

## Preserve the heritage!

Paul did not stop for 25 entire years, suffering and undergoing every type of hardship and persecution on account of his gospel preaching. And not only is he not ashamed of this, but he considers it his boast, since he forbore everything for the glory of Christ. He entrusted him and He was not disappointed because He did not see the fruits that He would await. Many people, not only were not ashamed of his bonds but they also supported him and “refreshed” him. However former fellow travelers of his, who abandoned him, were not lacking. Despite all these things, he is certain that the crown-giving Lord has the power to guard all the work that, with His grace, he performed, as also his reward for this, unto the day of his Second Coming.

The “newly recruited” Pastor Timothy had shared many of Paul’s afflictions and hardships. In this second epistle of his, the Apostle reminds him of them, and strengthens him in his apostolic ministry, calling him to keep the gospel teaching healthy and unaltered, just as he handed it down to him, with the power and illumination of the Holy Spirit

Archim. B. L

**SUNDAY, DECEMBER 15, 2019 11TH SUNDAY OF LUKE ,**  
Eleutherios the Hieromartyr, Bishop of Illyricum, and his mother Anthia, The Martyr Susannah the Deaconess

**TONE OF THE WEEK :** *First Tone*

**EOTHINON :** *Fourth Orthros Gospel*

**EPISTLE READING:** *St.Paul’s Second Letter to Timothy 1:8-18*

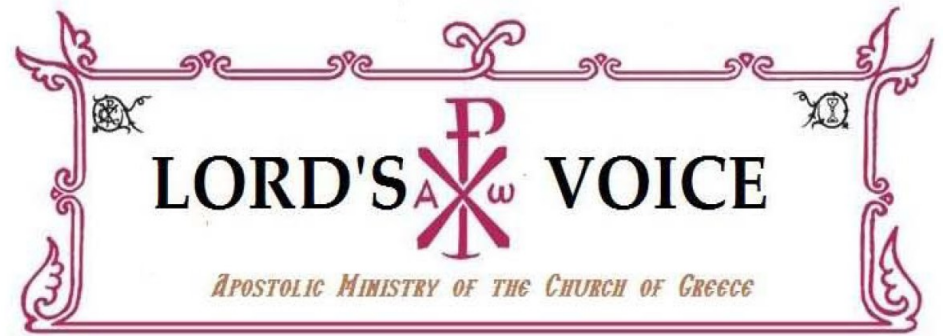
**GOSPEL READING:** *Luke 14 :16 - 24*

**SUNDAY, DECEMBER 22, 2019 SUNDAY BEFORE**

**NATIVITY ,** *Forefeast of the Nativity of Our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ Anastasia the Great Martyr , Chrysogonos, Theodota, Evodias, & Eutychianus, the Martyrs. The opening of the gates of the Great Church of God*

**EPISTLE READING:** *St.Paul’s Second Letter to Hebrews 11:9-10; 32-40*

**GOSPEL READING:** *Matthew 1:1-25*



67<sup>TH</sup> YEAR DECEMBER 15 2019 PAMPHLET #50 (3472)

## THE BRIGHTEST EXAMPLE

In the feast of a saint, whose martyrly end, his mother was proud of, and shared, we hear the Epistle Reading about a spiritual father who calls his spiritual child not only to not be ashamed, but also to share his martyrly ministry of the gospel preaching with him. The wondrous coincidence is that Saint Eleftherios’ mother, who celebrates today, Saint Anthia, had been catechized by disciples of the Apostle Paul. Consequently also, the hieromartyr saint is numbered among the direct “descendants” of the preeminent apostle.

### Shame or boast?

For human logic, which justifiably considers life and freedom as the highest goods, it is very natural for prison and death to be considered “worthy of shame and mockery”, as the sacred Chrysostom also notes. From the moment however, when the Son of God voluntarily accepted bonds and death for our salvation, “the death of His saints” was shown forth to be “precious”. So for this reason also, Paul with Saint John’s mouth, today tells Timothy: “Do not be ashamed, if I, who am resurrecting the dead, who am doing so many miracles, who went about the universe, now am imprisoned. I’m not in prison as a criminal, but on account of Him who was crucified. If my Lord was not ashamed of the cross, neither am I ashamed of the bonds”.

## THE EPISTLE OF SUNDAY (2 TIM. 1:8-18)

TIMOTHY, my son, do not be ashamed then of testifying to our Lord, nor of me his prisoner, but share in suffering for the gospel in the power of God, who saved us and called us with a holy calling, not in virtue of our works but in virtue of his own purpose and the grace which he gave us in Christ Jesus ages ago, and now has manifested through the appearing of our Savior Christ Jesus, who abolished death and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel. For this gospel I was appointed a preacher and apostle and teacher, and therefore I suffer as I do. But I am not ashamed, for I know whom I have believed, and I am sure that he is able to guard until that Day what has been entrusted to me. Follow the pattern of the sound words which you have heard from me, in the faith and love which are in Christ Jesus; guard the truth that has been entrusted to you by the Holy Spirit who dwells within us.

You are aware that all who are in Asia turned away from me, and among them Phygelos and Hermogenes. May the Lord grant mercy to the household of Onesiphoros, for he often refreshed me; he was not ashamed of my chains, but when he arrived in Rome he searched for me eagerly and found me - may the Lord grant him to find mercy from the Lord on that Day and you well know all the service he rendered at Ephesos.

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And, of course, our whatsoever hardships neither pay off debts, nor can conceivably be of equal stature with Christ's delivering sacrifice for us. Salvation was given to us completely freely. It is only a gift of Christ, purely from His own disposition. And our Lord, who completely does not need anything, has no need of our own offering and sacrifice. However, because He formed us free "in His image", He does not want to oppressively impose the deliverance from sin and death on anyone. He does not save us without us wanting it. We are not saved, if our own free repentance does not cooperate with His own disposition. The

Apostle Paul will clearly say it with the unparalleled expression: "Christ abolished death. And He illumined us to hope for true life and incorruption through His Gospel." The light and hope of eternal life will take us out of the darkness of death and despair, only if we embrace His Gospel and wish to freely keep His henceforth revealed will. Therefore our spiritual resurrection and the enjoyment of His eternal Kingdom, depend not only on His given "disposition and grace", but also on our own wholehearted "let thy will be done".

## Apostle to the gentiles

That this grace was given to us in Christ Jesus "before eternal years", according to the great theologian Paul, means that the divine decision for our salvation is unbegotten and preeternal, just as unbegotten and preeternal is our Saviour Son and Word of God. Consequently His incarnation, in order to grant us the fullness of eternal life and glory in His Kingdom, was not caused by our own fall into sin. It is not a result of necessity, but a natural fruit of His own freedom and love. Many foreshadowings of this love of the incarnate then Word, were manifested "in a shadowy way" in the Old Testament, especially to His "chosen" people, the Jews. Its glorious however and full revelation, occurred with the Incarnation of the Son and God and our Savior Jesus Christ, Who came to save not only the Israelites but all of humanity.

As apostle and preacher of this salvation, particularly for the gentiles, God chose a former fanatic persecutor of the Church of Christ, but who was an excellent knower of the Mosaic Law and of the prophets, even if he wretchedly misinterpreted them. Clearly this choice also was not a forced enlistment. If he wanted to, Saul could have become "disobedient to the heavenly vision" (Acts 26:19). However he immediately freely obeyed the "holy calling" and widely opened his heart, in order to receive the Holy Spirit. And after he realized that Christ is the "fullness of the law of the prophets", "he opened up" to the evangelizing of the gentiles, which the Jews reacted against. Trapped in racist viewpoints, they did not want to understand that every human henceforth belongs in the "chosen" people of God who himself chooses to believe in Christ, indiscriminate of descent.