

THE CONTRAST BETWEEN HOW GOD AND THE DEVIL SPEAK TO US

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St. Basil's Russian Orthodox Church, Watervliet, NY 12189, October 15, 2023

I wonder how many of us have thought about how God and the devil speak to us when we are about to sin. First of all, when choosing to succumb to temptation, what does the Lord say to us? He says "Thou shalt not." He appears as the Son of God on the Cross. He bars the way. He says, "My flesh was crucified and your flesh must be crucified too." Do not follow the path that you are choosing. Thus He stands in front of us. Perhaps we react by being annoyed. "Oh, we aren't free. We can't do anything that we want to do. Christ is there." But how does Satan talk? What does Satan say when we are about to sin? "Oh don't be silly. We don't believe those things anymore. Times have changed. Are you still a virgin? You mean you've never smoked marijuana or tried drugs? Everybody's doing it. Don't pay attention to those doctors who say that you will hurt your body and your brain. Don't pay attention when you hear about the people who are dying from drugs. They're just trying to scare you. You don't have to be afraid. Everyone just doesn't want to see you be happy and enjoy yourself. You've got to live your life. You have to be yourself. You haven't committed adultery? Everyone is doing it now. These views of strict morality were alright a hundred years ago or five hundred years ago, but this is a new world. 'I gotta be me! I gotta be free!' That is the way the devil talks. He's on our side. Before we sin, the Lord seems to be the accuser. Before we sin, the devil is our defender. He's on the side of our fornication, the side of our pride, the side of our greed. He takes our part.

What happens after we sin? After we sin the roles are reversed. Then our Savior becomes the defender and the devil the accuser. The devil will say, "Alright, now you've had your dope. Now you're hooked. Don't come to me, I can't help you. You might as well just give up. Sure, you lost your virginity. Now what difference does it make? You might as well go on. Sure, you've stolen. You haven't been caught, but you're about to be caught. And so the devil fills us with despair, just as he filled the heart of Judas with despair. Judas could have gone to our Savior and our Savior would have forgiven him. Instead, Judas took a rope. It was winter time, and he walked on the frozen ground between the frosty trees. Every knot in every tree seemed to him like an eye. And every branch on every tree seemed to be an accusing finger: "Traitor!" There was nothing for him to do in his despair but to die. And that is why suicide is so prevalent and on the increase in our society — despair. The devil got us. In the novel "Crime and Punishment" by Fyodor Dostoevsky the protagonist is the evil character Rodion Romanovich Raskolnikov. In contrast to Raskolnikov, there is a character named Sonya who is quiet, shy and timid, but devout and devoted to her family. Her primary means of support was her drunken father. After he dies, she sacrifices herself to a life of prostitution in order to support her family. Raskolnikov says to her, "Sonya, do you know what's going to happen to you? You're either going to jump off a bridge, or you're going to go mad, or you're going to cut your throat." But that did not happen, because Sonya picked up the Gospel of St. John and she began to read about the resurrection of Lazarus. She realizes that it doesn't have to be this way, and that she can find new life in Christ, which brings me to the way in which our Lord acts after we sin.

After we sin, our Lord is now our defender. He says, "Come to me, all 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. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light" (Matt. 11:28-30). Your sins will be blotted out, and you shall be made whiter than snow (Psalm 50). In our hour of sin, the Lord will pity us and grieve for us. When others turn away from us and shun us, our Lord will instead cover us with His love. Our Savior has prepared a home and a refuge for all of us. Just as the Lord forgave the paralytic his sins and healed him with the word "Rise!", He will also forgive us our sins which have paralyzed our souls, and He will also heal us of our brokenness by telling us: "Rise!" He will take us by the

hand and tell us to come with Him. This is the language of our Savior after we sin, to whom be all glory, honor and worship, with the Father and the Holy Spirit, now and ever, and unto the ages of ages. Amen.



St. Paisios early in his monastic life, living in solitude on Mt. Sinai. He underwent severe struggles with the devil, but he also received incredible divine grace and visitations from our Lord.