

8. October 2020

**“The gift of salvation”**

*Gal 3:1-5*

*You stupid people in Galatia! After you have had a clear picture of Jesus Christ crucified, right in front of your eyes, who has put a spell on you? There is only one thing I should like you to tell me: How was it that you received the Spirit -- was it by the practice of the Law, or by believing in the message you heard? Having begun in the Spirit, can you be so stupid as to end in the flesh? Can all the favours you have received have had no effect at all -- if there really has been no effect? Would you say, then, that he who so lavishly sends the Spirit to you, and causes the miracles among you, is doing this through your practice of the Law or because you believed the message you heard?*

We recognise the great concern of the Apostle of the Nations for the young congregation in Galatia, which opened itself to other teachings and was in danger of no longer remaining in the message it had originally received! The Lord is the Saviour of mankind, to Him we owe the grace of salvation as a gift from our heavenly Father! This is what the Spirit reveals and makes ever present; it is the everlasting message of faith on which and from which we live!

The congregation embraced heresies that incorporated Jewish into Christian preaching and demanded that the former pagans also let themselves be circumcised and accept the Old Testament law as necessary for salvation!

This prompted St Paul to issue this clear warning, for it was precisely one of the enormously important findings that the Gentiles were shown the way to salvation through Christ and not through the fulfilment of the law!

This may be rather self-evident for us Christians of today! But we can also realise very essential elements for our path of following Christ in the example of the Apostle to the Nations!

The message of faith makes us receptive people who receive their salvation from God! Despite all the necessary asceticism and the good works to which we are called, first of all comes gratitude for God's action! This keeps us in love and gratitude to God, and also always gives us the right attitude and spiritual order:

*“the Almighty has done great things for me”*, this is how the incomparable Mother of God praises the deeds of the Lord (*Lk 1:49*)!

Even more than our unpleasant inclination to give in to sensual temptations, pride is our enemy! The original temptation was pride on the part of the devil, to want to be like God and not to serve! Man was drawn into this rebellion, who succumbed to the very temptation to want to be like God through the fruit of the “tree of knowledge”!

The redemption by the crucified Lord not only corresponds to the truth of the proclamation, but it is also an antidote to pride, because we owe everything to the gift of God! The confession of the Crucified as the source of salvation prevents us from looking at and relying on our own works!

In this respect, the defence of God's way before the Galatians by the Apostle to the Nations also carries within it the dimension of preventing them from attaining salvation by following the law, that is, by their own efforts! To insist on one's own efforts and achievements was not seldom the work of some Pharisees and it is always the temptation for us humans to make ourselves the originators of good!

Jesus warns his disciples in the Gospel against such attitudes: *“When you have done all you have been told to do, say, “We are useless servants: we have done no more than our duty.””* (*Lk 17:10*).

It is a constant danger of man to put himself in the foreground, to praise his own works and to emphasize them before men!

However, the Lord gives us the remedy that is so necessary: all that we do good comes from the grace of God! God is always the starting point, without whom we are unable to do anything!

God wants to withhold praise for everything we do, so that we follow the path of discipleship in the right spirit and do not take ourselves so seriously! We serve the Lord and every exaltation that the Lord gives us comes from Him!

So may St Paul's clear warning to the Galatians always remind us that we have received salvation as an exceedingly great gift of divine grace, which we accept in gratitude and humility and glorify His name!