



My Beloved Ones,

In this Sunday's Epistle to the Galatians, the Apostle Paul wishes to make an important distinction concerning faith and the Law of Moses. Though the Law was provided to help the Israelites walk in God's ways, we now live in a time when the God-Man walked with us in true perfection. Therefore, St. Paul writes: *"Brethren we know that a person is justified not by the works of the law but through faith in Jesus Christ. And we have come to believe in Christ Jesus, so that we might be justified by faith in Christ, and not by doing the works of the law..."* (Galatians 2:16) However, Saint Paul also knows that just as *"...no one will be justified by the works of the law"* faith in Jesus Christ does not free anyone from sin either.

Therefore, St. Paul rhetorically asks the Galatians *"...if, in our effort to be justified in Christ, we ourselves have been found to be sinners, is Christ then a servant of sin? Certainly not!"* (Galatians 2:17) This Sunday (one week after the observance of the Exaltation of the Holy Cross) Christ tells His Disciples, *"If any want to become my followers, let them deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me."* (Mark 8:34) He says "If" to demonstrate that it is our choice to follow Him in seeking to be made perfect; we are still vulnerable to the passions that can lead us to sin, if we choose to follow them instead.

Indeed, St. Paul acknowledges this also when he says, *"...if I build up again the very things that I once tore down, then I demonstrate that I am a transgressor."* (Galatians 2:18) This spirit of transgression was the very purpose for which Moses gave the Law, and the same for which God chose to become Man, live and work, before dying and rising again to life. As St. Paul simply writes, *"For through the law I died to the law, so that I might live to God."* (Galatians 2:19) This reunion with God, where we can be considered His followers and friends is a source of great joy. No longer are we slaves to the Law but adopted sons and daughters of God. (Galatians 4:1)

As Christians who venerate the Cross on which our Lord voluntarily went to His Passion, we know what means to say, *"I have been crucified with Christ, and it is no longer I who live, but it is Christ who lives in me."* (Galatians 2:19-20) While we are still in the world—but not of it—we are indeed transformed people. As St. Paul says so movingly of all Christians *"...the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me."* (Galatians 2:20) Though we shall all struggle with our weaknesses, we do so now in the hope that we are children of God, whose faith can be a source of inspiration in times of struggle, as we continue to seek true communion with Him who created us and saved us.

+ALEXIOS
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