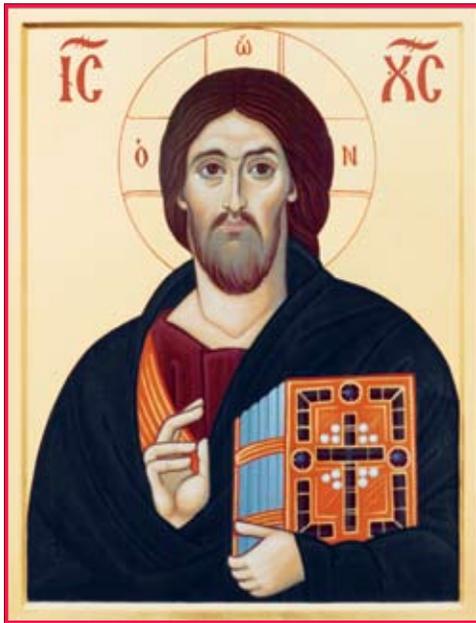


*Quickened
with Christ*



Father James Thornton

*Center for Traditionalist
Orthodox Studies*

QUICKENED WITH CHRIST

SERMONS ON THE SUNDAY EPISTLE READINGS
OF THE ORTHODOX LITURGICAL YEAR

by

Father James Thornton

With a Preface by
Archbishop Chrysostomos of Etna



Etna, California

2004

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PREFACE

I am delighted to have been asked by Father James Thornton to contribute some prefatory remarks to his series of sermons on the Sunday readings from the *Apostolos*, the compilation of the epistolary writings of the Holy Apostles Luke, Paul, James the Brother of the Lord, Peter, John, and Jude, arranged for daily liturgical use in the Orthodox Church. Those familiar with Father James's vivid articles on a wide variety of subjects will not be surprised by the agility and eloquence with which he expounds on this important body of Apostolic teachings. His homilies are both reverent and engaging: reverent, because Father James, a devout Orthodox Priest, has profound veneration for Saints Luke and Paul, the authors of the Acts of the Apostles and the Pauline Epistles, from which the Sunday epistolary readings are taken; and engaging, not only because he writes in a brisk and vivacious style, but also because he never fails to demonstrate the relevance of the Apostolic message for those struggling to live the Orthodox Christian life in these early years of the twenty-first century.

In recent decades, it has become fashionable in the circles of less-percipient theological thinkers—and the popular media have picked up on this whim—to place the teachings of Christ and the teachings of Saint Paul, in particular, at odds with one another. The former are typically characterized as “gentle,” “forgiving,” and “charitable,” while the latter are portrayed as “harsh,” “callous,” and “judgmental” or “tendentious.” Saint Paul is inevitably accused, by his contemporary detractors, of designedly usurping and distorting Christ's Gospel of love and acceptance and of replacing it with his own brand of Pharisaical, tenacious illiberality. Through an anachronistic and unfair application of modern secular values and ideals, the Holy Apostle has become the whipping boy for a panoply of putative and real evils perpetrated in the name of Christianity.

Rather than refute, in these brief introductory words, this unfair disapprobation of the spiritual legacy of “the Apostle of the

Nations”¹ and the primary contributor to the Orthodox *Apostolos*, I will simply note, first, that the Orthodox Church, fathoming the noetic depths of the Pauline treasure, has never ceased to laud “the blessed Paul”² as one “who enlightened the inhabited earth,”³ to use the words of Saint John Chrysostomos. A deified ascetic who mastered the passions through his unflagging practice of the Christian virtues, the Holy Apostle Paul, attaining “the mind of Christ,”⁴ became a faithful mouthpiece of Christ, His very Own “chosen vessel.”⁵ And it is thus that Orthodox Christians hear his pristine voice, joined, as it is, to the melodious sounds of the noetic utterances of the Apostle Luke.

Second, I will let the eloquent sermons of the author of the present collection speak in defense of this reception by the Orthodox world of a voice too often misheard and maligned by those with ears that do not hear,⁶ too muddled as they are by human caprice and the clamorous superficialities of the present to heed the subtle timbre of the *eschatological now*. If we pay very close attention to Saint Paul’s Epistles and to the Acts of the Apostles, as Father James’s commentaries exhort us to do, we will see, beyond his missionary journeys and his administrative prescriptions, proscriptions, and admonitions, a mystical feast of the faith that ineluctably nourishes and sustains the spiritual essence of the Christian Faith. Father James is to be commended for facilitating this journey into the heart and the quickening of the soul through

¹ Romans 11:13; cf. Acts 9:15, 26:17; Romans 15:16; Galatians 1:16; 2:2, 8; Ephesians 3:8; 1 St. Timothy 2:7; 11 St. Timothy 1:11.

² St. John Chrysostomos, “Εἰς τὸν Ἅγιον Ἀπόστολον Παῦλον. Ὁμιλία δ’” [“On the Holy Apostle Paul: Homily 4”], in *Ἰωάννης Χρυσόστομος Δ’* [*John Chrysostomos IV*], Vol. I of *Patrologia Graeca: Cursus Completus*, ed. Jacques-Paul Migne (Athens: Centre for Patristic Publications, 1996), col. 487.

³ *Ibid.*

⁴ 1 Corinthians 2:16.

⁵ Acts 9:15.

⁶ Cf. Deuteronomy 29:4; Isaiah 42:20; Jeremiah 5:21 (LXX); Ezekiel 12:2; St. Mark 8:18; Acts 28:27; Romans 11:8.

his inspiring and accessible sermons on the Sunday readings from the *Apostolos* of the Orthodox Church.

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May 2004*

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“[The present volume by Father James Thornton is a]...series of sermons on the Sunday readings from the *Apostolos*, the compilation of the epistolary writings of the Holy Apostles Luke, Paul, James the Brother of the Lord, Peter, John, and Jude, arranged for daily liturgical use in the Orthodox Church. Those familiar with Father James’s vivid articles on a wide variety of subjects will not be surprised by the agility and eloquence with which he expounds on this important body of Apostolic teachings. His homilies are both reverent and engaging: reverent, because Father James, a devout Orthodox Priest, has profound veneration for Saints Luke and Paul, the authors of the Acts of the Apostles and the Pauline Epistles, from which the Sunday epistolary readings are taken; and engaging, not only because he writes in a brisk and vivacious style, but also because he never fails to demonstrate the relevance of the Apostolic message for those struggling to live the Orthodox Christian life in these early years of the twenty-first century.”

*From the Preface by
Archbishop Chrysostomos of Etna*



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