

So for this reason, and while previously He had scolded them, now He comforts them, so that they not be led to excessive grief. Of course, whereas He is comforting them, He is counseling them and speaking to them mildly, He pinpoints with every sincerity, the cause of their failure: “for your disbelief”, meaning here as disbelief, the familiarization, the habit from the consequent repetition, which leads from glorification of God’s providence to mechanical actions and a complacent soul.

My brethren, many people in the duration of ecclesiastical history fell into these tempting thoughts. Either they doubted about God’s disposition to constantly work the salvation of man, holding back his Church, and they developed their own actions in an effort to “save the Church”, obeying their own viewpoints, or they got used to the ecclesiastical miracle, they became familiarized, and ceased glorifying the divine majesty, submitting it to a sense of routine. Both lukewarm faith as well as habit, are pinpointed by our Christ as “disbelief and perversion”, precisely because as an internal, fine battle, if they prevail, they lead to the same result. To the lack of an Orthodox orientation to faith, and to submitting the Church to one more many faceted formation of the historical spotlight. In each case, the only truth which the Church claimed, self defining herself, is treated unjustly, that she is the body of Christ, Christ being extended to the ages, the clinic of souls with the kingdom of the heavens as the destination.

Archimandrite I. N

**SUNDAY, AUGUST 28, 2016, 10<sup>TH</sup> SUNDAY OF MATTHEW**, *Moses the Black of Scete, Diomedes & Laurence the Martyrs, 33 Martyrs of Nicomedeia, Job of Pochaev, Synaxis of the Kiev Cave Fathers*

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

**EOTHINON** : *Tenth Eothinon*

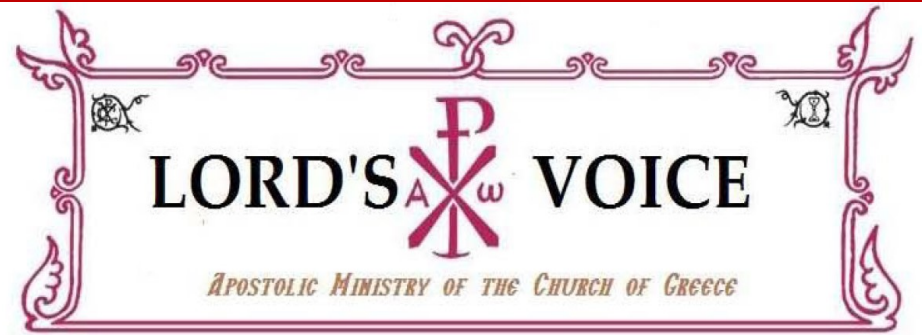
**EPISTLE:** *St. Paul’s Letter to Corinthians 4:9-16*

**GOSPEL:** *Matthew 17:14-23*

**NEXT SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 4, 2016, 11<sup>TH</sup> SUNDAY OF MATTHEW**, *Babylas the Holy Martyr, Moses the Prophet & Godseer, Our Righteous Father Anthimus of Coroucle in Cephallenia, Hermione the Martyr, daughter of St. Philip the Deacon, Anthimos the new ascetic.*

**EPISTLE:** *St. Paul’s Letter to Corinthians 9:2-12*

**GOSPEL:** *Matthew 18:23-35*



64<sup>TH</sup> YEAR

AUGUST 28, 2016

PAMPHLET # 35 (3300)

## DISBELIEF IN GOD’S ALMIGHTINESS

If on the previous Sunday, based on the gospel reading, we located as the cause of secularization of the ecclesiastical body, external temptations, with the main ones being the authoritative phenomenon, inner-worldliness and the perversion of the revealed truth, today’s gospel passage comes, in addition, to help us in defining other dangers as well. This time, internal ones, which nevertheless lead to the same result. The falling of the Church from the body of Christ in the form of this world. And it is dreadful for one to be betraying the divine constructor of the Church, contributing to the viewpoint that the reason for the Church’s existence in the world, which is none other than to secure salvation and to lead to holiness, is not the only one, but the Church may circumstantially be used to serve other more shallow, more imperfect aims, and nevertheless with an expiration date.

The reason for presenting these gospel readings, is not talk of danger or the cultivation of fear in the soul of those who are living spiritually. Especially those who have a more intense responsibility for the Church, so that they restrain their whatsoever efforts or actions. Nor again do these passages exist as a cause for criticizing one another, for arguments and divisions between spiritual brothers in the framework of whatsoever criticism. The Gospel unites, and its texts exist in order to forewarn us of the spiritual dangers, so that we are wakeful more in rejecting the whatsoever temptation, with unity between us as the particular perspective.

## 10<sup>TH</sup> SUNDAY OF MATTHEW

### THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO MATTHEW 17:14-23

At that time, a man came up to Him and kneeling before Him said, "Lord, have mercy on my son, for he is an epileptic and he suffers terribly; for often he falls into the fire, and often into the water. And I brought him to Your disciples, and they could not heal him." And Jesus answered, "O faithless and perverse generation, how long am I to be with you? How long am I to bear with you? Bring him here to me." And Jesus rebuked him, and the demon came out of him, and the boy was cured instantly. Then the disciples came to Jesus privately and said, "Why could we not cast it out?" He said to them, "Because of your little faith. For truly I say to you, if you have faith as a grain of mustard seed, you will say to this mountain, 'Move hence to yonder place,' and it will move; and nothing will be impossible to you. But this kind never comes out except by prayer and fasting." As they were gathering in Galilee, Jesus said to them, "The Son of man is to be delivered into the hands of men, and they will kill Him, and He will be raised on the third day."

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### Unbelieving and perverse generation"

A troubled father leads his precious only son before Christ with a big complaint. The reason? His son is being tortured by a demon, and while he was asking the disciples of Christ to heal him, they were not able to. They did not refuse! They tried but they did not manage to! They, who a little while before, in their testing journey, where Jesus had sent them by two, submitted the demons and did a multitude of miracles, now failed. And it seems that this cost a lot in the reputation of the disciples...

How does Christ react? With an exclamation, which betrays frustration, and one could consider that it is excessive, maybe even outside of the topic. "O unbelieving and perverse generation, how long shall I be with you? Until when shall I put up with you? Bring him here

to me". He calls all together, those who are listening, as an "unbelieving and perverse generation". What do these characterizations define? Clearly He is not accusing whoever was present, including his disciples of a lack of orientation to the true God. Clearly He is not characterizing them as atheists. The terms "unbelieving and perverse" befits that spiritual condition in which there is a basic acceptance concerning the truth of faith, but absolute trust and dependence on God the Father does not exist.

By these characterizations those are defined who, having lived very many spiritual conditions and experiences, continue to not "hand themselves over to God", in other words, they disbelieve in the divine almightiness, in the divine providence, in the divine love, and they are reserved. It is an approach which is expressed with the syllogism, "yes on the one hand God then provided, protected, cared, acted, but is He able to do, or I wonder will He do, the same thing now also?" It is essentially a doubt not about if God exists, but about what He is able to do. Not about if God exists, but about the what or how much He is God.

### "Why were we not able?"

Before the condition which is created, the disciples approach trembling, not in order to ask "where did we make a mistake?" or to ask for forgiveness. They come and ask for the reason of their failure not with an obvious longing for spiritual maturation and correction, but with an obvious fear that perchance they lost the gift for which they were previously boasting, that they had "authority over impure spirits"!

Where was the mistake of the disciples? In that they had gotten used to performing miracles. They were not working the miracles with a constant gratitude to the divine almightiness which this charism had given them as a gift, but they considered it their personal ability, even if acquired, and nevertheless with the now clear reference to their own self. They got used to handling grace and they didn't understand how important this was, why it had been given to them and from whom it had been granted to them. With a spiritually unacceptable familiarization, which Christ Himself, with a very pedagogical manner, in speaking about ascetical wakefulness, about increasing prayer and fasting, wanted to take away from them, without shaking them up more.