma*)
3. The Soul (Gr. *Psyche*)

→ The word “Soul” may be used sometimes to refer to the whole human nature:

- “That day about three thousand souls were added to them.” (**Acts 2:41**)

→ It may also be used to refer to the “Spirit”:

- “I saw under the altar the souls of those who had been slain for the word of God.” (**Rev 6:9**)
- “The soul of the child came back to him, and he revived.” (**1 Kgs 17:22**)

→ The distinction between the soul and the spirit is quite obvious from the following verse:

- “The word of God is living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the division of soul and spirit” (**Heb 4:12**)

→ Throughout these lectures we may need to keep this distinction in mind.

✦ **WATER:**

- When Jonah the Prophet was in the fish’s belly, he said, “The waters encompassed me, even to the soul” (**Jonah 2:5**)
- King David said, “If it had not been the Lord who was on our side... then the waters would have overwhelmed us, the stream would have gone over our soul; then the swollen waters would have gone over our soul” (**Ps 124:2, 4-5**)

✦ **WIND:**

- It is written about Ahaz, King of Judah that “his heart and the heart of his people were moved as the trees of the woods are moved with the wind” (**Is 7:2**) when they were told that Syria’s forces are deployed in Ephraim.
- King David said, “Our soul is bowed down to the dust” (**Ps 44:25**), “My soul clings to the dust” (**Ps 119:25**), “Why are you cast down, O my soul? And why are you disquieted within me?” (**Ps 42:11; 43:5**)

✦ **FAITH:**

- Faith and hope are the anchor of our souls that protects against the everyday water and wind of this world. It is written, “This hope we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast” (**Heb 6:19**).

### ✠ Sin as a Source of Psychological Challenge:

- It is written twice that God said, “There is no peace for the wicked” (**Is 48:22; 52:21**). Moreover, He said, “Oh, that you had heeded My commandments! Then your peace would have been like a river” (**Is 48:18**).
- King David said, “Lord, be merciful to me; heal my soul, for I have sinned against You” (**Ps 41:4**).
- Both Adam and Eve lost their peace with God due to sin and they “hid themselves from the presence of the Lord God among the trees of the garden” (**Gen 3:8**). They also lost the harmony of their relationship and Adam started blaming Eve for his mistakes, “the woman whom You gave to be with me, she gave me of the tree, and I ate” (**Gen 3:12**). Notice that Adam is indirectly blaming God also! (Denial & Projection)
- Cain said, “I shall be a fugitive and a vagabond on earth” (**Gen 4:14**).
- King Saul lost his inner peace due to his sins and David used to relieve his distress by playing the harp for him (**1 Sam 16:14-23**).

→ At this point, the psychological redemptive suffering of our Lord Jesus Christ on the cross are noteworthy. He carried the sins of the world with all their psychological consequences:

- “Surely He has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows.” (**Is 53:4**)
- “He was oppressed and He was afflicted, yet He opened not His mouth.” (**Is 53:7**)
- “It pleased the Lord to bruise Him; He has put Him to grief. When You make His soul an offering for sin ... He (The Father) shall see the travail (labor and pain of childbirth) of His soul, and be satisfied.” (**Is 53:10-11**)
- No wonder our Lord said, “My soul is exceedingly sorrowful, even to death.” (**Mt 26:38**)

→ After a long period of living in sin, the sinner may lose his/her sensitivity and his/her heart becomes hard. Therefore, “exhort one another daily, while it is called “Today” lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin” (**Heb 3:13**).

### ✠ The Devil & The People as a Source of Psychological Challenge:

St. Paul talked about the whole armor of God and the spiritual warfare “against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places” (**Eph 6:12**). This spiritual warfare has a psychological component that should not be overlooked:

- When Nehemiah was building the wall of Jerusalem, the Devil belittled his work by causing Tobiah the Ammonite to say, “Whatever they build, if even a fox goes up on it, he will break down their stone wall” (**Neh 4:3**).
- The King of Assyria (symbol of Satan) sent his messenger to Jerusalem and they insisted to convey his propaganda in the Hebrew language so that all the people would understand it and lose faith (**2 Kgs 18:26-27**).
- Job said to his friends, “Miserable comforters are you all! Shall words of wind have an end?” (**Job 16:2-3**), and “How long will you torment my soul, and break me in pieces with words?” (**Job 19:2**). Indeed, “The heart knows its own bitterness, and a stranger does not share its joy” (**Prov 14:10**). “Many are they who say to me, there is no help for him in God” (**Ps 3:2**).
- “There is one who speaks like the piercing of a sword, but the tongue of the wise promotes health.” (**Prov 12:18**)
- “It is better to dwell in the wilderness, than with a contentious and angry woman.” (**Prov 21:19**)

### ✠ Outer Circumstances as a Source of Psychological Challenge:

- The life of Joseph the Righteous is an excellent example of outer circumstance being a source of psychological challenge especially when the person did not commit any sin to cause these circumstances to take place. King David described the life of St. Joseph saying, “They hurt his feet with fetters, his soul came into iron” (**Ps 105:18**). King David also prayed for himself saying, “Bring my soul out of prison” (**Ps 142:7**).
- Jezebel the Queen threatened Elijah the Prophet so he fled and prayed saying, “It is enough! Now, Lord, take my life, for I am not better than my fathers!” (**1 Kgs 19:4**). This is probably what St. James was referring to when he said “Elijah was a man with a nature like ours” (**Jam 5:17**).

### ✠ The Self as a Source of Psychological Challenge:

This is the most dangerous and painful situation a person can experience because this person becomes an enemy to himself:

- “A man’s enemies will be those of his own household” (**Micah 7:6; Mt 10:36**). Judas is an unfortunate example for he killed himself because he lost hope and couldn’t deal with the tremendous guilt he felt, “I have sinned by betraying innocent blood” (**Mt 27:4**).
- “Every kingdom divided against itself is brought to desolation” (**Lk 11:17**), - “The merciful man does good for his own soul, but he who is cruel troubles his own flesh” (**Prov 11:17**).
- St. Peter exhorts us saying, “I beg you as sojourners and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts which war against the soul” (**1 Pet 2:11**). No wonder St. Paul said, “I discipline my body and bring it into subjection” (**1 Cor 9:27**).

### ✠ The Coptic Church & Our Psychological Health:

By the grace of God, the Church Fathers have recognized the importance of the psychological well being of the congregation. This is obvious in our liturgical prayers:

- In the Prayer of the Sick, the priest says, “Those who are in prison or dungeons, and those who are in exile or captivity, or those who are held in bitter bondage, O Lord, set them all free and have mercy upon them.” Obviously these people are not physically ill but they are mentioned during the Prayer of the Sick due to their psychological pains. (Divine Liturgy of St. Basil)
- Moreover, the priest prays saying, “All souls that are distressed or bound, give them mercy, O Lord; give them rest, give them coolness, give them grace, give them help, give them salvation, give them the forgiveness of their sins and their iniquities. As for us also, O Lord, the maladies of our souls heal, and those of our bodies too, do cure. O You the true Physician of our souls and our bodies.” (Divine Liturgy of St. Basil)
- During the Fraction Prayer, the priest prays saying, “Purify our souls, our bodies, our spirits, our hearts, our eyes, our understanding, our thoughts and our consciences.” (Divine Liturgy of St. Basil)
- During the hymn of “O King of Peace” (Epouro) we say, “Emmanuel our God is now in our midst...may He bless us... and heal the sickness of our souls and bodies.”
- The Coptic tunes and melodies of the Holy Psalmody and Divine Liturgies are by the grace of God effective remedies for distressed souls.
- The Sacrament of Confession is a great opportunity for self-examination and counseling.
- The Church acknowledges that the psychological challenges of this generation are different from the previous generations and therefore she gathered the youth of the 21<sup>st</sup> century to discuss these challenges and how to deal with them.

✠ **Third Annual Winter Youth Convention** ✠

By the grace of God this convention will be about:

**“An Anchored Faith Withstanding The Water & Wind of Psychological Challenges”**

Indeed these challenges vary from one generation to the other but the remedy remains the same for it is written,

**“Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever.” (Heb 13:9)**

And He is the One who said,

**“Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls.” (Mt 11:28-29)**

This year’s convention was inspired by the following words of St. Paul:

**“May the God of peace Himself sanctify you completely; and may your whole spirit, soul, body be preserved blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.” (1 Thess 5:23)**

→ The following subjects will be discussed ←

- 1. Pervading and Prevailing Moods**
  - 2. Emotional Expression**
  - 3. Coping Mechanisms**
  - 4. Self-Summation**
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