

train of thought which elevates the soul up to heaven. Nothing occurs without God allowing it. But also nothing occurs without reason. And the reason is so that we can preserve our faith in God and increase the precious grace of our salvation.

The gifts in the Apostle sufficed for him to preach, to work miracles, to live revelations of God. So because he had so many gifts, the hardship, the affliction of the body was also given to him so that he could always remember that everything is a gift and grace of God.

The contemporary comforts and the spiritual life of the believer

The contemporary world strives for as many comforts as possible. Of course this depends on the financial and social conditions which prevail. Material comfort makes it easy for man to forget God, to not thank Him, to not glorify Him. The egotism of self sufficiency appears and thus the help of God is cast away. And when the balances change and difficulties and afflictions take their place, then man has a difficulty not only facing them and enduring them, but he also accuses God who allows them. With this behavior, contemporary man loses God from within him without God being to blame for it.

The person of faith accepts both the gifts of God but also the trials, because in both cases his faith in God deepens. It is the experience which Job recorded saying: "Since we accepted the goods which God gave us, how is it possible for us to not forbear the evils also which He allows to us". In both cases God is present, who is also the longed for utterly highest good.

SUNDAY November 3 5th Sunday of Luke *Acepsimas the Bishop, Joseph the Presbyter, & Aeithalas the Deacon, Martyrs of Persia, Dedication of the Temple of the Holy Great Martyr George in Lydda, Holy Father and New Hieromartyr Gregory of Neapolis, Theodore the Confessor, Bishop of Ancyra, George of Neapolis the New Martyr*

Second Tone, Eighth Eothinon, -Epistle St.Paul's 2nd Letter to the Corinthians 11:31-33; 12:1-9, Gospel Luke 16:19-31

NEXT SUNDAY November 10 8th Sunday of Luke, Epistle Galatians 1:11-19 Gospel Luke 10:25-37



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"TRIALS AND REVELATIONS"

All the content of the preaching of the Gospel, all the teaching of the Church, is from the revelation of God. The Apostle Paul writes in his Epistle to the Galatians that the Gospel which he is preaching he did not receive nor was he taught by a man, but Jesus Christ revealed it to him (Gal. 1:12). The messianic prophecies of the prophets of the Old Testament were revelations of God. The Annunciation of the Theotokos is the revelation of the hidden mystery, from the foundation of the world. The same presence of Jesus in the world is "light unto revelation to the gentiles" (Lk. 2:32). The book of the Revelation of the Evangelist John is full of apocalyptic events of the end times, which the Son of God revealed to His beloved disciple.

According to saint Nikodemos the Haghiorite there are two presuppositions upon which the spiritual virtues are supported: the power of God and the good opinion - disposition of man. In other words, our own eagerness and diligence does not suffice alone, but of course the help of God is also needed for those spiritual gifts to be developed within us which

SUNDAY'S EPISTLE St. Paul's Second Letter to the Corinthians 11:31-33; 12:1-9

BRETHREN, the God and Father of the Lord Jesus, he who is blessed for ever, knows that I do not lie. At Damascus, the governor under King Aretas guarded the city of Damascus in order to seize me, but I was let down in a basket through a window in the wall, and escaped his hands.

I must boast; there is nothing to be gained by it, but I will go on to visions and revelations of the Lord. I know a man in Christ who fourteen years ago was caught up to the third heaven-whether in the body or out of the body I do not know, God knows. And I know that this man was caught up into Paradise-whether in the body or out of the body I do not know, God knows-and he heard things that cannot be told, which man may not utter. On behalf of this man I will boast, but on my own behalf I will not boast, except of my weaknesses. Though if I wish to boast, I shall not be a fool, for I shall be speaking the truth. But I refrain from it, so that no one may think more of me than he sees in me or hears from me. And to keep me from being too elated by the abundance of revelations, a thorn was given me in the flesh, a messenger of Satan, to harass me, to keep me from being too elated. Three times I besought the Lord about this, that it should leave me; but he said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness." I will all the more gladly boast of my weaknesses, that the power of Christ may rest upon me.

"He was elevated unto the third heaven and was transported to paradise where he heard words which a human mouth is not able nor allowed to say" (2 Cor. 12:2-4). This supernatural experience, as the godbearing monastic saints of our Church interpret, occurs with the power of the Holy Spirit to whoever has permanently accepted in their heart that divine enlightenment which the god-seers and god-bearers of the Church received Saint (Gregory the Theologian). It is not a spiritual thought and understanding of the mind, it is not an ecstasy of the human intellect. But the mind of the Saint which is cleansed of the passions and flooded by the divine light of the

Comforter is led to the eternal condition of the divine presence and glory which the angels and the Saints of God live. The heart which is aflame with divine eros is full of the shining brightness of the All Holy Spirit, it lives the divine alteration and becomes able to receive divine revelations and mysteries of the Triune God (Saint Symeon Metaphrastes).

The Apostle Paul was led into this spiritual majesty, an event which fills us with spiritual rejoicing, because all the toils here on earth have a high consequence, which even the strongest human fantasy pales before.

Trials a presupposition of divine revelations

However these revelations presuppose great humility because it is very easy for a person to slip into pride and haughtiness. So for this reason the Ap. Paul tells us: "So that I am not prideful on account of the many and great revelations a (thorn in the flesh) was given me, in other words, a trial which causes me great bothersomeness, affliction in my body) in order to slap me, to torture me, so that I not fall into haughtiness and pride." (2 Cor. 12:7-8).

It is a fact that trials cause afflictions. Afflictions, even though they are unpleasant, nevertheless they spiritually benefit the believer, if he knows how to face them with the spirit of God. The crown of holiness is woven from fortitude in afflictions. Because "through many afflictions must we enter into the kingdom of the heavens" (Acts 14:22). Consequently affliction in God is a presupposition for us to taste the many gifts of God. Lack of cares and the comfort of the First-created humans led them to the fall. They lost the gifts of God. Consequently the necessity of afflictions shows in the wakefulness which they cause to man. The afflictions mould the mind and the heart to keep the treasure of faith firmly in them. And in the afflictions the grace of God is multiplied. So for this reason also, the Apostle says that the power of God completes its presence through the patience we show in afflictions (2 Cor. 13:9). And despite the fact that we are unworthy, God grants us to live spiritual conditions which only God's Paradise has. The afflictions cultivate a humble