

These refer to goods that are granted to the now new “Israel of God”, to his new people, in other words, to his Church. Being crucified with Christ is a constant effort of repentance, a ceaseless “circumcision of heart in the spirit” (Rom. 2:29), where nothing is able to be ceremonial and mechanical. “What is the benefit of ceremonial circumcision”, Paul will say to the Romans, “if you are not keeping the law of God?” The genuine spiritual child of Abraham, as also his true citizen of the “new Israel”, of the Church of Christ, is he who is not walking “according to the flesh, but according to the spirit”. Because “the law of the spirit of life in Christ Jesus freed us from the law of sin and of death” (8:2)

And the experience of this freedom is able to reach to the chief sense of life in Christ, which Saint Theodore of Perge (April 19) was tasting. When being martyred for Christ, he was nailed to the cross, he shouted: “now I’m holding the branches of the Tree of Life”! He was holding the life-bearing branches, not because others were nailing his hands to the cross, but because he throughout his life “was grabbing” these branches with the sanctified struggle of his ascesis and obedience to the commands of Him who said: “The kingdom of God is taken by force and the forceful grab it”

Archim. B. L

**SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 10, 2019 9<sup>TH</sup> SUNDAY OF LUKE ,**

*Gregory the Wonderworker & Bishop of Neo-Caesarea , Gennadios I and Maximus, Patriarchs of Constantinople, Righteous Mother Hilda of Whitby.*

**-tone of the week :** *Plagal Of The First Tone*

**EOthinon :** *Eleventh Orthros Gospel*

**EPistle Reading:** *St.Paul’s Letter to GALATIANS 6:11 - 18*

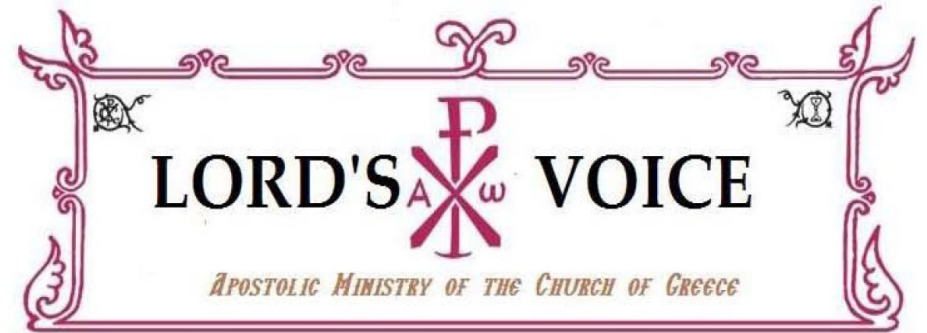
**GOSPEL Reading:** *Luke 102 : 16 - 21*

**SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 24, 2019 13<sup>TH</sup> SUNDAY OF LUKE ,**

Our Holy Father Clement, Pope of Rome , Peter, Archbishop of Alexandria , Hermogenes, the Martyr. *Afterfeast of the Entry of the Theotokos into the Temple, Philoumenos and Christopher the Martyrs*

**EPistle Reading:** *ST.PAUL’S LETTER TO EPHESIANS 2 : 4 - 10*

**GOSPEL Reading:** *Luke 18 : 18 - 27*



67<sup>TH</sup> YEAR NOVEMBER 17 2019 PAMPHLET #46 (3468)

## THE FREEDOM OF THE CROSS

Today’s Epistle Reading comprises the epilogue of the Epistle of Paul to the Galatians. In finishing his epistle, he stresses to them that he wrote it with his hand. Its last phrase however witnesses that he did not use ink but the blood “of the marks of the Lord Jesus”. His body was bearing them, on the one hand, while they “were shouting” also through his epistle, not only witnessing about his sacrifices for the sake of the Gospel, but also expressing his deep inner pain for the falsification of his preaching on the part of the Judaizers.

### Lawless, the ones boasting in the law

Just as the Arch-shepherd Christ “with bloodied divine fingers, delivering through the murderous hand, Adam” (troparion of the Paracleteke), thus also Paul who is crucified to the world with his bloodied “pen” is trying to deliver the Christians from the bonds of the likewise, murderous for them, persistent false brethren. These ones “who are disturbing” (Gal. 1:7), the Church disputed the genuineness of his apostolic office and were disapproving him, because he was abolishing the circumcision and the prayer rubric elements of the Mosaic law. Those who were falsely spreading that Paul is in favor of the circumcision were certainly not lacking also.

## **EPISTLE ST. PAUL'S LETTER TO GALATIANS 2:6:-11-18**

Brethren, see with what large letters I am writing to you with my own hand. It is those who want to make a good showing in the flesh that would compel you to be circumcised, and only in order that they may not be persecuted for the cross of Christ. For even those who receive circumcision do not themselves keep the law, but they desire to have you circumcised that they may glory in your flesh. But far be it from me to glory except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by which the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world. For neither circumcision counts for anything, nor uncircumcision, but a new creation. Peace and mercy be upon all who walk by this rule, upon the Israel of God. Henceforth let no man trouble me; for I bear on my body the marks of Jesus. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit, brethren. Amen

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And the ones, on the one hand, abolishing his ecumenical openings to the gentiles, but also the others, on the other hand, were boasting pretending to be the traditional ones. And they wanted to increase their boasting by forcing the gentiles also into circumcision. The Apostle however, uncovers them, that they are neither keeping the law that was handed down to them, nor have they understood the purpose of this tradition. The law was handed down in order to be a "pedagogue to Christ". And from the moment when Christ came, "we are no longer under the pedagogue". Consequently, in the end, the abolition of its typos and especially circumcision, so that we can adopt salvation in Christ, is an action of obedience to the spirit of the law. Paul unabashedly confessed it a little earlier on: "I through the law died to the law, so that I may live in God".

### **The life-giving double deadening**

So for this reason, "do not go far, brethren", the former persecutor advises. "Become as I am; for I am as ye are" (Gal.

4:12). "I know you and you know me". And his genuine interpreter, the sacred Chrysostom, analyzes Paul's sentence: "If you don't have another for a model, my own change is sufficient for you. From this, take courage to accept the abolition of the regulations of the law. I, earlier on, was burning more than you with a longing to keep the law (I was fervently also burning for the law). However after my conversion, I had no fear to leave the law and to change my way of life".

Of course, the new way of life is initially a way of death. The old things must be deadened, in order for the "new things" to live, in other words, the new ones. It is essentially a cross, and furthermore a double cross. A double deadening. "Not only I", says the Apostle, "became dead to the things of the world" (wealth, glory and pleasures) and I no longer desire them, but also the world with its delights – in other words, "the desire of the flesh and the desire of the eyes and the haughtiness of life" (1 Jn. 2:16) – lost for me their charm and strength and they no longer are able to dominate me and enslave me in their deceptions. And this saving doubled death, is the fruit of the Life giving Cross of Christ. So for this reason also, my unique boast is the Cross of Christ".

### **Hold on to the lifegiving branches!**

The source of our salvation is not the keeping of the Mosaic Law but the Cross of Christ. Christ liberated us also from the slavery to the mechanical regulations of the law – which no one was able to completely keep – but also from the idol worshipping promiscuity. "Neither circumcision nor uncircumcision" are able to grant true salvation. However, in the "new" creation that Christ founded, anarchy does not reign. There is a rule which imbues it, leads it and governs it: it is his Cross. Only whoever freely crucifies for Christ, his passions and desires, only whoever is crucified together with Christ, and voluntarily submits his will to the divine will, is able to enjoy the peace and mercy of God.