

## **St. Ephrem the Syrian – Spiritual Psalter 41.**

Woe is me, to what judgment will I be subject, and of what disgrace am I worthy! My inner self is not like my outward appearance: I talk about how to free oneself from the passions, but day and night I myself think about disgraceful passions. I conduct discussions about purity, but myself, I indulge in indecent behavior.

Alas! What trials await me? The truth is that I bear the image of righteousness, but lack its capacity. What face shall I who am guilty of such indecency wear when I approach the Lord God who knows the secrets of my heart? When I stand in prayer, I am afraid of the fire that will descend from heaven and burn me up, as it happened in the desert that there came out a fire from the Lord that consumed the men who offered strange incense.

What can I expect, I who am weighted down with such a heavy burden of sins? My heart is consumed with fire, my mind is clouded, and righteous thoughts have failed in me: like a dog do I ever return to my own vomit.

I have no boldness before Him Who will try my heart and inner workings. I have no clean thoughts, no tears while praying. Although I sigh and fall prostrate on my shame-filled face and beat my chest - this is a dwelling place of passions, a sweatshop of evil thoughts.

You know, O Lord, my passions hidden in darkness; the sores of my soul are known to You. Heal me, O Lord, and I will be healed. If You will not build the house of my soul, I labour in vain trying to build it myself.

It is true that sometimes I prepare myself to do battle with the passions when they war against me; but the evil wiles of the serpent paralyze the efforts of my soul with sensuality and I yield to them. Though no one visibly ties my hands, the invisible passions drag me away like a captive.

O Lord, enlighten the eyes of my heart, that I might rightly recognize the deceit and the malice of the passions. May Your grace shield me, that I might be able to stand firm and resist, having girded my loins with courage.

Once You, O Lord, did provide safe passage through the impassable sea for Your people. You gave Your people who thirsted water out of a hard rock. You alone, according to Your grace, did save the one who fell in with thieves. Have mercy upon me as well, for I have also fallen into the hands of thieves and, like a captive, I am bound by wicked thoughts.

No one is strong enough to heal the passionate temperament of my soul except You, O Lord, Who knows the depths of my soul. Condescend and save me by Your kindness!