

Second Week of Lent
Sunday, February 21, 2016

All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the servant of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.
II Timothy 3:16-17

All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable (cf. *II Timothy 3:16*), and no one can thwart someone who wishes to be saved. Only God who made us has power over us, and He is ready to help and protect from every temptation those who cry out to Him and want to do His holy will. Without Him we can do nothing (cf. *John 15:5*): we cannot even suffer evil against our will unless God permits it in order to chastise us and save our souls. But the evil that we commit ourselves is our own responsibility and arises from our own laziness with the help of the demons. On the other hand, all knowledge, strength and virtue are the grace of God, as are all other things. And through grace He has given all men the power to become sons of God (cf. *John 1:12*) by keeping the divine commandments. Or, rather, these commandments keep us, and are the grace of God, since without His grace we cannot keep them. We have nothing to offer Him except our faith, our resolution and, in brief, all the true dogmas that we hold with firm faith through the teaching we have heard (cf. *Romans 10:17*). With all this in mind, let us set to work undistractedly, as though beginning lessons at school, and in this way carefully learn about the seven forms of discipline to which we have referred.

Saint Peter of Damascus (c.12th Century)
The Philokalia

The seven forms of discipline that Peter of Damascus talks about are 1) stillness, 2) fasting, 3) vigils, 4) praying the psalms, 5) spiritual prayer, 6) devotional reading, and 7) spiritual conversations. These disciplines help the disciple to focus on a life of prayer through humility and learning. Peter stresses that God will show us our weaknesses as we practice his seven disciplines. He also encourages us to build upon each of the disciplines like one walking up a ladder. It would be detrimental for us to skip a discipline thinking we do not need it in our lives.

The *Philokalia* is a collection of Greek Orthodox writings on the spiritual life written between the 4th and 15th Centuries. It was first published in 1782 in Slavonic and then into Russian. It was translated into English in 1984 into four volumes. The writings of Peter of Damascus are found in volume three.