

Sunday before the Cross,

Galatians 6: 11-18

76. A man who through ascetic effort withers the flower of the flesh, and cuts off all its desires, bears in his mortal flesh the marks of the Lord (cf. Gal. 6:17).

77. The hardships of the ascetic life end in the repose of dis-passion, while soft ways of living breed shameful passions.

[V2] 30 St Theodoros the Great Ascetic A Century of Spiritual Texts

115. Those to whom the world is crucified are not the same as those who are crucified to the world (cf. Gal. 6:14). For the first, the nails are fasting and vigils; for the second, they are to shed every possession and to be treated with contempt. Without the second, the sufferings involved in the first are useless.

[V3] 62 Ilias the Presbyter A Gnostic Anthology Part IV

46. He who wholeheartedly hates and renounces 'the desire of the fallen self, the desire of the eyes, and the false pretensions of this life' (1 John 2:16) - that whole 'world of iniquity' (Jas. 3:6) through the love of which we become the enemies of God (cf. Jas. 4:4) - has crucified the world to himself and himself to the world: he has destroyed in his flesh the enmity between God and his soul, and has made peace between the two (cf. Eph. 2:15). For he who has died to these things through effacing the will of the flesh has reconciled himself to God. He has eradicated the enmity of this world by obliterating sensual pleasure through a life crucified to the world, and has embraced friendship with Jesus. He is no longer God's enemy because of his love for the world, but is a friend of God, crucified to the world and able to say, 'The world is crucified to me, and I to the world' (Gal. 6:14).

[V4] 91 Nikitas Stithatos On the Practice of the Virtues: One Hundred Texts

Paul not only says, "The world is crucified to me", but adds, "and I to the world" (Gal. 6:14). ... The first mystery of the Cross is flight from the world, and parting from our relatives according to the flesh, if they are a hindrance to piety and a devout life, and training our body, which Paul tells us is of some value (I Tim. 4:8). In these ways the world and sin are crucified to us, once we have fled from them. According to the second mystery of the Cross, however, we are crucified to the world and the passions, once they have fled from us. It is not of course possible for them to

leave us completely and not be at work in our thoughts, unless we attain to contemplation of God. When, through action, we approach contemplation and cultivate and cleanse our inner man, searching for the divine treasure which we ourselves have hidden, and considering the kingdom of God within us, then it is that we crucify ourselves to the world and the passions. Through meditation of this a certain warmth is born in our heart, which chases away evil thoughts like flies, instills spiritual peace and consolation in our soul, and bestows sanctification on our body.

St. Gregory Palamas Homily on the Cross paragraph 7.

Gospel of St. John 3: 13-17

This is the wisdom and power of God; to be victorious through weakness, exalted through humility, rich through poverty. Not only the word and the mystery of the Cross are divine and to be revered, but so also is its sign. For it is a holy, saving and venerable seal, able to hallow and perfect all the good, marvelous and indescribable things which God has done for the human race. It can take away the curse and condemnation, destroy corruption and death, bestow eternal life and blessing. It is the wood of salvation, the regal scepter, the divine trophy of victory over visible and invisible enemies, even though the heretics' followers are insanely displeased. ... The Lord Himself, when He was going to ascend the Cross, openly referred to it as His lifting up and His glory (John 3:14-15). And He announced that when He came again and manifested Himself, this sign of the Son of man would come with power and great glory (Matt. 24:30)

St. Gregory Palamas Homily on the Cross paragraph 25

Ver. 11, 12. See with how large letters I have written unto you with my own hand. As many as desire to make a fair show in the flesh, they compel you to be [circumcised](#).

Observe what grief possesses his blessed [soul](#). As those who are oppressed with some sorrow, who have lost one of their own kindred, and suffered an unexpected calamity, rest neither by night nor day, because their grief besieges their [soul](#), so the [blessed Paul](#), after a short moral discourse, returns again to that former subject which chiefly disturbed his [mind](#), saying as follows: see with how large letters I have written unto you with my own hand. By this he signifies that he had written the whole letter himself, which was a [proof](#) of great sincerity. In his other Epistles he himself only dictated, another wrote, as is plain from the Epistle to the Romans, for at its close it is said, I Tertius, who write the Epistle, salute you; [Romans 16:22](#) but in this instance he wrote the whole himself. And this he did by necessity, not from affection merely, but in order to remove an injurious suspicion. Being charged with acts wherein he had no part, and being reported to

preach Circumcision yet to pretend to preach it not, he was compelled to write the Epistle with his own hand, thus laying up beforehand a written testimony. By the expression what sized, he appears to me to signify, not the magnitude, but, the misshapen appearance of the letters, as if he had said, Although not well skilled in writing, I have been compelled to write with my own hand to stop the mouth of these traducers.

*Ver. 12, 13. As many as desire to make a fair show in the flesh, they compel you to be **circumcised**; only that they may not be **persecuted** for the cross of **Christ**. For not even they who receive **circumcision** do themselves keep the Law; but they desire to have you **circumcised**, that they may **glory** in your flesh.*

Here he shows that they suffered this, not willingly but of necessity, and affords them an opportunity of retreat, almost speaking in their defence, and exhorting them to abandon their teachers with all speed. What is the meaning of to make a fair show in the flesh? it means, to be esteemed by **men**. As they were reviled by the **Jews** for deserting the customs of their fathers, they desire, says he, to injure you, that they may not have this charged against them, but vindicate themselves by means of your flesh. His object here is to show that they did not so act from respect to **God**; it is as if he said, This procedure is not founded in **piety**, all this is done through **human** ambition; in order that the unbelievers may be gratified by the mutilation of the faithful, they choose to offend God that they may please men; for this is the meaning of, to make a fair show in the flesh. Then, as a **proof** that for another reason too they are unpardonable, he again convinces them that, not only in order to please others, but for their own vain **glory**, they had enjoined this. Wherefore he adds, that they may **glory** in your flesh, as if they had **disciples**, and were teachers. And what is the **proof** of this? For not even they themselves, he says, keep the Law; even if they did keep it, they would incur grave censure, but now their very purpose is corrupt.

*Ver. 14. But far be it from me to **glory**, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ.*

Truly this **symbol** is thought despicable; but it is so in the world's reckoning, and among **men**; in **Heaven** and among the faithful it is the highest **glory**. Poverty too is despicable, but it is our boast; and to be cheaply thought of by the public is a matter of laughter to them, but we are elated by it. So too is the Cross our boast. He does not say, I boast not, nor, I will not boast, but, Far be it from me that I should, as if he abominated it as absurd, and invoked the aid of **God** in order to his success therein. And what is the boast of the Cross? That Christ for my sake

took on Him the form of a slave, and bore His sufferings for me the slave, the enemy, the unfeeling one; yea He so loved me as to give Himself up to a curse for me. What can be comparable to this! If servants who only receive praise from their masters, to whom they are akin by nature, are elated thereby, how must we not boast when the Master who is very God is not ashamed of the Cross which was endured for us. Let us then not be ashamed of His unspeakable tenderness; He was not ashamed of being crucified for your sake, and will you be ashamed to confess His infinite solicitude? It is as if a prisoner who had not been ashamed of his King, should, after that King had come to the prison and himself loosed the chains, become ashamed of him on that account. Yet this would be the height of madness, for this very fact would be a special ground for boasting.

Ver. 14. Through which the world has been crucified unto me, and I unto the world.

What he here calls the world is not the heaven nor the earth, but the affairs of life, the praise of men, retinues, glory, wealth, and all such things as have a show of splendor. To me these things are dead. Such an one it behooves a Christian to be, and always to use this language. Nor was he content with the former putting to death, but added another, saying, and I unto the world, thus implying a double putting to death, and saying, They are dead to me, and I to them, neither can they captivate and overcome me, for they are dead once for all, nor can I desire them, for I too am dead to them. Nothing can be more blessed than this putting to death, for it is the foundation of the blessed life.

Ver. 15, 16. For neither is circumcision any thing, nor uncircumcision, but a new creature. And as many as shall walk by this rule, peace be upon them, and mercy, and upon the Israel of God.

Observe the power of the Cross, to what a pitch it has raised him! not only has it put to death for him all mundane affairs, but has set him far above the Old Dispensation. What can be comparable to this power? For the Cross has persuaded him, who was willing to be slain and to slay others for the sake of circumcision, to leave it on a level with uncircumcision, and to seek for things strange and marvellous and above the heavens. This our rule of life he calls a new creature, both on account of what is past, and of what is to come; of what is past, because our soul, which had grown old with the oldness of sin, has been all at once renewed by baptism, as if it had been created again. Wherefore we require a new and heavenly rule of life. And of things to come, because both the heaven and the earth, and all the creation, shall with our bodies be translated into incorruption. Tell me

not then, he says, of [circumcision](#), which now avails nothing; (for how shall it appear, when all things have undergone such a change?) but seek the new things of [grace](#). For they who pursue these things shall enjoy peace and amity, and may properly be called by the name of [Israel](#). While they who hold contrary sentiments, although they be descended from him ([Israel](#)) and bear his appellation, have yet fallen away from all these things, both the relationship and the name itself. But it is in their power to be [true Israelites](#), who keep this rule, who desist from the old ways, and follow after [grace](#).

Ver. 17. From henceforth let no man trouble me.

This he says not as though he were wearied or overpowered; he who chose to do and suffer all for his [disciples'](#) sake; he who said, Be instant in season, out of season; [2 Timothy 4:2](#) he who said, If perhaps God may give them repentance unto the [knowledge](#) of the [truth](#), and they may recover themselves out of the snare of the [devil](#); [2 Timothy 2:25-26](#) how shall he now become relaxed and fall back? Wherefore does he say this? It is to gird up their [slothful mind](#), and to impress them with deeper [fear](#), and to ratify the [laws](#) enacted by himself, and to restrain their perpetual fluctuations.

Ver. 17. For I bear branded on my body the marks of Jesus.

He says not, I have, but, I bear, like a man priding himself on trophies and royal ensigns. Although on a second thought it seems a disgrace, yet does this man vaunt of his wounds, and like military standard-bearers, so does he exult in bearing about these wounds. And why does he say this? More clearly by those wounds than by any argument, than by any language, do I vindicate myself, says he. For these wounds utter a voice louder than a trumpet against my opponents, and against those who say that I play the hypocrite in my teaching, and speak what may please men. For no one who saw a soldier retiring from the battle bathed in blood and with a thousand wounds, would dare to accuse him of cowardice and treachery, seeing that he bears on his body the [proofs](#) of his valor, and so ought you, he says, to judge of me. And if any one desire to hear my defence, and to learn my sentiments, let him consider my wounds, which afford a stronger [proof](#) than these words and letters. At the outset of his Epistle he evinced his sincerity by the suddenness of his conversion, at its close he proves it by the perils which attended his conversion. That it might not be objected that he had changed his course with upright intentions, but that he had not continued in the same purpose, he produces his trials, his dangers, his stripes as witnesses that he had so continued.

Then having clearly justified himself in every particular, and [proved](#) that he had spoken nothing from [anger](#) or malevolence, but had preserved his

affection towards them unimpaired, he again establishes this same point by concluding his discourse with a [prayer](#) teeming with a thousand blessings, in these words;

Ver. 18. The [grace](#) of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit, brethren. Amen.

By this last word he has sealed all that preceded it. He says not merely, with you, as elsewhere, but, with your spirit, thus withdrawing them from carnal things, and displaying throughout the beneficence of [God](#), and reminding them of the [grace](#) which they enjoyed, whereby he was able to recall them from all their judaizing [errors](#). For to have received the Spirit came not of the poverty of the Law, but of the righteousness which is by Faith, and to preserve it when obtained came not from Circumcision but from Grace. On this account he concluded his exhortation with a [prayer](#), reminding them of [grace](#) and the [Spirit](#), and at the same time addressing them as brethren, and supplicating God that they might continue to enjoy these blessings, thus providing for them a twofold security. For both [prayer](#) and teaching, tended to the same thing and together became to them as a double wall. For teaching, reminding them of what benefits they enjoyed, the rather kept them in the doctrine of the [Church](#); and [prayer](#), invoking [grace](#), and exhorting to an enduring constancy, permitted not the Spirit to depart from them. And He abiding in them, all the [error](#) of such doctrines as they held was shaken off like dust.

John Chrysostom