

**Saint Benedict's Rule for Monasteries**  
**The Prologue**

**1**

Son, listen to the instructions of a master. Bend the ear of your heart to receive gladly the advice of a kind father, and fulfil it in practice.

**2**

In this way, by the labour of obedience, you will return to him from whom you have withdrawn by the slackness of disobedience.

**3**

Now my discourse is directed to you, whoever you are, who renounce the movements of self-will and, being ready to fight for the Lord Christ, the true King, take up the strong and distinguished weapons of obedience.

**4**

First, whenever you begin to do some good deed, ask [Christ] with most insistent prayer that he bring it to completion.

**5**

In this way, [Christ] who has been pleased to count us in the number of his sons will not ever be grieved by our evil deeds.

**6**

Thus we must obey him at all times through his good things in us, so that he will not, in time, disinherit us as an angry father [disinherits] his sons.

**7**

Also he will not, as a fearsome Lord, angry because of our evils deeds, hand us over to perpetual punishment like the most wicked of slaves who were not willing to follow him to glory.

**8**

Now, therefore, let us finally arise. Scripture stirs us up saying, "Now is the hour to rise from sleep".

**9**

And with eyes wide open to the divinising light, and with astonished ears, let us hear God's voice crying out to us every day and admonishing us.

**10**

"Today if you hear his voice harden not your hearts."

**11**

And again, "Let the one who has ears for hearing, hear what the Spirit says to the churches".

**12**

And what does [the Spirit] say? "Come, children, listen to me; I will teach you fear of the Lord.

**13**

"Run while you have the light of life, lest the darkness of death envelop you."

**14**

And the Lord, seeking his workman in the midst of a multitude of people, cries out to him and says:

**15**

"Who is the person who wants life and desires to see good days?"

**16**

If hearing this, you respond, "I do", the Lord says this to you.

**17**

"If you want to have true and perpetual life, forbid your tongue from evil and your lips lest they speak deceit. Turn away from evil and do good. Seek peace and pursue it."

**18**

And when you have done this, my eyes will be upon you and my ears [will be attentive] to your prayers. Before you call upon me I shall say to you, "Here I am".

**19**

What is sweeter for us, dearest brothers, than this voice of the Lord inviting us?

**20**

Behold, by his kindness the Lord shows us the road of life.

**21**

Therefore, with our loins girded with faith and the observance of good deeds, let us set out on his journey with the guidance of the Gospel, so that we may be worthy to see the one who has called us into his kingdom.

**22**

We cannot arrive at this kingdom in which we want to dwell, except by running there by means of good deeds.

**23**

Let us, however, ask the Lord with the prophet, and say to him: "Lord who will dwell in your tent? Who will find rest on your holy mountain?"

**24**

After this question, brothers, let us listen to the Lord answering, showing us the road to his tent.

**25**

He says: "The one who enters without stain and practises righteousness."

**26**

"The one who speaks truth in the heart and does not commit deceit with the tongue."

**27**

"The one who does no evil to a neighbour or brings disgrace upon a neighbour."

**28**

“One who rejects and annihilates the malign devil when he suggests something, [driving him] out of sight of the heart; one who grabs the thoughts born of him and beats them against [the rock that is] Christ.”

**29**

Those who fear the Lord are not elated by their good observance, but consider that the good things in them cannot have come about from themselves but are from the Lord.

**30**

And so they magnify the Lord working in them, saying with the prophet: “Not to us, Lord, not to us, but to your name give the glory.”

**31**

In the same way, Paul the Apostle did not attribute anything of his preaching to himself but said, “It is by God’s grace that I am what I am”.

**32**

And again he says, “Let the one who boasts, boast in the Lord”.

**33**

Whence the Lord says in the Gospel, “The one who hears these my words and does them, I will liken to a wise man who built his house on rock.”

**34**

“The floods came, the winds blew and assailed that house and it did not fall, because its foundations were on rock.”

**35**

Having finished this, the Lord waits for us every day to respond by deeds to his holy admonitions.

**36**

Because of this he has declared a truce during the days of this life to give us the opportunity to amend evils.

**37**

As the Apostle says, “Do you not know that the patience of God is leading you on to repentance?”

**38**

For the kind Lord says, “I do not want the death of sinners but that they may be converted and live”.

**39**

Brothers, since we have asked the Lord about those who dwell in his tent, and we have heard the instructions for dwelling [in that place] we have to do the duty of one who dwells there.

**40**

Therefore our hearts and bodies must be prepared to serve under the instructions of holy obedience.

**41**

For what is less possible for us by nature, let us ask the Lord that he may provide it for us by the help of his grace.

**42**

And if we flee the punishments of hell, because we wish to arrive at unending life,

**43**

then, while there is opportunity and we are in this body, and there is opportunity to complete [these tasks] by this light of life,

**44**

there is a need to run and do now what will profit us in perpetuity.

**45**

Therefore a school of the Lord’s service is to be set up by us.

**46**

In its organisation we hope to put in place nothing that is hard or heavy.

**47**

It may be a little restrictive - as reason and equity dictate - for the purpose of advancing the process of amending vices and maintaining charity.

**48**

Do not run away from this road to salvation, fearful and terrified. At the very beginning it cannot be other than narrow.

**49**

As progress is made in the way of life and in faith, the road of God's commandments will be run with heart enlarged and in the indescribable sweetness of love.

**50**

And so, let us never cease to have him as master, let us persevere in his doctrine in the monastery until death, and let us participate by patience in the sufferings of Christ. In this way will we deserve to be sharers in his kingdom. Amen.