A MAN CALLED GEORGE, a Cappadocian, was passing along the public road, bound with chains about his neck, hands and feet, and in the custody of a strong contingent of the imperial guard and soldiers. He was charged, they said, with making insurrection against the Emperor Phocas. This man eagerly desired to go up to the Saint [*Theodore of Sykeon*] and be deemed worthy of his prayers, and as his guard had the same wish, they ascended to the monastery with him, and after praying in the oratories of the saints, they also went to the cell in which the Saint was. After doing reverence to him they received his blessing. The guards besought him to advise the captive to behave himself reasonably on the journey and not to harbour any evil designs against himself or against one of them, so that they themselves might not run the risk of punishment at the Emperor's hands. And this the Saint did, admonishing the prisoner from the Holy Scriptures, saying, 'Things here are temporal, son, but things there are eternal; and it is good that one who has suffered violence from another should die like just Abel, and God's blameless servant Zacharias, and the holy John the Baptist, and Christ's holy apostles and martyrs, rather than meditate injury to himself and become subject to eternal condemnation. For think of this, son; if you undergo death either for the crime of which you are now accused or for any other reason, accept it willingly as thereby taking your punishment in this world and going away guiltless to the next life. But if you are innocent of any crime and are to suffer death unjustly here, you will receive a crown from God like His saints who were violently put to death.' With these and many other words from the sacred Scriptures the man's despair was cured and he then asked to be allowed to partake of the Holy Mysteries. The Saint said to the soldiers who held him, 'Show honour, my sons, to our Master's Holy Mystery, and loose this man from his chains until he has partaken; for it is not right that a faithful man should be in bonds to receive the Christ Who suffered for us and loosed us from the bonds of Hades.' But they said he must excuse them, as they did not dare to do it because the man was brave, and if perchance he were to commit any folly, they would no longer be able to restrain him. The inspired man [*St. Theodore*] then took the holy cup of the Communion to give to him and looking up to heaven groaned, whereupon the captive's fetters were immediately loosed and the chains which bound him fell to the ground with a clatter. The guards were alarmed and ran to the doors and bolted them to prevent his running out and escaping from them, but the Saint said to them, 'Do not be afraid of him at all, for I know the man's mind and he will not commit any folly.' After administering the Holy Mysteries to him he arranged for him to have a meal together with his guards; after that his chains were put on again and they went their way.

Three Byzantine Saints, tr. Dawes & Baynes,
Life of St. Theodore of Sykeon, Oxford, 1948, pp. 171–72

PEARLS FROM THE HOLY FATHERS

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