

Impediments to Prayer: Spiritual Languor (Sloth)

معوقات الصلاة:
الفتور الروحي



*For the enemy has
persecuted my soul;
He has crushed my life
to the ground;
He has made me dwell
in darkness,
Like those who have
long been dead.
(Psa 143:3)*

Impediments to Prayer

- Three Spiritual Impediments:

- *Spiritual Aridity* (الجفاف الروحي)
- *Spiritual Languor* (الفتور الروحي)
- *Loss of Purpose* (فقدان الهدف)

- Aridity:

- *Prayer does not stop*
- *No solace or pleasure*

- Languor:

- *Affects the will to pray*



Symptoms of Languor

- *Stand up to pray*
 - *no words come out, no power in prayer*
- *Read the Bible*
 - *no understanding nor a will to comprehend*
- *Desire to pray may fade*
 - *unable and unwilling to pray*



Symptoms of Languor

- If we try to fix it (on our own) ,it gets worse

- *If we examine our faith, we find it has died*
- *If we knock, no one opens*
- *If we seek warmth, we find ice*
- *No hope!*
- *“...my beloved had turned away and was gone.*

*I sought him, but I could not find him;
I called him, but he gave me no answer.”
(Song 5:6)*



Prognosis of Languor

- Enemy takes the opportunity to convince us of our failure
 - *Once and for all deny your spiritual life*
- Yet, the soul deep within somehow clings to God
 - *Soul worships God without realizing or wanting to*
 - *Keep praying, even if you don't want to...*
 - *Continues to pray, even without comfort nor assurance*
 - *Spirituality is dormant, only springs to life at last moment*
 - *Sleeping lion*

Purpose for Languor

- Discipline : pride/ambition
 - *Story: monk who wishes to fast all day*
- “When the ambitious soul becomes obsessed with progress, it tries to double its speed. It goes beyond its ability to endure. It barges into the realms of higher spiritual experience. It gazes into the light without the proper qualifications. The simple result is that it comes to a sudden halt!”
(Fr. Matthew the Poor)



Purpose for Languor

- Discipline : soaring and falling
 - *Story: monk who wishes to ascend*
- Spiritual Life Insurance: against pride
 - *Tower or Babel*
 - “Come, let us build ourselves a city,
and a tower whose top is in the heavens;
let us make a name for ourselves...”
(Gen 11)



Benefits of Languor

- It strips the soul completely of all ambition
- Ends excessive obsession and false progress
- Brings us back to the beginner's level
 - *Ground zero... can't fall...*
 - *Start again, now with humility*
 - *Bearing grief and sadness – good sign!*
 - *Embarrassed of condition – shame!*
 - *“Remember therefore from where you have fallen; repent and do the first works...” (Rev 2:5)*
 - *Loss of proud hopes*
 - *Better guarantee for salvation*



Benefits of Languor



- Correcting our understanding of the relationship with God (1)
 - *God is the One who grants us the energy to worship Him*
 - *God takes away this energy! Why???*
- Shocking realization #1:
God is in no need of our prayers!
 - *“You had no need of my servitude. Rather, it was me who was in need of Your lordship.” (Liturgy of St. Gregory)*

Benefits of Languor



- Correcting our understanding of the relationship with God (2)
 - *Soul thinks its own prayer qualifies it for the love of God*
 - *Soul tries in vain to rise and resume its prayers, but in vain, for the resolve is gone.*
- Shocking realization #2:
The greatness of God can not be measured by the triviality of man!
 - *“Because of the multitude of Your compassions, You formed me when I had no being” (Liturgy of St. Gregory)*

Benefits of Languor



- Correcting our understanding of the relationship with God (3)
 - *God condescended to adopt the sons of dust as His children, out of His compassion, not as a reward!*
 - *Our sonship remains despite of our sins*
- Shocking realization #3:
Prayers are not the price for God's love but only a response to it!
 - *“I offer to You, O my Master the symbols of my freedom. I write my deeds according to Your words.” (Liturgy of St. Gregory)*

Two Kinds of Languor

- Due to ambition

- Symptoms/questions:

- *Has God forsaken me?*
 - *Is it because of my sins?*
 - *Have I provoked Him to anger by my sloth and laziness*
 - *Has He rejected me because my prayer is no longer acceptable before Him?*



- Due to faulty understanding of God's love and fatherhood

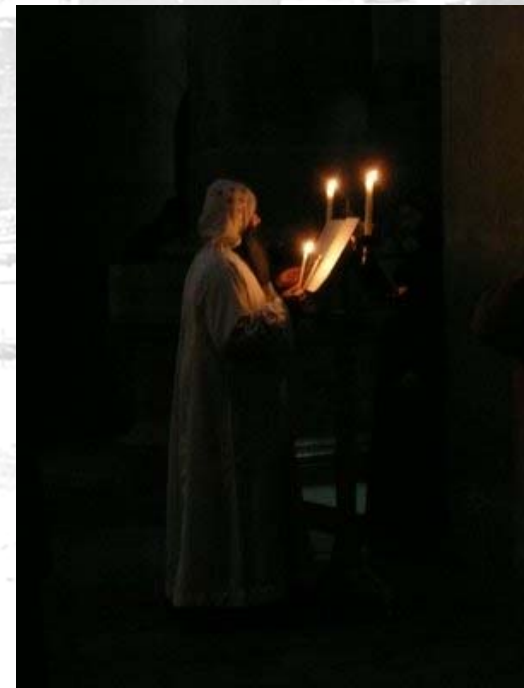
- Symptoms/questions:

- *What is my status as child of God?*
 - *Losing confidence and love*
 - *Fear and anxiety increases, affliction, and dryness increases*



Benefits of Languor

- Strengthening Faith beyond what is tangible
- Man is enjoying life with God, when suddenly...
 - *God cuts off all aid...*
 - *God withholds all care and protection*
 - *Man is vulnerable to all enemies: internal and external*



Beyond Tangibles

- What happened? Why?
 - *Man sits in dust and ashes, trying to make sense of it all: Job*
 - *Try to find hope, a ray of sunshine... nothing!*
 - *Why? Spirituality was built upon false estimation*
 - *on man, not God*
 - *Hardship, grumbling, bewilderment, blasphemy, horror...*
 - *Is God pleased to see us in this state? Being torn apart?*



Beyond Tangibles: Job

- None of the afflictions bothered Job as much as the thought that God has turned against him.

— Job 7:11 *“Therefore I will not restrain my mouth;*

I will speak in the anguish of my spirit;

I will complain in the bitterness of my soul.

¹⁶ I loathe my life; I would not live forever.

Let me alone, For my days are but a breath.

¹⁷ “What is man, that You should exalt him,

That You should set Your heart on him,

¹⁸ That You should visit him every morning,

And test him every moment?

²⁰ Have I sinned? What have I done to You, O watcher of men?

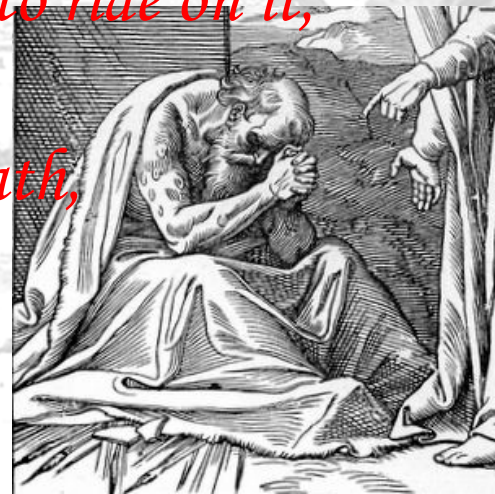
Why have You set me as Your target,

So that I am a burden to myself?



Beyond Tangibles: Job

- *Job 13:21 Withdraw Your hand far from me,
And let not the dread of You make me afraid.
24 Why do You hide Your face,
And regard me as Your enemy?*
- *Job 30:21 But You have become cruel to me;
With the strength of Your hand You oppose me.
22 You lift me up to the wind and cause me to ride on it;
You spoil my success.
23 For I know that You will bring me to death,
And to the house appointed for all living.*



Beyond Tangibles: Job

- Job sincerely describes his feelings
 - *He struggled with God, but never renounced his integrity*
 - *Job 2:9 Then his wife said to him, “Do you still hold fast to your integrity? Curse God and die!”*
 - *10 But he said to her, “You speak as one of the foolish women speaks. Shall we indeed accept good from God, and shall we not accept adversity?”*
 - In all this Job did not sin with his lips.*



Beyond Tangibles: Job

- All those tribulations did not mean that God forsook him
 - *When he mistakenly felt that, he lost his balance in faith*
 - *He fell into despair and asked for death*
 - *Job 6:8 “Oh, that I might have my request,
That God would grant me the thing that I long for!
9 That it would please God to crush me,
That He would loose His hand and cut me off!*
 - *11 “What strength do I have, that I should hope?
And what is my end, that I should prolong my life?*
 - *Job 10:1 “My soul loathes my life;*



Beyond Tangibles: Job

- Despite all the torment, Job never ceased looking up towards God
 - *Until the vision of God became clearer...*
 - *Job 19:25 For I know that my Redeemer lives,
And He shall stand at last on the earth;
26 And after my skin is destroyed, this I know,
That in my flesh I shall see God,
27 Whom I shall see for myself,
And my eyes shall behold, and not another.
How my heart yearns within me!*
 - *Job 23:10 But He knows the way that I take;
When He has tested me, I shall come forth as gold.*

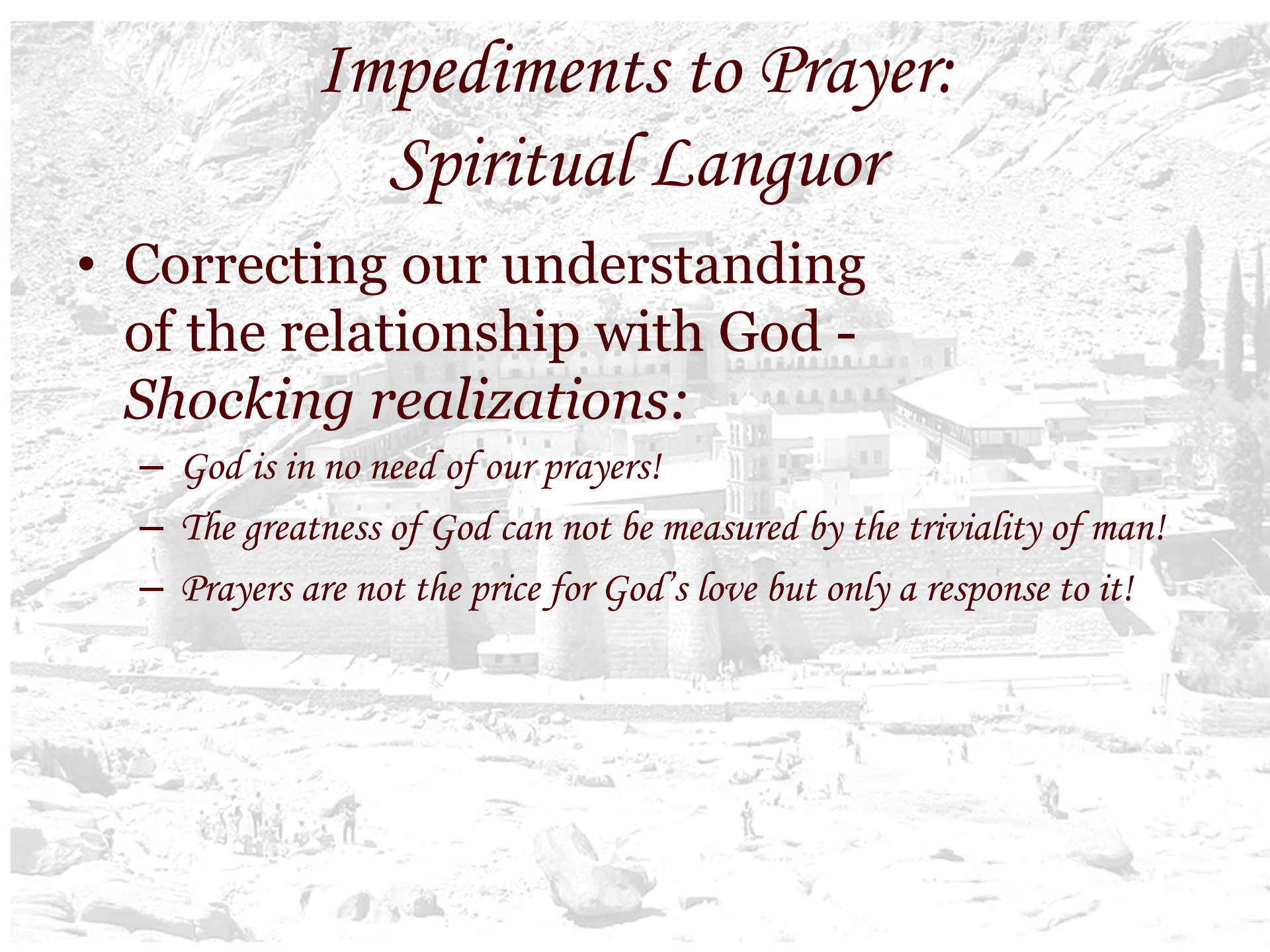


Beyond Tangibles: Job

- No matter how bitter the experience is, every Christ-loving soul knows its final share in Him
- It crawls forward, injured and trodden, but looking towards Him
- It crawls until it reaches Him.
 - *Injured solidier*
- “Trust may fade from view but is never lost. Faith may sometimes come to a halt, but never comes to an end. Feelings of love may sink out of sight, yet they are still preserved in the depth of the soul to spring forth at the end of the trial with an invincible power.” (Fr. Matthew the Poor)

Impediments to Prayer: Spiritual Languor

- *Languor: Affects the will to pray*
- *Symptoms:*
 - *no words come out, no power in prayer*
 - *no understanding nor will to comprehend*
 - *unable and unwilling to pray*
- *Purpose:*
 - *Discipline : pride/ambition, soaring and falling*
 - *Spiritual Life Insurance*
- *Benefits:*
 - *It strips the soul completely of all ambition*
 - *Better guarantee for salvation*

The background of the slide is a faded, sepia-toned photograph of a desert landscape. In the foreground, there is a rocky, arid plain with some sparse vegetation. In the middle ground, a large, walled city or fortress is visible, featuring a prominent tower and a river flowing through it. The city is surrounded by steep, rocky hills. The overall tone is historical and somewhat somber, fitting the theme of the text.

Impediments to Prayer: Spiritual Languor

- Correcting our understanding of the relationship with God -
Shocking realizations:
 - *God is in no need of our prayers!*
 - *The greatness of God can not be measured by the triviality of man!*
 - *Prayers are not the price for God's love but only a response to it!*

The background of the slide is a faded, sepia-toned photograph of a desert landscape. In the foreground, there are rocky, uneven terrain with some sparse vegetation. In the middle ground, a small town or village is visible, featuring several buildings, including a prominent church with a tall steeple. The town is nestled at the base of a range of rugged, rocky mountains that fill the background. The overall atmosphere is one of isolation and hardship, which thematically links to the biblical story of Job.

Impediments to Prayer: Spiritual Languor

- **Strengthening Faith Beyond Tangibles - Job**
 - *None of the afflictions bothered him as much as the thought that God has turned against him.*
 - *Job sincerely describes his feelings*
 - *He struggled with God, but never renounced his integrity*
 - *When he mistakenly felt that, he lost his balance in faith*
 - *He fell into despair and asked for death*
 - *Despite all the torment, Job never ceased looking up towards God*
 - *Until the vision of God became clearer...*