

## The right and left weapons

In his struggle for God's truth and righteousness, Paul lived both joys and sadnesses. Some honored him, praised him and recognized him, whereas others humiliated him, slandered him or ignored him. Some considered him a deceiver, whereas others a preacher of the truth. Sometimes he reached also to the brink of death, as when he was stoned in Lystra; God however, saved him, for him to toil a little more for His glory. He was all-poor and possessionless, but he had everything at his disposition from the love of the believers. And justifiably the Golden-tongued John asks: "How could he not have all their own things as his own, he, whom they received as an angel, and for whose sake they were ready to take out their eyes and to give them to him?"

However, as Saint Theophylactos notes, neither did he allow the joys to "puff up his mind" ("with the more happy things puffed up) nor the sadnesses to discourage him ("recoiling from the sad things»). He made both, weapons of righteousness, "right and left" to not remain unharmed by passions and to gain souls for Christ.

Archim. B. L

**SUNDAY SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 3, 2019** *The Synaxis of the Holy and Righteous Symeon the God-Receiver and the Holy Prophetess Anna , Stamatios, John, & Nicholas, New Martyrs of Spetses , Nicholas, Archbishop & Enlightener of Japan, Afterfeast of the Presentation of Our Lord and Savior in the Temple , Synaxis of the Most Holy Theotokos Werburga*

**TONE OF THE WEEK :** Third Tone

**EOTHINON :** Third Orthros Gospel

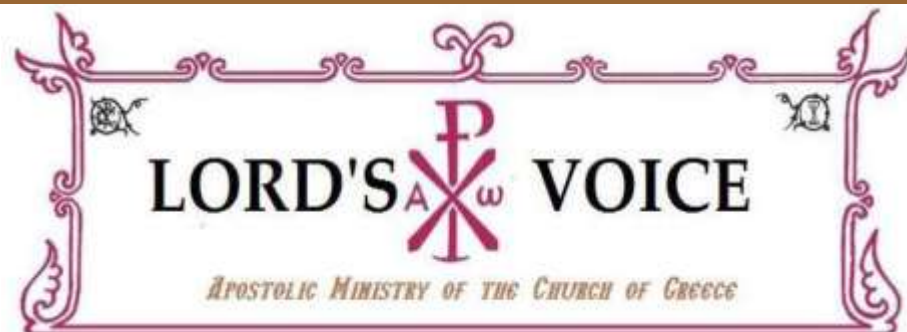
**EPISTLE READING:** Second Letter to the Corinthians 6:1-10

**GOSPEL READING:** Matthew 25:14-30

**NEXT SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 10, 2019** *Sunday of the Cannanite, Hieromartyr Haralambos , Anastasios Patriarch of Jerusalem, Porphyrios and Bartos the monk martyrs.*

**EPISTLE READING:** Second Letter to Timothy 2: 1-10

**GOSPEL READING:** Matthew 15:21-28



67<sup>TH</sup> YEAR

FEBRUARY 3, 2019

PAMPHLET #5 (3427)

## THE CROSS OF THE APOSTLE

With justified boldness, the Apostle Paul "asks" the Corinthians to not accept the saving gift of the knowledge of God in vain and unbeneficially. The boldness that springs from the fact that he himself did not simply accept "the grace of God in vain", but "he cooperated" with this grace and "more so" (2 Cor. 11:23) than everyone, he suffered hardship for the Gospel of Christ. So he exhorts them to not allow their hearts to grow cold in the indifference or in the delay.

### The dangers of the delay and of the scandal

"Don't think", interprets the sacred Chrysostom, "that God will always be sending you such opportunities for them to be asking you with the preaching to wake up. He will be sending, for as long as we are here, in this life. Because afterwards, judgement and recompense follow. And we are here for so little, that from the shortness of time, the matter is urgent". It was correctly said that a more demonic thought than that which submits that "God and recompense do not exist" is the thought: "God and recompense do exist, but do not rush. You have time to repent". And yes, on the one hand, now "is not the time of the court, but it is, of grace and salvation". However the "acceptable", the welcome opportunity is not even after a little,

**ST. PAUL'S SECOND LETTER TO THE CORINTHIANS 6:1-10**

Brethren, working together with him, we entreat you not to accept the grace of God in vain. For he says, "At the acceptable time I have listened to you, and helped you on the day of salvation." Behold, now is the acceptable time; behold, now is the day of salvation. We put no obstacle in any one's way, so that no fault may be found with our ministry, but as servants of God we commend ourselves in every way: through great endurance, in afflictions, hardships, calamities, beatings, imprisonments, tumults, labors, watching, hunger; by purity, knowledge, forbearance, kindness, the Holy Spirit, genuine love, truthful speech, and the power of God; with the weapons of righteousness for the right hand and for the left; in honor and dishonor, in ill repute and good repute. We are treated as impostors, and yet are true; as unknown, and yet well known; as dying, and behold we live; as punished, and yet not killed; as sorrowful, yet always rejoicing; as poor, yet making many rich; as having nothing, and yet possessing everything.

but every moment that we are living, since no one knows when our soul "is violently separated from the body".

Of course, the Apostle Paul's humility makes him agonize not only for our own indifference or delaying of repentance, but also he fears that he not become cause even in the slightest, for one to be scandalized. He does not want to forget what he said to the Corinthians in his previous epistle: "I am not worthy to be called an apostle because I persecuted the Church of Christ". In the same epistle, he had told them that, so that he not give any cause for scandal to anyone, he sacrificed his every right: both for him to eat food sacrificed to idols, and to bring with him in his journeys a woman to serve him, and to not work and for the Christians to maintain him.

### **The gift of suffering for Christ**

And he did not simply abdicate from all his lawful "comforts", but voluntarily and with much patience, he carried

the entire cross of the Apostle, which in his case included afflictions, beatings and whippings, imprisonments, persecutions which did not allow him to stay anywhere, vigils, lack of food. The greatest glory of the Apostle, according to the Golden-tongued one, are his imprisonments. According to Saint Clement of Rome, the Apostle Paul wore chains seven times. So justly, his ambitious imitator, Saint John, breaks out in beatitudes:

"I do not bless Paul, so much because he was grabbed up in paradise and he heard ineffable words, as because he forbore the bonds for Christ. Paul's hands were not so worthy of honor, when he was healing the sick, as when they were wearing chains. Do not admire that he escaped from the waves of the sea and from the biting of the snake in Malta. Both the snake and the sea respected his chains. Paul does not gladden me so much when he is doing miracles, as when he is suffering for Christ. If they were telling me to choose between the gift of raising the dead and in being bound by chains for Christ, I would choose the chains".

Naturally, the glory of the Apostle was not only physical hardship. Many ideologues suffered hardship and literally rotted in prisons for their ideas. However "the fire tries" (1 Cor. 3:13) how much the work each one is worth. And the "fire" is Christ and His truth. And the highest glory of the Apostle Paul is that he became a torch and accepted to be lit from this fire of the only true God, the fire of the Holy Spirit. So all the virtues which adorned the Apostle during his ministry, purity, unselfishness, longsuffering, kindness, and unhypocritical love, are not simply Paul's moral achievements, fruits of anthropocentric techniques. They are fruits of the Holy Spirit, whose pure vessel the former god-fighter Saul struggled to become. And the Apostle cultivated them not in order to glorify himself but God, the Source of Truth and real Power.