

The message to us

We today are not granted such tortures for the sake of Christ, probably because we are not ready. However, there always exist events in the life of each person, much more so of every Christian who is fought mainly by the good-hating devil, in which both bitterness and affliction are expected, as also being put down, especially morally, but also the uncertainty about whatever is before us, plagues us and threatens to subject us to despair. Furthermore, the utmost sin is hopelessness, since man is submitted to believe that not even the Almighty God is able henceforth to save him. So for this reason also, the spiritual struggle exists in order to fill man with trust in God the Father's providence.

So if, we struggle correctly and take every circumstance of our life as the Church teaches, as a cause for struggling, as spiritual ascesis which strengthens us in Christ, then we have the conviction prevailing, that we are in the hands of the Almighty God, who will not allow us to enter into a trial greater than we can endure. While if this prevails in our heart as an unshakable and strong assurance, then more so we will rejoice "in the sufferings", as these things will prove the presence of God in our life and the presence of His Grace.

Archim. I. N.

SUNDAY, MAY 17, 2015 SUNDAY OF THE BLIND MAN, *The Holy Apostles Andronicus and Junia, Holy Godbearing Nectarius, the Builder of the Holy Monastery of Varlaam of Meteora, Theodosios the Martyr of Ancyra & the 7 Virgin-martyrs, Athanasios, Archbishop of Christianopolis, The New Martyrs of Batak, Bulgaria.*

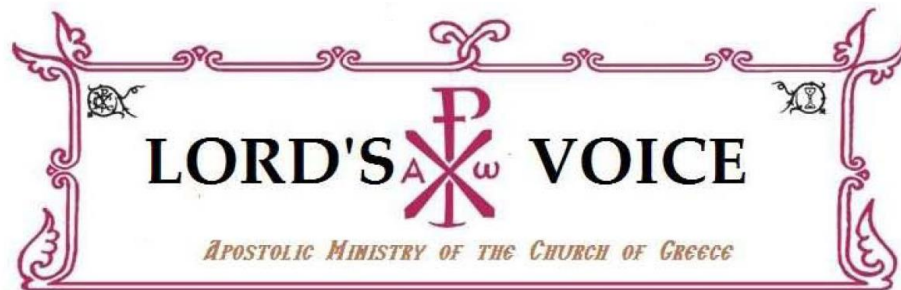
tone of the week: Plagal of the First Tone, Eothinon - Eighth Eothinon, EPISTLE Acts of the Apostles 16:16-34,

GOSPEL John 9:1-38

NEXT SUNDAY, MAY 24, 2015, FATHERS OF THE 1ST COUNCIL, *Symeon the Stylite of the Mountain, Saint Vincent of Lerins, Meletios the Commander & his Companion Martyrs, Gregory, Archbishop of Novgorod*

EPISTLE Acts of the Apostles 20:16-18, 28-36

GOSPEL John 17:1-13



63RD YEAR

MAY 17, 2015

PAMPHLET # 20 (3233)

THE WONDERFUL BEYOND REASONING

Today's Epistle Reading narrates to us the hardships of Paul and Silas in the dreadful prison of Philippi of our Macedonia, but also the wondrous manner of fruit bearing of the divine word. In an unjust and slanderous manner, because an unfortunate being was liberated from the "spirit of python" which plagued her and made her furthermore, an object of lewd abuse from her masters, led to the "internal prison", to the most sunless dungeon, after the lies of those who lost, after Paul's miracle, the source of their unjust enrichment. And not only this, they whipped them previously with the dreadful Roman whips and subsequently, as if they were suspect of escaping or they could move, after so many wounds, they locked their feet in the stocks, the familiar "trunk". They received, in other in other words, all the measures, not in order to secure them, but in order to humiliate them.

Paul and Silas' attitude in prison

How did Paul and Silas react? In a way that causes awe and simultaneously surprise, since their attitude is so sudden and their behavior so unexpected, that it causes admiration and amazement, not only to the people who were in prison, but also throughout time, to the whoever throughout the ages studies this passage. Around midnight, the prison is shaken up from something odd. The area which till then had gotten used to hearing only the grumblings of the torture and the curses of the prisoners, resounds from something unheard of. From hymns to the True God! And who is chanting?

ACTS OF THE APOSTLES 16:16-34

Prokeimenon. Mode Plagal 1.

Psalm 11.7,1

You, O Lord, shall keep us and preserve us.

Verse: Save me, O Lord, for the godly man has failed.

IN THOSE DAYS, as we apostles were going to the place of prayer, we were met by a slave girl who had a spirit of divination and brought her owners much gain by soothsaying. She followed Paul and us, crying, "These men are servants of the Most High God, who proclaim to you the way of salvation." And this she did for many days. But Paul was annoyed, and turned and said to the spirit, "I charge you in the name of Jesus Christ to come out of her." And it came out that very hour. But when her owners saw that their hope of gain was gone, they seized Paul and Silas and dragged them into the market place before the rulers; and when they had brought them to the magistrates they said, "These men are Jews and they are disturbing our city. They advocate customs which it is not lawful for us Romans to accept or practice." The crowd joined in attacking them; and the magistrates tore the garments off them and gave orders to beat them with rods. And when they had inflicted many blows upon them, they threw them into prison, charging the jailer to keep them safely. Having received this charge, he put them into the inner prison and fastened their feet in the stocks. But about midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns to God, and the prisoners were listening to them, and suddenly there was a great earthquake, so that the foundations of the prison were shaken; and immediately all the doors were opened and every one's fetters were unfastened. When the jailer woke and saw that the prison doors were open, he drew his sword and was about to kill himself, supposing that the prisoners had escaped. But Paul cried with a loud voice, "Do not harm yourself, for we are all here." And he called for lights and rushed in, and trembling with fear he fell down before Paul and Silas, and brought them out and said, "Men, what must I do to be saved?" And they said, "Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved, you and your household." And they spoke the word of the Lord to him and to all that were in his house. And he took them the

same hour of the night, and washed their wounds, and he was baptized at once, with all his family. Then he brought them up into his house, and set food before them; and he rejoiced with all his household that he had believed in God.

Those previously whipped, assaulted and imprisoned, who normally ought to have been exhausted and to be seeking in sleep some small comfort for their sufferings! The sacred Chrysostom admires and glorifies: "They were whipped and received many wounds, they were cursed, they almost died, in the stocks they were locked in place, imprisoned in the worst prison, and nevertheless they aren't reconciled either by sleeping a bit, but they were keeping vigil praying! (...) The need for sleep didn't overcome them, nor did the pains make them yield, but neither the fear also, about what would happen to them at dawn couldn't put them into agony. It was all these things which held them more in wakefulness and filled them with vast joy!"

Why joy? Because the Lord's presence was felt, as at other times with Joseph in the prison of the Egyptians, or with Daniel in the lion's den, with the Holy Three Children in the furnace of the Babylonians! So for this reason, they also were calm, peaceful and joyous so as to reach even the point of chanting! It wasn't either the time, or the place for prayer, as it was past midnight in the prison of Phiippi. And nevertheless, the person of God "at every time and at every hour in heaven and upon earth" unrelated to the circumstances and happenstances of life, hymns and glorifies the Lord, because He is the source and cause of his being, his support in the afflictions, his consolation and his justification!

What resonance does the attitude of the Apostles have on the others? "And the prisoners were listening to them," the sacred text will tell us. In other words, they are stunned and respect. They don't shout to the Apostles to stop and to let them sleep, but silent and wakeful, they listen to the words of the hymns and observe the manner how the heart of these strange fellow prisoners of theirs is chanting. When something is from God, even the harshest heart is drawn, recognizing God the Father.