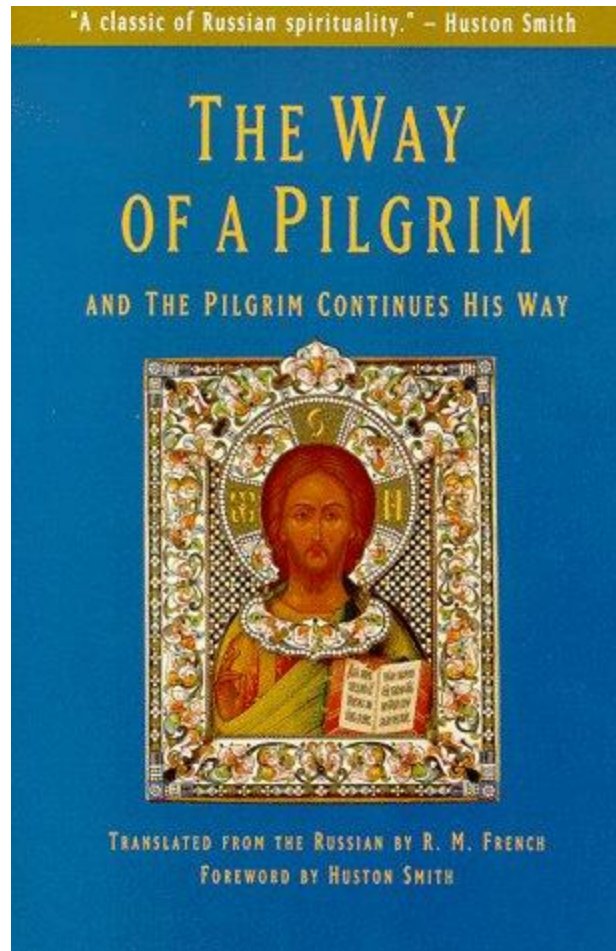


The Way of a Pilgrim and the Pilgrim Continues His Way by Anonymous



[Beautifully Summarizes The Whole Of Christian Theology As A Constant Yearning Towards God](#)

A portrait of the traditions and interior life of Russian Orthodox spirituality.

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In his first letter to the Thessalonians, Paul writes Pray without ceasing, (1 Thes 5:17) and in his letter to the Ephesians, he writes Pray at all times in the Spirit. (Eph 6:18) What does it mean to pray at all times without ceasing? Can it be done? These are the questions asked by the pilgrim, the main character of The Way of the Pilgrim and The Pilgrim Continues his Way, two books written in the late nineteenth century by an anonymous

Russian Christian. The pilgrim character tells of his journeys through Russia as he seeks to learn to pray unceasingly.

Through the telling of his tale, the pilgrim shares much about prayer. The focus of prayer is The Jesus Prayer, and the goal for the pilgrim is to continually pray this prayer from his heart. The writer introduces lessons on prayer and the Christian life through other characters such as priests, wise teachers called starets and other Christian travelers who share their stories of faith. The pilgrim carries two books with him that are his sole possessions on the earth and his treasures. These are The Bible and a book of Eastern Church Fathers called The Philokalia. The narrator references both books to provide lessons on prayer.

His journey reveals what he learns about prayer. Through the book, the narrator reveals several lessons about prayer for reflection and practice. The main theme is ceaseless prayer.

An older teacher shares with the pilgrim that, as Paul writes to the Romans, we know not what we should pray for as we ought. (Rom 8:26) The teacher advises that the perfection of prayer is not within our power, but we can pray often and always. The teacher then shares The Jesus Prayer with the pilgrim,

The continuous interior prayer of Jesus is a constant uninterrupted calling upon the name of Jesus with the lips, in the spirit, in the heart, while forming a mental picture of His constant presence, and the imploring of His grace, during every occupation, at all times, in all places, even during sleep. The appeal is couched in these terms, `Lord Jesus Christ, have mercy on me. (Pilgrim 9)

The pilgrim begins by practicing saying the above prayer thousands of times a day. With much effort and by the rejection of other thoughts and doubts, he develops the habit of saying it continually. He first says it with his lips and mind. Later in the book a teacher shares with him the expanded form of the Jesus Prayer, Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on me, a sinner.(Pilgrim 135) His teacher explains that in this form of the prayer, the entire Gospel and way to salvation is represented.

Through his interactions with others and his reading, the pilgrim continues to learn about The Jesus Prayer and its effects. He shares the following,

What the Gospel is, that the prayer of Jesus is also, for the Divine Name of Jesus Christ holds in itself the whole gospel truth. The holy Fathers say that the prayer of Jesus is a summary of the Gospels.(Pilgrim 27)

This explains why the prayer so effective for those who pray it in combating their spiritual enemies and producing the fruits of the Spirit in their heart.

The author emphasizes that God's grace drives prayer and rewards prayer. He urges those he speaks with to make attempts at prayer and ask God to help them. He does not belittle even the feeblest attempts at prayer. For the author, every intention of ours and every movement of ours toward God are valuable to God. He summarizes his thoughts,

The love of God gives grace a thousand fold more than human actions deserve. If you give Him the merest mite, He will pay you back with gold. If you but purpose to go to the Father, He will come out to meet you. You say but a word, short and unfeeling--`Receive me, have mercy on me--and He falls on your neck and kisses you. That is what the love of the heavenly Father is like toward us, unworthy as we are. (Pilgrim 117)

This is an important spiritual value for the pilgrim that he tries to practice and teach. God gives us grace to come to Him, and when we come, he pours out more grace upon us.

The Way of the Pilgrim and The Pilgrim Continues His Way summarize the Bible's lesson on prayer. The author illustrates that prayer leads us to Christ and the Father and is itself inspired and initiated by the Holy Spirit within us. The author has included many scriptures about prayer. He shows systematically how the New Testament encourages prayer. He offers a lesson on how prayer empowers us to do good works, so that the term, Pray and do and think what you will is reasonable and sensible for the Christian who prays sincerely.

The book offers a way of life that is hidden in Christ through a continual praying from the heart to Christ. The author shows how it is possible and beneficial to pray continually as prescribed by Scripture.

Shakespeare On Spirituality: Life-Changing Wisdom from Shakespeares Plays

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