

“OVIDIUS” UNIVERSITY OF CONSTANȚA
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THESIS SUMMARY

***THE FIGHT FOR OBTAINING THE SALVATION CROWN,
AFTER THE PAULINE EPISTLES***

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 - A. Editions of the Holy Scripture
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- II. Dictionaries, encyclopedias
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After two millennia of Christian confession, it still exists plenty of wrong ideas about what salvation means and how it can be appropriated, because there are made counts and it is used the world wisdom about pleasure and effort, when it is chosen between the complete fulfillment of the most beautiful wishes in the eternal life, but obtained with a lot and lengthy efforts, despite the eternal torment, but benefiting of the worldly pleasures imaginings, now, even if mixed with pain.

And however, a serious problem, even vital, with which the all-time Christian confronts has meaning and value only by his concern for his own salvation and gaining it through the communion with Christ as member of His body, the Church.

Yet, this is not a simple and easy realization because, in a “natural” way the worldly people are not interested in the spiritual world, and especially demotivated, *“for the word of the cross madness is for the ones who perish”* (1 Corinthians I, 18).

However, when the worldly “politeness” avoids to express itself, towards this “craziness”, it is invoked the excuse of some capacities and exceptional men, which can be the only capable of the Christian life performances. It is painful that the worldly people do not manifest the will of knowing truly the Christianity, due to a conflictual and in the same time rejection and interest attitude. In the eyes of the world, the Christian “problem” is dual, very pleasant when Christians are talking about the dearest hopes of the people, but a real craziness when it shows the world how these hopes can be actually realized.

Thus, it is very pleasant to talk about love and forgiveness in the most ideal way, but is madness to love and especially forgive the enemies.

Also, is also pleasant to talk about the love between a man and a woman, but is madness to talk about virginity or loyalty, even in thoughts. And it is pleasant to talk about help and charity acts, but it is madness to give everything you have, to unconditionally listen to your superior, to refrain from food, drink, sex and other “pleasures” for God and eternal life. And crazier than anything, is a Christian that talks about God and devil, about the eternal reward and punishment and about martyrs. And for what all this “craziness”? Only to save one soul, of which science cannot pronounce itself whether it exists or not? Obviously, even if we would continue in this manner, definitely we wouldn’t reach to the “same” result.

Fortunately, we are Christians and have the will to know Christianity and God helps us with the wisdom he gifted to the holy fathers who made ascetic efforts and left us spiritual treasures who they share with us.

Here is why, in this paper: *“The fight for obtaining the salvation crown, after the Pauline epistles”*, we try to present the Christian teaching about salvation, and namely in the context occasioned by the epistles of Saint Apostle Paul, but more exact, we will try to present the Christian Orthodox teaching about the fight that a Christian has after the example of the Saint Apostle, to receive the salvation crown, and we talk about the “crown” to strengthen the idea of the necessary effort in this fight for the saving of our soul. Evidently, it is improper to say that we save ourselves through personal effort, because not us, but Christ, saves us, and because God loves our freedom, asks for our agreement and participation through faith and good Acts to save ourselves. Through our efforts we can prove our live belief and thus Christ will mediate and work together to save us.

Being concentrated not only on the fighter example, but especially on the teachings of Saint Apostle Paul about saving, I’ve structured the paper in two big parts, with chapters and subchapters and accordingly, we will present in the first part the information of theoretical nature, and in the second part we will develop them by applying those of practical nature.

The title of our paper contains a promise “obtaining salvation” and a context “according to the Pauline epistles”, and the words “fight” and “crown” indicate the ways used and the sign of fulfilling or achieving the target, as essential and specific dimensions of an active Christian life.

The paper is conducted in four big chapters, each chapter being segmented in more subchapters with the purpose of an optimal highlighting and analysis of the researched subject:

CHAPTER I - Σωτηρία in the horizon of the old and New Testament theology

CHAPTER II – Salvation and faith. The theological-rationale dexterity of Saint Apostle Paul

CHAPTER III – From the Fleshly to the spiritual life: *κατα σαρκα περιπατοῦσιν ἀλλὰ κατα πνεῦμα* (Romans 8, 4-18). Spiritual coordinates in the Pauline Theology

CHAPTER IV – Virtues maximization until the “perfected state of the man” - *ἀνδρα τελειον* (Ephesians 4, 13)

The teaching about *salvation* is central in Christianity. In a way or another we find it in the whole belief teaching of the Church. It is in the same time an actual problem. Christianity is called to show, to give testimony about the contribution it brings in the service of the man in his desire of living, to be perfected and eternal. Almost in every inter-theological meetings, in the theological dialogues bi- or multi-lateral, it occupies a special place.

In this paper we try to describe a small and concentrated part of the Orthodox teachings about salvation, but, especially those personal acts which are contained in the Christian fighting and qualify it as extraordinary and justified to receive the promised blessing of the salvation crown, because the presenting of the entire teaching of salvation is so vast, that it contains the whole faith teaching of the Church, Christology, soteriology, ecclesiology and eschatology. x

Each of these dimensions of Christian faith teachings offer an image of Saint Apostle Paul's testament to all Christians: "I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. Now there is in store for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to me on that day--and not only to me, but also to all who have longed for his appearing." (2 Timothy IV, 7-8).

From the Acts we know that for a lot of time, Saint Apostle Paul It was a ruthless persecutor of the Church (Acts 8, 3), being present at the murdering with rocks of Saint Martyr Archdeacon Stephen (Acts 7, 58; 8, 1), but not much after, gone in a new mission of this kind, Lord Christ reveals Himself on the road to Damascus, moment in which "Saul" converts to the faith in Christ (Acts, chapter 9), becomes Saint Apostle Paul, ("the apostle of nations") and engages with the same zeal in the fight for obtaining the crown in living the Christian belief, namely towards his own salvation and to all shepherding entrusted to him.

Besides, the most important texts that explicitly use the symbol of the "crown" and "coronation" in the fight for the full exercise of belief towards salvation, is in its majority, in the Epistles of the Saint Apostle, (1 Corinthians IX, 24-27; 2 Timothy II, 3-5; IV, 8; Hebrews II, 6-7, 9-10; James I, 12; Peter V, 4; Acts II, 10; III, 11).

Only two of them refer to the crown obtained by fight, and is interesting that precisely the "perfection" claimed by the Corinthians believers determine the Saint Apostle to argue with them and to show them that all they consider to realize can be without value, when their efforts are lacking humility, love and listening to the Lord Christ, namely they are made required arrangement.

Together with the current esthetic significance, of *adornment*, the term “crown” has in the Holy Scripture, the use of “reward” and spiritual or physical “sign/symbol” of victory and power, being associated both to the positive situations: “royal crown” (2 Kings I, 10; Est I, 11; Ps V, 12; VIII, 5; XX, 3; CII, 4; Proverbs I, 9; IV, 9; XII, 4; XIV, 24; XVI, 33; XVII, 6; Song of Solomon III, 11; Isaiah XXII, 17; Isaiah XXVIII, 5; LXII, 3, 10; Iz XVI, 12; XXIII, 42; XXVIII, 12; Zechariah VI, 11, 14; Idt III, 7; Ba V, 2; Sol IV, 2; V, 16; Ecclesiastes I, 11; Sir I, 18; VI, 31; XV, 6; XXV, 6; XXXII, 2), but also to the negative ones: “*He has stripped me of glory and from my proud forehead He took my crown*” (Job XIX, 9; XXXII, 36; Isaiah XXVIII, 1, 3; Jeremiah XIII, 18; Lamentations II, 15; V, 16), and offensive ones (Matthew XXVII, 29; Mc XV, 17; In XIX, 2, 5). In the New Testament, Saint Apostle Paul uses the term in a positive way of recognition of some exceptional realizations committed in dramatic conditions. On the one hand the apostle uses the term with a “worldly” references at athletes as exponents of realizations in the Adamic world (1 Corinthians IX, 25), but he especially uses the term with a “spiritual” references for the Christians that realized their mission in Christ (1 Corinthians IX, 25; Philippians IV, 1; 1 Thessalonians II, 19; 2 Timothy II, 5; IV, 8; Hebrews II, 7, 9; James I, 12; I Peter V, 4; Acts II, 10; III, 11; IV, 4, 10; VI, 2).

According to the example used by the apostle, the Christian is like an athlete: an athlete of Christ (1 Corinthians IX, 24-27), and in antiquity the athletes were subjected before the conquest to a very strict regime: “*For ten months and even more, a rigorous and tyrannous regulation was fixing the candidate (at the conquest) the hours and length of the exercises, eating and sleeping... He had to arm himself against hunger and thirst, cold and heat, sun and dust, fatigue and weather*”. He was banned from eating certain foods and drink wine or any other sprits, he had to be restrictive at the table; to leave any sexual relation, living in full chastity (some were remaining in chastity their entire life); to sleep in a strong bed. “*And all these for a crown of leaves that will adorn the head of the happy winner*”.

In contrast, Christ’s athlete doesn’t have in front a corruptible crown, but the non-sere crown of eternal happiness. It would be proper that he should impose a restraint regime, disciplining the being and his habits so he can prevail.

Interpreting the example of the athlete which Apostle Paul gave to the Corinthians to clarify the nature of the efforts committed by the Christians in the fight of obtaining salvation and says: “*showing that it is useful to be humble with others, because this is the highest*

perfection, which he himself did it, through the fact that he didn't seek help from the disciples, as the others apostles did, and afterwards he descended the lowest than all, making known the settlements to all, as also the perfection and humbleness, Saint Apostle Paul doesn't tell them yet clearly, so they wouldn't remain ashamed, but makes them understand that what is happening between them, is a futile work and without purpose, although it seems to come from their perfection, but everything they do, they sin in Christ, that they lose their brothers and have nothing useful from knowing the perfection if they don't add also love, and for elucidation he gives them an example with a general validity, and says: "Don't you know that those that run in the stadium, run together, but only one receives the prize?"

Evidently, at Christians, that "one" single winner is Christ, and He won for all those who believe in Him, and through the used example, the Saint Apostle doesn't tell the Corinthians that only one from all will save himself, because at the "Christians", all the faith "runners" have already won in Christ, and all be crowned because they do not fight each other, but each with their own sins (only of course, if they will run "good"), but rather tells us that is useful to each one of us to have a burning zeal as of the one single runner that wins at races.

As in the arena many go, yet not many are crowned, and only one receives the prize, because he is the most capable, and as to reach victory it is not sufficient to only watch the fight, or to only anoint the body with oil and go in combat, also here it is not sufficient only to believe and to "randomly" fight, because we will have nothing, if we do not use everything we have to clearly win, and we will only assume that we are winners after how perfected we think we are, it is let to be understood, and said: *"Run so as to take it"*. Therefore, they didn't take it yet – says St. John Chrysostom. But the apostle doesn't only argue with them, but by saying "so", further shows them also the way how to take the prize.

"And – it says-, anyone that fights is temperate in all". And here "all" means to stop also from *the gluttony of the womb and from licentiousness and drunkenness, and in the end from all passions*. This happens even in the worldly fights, where they are not allowed, for example those who fight, nor to get drunk during the fight, nor to raffish, so they won't weaken their power, and nor to occupy himself with other things at that time, but being away from all these, the athletes think and work only for the victory in the fights. Thus, if there is so, and only one takes the crown, then the more here, where the crowns are more and the race is bigger, because not only one is crowned, but all are and the prize is so big, that it defeats all the efforts made. And

showing the difficulties of the saint apostle shows them also the advantages, that we shouldn't fight one against each other, but together, and all in Christ: *"And those, to take a broken crown, and us, an unbroken one"*.

And then urging them with the example of the fights from outside, the apostle goes in the middle and continues: *"Well, that's how I run, not randomly"*.

But what does *"not randomly"* mean? *"I have my sight pointed to a certain goal, and not in vain without a purpose like you. Because with what is useful if you enter the heathen temples and by this you're showing your so-called perfection? With nothing, and I'm not so; all that I do, I do for the salvation of the neighbor. If I show my perfection, for my neighbor I do it; if I am humble, for them I do it; if I surpass Peter in that I do not take anything from you, I do it for those near, so they don't go crazy; if I descend the lowest of all, cutting around and shaving my head, still for them I do it, for not to deceive them."* And this is what *"not randomly"* means.

"But why, he says, do you eat in the temples of the idols, tell me? But you do not have any blessed reason." Food will not bring you near to God that neither if you will eat, will abound, nor if you will not eat, will miss" (1 Corinthians VIII, 8). Therefore, you run as it would happen without a purpose. This means *"randomly"*.

But *"this is how I fight, not kicking the air"*, he says, and with this again talks about the Corinthians, that were fighting without a purpose and use, as if they were only kicking the air. While, *"I have someone to kick, namely the devil; you however are not kicking him, but stay impassive in front of him"*.

But more, not only that he shows them the difference between the chaotic, concentrated and oriented fight towards actual objectives, but also shows them how to gain this "good accustom": *"But I torment my body and subject it to slavery; lest, preaching to others, I myself to become worthless"*. Here they are shown as subject to the womb lust, whom brakes were let free, cloy under the mask of perfection, as said above and mourning, but softens the showing that he himself fights hardly with the sins, so that no one will get discouraged in the fights for virtue, which he recognizes them as being hard.

"But I torment my body and subject it to slavery". And here the Saint Apostle leaves the fighting and racing symbolic, and doesn't say "I destroy him" or "I punish him" – because the body isn't the man's enemy – but only *"I torment and subject it to slavery"*, which only makes the lord and warrior; the scholar, and not the enemy; the teacher, and not the corrupter.

Let's not forget that the apostle himself asks for the church's help in his choice, giving an eloquent example of how the Christian conduct must be: *"In the end, brothers, pray for us, that the message of the Lord may spread rapidly and be honored"* (2 Thessalonians III, 1). The targeted dimension here by Saint Apostle Paul isn't the geographical one, spatial, of "propagation" of the Gospel, but historical, temporal, of a road that must be rapidly crossed in a single direction, of that of the eschaton, at the end of which the choice becomes its own "glorious" crown.

"Lest preaching to others, me myself to become worthless". And if here the apostle himself, that learned so much, is afraid, even after he preached the Gospel, and after he made himself angel in flesh and he showed such great care to worldwide, then, if we compare our "achievements" with the ones of the saint apostle, what can we say about us?

And the apostle warns us that we should look at this "achievements" and: *"Don't think that if you believed it is enough for your salvation. That if for me, who I preached and learned and many others I have done, and yet are not enough only these, of not making undefeated and all others mine, then the more you."*

Also, the Christian is compared with the Saint Apostle as with a soldier: he is the soldier of Christ, armed with the weapons of justice (Ephesians VI, 13-17), so that he can fight with the enemies of their salvation. And so how the soldier from the army, to be pleasant to his superior, doesn't get involve in the things of the ordinary life, gives up to himself and to other pleasures, the soldier of Christ seeks to be pleasant to Christ (II Timothy II, 3-4; I Timothy VI, 11-12) under the command of which he fights and gives up at everything that is not according to his will.

Thus so that the sin would not master in our body and soul, but in both to be glorified God (Rm VI, 12-22; 1 Tess V, 23; Eph IV, 22-32; 1 Co VI, 15-20; Col III, 9), the Apostle urges the believers, because from the love of the people the Son of God embodied Himself, sacrificed on the cross and rose to save all people. And His work in the world is the testimony of God's presence in the world, is prove of love and possibility of man's communion with God, reason and purpose itself of the entire world's existence.

Saint Apostle Paul is the first and most prolific writer of epistles of the New Testament, and if the Church could develop early a theological systematic thinking, this are largely due the fourteen Pauline epistles, but, we do not have motives to think that Saint Apostle Paul cultivated

the epistolary type as such, with the intention of creating a literary work and probably, he created the letters in an absolutely circumstantial way, under the pressure of some Christian situations or events created by him, that were asking him an intervention of proper clarification, reason why have remained over the ages always current, firstly, because of the work of the Holy Spirit that assisted and coordinated alike both the kerygmatic work, and the missionary one of the Apostle Paul.

His theology, exposed in epistles is one of the most fecund and profound Christian thoughts, and an essential thing that Saint Apostle Paul said in his epistles is the fact that obtaining the salvation is necessary for all Christians, being by excellence a religious act that sees the entire life of the man and is about man's relation with God.

Starting from calling to repentance by Saint John the Baptist, which was preparing the believers for the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ which began his preaching with the same thought: "*Repent, for the kingdom of heaven has come near.*" (Matthew III, 2; IV, 17), we find in the Christian life a fight calling for the renewal of the world, and the establishment of God's kingdom on earth and in heaven, as the Lord taught.

The Christian life is the Truth that sets free, namely a fierce and eternal battle for love and against the sin and wickedness, because it demonstrates the eternal quality of freedom, which the devil despises, even before the man was created.

Fortunately that this fight is already won, and at the creation from new of the man through the sacrifice of Christ, has evidently become for each Christian that the life here is a fight, a trial place, a stadium, and the after-life is the reward, the crown, the prizes. As an athlete must fight in the arena with sweat, dust, oppressiveness, nerves and podvig, so must the righteous must suffer here many and endure all with manhood, if he wants to receive the shining crown on the other side. Starting yet from the beauty of the forbidden tree we can say that God has put the man in the fighting situation, first in fighting his own temptations, and after the snake's temptation, God has "*activated*" – if we can say this – the fight against Satan, and that will lead to the defeat of Satan in the Son of Man, in Christ, when He establishes: "*I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and hers; he will crush your head, and you will strike his heel.*"(Genesis III, 15). But the man alone cannot succeed and for this the Creator Himself receives to fight for His creation and becomes Teacher with the act and word in this fight. And because the enemy has deceived the man with the promise of divinity

(Genesis III, 5), now he himself is deceived, because God has become Man and showed in the same time the kindness, wisdom, justice and power of God.

God “*wants that all the people to be saved and the knowledge of the truth to come*” (2 Timothy II, 4). That’s why, the biggest concern of the Christian in his life is the salvation of the soul, because: “*What good is it for someone to gain the whole world, yet forfeit their soul? Or what can anyone give in exchange for their soul?*” (Mark VIII, 36-37).

As we have seen in the course of the paper, the subjective salvation is the process in which we engage with all the powers to gain salvation. But what does it mean for a man to be saved? In the Eastern Church, on the basis of uncreated energies teaching, it is used to characterize the union of soul with God, the daring term of *holiness, deification or participation at the deification*, which describes a living of deification or participation at the deified life by grace, and this “*state*” of perfection in which is brought the Christian and the acts committed in this sense is a main dimension of the salvation of which we talk in this paper.

An important role on the road to salvation has the divine grace which is the uncreated divine energy, shed by the Holy Spirit upon us, through the resurrected and exalted humanity of Christ; the grace is the communion with Christ in the Holy Spirit. The grace is shared to the people through the Sacraments, which are ways of sharing of the divine grace and are absolutely necessary for salvation.

By His death on the cross, the Son of God has created, or recreated the world, or better said has founded the recreation to which fulfillment we are called to collaborate.

Therefore salvation is a “*real recreation*” of the human nature. “*God became man for that the man can become God*”, the Church Fathers say. Resurrecting with Christ in the depth of the sacramental mystery of the Church, the Christian begins a new life, becomes “*the new man*”. However, it must be mentioned that the salvation work is a thenadric work. Both in the objective salvation and in the subjective one we meet the synergic cooperation between God and man.

Salvation is a divine act absolutely free and universal, but an act that requested the consent of the man and was realized through his consent. God did not save or does not automatically save the people without their will and consent. The salvation and man’s renewal become real through the relation with Christ and by the submission of believers to eternal life. Since we baptize we become partakers of the resurrection. The baptize as death in Christ is the beginning of the subjective salvation. Only then the straightening is perfected, only then it is full

the manifestation of holiness. Until then the believer is obliged to work, as Saint Apostle Paul says: “*Continue to work out your salvation with fear and trembling*” (Philippians II, 12).

The work of salvation is the fulfillment of God’s love towards the world and the will of our Lord Jesus Christ: “*He that wants all the people to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth*” (1 Timothy II, 4). Christ gives us another life, we become members and receive power to prepare for the eternal life.

The Savior has come in the world to reconcile by His death and rise the people of God. This reconciliation of God contains all the “*righteous and sinner*” people. But salvation is gained individually by atonement; it passes from the calling of all people to the worship of God by each and at the living in Church.

The subjective salvation is not outside us, but in ourselves, consisting of our justification in Christ. On this way we reach the purpose of creation, namely we become sons of God – by grace.

Therefore, for the Orthodox Church the Christian salvation has two aspects:

A) The redemptive action of mankind globally or virtually, by Jesus Christ, by sacrifice on the cross, is called *objective salvation, redeeming or universal reconciliation of man with God*.

B) The approach, by each man, of the effects of Incarnation, Death, Resurrection and Rise, is called *subjective salvation* or personal, or simply *salvation, atonement or the blessing of the man*. This paper is accomplished personally by each Christian by collaboration between the grace of the Holy Spirit, faith and good acts, for that the man could be redeemed by the sacrifice in Christ, to obtain eternal happiness.

The subjective salvation is the together-work of God and man, through which he appropriates the fruits of the sacrifice from the cross of the Savior, being released from the slavery of the sin and death, starting from the Baptize and Anointing a new life, through which he becomes righteous in front of God. This new life develops and strengthens through the collaboration of the Christian with the grace, as fruit of faith, manifested through good acts, and the reward that he will receive will be eternal happiness.

Being the creator of man, God uses, during and after the end of history, the right to reward the man, either with the punishment of eternal torments in hell, either with the reward of

the eternal life in the kingdom of heaven, and not from the worthiness of the man, but by love towards His Son Jesus Christ and towards the people.

Saint Apostle Paul speaks about the personal salvation not only by a new life in Christ, but also as justice, however, it is not about the legalistic righteousness of the Old Testament, founded on a Law that remained exterior to the man, but about the justice of God, which becomes interior for the believer, as a new life in Christ, through His Spirit. *“And if Christ lives within you, so even though your body will die because of sin, the Spirit gives you life because you have been made right with God. And if the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead is living in you, he who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies because of his Spirit who lives in you.”* (Romans VIII, 10-11).

The *justice* brought by Christ means *a new internal life*, to transform the human in Christ, not only a simple exterior and ritual straightening. Maybe that’s why, to the Roman-Catholics where salvation is called *justice* (only with a juridical meaning), in Orthodoxy, the term of *salvation* has more meanings (according to the New Testament), expressed in different terms, which complete without containing completely or exhausting the meaning and highlight the new life of Christ as an interior life through the work of the Holy Spirit.

The whole lifting work of the Christian’s life needs from his part of *faith and good acts*, but only after when the foundation was placed by God through the instilling of the grace from Baptism, and the entire process is then continued and perfects itself during all the days through the *Holy Sacraments*. And all these conditions must work together because, nor faith, nor the good acts, do not solely save and only together and by the power of the divine Grace.

The Orthodox teaching calls the divine *grace* the objective condition of man’s rebirth in Christ, and *the faith and good acts* the subjective conditions of the rebirth.

The grace is conceived by the Orthodox teaching as an uncreated energy which emanates from the deification and is shared by the Holy Spirit to the Christians in the Church, through the resurrected and glorified humanity of Jesus Christ. Anyone can receive with goodwill the grace of God, but it can also reject it: *“Here I am! I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in and eat with that person, and they with me.”* (Revelation III, 20).

The absence of the Christians visible encounter with the Savior after the ascension, it is fulfilled by the *grace* shed in Church, through the *Holy Sacraments*, with real ontological tracks

for us, because it makes the presence of the Savior felt towards all people: *“And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.”* (Matthew XXVIII, 20).

For this we can say that salvation and the communion restoration with God, it is the ratio of our meeting with the Savior, which is the Way, Truth and Life and which tells us that: *“Nobody comes to My Father but through Me”* (John XIV, 6). And the necessity of the grace for salvation results from the universality of the ancient sin: *“For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God; and all are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus.”* (Romans III, 23-24); as without the acquired grace through Jesus Christ, nor anybody can will, nor to work for their salvation: *“For it is God who works in you to will and to act in order to fulfill his good purpose.”* (Philippians II, 13).

However, how the people receive it, the gift of salvation isn't the result of the personal worthiness of man and God offers His grace freely, because of the redeeming work accomplished by the Savior Christ, how Saint Apostle Paul tells us: *“Us, which we were dead through our mistakes, made us alive together with Christ..., For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith, and this is not from yourselves: it is the gift of God; not by works, so that no one can boast. For we are God's masterpiece, built in Jesus Christ so we can do good things, which God prepared them previously, to walk in them”.* (Ephesians II, 8-10).

Therefore, the objective condition of opening and intensifying the collaboration of man with the *grace*, which is not created and doesn't belong to the man, being an uncreated energy, and is to the man exterior by nature, but interior by work, and especially as interior as the communion with God is deeper. And the communion gifts itself to the extent in which the Christian sanctifies itself, namely by the virtues gained and strengthened through ascetic efforts, of the good acts and participation at the Holy Sacraments.

Alongside the objective condition of the grace, the salvation asks for the subjective conditions of the: faith and good acts.

The necessity of *faith* with *repentance* for salvation was shown by Christ the Redeemer Himself to the apostles, when He sent to preaching the holy apostles and told them: *“Go into all the world and preach the gospel to all creation. Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved, but whoever does not believe will be condemned.”* (Mark XVI, 15-16); both in the baptize of John: *“Repent, for the kingdom of heaven has come near...and they were baptized by him in the*

Jordan River, confessing their sins.” (Mark III, 2, 6); and especially in the Christian baptize: “Repent and be baptize each one of you in the name of Jesus Christ.” (Acts, II, 38).

The same necessity of faith shows also Saint Apostle Paul when he says: *“And without faith it is impossible to please God” (Hebrews XI, 6), and in another time: “If you declare with your mouth, ‘Jesus is Lord’, and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved”.* (Romans X, 9).

As an intellectual act, faith is our free memberships at the divine Revelation, however, for salvation, this faith isn’t sufficient, but necessary *“working faith through love”* (Galatians V, 6), because the *good acts* are those that show the face of Christ in the spiritual life of the believer. Starting from faith, the good acts confirm, verify and perfect faith, permanently strengthening the power of the soul for a continuous renewal of life in Christ, to the *“mature state of the man, to the measure of the fullness of Christ”* (Ephesians IV, 13).

The teaching of our Church claims that together with the *faith* are necessary for salvation and *good acts*, however not the acts with personal relation of the believer with Christ, namely those committed founded on an impersonal normative law, but the acts that spring from faith and by the power of Christ, because they increase in us the union with Christ and likeness with Him.

Therefore, is obvious that salvation comes through faith, but, not by any kind of belief, but also by acts. Namely by the faith in God which is visible in acts of love. And is not just about a faith of Christians, but about a faith in God of all people. Saint Apostle James says in this regard: *“What good is it, my brothers and sisters, if someone claims to have faith but has no deeds Can such faith save them? Suppose a brother or a sister is without clothes and daily food. If one of you says to them, ‘Go in peace; keep warm and well fed’, but does nothing about their physical needs, what good is it? In the same why, faith by itself, if it is not accompanied by action, is dead.”* (James II, 14-17).

Also, in the painting of Judgement, presented by the Savior, we see that any believer will be judged by the committed acts: *“When the Son of Man comes in His glory, and all the angels with Him, He will sit on His glorious throne. And all the nations will be gathered before Him, and He will separate the people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. He will put the sheep on his right and the goats on his left.”* (Matthew XXV, 31-33).

Also the Savior tells us: *“Not everyone who says to Me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only the one who does the will of my Father who is in heaven.* (Matthew

VII, 21). So, sheep or goats, good or bad, people will be judged by their good and bad acts and not by their worldly evolution and development, and Saint Apostle Paul confirming this tells us that: *“For we must all appear before the judgement seat of Christ, so that each of us may receive what is due us for the things done while in the body, whether good or bad.”* (2 Corinthians V, 10), because the inheritance of the kingdom of heaven or the exclusion from it, will be made by the fulfillment or incompleteness of the criteria by the Christians of the carnal mercy acts (Matthew XXV, 34-45).

In numerous occasions, Saint Apostle Paul highlights that, at the righteous justice, God will reward each one by their acts (Romans II, 6; 2 Corinthians V, 10; 1 Timothy VI, 18, etc.), and by the impulse of Saint Apostle Paul, addressed to the Philippians: *“...continue to work out your salvation with fear and trembling”* (Philippians II, 12), results that salvation is not a simple gift from God, nor an act or work of the man, but a durable action that has a beginning, gradually develops and is committed through the together-work of God and man.

As a synergistically work the salvation is the fruit of collaboration between God and man, in order that *“the sower and reaper may be glad together”* (John IV, 36).

By the interweaving of faith with the acts Saint Apostle James speaks to us: *“You see that a person is considered righteous by what they do and not by faith alone”* (James II, 24), and: *“Faith without acts is dead”* (James II, 17).

The same salvation, isn't “something” that can be “cropped”, but a gift and we can receive it, however only if we fight for it with all our strength. For this, the Orthodox teaching highlights the contribution importance of the man to his own salvation, alongside the Holy Spirit, in communion with Christ and the other believers. The Eastern Church even confronted with the necessity of specifying the subjective conditions of salvation long before the Reform, claiming the implication of the entire psychophysical constitution of man in the salvation work through the transfiguration of the human nature under the power of the divine grace after the model of the Savior's Transfiguration on the Tabor Mountain, which categorical rejects the Protestant teaching about salvation only by *faith*, without *acts*, and the Catholic one by *abundantly merits*.

In the patristic thought, obtaining the salvation is made by fighting, because the man was deceived to fall into sin and wasn't created with a sinful nature, but inherited from the protoparents an ill nature, which was corrupted by passions, and in its turn corrupts every man that inherits it. The man is born as a sinner, but, let's himself lured by the impulses to the passion

towards which, his own nature pushes him. The necessity of satisfying the body's needs inevitably leads to passions of the mortal people to survive, however the sin is of the personal will and not the nature, which although ill remains permanently open to the collaboration with the grace for the restoration of the image with which was created, prove that getting away from the tyranny of the death bringing lusts is realized by good acts, as acts of the personal will.

As Saint Apostle Paul said to the Philippians: "*Brothers, I do not consider myself yet to have taken hold of it.*" (Philippians III, 13), salvation is a work that is won always, it never ends, and once obtained, it must be kept by the same conditions, because the path of the believer to salvation requires a continuous purification of the spiritual life, of any kind of filthiness, of any passion or sin. Without this effort claimed by the elimination of each evil from his being, the Christian could never accomplish the purpose of salvation, of communion with God's holiness.

The Holy Fathers say that man ordains himself the salvation and all that is about salvation, because, as an ascetic act, the salvation work is what defines very much the Orthodox Christian conception of salvation, which cannot exist without the exercise of giving up at all that means sin, inclination or passionate impulse, because we find out in the first epistle to the Corinthians that against salvation are the passions and vices: "*...Neither the sexually immoral nor idolaters nor adulterers nor men who have sex with men, nor thieves nor the greedy nor drunkards nor slanderers nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God.*" (1 Corinthians VI, 9-10).

Interpreting the Epistles of Saint Apostle Paul, the Holy Fathers approach a vast thematic of concerns, that aim reaching the ideal of Christian perfection, by everyone, by the work of virtues, which is not made simply like any other work but only by a fierce battle, which in Orthodoxy implies three states of spiritual life in grace: *the calling* or preparation of strengthening, *strengthening*, salvation or sanctification and *glorification* from the eternal life, on the basis of the Holy Scripture: "*...those he called, he also justified; those he justified, he also glorified.*" (Romans VIII, 30).

The spiritual fight develops with the *weapons of God* which are gifted to the man and can be identified by: truth, righteousness, confession zeal, faith, hope, and God's Word. The adversaries of the Christian are: firstly he himself through the ancient man, the bodily man; then and the devil. Each of these adversaries are the irreconcilable enemies of life, holiness and virtue, and accordingly the ascetic will orientate his resistance and attacks against the passions,

temptations and deceptions. In the Roman-Catholic theology the accent is on the mortification of the body, and the ascetic conception is to destroy the body considered bad by nature. In contrast, the Eastern theology recommends the discipline and not destroying the body. Even if in the Holy Scripture it is used the word killing of the ancient man, they do not refer at the biological death but at the elimination of passions fixed as bad habits in the flesh, with the conviction brought by some bad ideas. Thus the Eastern asceticism recommends the body discipline to gain his control exercising the virtues to wipe the bad habits concomitant with the rebirth of good habits gifted to the man at his creation. In this way, the body discipline completes through the discipline of the soul. And while the bad tendencies are wiped, the good tendencies are revived, through ascetic effort and the power of the Spirit and are fixed in virtues through good acts.

We know that the passions and virtues can be opposed theoretically and mainly to each passion corresponds a virtue which once worked leads to the wiping of the passion appropriate to it. This principle is extremely important in asceticism, and is applied suitably for his maximum efficiency. That's why, we've exposed in the paper passions and virtues, with a particular importance in the Christian life and spiritual fight, but not rigorously, as passion pairs and opposed virtue, but according to their relevance, on the one hand of the more visible passions from the life of the Christian, and on the other hand of the necessary virtues for the spiritual perfection. Necessarily it must be said we cannot talk about passions or virtues separately, because showing a passion we talk in the same time also about the passions which provokes but also about the virtue which covers and that must be freed, as when exposing a virtue, we have in sight both the passion or passions that darken it and the virtues which supports and gives birth through the work. For this reason we tried to present a generalized list at maximum, and described those passions and those virtues that have a source role for others in their turn, and also the numerous effects upon others. Passions that can give birth to other passions, passions that can darken not only one virtue but many, and also, virtues that give birth to other virtues and that support and develop other virtues. Obviously, we described in a very brief way the passions, using the general list of the sins, and presented the destructions which the spirit produces, but also the way they can be wiped through asceticism. But we have insisted and developed more the part destined to the virtues, which we set according to their classification in the theological virtues, evangelical virtues and cardinal virtues. Also, we have presented extensively the role of

the virtues in the Christian life, knowing that they will be crowned through the Christian communion with God.

As a spiritual attitude the ascetic fight must start immediately the believer received the “good news” of the kingdom. Here is why the Orthodox Church requires the repentance of all believers, and rejects the opinion of those who consider as a model, the case of the saved thief, in the last moment of his life, on the cross, because he was a possible exception then but, today there is not possible for a man, after he heard the Gospel, to live a life full of viciousness and sins, to repent in the moment of death. Even if the life of the Christian has the perspective of eternity, his salvation must start now, today, right after we hear the “good news” of the kingdom.

More, the purity of the soul is a natural state of the man, that doesn't need to be added but regained. That's why it is also possible and necessary obtaining the virtues, and not only the purification of the passions, because the effort of the continuous spiritual purification, must be woven harmoniously with the spiritual renewal, and growth in virtue, shown through good acts, until we reach the *“mature state, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ”* (Ephesians IV, 13).

However, even after we fulfill the necessary conditions, we cannot have the certitude of salvation, but only at the end of life we have the promise, that we will receive the “crown of justice”, or the “prize of victory” (2 Timothy IV, 6-8; Revelation II, 10; III, 11. Due to this fact and because it permanently exists the possibility of falling, it is proper that in humility to “work with fear and tremble for the perfection of our salvation” (Philippians II, 12), and, this “incertitude” will exercise a positive influence upon us, constituting a permanent impulse at committing good acts and perfecting ourselves. In other words, for the fight of the Christian it is more useful the promise and not the certitude of salvation.

Interpreting the Epistle to the Philippians, the Holy Fathers highlight that if God created the man by His will, in return He does not save him without his will and participation, and that's why Saint Apostle Paul tells us “*work*”, is true, “work with fear and tremble”, but, “*work...for your salvation*”, (Philippians II, 12), which is likely to increase, strengthen and perfect, and for which is bound not only by the will and work of man but also by how will God see the result of his actions, no one can be sure of his own salvation, and for the man is necessary the continuous work in this purpose, fulfilling all commandments and gaining himself the virtue that crowns all: love.

We can therefore say that for a Christian the certainty of obtaining, isn't useful but rather the promise of salvation. Because the promise motivates him to keep all that works at and to work always with zeal, reminding him in every state of his spiritual growth, the words of Saint Apostle Paul: *"So, if you think you are standing firm, be careful that you don't fall!"* (1 Corinthians 10, 12).

Alongside hope, in the fight for obtaining salvation, it is recommended the humility, because the Savior tells us: *"So you also, when you have done everything you were told to do, should say: 'We are unworthy servants, we have only done our duty'"* (Luke XVII, 10), and Saint Apostle Paul gives us also the explanation: *"But by the grace of God I am what I am, and His grace to me was not without effect. No, I worked harder than all of them, yet not I, but the grace of God that was with me"* (1 Corinthians XV, 10), and in another place he says: *"For who makes you different from anyone else? What do you have that you did not receive? And if you did receive it, why do you boast as though you did not?"* (1 Corinthians IV, 7). That's why, let's never forget that salvation is the gift of God, and the working faith through love, from which spring the good acts that aren't the worthiness, but our responsibility through which we answer to the Savior and the only means through which we can obtain salvation, which Saint Apostle Paul symbolically shows to us through the symbol of "crown" and "crowning" in his Epistles: *"Do you not know that in a race all the runners run, but only one gets the prize?"* (1 Corinthians IX, 24). *"Henceforth there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, will give it to me in that day; and not only to me but also to all who have loved his appearing."* (2 Timothy IV, 8). *"What is mankind that you are mindful of them, a son of man that you care for him? You made them a little lower than the angels; you crowned them with glory and honor (...) But we do see Jesus, who was made lower than the angels for a little while, now crowned with glory and honor because he suffered death, so that by the grace of God he might taste death for everyone. In bringing many sons and daughters to glory, it was fitting that God, for whom and through whom everything exists, should make the pioneer of their salvation perfect through what he suffered. (Hebrews II, 6-7, 9-10). "Blessed is the one who perseveres under trial because, having stood the test, that person will receive the crown of life that the Lord has promised to those who love him."* (James I, 12). *"And when the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the crown of glory that will never fade away".* (1 Peter V, 4). *"Do not be afraid of what you are about to suffer. I tell you, the devil will put some of you in prison to test you, and*

you will suffer persecution for ten days. Be faithful, even to the point of death, and I will give you life as your victor's crown." (Revelation II, 10). *"I am coming soon. Hold on to what you have, so that no one will take your crown."* (Revelation III, 11).

It is interesting that precisely the "perfection" claimed by the Corinthians believers determine the saint apostle to argue with them and to show them that all they consider to have realized may be without value, if their efforts are lacking humility, love and obedience to Lord Christ, namely are made without the required ordination.

Showing that is necessary to be humble towards others, because this is the highest perfection, which he himself did it, through the fact that he didn't took help from the disciples, as the other apostles, and finally again has descended the lowest than all, making known the settlements to all, as also the perfection and humbleness, Saint Apostle Paul doesn't tell them yet clearly, so they wouldn't remain ashamed, but makes them understand that what is happening between them, is a futile work and without purpose, although it seems to come from their perfection, but everything they do, they sin in Christ, that they lose their brothers and have nothing useful from knowing the perfection if they don't add also love, and for elucidation he gives them an example with a general validity, and says: "Don't you know that those that run in the stadium, run together, but only one receives the prize?"

Evidently, at Christians, that "one" single winner is Christ, and He won for all those who believe in Him, and through the used example, the Saint Apostle doesn't tell the Corinthians that only one from all will save himself, because at the "Christians", all the faith "runners" have already won in Christ, and all be crowned because they do not fight each other, but each with their own sins (only of course, if they will run "good"), but rather tells us that is useful to each one of us to have a burning zeal as of the one single runner that wins at races.

"And – it says-, anyone that fights is temperate in all". And here "all" means to stop also from *the gluttony of the womb and from licentiousness and drunkenness, and in the end from all passions*. This happens even in the worldly fights, where they are not allowed, for example those who fight, nor to get drunk during the fight, nor to raffish, so they won't weaken their power, and nor to occupy himself with other things at that time, but being away from all these, the athletes think and work only for the victory in the fights. Thus, if there is so, and only one takes the crown, then the more here, where the crowns are more and the race is bigger, because not only one is crowned, but all are and the prize is so big, that it defeats all the efforts made. And

showing the difficulties of the saint apostle shows them also the advantages, that we shouldn't fight one against each other, but together, and all in Christ: *"And those, to take a broken crown, and us, an unbroken one"*. And Saint Apostle Paul has fulfilled in this purpose all necessities conditions. The path of fighting and sacrifice which God decided for him, passed it through to the end – with pain, but without mistakes and stumbling. The belief inculcated by the Lord with the conversion occasion and steeped in years of loneliness and missionary running, kept it intact, until the last hour, unaffected by any addition or human correction. It kept its message as a lit torch at the hearths of spiritual embers of Heaven, until the earth margins. Despite so many efforts and sacrifices, persecutions and bitterness, victories and temporal defeats, the people of that time have fully known his ardent love for Christ and not few were those that let themselves scorched, freshening their lives.

Both the “work of belief” and the “labor of love” and “perseverance of hope” (1 Thessalonians I, 3) shows – after the ones said by Saint Apostle Paul – the unceasing endeavor of the Christian for fulfilling the virtues is to maintain them in an unceasing action. The faith and hope support each other. They develop through love and both impulse love to action; that it may be said that all acts from faith and hope are acts of love. They bring the fruit and make the man to grow in all good thing; they increase the knowing of God (Col I, 11). Their shield is the clothing of the new man, “clothing in Christ” (According to Galatians III, 27), of the light and life. “Putting on faith and love as a breastplate, and the hope of salvation as a helmet” (1 Thessalonians V, 8), we obtain the salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ. Faith, hope, love, remain eternal. They are above charisms; are gifts of the Holy Spirit that perfect in man the virtue and collaborate with him for the likeness of God. (1 Corinthians XIII, 8-13).

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