

CONCERNING CHRISTIAN CONDUCT

—by Saint Epiphanius, bishop of Cyprus—

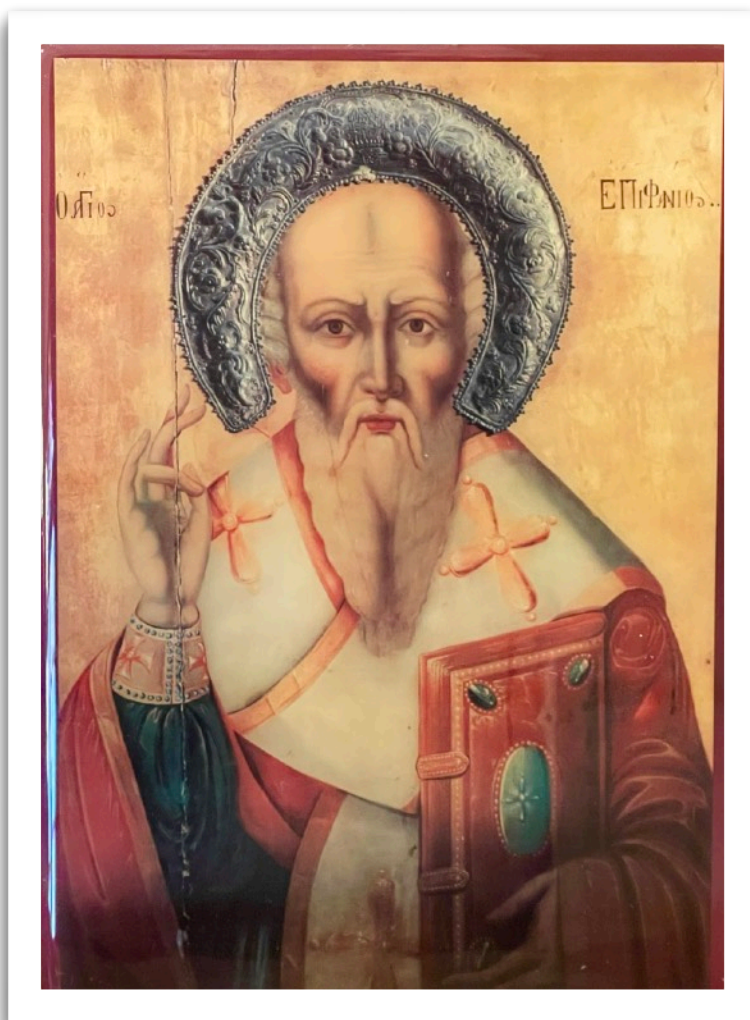
Whoever wants to live faithfully in Christ Jesus should, with God's help, preserve in serenity and *ascesis*. Guard yourself from speaking excessively, because by talking excessively you will not be able to avoid sinning. If you have something to say, speak to your fellow man prudently; otherwise, may your hand cover your mouth. Neither speak ill of anyone, nor tolerate anyone who speaks ill of others; rather, disapprove of such a thing if it takes place.

What you hate, do not do to another person; and what you would like others to do to you, do the same to them. Sever from yourself inappropriate and untimely laughter. Make every effort to never sadden anyone. Never repay evil with evil, but conquer evil with good. Always be prepared to obediently carry out all things that are done in accordance to God's will. With all your might, make an effort to not do anything with the aim of impressing people, lest you are harmed. Rather, carry out everything you do as if God is watching you, and you will never sin.

Incline neither to the right nor to the left, but remain on the straight path. In every situation, examine your thoughts to determine if they are according to God. If you are not able to do so, then ask someone who is capable of discerning correctly. If an indecent or impious image arises within your mind, immediately think of the future day of judgment, and the image will disappear. Do not desire to sleep excessively. Keep watch over yourself even as you work throughout the day. Pull your mind away from harmful thoughts and ceaselessly pray to God, thanking Him for delivering you from the devil's bondage and deeming you worthy of carrying out the work of the angels.

Never ridicule your brother—not even within your heart; rather, consider yourself to be the least of all. Do not occupy yourself with things that are of no concern to you. When you fall into various sorrows, patiently endure them on account of the future rewards that lie in store. Let your yes be yes, and your no be no, and do not swear at all. Struggle unto death on behalf of the truth. Keep the Orthodox faith of the Holy Trinity with good hope. When you have carried out all these things, be careful lest your heart feels proud; rather, consider yourself to be a useless slave, and say, “I only did what I was obligated to do.”

My brothers, let us humble ourselves. For humility is the source and the basis of all other virtues. It is a pillar that supports everything else. Humility is the crown of the humble, of the poor, and of all Christians. Humility is a fortified wall that never collapses. Humility is the wealth and boast of all people. A humble monk becomes worthy of eternal life; conversely, the prideful monk will not be numbered amongst them who are loved by the Lord. The person who is humble does not become angry, he does not become enraged, he does not become furious, he does not become indignant, he does not seek glory and recognition from people. Rather, he resembles a young child who is void of all wickedness. The humble person does not repay evil with evil. The humble person never falls, because he has built a foundation upon our Lord Jesus Christ. He has built his house upon the rock, that is Christ, and he will become an heir of the Kingdom of Heaven.



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