

manifested. As self-evident as breath is for a living person, so self-evident are the expression of good works for the saved person. When we are basing our salvation on our works, and we think that we owe it to them, we're altering Christianity into an anthropocentric religion, which makes the sacrifice of the Cross and the Resurrection of Christ superfluous.

In such a case, Christianity would differ very little from the law-centered Judaism but also from the anthropocentric pre-Christian idolatry. These two temptations are not unknown in our age. Today also, man thinks that the idols that he himself creates give him more security than the responsible acceptance of the grace of God. And also, taking refuge only in the external keeping of the religious forms, creates a shelter of self protection, and gives birth to a false euphoria and individual satisfaction. The entire New Testament turns against these two attractive temptations.

Archim. B. L

SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 24 2019 13TH 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

TONE OF THE WEEK : Plagal Of The Secondt Tone

EOTHINON : First Orthros Gospel

EPISTLE READING: ST.PAUL's LETTER TO EPHESIANS 2:4 - 10

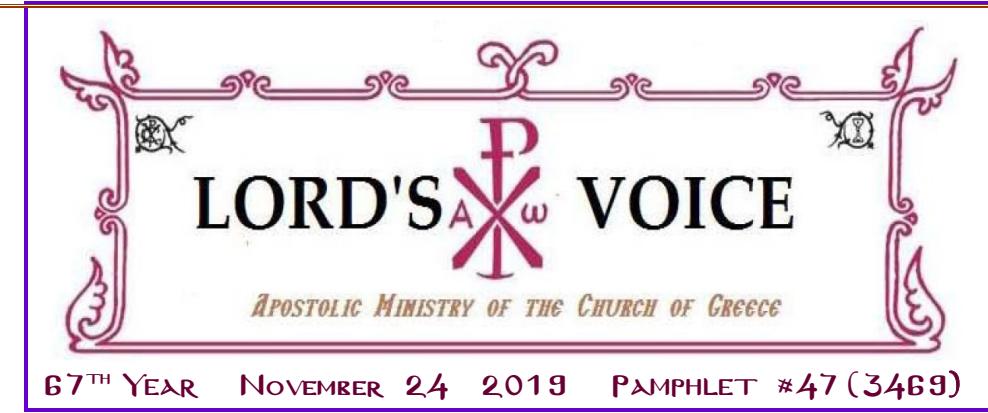
GOSPEL READING: Luke 18 :18 - 27

SUNDAY, DECEMBER 1, 2019 14TH SUNDAY OF LUKE ,

Nahum the Prophet , Ananias the Persian, Philaret the Merciful of Amnia Holy Father Theocletus the Wonderworker, Archbishop of Lacedaemonia , Our Holy Fathers Ananius and Solochon, Archbishops of Ephesus ,

EPISTLE READING: ST.PAUL's LETTER TO EPHESIANS 2:14 - 22

GOSPEL READING: Luke 18 :35 - 43



COLLEAGUES IN FREE SALVATION

A customary way of attracting the consumer public is the inscription of the words "free" or "offer" on the various products. Obviously it is a deceptive advertising trick, and not, of course, a philanthropic initiative of the producing company.

Truth or deception?

In today's Epistle Reading, the Apostle Paul, with a torrential speech, projects the highest "product" of divine love, our salvation. And repeating the phrase "by grace you are saved" twice, and referring to "God's gift" once, he stresses primarily that it refers to a "free" salvation. There however, where the repetition becomes challenging, is the reference to the diverse wealth of God. From the beginning of his Epistle to the Ephesians, he has spoken about it four times: "wealth of grace", "wealth of mercy", "wealth of love", "wealth of inheritance". Thus a superficial reader of the Epistle could easily be enthused, admiring that with such a rich and such a compassionate gift-giving Lord, the "gate is (certainly) wide, and the road spacious, which leads to salvation.

Surely such an evaluation is a destructive perversion of the apostolic preaching, which unfortunately "prospered" in Western Christianity. An American, who converted to Orthodoxy, writes characteristically: "A grievous result of contemporary Protestant confusion is the disappointment of those, to whom a false list of

EPISTLE ST.PAUL'S LETTER TO EPHESIANS 2 : 4 - 10

Brethren, God who is rich in mercy, out of the great love with which he loved us, even when we were dead through our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved), and raised us up with him, and made us sit with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, that in the coming ages he might show the immeasurable riches of his grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus. For by grace you have been saved through faith; and this is not your own doing, it is the gift of God: not because of works, lest any man should boast. For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.

goods was given, with first in line being, direct and easy salvation, and second, the promise about repentance and internal change, without the toils of repentance. It was given to them so that they could mistakenly understand that with a painless and absolutist type of rebirth, everything will go well." Behold the deceptive "free", which was mentioned in the beginning.

Grace and debt

Of course, Paul didn't have any disposition to "advertize" such salvation, when he was writing to the Ephesians. He would clearly freak, hearing the unacceptable misinterpretation of his words. And on the one hand, the central message of the entire passage is obvious, that salvation is not a result of human efforts, but a gift of God's grace. Neither the virtues, as the pagan philosophers were teaching, nor the keeping of the Mosaic Law (who, I wonder, was keeping it perfectly?) could save man. Yes, we were "sons of disobedience" and "children by nature of wrath". We were "dead through the transgressions and the sins".

And, yes, God "co-enlivened" us...co-raised and co-sat in the heavens in Christ Jesus". Let us imagine a judge, judging an accused fellow, guilty of many crimes, and out of his great compassion, not only does he exonerate him, but he makes him a co-president on his

throne. And furthermore, in order for this to happen, the heavenly Judge and God accepts to become "condemned" and to be condemned by us, as a criminal, in the worst of punishments. How could Paul not characterize the wealth of His grace "immeasurable"? The immeasurableness, of course, of this wealth will appear mainly after the future coming of the Savior, when even the former persecutor will sit, as also the other apostles, on a throne, to judge the tribes of Israel. However, already in the Church, we are enjoying the foretaste of the great wealth of grace.

And the sacred Chrysostom, advancing Paul's thought stresses: "Truly immeasurable (is) the wealth. Truly immeasurable (is) the magnitude of His power. And even if you have myriads of lives, would you not sacrifice them for Him? Ought you not, for Christ, be ready to fall even into fire?" Saint John, an authentic "loudspeaker" of the Apostle of the Gentiles, effortlessly is led to the need for our own responsibility to adopt salvation. Paul himself says it clearly also, that we are saved not only by God's "grace," but also "through" our own "faith". So salvation is given, on the one hand, freely, but neither magically, nor obligatorily, to everyone. A forced salvation, Saint Theophylactos says, would "ravage man's free will". It would abolish our freedom. Paul will also tell the Romans that salvation is offered freely by God with the Gospel, which is "the power of God unto salvation (not however to everyone without presuppositions but) to everyone who believes". And naturally "faith without works is dead" (James 2:20).

The fruit and not the presupposition

Just that the works do not precede, but follow the saving gift of divine grace. With this so bright clarification, the godly illumined Apostle closes today's passage. In the phrase "created in Christ Jesus to do good works" the relationship of works and salvation is epigrammatically defined, in the sense that the works do not comprise a presupposition, but a result of salvation. We became, in other words, a new creation not with the works we did – which essentially were leading us to death- but in order for us to do good works, with which our rebirth is