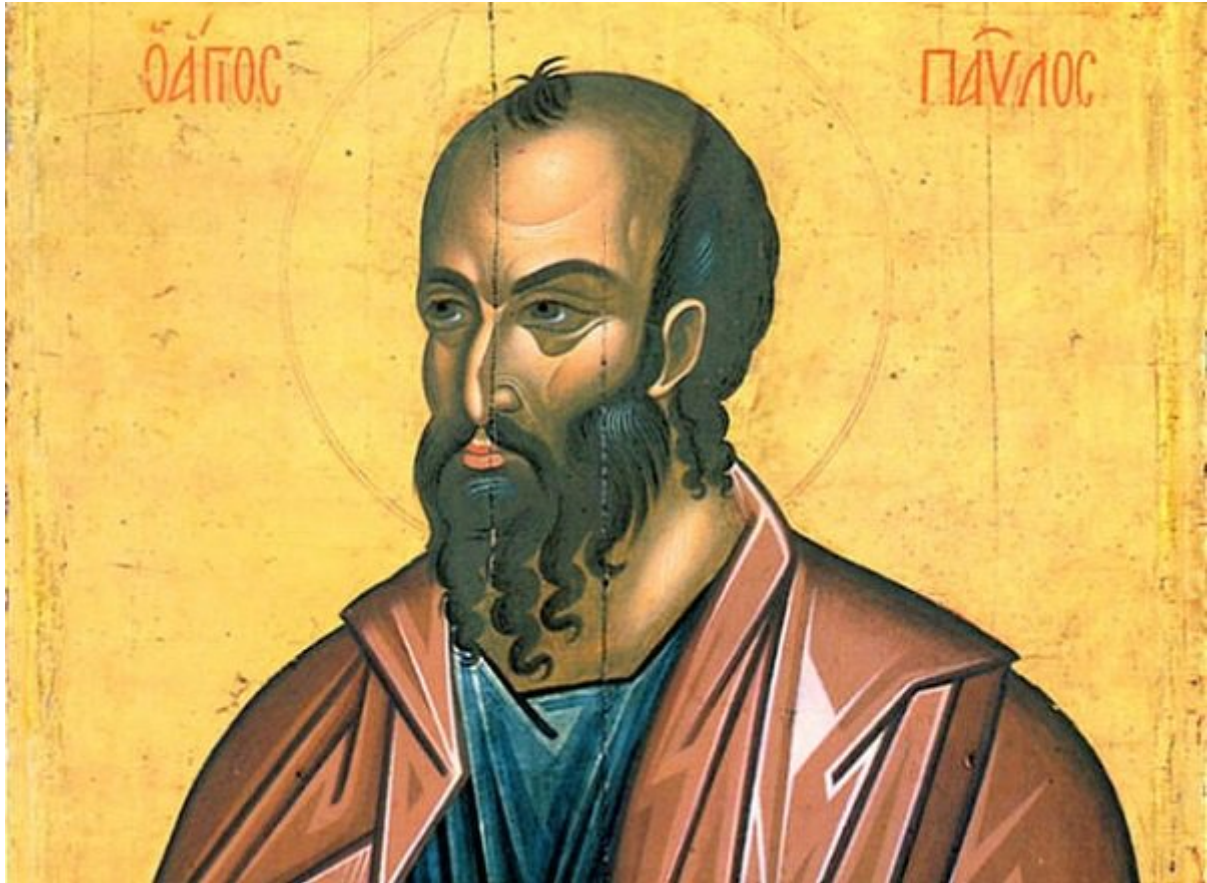


Sermon on the Apostolic Reading for the 5th Sunday of Matthew (Romans 10: 1-10) **(Metropolitan of Pisidia Sotirios)**

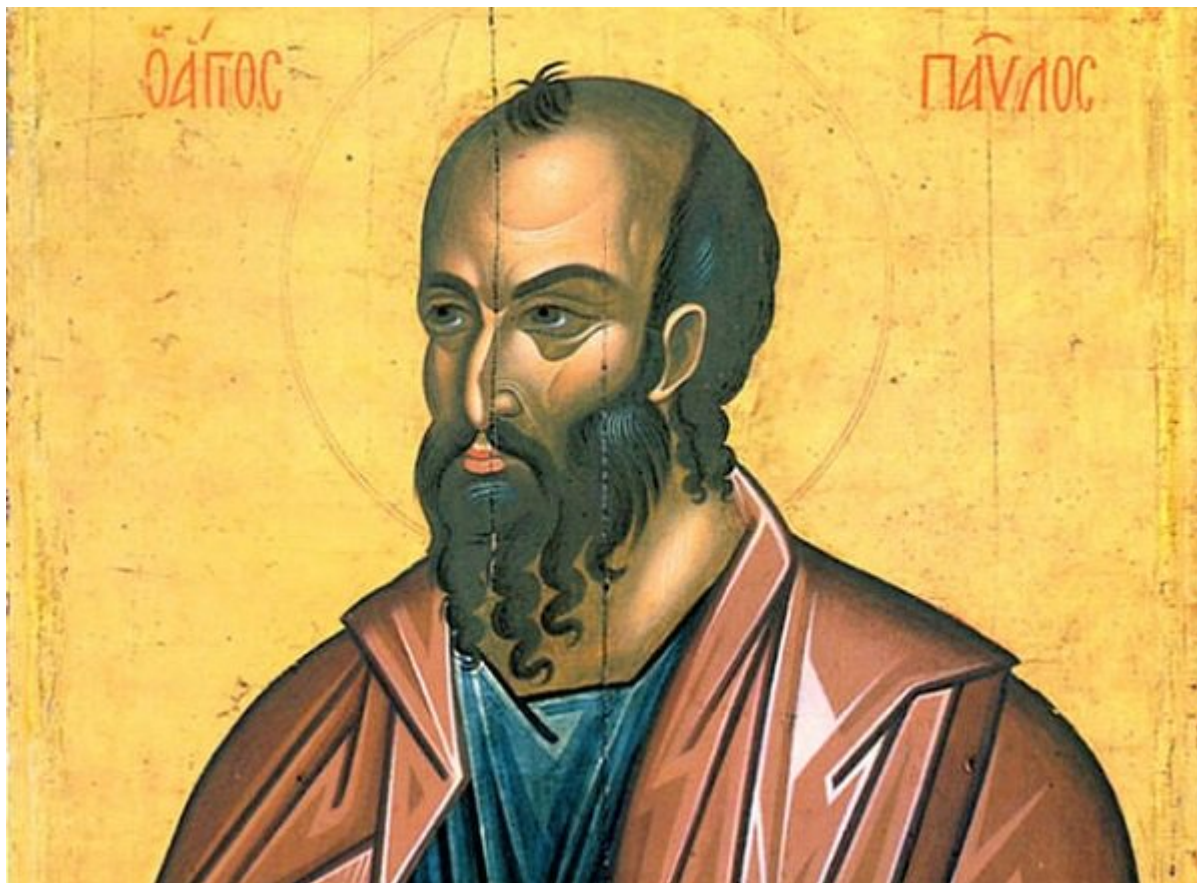
[Ξένες γλώσσες / In English](#)



In our reading from the Letter to the Romans, St. Paul lays before us two basic truths, which are of particular interest for us today. The first, is that we should desire and seek the salvation of our people with all of our hearts. Not only those close to us, but all people. Second, the Holy Apostle tells us that the salvation offered by Christ is open to all, and is within reach for those who turn to Him.

St. Paul retained great zeal for the salvation for his own people, the Jewish people. Saul (St. Paul's Jewish name), from the time he turned to Christ, never stopped facing the scorn of his own nation. Every time he found himself among his people, he was imprisoned, stoned, and under threat of death. Even with all of that, the Apostle Paul continued his attempts to draw them to the salvation offered by Christ. He even came to the point of writing: "I have great sorrow and continual grief in my heart. For I could wish that I myself were accursed from Christ for my

brethren, my countrymen according to the flesh” (Romans 9:2-3). Do we understand what this means? St. Paul is saying that he would gladly suffer separation from Christ if it meant the salvation of Israel. He would give up his own salvation for theirs! This desire is repeated again in today’s reading: “Brethren, my heart’s desire and prayer to God for Israel is that they may be saved” (verse 1).



Do we feel the same passion for our friends, relatives, family members, and associates? Can we relate to St. Paul’s yearning for all to be close to Christ? Do we make an effort to get to know Christ, to love Him and believe in Him? Do we pray with warmth in our hearts for those we love to have faith in Christ take root? In short, are we concerned with salvation at all?

The Holy Apostle does not limit his focus to the people of Israel. He goes on to say that salvation is not restricted to a particular nation or people (like the Mosaic Law), but that Christ is for everyone who believes (see verse 4). Salvation is for all, no matter who that person is or where they are from (see Galatians 3:28). “Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest” (Matthew 11:28) is the constant invitation of Christ. For God, “desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth” (1 Timothy 2:4).

There is something else here, something very important: the Salvation offered by Christ is not out of reach and impossible, as some may think. St. Paul says this: “Do

not say in your heart, Who will ascend into heaven? (to bring Christ down to us) or Who will descend into the abyss? (to bring Christ up from the dead)” (verses 6-7). These questions have already been answered, in that it is Christ Himself who has already done everything. He “Who for us men and for our salvation came down from heaven” (The Symbol of Faith); and also “Christ is risen from the dead, trampling down death by death, and to those in the tombs, granting life” (Paschal Troparion). What is left for us to do? To believe, and know that Salvation is close at hand if we want it. In Christ, all of this is possible.

St. Paul continues: “The word is near you, in your mouth and in your heart (that is, the word of faith which we preach): that if you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved. For with the heart one believes unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation.” (verses 8-10). St. John Chrysostom, commenting on these verses, says: “In your mind and in your tongue is your salvation. There is no long journey to go on, no seas to sail over, no mountains to pass, in order to be saved.”

Christ will never abandon a person who believes in Him with all their heart, accepts Him as Lord and God of their life (by living according to His will), and has the courage to confess this faith to others, even at the risk of their own life. May we also have this faith in God growing in our hearts, and to bravely declare our own love and devotion to our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.