

We grasp a relationship among brothers! Of course there is a hierarchy in the relationship, just as we could consider Abraham as the older, respected brother and Eliezer as the obedient, younger brother. In any case, the relationship is deeply family-like! And this relationship is characterized by the Old Testament, a relationship of "slavery". And he calls us also to such a relationship towards God! An unbreakable relationship, a relationship of faith, a relationship of dependence due to mutual love.

When the Apostle Paul calls us to 'slavery to God's righteousness', when our Church calls us to boast as "slaves of Christ", they are not doing anything other than indicating the special, unique relationship which each Christian has with God his Father. The relationship is family-like, loving, of mutual trust, so for this reason also, effective. To the freedom of the family of Christ, being honored members, we are called to justify this family relationship responding to the divine will with the manner of our life, so that the title "man of God" justly characterizes us!

Archimandrite I. N

SUNDAY, JUNE 28, 2015 4TH SUNDAY OF MATTHEW, *Finding of the Relics of Cyrus and John the Unmercenarys, Pappias the Martyr, Righteous Fathers Sergius and Herman, Founders of Valaam Monastery*

tone of the week: Tone Third, **Eothinon** Fourth *Eothinon*

EPISTLE St. Paul's Letter to the Romans 6:18-23

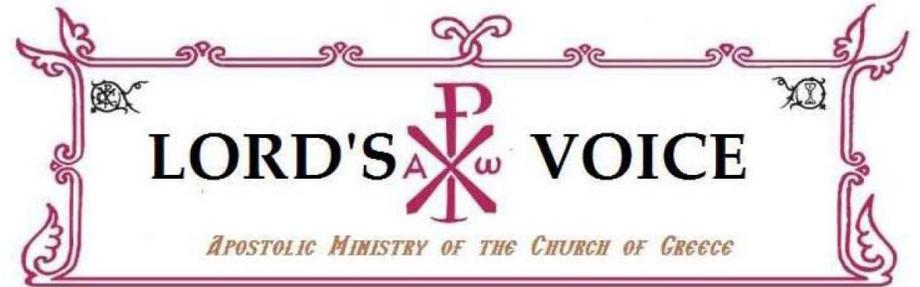
GOSPEL Matthew 8:5-13

NEXT SUNDAY, SUNDAY, JULY 5, 2015, 5TH SUNDAY OF MATTHEW,

Athanasius of Mount Athos, Righteous Father Lampadus the Wonderworker, Kyprianos the New Martyr of Koutloumousiou Monastery, Uncovering of the Holy Relics of Our Righteous Father Sergius of Radonezh, Holy New Martyrs Elizabeth the Grand Duchess and the Novice Barbara.

EPISTLE St. Paul's Letter to the Galatians 5:22-26; 6:1-2

GOSPEL Matthew 8:28-34; 9:1



63RD YEAR

JUNE 28, 2015

PAMPHLET # 26 (3239)

FREEDOM IN CHRIST

The Apostle Paul juxtaposes the meanings of freedom and slavery in today's Epistle Reading. And he does it not bringing forth a moralistic or theoretical word, but a true and human word. Having previously referred to the condition of sin, which is slavery for man, but also to the deliverance from this slavery, as the Christian preaching secures, he comes anthropomorphically to call people to "be enslaved" to this and to live God's righteousness.

"Slavery" to God

Why does the Apostle Paul speak of God's righteousness? Not in order to imply that it is oppressive or annihilating for man. And how could he imply it, when previously in the same epistle he had written so many things about Divine Love? He speaks of slavery to God's righteousness meaning the disposition man should have towards it. His contemporaries being previously sunk in the darkness of sin, before hearing and believing in the human race's deliverance by the Only Begotten Son and Word of God, had experience of the vice of sin which crushes the human soul, leading it to beastliness and despair. So the Apostle calls them, reminding of the hardships of spiritual slavery so that they don't

ST. PAUL'S LETTER TO THE ROMANS 6:18-36

Prokeimenon. Mode 3.

Psalm 46.6,1

Sing praises to our God, sing praises.

Verse: Clap your hands, all you nations..

BRETHREN, having been set free from sin, you have become slaves of righteousness. I am speaking in human terms, because of your natural limitations. For just as you once yielded your members to impurity and to greater and greater iniquity, so now yield your members to righteousness for sanctification. When you were slaves of sin, you were free in regard to righteousness. But then what return did you get from the things of which you are now ashamed? The end of those things is death. But now that you have been set free from sin and have become slaves of God, the return you get is sanctification and its end, eternal life. For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.

escape from the freedom of Faith, but for them to claim and remain firmly attached to it, in a way that they might not be able to escape, just as the slave can't escape from his condition. In other words, he calls them, and along with them all Christians throughout time, to undertake their duties before the liberator of their soul, Jesus, and to remain faithful to Him!

One of the misunderstood phrases of the Christians is their self definition as "slaves of Christ". This phrase has its roots, among other things also, in today's Epistle Reading. So it is worth it, for us to see what we mean with this phrase, clarifying more the meaning of Divine slavery about which the Apostle Paul is speaking. So that we don't speak theoretically, it is worth it for us to take refuge in an example from the Old Testament, which

interprets, in the best possible manner, the content of the characterization of the person of God, as His slave.

The example of Eliezer

The leader of the race of Jews, Abraham, after the death of his wife Sarra, is interested in the marriage of his son Isaac. And what parent isn't interested in this important matter of his child's life! And what parent doesn't prepare this matter in the best possible manner? And what parent doesn't show the greatest possible diligence! And Abraham, in the book of Genesis, in the 25th chapter, tells us, exhausting all his concern for the matter of Isaac's settling, entrusted the matter to..his slave Eliezer. He entrusted his slave to settle his child! It is the first indication of how the man of God perceives slavery.

How does Eliezer behave? In a strange way for a slave, as we perceive the slave in our own secularized logic. Abraham gives him camels, gives him gold, gives him complete freedom of actions, he sends him to a far away place without examining him, making known to him only his verbal desire for the matter of his son's marriage. And Eliezer, instead of considering it a unique opportunity to escape from the slavery, taking advantage of the means themselves which Abraham put at his disposal, on the contrary, brings to fruition the mission which was entrusted to him, with prayer, the fear of God and with such a feeling of responsibility as if Isaac were his own child! And he returns extremely joyous, bringing the best bride which he could have found, and giving a complete report to Abraham about all that took place. Abraham entrusts Eliezer and Eliezer responds uniquely! We aren't able to speak of a relationship of a master and slave, nor even about the relationship of a master and servant.