

SALVATION CONDITIONS US FOR IMMORTALITY

“For we know that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. For in this we groan, earnestly desiring to be clothed upon with our house which is from heaven: If so be that being clothed we shall not be found naked. For we that are in this tabernacle do groan, being burdened: not for that we would be unclothed, but clothed upon, that mortality might be swallowed up of life. Now he that hath wrought us for the selfsame thing is God, who also hath given unto us the earnest of the Spirit.” (2 Cor 5:1-5)

Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION, #1

The Spirit, in Scripture, has developed the true perspective of spiritual life. In Christ Jesus life is significantly different than it was under a system of Divinely imposed Law. The First Covenant involved a series of ceremonies that dealt “only with clean and unclean meats and drinks and different washings, [mere] external rules and regulations for the body imposed to tide the worshipers over until the time of setting things straight [of reformation, of the complete new order when Christ, the Messiah, shall establish the reality of what these things foreshadow—a better covenant]” (Heb 9:10, AMPLIFIED). Because the people remained fundamentally unchanged in their character and appetites, this kind of religion was required. It was a system in which a personal acquaintance of God not only was NOT realized, it was a covenant in which such familiarity and intimacy could not be experienced. During the administration of the Law, those few souls who were given to comprehend something of the character and ways of God, did not do so through the Law itself. Rather, it was their faith that brought to them a personal knowledge of the Lord. God cannot be known through laws, ceremonies, and procedures.

Familiarity with God is not attained by means of external sights and involvements. This is because such an approach relies upon the strength of the individual himself, rather than upon the Lord. Thus it is written that “the law is not of faith,” or “is not based upon faith” (Gal 3:12, NIV). Thus it is said of those under that Old Covenant, “The ox knoweth his owner, and the ass his master's crib: but Israel doth not know, My people doth not consider” (Isa 1:3). And again, “they regard not the work of the Lord, neither consider the operation of His hands” (Isa 1:3). And again, “for it is a people of no understanding: therefore He that made them will not have mercy on them, and He that formed them will show them no favor” (Isa 27:11). And again, “For they are a nation void of counsel, neither is there any understanding in them” (Deut 32:28). And again, “For My people is foolish, they have not known Me; they are sottish [stupid, NASB] children, and they have none understanding: they are wise to do evil, but to do good they have no knowledge” (Jer 4:22).

The Law, or “the First,” and now “Old,” Covenant did not address this situation, but only pointed it out and condemned it. Further, there was nothing in that covenant itself that promoted or sustained the knowledge of God. It was, in every sense of the word, “weak through the flesh” (Rom 8:3) – that is, its weakness was found in those charged with keeping it. That is, because it relied upon what men did (“which if a man DO, he shall live in them” – Ex 18:5). Righteousness, or life, could not come through it. As it is written, “for if there had been a law given which could have given life, verily righteousness should have been by the law” (Gal 3:21).

Now that a “new” covenant has been given, ratified by the blood of Christ (Heb 13:20), it is a grievous transgression to continue to seek Divine approval by means of a procedure, routine, or system of law. The New Covenant is one in which believing is fundamental to the realization of righteousness. It does not say “DO and live,” but “BELIEVE on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved” (Acts 16:31). This by no means excludes obedience. Rather, it makes obedience possible. For this reason, obedience is said to be “of faith” – or that which “comes from faith” (NIV) (Rom 1:5).

Chapter 2

INTRODUCTION, #2

With these things in mind, Paul has detailed some of the remarkable benefits of the New Covenant (perhaps it would be better to call them “realities”). The third and fourth chapters of this book (Second Corinthians) mention the following characteristics of the New Covenant.

- Believers themselves are “the epistle” (3:2).
- They are Christ’s own “epistle” (3:3a).
- They have been written “with the Spirit of the living God” in “fleshly tables of the heart” (3:3b).
- “Trust,” or “confidence,” is realized through Christ toward God (3:4).
- In distinction to the Old Covenant, “sufficiency” now comes from God (3:5).
- Men are made “able ministers” of the Spirit, not of the letter (3:6a).
- The Spirit “gives life,” as compared with the Law which offered life through doing (3:6b).
- The “ministration of the Spirit” exceeds the glory made known under the Law (3:7-8).
- While the law was the “ministration of condemnation,” the New Covenant is the “ministration of righteousness” (3:9).
- The glory of the Old Covenant dissipated, while the glory of the New “remains” (3:11).
- The New Covenant generates “hope,” rather than condemnation

(3:12).

- The Old Covenant blinded the minds of men to Divine purpose, while the New Covenant does away with such blindness (3:13-16).

- Whereas the Law generated bondage, the New Covenant, through the Spirit, produces liberty (3:17).

- While the Old Covenant left the people unchanged, under the New Covenant men are changed “from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord” (3:18).

- Under the New Covenant, men “faint not” (4:1).

- There is a hearty and willing renunciation of the things the Law pointed out and condemned (4:2a).

- The truth is manifested, or made known, through the lives of those in Christ Jesus (4:2b).

- Under the New Covenant, God shines “in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ” (4:6).

- In the New Covenant we are given a “treasure,” which is presently housed in an “earthen vessel” (4:7).

- Life is so arranged as to confirm that the “excellency of the power is of God, and not of us” (4:7b-10).

- Both the “dying” of the Lord Jesus and His “life” are made known in our bodies, or “mortal flesh” (4:10-12).

- Under the New Covenant men are constrained by faith, not mere duty (4:13).

- The motivation for faithfulness is the persuasion of being presented faultless before the Lord (4:14).

- The purpose for which men are called is known to those under the New Covenant, which purpose compels them to labor with God (4:14-15).

- In Christ men become aware that while the “outward man” is perishing, the “inward man” is being “renewed day by day” (4:16).

- Under the New Covenant, afflictions are actually accruing a “far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory” for the sufferer (4:17).

- The power to survive and make progress toward glory is realized “while we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen” (4:18).

Chapter 3

AN ANALYSIS

Even though the realities declared in the Gospel are inherent in the New Covenant, and are realized in Christ Jesus, they remain virtually unknown by the modern church. This very condition confirms that a great falling away has, in fact, taken place, just as surely as

spiritual retrogression had occurred in the church at Corinth (1 Cor 3:1-4). The church has been so victimized by an academic and sensually-based religion that these things sound strange. The life of the average church of our day is firmly rooted in “this present evil world,” and thus contradicts the declared posture of those who are living by faith.

Faith has always made people “strangers and pilgrims on the earth” (Heb 11:13). It has always moved people to “seek a country,” and to “desire a better country, that is an heavenly” (Heb 11:14-16). Thus Peter admonished those in the Son, “Dearly beloved, I beseech you as strangers and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul” (1 Pet 2:11). In the professed church, where this posture – that of “strangers and pilgrims” – is not found, either men have “departed from the faith” (1 Tim 4:1), are about to do so, or have never really believed.

When the characteristics of spiritual life are not found, it is because the life simply is not there. It is time to say to such people, “Awake thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light” (Eph 5:14). Such poor souls are slumbering on the brink of eternal ruin, all the while being soothed by the seemingly melodious sounds of a dead religion.

Much of the cause for the condition of the churches is owing to the miserable message that is being delivered to it. I speak as one who has experienced these things, and not as a mere spectator. For years, far greater in number than I wish to confess, I have heard and read messages that fairly dripped with worldly wisdom, and the values of this “present evil world.” I have witnessed a remarkable increase of Scriptural illiteracy, and a staggering proliferation of spiritual infants in the ministry and positions of leadership. Among this horde of unlearned and pretentious leaders, the matters that I have listed from the third and fourth chapters of Second Corinthians are virtually unknown. Rarely do you hear them affirmed, discussed, or taught today. I appeal to those exposed to this lesson to search and see if, in the context of today’s church, such things do not have a strange sound to them – even though Paul has declared them to be common among us.

PROCEEDING FURTHER

Paul is going to proceed further in his exposition of New Covenant life – life in Christ Jesus that is advanced through the ministry of the Holy Spirit. He will affirm what God is doing in Christ Jesus, and how the “newness of life” is reacting in this world. The entire matter of salvation is a preparation for something that is ahead. There is a Divine appointment on the heavenly agenda for which redemption is readying us. Unless you have been taught properly, and have been living by faith, this will sound strange. Yet, it is not strange. Rather, it is the common experience of all who are living by faith and walking in the Spirit.

We are going to be exposed to thoughts regarding the resurrection body. We will be told that God is preparing us for that body – and that this is an integral part of what salvation is really about. It should be abundantly apparent that this is an exceedingly rare subject within the modern church. There is a reason for this condition, and it is a wholly unacceptable one.

Chapter 4

WE KNOW

“For we know . . .” Other versions read, “Now we know,” (NIV) “For we are conscious.” (BBE)

The New Covenant is one of spiritual knowledge. Whereas those under the Old Covenant did not know God, and were not acquainted with His ways, this is not at all the manner of the New Covenant. Until Jesus died, the best among men were surprised by the working of the Lord. When Jesus taught, “all the people were amazed” (Matt 12:23). When expounding the requirements of salvation, even His disciples “were exceedingly amazed” (Matt 19:25). When He worked, they are said to have been “sore amazed within themselves, beyond measure, and wondered” (Mk 6:51). On one occasion “all the people were greatly amazed, and running to Him saluted Him” (Mk 9:15). Others “marveled” at His works, saying “It was never so seen in Israel” (Matt 9:33). Another time, when Jesus had cursed a fig tree, His own disciples “marveled saying, ‘How soon is the fig tree withered away!’” (Matt 21:20). When Jesus was only a few days old, when Simeon prophesied over Him, “Joseph and His mother “marveled” at those things which were spoken of Him” (Lk 2:33). Later, during His ministry, when Jesus was asked concerning the lawfulness of paying tribute to Caesar, “they marveled at His answer, and held their peace” (Lk 20:26).

With the entrance of sin and death, men became unfamiliar with the God of heaven! Only those to whom He revealed Himself had even the faintest notion of what He intended to do among men. There was a prevailing ignorance of the salvation which had not been made known. Some few souls had some inclination that a blessed future was not associated with this world. That is why early “pilgrims” desired a “better country” (Heb 11:16). It is why Abraham “looked for a city which hath foundations, whose Builder and Maker is God” (Heb 11:10). It is why David spoke of dwelling in the “house of the Lord forever” (Psa 23:6). It is why ancient Job confessed, “And though after my skin worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God: Whom I shall see for myself, and mine eyes shall behold, and not another; though my reins be consumed within me” (Job 19:26-27). These are among the very sparse and few expressions of a hope beyond the grave prior to the coming of Christ. It is also why men cannot find a thorough explanation of the grave in the writings of Moses and the Prophets – particularly in the writings of Solomon. “Life and immortality” have been brought to light by the “Gospel, “ and were largely mysteries before that (“Who hath saved us, and called us with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began, but is now made manifest by the appearing of our Savior Jesus Christ, who hath abolished death, and hath brought life and immortality to light through the gospel:” (2 Tim 1:10). It had not “entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love Him” (1 Cor 2:9).

However, that is not the case now – not in this day of salvation (2 Cor 6:2), and the era of the New Covenant (Heb 8:10-13)! Thus it is written, “But God hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit: for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God” (1 Cor 2:10). This is an epoch of true and extensive knowledge and understanding. Now things are known that were never known before, and things that were formerly introduced with few words, and in types and shadows, are being expounded in remarkable detail.

THE MANNER OF THE TEXT

“For we know . . .”

Notice the manner of this text. It is not a mere academic iteration, pointing out something that has escaped our attention, or of which we are fundamentally ignorant: “For we KNOW.” This is a knowledge that is possessed now. This is a strong expression, coming from the Greek word “oid-amen.” It means, “as having come to a perception or realization of something; know, understand, comprehend; as having knowledge through experience – recognize, understand” (ROBERTSON).

This is a knowledge inherent in the new creation. At some time, there may very well be an inability to express, or articulate, this knowledge. Yet, it is known intuitively, so that when the individual hears it expressed, the matter is at once recognized as the truth, and even correlated with personal experience. Here we find a confirmation of the great ministry of speaking in words “taught by the Spirit, combining spiritual thoughts with spiritual words” (1 Cor 2:13, NASB). In such a case, this inner-knowledge is awakened, as it were, and the mind is enabled to take hold of it. This is part of what is involved in God writing His laws upon our hearts and putting them into our minds (Heb 10:16).

The glaring deficiency of speaking in words reflecting the wisdom of this world is that it hides truth from the people, so that what is known intuitively is never discerned with the mind, and thus cannot be enjoyed. Much of the religion of our day actually puts the people of God at a remarkable disadvantage. The things that God intends for them to know remain obscured, and are not recognized. It is like a carpenter having all the tools of his trade available to him, yet hidden beneath the floorboard of his truck. He senses that he needs them. He can see from what he regularly does that such things would be useful, yet does not know how to describe them or where to find them. Once they are found, however, their proper use becomes apparent to him, for he had, in fact, been trained to use them.

Paul does not say we “ought” to know, but that “we know.” He does not say we “can know,” but that we DO know. That is, new covenant life contributes to and prepares for such knowledge. The “new creation” (2 Cor 5:17), or the “new man” is adapted for such knowledge, being “created in righteousness and true holiness” (Eph 4:24). The new man “is renewed in knowledge after the image of Him that created him” (Col 3:10). He will perceive the truth of what follows – it will make perfect sense to him.

KNOWING

Let me confirm to you this manner of speaking – that is, referring to what “we know.” This is a common way in which the household of faith is addressed. Here are some examples.

1. “Now we know that what things soever the law saith, it saith to them who are under the law: that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God” (Rom 3:19).

2. “For we know that the law is spiritual: but I am carnal, sold under sin” (Rom 7:14).
3. “For we know that the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now” (Rom 8:22).
4. “And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose” (Rom 8:28).
5. “But we know that the law is good, if a man use it lawfully” (1 Tim 1:8).
6. “Little children, it is the last time: and as ye have heard that antichrist shall come, even now are there many antichrists; whereby we know that it is the last time” (1 John 2:18).
7. “Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he isain”(1 John 3:2).
8. “We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren. He that loveth not his brother abideth in death” (1 John 3:14).
9. “By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God, and keep his commandments” (1 John 5:2).
10. “And we know that the Son of God is come, and hath given us an understanding, that we may know him that is true, and we are in him that is true, even in his Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God, and eternal life” (1 John 5:20).

The New Covenant is a covenant of knowledge and spiritual understanding. It is one in which the constituents of the covenant are “friends,” for the will of the Master is being divulged to them (John 15:15). This is precisely why Paul prayed for the churches to receive “the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him” (Eph 1:17). It is why he earnestly sought for the saints to be “filled with the knowledge of His will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding” (Col 1:9). This is not a knowledge of luxury, but is essential to the life of faith. If the coming of the Lord Jesus will result in Him taking “vengeance on them that know not God” (2 Thess 1:8), who, then, is the person who cannot see the essentiality of such knowledge?

Chapter 6

THE KNOWLEDGE OF DIVINE PURPOSE IS FUNDAMENTAL

Fundamental to knowing God, which is eternal life (John 17:3; 1 John 5:20), is the awareness of His purpose – i.e. what is intended by His “great salvation.” Right here we touch upon a matter in which multitudes are suffering from spiritual malnutrition and ignorance. The religion of our day is not tailored to promote the knowledge of God. It is more calculated to address the temporal needs of men, and thus is highly conducive to the development of individual careers, the gratification of the flesh, and institutional success – none of which are integral to salvation or that to which it leads.

Forthrightly the Spirit tells us that we have been “called according to His purpose” (Rom 8:28). The “purpose of God” is something that stands immovable, and is the circumference within which God works (Rom 9:11,17). His predeterminations are in strict comportment with this “purpose” (Eph 1:11), for it is an “eternal purpose” (Eph 3:11). It was “according to His own purpose and grace” that God “saved us, and called us with an holy calling” (2 Tim 1:9). Men may say that have found in Jesus everything they wanted, but it would be more accurate to say that God has provided in Jesus everything He desired.

To be ignorant of this Divine “purpose” is to be at the ultimate disadvantage. Although this “purpose” has been “purposed in Himself” (Rom 1:9), and “purposed in Christ Jesus” (Eph 3:11), the Lord has made it known in the Son. This is the “mystery of His will” that is now “made known” (Eph 1:9). It is the “mystery” that was made known to, and declared by, the apostle Paul (Eph 3:3-5). It is what God has “revealed” (Rom 16:25; 1 Cor 2:10; Eph 3:3,5).

In Christ, God is making known what He has purposed, or determined. In other words, He is revealing the objective of His “great salvation,” including what is presently occurring, as well as the appointed consummation. If this is true – that God is making His purpose known – then no child of God can be content to remain ignorant of that purpose. To the degree that we are ignorant of what God is doing, we are, in fact, ignorant of God Himself, for God is known by what He does (Ex 16:6; Ezek 6:13; 37:14; John 8:28). The Lord is “known by the judgment that He executeth” (Psa 9:16), but particularly by what He is doing by Jesus “through the church” (Eph 3:10).

Our text for this series of devotions will project us beyond life in this world. It will hold before us a Divinely established objective, and speak to us as though this is clearly seen. This is addressed to the “new man,” and will make perfect sense to him. It will sound exceedingly strange and unreasonable to anyone dominated by the flesh, appearing to have no relevance to life.

Remember, Paul is writing within the greater context of us having a treasure in an earthen vessel, and of the conflict and hard experiences that this has caused to erupt. His word, therefore, will have a glad note, which I trust you will be able to hear. If the sound of it seems muffled, then stretch forward to hear it. Do not let it pass. This is a high frequency to which the “new man” is tuned.

Chapter 7

THE DISSOLUTION OF OUR TABERNACLE

“ . . . that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved . . . ”

When the Spirit speaks of things that will pass away, He never applies such words or concepts to what we have received from God in Christ Jesus—i.e. eternal life, grace, peace, truth, the Holy Spirit, etc . He does not refer to anything that is received by faith, or anything that is related to hope. What Jesus has come to give us does not pass away:— i.e. “Eternal life” (Rom 6:23), “everlasting consolation” (2 Thess 2:16), “eternal glory” (2 Tim 2:10), “eternal salvation” (Heb 5:9), “eternal redemption” (Heb 9:12), “eternal inheritance” (Heb 9:15), “everlasting kingdom” (2 Pet 1:11), etc !

The life that is in Him, and is realized “more abundantly,” does not relate to temporality. From the true perspective, nothing that is temporal can really be “abundant.” At the very best, it is put into a bag “with holes” (Hag 1:6), and “broken cisterns, that can hold no

water” (Jer 2:13). Godly men know that if what we receive in Christ Jesus is eternal, and blends with eternity, what is temporal, or is passing away, cannot be our focus or emphasis. Those who fail to see this will, by default, enter into the broad road that leads to destruction .

When those who speak for God major on temporal things, they have robbed the people, and put them at a tremendous disadvantage. God’s “purpose” for everything that is temporal is clearly stated: “Heaven and earth shall PASS AWAY” (Matt 24:35). And again, “the fashion of this world PASSETH AWAY” (1 Cor 7:31). And again, “The world PASSETH AWAY, and the lust thereof” (1 John 2:17). However, this is not so of the things that God has prepared for those who love Him (1 Cor 2:9-10). Not a single one of those “things” is passing away!

Our text confirms there is a part of us that will be “dissolved.” Other versions read, “destroyed” (NKJV), “torn down” (NASB), “taken down” (BBE) “dismantled” (NET) “folded up” (NJB), and “thrown down” (YLT). This is also referred to as our “outward man” – “For which cause we faint not; but though our outward man perish, yet the inward man is renewed day by day” (2 Cor 4:16). It is the part of us that was made from the earth, and is called “earthy” (1 Cor 15:47-49), or “made of the dust” (NKJV). It is also called an “earthen vessel,” or “jars of clay” (2 Cor 4:7, NIV). This is our body.

The truth of the matter is that this part of us is passing away, and cannot be sustained for long. Life must not be lived as though we will always be in this frail frame – our bodies. The lusts and desires that are tied to this body cannot be our fundamental desires, nor is life to be lived primarily to satisfy them. In particular, our religion must not center in our bodies and the activities related to them. This is why John wrote, “Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world. And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever.” (1 John 2:15-17).

It is “appointed” unto all men “once to die” (Heb 9:27) – the dissolution of the body will be fulfilled. Maschil the Psalmist challenged, “What man is he that liveth, and shall not see death? shall he deliver his soul from the hand of the grave? Selah” (Psa 89:48). Job observed of men, “Seeing his days are determined, the number of his months are with thee, thou hast appointed his bounds that he cannot pass” (Job 14:5).

Death is a judgment passed upon all men because of sin – Adam’s sin: “Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned” (Rom 5:12). Death passed upon all men because Adam sinned. The fact that it was effectively passed upon all men is seen in the words, “for that all have sinned.” That is, Adam’s nature was passed on, as well as God’s judgment against it. Everything that goes back to Adam is under the curse.

The only solution to this dilemma is to be born again (1 Pet 1:23), regenerated (Tit 3:5), and created anew (Eph 2:10). This takes place in Christ Jesus, by faith, and through the Spirit.

While this ought to be glaringly apparent to every professing believer, this is sadly not the case.

Chapter 8

OUR EARTHLY HOUSE

“ . . . that if our earthly house of this tabernacle . . . ” Other versions read, “if our earthly house, this tent” (NKJV), “if the earthly tent which is our house” (NASB), “if the earthly tent we live in” (NIV), “that if our tent of flesh” (BBE), “if our earthly house of this habitation” (DOUAY), “our earthly home” (ESV), “when the tent that houses us on earth” (NJB), “these bodies” (NLT), and “if this poor tent, our earthly house” (WEYMOUTH).

Our “earthly house” is our body – a body of “flesh and blood.” It is the place where we are temporarily located. It is not “us,” or we ourselves, but where we live. Properly speaking, a “house” is not to be confused with the person who lives there.

Our bodies are called an “earthly house,” because they are from the earth. We are told of their origin in the book of Genesis. “And the LORD God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul” (Gen 2:7).

Commenting on this, Paul wrote, “The first man is of the earth, earthy: the second man is the Lord from heaven. As is the earthy, such are they also that are earthy: and as is the heavenly, such are they also that are heavenly. And as we have borne the image of the earthy, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly” (1 Cor 15:47-49). This is the part of us that is associated with fallen Adam and the cursed earth.

Our bodies are called a “tabernacle,” or “tent” (NKJV), because they are frail, temporary, and transient. As surely as tents are subject to the elements of nature, so our bodies are subject to the difficulties and vicissitudes of life.

LIKE ISRAEL

In this regard, they parallel the experience of Israel in their journey through the wilderness to Canaan. Following their exodus, all Israelites dwelt in “tents” until they entered the promised land. They gathered manna and took it into their “tents” (Ex 16:16). When they camped, they were all to “pitch their tents” in groups according to their tribes (Num 1:52). When the directing cloud stopped, all of Israel had to stop and “pitch their tents” in that place (Num 9:17). As long as the cloud stayed over the tabernacle, the people “rested in their tents” (Num 9:18). The Psalmist affirms that God “made the tribes of Israel to dwell in their tents” (Psa 78:55).

They dwelt in tents because the wilderness was not their real home. They were journeying through it, and were never intended to take up permanent residency in it. Even when they were not allowed to enter the promised land because of their unbelief, they were not permitted to build houses, settling down in the wilderness. God assigned them one year for each day the unfaithful spies perused the land of Canaan. That means they had to spend “forty years” in the wilderness (Num 14:34). Even then, they could not erect permanent houses in the wilderness, but were consigned to a life of wandering. It is written, “And the LORD'S anger was kindled against Israel, and He made them wander in the wilderness forty years” (Num 32:13) – and “tents” are for wanderers! During that time, all those who did not believe died off, wandering “until all of the generation, that had done evil in the sight of the LORD, were consumed” (Num 32:13).

For those who are in Christ Jesus, this world is like a wilderness where “there is no water” – just as with Israel (Deut 8:15). Being a man after God’s own heart, David sensed this and cried out, “O God, Thou art my God; early will I seek Thee: my soul

thirsteth for Thee, my flesh longeth for Thee in a dry and thirsty land, where no water is” (Psa 63:1). He knew that any sustenance in this world had to be received from another Source, even as Israel drank “water out of the flinty rock” (Deut 8:15).

Our bodies are “tents,” only intended as a habitation while we remain in this world. We are not to treat them as permanent abodes, but keep under them, and bring them “into subjection” (1 Cor 9:27). So far as earthly utility is concerned, we daily put them up and take them down, looking more intently on the progress we are making to the promised land.

Chapter 9

DISSOLVED

“ . . . were dissolved . . . ” Other versions read, “is destroyed” (NKJV), “is torn down” (NASB), “is taken down” (BBE), “is folded up” (NJB), “may be thrown down” YLT, and “struck down” (MONTGOMERY).

The manner in which Paul refers to the destiny of our bodies is most intriguing: “dissolved.” This parallels the words of the Lord to Adam: “In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread, till thou return unto the ground; for out of it wast thou taken: for dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return” (Gen 3:19). At that time, the Lord did not divulge the details that are being made known in our text.

There are fifty-nine chemicals that comprise the human body. They include the following. Amounts are based on the average weight of a person: oxygen (70% of body weight), carbon, hydrogen, nitrogen, calcium, phosphorus, potassium, sulfur, sodium, chlorine, magnesium, iron, fluoride, zinc, silicon, rubidium, strontium, bromine, lead, copper, aluminum, cadmium, cerium, barium, iodine, tin, titanium, boron, nickel, selenium, chromium, manganese, arsenic, lithium, cesium, mercury, germanium, molybdenum, cobalt, antimony, silver, niobium, zirconium, lanthanum, gallium, tellurium, yttrium, bismuth, thallium, indium, gold, scandium, tantalum, vanadium, thorium, uranium, samarium, beryllium, and tungsten. All of these are found in the earth, from which the body was made. They are all in proper proportion, and, when working together, promote a state of sound health.

The human body is complex from a biological point of view, being comprised of these fifty-nine chemicals, and an array of complex systems: i.e. circulatory, nervous, respiratory, skeletal, etc. As David well said, “I am fearfully and wonderfully made” (Psa 139:14).

Yet, all of this – “our earthly house of this tabernacle” – is in a state deterioration, being subject to corruption. It is only a matter of time until we will move out of this “tent,” having no further need for it.

The word “dissolved” comes from a Greek word that means “to put down, destroy; to dissolve, break up; to disband; to end, bring an end to” (THAYER). Other lexical meanings include, “destroy, demolish, dismantle; tear down” (FRIBERG), “to destroy completely by tearing down” (LOUW-NIDA). The other place in Scripture where this exact word is used is Mark 13:2, where the Lord spoke of the destruction of the Temple. “Seest thou these great buildings? there shall not be left one stone upon another, that shall not be THROWN DOWN” (Mark 13:2).

All of this is associated with purpose – Divine purpose. Just as the Temple was removed when it had served its purpose, so our earthly bodies will be dismantled when they have

served their purpose. The perspective of the believer of this is that when the course of life has been completed, the “tabernacle” of our body will be taken down, returning to earth, while the spirit returns to God. Solomon put it this way, “Then shall the dust return to the earth as it was: and the spirit shall return unto God who gave it” (Eccl 12:7). After this, Solomon concluded, “Vanity of vanities, saith the preacher; all is vanity” (Eccl 12:8). In the greater light of the Gospel, Paul will draw quite another conclusion.

Faith enables us to develop a proper perspective of life. All of us have an appointment with death. As it is written, “it is appointed unto men once to die” (Heb 9:27). Prior to Christ, not much was known about anything after that determined conclusion. Holy men did know death was a common appointment, and thus were able to say like Joshua, “I am going the way of all the earth” (Josh 23:14). David said the same thing: “I go the way of all the earth” (1 Kgs 2:2). Before them Job said, “When a few years are come, then I shall go the way whence I shall not return” (Job 16:22). He saw the grave as a “house appointed for all living” (Job 30:23).

Now Paul will shine Gospel light upon this otherwise morose experience. He will brighten the occasion by showing us what will come after death. He will speak of something that already exists, even though it is not presently seen or experienced. All of this, he will powerfully affirm, is according to “God’s eternal purpose.” Our present bodies are not the only bodies – that is, they are not the only bodies we ourselves will inhabit! God has created and reserved a better body for His children!

Chapter 10

WE HAVE A BUILDING OF GOD

“ 1c . . . we have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.”

It is the Spirit’s manner to speak much about what “we have” – whether at this present time, or in “the world to come.” The Old Covenant could not speak in this way because it was “weak through the flesh” (Rom 8:3).

WE HAVE

“ . . . we have . . . ” Other versions read, “there is . . . for us” (NJB), and “we will have” (NLT). Both of the variant translations are extremely weak, and do not convey the full force of this affirmation. The word “have” is an unusually strong one, coming from a word that means “to have (hold) in the hand . . . equivalent to ‘own’” (THAYER), and “to have or to hold, possess” (FRIBERG).

This is something we presently have “by faith” – one of the many possessions “the elect” enjoy. We are also said to “HAVE peace with God” (Rom 5:1), “access by faith” (Rom 5:2), and “the Spirit which is of God” (1 Cor 2:12). We “HAVE the mind of Christ,” (1 Cor 2:16), “hope in Christ” (1 Cor 15:19), and a “treasure” from God (2 Cor 4:7). We also HAVE “liberty” (Gal 2:4), “redemption” (Eph 1:7), and “HAVE obtained an inheritance” (Eph 1:11). Additionally, we “HAVE a great High Priest” (Heb 4:14), “an anchor for the soul” (Heb 6:19), and “an altar” (Heb 13:10). All of these are held and enjoyed by faith. They strengthen our inward man and rejoice the heart.

What is now set before us is a word of surety. Faith can give us the “substance” of it, for it is very real. We can enjoy “confidence” of its reality, even though it is not presently seen (Heb 11:1).

The fact that this is mentioned confirms that it is pertinent both life and godliness. God

makes no irrelevant promises, nor does He speak of matters that are of no real consequence. The life into which we have been inducted requires what is now affirmed. If you are not learned in this area, then it is your business to become conversant with it. The context in which this is stated suggests that the knowledge of it is essential to overcoming the world and the grievous experiences that are found within it.

A BUILDING OF GOD

“ . . . a building of God . . . ” Other versions read, “a building given of God” (GENEVA), “there is a house for us from God” (NJB), “wonderful new bodies” (LIVING), “another building” (IE), and “from God a building” (AMPLIFIED).

This “building” is in contrast to the frail “tent” of our mortal body. Two perspectives can be seen here. First, this speaks of something that is permanent. Second, it is informing us of what God has provided – something for which His salvation is suiting , or preparing, us.

By saying “of God,” the Spirit refers to the Source of this “building.” It has been prepared by God, and is given to us by Him. Without His involvement, we would neither have this “building” nor be able to possess it.

We will find that this is nothing less than the resurrection body – the one that is described in First Corinthians fifteen. There, a contrast is also made between our present “tabernacle” and the “building” that awaits us. “So also is the resurrection of the dead. It (tabernacle) is sown in corruption; it is raised in incorruption (building): it (tabernacle) is sown in dishonor; it is raised in glory (building): it (tabernacle) is sown in weakness; it is raised in power (building): It (tabernacle) is sown a natural body; it is raised a spiritual body (building). There is a natural body (tabernacle), and there is a spiritual body (building)” (1 Cor 15:42-44). “Howbeit that was not first which is spiritual (building), but that which is natural (tabernacle); and afterward that which is spiritual (building)” (1 Cor 15:46). “And as we have borne the image of the earthy (tabernacle), we shall also bear the image of the heavenly (building)” (1 Cor 15:49).

This resurrection body, as affirmed by this text, already exists. Even if it was not stated in this manner, we should be able to conclude this by the statement, “the works were finished from the foundation of the world” (Heb 4:3). While the experience of the resurrection will not occur until Jesus comes, everything is in place at this time, and in that fact we can confidently rest.

In my judgment, these “buildings” are the “mansions” of John 14:2: “In My Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you” (John 14:2). Although a different word is used in John, the essential meaning remains the same. When Jesus spoke, He was emphasizing the “dwelling” aspect – WHERE it would be: “in My Father’s house.” In our text, the emphasis is upon WHAT it will be, as compared with our present bodies. While I only suggest this as a possible meaning, I have found it to be quite edifying to ponder – a personal “building” in which we will carry out the various aspects of our assignments in the glory.

SALVATION CONDITIONS US FOR IMMORTALITY

“For we know that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a

building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. For in this we groan, earnestly desiring to be clothed upon with our house which is from heaven: If so be that being clothed we shall not be found naked. For we that are in this tabernacle do groan, being burdened: not for that we would be unclothed, but clothed upon, that mortality might be swallowed up of life. Now he that hath wrought us for the selfsame thing is God, who also hath given unto us the earnest of the Spirit.” (2 Cor 5:1-5)

Chapter 11

HOUSE NOT MADE WITH HANDS

“ . . . an house not made with hands . . . ” Other versions read, “not built by human hands” (NIV), “a dwelling not made with hands” (NAB), “not man-made” (IE), and “made, not by man” (PHILLIPS).

Just as it is with every facet of our salvation, this marvelous “house” will have nothing made by man in it. Because man is fallen by nature, everything that originates with him is polluted. When God gave commandment concerning the altar, He said, “And if thou wilt make Me an altar of stone, thou shalt not build it of hewn stone: for if thou lift up thy tool upon it, thou hast polluted it” (Ex 20:25). So it is with the “building” of reference – nothing with man’s tool will be within or upon it. We can “lay up” for ourselves “treasures in heaven” (Matt 6:20), but we cannot build anything there!

Again, there is a type of this that was deliberately built into the history of Israel. The Lord assured them that when they arrived in the promised land, they would live in houses they had not built. “And it shall be, when the LORD thy God shall have brought thee into the land which he sware unto thy fathers, to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, to give thee great and goodly cities, which thou buildedst not, and houses full of all good things, which thou filledst not, and wells digged, which thou diggedst not, vineyards and olive trees, which thou plantedst not; when thou shalt have eaten and be full” (Deut 6:10-11).

Just as surely as Israel occupied a land and its cities which they did not build, so the saints will eternally occupy a body they did not build. Nothing of their work will be in it, for it is a body that will not die, and those who die cannot fabricate something that will not die. It is not possible for one who is mortal to produce something that is immortal, or for corruptible man to fashion something that is incorruptible.

While the redeemed are made to do “good works” (Eph 2:10; Tit 2:14), none of those works are an integral part of salvation itself. The foundations of the faith are also completely void of anything done by the redeemed themselves. The salvation of God is wholly of Him – from its beginnings of the conviction of sin and being born again, until we are raised from the dead inhabiting an incorruptible body. Through eternity the insightful response will echo, “Salvation to our God which sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb” (Rev 7:10). And again, “Alleluia; Salvation, and glory, and honor, and power, unto the Lord our God” (Rev 19:1).

Chapter 12

ETERNAL IN THE HEAVENS

“ . . . eternal in the heavens.” Other versions read, “an eternal house in heaven” (NIV), “eternal in heaven” (DOUAY), “everlasting in the heavens” (NJB), “age enduring in the heavens” (YLT), “in the heavenly worlds . . . It lasts forever” (IE), and “a permanent house in heaven” (PHILLIPS).

Unlike our mortal bodies, until we “put on” this new body, it will not in any way

diminish. And, after we put it on, it will continue throughout eternity. At this present time, that body, or “house from heaven,” is “eternal in the heavens.” That body is suited for eternal involvements, even as Christ’s resurrection body was suited for His return to heaven, and His consequent reign in glory. It is affirmed that Jesus Christ “being raised from the dead, dieth no more: death hath no dominion over Him” (Rom 6:9). For that reason, He is no more suited to dwell in this world. His glorified body is adapted for glory, not for earth. After He was raised from the dead, He is said to have “appeared” to His followers (Mk 16:9,12,14; Lk 24:34; Acts 9:17; 26:16). Ordinarily, this is not said of Jesus prior to His death. The single exception is found in Hebrews 9:26, where His coming from heaven is the point, and the appearing was miraculous in nature – as His appearances were following His resurrection.

When men at last see the Lord in all of His glory, the present heaven and earth will have been removed, and a new heaven and earth in place. The dead will also have been raised incorruptible (1 Cor 15:52), and those who remained alive until the coming of the Lord will have been “changed” (1 Cor 15:51-52). At that time, all men will see Jesus “as He is” – in the glorified state

(1 John 3:2).

So far as the world seeing Jesus in any external way, Jesus plainly spoke of His death in this manner: “Yet a little while, and the world seeth me no more” (John 14:19) – and it never has, nor ever will. The reason – flesh cannot behold Divine glory.

The same adaptation to glory is declared to be the destiny of those who are raised from the dead, and are “ever with the Lord.” “But they which shall be accounted worthy to obtain that world, and the resurrection from the dead, neither marry, nor are given in marriage: neither can they die any more: for they are equal unto the angels; and are the children of God, being the children of the resurrection” (Luke 20:35-36).

Thus our bodies will be in strict concert with our spirits, which are quickened in Christ Jesus – and our total persons shall be adapted for the glory. Our Lord said of those believing in Him, “And whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die. Believest thou this?” (John 11:26). What a glorious match that will be – a person who never dies inhabiting a body that cannot die. That is certainly something to seek to attain!

Thus it is written of those eternal ages, when we are with the Lord, “there shall be no more death” (Rev 21:4). In fact, death itself will finally be cast into the lake of fire. As it is written, “And death and hell were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death” (Rev 20:14).

The word from which “death” is translated is used one hundred and eighteen times in the New Testament Scriptures. These speak of “the region of death” (Matt 10:21), tasting of death (Matt 16:28), the wages of sin being “death” (Rom 6:23), and the “motions of sin” working in our members to “bring forth fruit unto death” (Rom 7:5). None of that will be in the glory! All of it will be cast into “the lake of fire.”

One last thing. The resurrection of the dead will spell the end of death itself, which will be “swallowed up in victory” (1 Cor 15:54). There will no such thing as a resurrection body that can die, or in any way be capable of sinning. Ponder the idea of a person enslaved to sin dwelling in a body that cannot sin – the ultimate frustration. For the saints, they have no heart for sinning, but dwell in a body that cleaves to the dust. It brings a certain frustration to them: “O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me

from the body of this death?" (Rom 7:24). That will be fully answered in "the resurrection of life" (John 5:29). Then, they will have a body that will eagerly carry out all of the desires that have been cultured by grace.

But for the wicked, they will have all of their lusts, being "filthy still" (Rev 22:11), yet will have no ability to carry them out. Thus, for them, the saying will be fulfilled, "Where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched" (Mark 9:44).

Chapter 13

SOME PRELIMINARY OBSERVATIONS

It is staggering to consider how little is said these days about the "hope and resurrection of the dead" (Acts 23:6). Paul was driven by a quest to "attain unto the resurrection of the dead" (Phil 3:11). He also affirmed that a religion that deals only with "this life" – i.e. life in this world – leaves us "of all men most miserable," and to be "pitied" for embracing such an absurd religion: "If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable" (1 Cor 15:19).

When one considers the nominal church's inordinate emphasis upon life in this world, this verse is startling to those who think beyond the surface. While not wrong of itself, the larger percentage of "Christian ministries" are philanthropic in nature, and deal largely with outward relief. I am quick to say that this is not to be construed as an attack on such works. However, it is intended to be critical of an emphasis being placed on them. This is NOT the emphasis of Jesus' teaching or of apostolic doctrine. We do have exhortations to "do good unto all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith" (Gal 6:10). There is also the word, "Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this, To visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world" (James 1:27). Even there, caring for the fatherless and the widows in their affliction is to be attended by keeping oneself "unspotted from the world." If the people to whom we minister are not made aware of the fact that having hope in this world alone constitutes the greatest misery, little has really been accomplished. In fact considerable damage has been done to the people.

It is bad enough when the supposed outreach of the church is largely for life in this world. However, when the members of the body of Christ are not made aware of the prospect of eternity, and being duly prepared for it, a tremendous disservice has been committed. There is no way to understate it. If those possessing hope only in this world are the most miserable and pitiful of all, then there certainly ought to be more talk about the resurrection of the dead and the world to come.

It is interesting to note that an observation of apostolic preaching was, "they taught the people, and preached through Jesus the resurrection from the dead" (Acts 4:2). When Paul was in Athens, he "preached unto them Jesus and the resurrection" (Acts 17:18,32). Paul said his accusers had called him into question concerning "the resurrection of the dead," which was a prominent part of his preaching (Acts 24:21). The fifteenth chapter of First Corinthians is devoted entirely (fifty-eight verses) to the resurrection of the dead. This, Paul taught, was a necessary consequence of Jesus Himself being raised from the dead (1 Cor 15:1-8). He told them that if the dead do not raise, then Christ was not raised (1 Cor 15:13,16). "The resurrection of the dead" is one of the basic "principles of the doctrine of Christ" (Heb 6:2). If men are not duly prepared for that scheduled event, they have lived in vain.

The condition of the modern church causes the marvelous passage that is the text of these devotions (2 Cor 5:1-5) to appear something like a needless literary appendage. Within the context of the imagined “Christian life,” it does not seem to be relevant, but is only seen (if noticed at all) as a sort of theological novelty. However, we must not allow the misconceptions and aimless talk of religious sophists to shape how we think of Scripture, or of life itself. What we are reading and perusing is the truth of God, and it has been given to clarify the life that is in Christ Jesus. Paul is writing of a foundational consideration – something that we must learn to handle aright. There is nothing about it that allows for us to remain ignorant of the resurrection of the dead and our “building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.”

Chapter 14

IN THIS WE GROAN, #1

“For in this we groan . . .”

What are the saints of God to do now, if their real habitat is in heaven? More precisely, what are they required to do now? How is their time to be occupied? And what is the impact of this situation upon them? They have a treasure in an vessel – a vessel that not only is unlike the treasure, but actually militates against it. We have been told of the effects of this treasure/vessel dichotomy within the framework of our opponents : “trouble on every side,” “perplexed,” “persecution,” and being “cast down.” We have also been informed of the result of the treasure’s absolute superiority: “not in despair,” “not distressed,” “not forsaken,” and “not destroyed.” But what is the impact of this situation upon our own persons? How do we ourselves react to it? The reactions mentioned thus far are the response of the redeemed to conditions imposed on them, as it were, by their enemies. Now the Spirit will look at our circumstance as though there were no troubles that surrounded. We have seen our response to conditions that stymied our minds, and for which no solutions were apparent. The response of the child of God to persecution and being thrown down have been delineated. Now all of those circumstances are pushed into the background, and we will view the matter as though all that existed was a heavenly treasure within a frail vessel.

Now we will not consider outward circumstances, or the assault of our enemy. Rather, we will confine ourselves to dealing with two incompatible natures.

IN THIS

“For in this . . .” Other versions read, “meanwhile” (NIV), “in this tent” (NRSV), “Here” (RSV), “For verily in this” (ASV), “For therefore” (GENEVA), “For indeed, in this house” (NAU), “And in this earthly state” (NJB), “in our present bodies” (NLT), “for also in this” (YLT), “That is why” (IE), “for in this one” (WEYMOUTH), “Here indeed, in this [present abode, body]” (AMPLIFIED), and “in this present frame” (PHILLIPS).

The focus of attention is the “inward man,” or “new man” himself. He is the one with which “this treasure” is concerned, and to which it is related. This is the nature that is “IN this” tabernacle.

The word “this” refers to the body – the “vessel.” Behold the impersonal nature of this reference. This word is in the neuter gender (tou,twl), which is equivalent to saying “this thing.” In other words, the body is not the real person, but the tabernacle in which the real person dwells.

The real and valid identity is thus assigned to the part of man that has been regenerated – the “new man” that is housed by the body. This is the part of man that is “born of God” (1 John 5:1), “born of the Spirit” (John 3:6), “begotten of God” (1 John 5:18), and “created in Christ Jesus” (Eph 2:10). This is the part that is “renewed in knowledge after the image of Him that created him” (Col 3:10).

WE GROAN

“ . . . we groan . . . ” Other versions read, “crying in weariness” (BBE), “we sigh” (GENEVA), “grow weary” (NLT), “how weary we grow” (LIVING), “I am sighing” (WILLIAMS), “I am groaning” (MONTGOMERY), and “we sigh and grown inwardly” (AMPLIFIED).

“WE”

The “we” of reference are those into whose hearts God has shined the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ (4:6). It is those who have “this treasure in vessels” (4:7), in whom both the “dying of the Lord Jesus” and “the life also of Jesus” are being experienced (4:10-11).

This is an experience that is common to all those who are “in Christ Jesus” (Rom 8:1) – those who are “washed, sanctified, and justified in the name of the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God” (1 Cor 6:11). Rather than being limited to the Apostles, or even to the Corinthians, what follows is common to everyone whom God has put “in Christ Jesus,” and to whom He has made Jesus to be “wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption” (1 Cor 1:30). All who are “born again” John 3:6,8; 1 Pet 1:23), and are living “by faith” (Heb 10:38) have this experience. Although this may not be known cognitively, so that they are able to diagnose and speak intelligently of the experience, what is here taught will have a ring of familiarity to every one of them.

“GROAN”

The word “groan” is a strong one, speaking of a deep spiritual experience. The precise Greek word that is used here (*stena,zomen*) is in the present active mode, which means it is a present and ongoing experience, as opposed to being surrounded with specific troubles, being perplexed, persecuted, or cast down (4:8-9). Those experiences were all marked by beginnings and endings, and were brought on by external, or outward, oppositions. What we are dealing with here is of another order, and is not necessarily associated with outward circumstances, opposing men, or even strong Satanic assaults. This is the direct result of having a heavenly treasure in an vessel, whether we face any enemies outside of ourselves or not.

The word “groan” means “to groan inwardly with a sigh of discontent – within ourselves, in our souls inwardly” (THAYER), “to complain strongly against another” (FRIEBERG), “to groan or sigh as a result of deep concern or stress” (LOUW-NIDA), and “to sigh often, sigh deeply” (LIDDELL-SCOTT).

Chapter 15

IN THIS WE GROAN, #2

In the precise sense of our text (a present and ongoing groaning) this word is used three times in Scripture.

1. “And not only they, but ourselves also, which have the firstfruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves GROAN within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption

of our body” (Rom 8:23).

2. “For in this we GROAN, earnestly desiring to be clothed upon with our house which is from heaven” (2 Cor 5:2).

3. “For we that are in this tabernacle do GROAN, being burdened: not for that we would be unclothed, but clothed upon, that mortality might be swallowed up of life” (2 Cor 5:4).

All three of these texts have to do with being “in the body.” The Romans text is a groan that is discontent with the present condition, and is looking forward to the redemption of the body. The references in Second Corinthians both have to do with the same thing, and the aggressive desire to be clothed with our new bodies, which are presently “in heaven,” awaiting the day of our resurrection.

Technically, or more precisely, the response to which we will now be exposed is that of the “new man.” This is the reaction of the “new creation” (2 Cor 5:17; Gal 6:15) to the dichotomy of a heavenly treasure within an vessel. This is not the “groan” caused by bodily infirmities and pain. It is not even the reaction of a godly soul to fierce persecution. Even if we faced no obvious opposition, and all was peaceful around us, yet the groaning of this text would still be experienced. It is brought on by our present separation from our “house which is from heaven,” and our incompatibility with “this present evil world” (Gal 1:4).

This “groan” is also mentioned in the eighth chapter of Romans, where it is related to the sighs of a creation that is also presently under the weight of mortality. “For we know that the whole creation GROANETH and travaileth in pain together until now. And not only they, but ourselves also, which have the firstfruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body” (Rom 8:22-23). Here, the “groan” is related to the travail of a woman about to give birth. That is, even though it is painful, yet there is the expectation of good in it. This is a “groan” that is temporary, and faith confirms that fact to our hearts.

Our “adoption” has begun, but it has not yet been brought to its fulness. We have received “the Spirit of adoption,” having been reconciled to God and receiving the Holy Spirit (Rom 8:15). We remain in a “body” that in no way has been redeemed. It remains “of the earth earthy” (1 Cor 15:47), and is appropriately called a “vile body” (Phil 3:21) and “the body of this death” (Rom 7:24). For this reason we must “keep under” it, or control it, bringing it under subjection to the “law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus” (1 Cor 9:27; Rom 8:2). Elsewhere, the effects of this conflict are stated in this way: “For the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary the one to the other: so that ye cannot do the things that ye would” (Gal 5:17). The AMPLIFIED BIBLE reads, “For the desires of the flesh are opposed to the [Holy] Spirit, and the [desires of the] Spirit are opposed to the flesh (godless human nature); for these are antagonistic to each other [continually withstanding and in conflict with each other], so that you are not free but are prevented from doing what you desire to do.” This circumstance is what causes the “groaning” of our text.

This “groan” is particularly expounded in the seventh chapter of Romans. You can hear it emitting from Paul’s words concerning the inner conflict that faith has induced. “I am carnal, sold under sin . . . that which I hate I allow not . . . what I hate that I do . . . “it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me . . . in me (that is in my flesh) dwelleth no good thing . . . “to will is present with me, but how to perform that which is good I find

not ... I find then a law, that, when I would do good, evil is present with me ... I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members ... wretched man that I am ... So then with the mind I myself serve the law of God, but with the flesh the law of sin" (Rom 7:14-25).

That is an intelligent statement of the case – it is the spiritually wise way of saying “groan.” It reveals the discerned cause of groaning, and its effects as well. Our text is also definitive, stating that this groaning is produced because we presently inhabit a dwelling that does not match the treasure we have received. Also, we are now absent from our appointed dwelling, even though we are presently being suited.

THE ABSENCE OF GROANING

I cannot leave this text without observing the glaring absence of this kind of “groaning” in the modern church. We are seeing a sort of revival of fleshly and soulish religion that is actually more tailored for the flesh than for the spirit. Religious appeals are being made on both the intellectual and sensual level that are strictly confined to the flesh. Much of the present praise movement even falls into this area, where very little subordination of the body is evident. There is also an accompanying spiritual ignorance that is spreading, where both God and the things of God are becoming distant and strange to the people.

A religion that pampers the body and concedes to its wishes is not from God, no matter what its claims may be. When at-home-ness in this world is promoted, or is the result of a religious emphasis, Satanic delusion has taken place. There can be no exception to this seemingly tenuous rule. If God has, in Christ, delivered us “from this present evil world” (Gal 1:4), our religion cannot possibly anchor us to it, or cause us to feel at home in it. If faith causes us to be “strangers and pilgrims” (Heb 11:13; 1 Pet 2:11), in the world, it simply is not possible for “pure religion” (James 1:27) to move us to participate in its manners and ways!

Allow me to be even more precise. Where there is an absence of the “groaning” to which this text refers, there is, at the very best, “little” or “weak” faith. And, where there is “little faith,” there is also “little” participation, and, consequently “little” hope. If sufficient has been proclaimed and expounded to have allowed for a more robust faith, then the individual or individuals have “drawn back,” thereby incurring the displeasure of the Almighty. As it is written, “Now the just shall live by faith: but if any man draw back, my soul shall have no pleasure in him. But we are not of them who draw back unto perdition; but of them that believe to the saving of the soul” (Heb 10:38-39). Indeed, this is a sobering thought, and worthy of meditation!

Chapter 16

EARNESTLY DESIRING

“ . . . earnestly desiring to be clothed upon with our house which is from heaven.”

One of the indications of thoroughly false religion is when it causes the Word of God to emit a strange sound. When the language of the Spirit sounds like a foreign tongue, it is an indication of alienation. I acknowledge that this has some rather arresting implications – particularly in view of the kind of “Christianity” that is all about us. However, if God’s Word is to be taken seriously, and if the passages relating to the response of enlightened hearts apply to our time, then these implications must not be avoided. It seems to me that before God can do a work among a people, they must first be brought to see any

deficiency that exists in their religion, and then bring themselves to abandon it with haste. On the day of Pentecost, people had to be induced to give up their former views of Christ, salvation, the work of the Spirit, and the means of approach to God. That requirement has always been held before the people, whether in old time or at this time. “Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the LORD, and He will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for He will abundantly pardon. For My thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways My ways, saith the LORD” (Is 55:7-8). There is no hope of obtaining the blessing of the Lord if His thoughts and ways are at variance with our own!

If, therefore, the words that follow are not harmonious with our own thoughts and ways – if they do not reflect our own experience – something is fundamentally wrong. On the other hand, praise God, if what follows expresses what we ourselves are experiencing, it confirms our participation in the life of God.

EARNESTLY DESIRING

“ . . . earnestly desiring . . . ” Other versions read, “longing to be” (NASB), “greatly desiring” (BBE), “ardently desiring” (DARBY), “look forwardly eagerly” (LIVING), “yearning” (IE), “earnestly longing” (MONTGOMERY), and “sigh with deep longing” (PHILLIPS).

LIFE IN CHRIST JESUS IS VIGOROUS

There is nothing haphazard about it. The truth of the matter is that what God has promised is eagerly sought by “the new man” and the “pure in heart.” When the truth is really known, it is aggressively sought and pursued. That is part of being made “free” by that truth. Thus the righteous “press” toward the mark (Phil 3:14), run “with patience” (Heb 12:1), labor “fervently” (Col 4:12), and serve with “singleness of heart” (Col 3:22). The “whole armor” of God is “put on” (Eph 6:11,13), and sanctification is sought for the “whole spirit, and soul, and body” (1 Thess 5:23). Apathetic religion is good for nothing but the dung hill, into which it ought to be immediately and completely thrown.

Now that “our house from heaven” has been made known, we do not entertain a mere occasional thought about it. This is not a subject for theological speculation and endless controversy. The genuine believer fervently wants what the Lord has promised.

“Earnestly desiring” speaks of a yearning that is consistent and growing. It is not something that is periodic or cyclical. It does not wax in crises and wane in blessing, or rise in trouble and fall in peace. Just as surely as the believer is being “changed from glory to glory,” so this desire increases, and refuses to be squelched by life in the flesh.

This kind of desire parallels being hungry and thirsty for righteousness (Matt 5:6), or the soul breaking “for the longing” it has for the things of God (Psa 119:20). Where there is a satisfaction with brief and shallow homilies on Scripture, this desire either does not exist at all, or is faint and “ready to die” (Rev 3:2). Where people are willing to settle for infrequent gatherings with those of like precious faith, even though edification can be realized and clarity can be experienced, people have settled down in this world – regardless of what they say to the contrary.

Chapter 17

TO BE CLOTHED UPON

“to be clothed upon . . .” Other versions read, “to be clothed” (NKJV), “desiring to put on” (DARBY), “to put on” (ESV), “to be further clothed” (NAB), “to clothe yourselves” (YLT), “to put on like new clothes” (LIVING), “to put on over it” (WEYMOUTH), “to put on, like a robe” (WILLIAMS), and “to be under the cover” (MONTGOMERY).

And what is it for which “WE” are “earnestly desiring”? What is it for which we “look forward eagerly?” (LIVING); for what do we “sigh with deep longing”? (PHILLIPS). It is the experience of being “clothed upon” with a body that is compatible with our “new man,” and will be suitable to dwell in glory. This is something we are not content to merely talk about. We want to experience the blessing! God has told us about it, and we are “yearning” for it!

OUR HOUSE WHICH IS FROM HEAVEN

“ . . . with our house which is from heaven.” Other versions read, “our habitation which is from heaven” (NKJV), “our dwelling from heaven” (NASB), “our heavenly dwelling” (NIV), “our heavenly habitation” (NAB), “our heavenly bodies” (NLT), “our heavenly house” (WEYMOUTH), “my heavenly body, my future home” (WILLIAMS), and “our mansion which is from heaven” (TYNDALE).

This is nothing less than the resurrection body – “our dwelling from heaven” (NASB). It belongs uniquely to us, and we are being prepared for it. It is well adapted for the redeemed, and effectively removes all of the liabilities and deficiencies with which our present bodies are plagued. Mark it well, we are not seeking a better body upon earth, but a body that is “from heaven.” While we desire all of God’s people to prosper and be in good health (3 John 1:2), we know that is not the ultimate blessing. Only those who are fundamentally carnal are thoroughly satisfied with healthy bodies. To be sure, we give thanks for such a benefit which enables us to serve the Lord more extensive and energetic expression. But when it comes down to the bottom line, we prefer a body like Jesus’ present body – even more than a body like Adam had in the paradise of God!

There are two valid approaches to life – and we must learn to master them well, and at the same time. First, we strive to say with all of our heart, “For me to live is Christ.” Second, it is to insightfully acknowledge, “for me to die is gain” (Phil 1:21). That is the two-sided coin of life in Christ Jesus. At the precise point where these cannot be simultaneously and truthfully confessed, our lives are skewed in the wrong direction. The salvation of God does not allow a person to long for heaven while NOT living to the glory of God. Nor, indeed, does it allow for living for God while NOT desiring to be “clothed upon with our house which is from heaven.”

When we truly live “unto” ourselves no longer, but “unto Him which died for” us and “rose again” (2 Cor 5:15), the deficiency of our present body will become most apparent. It will prove to be the locus of incessant struggle, and the source of much sorrow.

At the same time, an appropriate knowledge of the glory of having a body that is perfectly adapted for heavenly commerce and service will produce a longing to enter that body – a longing the world cannot quench. The thought of a body that is personal, being in heaven for us now, will move us to make the appropriate preparation now to inhabit that house then! This is part of being “saved by hope” (Rom 8:24), for which grace thoroughly equips us.

NOT FOUND NAKED

“If so be that being clothed we shall not be found naked.”

We now touch upon an aspect of the sanctified human nature that is rarely considered. Yet, the Apostle, writing as moved by the Holy Spirit, is going to make a point of this most unique subject. If man, in his entirety, is “spirit,” “soul,” and “body,” then redemption will whet his appetite for that whole to be thoroughly separated from all defilement.

IF SO BE

“If so be . . .” Other versions read, “If indeed” (NKJV), “inasmuch as” (NASB), “because when” (NIV), “so that by” (RSV), “Yet so that” (DOUAY), “For we will” (NLT), “Since we will be” (IE), “Of course if (ISV), “If I do” (WILLIAMS), and “So that by” (AMPLIFIED).

This is a most intriguing expression, and is filled with meaning. It is stated in a manner that is characteristic of spiritual reasoning, or the logic that is induced by faith. The fact that has been stated – “our house which is from heaven” – is taken into the thought processes. This is something that faith does, wrapping thought around the realities concerning which faith is both the substance and evidence.

The point of this expression is that we are groaning, earnestly desiring to be clothed with our house from heaven, in the confident prospect of what follows. It is the persuasion of what is to come that makes our groaning something to be embraced rather than avoided.

This is not a philosophical argument – one that has to do with humanity in general. Even though the subject is the resurrection of the dead, in which all will participate (John 5:28,29), the view that is now enunciated is that of the believer – the person who is in Christ Jesus. The Scriptures make clear that all of the dead will be raised. “For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive” (1 Cor 15:22). A vivid picture of the general raising of the dead is found in the Revelation. “And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is the book of life: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works. And the sea gave up the dead which were in it; and death and hell delivered up the dead which were in them: and they were judged every man according to their works” (Rev 20:12-13).

However, when the resurrection is more specifically expounded, it is always from the perspective of those who are in Christ, for they are the only ones that will be advantaged by the resurrection. In this world, while they remain in the body, believers are clothed with Christ Himself. As it is written, “For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ” (Gal 3:27). He is “made unto us wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption” (1 Cor 1:30). Thus, at this present time, we appear before God in a spiritually clothed state, with the nakedness of flesh not appearing before Him. This condition ensures that the resurrection will result in the experience that follows.

Chapter 19

BEING CLOTHED

“ . . . that being clothed . . .” Other versions read, “having been clothed” (NKJV), “having out it on” (NASB), “we are clothed” (NIV), “when we have taken it off” (NRSV), “by putting it on” (RSV), “having really put on a robe,” WEYMOUTH “being so covered,” MONTGOMERY and “when death destroys our present dwelling –

these bodies of ours” (PHILLIPS).

Because man is, by Divine intention, comprised of spirit, soul, and body, those in Christ cannot reconcile themselves to being without a body. Even though death delivers us from the bondage of corruption, it appears that there remains a sort of holy discontent until the resurrection body is inhabited. I approach this subject with great caution, not desiring to obscure the truth that is here declared, to any degree. We do not have an abundance revealed to us on this subject. However, enough has been made known to cast the light of holy intelligence upon it.

John was given a glimpse of souls who had departed from this life, yet had not experienced the resurrection. They are identified as “the souls of them that were beheaded for the witness of Jesus, and for the Word of God” (Rev 6:9). They had not submitted to the corrupt Christianity of the great religious Imposter, and were beheaded for it. These souls are seen in a mysterious place – free from the encumbrances of this world, yet not in the ultimate glory. Earlier, when given to see these souls, they were depicted as being “under the altar” (Rev 6:9). A cry of discontent was emitting from their lips: “And they cried with a loud voice, saying, How long, O Lord, holy and true, dost Thou not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth?” (Rev 6:10). Being out of the body, they did not pray for their murderers as Stephen did for his, while he was yet “in the body” (Acts 7:60). “White robes” were given to these precious martyrs, “and it was said unto them, that they should rest yet for a little season, until their fellowservants also and their brethren, that should be killed as they were, should be fulfilled” (Rev 6:11). Although shrouded in holy mystery, it is evident that these “souls” had not yet experienced the ultimate blessing that is reserved for the faithful.

Our text suggests that such souls are not content to remain in that condition. That want to be “clothed upon” with their “house which is from heaven.”

THE TIME OF THE RESURRECTION

Elsewhere, Paul makes clear that everyone will obtain their “house which is from heaven” at the same time – at the resurrection of the dead. An extended discussion of this is found in the fifteenth chapter of First Corinthians. It addressed the heresy that was found among the Corinthians, namely that there was no resurrection of the dead: “how say some among you that there is no resurrection of the dead?” (1 Cor 15:12).

Paul makes the point of death being the “last enemy,” stating that it will finally be overthrown when Jesus comes again (1 Cor 15:23). Several different perspectives of that time are given.

1. What was sown in corruption will be raised in incorruption (15:42).
2. What was sown in dishonor will be raised in glory (15:43a).
3. What was sown in weakness will be raised in power (15:43b).
4. What was sown a natural body will be raised a spiritual body (15:44).
5. Those who have born the image of the earthy (Adam), will bear the image of the heavenly (Christ) – 15:49.
6. This will occur “in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed” (1 Cor 15:52). That is, those who have died “shall be raised,” and those who are alive and remain “will be changed” – when Jesus comes.

7. This corruption will put on incorruption (15:53a).
8. This mortal will put on immortality (15:53b).
9. Then, the saying will be fulfilled, “Death is swallowed up in victory. O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?” (1 Cor 15:54-55).

In confirmation of this, John declared of the Lord’s return, that then we will “be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is” (1 John 3:2).

Thus, in this text, Paul calls upon us to look beyond death, to the coming of the Lord, when the ultimate blessing will be received.

Chapter 20

NOT FOUND NAKED

“ . . . we shall not be found naked.” Other versions read, “may not be unclothed” (BBE), “rather than stripped bare” (NJB), “Will not be spirits without bodies” (NLT), “found without a body” (ISV), “find myself to be disembodied” (WILLIAMS), “found naked [without a body]” (AMPLIFIED) and “we do not want to face utter nakedness” ((PHILLIPS).

Because this will be further developed in the verses that follow, it is enough to make a single observation here. Those who are in Christ Jesus long for more than simply getting out of this body, and out of this world. For them, it is not enough to merely leave this world, or be divested of this body of flesh. Grace, through their faith, has developed in them an intense appetite for things that cannot pass away – the things that are “above,” where their affection has been set while journeying through this world (Col 3:1-2). This attitude is fundamental to living by faith. Where it is lacking, faith is lacking, and where faith is lacking there can be no sustaining hope!

This is a perspective that is not entertained by those who contemplate, or carry out, suicide. Although some speak sympathetically of such poor souls, they have actually been deluded by the wicked one. Simply getting out of the body is not the ultimate advantage. There is more to be realized. Being in this body is, in a sense, a handicap – but it is not the greatest handicap.

BEING BURDENED

“For we that are in this tabernacle do groan, being burdened . . . ”

I want to underscore that this is family language – it is for the “whole family in heaven and earth” that is named after Christ (Eph 3:15). This is the way in which the mature saved person reasons and speaks. This is not empty theological jargon, but reflects holy values and aspirations. Even though the spiritual novice may never have heard these words before, they will resonate with truth upon the heart.

Not wanting to be found “naked,” is not desiring a state in which no body is possessed – even though we are “burdened” with our current body. The “burden “ is not having a body, but is rather realized in having a body that is not compatible with our renewed spirit – a body that cleaves to the dust.

God had made us a tripartite being – spirit, soul, and body (1 Thess 5:23) – and we will not be content until we have a body that is compatible with our spirit, and fits into the glory.

Chapter 21

WE THAT ARE IN THIS TABERNACLE

“For we that are in this tabernacle . . .” Other versions read, “We who are this tent” (NKJV), “While we are in” (NASB), “while we are still in” (NRSV), “For indeed we that are in” (ASV), “For truly, we who are in” (BBE), “Yes, indeed, in this present tent” (NJB), and “as long as we are clothed in this temporal dwelling” (PHILLIPS).

The “we” refers to those who are in Christ Jesus – more specifically to the “new man,” or “inward man” that is “created” when we are “born again” (Col 3:10). We are not the only ones that are “in the body,” but we are the only ones who have hope of a better condition. These are the members of “the whole family” that are “alive and remain” in the world (1 Thess 4:15,17). We certainly are not the whole of the “family,” nor are we anywhere near a major percentage of it. We are the only members of the “family,” which is the “bride” being prepared for presentation, that are “in this tabernacle,” or body.

THE POSTURE OF PILGRIMS

“We that are in this tabernacle” – this is the language of pilgrimage. Jesus has chosen us “out of the world” (John 15:19), and thus we are no longer “of the world.” That is, we do not belong to it’s order, do not have its values, and do not live as though it was the primary world. From an even higher vantage point, Paul is speaking of those that God has given to Jesus “out of the world” – separating them from the condemned order, and giving them to Jesus in order that He might bring them “to glory” (Heb 2:10).

On the evening of His betrayal, Jesus prayed to the Father with insightful tones: “Father, the hour is come; glorify Thy Son, that Thy Son also may glorify Thee: as Thou hast given Him power over all flesh, that He should give eternal life to as many as Thou hast given Him . . . I have manifested Thy name unto the men which Thou gavest Me out of the world: Thine they were, and Thou gavest them [to] Me . . . They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world” (John 17:1,2,6,16).

A worldly church is a flagrant contradiction of Divine purpose, and in no way reflects the “workmanship” of Almighty God (Eph 2:10). Such a church is the work of the devil, just as surely as Cain was “of that wicked one” (1 John 3:12). Faith puts us at variance with the world, it does not in any way bring us into harmony with it. In Christ Jesus we have received “eternal life,” and the world is passing away, destined to ultimately be removed. How could those who have eternal life possibly mesh with such a world?

Those who died “in the faith” are declared to have “seen” the promises “afar off,” embraced them, “and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth” (Heb 11:13). They plainly declared that they were seeking “a better country, that is an heavenly” (Heb 11:14,16). And why did they seek such a “country?” Because the promises made it clear that the coming blessing had nothing whatsoever to do with “this present evil world” – the world from which Jesus, according to the will of God, has “delivered us” (Gal 1:4). It is for this precise reason that it is written, “wherefore God is not ashamed to be called their God: for He hath prepared for them a city” (Heb 11:16b). A worldly church is a church of which God is ashamed, for He has made no promises for good to such a people – not so much as a single one!

Chapter 22

DO GROAN, BEING BURDENED

“ . . . do groan, being burdened...” Other versions read, “we groan and are

burdened” (NIV), “we groan under our burden” (NRSV), “we sigh with anxiety” (RSV), “we give our cries of weariness, for the weight of care which is on us” (BBE), “we groan and are weighed down” (NAB), “we groan and sigh” (NLT), “we are groaning because we feel burdened” (IE), “sighing beneath my burden” (WILLIAMS), “I am groaning in deep trouble” (MONTGOMERY), “we groan under the burden and sigh deeply (weighed down, depressed, oppressed)” (AMPLIFIED), and “we have a painful longing” (PHILLIPS).

How is it that “strangers and pilgrims” conduct their lives in this world? What is the experience that they have? Our text says they “groan, being burdened.” Now that they have a “treasure” in their “vessel,” mortality has become a burden to them! It is not suited to join in with what they have obtained in Christ Jesus! Now, its desires militate against the inward man, producing intense warfare within. As Peter well said, “Dearly beloved, I beseech you as strangers and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul” (1 Pet 2:11). This is a war that flesh initiates against the soul, pressing the issue of obvious contradiction between the flesh and the Spirit. Thus some versions read, “which wage war” (NASB), “which make war” (BBE), “which fight against” (GENEVA), and “that attack” (NJB).

FORESHADOWED IN ISRAEL

This condition – groaning and being burdened – was foreshadowed by Israel’s bondage in Egypt, and their pilgrimage through the wilderness en route to Canaan. While the Israelites were in Egypt, they were away from the country they were intended to occupy – the “land” of Canaan, which was promised to Abraham and His seed (Gen 12:1; 17:8). In Egypt the people “groaned” (Ex 2:24). They were “under the burdens of the Egyptians,” being oppressed (Ex 6:6-7). They yearned for deliverance for at least two reasons. First, this was not the land that had been promised to them. Second, they were oppressed by the leaders and citizenry of Egypt.

So it is with the saints of the Lord. Presently their “inward man” occupies a body that is not its ultimate habitation. Redemption is suiting them for “a house which is from heaven” – the resurrection body. Their present body does not consent to serve the higher needs of the redeemed spirit, but must be brought into subjection. Its desires must be “mortified” – put to death under the direction of the Holy Spirit (Rom 8:13).

“GROANING” IS NOT AUTOMATIC

The fact that believers are said to “groan, being burdened,” does not suggest that this groaning is automatic. It is induced by a conscious awareness of our condition – and that is something of which we must be put in remembrance. If we hear little of “the world to come,” and are rarely, if ever, exposed to the truth about our resurrection bodies, the “groaning” of the “new man” will be misinterpreted, and soon, because truth is neglected, we will have no recognition of it at all.

This circumstance is greatly complicated since the psychiatrists have taken over the professed church. They have foisted upon us explanations for the “groaning” that are centered in this world instead of “the world to come.” They diagnose believers with Freudian principles in mind rather than the Word of God. In all of this, they have carved out a rather large territory for themselves among professing Christians. They are now at all of the Christian conventions. Many of them are staff members in churches. They are in the Bible Colleges and Seminaries, shaping the curriculum, and creating new career

paths. However, they are not able to properly identify or trace the “groaning” and “burden” of our text, and that is something that must be done if the saints are to overcome. In my judgment, these purveyors of the wisdom of the world should be thrown out of the church, together with all of their pseudo-wisdom and nomenclature.

Believers who are “alive and remain” in this world must be stirred up continually, lest their bodies cause them to focus on lesser things. That is why Peter wrote, “Yea, I think it meet, as long as I am in this tabernacle, to stir you up by putting you in remembrance; Knowing that shortly I must put off this my tabernacle, even as our Lord Jesus Christ hath showed me. Moreover I will endeavor that ye may be able after my decease to have these things always in remembrance” (2 Pet 1:13-15).

BEING BURDENED

To be “burdened” is to be weighed down. Coming from the Greek word *baroumenoi* (bar-ou-men-oi), “burdened” means “heavily, with difficulty” (THAYER). This is a weight that slows our progress, so that we cannot advance as we desire. It is unlike the “weight” of which we are warned in Hebrews 12:1: “let us lay aside every weight, and the sin that doth so easily beset us.” The “burden” of our text is a weight that cannot be laid aside, or cast off. It is a dreadful handicap that we must carry about with us – the burden of mortality.

Technically, the word “burdened” is a “verb participle present passive.” A verb is an action word. A participle has the characteristics of both an adjective and a verb: that is, it is a particular kind of present action. “Passive” means we are affected by an action external to ourselves – something over which, in this case, we have no power. Putting all of this together, our text is saying, we are presently living with a burden that is imposed upon us, a burden which we have no power to remove.

Let us say it in words that the Holy Spirit teaches. “But I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members. O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death? I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord. So then with the mind I myself serve the law of God; but with the flesh the law of sin” (Rom 7:23-25). There you have our text framed within human experience. The “members” of Romans 7:23-25 are the locus of the “burden” of our text. They are the part of us that is mortal, constituting a drag upon our spirits. While we are “in the body” we are living with limitations that constitute a weight, and cause us to groan. Our bodies not only cannot keep up with our spirits, they care nothing at all for the “newness of life” and its preferences.

Suffice it to say, a religion that focuses upon the body only increases the “burden” of the saints of God. Have you not felt the weight of frothy religion, surface explanations of Scripture, juvenile pep rallies, and meaningless choruses? Do not such things cause your spirit to “groan” within? Why do some of us have such experiences? Is it merely because we like the old way of doing things, do not like the new way, and are unwilling to change? Is that the reason? Indeed, for those who walk in the Spirit and live by faith, a constant “change” is taking place (2 Cor 3:18). What we object to is that we are being called back into the domain from which we once escaped – where the “flesh” is dominant and the body is fundamental.

If it is true that our mortality constitutes a burden to us, then an emphasis upon that mortality will only increase the burden. It is the “new man” that must be fed, not the

flesh. It is the “inward man” that lives by every word of God, not the flesh. In order for spiritual strength to be realized, the accent must be placed on the treasure that is in the vessel, not on the vessel!

It must be remembered that the “vessel,” includes the “carnal mind” (Rom 8:17), and the “natural man” (1 Cor 2:14), both of which accent affection and thought rather than a physical constitution. Those who promote fleshly ways of thinking have a vessel-centered religion. True religion is treasure-centered, dealing with “righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit” (Rom 14:17). It focuses on what God Himself has caused. Oh, how I wish these things were better known!

Chapter 23

NOT UNCLOTHED, BUT CLOTHED UPON

“ . . . not for that we would be unclothed, but clothed upon.”

We were introduced to this line of reasoning in the third verse: “If so be that being clothed we shall not be found naked.” Now the Spirit will elaborate further on this essential perspective. Because of the spiritual distortion found within the professed church, these words will also have a strange sound.

NOT THAT WE WOULD BE UNCLOTHED

“ . . . not for that we would be unclothed . . . ” Other versions read, “not because we want to be unclothed” (NKJV), “because we do not want to be unclothed” (NASB.) “because we do not wish to be unclothed” (NIV), “not because we are desiring to be free from a body” (BBE), “not that we want to be stripped of our covering” (NJB), “but it is not that we want to die and have no bodies at all” (NLT), “seeing we wish not to unclothe ourselves” (YLT), “That doesn’t mean we want to die” (IE), “we do not wish to lay aside that with which we are now clothed” (WEYMOUTH), “not that we want to put off the body (the clothing of the spirit)” (AMPLIFIED), and “not because we want to just get rid of these ‘clothes’” (PHILLIPS).

The accent of this verse is not placed on our bodies, but on our “new man,” or the “new creation.” It is essential to see the scope of our salvation, which is most marvelous. Salvation addresses every area that was infected by sin – and that includes the body. While we are in this world, we only participate in a part of God’s “great salvation” – the part that has to do with the “inner man.” This does not mean we neglect our bodies, for they are, in truth, “the members of Christ” (1 Cor 6:15), and we are to “glorify God” in them (1 Cor 6:20).

In view of this, our longing is not simply to be without a body – for salvation includes the changing of our bodies. That will occur, as I have already established, at the resurrection of the dead.

So far as leaving this body and this world are concerned, we will experience one of two things. Either we will meet the ordinary appointment of death before Jesus comes, or we will be “changed” when He comes. Thus it is written, “For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord” (1 Thess 4:17).

This is stated even more succinctly in First Corinthians. “In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised

incorruptible, and we shall be changed” (1 Cor 15:52).

Let it be clear, our hope is not in dying, but in the resurrection of the dead! As it is written, “And have hope toward God, which they themselves also allow, that there shall be a resurrection of the dead, both of the just and unjust” (Acts 24:15). Death will not be fully conquered when we die. Nor, indeed, will we experience the ultimate blessing or the fulness of our salvation when we die. We will not be fully like our Lord until He comes in all of His glory (1 John 3:1-2).

Thus Paul carefully states that our hope does not consist of merely leaving this world, and being without the present “body.” Our spirits are made to be “clothed” – to be housed in a body that can carry out the desires of the “new creation.” Presently, our bodies are like a prison in which we are confined. In our measure we can say with Jesus, concerning our tenure in the body, “and how I am straitened” (Luke 12:50). However, we are not longing for death itself, but for the “hope” that is associated with that death: “the righteous hath hope in his death” (Prov 14:32). For the child of God “to die is gain” (Phil 1:20). However, our text is showing us that death is not the ultimate gain. It is but the door that leads to the culmination of the salvation that is “ready to be revealed,” and the grace that is to be brought to us “at the revelation of Jesus Christ” (1 Pet 1:5,13).

We know very little of the interim experience between death and the coming of the Lord. There are some hints concerning our state at that time, but enough information is not provided to build a structured doctrine. Here are some things pertaining to the post-death experience.

1. Following his death, Samuel delivered a remarkable prophecy to king Saul, who had disobeyed God and lost the kingdom (1 Sam 28:16-19). In that prophesy he said 1 the Lord had departed from Saul, (2 and become his enemy, (3 that God had torn the kingdom from Saul, (4 that God had given the kingdom to David, (5 that Israel would be turned over to the Philistines, and (6 that Saul and his sons would soon be with him. All of these things were not known by Samuel while he remained in the body. He became more learned after he had died. For those who say Samuel was not the one who said this, but a demon, they must explain how God would deliver a poignant prophecy through the mouth of a demon. That will, I assure you, be a most difficult thing to substantiate.
2. Jesus spoke of Abraham several hundred years after his death, and represented him as knowing about Moses and the Prophets, which did not live until at least 500 years after Abraham’s death (Lk 16:29,31). Abraham had, therefore, gained some knowledge after he died.
3. Jesus spoke of a man named Lazarus, who was comforted following his death and prior to the resurrection (Lk 16:25a).
4. Jesus also spoke of a rich man who, because of his life in the world, was tormented after his death (Lk 16:24-25).
5. John saw the souls of some martyrs under the altar, and they were to some degree distressed after their death (Rev 6:9-10). They were knowledgeable of at least some of the affairs of this world, knowing that their blood had not yet been avenged. They received “white robes,” and were told to “rest a little season” until their fellowservants, that were to be “killed as they were,” should be fulfilled” (Rev 6:9-11). Thus, after their death, these souls observed, asked a question, received an answer, were given robes, became privy to future events, and rested.

6. Paul said to be absent from the body was to be present with the Lord (2 Cor 5:8).
7. Paul referred to an occasion when he was taken up into “the third heaven,” or “paradise.” There he heard words that are not lawful for men to utter. That is, they were words for which human speech is not adapted. Paul says he did not know whether, at that time, he was in the body or out of the body – i.e. he did not know if he was dead or alive (2 Cor 12:1-4).
8. As he was being stoned to death, Stephen asked the Lord Jesus to receive his spirit (Acts 7:59).
9. Moses (who died as ordinary men), and Elijah (who was translated), were seen in glory, speaking with Jesus concerning the death that He was going to accomplish (Luke 9:30-31). While upon earth, Moses did not say a single word about the Messiah dying. Elijah did not say a single word about the coming Messiah. Both of them, therefore, had gained some understanding after their death.
10. We are told of some “spirits” that were once disobedient in the days of Noah, to whom Jesus “preached the Gospel” prior to being raised from the dead (1 Pet 3:18-20; 4:6).

There is an element of ambiguity in all of these texts. However, enough is made known to confirm that death is not the final transition of men, whether saved or lost. There is an increase of knowledge on the other side of the grave. There is comfort for the saved and torment for the lost beyond the grave. This, of course, sounds the death-knell for the soul-sleeping doctrine, which affirms man remains unconscious and inactive from the moment he dies until the dead are all raised.

It should be obvious that we are not complete when we “put off” this earthly “tabernacle.” The culmination of our salvation is not realized at that time, even though we do move up higher.

We must never speak of death as though everything is concluded for us at that time. It is true that our character is fixed at that time, whether holy or unholy (Rev 22:11). Our destiny is also determined at that time, for there will be no further moral change. However, there will be change upward. We will know more and see more. And, praise God, we will eventually inhabit our resurrection bodies, here called “our house which is from heaven” (5:2).

Chapter 24

BUT CLOTHED UPON

“ . . . but clothed upon” Other versions read, “but further clothed” (NKJV), “but to be clothed” (NASB), “but so that we may have our new body” (BBE), “but clothed” (DARBY), “but because we want to be covered with a second garment on top” (NJB), “We want to slip into our new bodies” (NLT), “but to clothe ourselves” (YLT), “we only want a new life” (IE), “but to put on more” (WEYMOUTH), “but rather that we would be further clothed” (AMPLIFIED), and “but because we want to know the full cover of the permanent house that will be ours” (PHILLIPS),

In this world, we are admonished to “put on the new man” (Eph 4:24). This is a spiritual man “which is renewed in knowledge after the image of Him that created him” (Col 3:10).

However, in the resurrection, we will put on a new body – or be “clothed upon.” Our

spirits, or inner man, will be appropriately clothed with a body capable of thorough and satisfying expression. For “the saved of the Lord,” that body will have no capacity for tears or pain. It will not be the source of sorrow, grief, or any form of frustration. We will not be “straitened,” or in any way restricted, by our new bodies, that “building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.” 5:1). Our new bodies will be perfectly compatible with our regenerated spirits. There will be no conflict within because of those glorious bodies, which will be “fashioned like unto His glorious body” (Phil 3:21).

Everything thing about us will be godly – even in appearance. Nothing about us will be weak, infirm, or in need of subjugation. Here is a glorious reality of which the saints are to be put in remembrance. It refers to the time when we will appear with Jesus “in glory” (Col 3:4). The resurrection of the dead is the time when we will be “like Him, for we shall see Him as He is” (1 John 3:2). Job saw this faintly and spoke of his longing for it: “And though after my skin worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God: Whom I shall see for myself, and mine eyes shall behold, and not another; though my reins be consumed within me” (Job 19:27). David spoke of this time, even though he lived in a period when very little light had been shed on the subject: “As for me, I will behold Thy face in righteousness: I shall be satisfied, when I awake, with Thy likeness” (Psa 17:15). Isaiah also referred to the resurrection of the dead, “Thy dead men shall live, together with my dead body shall they arise . . . and the earth shall cast out the dead” (Isa 26:19). Daniel was told that even though he died, “at the end of the days,” he would stand in his own “lot” (Dan 12:13). God revealed this to Hosea also, saying, “I will ransom them from the power of the grave” (Hos 13:14). Jesus spoke of “the resurrection of the dead,” and how bodies would be radically different than our present ones (Matt 22:30-32).

Speaking of the resurrection body, Paul said it was “in incorruption,” “in glory,” and “in power.” He said the new body was “spiritual,” and “the image of the heavenly” (1 Cor 15:42-49). It was characterized by “incorruption” and “immortality” (1 Cor 15:53).

Now, our text affirms that those who are in Christ Jesus are looking forward, with an earnest longing, to putting on that body – being “clothed” with immortality. They are not anticipating being without a body, but rather putting on one that is immortal!

Chapter 25

WHEN MORTALITY WILL BE SWALLOWED UP

“ . . . that mortality might be swallowed up of life.”

There have been several worldly epochs – times in which things radically changed. There was man’s sin and consequent expulsion from the Garden of God (Gen 3:24; Rom 5:12-19). There was the flood, when God judged the entire world, and removed all but eight souls, starting afresh (Gen 7:21; 1 Pet 3:20; 2 Pet 3:6). There was the tower of Babel, and the overthrow of a staggering project, when the language of men was confused, and a scattering was imposed upon humanity (Gen 11:4-9). Who can forget the calling of Abraham, at which point an enlarged perspective of God and of His intentions began to be realized (Gen 12:3; 18:18; 22:18; Gal 3:8). The giving of the Law also provided humanity with an epoch in which the ravages of sin would be more fully known, and the way prepared for the coming Savior (Ex 20:1-17; Gal 3:24-25). The days of John the Baptist were an epoch in which men were moved to anticipate the kingdom of

God (John 1:6-8; Matt 3:3; Lk 3:3-6). In the fulness of the time, God sent forth His Son, introducing “the day of salvation,” and embarking on the great work of bringing many sons to glory (Gal 1:4; Lk 4:18-21).

Although these events had a pervasive impact upon humanity, most of them are excluded from human attempts at writing history. That is because men refuse to acknowledge that it is God “with whom we have to do” (Heb 4:13).

Even when society is moving along with the persuasion that it is right to primarily seek one’s personal interest, God takes due note of that selfish and godless activity, and finally does something about it. Scripture states it this way: "And even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a reprobate mind, to do those things which are not convenient; Being filled with all unrighteousness, fornication, wickedness, covetousness, maliciousness; full of envy, murder, debate, deceit, malignity; whisperers, Backbiters, haters of God, despiteful, proud, boasters, inventors of evil things, disobedient to parents, Without understanding, covenantbreakers, without natural affection, implacable, unmerciful: Who knowing the judgment of God, that they which commit such things are worthy of death, not only do the same, but have pleasure in them that do them” (Rom 1:28-32).

The above condition of rapid and pervasive degeneracy was an epoch brought on by Divine abandonment. The immorality of reference was not caused by physiological conditions, social pressures, DNA, and the likes. Just as surely as God judged the world with the flood, and judged the building of the tower at Shinar, so He judged the human race for its insistence on forgetting Him and indulging their own fleshly appetites. The result – sinful expression in unparalleled measures.

There is yet another epoch on the Divine calendar. It is one in which death will be conquered in its totality, and nothing of it will remain. It will be the final stage of the “great salvation” as we have been given to see it, and will prepare the way for “the ages to come” (Eph 2:7). It is referred to as “the end of the world” (Matt 13:49), the passing away of heaven and the earth (Matt 24:35), and the time "in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up" (2 Pet 3:10).

Salvation prepares us for that time, enabling us to so live as to successfully make the transition from time to eternity.

Chapter 26

MORTALITY

“ . . . that mortality . . . ” Other versions read, “in order that what is mortal” (NASB), “so that these dying bodies” (NLT), “that the mortal” (YLT), “that which can die” (IE), “so that our mortality” (WEYMOUTH), and “ our transitory life” (PHILLIPS).

What a word is this!–“mortality.” The word means “liable to death” (THAYER), “what is subject to dying” (FRIEBERG), and “that which will eventually die” (LOUW-NIDA).

This is the effect of the sentence of death that was passed upon men when Adam sinned: “But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die” (Gen 2:17). Sin opened the door to death, death entered, and mortality was set in motion. As it is written, “Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned” (Rom 5:12).

The existence of “mortality” is what has given rise to “vanity.” When Solomon said, “Vanity of vanities, saith the Preacher, vanity of vanities; all is vanity” (Eccl 1:2), he was describing the result of “mortality.” From the standpoint of this world, he saw that everything was in a state of decline, and that no man could keep what he gained of this world.

From that dreadful day in Eden until this time, “mortality” has “swallowed” everything, devouring all things created, as recorded in the first chapter of Genesis. Not a single corner of the universe, or “the worlds” (Heb 1:2; 11:3) has escaped the grip of “mortality.” Everything and everyone dies!

ALL CREATION

Citing the staggering effects of sin, the Spirit reveals that all creation has been blighted because of man’s sin. “For the earnest expectation of the creature waiteth for the manifestation of the sons of God. For the creature was made subject to vanity, not willingly, but by reason of him who hath subjected the same in hope, Because the creature itself also shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God. For we know that the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now” (Rom 8:19-22).

The shroud of mortality hangs over the entire creation. This is not the result of nature’s choice, but has been imposed upon nature “by the will of Him who so subjected it – [yet] with the hope that nature (creation) itself will be set free from its bondage to decay and corruption [and gain an entrance] into the glorious freedom of God’s children” (Rom 8:20-21, AMPLIFIED). Creation, under the weight of mortality, is groaning and travailing in pain until now, expecting the freedom that will come to it when the sons of God are made known in all of their glory. The “groan” of creation is owing to the imposition of mortality upon it, without any cause for that mortality proceeding from itself. By saying it was “made subject to vanity not willingly,” the Spirit means it was not “by its own choice” (NIV) – that is, not because of a faulty choice it had made, like that which was made by Adam and Eve, who were disobedient.

It was the “will” of God that caused mortality to pervade the whole of creation. However, God did this “with the hope that creation itself will be set free from its bondage to decay and corruption [and gain entrance] into the glorious freedom of God’s children” (Rom 8:20-21, AMPLIFIED). Thus, the environment made for man, and over which man was intended to preside (Gen 1:26-28) partook of the curse brought on by the sin of man. When men “died,” everything “died,” in order that God might “make all things new” (Rev 21:5). Long before these things were made plain through Christ Jesus, Isaiah prophesied, “For, behold, I create new heavens and a new earth: and the former shall not be remembered, nor come into mind” (Isa 65:17).

In the Divine economy there will never come a point when something new will be permanently joined to something old. The old order and the new order cannot be finally merged, just as surely as new wine cannot be put into old bottles, or a new piece of cloth sewn onto a piece of old clothing (Mk 9:16-17).

Chapter 27

ABOUT SOUL SLEEPING

A false doctrine that is gaining prominence among professed believers is that of “soul sleeping.” This doctrine affirms that the whole of man is “mortal,” including his “soul,”

or unseen part. Thus, when the individual dies, not only is the “body” said to “sleep,” but the soul is also seen as being “asleep” – inactive, unconscious, and without any awareness. According to this doctrine, for all men, the next conscious moment after death will be the resurrection of the dead.

The argument is made that only God is immortal: “Who only hath immortality, dwelling in the light which no man can approach unto; whom no man hath seen, nor can see: to whom be honor and power everlasting. Amen” (1 Tim 6:16). Therefore, it is reasoned, every part of man is mortal, and immortality will in no sense be realized until the resurrection of the dead.

When the Scriptures affirm that God alone has “immortality,” they mean He alone is inherently immortal, or cannot die. By virtue of that circumstance, He can confer immortality. This is what Jesus affirmed of both the Father and Himself: “For as the Father hath life in Himself; so hath He given to the Son to have life in Himself” (John 5:26). Jesus declares this to mean that He can confer life – the life He has “in Himself.” This is the very life into which we “pass” by faith. Thus, Jesus said, “Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life. Verily, verily, I say unto you, The hour is coming, and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God: and they that hear shall live” (John 5:25).

This life is appropriately called “eternal life,” and is a present possession (1 John 5:13). It is not a life that can die, but partakes of the very nature of God Himself. That is why Jesus affirmed, “And whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die. Believest thou this?” (John 11:26). Further, what cannot die, cannot sleep, for “sleep,” unless imposed by God, as with Adam (Gen 2:21), is a consequence of death.

The Divine nature not only cannot die, it does not “sleep.” It is said of the Lord, “Behold, He that keepeth Israel shall neither slumber nor sleep” (Psa 121:4). “Sleep” is an attribute of mortality, not of immortality. Therefore, it cannot be a trait of “eternal life,” which we now possess. Nor, indeed, can it be said of Christ Jesus, to whom our very spirits have been “joined.”

The Holy Spirit has provided records of souls that were conscious, perceptive, and active after leaving this world. An extensive prophesy was delivered by Samuel to king Saul after he had died (1 Sam 28:15-19). It was a prophesy that could not possibly have been delivered by the devil or a demon, for it was a legitimate prophesy. According to Jesus, Abraham knew and spoke of things he never knew while alive in the body, hundreds of years after he had died (Luke 16:25-31). Jesus spoke of a man named Lazarus, who was comforted after he died – a condition that requires consciousness (Luke 16:25). He also spoke of a certain rich man who saw, felt torment, reasoned, and spoke, after he had died (Luke 16:23-24,27-28). If it is countered that this is a parable, this simply cannot be. In parables the likeness is not between fables and spiritual reality, but between earthly realities and heavenly realities.

On the mount of transfiguration, both Moses and Elijah appeared with Jesus “in glory,” and reasoned with Him about the death He was going to accomplish (Luke 9:30-31), doing so after they had left this world. Neither of these men, when they were upon the earth, uttered a single syllable about the death of Christ. Any understanding of that death they had acquired was after they left the world.

John the revelator was given to see “souls” after they had been martyred, and they were discerning, reasoned, spoke, and were given something, and were comforted (Rev 6:9-11). This could hardly have happened while their essential persons were sleeping. None of these things can possibly be true is the soul “sleeps” until the resurrection of the dead. Once again, if it is reasoned that these are parables, then we have the Spirit comparing eternal verities with things that are not possible, and cannot possibly occur. Such an approach to Scripture is unworthy of the slightest consideration, and ought not to be honored in the least.

One further thing concerning the foolish notion of soul sleeping. Jesus spoke of “that world,” following the resurrection of the dead. He said of those who are “accounted worthy to obtain that world,” “Neither can they die any more: for they are equal to the angels” (Lk 20:36). That means that “the angels” presently have “immortality,” which is a state of “deathlessness,” or “endless existence” – the opposite of being subject to death (THAYER/FRIEBERG). In the case of God Himself, “immortality” is an essential part of His person. In the case of angels, it has been conferred upon them. In the case of believers, it is “eternal life,” realized through our union with Christ Jesus.

Chapter 28

SWALLOWED UP OF LIFE

“ . . . might be swallowed up of life.” Other versions read, “death may be overcome by life” (BBE), “swallowed up by everlasting life” (NLT), “Then life will swallow up” (IE), “mortality may be absorbed in life” (WEYMOUTH), “may be swallowed up by life [in the resurrection]” (AMPLIFIED), and “absorbed into the life that is eternal” (PHILLIPS).

Presently, there is a struggle between life and death, the flesh and the Spirit, newness and oldness, and the “new man” and the “old man.” That struggle is implicit in the earnestness of the “groaning” we now experience – while we are “in the body.” However, life and death are not equals, nor are the flesh and the Spirit. The “newness of life” and the “oldness of the letter” do not stand on equal footing! There is no equality between the “new man” and the “old man.” “Life” is, in every way, superior to death! Death is, in every way, inferior. In the end, life will triumph over all, for it is a Divine quality, and death has no part in Him.

Now, while “this present evil world” remains, it appears as though death is doing all of the swallowing. It has gulped down the entire human race, and all of creation as well. It appears to be dominant, being, according to appearance, the last one to speak. Death is, after all, “the LAST enemy.” Prior to life and immortality being “brought to light” through the Gospel (2 Tim 1:10), there was a general moroseness brought on by the consideration of death. Job reasoned, “Man that is born of a woman is of few days, and full of trouble. He cometh forth like a flower, and is cut down: he fleeth also as a shadow, and continueth not” (Job 14:1-2). And again, “When a few years are come, then I shall go the way whence I shall not return. My breath is corrupt, my days are extinct, the graves are ready for me” (Job 16:22-17:1). David cried out, “The dead praise not the LORD, neither any that go down into silence” (Psa 115:17). Solomon said, “For to him that is joined to all the living there is hope: for a living dog is better than a dead lion. For the living know that they shall die: but the dead know not any thing, neither have they any more a reward; for the memory of them is forgotten” (Eccl 9:5).

However, these affirmations are not the highest view of death. These speak of death from

the human point of view, without the glory of God shining upon the subject. This is owing to a lack of revelation on the subject during the times of those people. When redemption is put into the scenario, the whole picture changes. Even those ancients knew of the resurrection of the dead. Job spoke of it (Job 19:26-27). David referred to it (Psa 16:9-10; 17:15; 49:15). Very faintly Solomon sensed the truth of the resurrection and spoke of the righteous having “hope in his death” (Prov 14:32). These men seemed to sense that death could not be the end of the matter. This could not be the final experience of men. Yet they did not have sufficient revelation to speak with ultimate intelligence on the subject.

Now the matter has been more fully expounded. Not only are we told that there is a whole realm of experience beyond the grave, death itself will finally be “swallowed up of life,” or devoured and destroyed by life. Further, we are told precisely when this will occur. “So when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory” (1 Cor 15:54). Paul pointedly affirms that he is speaking about “the resurrection of the dead” (1 Cor 15:42).

Death will be “swallowed” by life when the dead are raised. But more will be “swallowed” than the grave and human mortality! The “vanity” to which all of creation has been “subjected” will also be “swallowed.” The “first heaven” and the “first earth,” contaminated by man’s sin, will pass away, giving place to “a new heaven and a new earth,” which will, so to speak, swallow up the first (Rev 21:1). There, in the “new heavens” and the “new earth,” only “righteousness” will exist (2 Pet 3:13). As eternity rolls its ceaseless cycles onward, there will not be so much as a ripple of trouble or any of its sisters. An opposing hand will not be lifted, and a dissenting voice will not be heard. There will be nothing that chaffs against us or hurts. There will be no opponent, and hence neither weapon nor shield will be required. There will be no dullness or insensitivity, and nothing will go unobserved. In every sense, and in every way, death will be swallowed up by life!

Chapter 29

WROUGHT FOR THE SELFSAME THING

“Now he that hath wrought us for the selfsame thing is God.”

Now we soar on eagle’s wing into the realm of eternal purpose. Here we are confronted with Divine objectives. We now leave the domain of obligation, human responsibility, and moral requirements. Lifted up in the Spirit, we are given a glimpse of the WHY of redemption. This addresses the reason for our salvation, the aim of it all. With unparalleled skill, Divine wisdom races through all of the details of our salvation, and powerfully points to the bottom line. This is the purpose for the “new creation.” This is why we have been born again. It is why we have received the gift of the Holy Spirit. It is the cause that drives the intercession and mediation of Jesus (Isa, 53:12; Heb 7:25; 8:6), and the helpful intercession of the Spirit (Rom 8:26-27). If this objective is not realized – the objective of putting on immortality, the resurrection body – nothing else is of any favorable consequence! This is why God has made us and put us into Christ.

As we address this matter, it will become very apparent to you that it is exceedingly rare to hear so much as a single word on this subject in the church-world we are confronting. There is nearly total silence on this issue – a matter that Paul has painted as being most

critical in our salvation. He has taken us to the culmination of history, and the domination of the eternal and unchanging order. With great skill he has propelled us beyond the time of death to the time when the Lord will come in all of His glory, and life in its marvelous fulness will utterly decimate everything tainted by death. He will tell us that God has made us for that time, and what will take place then, when His purpose is brought to fruition.

If these assessments are correct, the bulk of the “Christianity” to which we are regularly subjected is, to say the very least, skewed in the wrong direction. This being the case, it cannot possibly lead people to the Divinely appointed objective. If men are to be saved, therefore, it will be in spite of their religion, not because of it. That is, they will have to overcome what is generally being represented as being from Christ Jesus, and contributive to their salvation. This is an awesome consideration, but must be entertained.

HE THAT HATH WROUGHT US

“Now He that hath wrought . . .” Other versions read, “Now He who has prepared us” (NKJV), “It is God who has made us” (NIV), “Now He that maketh us” (DOUAY), “And He that hath created us” (GENEVA), “who designed us” (NJB), “has prepared us” (NLT), “And He who did work us” (YLT), “and He who formed us” (WEYMOUTH), “who has put the finishing touches on me” (WILLIAMS), “And He who has wrought me out” (MONTGOMERY), “Now He who has fashioned us [preparing and making us fit” (AMPLIFIED), and “Now the power that has planned” (PHILLIPS).

The Spirit will not let us forget the Source of our salvation. Those in Christ Jesus are not self-made people. They are not the products of their own discipline, nor the work of their own hands. In order for them to be saved, they had to be delivered from what they were, and forgiven of what they had said and done. They had to be cleansed from their activities and the effects of them. If those who were of Israel could say, “Know ye that the LORD He is God: it is He that hath made us, and not we ourselves; we are His people, and the sheep of His pasture” (Psa 100:3), how much more can those in Christ make such a confession? As it is written, “For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them” (Eph 2:10).

It is God, and God alone, who has “begun a good work” in us (Phil 1:6). We are “God’s husbandry” and “God’s building” (1 Cor 3:9). We are wholly the products of Divine activity. The “new man” is categorically said to have been “created” by God (Col 3:10) – and God always creates something from nothing (Heb 11:3).

God always has a purpose for what He creates. He does not make anything simply to walk away from it and leave it to its own. His creation is driven by His objective, or purpose, for He does nothing “without cause,” or without linking it to a purpose (Ezek 14:23). Now, why did God make us in Christ Jesus? What is the purpose for the “new creation” – the ultimate purpose. From one perspective, God says He has made us “for My glory” (Isa 43:7). From another perspective, He has created us in order to do the “good works, which God before ordained that we should walk in them” (Eph 2:10). From still another view, it is “that we might receive the adoption of sons” (Gal 4:5). Yet another reason is that we might be “conformed to the image of His Son” (Rom 8:29). There is no competitiveness among these views. Our text provides yet another perspective – and it is linked to the objectives just stated.

Chapter 30

FOR THE SELFSAME THING

“ . . . us for the selfsame thing . . . ” Other versions read, “for this very thing” (NKJV), “for this very purpose” (NASB), “for this” (NLT), “this same thing” (WEB), “to this selfsame thing” (YLT) “for this very reason” (IE), “with this very end in view” (WEYMOUTH), “for this change” (WILLIAMS), “for this very end” (MONTGOMERY), and “this experience” (PHILLIPS).

What is this “selfsame thing” – the thing for which God has “wrought us?” It is the putting on of our house “which is from heaven!” It is to put on immortality and incorruption. It is to inhabit the resurrection body! Behold the strangeness of the sound! You will not often hear such a statement, yet it is one that must be heard, for it speaks of Divine intentions – revealed intentions

In the “new creation,” God is preparing personalities to inhabit bodies that are not corruptible. It makes no sense, therefore, that in the “newness of life,” God would make the body that is to be discarded a focal point! It is impossible that He would make us for one thing, and then emphasize another. The Almighty God cannot conduct His affairs in such a way!

Do not suppose for one moment that this is apparent to all, for it is not. The majority of the religion which we face is for the body, not the “new man.” The credentials of which men boast, and that are required by institutionalized religion, all have to do with the body. Much of the “praise and worship” that is inundating the church of our time has to do with the body, its motions, and its feelings. Church services are tailored for these “vile bodies,” yielding to its demands, and catering to its preferences. A significant percentage of the Christian world promotes a view of the Holy Spirit and blessing that places the stress on what happens in the body.

This religious bent has opened the door for all kinds of immorality and inappropriate behavior. This is so because when men emphasize the body, and the things that are related to it, it actually gives the body the advantage. That is why immorality and all manner of carnality have erupted within the “Christian” community – it is because the religion of the day has to do with the body. Therefore it has awakened the corrupt desires of the “vessel,” moving the attention away from the “treasure” housed within it. The modern health and wealth movement is also directly linked to the body, and has no significance at all apart from the body.

But this is not why God has “wrought us.” It is not why He has created us in Christ Jesus. Such ignoble purposes cannot blend with His. They can only fit into an agenda in which He is not prominent, and, consequently, from which He is absent. That is why these sophists must adopt all manner of routines, disciplines, and the likes in order to fulfill their purposes. God is not in their religion, and therefore it has no power. Instead of acknowledging this condition, men seek to create their own power – their own means of fulfilling their aberrant objectives. The very best they can do is adopt a “form of godliness” that rejects the power of God (2 Tim 3:5). Those who are of God must reject both these ways and the people who perpetrate and adopt them. This is the word of the Lord on this matter: “Having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof: from such turn away” (2 Tim 3:5).

And why is this so? Why are God’s people forbidden to traffic among those who walk in

the flesh, thereby glorying in their shame? It is because God has another objective – one that cannot be served by the agendas of men. His purpose is to prepare, or suit, you for incorruption! That is what our text affirms! “Now He Who has fashioned us [preparing and making us fit] for this very thing.” (AMPLIFIED) He is preparing us for what He has reserved for us: “a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.”

Only a fool would propound that the culturing of fleshly appetites and catering to the corruptible body could prepare us for such a habitation! Let us have done with mitigating the truth to make it palatable for the flesh, inventing “seeker friendly” approaches, and reducing our words to carnal lips that are less offensive to the flesh! Forever put behind you anything that encourages glorying in appearance (2 Cor 5:12), or being “at home in the body” (2 Cor 5:6). Such things are on the “condemned” side of the heavenly ledger!

We are being readied to “put on incorruption,” and “put on immortality” (1 Cor 15:53). If one’s religion is not equipping him to do that, it is of no value at all, but is only a hindrance and an obstacle. Such religion must be overcome, for it is destined to pass away with the world, which is its locus. God did not create a “new man” only to leave him in the old wineskin of flesh and blood!

While we remain “in the body,” our very best moments with the Lord, and our greatest triumphs in the Spirit are but the “first fruits” of what is to come. They only prepare us for the inheritance that is “reserved in heaven” for us (1 Pet 1:4) – and the resurrection body is an integral part of that inheritance.

Chapter 31

IS GOD

“ . . . is God” Other versions read, “Now it is God” (NIV), and “God Himself” (NLT). The One who has made us for this purpose “is God.” Of necessity, that means that any conflicting purpose is not of God. God is not in such purposes, and cannot possibly be served by them, even if they have a veneer of religious culture over them. No teaching or environment can possibly be acceptable to God in which He Himself neither resides nor works! And, for purposes of clarity, God neither works nor resides where His objectives are not the fundamental thing! It should also be clear that when those purposes are not articulated, and when what is being emphasized does not accentuate them, it is only folly to imagine that God is there, and that His blessing is over what is being done. Such things could not be without God denying Himself, and “He cannot deny Himself” (2 Tim 2:13).

When Paul affirms, “Now He who has made us for this very thing is God” (BBE), He means that God Himself has “created” us “in Christ Jesus” for the purpose of being “clothed” with “our house which is from heaven.” We have therefore been “born of God” (1 John 3:9; 4:7; 5:1,4,18), and “begotten of God” (1 John 5:18) for a purpose that extends beyond the duration of the present heavens and earth, and the life that is lived in them.

If, in fact, this is what “God” has done, all competing purposes are actually “enmity against God” (Rom 8:7). Those who are primarily attempting to do something else that is, of necessity, connected with this world are fighting “against God” (Acts 5:39). Rather than God creating and shaping us to fit into this world, and to experience its better things, He is actually separating us from this present evil world, and preparing us for “the world to come.” Additionally, God has not determined to make this world a “better place

to live,” as some novices affirm. He has already revealed that He is going to destroy this world by fire (2 Pet 3:10-13). He has already prepared a better abode for us, and foreordained that we will occupy it in a new body – our house which is from heaven.

Today, the religious world is being dominated by media ministers and the mega-millions they have infected with a fleshly virus. It is estimated that this wave of religious carnality now comprises a significant percentage of the professed “Christian” population – 555,000,000 of the 2.5 billion professing Christians. Of the total professing Christians, over one billion are Roman Catholic. That means of all the rest, about 50% are caught in this wave of delusion. None of these people are being told about God’s purpose for them to occupy their house from heaven. They are rather being told that God wants them to be rich and healthy in this world. The seriousness of this delusion cannot be overemphasized.

And, as if the above was not serious enough, the remaining segment of professing Christians are not being told of this purpose either. Unless there is a significant shift to a proper theological emphasis, the modern church, I am afraid, is being slated for destruction.

Chapter 32

WE ARE GIVEN THE EARNEST OF THE SPIRIT, #1

“ . . . who also hath given unto us the earnest of the Spirit.”

When it comes to the subject of the Holy Spirit, considerable confusion exists in the professed church. For some, mentioning the “Holy Spirit” awakens thoughts about speaking in tongues, or being thrown down to the floor. For others, it is associated with uncontrollable laughter, or making strange sounds. Still others, being slightly more elevated in their thoughts, connect the Spirit with powerful gifts, or declaring Divinely appointed things that have not yet come to pass. For some, a solitary association is made between the Holy Spirit and the Scriptures.

Now, no informed person is set to unvaryingly deny all of these associations. However, that they are the fundamental thing I emphatically deny! I deny that such things are the primary purpose for which the Holy Spirit has been given to us, or that they are the fundamental evidence of His presence and activity.

Our text will consider the Holy Spirit with a mind to the ultimate aim of the Almighty. You may rest assured that everything the Holy Spirit does will fit into, and prepare us for, that objective. The Holy Spirit will never function independently of the revealed purpose of God – the “selfsame thing” for which He has “wrought us;” namely, to put on our “house which is from heaven.” If what I think about the Holy Spirit makes it difficult for me to take into consideration the resurrection body, then I am not thinking rightly. God has told us what He is doing, and why He has made us. The Spirit is always working in strict harmony with that purpose. God does not purpose one thing, and the Holy Spirit work on something else. It is certainly on the part of wisdom for men to refuse to work on something other than what God has purposed.

WHO ALSO HATH GIVEN UNTO US

“ . . . who also hath given unto us . . . ” Other versions read, “who gave to us” (NASB), “has given us” (NIV), and “who also did give” (YLT).

The “us” of reference is not limited to the apostles. This has reference to all who are in Christ Jesus, and that is precisely how Paul is using the word “us” in this text. Much is

made of God giving us His Holy Spirit, and we do well to make much of it also. While Jesus was ministering among men, and prior to His death, He made much of the Spirit being given to men. A few of His remarks will suffice to confirm that this is true.

1 “If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children: how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask Him?” (Luke 11:13).

2 “He who believes in Me, as the Scripture has said, out of his heart will flow rivers of living water. But this He spoke concerning the Spirit, whom those believing in Him would receive; for the Holy Spirit was not yet given, because Jesus was not yet glorified” (John 7:38-39).

3 “Even the Spirit of truth; whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth Him: but ye know Him; for He dwelleth with you, and shall be in you” (John 14:17).

Now, in our text, the Apostle affirms that what Jesus promised is presently taking place. This is, in a manner of speaking, the interim blessing until we put on our “house which is from heaven.” We are to understand that this is the appointed means by which we are being prepared to be clothed with that house, or to “put on immortality.”

Chapter 33

WE ARE GIVEN THE EARNEST OF THE SPIRIT, #2

THE EARNEST OF THE SPIRIT

“ . . . the earnest of the Spirit.” Other versions read, “the Spirit as a guarantee” (NKJV), “the Spirit as a pledge” (NASB), “the Spirit as a deposit, guaranteeing what is to come” (NIV), “as a witness of what is to come” (BBE), “the Spirit as a first installment” (NAB), “and as a guarantee, He has given us His Holy Spirit” (NLT), “His Spirit as a pledge and foretaste of that bliss” (WEYMOUTH), “The [Holy] Spirit as a guarantee [of the fulfillment of His promise]” (AMPLIFIED), and “His Spirit as a guarantee of its truth” (PHILLIPS).

The Holy Spirit is given within the context of our mortality, and its relentless warfare against the renewed spirit. The frailty of our human constitution demands that we have help – help that comes from heaven. This assistance is preparing us for immortality, and the donning of our “house which is from heaven.” Just as Jesus introduced the matter of God giving us His Spirit, so the Apostles took up the matter, declaring that this has, in fact, taken place in Christ Jesus.

1. “Now He that hath wrought us for the selfsame thing is God, who also hath given unto us the earnest of the Spirit” (2 Cor 5:5).
2. “He therefore that despiseth, despiseth not man, but God, who hath also given unto us His holy Spirit” (1 Thess 4:8).
3. “And he that keepeth his commandments dwelleth in him, and he in him. And hereby we know that he abideth in us, by the Spirit which he hath given us” (1 John 3:24).
4. “Hereby know we that we dwell in Him, and He in us, because He hath given us of his Spirit” (1 John 4:13).
5. “And we are His witnesses to these things, and so also is the Holy Spirit whom God has given to those who obey Him” (NKJV) (Acts 5:32).
6. “Now hope does not disappoint, because the love of God has been poured out in our

hearts by the Holy Spirit who was given to us” (NKJV) (Rom 5:5).

In this context, the purpose for the giving of the Holy Spirit is to prepare us to inhabit “our house which is from heaven.” His ministry has to do with orienting us for “the world to come,” and for our reign with Jesus. That is why the gift of the Spirit is here referred to as “the earnest of the Spirit.” He is the “guarantee” (NIV) of what is to come, and a “pledge and foretaste” (WEYMOUTH) of our “building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens” (2 Cor 5:1).

Therefore, we ought to expect the Spirit’s work within our hearts (Gal 4:6) to wean us from this world, and assist in the development of appetites that have to do with our inheritance in heaven. He is acquainting us with eternal verities, and leading in the mortification of the appetites that rivet us to the world, the fashion of which, is “passing away” (1 Cor 7:31). A brief review of the revealed ministries of the Holy Spirit will confirm this to be the case. These things have no relevance whatsoever if there is no “world to come,” no “house which is from heaven,” and no “reign with Christ.”

1. The conviction of sin, righteousness, and judgment (John 16:8-11).
2. Guiding into all truth (John 16:13a).
3. Showing us things to come (John 16:13b).
4. Empowerment for laboring with God (Acts 1:8).
5. Reveal to us what is prepared for those who love Him (1 Cor 2:9-10).
6. Strengthening the inward man, so Christ can dwell in our hearts by faith (Eph 3:16-17).
7. Enabling us to abound in hope (Rom 15:13).
8. Working righteousness, peace, and joy in the saints (Rom 14:17).
9. Leading us in mortifying the deeds of the body (Rom 8:13-14).
10. Making intercession for us when we do not know what to pray for as we ought (Rom 8:26-27).
11. Enabling us to wait for the hope of righteousness (Gal 5:5)
12. Empowering us to obey the truth (1 Pet 1:2,22).
13. Shedding, our pouring out, the love of God abroad in our hearts (Rom 5:5).
14. Sanctifying us for Divine acceptance (Rom 15:16).
15. Washing, sanctifying, and justifying us (1 Cor 6:11).
16. Giving appropriate spiritual gifts to members of Christ’s body (1 Cor 12:4-11).
17. Changing us from one stage of glory to another (2 Cor 3:18).
18. Revealing the mystery of God’s purpose to the Apostles and Prophets (Eph 3:5).
19. Giving us the ability to keep what has been given to us (2 Tim 1:14).
20. Quickening our mortal bodies in order that we might live godly (Rom 8:11).
21. Baptizing us into one body (1 Cor 12:3).
22. Inscribing the Divine nature upon our hearts, thereby causing us to be new creatures (2 Cor 3:3).
23. Giving us access to God (Eph 2:18).
24. Renewing us (Tit 3:5).

25. Sealing believers as belonging to God, and being the earnest of things to come (1 Cor 1:22).
26. Giving life life to us (2 Cor 3:6).
27. Leading believers in subduing the flesh (Gal 5:18).
28. Producing spiritual fruit in believers (Gal 5:22-23; Eph 5:9).
29. Causing us to reap life everlasting (Gal 6:8).
30. Producing unity among the saints (Eph 4:3).
31. Making the Word of God an effective weapon (Eph 6:17),

There are thirty-one activities that are traced back to the Holy Spirit. They all will culminate in the grand objective for which they prepare us – putting on our house that is from heaven. Remove this appointment – putting on immortality, or the resurrection body – and there is no purpose to the workings of the Spirit. He is the “pledge” of that ultimate experience, when mortality will be “swallowed up of life.” Everything He does is in prospect of the ultimate triumph of life and demise of death.

Whatever will not survive death being “swallowed up,” is unworthy of our emphasis now. Although God gives us grace to deal with these temporal relationships and experiences, and even to bring Him glory through them, He does not give us grace to make temporal things, however lofty they may appear, the primary, or fundamental, things in our lives.

In order to “love life, and see good days” (1 Pet 3:10), our affection must be “set on things above, and not on things on the earth” (Col 3:1-3). If, in the end, we are not ready for the passing of the present heavens and earth, we will surely altogether miss the blessing for which salvation prepares us. We therefore do well not to “mind earthly things” (Phil 3:19). This is particularly true in matters of religion – things pertaining to life and godliness. It is imperative that we keep ourselves “unspeckled from the world” (James 1:27), forbidding the dominance of the flesh.

Chapter 34

CONCLUSION

As we began this series of devotions, I mentioned that, within the context of modern religion, we would be exposed to a strange sound. I trust this has been confirmed to your heart. Equally true, the heart that has been cultured by grace, tutored by Jesus, and strengthened by the Spirit, will find this text to be of great comfort. If we have not yet experienced the ultimate blessing, then all of the difficulties and troubles that we presently experience cannot be as bad as they seem. We must look at trouble through the eyes of faith. If the purpose of God has not yet been realized in its fulness, then pain and difficulty are not at all that they appear to be. All difficulty, trouble, hardship, and similar experiences, are related to death, not life. When mortality is “swallowed up of life,” death, together with everything associated with it, will be forever gone. Not so much as one weightless mote of such things will ever again be seen, realized, or in any sense experienced. There will be no recollection of them, and no debasing memory of their presence or effects. For the saints of God, only life and its glorious consequences will remain. That, dear child of God, is the blessing for which God has created you!

When, therefore, people and influences pull you down to the earth, causing you to wallow in trouble, lift up your eyes, and look to the places that are associated with the Lord

Himself. This is posture of which David spoke when he said, “I will lift up mine eyes unto the hills, from whence cometh my help. My help cometh from the LORD, which made heaven and earth” (Psa 121:1-2). For him, “the hills” were related to the city of Jerusalem, where God had placed His name, and to the Temple in which God “dwelt between the cherubims” (2 Kgs 19:15). How David longed for the blessings associated with those sacred “hills.”

For you, saint of God, “the hills” are the “heavenly places” in which God has placed you, (Eph 2:6), and where “all spiritual blessings reside” (Eph 1:3). This is where Jesus is seated at the Father’s “own right hand” (Eph 1:20). It is where elite “principalities and powers” are being tutored in the staggering diversity of Divine wisdom, and it is being done “through the church” (Eph 3:10). This is the domain for which you are being prepared to dwell in glorious fulness, by the grace of God and through His Holy Spirit. It is where your final and ultimate “house” resides, and it is where you will ever be “with the Lord.” Comfort your heart by recalling these things.