

## CHAPTER FIVE

### That Which Awaits Us

BACKGROUND: In Chapter Four, Paul wrote about the breaking down of the *outward* man due to suffering endured for the sake of preaching the Gospel and the subsequent purification of the *inward* man through faith, hope and perseverance. Now his thoughts turn to that which gives him confidence to remain joyful in the midst of this difficult process.

**5:1. For we know that if our earthly house, this tent, is destroyed, we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the Heavens.** The dangers inherent in preaching the Gospel continue. Therefore, Paul's suffering goes on and the possibility of death for refusing to deny Christ or forsake His work is ever present. Paul is confident, however, of the truth that his soul is immortal. If his earthly body ceases to function, an even better body awaits him.

Paul calls the body an *earthly house*. As a tentmaker, He compares it to a *tent*—a temporary home for the soul to abide in while on earth. After judgment at the Second Coming of Christ, he who has demonstrated faith and prepared himself for life in God's Kingdom will receive a new imperishable body, an incorruptible house for the soul to inhabit.

If a jeweler makes in mosaic the form of an animal, and the stones are scattered by time or by the man who made them, he may gather them together again, form them in the same way, and make the same form of an animal. Shall not God be able to collect again the decomposed members of the flesh and make the same body as was formerly produced by Him?

JUSTIN THE MARTYR<sup>1</sup>

**5:2. For in this we groan, earnestly desiring to be clothed with our habitation which is from Heaven...**Paul looks forward to the heavenly house his soul will dwell in eternally. This will not be an entirely different body but "the same one made incorruptible."<sup>2</sup>

Be tender, I beseech you, of this body, and understand that you will be raised from the dead, to be judged with this body.                      CYRIL OF JERUSALEM<sup>3</sup>

Although you may say: The remains of the flesh itself do not exist anywhere: they may have been consumed by fire, or devoured by a wild beast. Know this: whatever is consumed is contained in the bowels of the earth, and from there, at the command of God, it can be brought forth. For even you, where no fire is visible, can take flint and steel and strike fire from stone. That, therefore, which you do by effort and the skill God Himself has given you, so that you bring forth what is not visible, cannot the Divine Majesty do of His power? Believe me, God can do anything.

CHRYSOSTOM<sup>4</sup>

**FOOD FOR THOUGHT:** (a). What other indications does the Bible give that everyone will spend eternity in a body? (b)...that the immortal body of a believer will be much like the one possessed in life on earth but different, with unique spiritual qualities?

**5:3. if indeed, having been clothed, we shall not be found naked.** The only thing Paul is concerned about is that at Judgment he not be *found naked* of faith, so that the body he will

receive at the Resurrection will be his eternal habitation in joy, not in agony (Mt 25:41-46).

Although the body is dissolved at the appointed time, because of the primeval disobedience, it is placed in the crucible of the earth, to be recast again...to each body its own soul shall be restored...possessing in every respect the things pertaining to it: not bodies diverse from what they had been...but as they departed this life, in sins or in righteous actions: and such as they were, such shall they be clothed with upon resuming life; and such as they were in unbelief, such shall they be faithfully judged. IRENAEUS<sup>5</sup>

Be of good cheer, but work, strive earnestly; for nothing shall be lost. Every prayer, every psalm you sing is recorded; every good deed, every fast is recorded; every marriage duly observed is recorded; continence kept for God's sake is recorded...for you shall rise clothed with your own sins, or else with your righteous deeds.

CYRIL OF JERUSALEM<sup>6</sup>

**FOOD FOR THOUGHT:** (c). What will be the conditions of eternal life in God's Kingdom? (d). What will be the characteristics of the resurrected bodies of the righteous?...the unrighteous?

**5:4. For we who are in this tent groan, being burdened, not because we want to be unclothed, but further clothed, that mortality may be swallowed up by life.** God created Adam and Eve to live forever and gave them one commandment to follow. After they disobeyed, He clothed them in *tunics of skin* (Gen 3:21), the mortality that came to man as a consequence of his fall from grace.<sup>7</sup> Mortality is the "biological condition, subject to the necessity of death" which became "a new law of the existence of the earthly creation."<sup>8</sup> Life in a mortal body is burdensome, prone to many difficulties and restricted by limitations. Still, life is a great blessing. If we do not love life, why would we long to live eternally? All Christians who have even the most basic understanding of the awesome truth of salvation through Jesus Christ long not to be rid of their bodies but to be clothed again in the immortal bodies Adam and Eve enjoyed before they disobeyed.

The transformation of the body takes place in this way: while it is mortal and corruptible, it becomes immortal and incorruptible, not after its own proper substance, but after the mighty working of the Lord, Who is able to invest the mortal with immortality, and the corruptible with incorruption.

IRENAEUS<sup>9</sup>

After the Second Coming of Christ, believers will experience life unending and perfect, with no sickness, no sorrow, no tears, no pain, no death (Rev 21:4). The joyful moments we experience during life on earth are tastes of the perfect joy of God's Kingdom in its fullness. Because of these bits of ecstasy, we are usually very reluctant to give up this life, wanting more and more of the "good" it has to offer. This instinctive desire to live forever is assurance from God that eternal life is a reality. The moments of suffering and despair we experience are tastes of Hell. God allows these experiences so we can make our choice. If we remember that the difficult times of life are allowed by God as a part of the process which brings His people to the surface and which strengthens and purifies them for life with Him, we help Him turn evil back to the good of His creation.

**FOOD FOR THOUGHT:** (e). There are those, like Jehovah's Witnesses, who believe there is no Hell (in the sense of a state or place of eternal agony). This false teaching can cause much harm and eternal suffering. How?

**5:5. Now He Who has prepared us for this very thing is God, Who also has given us the Spirit as a guarantee.** Eternal life in communion with God has been a part of His plan for man from the beginning. The Holy Spirit, present within from the time of our Chrismation, calls us to holiness. If we cooperate and make an effort to feed and nurture our souls as we do our bodies, we grow spiritually. As this process continues, we receive ever-increasing glimpses into the wonder and joy of the Kingdom, which begins in this present life. This has a liberating effect in our lives. Our burdens seem lighter, in spite of the corruption of the world. We become increasingly secure in knowledge of the reality of the spiritual world and begin to respond to all of creation with love.

It might seem to men of the present day, who are ignorant of God's appointment, to be a thing incredible and impossible that any man could live eternally...yet the ancients of the Old Testament lived to seven hundred, eight hundred and nine hundred years of age. Their bodies kept pace with the protracted length of their days and participated in life as long as God willed that they should live....and those who were translated [Enoch and Elijah, who did not die] do live as a guarantee of the future length of days. IRENAEUS<sup>10</sup>

**5:6. Therefore we are always confident, knowing that while we are at home in the body we are absent from the Lord.** The early Christians faced continual persecution and the ever-present threat of death, which was often the consequence of refusing to deny their faith in Christ. Like them, Paul does not fear death. Those born again spiritually of water and the Spirit through Baptism and Chrismation (Jn 3:3-5), followed by a life of faith, can share his confidence that to leave this life is to join Christ in His Kingdom—so there is no need for fear.

What are we doing, we men of little faith, who grieve and rebel should one of our dear ones depart to the Lord? What are we doing, we whose pilgrimage on this earth delights us more than to be restored to the presence of Christ? In very truth, this whole life of ours is but a journey through a strange land. For as pilgrims in this world, we have here no certain dwelling; we suffer, we sweat, walking by ways that are difficult and full of peril. Treachery awaits us on every side, from spiritual enemies and from bodily ones; on every side the winding paths of error are made ready. And though beset by such dangers, not only do we wish not to be set free of them, but we even weep and mourn as lost those who have been delivered. What has God given us through His Only-begotten, if we still fear the coming of death? Why glory in being born again of water and the Holy Spirit, when we are saddened at the thought of going forth from this world?

CHRYSOSTOM<sup>11</sup>

After their disobedience, God evicted Adam and Eve from the perfect setting they had enjoyed and placed angels at the gate so they would no longer have access to the tree of life (Gen 3:22-23). They found themselves in the imperfect world in which we live, where the devil has reign and where they would face deterioration and death.

Death is harsh—but it is not the enemy we tend to think it is. Death saves us from having to live on interminably after quality of life is gone. If we had to face the dangers of this world, with no end to the ravages of time on our minds and bodies, at some point (through illness, age, or harm inflicted upon us) we would reach a state beyond healing. Each of us would face certain agony with no respite. Horror would ensue. God allows a glimpse of this untenable situation: all we need do is visit a long-term care facility for the very sick or very old to see that the alternative to death would be infinitely worse. Death sets limits to personal pain and suffering and prevents unending mushrooming of sin. The world would be intolerable if the evil characters of history were not contained by death.

God, and here lies the whole mystery of the “tunics of skin,” introduces a certain order at the very heart of disorder to avoid a total disintegration by evil. His beneficent will organizes and preserves the universe; His punishment is pedagogy: better that man dies, that is to say, be excluded from the tree of life, than that his monstrous condition be made eternal. His finitude itself would make repentance well up within him...<sup>12</sup>

In His wisdom, God also allows (does not cause) the conditions which sometimes bring illness and death to the young as well as the old. This fact discourages carelessness and indifference and reminds us to be vigilant about the state of our souls, whatever our age. Because of fallen human nature, if each of us were guaranteed a certain number of years of life, it is probable that the majority would spend the greater number of them not worrying about God and what He expects of us, thinking that there is plenty of time. Toward the end of those promised years, however, instead of then turning our attention to God, we would probably be too far from knowledge of Him to even consider (much less know how to find) Him. The habits of a lifetime are not easily changed. The Christ-like life to which we are called guides us in building virtuous habits (ascesis).

The curse of death has never been a judgment of God. It was the punishment of a loving Father, not the obtuse anger of a tyrant. Its character was educative and restorative. It prevented the perpetuation of an estranged life, the apathetic induction into an anti-natural condition. It not only put a limit to the decomposition of our nature, but, by the anguish of finitude, helped man to become alive to his condition and turn to God. Similarly, the unjust will of Satan cannot function except through the just permission of God. Satan’s choice was not only limited by the divine will but also used by it, as we see in the case of Job.<sup>13</sup>

Before Christ’s death on the Cross, however, death also meant separation from God. Man was unable to overcome the effects of sin on his own. Christ’s mission was to overthrow all of them, including death, and to make possible again the union of man with God.

The mere fact of incarnation overcomes the first obstacle to this union: the separation of the two natures, that of man and that of God. Two other obstacles then remain, linked to the fallen condition of man: sin and death. The work of Christ is to vanquish them, to banish their necessity from the terrestrial cosmos. Not to overcome them without redress, for that would be to violate the very liberty that created them. But to make death harmless and sin curable by submission of God Himself to death and Hell. Thus the death of Christ removes, from between man and God, the obstacle of sin; and His Resurrection takes from death its “sting.”<sup>14</sup>

The fact that true Christians do not fear death does not mean, however, that we should seek premature death in any way. Life is precious and belongs to God. Only He knows His intent for each person’s time on earth.

No one has the right to raise his hand against himself, or slay himself against the will of God, his Creator, or drive the soul from the dwelling place of the body. But when he is called, and when his neighbor is called, let him go cheerful and rejoicing, and let him rejoice with those who are going. For this is the sum total of Christian belief: to look for our true life after death; at the end of life, to look for its return. CHRYSOSTOM<sup>15</sup>

**FOOD FOR THOUGHT:** (f). Christ taught the early Christians to live with the constant thought that He might return at any moment (Mt 24:36, 25:13; Lk 21:34-36; 1 Thess 5:1-2). Why? (g). What happens to the soul after death?

**5:7. For we walk by faith, not by sight.** Though we are united with Christ through Baptism and Eucharist and can know Him through the truths of the Gospel and the grace of the Holy Spirit, we do not see Him bodily as did those who lived when He walked on earth. To try to live by God's word daily, without having seen Christ, is a demonstration of faith, which He acknowledged when He said, *Blessed are they who have not seen, yet have believed* (Jn 20:29).

**5:8-9. We are confident, yes, well pleased rather to be absent from the body and to be present with the Lord. Therefore we make it our aim, whether present or absent, to be well pleasing to Him.** Life on earth is precious, but those who have true faith know that to be with the Lord in His Kingdom is infinitely better. The important thing, therefore, is to live in a manner which is *well pleasing* to God, so as to be ready for death, whenever it comes.

**FOOD FOR THOUGHT:** (h). How can we live in a way that pleases God?

**5:10. For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive the things done in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad.** Some are attracted to the Kingdom because of God's promise of its unequalled joy and love. The attention of others, however, is gained only through the more powerful fear of suffering. In his desire to lead all to salvation, Paul gives the full picture: each of us will face judgment at the feet of Christ and will spend eternity in circumstances determined by whether or not our lives as a whole demonstrated faith. This fact does not call for a legalistic following of rules—like the works of the Mosaic Law which Paul wrote against, required to be followed exactly to show man he could not earn salvation (Eph 2:9). Rather, it calls for a continuous attempt at Theosis: growth in those works which are the facets of a Christ-like life (Eph 2:10) that demonstrate and solidify faith and bring others to Him (Jas 2:14-26).

Most Protestant denominations teach what is called salvation by “faith alone”: the belief that those who profess faith in Christ are automatically “saved,” with no qualifying works or actions required. According to this theory, those who pronounce themselves saved because of their acknowledgement of Christ as Savior are guaranteed entrance to Heaven. Scripture which points to judgment is considered to refer only to the unsaved or as a determination of placement in the Kingdom, with levels assigned according to the good or bad one has done. But this verse states that *all* must face judgment, and 2 Cor 5:11 implies fear. Is there to be punishment in Heaven? Isn't being in God's presence, at any level, a state of glory? The Psalmist wrote: *I would rather be a doorkeeper in the house of my God than dwell in the tents of wickedness* (Ps 84:10).

The doctrine of salvation by faith alone began as opposition to the emphasis on legalistic-type works (in the sense of earning points) which developed in the Western Church, culminating in the sixteenth century with the selling of indulgences, which implied that one could buy (or work) one's way to the Kingdom. Martin Luther was a Roman Catholic Priest who protested this aberration, but he went too far in the other direction, insisting that only faith in Christ is necessary for salvation, with no requirement for works of any type. His concerns were justified, but his theology constituted a break in the crucial connection between professed faith and the essential elements of a Christ-like life. The teaching of the early Church (preserved in the East, in Orthodoxy) is that faith is indeed the single criteria for salvation, but faith must be proved by

one's life (2 Cor 13:5) and will be judged by God.

Those who espouse the concept of salvation by faith alone hold that a person who believes in Christ will automatically lead a Christ-like life. Luther taught that this will happen naturally, "as a cow gives milk." In the sincere, thoughtful person, this can indeed happen. The problem is that it gives the misleading impression of a guaranteed conclusion. A person who really has zealous faith will probably seek the truth, attempt to follow it, and consequently grow in holiness through the grace of God. The crucial factor, however, is that conscious personal effort is required and is part of God's plan not to force but to work only in cooperation with man. God meets faith-demonstrating effort with His divine grace. God's grace and man's efforts, together, produce synergistic supernatural growth in Christ's image, toward the holiness that pervades in Christ's presence.

The faith alone philosophy turned its adherents away from the Roman Church because its mass, hierarchical priesthood, Sacraments, etc. were considered "works" with the motivation of achieving credit towards salvation. But Luther himself soon became so distressed at the laxity of behavior in church attendance, lifestyle, etc. that his teachings began to produce in many of his followers who professed faith that he found it necessary to impose harsh discipline. In modern days, salvation by faith alone is sometimes referred to as "instant salvation." It holds great appeal for the "lukewarm" (Rev 3:16), who may or may not be part of a church. It allows adherents to blissfully consider themselves Christians, content that because they orally profess Christ as Savior they are headed toward Heaven, in spite of the absence of an attempt at Christ-like living. Those who have been lulled into such complacency feel that enlightened thinking has liberated them from what they consider to be the old-fashioned, legalistic moral constraints of the Bible. To live in a manner unconcerned with spiritual growth and doing the work of the Lord, however, or to intentionally disobey His word shows lack of real faith. He who does only as he pleases shows faith in himself over and above anything else, including God.

For the spiritually lazy, Martin Luther's well-intentioned Protestant Reformation efforts at reform and renewal have degenerated into the simplistic catch-all theory: Jesus died for sinners, so nothing is required of us. This has contributed to the watering-down of Christ's Gospel (Rev 12:15) and helps Satan continue to do, through false teachings, that which he failed to do through persecution in the early Church (Rev 12:13): divide the faithful and lead as many as possible away from God, like sheep to slaughter.

**5:11. *Knowing, therefore, the terror of the Lord, we persuade men; but we are well-known to God, and I also trust are well-known in your consciences.*** Paul tries to awaken everyone he meets to the fact that the aftermath of judgment is eternal: blessed life with God or the torment of being far removed from Him. This man, who always zealously allowed his faith to guide his actions, knows he must continue in that vein (Phil 3:12) or face *the terror of the Lord*. He is also aware that he must be a good role model for others. This awareness of the example we set as Christians is very important. Everything we say and do—our actions, inactions and reactions—can influence, positively or negatively, those with whom we come in contact.

He who lives a worthy life draws grace upon himself; and he who receives such grace receives that he may help others to amend their lives...The beauty of a good life can help others more than miracles. I mean by a good life, not simply fasting nor lying down in sackcloth and ashes but to despise riches, to have charity towards your neighbor, to give of your bread to the hungry, to control your anger, to seek not vainglory, and to turn from envy.

**5:12. For we do not commend ourselves again to you, but give you opportunity to glory on our behalf, that you may have something to answer those who glory in appearance and not in heart.** Paul offers the example of his life as a guide to the type of struggle required of those whose hearts are set on God's Kingdom. This contrasts sharply with false teachers who boast about themselves and their ministries but who, in reality, are spiritually dead.

**5:13. For if we are beside ourselves, it is for God; or if we are of sound mind, it is for you.** Paul's exuberance leads his detractors to say that he is not of sound mind. He responds that what they have witnessed is the spiritual ecstasy which fills him because of his love for God. But whether he is in that state or in a state of sober reflection, his intent is to bring them the truth of God's promises. This brings to mind the fact that, in the jargon of the world, someone who is zealous for sports, music or other such interests is called a fan, but someone who is enthused about God and His Kingdom is likely to be called a fanatic.

**5:14-15. For the love of Christ constrains us because we judge thus: that if One died for all, then all died; and He died for all, that those who live should live no longer for themselves but for Him Who died for them and rose again.** Death came through sin (Gen 2:17). Everyone born to man after the fall inherits this consequence—and a sinful nature. Christ was born of Mary, a pious, obedient maiden who was freed of any association with the disobedience of Adam and Eve when she consented to bear the Son of God in her womb. She conceived through the Holy Spirit—supernaturally—outside the natural laws of procreation and heredity. Thus Christ was born with no association with the sin of Adam and Eve. He lived a sin-free life, so did not deserve to die. Yet he willingly became the scapegoat for the sins of mankind (Lev 16:10, 21). He passed through death, and then rose on the third day to show us there is life after death. If we try to grow in our understanding of these truths and the all-encompassing love demonstrated by them, we will develop a growing love for Christ. This love will manifest itself in a willingness to stand apart from the selfish ways of the world, in which personal goals for success and pleasure dominate. We will choose, instead, to live for Him—to continue the work He left for us.

If there is true Christian love in a man, let him carry out the precepts of Christ. Who can describe the constraining power of love for God? Who can adequately express its majesty and beauty? No tongue can tell the heights to which love can lift us. Love binds us fast to God. Love casts a veil over sins innumerable. There are no limits to love's endurance, no end to its patience. Love is without servility, as it is without arrogance. Love knows of no divisions, promotes no discord; all the works of love are done in perfect fellowship. It was in love that all God's chosen saints were made perfect; for without love nothing is pleasing to Him. It was in love that the Lord drew us to Himself; because of the love He bore us, our Lord Jesus Christ, at the will of God, gave His blood for us—His flesh for our flesh, His life for our lives.

CLEMENT OF ROME<sup>17</sup>

**5:16. Therefore, from now on, we regard no one according to the flesh. Even though we have known Christ according to the flesh, yet now we know Him thus no longer.** Those who realize that Christ is the promised Messiah do not consider Him as just another man who lived and died. They know Him by His position in the Kingdom, at the right hand of God, waiting for those who belong to Him. Paul writes that we should regard those around us in our lives in similar fashion: according to the degree that they reflect the image of Christ rather than the degree of worldly status they have attained. This was the attitude of Christ Himself, Who emphasized spiritual relationships above worldly when He said, *My mother and my brothers are [those] who hear the word of God and do it* (Lk 8:21).

Let us beg and implore of God's mercy that we may be purged of all earthly preferences for this man or that, and be found faultless in love. Though every generation from Adam to the present day has passed from the earth, yet such of them as by God's grace were perfected in love have their place now in the courts of the godly, and at the visitation of Christ's Kingdom they will be openly revealed. For it is written, *Go into your secret chambers for a very little while, till my rage and fury pass away; and then I will remember a day of gladness, and raise you out of your graves.*

CLEMENT OF ROME<sup>18</sup>

**5:17. Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new.** The oppressive Law of the Old Testament covenant has been fulfilled by the liberating force of Christ's sacrifice. To those who belong to Christ through Baptism, nothing is as it was before.

Behold, both a new soul (for it was cleansed), and a new body, and a new worship, and promises new, and covenant, and life, and table and dress, and all things new absolutely. For instead of the Jerusalem below we have received that mother city which is above (Gal 4:26); and instead of a material temple we have seen a spiritual temple; instead of tables of stone, fleshy ones; instead of circumcision, baptism; instead of manna, the Lord's Body; instead of water from a rock, blood from His side; instead of Moses' or Aaron's rod, the Cross; instead of the promised land, the Kingdom of Heaven; instead of a thousand priests, one High Priest; instead of a lamb without reason, a Spiritual Lamb. With these and such like things in his thought he said, *all things are new.* But *all these things are of God*, by Christ, and His free gift.

CHRYSOSTOM<sup>19</sup>

**5:18-19. Now all things are of God, Who has reconciled us to Himself through Jesus Christ and has given us the ministry of reconciliation, that is, that God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not imputing their trespasses to them, and has committed to us the word of reconciliation.** Through Christ, the second person of the Holy Trinity, in fulfillment of the first prophesy (see Gen 3:15 and this study for 1 Cor 2:6-8), God gave man the way back to union with Him—that which Adam and Eve lost for themselves and mankind when they disobeyed. This truth was given to the Apostles. All who continue their work of teaching the Gospel, whether clergy or laity, carry on Christ's ministry of reconciliation.

Through Chrismation every member of the Church becomes a prophet and receives a share in the royal priesthood of Christ; all Christians alike, because they are Chrismated, are called to act as conscious witnesses to the Truth. *You have an anointing (chrisma) from the Holy One, and know all things* (1 Jn 2:20).<sup>20</sup>

**5:20-21. Therefore we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were pleading through us: we implore you on Christ's behalf, be reconciled to God. For He made Him Who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.** An ambassador represents the leader of his country in a foreign land. He must speak the language and take part in the ways of that land but is a citizen of his own country. So too, true Christians are in the world, but not of it, *For our citizenship is in Heaven* (Phil 3:20).

Christians have a unique citizenship of their own. They are, of course, citizens of their own lands—loyal ones too. Yet they feel like visitors. Every foreign country is their homeland, and their homeland is like a foreign country to them.

## MATHETES<sup>21</sup>

As Christ's ambassador, Paul urgently pleads that we all come to full realization of that which our Savior has done for us. Jesus not only accepted death undeservedly on our behalf, He also endured the indignities of crucifixion, the most dreaded torture (Gal 3:13). By humbling Himself to the utmost, Christ attained the highest glory (Phil 2:8-11). He promises that if we acknowledge Him as Savior and try to live according to His teachings, we take part in His righteousness. As a part of Him through Baptism, Eucharist, and a life of faith, we are no longer bound by the consequences of sin, so will share His glory.

“God made Himself man, that man might become God.” These powerful words, which we find for the first time in St. Irenaeus, are again found in the writings of St. Athanasius, St. Gregory of Nazianzus, and St. Gregory of Nyssa. The Fathers and Orthodox theologians have repeated them in every century with the same emphasis, wishing to sum up in this striking sentence the very essence of Christianity: an ineffable descent of God to the ultimate limit of our fallen human condition, even unto death—a descent of God which opens to men a path of ascent, the unlimited vistas of the union of created beings with the Divinity.<sup>22</sup>

We find it easy to remember that God took on flesh and died to redeem us from sin, but we also easily forget the reason: that we “might become God.” Consequently, too often our glorious potential remains unrealized. We can become God to the extent that we grow in union with Him, but that which man can know of God, and partake of, is not His divine essence but His “operations” or “energies.”

We know our God from His operations, but do not undertake to approach near to His essence. His operations come down to us, but His essence remains beyond our reach.

BASIL<sup>23</sup>

God's essence is often compared to the solar disk and His energies to its rays.<sup>24</sup> We can see the light which emanates from the sun and can feel its heat but cannot approach the source or gaze upon its brilliance directly, even from a great distance. So it is with God. We can partake of that which flows from Him but not of that which makes Him God—for He is unknowable, inaccessible. “We are created beings, called to become by grace what God is by His nature. If one could participate in the essence itself, God would no longer be Trinity, but a multitude of persons.”<sup>25</sup>

Those who grow in holiness do so because they partake of (plug-in to) the actual energies of God. We avail ourselves of those energies by disciplining our will to follow His bidding. To the extent we do so, we actually take on His qualities, as an object added to a glowing fire takes on the characteristics of fire.

This is why the saints are the instruments of the Holy Spirit, having received the same energy He has.

GREGORY PALAMAS<sup>26</sup>

It is through these energies of God that man is divinely activated and can actually have a direct relationship with God during his earthly life and beyond. Bishop Kallistos Ware writes: “In relation to us humans, the divine energy is in fact nothing else than the grace of God.”<sup>27</sup> Man has access to God's grace, His energies, through the operations of each of the three persons of the Godhead.

The Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit alike hallow, quicken, enlighten and comfort. No one will attribute a special and peculiar operation of hallowing to the operation of the Spirit after hearing the Savior in the Gospel saying to the Father about His disciples, "Sanctify them by your Truth" (Jn 17:11,17). In like manner all other operations are equally performed, in all who are worthy of them, by the Father and by the Son and by the Holy Spirit; every grace and virtue, guidance, life, consolation, change into the immortal, the passage into freedom and all other good things which come down to man.

BASIL<sup>28</sup>

## FOOD FOR THOUGHT COMMENTS

**(a). What indications does the Bible give that everyone, believers as well as non-believers, will live eternally in a body?**

FROM THE OLD TESTAMENT:

*For I know that my Redeemer lives, and He shall stand at last on the earth; and after my skin is destroyed, this I know, that in my flesh I shall see God* (Job 19:25-26). Job clearly foretells Christ the Redeemer...speaking not of "my Creator," but of *my Redeemer*...But tell us clearly I beg you, Blessed Job, what you believe, concerning the resurrection of your own flesh....I ask to learn the manner of this resurrection. For I believe that I shall rise again, but I desire to know of what nature shall I be? For I must know whether I shall rise again in some other subtle or perhaps ethereal body or in this body in which I die. For if I rise again in another, ethereal body, it will no longer be I who shall rise. For how can that be a true resurrection, if there cannot be a true body? Plain reason tells me that if the body is not true, then beyond doubt there shall be no true resurrection. Nor can it be rightly called a resurrection, when that does not rise which died. O Blessed Job, take from us these clouds of doubt, and as you, through the grace of the Holy Spirit, have already begun to speak to us of our hope of resurrection, make clear to us if our flesh shall truly rise again. There follows: *in my flesh I shall see God*.

GREGORY THE GREAT<sup>29</sup>

*Your dead shall live; Together with my dead body they shall arise. Awake and sing, you who dwell in dust; For your dew is like the dew of herbs, and the earth shall cast out the dead* (Is 26:19). Perhaps you fear that your dry bones cannot be clothed again in their former flesh? Do not measure the power of God by your own weakness. God, the Creator of all things, Who clothes the trees with leaves, the fields with flowers, can also, at the Resurrection, clothe your bones with their true flesh. Ezekiel the prophet on one occasion doubted this very thing, and asked by the Lord whether the dry bones he saw scattered over the plain would live again, replied: *Oh Lord God, You know* (Ez 37:3). But after the Lord commanded him to prophesy concerning these bones, he saw the bones come together, each one to its joint, and when he had seen the dry bones bound together with sinew and interwoven with veins and covered with flesh and the skin stretched out over them he prophesied in the spirit, and the spirit of each one entered into the bodies lying there, and they rose from the dead, and directly they *stood upon their feet*. And the prophet, reassured in this way of the truth of the resurrection of the dead, wrote down the vision, that those who came after him might come to know of this wondrous happening. CHRYSOSTOM<sup>30</sup>

FROM THE NEW TESTAMENT:

*Behold My hands and My feet, that it is I Myself. Handle Me and see, for a spirit does not*

*have flesh and bones as you see I have* (Lk 24:39). When I was living in the city of Constantinople at the time of this Eutychius (who once said our future bodies would be impalpable and more ethereal than air), I put this testimony from the Gospel to the truth of our resurrection before him. He replied: “The Lord did this to remove all doubt of His Resurrection from the hearts of His Disciples.” To this I said: “This is truly an extraordinary thing you are saying: that doubt should arise in us from the same grounds which took away all doubts from the hearts of the Disciples?” If you assert that He did not possess that which He showed them, which confirmed the faith of His Disciples, then our faith is destroyed. He then went on to say that the Lord had the palpable Body He showed them. But after He had confirmed the hearts of those who touched Him, all that could be touched in the Lord was then reduced to a certain subtlety. To this I answered: “It is written that Christ, rising again from the dead, dies now no more; Death shall no more have dominion over Him” (Rom 6:9). If, therefore, after His Resurrection anything of His Body could suffer change, contrary to the truth of what Paul has said, then after His Resurrection the Lord returned to death. And what person however foolish would say this, except one who denies the true Resurrection of His Body?

To this he objected, saying to me: “Since it is written that...*flesh and blood cannot possess the Kingdom of God* (I Cor 15:50), on what ground can we believe that the body shall truly rise again?” To this I replied “In Sacred Writ flesh is spoken of in one way in regard to its nature, in another in regard to its guilt or corruption. Of flesh as nature it was written: *This now is bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh* (Gen 2:23); and *The Word was made flesh and dwelt among us* (Jn 1:14). Of flesh as guilt it was written: *My spirit shall not remain in man forever because he is flesh* (Gen 6:3). And the Psalmist says: *and he remembers that they are flesh: a breath that passes away and does not come again* (Ps 78:39). And it was in this sense Paul said to the disciples: *You are not in the flesh, but in the spirit* (Rom 8:9). It was not that the persons to whom he was writing were no longer in the body, but that they had mastered the impulses of the body’s desires; and being now free through the power of the Spirit, were no longer *in the flesh*.

Accordingly, Paul saying that *flesh and blood cannot possess the Kingdom of God* means that flesh here stands for guilt, not for our nature. For in his next words he shows he was speaking of flesh as guilt when he adds: *Neither shall corruption possess incorruption*. Therefore flesh shall be in the glory of that Heavenly Kingdom, in its nature, but *not in the passion of lust*; and the sting of death overcome, it shall reign incorrupt forever...”

Going on with this question for a long time, we began to feel a great resentment towards one another. Then the Emperor, Constantine Tiberius of pious memory, received us both in private to learn of the disagreement between us. After weighing the written presentation of the case by either side, he decided that the book Eutychius had written on the Resurrection should be committed to the flames. Upon leaving, I became very ill, and the same happened to Eutychius, who died a little later. At the time of his death, as there was almost no one who followed his teaching, I dropped the prosecution of it, lest I should appear to be shooting arrows at his ashes. But while he was still alive, and while I was ill with fever, to those I knew who went to visit him he would say, holding the skin of his hand before their eyes: “I confess that in this flesh we shall all rise again.” And this, they tell me, he used to deny totally.

GREGORY

THE GREAT<sup>31</sup>

**(b). What indications does the Bible give that, after the Resurrection, the immortal body of a believer will be much like that possessed in life on earth but different, with unique spiritual qualities?** The references to Jesus’ physical appearance after His Resurrection indicate that though those who had known Him before His death were able to recognize Him, not all did

so immediately, for two reasons: (1) they were not expecting to see Him alive again, and (2) upon Resurrection, His body was made incorruptible. So He looked similar—yet different.

Mt. 28:1-10: This account shows that the women recognized Jesus. Thus His post-Resurrection appearance must have been similar to His pre-Resurrection appearance.

Jn 20:11-18: Mary, however, recognized Jesus only after He spoke her name, a sound familiar to her ears, indicating that there was something different about His physical appearance.

Jn 20:19: When the doors were shut, Jesus came and stood in their midst. The special qualities of His resurrected body enabled Him to be present in a room without entering through a door or window.

Lk 24:13-31: When two of the (seventy) disciples were on the road to Emmaus, Jesus drew near and began to walk with them. They did not recognize Him, however, until He blessed bread, broke it and gave it to them, something they had seen Him do before (Mt 14:19; 26:26). Then He *vanished from their sight*, another indication of the special qualities of His resurrected body.

The body in which we spend eternity will be a “spiritual body.” Bishop Kallistos Ware wrote: “This does not mean that at the Resurrection our bodies will be somehow dematerialized; but we are to remember that matter as we know it in this fallen world, with all its inertness and opacity, does not at all correspond to matter as God intended it to be. Freed from the grossness of the fallen flesh, the resurrection body will share in the qualities of Christ’s human body at the Transfiguration and after the Resurrection. But, although transformed, our resurrection body will still be in a recognizable way the same body as that which we have now: there will be continuity between the two.”<sup>32</sup>

After our future resurrection, our flesh shall be the same and different: the same in nature, different through glory; the same in its reality, different in its power. It shall indeed be subtle because it shall be incorruptible. It shall be palpable because it shall not lose the essence of its true nature.

GREGORY THE GREAT<sup>33</sup>

For it is just that in the body in which the righteous toiled or were afflicted, being proved in every way by suffering, they should receive the reward of their suffering; and that in the body in which they were slain because of their love for God, in that they should be revived again; and that in the body in which they endured servitude, in that they should reign. For God is rich in all things, and all things are His. It is fitting, therefore, that the creation itself [the body], being restored to its primeval condition, should without restraint be under the dominion of the righteous.

IRENAEUS<sup>34</sup>

**(c). What will be the conditions of eternal life in God’s Kingdom?** Perfection is dynamic, not static. The righteous will rise in perfect, immortal bodies and will continually grow in union with God.

For if on earth Jesus Christ healed the sicknesses of the flesh and made the body whole, much more will He do this in the Resurrection, so that the flesh shall rise perfect and entire, with all dreaded difficulties healed.

JUSTIN THE MARTYR<sup>35</sup>

Godliness is perfection that is never complete.

PHILOTHEOS OF SINAI<sup>36</sup>

There shall be no marrying, to beget children. For there shall be no death; nor growing up, because no one grows old. There shall be no eating, for there shall be no hunger. (The power to eat and to drink shall remain after the Resurrection, as it did with Christ, but not the need...<sup>37</sup>) There shall be no buying or selling, for there shall be no want...The Sabbath (day of rest) shall be unbroken: what the Jews celebrate for a period of time, we shall celebrate for all eternity.

There shall be ineffable rest...for as we are born in the body to toil, we are reborn in the spirit to rest; ...Here He feeds us, there He perfects us; here He promises, there He shall give; here He foretells, there He shall show us the reality. And when we are safe and perfected, in spirit and in body, within that blessedness, the things of this world shall be no more;

...but we shall not sleep in idleness; for sleep itself is now given to us as refreshment for the weariness of the soul. For the fragile body cannot endure the unceasing striving that agitates our mortal senses unless this fragility is renewed, through the sleep of the senses, to enable it to bear this agitation. And as the renewal to come shall be from death, so is waking now from sleep. Therefore there shall be no sleep. For where there is no death, there shall be no image of death.

All our activity shall be, “Amen” and “Alleluia”...Do not be saddened by thinking, in earthly fashion, that if one of you were to stand every day saying, “Amen” and “Alleluia,” he would soon wither away from sheer tedium, if he did not fall asleep from repetition and long for silence; and from this go on to think of that life as unpleasing and undesirable...We shall say “Amen” and “Alleluia,” not in sounds that come and go, but with the love of our soul...Amen means “so be it”; alleluia, “praise God”... Because we shall, with unceasing delight, see Truth there, and contemplate it in shining clarity. Inflamed with the love of this Truth and clinging to it in sweet, chaste, and incorporeal embrace, we shall praise it and say “Alleluia.” Exhorting each other to the same praise, and with most ardent charity towards one another and towards God, all who are citizens of that City shall sing, “Alleluia,” as they shall say “Amen.”  
AUGUSTINE<sup>38</sup>

**(d). What will be the characteristics of the resurrected bodies of the righteous?...of the unrighteous?** The resurrected bodies of both the righteous and the unrighteous will be immortal—but they will be decidedly different.

If a man is righteous, he will receive a heavenly body, that he may be able to converse with angels; but if a man is a sinner, he shall receive an eternal body fit to endure the penalties of sins. And righteously will God assign either state, for we do nothing without the body. We blaspheme with the body, and with the mouth we pray. With the body we commit fornication, and with the body we keep chastity. With the hand we rob, and by the hand we bestow alms; and the rest in like manner. Since then the body has been our minister in all things, it shall also share with us in the future the fruits of the past.

CYRIL OF JERUSALEM<sup>39</sup>

The bodies of the impious shall be unchanged; nothing shall appear to be taken from them. But their unchanged body shall be for a punishment; and this sort of consistency, if I may call it so, is a corruptible consistency. For where there is pain there is corruption: and the former liability to pain shall not cease, pain itself shall not die. For we believe that this corruption was referred to prophetically by the term *worm*, and pain, by the word *fire*. But since this consistency shall be such that it shall neither yield to death through

pain nor be changed to that incorruption in which there is no pain, for this reason was it written: *Their worm shall not die, and their fire shall not be quenched* (Is 66:24; Mk 9:43-48).

AUGUSTINE<sup>40</sup>

Well! I know what a chill comes over you on hearing these things; but what am I to do? This is God's own command, to continually tell you these truths.

CHRYSOSTOM<sup>41</sup>

**(e). There are those, like Jehovah's Witnesses, who believe that there is no Hell (in the sense of a state or place of eternal agony). This false teaching can cause much harm and eternal suffering. How?** Jehovah's Witnesses profess that ultimately, the unrighteous will be totally annihilated. This false teaching is very attractive to many and inspires the saying: *Let us eat, drink and be merry, for tomorrow we die* (Is 22:13). The Devil wants us to believe that there is no Hell for the same reason he would like us to believe that he does not exist. If we are unaware of his presence, we will be unaware of the traps he sets for us—the ways in which he tries to lead us away from God. Those who believe there is no Hell may choose to spend their lives following their own will instead of trying to determine and discipline themselves according to that of God, content with what they think will be a blissful future of non-existence. In either case, Satan will have attained his goal of diverting many from the Kingdom.

It will literally be a rude awakening, to those who succumb to the comforts of this heresy and squander their lives with no concern for the obedience and spiritual growth God expects, to find not merciful oblivion but eternal agony: *the worm that does not die* and the *fire that is not quenched* (Mk 9:48): an awful, never-ending painful realization of having denied oneself blessedness and eternal joy.

**(f). Christ taught the early Christians to live with the constant thought that He might return at any moment (Mt 24:36, 25:13; Lk 21:34-36; 1 Thess 5:1-2). Why?** For the same reason that God does not want us to know the length of our individual lives. He wants us to live in a state of readiness so we do not become negligent about our relationship with Him. Death can come upon us unexpectedly, as can Christ's Second Coming. Either event marks the end of our opportunity to demonstrate our faith and to grow in holiness in preparation for the Kingdom. Both are times of judgment. Therefore, each day of our lives we must try to grow in Christ's image so that we are always ready to meet our Lord.

**(g). What happens to the soul after death?** After death, the soul leaves the body and lives on because it is immortal. Partial judgment takes place. In its unending existence, the soul enters a new state in which it "pre-senses and foretastes, to a certain degree, that which it shall experience in full after the Second Coming of Christ and final judgment. The soul of the righteous foretastes and experiences the beneficences of Heaven and Paradise....The soul of the sinner foretastes and experiences the fearful sufferings of Hell."<sup>42</sup> When we sleep we experience a foreshadowing of this state of existence between death of the earthly body and the resurrected state after the Second Coming of Christ: though our body is immobile, through dreams we may participate in many experiences.

When the body lies in bed, not moving but in death-like sleep, the soul keeps awake by virtue of its own power. It transcends the natural power of the body and as though traveling away from the body while remaining in it, imagines and beholds things above the earth. Often it even holds converse with the saints and angels who are above earthly and bodily existence and approaches them in the confidence of the purity of its

intelligence. Shall it not all the more, when separated from the body at the time appointed by God Who coupled them together, have its knowledge of immortality more clear? For if even when coupled with the body it lived a life outside the body, much more shall its life continue after the death of the body and live without ceasing by reason of God Who made it thus by His own Word, our Lord Jesus Christ.

ATHANASIUS<sup>43</sup>

The resurrection of the dead will take place at the Second Coming of Christ, when “every soul shall unite itself to the body which it possessed during its life on earth...it will be a spiritual, not a material one. In this way we shall all appear before the tribunal of Christ.”<sup>44</sup> After this final and complete judgment, each person will experience eternally, with both body and soul, that for which s/he has prepared. What the soul had become inwardly during life on earth will become evident outwardly in the body. We will be what we have practiced to be.

The glory that in the present life enriches the souls of the saints will cover and enfold their naked bodies at the Resurrection and will carry them to Heaven. Then with body and soul the saints will rest with God in the Kingdom forever. For God, when He created Adam, did not give him bodily wings as He gave to the birds: His purpose was to confer the wings of the Spirit on him at the Resurrection, so that he might be lifted up by them and carried wherever the Spirit desired. Such spiritual wings are given to the souls of the saints in this present life so that their understanding may be raised by them to the spiritual realm. For the world of the Christians is a different world, with different garments, different food and a different form of enjoyment. We know that when Christ comes from Heaven to resurrect all those who have died during the present age, He will divide them into two groups (Mt 25:31-33). Those who bear His sign, which is the seal of the Holy Spirit, He will set at His right hand, saying: *My sheep, when they hear My voice, recognize Me* (Jn 10:14). Then He will envelop their bodies with the divine glory that, through their good works and the Spirit, their souls have already received in this present life.

MAKARIOS OF EGYPT<sup>45</sup>

**(h). How can we live in a way that pleases God?** If, every time we must make an important decision, we try to determine what God asks of us and do our best to act accordingly, we will grow in the image of Christ and thus will please God.

Wear a garment of incorruption, resplendent in good works; and whatever matter you receive from God to administer as a steward, administer profitably. Have you been given riches? Dispense them well. Have you been entrusted with the word of teaching? Be a good steward thereof. Have you power to rule? Do this diligently. There are many doors of good stewardship. Only let none of us be condemned and cast out; that we may with boldness meet Christ, the everlasting King, who reigns forever.

CYRIL OF JERUSALEM<sup>46</sup>

If you have the fire of lust, set against it that other fire (Mt 13:42), and this will presently be quenched and gone. If you wish to utter some harsh sounding words, think of the gnashing of teeth and the fear will be a bridle to your tongue. If you wish to plunder, hear the Judge commanding, *Bind him hand and foot, and cast him into the outer darkness* (Mt 22:13), and you will cast out this lust also. If you are drunken, and overindulge continually, hear the rich man saying, *Send Lazarus, that with the tip of his finger he may cool this scorching tongue* (Lk 16:24), yet not obtaining this, and you will hold yourself aloof from that distemper. If you love luxury, think of the affliction there and you will not think at all of this. If you are harsh and cruel, think of those virgins who when their lamps had gone out missed the bridal chamber (Mt 25:12), and you will quickly become

humane. Are you sluggish, and remiss? Consider him who hid the talent (Mt 25:24-30), and you will be more vehement than fire. Are you devoured by desire of what belongs to your neighbor? Think of the worm that does not die and you will easily both put away from you this disease, and in all other things act virtuously. He has asked of us nothing irksome or oppressive. Why then do His injunctions appear irksome to us? From our laziness. If we labor diligently, even what appears intolerable will be light and easy; but if we are lazy, even things tolerable will seem difficult.  
CHRYSOSTOM<sup>47</sup>

- <sup>1</sup> Roberts and Donaldson, "Fragments of the Lost Work of Justin on the Resurrection," Vol. I, p.297.
- <sup>2</sup> Chrysostom; Schaff, "Homily X," Vol. XII, p.327.
- <sup>3</sup> Philip Schaff and Henry Wace, "Lecture IV" (30), *NPNF*, Second Series, Vol. VII, *St. Cyril of Jerusalem, St. Gregory Nazianzen*, p.26.
- <sup>4</sup> Toal, "On the Consolation of Death, Second Sermon," Vol. Four, p.360.
- <sup>5</sup> Roberts & Donaldson, "Fragments from the Lost Writings of Irenaeus," Vol. I, p.570.
- <sup>6</sup> Schaff and Wace, "Lecture XV," (23 and 25), Vol. VII, p.111-12.
- <sup>7</sup> Panayiotis Nellas, "Garments of Skin," *Deification in Christ*, p.46-53.
- <sup>8</sup> Lossky, *Image*, p.222.
- <sup>9</sup> Roberts and Donaldson, "Against Heresies," Vol. I, p.540.
- <sup>10</sup> *ibid*, p.531.
- <sup>11</sup> Toal, "On the Consolation of Death, First Sermon," Vol. Four, p.318.
- <sup>12</sup> Lossky, *Theology*, p.83.
- <sup>13</sup> *ibid*, p.113.
- <sup>14</sup> *ibid*, p.92.
- <sup>15</sup> Toal, "On the Consolation of Death, First Sermon," Vol. Four, p.318.
- <sup>16</sup> *ibid*, "The Leaven of Holiness," Vol. One, p.354.
- <sup>17</sup> Maxwell Staniforth, "The Blessedness of Christian Love," (49), *Early Christian Writings, The Apostolic Fathers*, p.49.
- <sup>18</sup> *ibid*, (50), p.49.
- <sup>19</sup> Schaff, "Homily XI on Second Corinthians," Vol. XII, p.333.
- <sup>20</sup> Ware, *Church*, p.279.
- <sup>21</sup> Winter, "The Difference," (Day 5).
- <sup>22</sup> Lossky, *Image*, p.97.
- <sup>23</sup> Schaff and Wace, "Letter CCXXXIV," Vol. VIII, p.274.
- <sup>24</sup> John Meyendorff, "Essence and Energies in God," *Gregory Palamas, The Triads*, p.108.
- <sup>25</sup> Lossky, *Image*, p.56 and note 27.
- <sup>26</sup> Meyendorff, "The Uncreated Glory," p.88.
- <sup>27</sup> Ware, *Church*, p.68.
- <sup>28</sup> Schaff and Wace, "Letter CLXXXIX," Vol. VIII, p.231.
- <sup>29</sup> Toal, "The Resurrection of the Body," Vol. Four, p.123-5.
- <sup>30</sup> *ibid*, "On the Consolation of Death, Second Sermon," p.359.
- <sup>31</sup> *ibid*, "The Resurrection of the Body," p.126-7.
- <sup>32</sup> Ware, *Way*, p.136.
- <sup>33</sup> Toal, "The Resurrection of the Body," Vol. Four, p.128.
- <sup>34</sup> Roberts and Donaldson, "Against Heresies," Vol. I, p.561.
- <sup>35</sup> *ibid*, "On the Resurrection," Vol. I, p.295.
- <sup>36</sup> Palmer, Sherrard, Ware, "Texts on Watchfulness," (20), Vol. Three, p.24.
- <sup>37</sup> Toal, "On the Resurrection of the Dead, Second Sermon," Vol. Four, p.386.
- <sup>38</sup> *ibid*, p.400-2.
- <sup>39</sup> Schaff and Wace, "Lecture XVIII," (19), Vol. VII, p.139.
- <sup>40</sup> Toal, "On the Resurrection of the Dead, Second Sermon," Vol. Four, p.395.

<sup>41</sup> Schaff, "Homily IX on First Corinthians," Vol. XII, p.49.

<sup>42</sup> Athanasios S. Frangopoulos, "The Completion of Redemption," *Our Orthodox Christian Faith*, p.239.

<sup>43</sup> Schaff and Wace, "Against the Heathen," (33), Vol. IV, p.21.

<sup>44</sup> Frangopoulos, "The Completion of all Things," p.249.

<sup>45</sup> Palmer, Sherrard, Ware, "The Raising of the Intellect," (63), Vol. Three, p.312.

<sup>46</sup> Schaff and Wace, "Lecture XV," (26), Vol. VII, p.112.

<sup>47</sup> Schaff, "Homily X on Second Corinthians," Vol. XII, p.330.