



My Beloved Ones,

As we continue towards the second week of Triodion, the theme of this Sunday, the Sunday of the Prodigal Son is repentance: God, our Father, who is infinitely loving and compassionate, waits for us with a spirit of forgiveness and tenderness; just as the Father waited for His Prodigal Son, who “...*was dead, and is alive; he was lost, and is found*” (Luke 15:32).

In this week’s Letter from St. Paul’s to the Corinthians, the Apostle continues providing comfort to the persecuted Christians by reminding them that, “...*it is the God who said, ‘Let light shine out of darkness,’ who has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ*” (II Corinthians 4:6). This darkness that Paul speaks of is not just a historical reference to the persecutions I wrote of last week, it can also refer to an individual’s state in our own society.

Paul reminds them, as he did Timothy, that “*We are afflicted in every way, but not crushed; perplexed, but not driven to despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed; always carrying in the body the death of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may also be manifested in our bodies*” (II Corinthians 4:8-10). Like the Prodigal Son, the reality of evil in this world, is that it seeks to destroy the “*earthen vessels*” that are our bodies, whether through forces outside ourselves (as with the persecution in Paul’s time), or from within our own fallen natures. We too are afflicted, crushed, perplexed, persecuted and struck down in so many ways throughout our lives, as we run pridefully from God toward the passions that give us temporary pleasure, just as the Prodigal Son did.

However, St. Paul knows that all we must do is to place our faith and trust in the Lord. We, as Prodigal Sons and Daughters, must, in our weakest moments, return to Him, with the same humility of the Publican, and seek God’s loving embrace once more. We must have “...*the same spirit of faith as he had who wrote, ‘I believed, and so I spoke’*” (II Corinthians 4:8-13). Through this belief, we must speak to our Father as did the Prodigal Son when He said, “*Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you; I am no longer worthy to be called your son*” (Luke 15:21). When we speak this fact—that we cannot do anything without God’s help—we are entrusting our lives to our loving Creator, who “...*will raise us also with Jesus...*” (II Corinthians 4:14), where we too shall be welcomed to the merry banquet that shall be experienced forever by those who enter the Kingdom of Heaven.

+ALEXIOS

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