

# St. Basil the Great on the Psalter[1]

From the **Russian Orthodox Psalter**[2]

Oct 30/ Nov 12 2009 23<sup>rd</sup> Thursday after Pentecost



No other book so glorifies God, as does the Psalter. It profits the soul; it glorifies God together with the angels, and exalts and extols with a powerful voice, and imitates the angels.

At times, it flogs the demons and drives them out, and causes them much weeping and injury. It prays to God for kings and princes, and for the whole world. With the Psalter you can pray to God even for yourself, for it is the greatest and most exalted of books.

This book called the Psalter is like a great sea: for as the water of the sea is never diminished or exhausted by the outpouring of its rivers and streams, neither does the chanting of the Psalter ever fail.

The Psalter has been called bravery and boldness before God for the salvation of the soul, for there is great reward in fasting, and in bows, and in the reading of the Psalter.

If, brother, you say that you are weak, and cannot perform this rule, being but flesh – look up into the air, and see how the sun and the moon and the stars do not rest day or night from following their path, performing the commandments of the Lord, and how this fiery creation does not eat, or drink, or look for the torment to come, but, rather, fears God, and performs His commands without ceasing.

You, brother, though flesh, have clothing for your body. If you are in want, you eat and drink, and sleep as needed. There are those who get up at midnight, and worship, and pray to God, and occupy themselves with handiwork, and yet give thanks to their Maker for all things. And again he says, How weak and infirm is the nature of water, and yet it fears the Lord. Day and night it continues to ebb and flow, washing not only men, but also their darkness, giving drink to cattle, and birds, and beasts, and creeping things, and pouring itself out upon the earth.

And you, brother, how is it that you neither examine nor attend to yourself? With God, all things are possible, but with man, nothing is possible. Simply take courage and be strong, and God will help you. For David says, “Wait thou on the Lord, and keep His way, and He shall promote thee, that thou shalt possess the land” [Ps. 36:34]; so let not a single day pass without singing from the Psalter.

If, for some reason, you are obliged to set it aside, mark the place, and begin again the next morning, not stopping out of slothfulness. For, as Peter, the chief of the apostles, says, “One day of our life is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day,”[\[1\]](#) and it makes no difference.

For all the seasons of this world, brethren, turn like a wheel. Today, there is sun, and, tomorrow, darkness, and rain, and snow. Today, there are parties and weddings, and, tomorrow, weeping and despondency. But if you take action to save your soul, you will correct your speech and learn the commandments of God, and He will open your eyes, so that you might understand the wonders of the Law of the Lord.

The great John Chrysostom was asked by the brethren, “Is it good to lay aside the Psalter?” He replied, “It would be better for the sun to fall from its orbit, than to neglect reading the Psalter, for it is of great benefit to study the psalms, and to read the Psalter diligently. For all books are profitable for us, and grieve the demons, but there is none like the Psalter.” Let us, then, take heed.