

BOOK REVIEW



Wounded by Love, The Life and the Wisdom of Elder Porphyrios

Having read many spiritual works by various authors, I have found a profound wisdom in this book which has changed my whole way of thinking and being a Christian. This is quite a statement to apply to any single book outside of Holy Scripture but for me the wisdom of Elder Porphyrios is Christianity uncomplicated, powerful, and from the heart. The first part of this two part book concentrates on the life of Elder Porphyrios and makes for a great read into his background and his accomplishments. However, with limited

space, I will only concentrate on the second part of the book in order to give you some idea of who he was spiritually and what pearls of wisdom he has to offer. Like some of you, my personal experience in struggling to live a virtuous Christian life, was one of obeying a system of rules. I was never warned that God wishes that all should be done for love of Him alone...at least not in the way Elder Porphyrios explains it. I say "warned" because, in so many words, he reminds us that God does not accept anything from us unless it is given with love (from the heart). I was certainly taught to have a healthy fear of God and to obey the commandments and Church rules *for my own good*. For many years, I lived my life thinking in this way. I thought I was being a good Christian but I wasn't really progressing in love or in relationship with God. Elder Porphyrios advises, *"Often neither labour, nor prostrations, nor crossing ourselves attract God's grace... The most important thing is to go beyond the formal aspects and go to the heart of the matter. Whatever is done must be done with love. Love always understands the need to make sacrifices. Whatever is done under coercion always causes the soul to react with rejection. Love attracts the grace of God...with Christ a person is filled with grace and so lives above evil. There is only good, which is God. Evil cannot exist."* Feeling that "dry" feeling during prayer or an absence of the presence of God were experiences I had always read were just part of the spiritual struggle. Elder Porphyrios continues, *"The essence of the matter is ...for our soul to wake up and love Christ and become holy."* Such an approach to Christianity does not allow, *ever*, for us to feel empty or dry. In fact, since I have taken his advice, I have experienced nothing but peace, joy, anticipation, and satisfaction in prayer, and in the Church services (yes, all three-plus hours beginning from Orthros all the way through the end of the Memorial Service) on Sunday morning! No hunger, no headache, no impatience to leave. Remember, though, one must live daily with love for God in prayer and fasting without any effort...rather, with longing for God. This prepares you for Holy Communion and keeps you in the love of God. You can't just walk in Sunday morning and expect to jump joyfully into the Liturgy. If you're stuck in a spiritual "rut", you cannot take this one piece of wisdom I have just passed on to you and build on it alone. You should read this book for yourself and apply all of Elder's advice together. There is so much more wisdom in this book that space will not allow me here to tell you, but I will give you a bit more before I end. (On Dispositions of the Heart) *"Man has such powers that he can transmit good or evil to his environment. We need to have goodness and love in our soul and transmit these things."* This is an incredible spiritual power that we all possess...let us be careful how we use it.

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