

faith expects support and understanding from the one who is strong. At this point, we can distinguish the greatness of the Christian ethos. Above the right that freedom provides us, sacrifice is placed, which love inspires in us.

The freedom that overlooks love, degenerates; the believer, however who keeps the commandments of God, first of all, that of love, abides and matures in freedom. Because the evangelical commandments guard "the terms of the freedom given to us", as Saint Mark the Hermit says, and reveal to man the divine life, the life of true love.

May we also experience freedom as love and contribute with our silence, prayer, speech and morals to the strengthening of the faith of our brethren in Christ .

Archim. N.K

SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 19, 2023 JUDGMENT SUNDAY
(MEATFARE SUNDAY) *The Holy Apostles of the Seventy Philemon, Apphia, Archippus, and Onesimus Philothei the Righteous Martyr of Athens Niketas the Younger*

EPISTLE READING: *St. Paul's First Letter to the Corinthians 8:8-13*

GOSPEL READING : *Matthew 25:31-46*

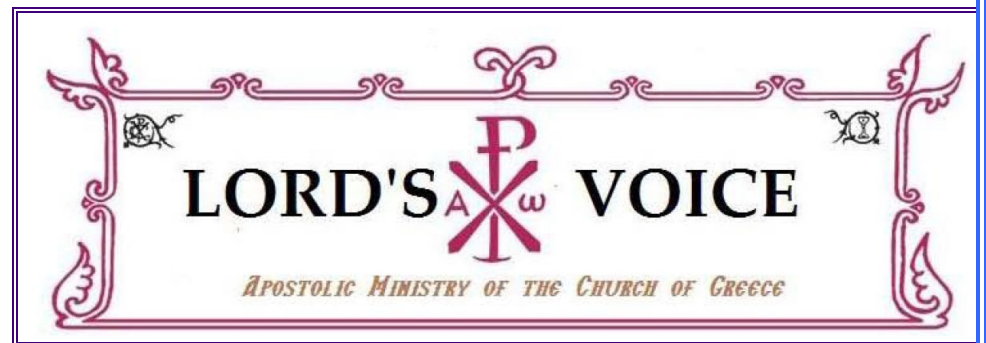
TONE OF THE WEEK : *Third Tone*

EOTHINON : *Third Eothinon*

SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 26, 2023 FORGIVENESS SUNDAY ,
Porphyrius, Bishop of Gaza Women ,The Holy Great Martyr Photine, the Samaritan ,Holy Martyr Theocletus , John Claphas the new Martyr.

EPISTLE READING: *St. Paul's Letter to Romans 13:11-13,14:1-4*

GOSPEL READING : *Matthew 6:14 - 21*



71ST YEAR FEBRUARY 19 2023 PAMPHLET # 8 (3638)

**"TAKE CARE LEST THIS LIBERTY OF YOURS
SOMEHOW BECOME A STUMBLING BLOCK"**

Today's Epistle passage deals with the subject of food sacrificed to idols, which occupied the Church at the beginning of its historical course. In extreme brevity let us note that the food sacrificed to idols were carcasses from the sacrifices that the gentiles offered to the idols. As a sacrifice they usually offered the animal's legs and entrails, which they would throw in the altar fire, while the rest of its members were eaten at dinners or they sold them in the market.

Quite a few Christians who came from the gentile groups and continued to maintain family and social relations together with them, participated in joint meals where food sacrificed to idols was offered. However, their conscience did not bother them to eat from them, since, as Paul points out, "no idol has a real existence. In the world there is no other God but one" (I Cor. 8,4). Thus, unwaveringly believing in Christ, they accepted that there is nothing to reject and impure in God's creation, and that everything is destined to be sanctified by God.

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THE SUNDAY EPISTLE (1 CORINTHIANS 8:8-13)

Brethren, food will not commend us to God. We are no worse off if we do not eat, and no better off if we do. Only take care lest this liberty of yours somehow become a stumbling block to the weak. For if any one sees you, a man of knowledge, at table in an idol's temple, might he not be encouraged, if his conscience is weak, to eat food offered to idols? And so by your knowledge this weak man is destroyed, the brother for whom Christ died. Thus, sinning against your brethren and wounding their conscience when it is weak, you sin against Christ. Therefore, if food is a cause of my brother's falling, I will never eat meat, lest I cause my brother to fall. Am I not free? Am I not an apostle? Have I not seen Jesus our Lord? Are not you my workmanship in the Lord? If to others I am not an apostle, at least I am to you; for you are the seal of my apostleship in the Lord.

Christians with a weak conscience

However, there were also Christians with a weak conscience and faith, that is, they continued to fear idols, as they believed that by eating from the foods sacrificed to idols, the believer becomes defiled and sins. Finally, there was also the possibility that certain believers who saw their fellow believers with a strong conscience and faith eating from the food sacrificed to idols and furthermore, in idol worshipping temples, would also imitate them; but with the mistaken impression that it is something really sacred and worthy of respect and not just simply food.

The risk of breaking the unity of the faithful because of

this issue was great. Those with a weak conscience criticized those who were eating from the carcasses of the sacrifices, that they were compromising the faith, mixing it with idolatry. And those with a strong conscience said of the former, that they have not yet been freed from the influence of idols and that their faith in Christ was not unshakable and strong.

The risk of scandal

The Apostle points out that it is not the food that determines our position before God. The use of food - and in fact of food sacrificed to idols, that constitute the specific "food" about which he is speaking - is something indifferent and of secondary importance. Neither if we eat, that is, do we gain anything, nor if we don't eat, do we lose. Hence, he draws the believer's attention to the danger of scandalizing. Be careful, he told them, lest your right and liberty to eat from the food sacrificed to idols, become an "obstacle", an occasion for those who have weak faith, to stumble and fall.

Freedom and love

The Apostle reduces the matter to its real dimension, that is, to the relationship of freedom and love or free love and loving freedom. Since the root and cause of the problem in question was the interpersonal relationships between believers. The food sacrificed to idols were only the occasion. The Christian must cultivate the consciousness that freedom cannot function separately from his love for fellow man. The consequences of empowerment and emancipation of freedom from love are harmful, because he who is weak in