

SERMON ON THE APOSTOLIC READING FOR THE SECOND SUNDAY OF LUKE

29/9/2019

(2 Corinthians 4: 6-15)

In today's passage from St. Paul's Second Letter to the Corinthians, the Holy Apostle reveals to us in an exemplary way (including from his own life) how beneficial the power of God Almighty is. *"For it is God who commanded light to shine out of darkness, who has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ"* (verse 6). It is here that the Great Apostle relates two events:

First, the Creation of the World by God the Father through the Son and Word of God. As described in Genesis, all of creation began in dense darkness; and "God said let there be light, and there was light" (Genesis 1:3). As God's Word illuminated the world through natural light, so it is with the spiritual light that shines in our hearts and enlightens us to know the Divine Glory through the face of Christ. This is exactly what St. John the Evangelist speaks of at the beginning of his Gospel: The Word - Jesus Christ - was the true light, which gives light to every one coming into the world (see John 1:9).

St. Paul also had a personal experience of this light, when Jesus Christ appeared to him before Damascus after His Ascension. He shone with a powerful light that penetrated the deepest part of St. Paul's soul, changing him from a fanatical apostate persecutor of Christ into a supreme Apostle! The Light of Christ illuminated not only St. Paul, but also anyone who opens their eyes to His divine light, allowing it to lead the way. It is such a joy and blessing for each of us to feel in our hearts and minds this light of Christ, desiring to act as people of light (see Ephesians 5:8). The Holy Apostle, overwhelmed by this great honor that God has given to man by this light, writes in a great spirit of humility: *But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellence of the power may be of God and not of us* (verse 7). In other words, we are fragile, imperfect vessels with a great gift. This gift was given by God, and we cannot claim any credit for it.

To encourage the Corinthians, St. Paul cites examples from his life, as well as his associates in demonstrating this power of God. Everywhere they go they are persecuted. They do not allow this to sadden or distress them, but instead look beyond the hardships. They know that no matter what the situation, God will not abandon them. They suffer constantly and face the risk of death, just as Jesus did before he was ultimately crucified. Their escape from these dangers, are evidence that Jesus is still with us, and in His power protects us. It may seem that we are beaten down and defeated, but like the wrestler, we get up and continue the fight. Victory is within our grasp, as we will always have what we need for our salvation. Remember the martyrdom and difficulties the Apostle of Christ suffered in various places, as he preached the Gospel (see 2 Corinthians 11:23-28). If Almighty God did not protect him, how could he survive the severe whippings, which he received five times (with 39 lashes each time)? Or how could he get up after being stoned in Lystra, to the point where he was left for dead? And St. Paul adds: We are always ready to die for Christ, and despite so many dangers, to make it clear that the power of Jesus is preventing our death (see verse 11).

My brothers and sisters, we are very fortunate to receive such encouragement from the Holy Apostle today! We may not have suffered the same way he did, but sorrow, slander, injustice, contempt, danger, and much more follow us in our own lives every day. May we be strengthened by St. Paul's unwavering faith, that Christ will never abandon us in our daily struggles. As the Almighty, He has the power to lift our burdens, no matter how heavy they may be. As a Righteous God, He will be with us in any injustice we have to endure. No matter our state, He will find the

best way to protect us. May we patiently never lose heart or hope in our Lord and God. Let us also imitate the shining example of St. Paul. In this way, we too can see miracles in our lives. Amen.