

A précis of St Ephraim's tenth reflection from *A Spiritual Psalter, or Reflections on God*: "I cannot manage my own self; grant me the spirit of repentance"

I have neglected my soul. Thy grace has lifted up my head, but daily it is brought low by my sins. Bad habits entangle me; I sink to the very depths of evil, and this delights me. Daily the enemy gives me new shackles, for he sees how this variety of bonds pleases me.

I appear to be robed in the beautiful clothes of reverence, but my soul is entangled with shameful thoughts. I deceive myself with this vain promise until my death. I say, "I will repent," but never do. My words give the appearance of repentance, but in deed I am always far from repentance.

My own desires should provoke weeping and lamentation, shame and disgrace. Who will give the water for tears, so that I may ever weep before Thee, O merciful God, that Thou might send Thy grace?

My conscience accuses me of all this. Every day I worry and sigh over this, yet I remain bound by the same snares.

How pitiful is my daily repentance; it has no firm foundation. Every day I lay a foundation and again with my own hands I demolish it. Certainly I shall be sentenced to torment, if here I have not moved Thee to mercy, O my Judge, by my tears.

I hope on Thy mercies, O Lord; I fall at Thy feet and beseech Thee: Grant me the spirit of repentance and lead my soul out of the dungeon of iniquity! May a ray of light shine in my mind before I go to the terrible judgement which awaits me, where there is no opportunity to repent of one's wicked deeds.