

THE GOOD SAMARITAN

November 11, 2012
8th Sunday of Luke
Revision H

Gospel: Luke 10:25-37

The Gospel lesson of the Good Samaritan returns to an often-occurring theme of loving God with all our heart, soul, mind and strength and our neighbor as us. This Gospel lesson is used in the Western Church in July.

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Today's Gospel lesson is recorded only by Luke and occurred in the Fall of 29 AD. It begins with a lawyer (an expert in the Mosaic Law, not civil law) trying to justify himself with Jesus (Luke 10:29). He first asked Jesus, "What shall I do to inherit eternal life?" (Luke 10:25) Jesus replied, "What is written in the Law?" (Luke 10:26) The lawyer replied by quoting the Greatest Commandment, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your strength and with all your mind, and your neighbor as yourself" (Luke 10:27). The lawyer did not come up with this completely on his own. His statement was part of a creed used in the synagogue worship that was learned and memorized by school children¹. This is also a quote from Deuteronomy 6:5 and Leviticus 19:18.

The same issue came up again in the Spring of 30 AD during Holy Week, where the Pharisees and Scribes also asked Jesus which is the Greatest Commandment (Matthew 22:34-40, Mark 12:28-34). Jesus replied that all the (Mosaic) Law and the Prophets hang on this same statement that the lawyer made; that is, the Greatest Commandment (Matthew 22:40). One scribe² replied to Jesus, "to love Him with all the understanding, with all the soul, and with all the strength and to love one's neighbor as oneself is more than all the whole burnt offerings and sacrifices" (Mark 12:33). Jesus remarked then that he had answered wisely; so Jesus said to him, "You are not far from the Kingdom of God" (Mark 12:34). This is to say: you know what to do; all you need now is to go do it.

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¹ Edersheim, Sketches of Jewish Social Life, p. 245, 101-104

Gower, New Manners and Customs of Bible Times, p. 79.

² Scribes were experts in the Mosaic Law and could be called lawyers.

Background: The Lawyer

In our Gospel lesson, when the lawyer quoted the Greatest Commandment, Jesus replied, “You have answered rightly; do this and you will live” (Luke 10:28). Thus the opinion of the experts on the Mosaic Law (Scribes, Pharisees, lawyers) concur that the Greatest Commandment is the answer for obtaining eternal life, and the Lord agreed with them.

Clement of Alexandria discussed³ why Christ first asked the lawyer if he had kept the Commandments. Keeping them leads to eternal life in that the Commandments define sin and what God requires. Good deeds and the keeping of the Commandments are an acceptable prayer to God.

“God dispenses many treasures; some disclosed by the Law, others by the prophets; some by the mouth of God, and others by the Spirit singing accordingly. And the Lord is the same Instructor by all these. Here is then a comprehensive precept, and an exhortation of life, all embracing, ‘As you wish that men should do to you, do likewise to them’ (Luke 6:31). We may comprehend the Commandments in two parts, ‘You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your strength; and your neighbor as yourself’. From these He infers, ‘on this hang the Law and the prophets’ (Matthew 22:37-40). Further, to him that asked, ‘What good thing shall I do, that I may inherit eternal life?’, He answered, ‘Do you know the Commandments?’ And on him replying, Yes, He said, ‘This do⁴, and you shall be saved’ (Matthew 19:16-20). Especially conspicuous is the love of our Instructor set forth in various Commandments. We have the Ten Commandments given by Moses, an elementary principle, defining the designation of sins in a way conducive to salvation. These things are to be observed, and whatever else is commanded in reading the Bible. And He directs us, ‘Wash yourselves, make yourselves clean; put away the evil of your doings from before My eyes. Learn to do good; seek justice, rebuke the oppressor; defend the fatherless, plead for the widow. Come now, and let us reason together, says the Lord’ (Isaiah 1:16-18). We find many examples in other places, as, for instance, respecting prayer, where good works are an acceptable prayer to the Lord⁵. And the manner of prayer is described: ‘If you see the naked, cover him; and you shall not overlook those who belong to your seed. Then shall your light spring forth early, and your healing shall spring up quickly; and your righteousness shall go before you, and the glory of God shall encompass you’. What, then, is the fruit of such prayer? ‘Then shall you call, and God will hear you; while you are yet speaking, He will say, I am here’” (Isaiah 58:7-9).

Irenaeus of Lyon stated⁶ that when Jesus asked the lawyer if he had kept the Commandments, this was in keeping with what He had imposed on mankind from the beginning;

³ Clement of Alexandria, *The Instructor*, III, 12.

⁴ Clement has added a few of the expressions from Luke 10:25-28.

⁵ See for example the Judgment of Works (Matthew 25:31-46), where people are saved by virtue of their dedication to serving the Lord’s brethren.

⁶ Irenaeus of Lyon, *Against Heresies*, IV, xii, 5.

but the lawyer hadn't kept them, even though he said that he had. Jesus offered the lawyer the reward of an Apostle if he would diligently pursue his question, but the lawyer turned Him down.

“The Law beforehand taught mankind the necessity of following Christ, and He made this clear, when He replied to him who asked Him what he should do that he might inherit eternal life. ‘If you want to enter into life, keep the Commandments’. When the lawyer asked ‘Which?’, again the Lord replied, ‘Do not commit adultery, kill, steal, or lie; honor your father and mother, and love your neighbor as yourself’ (Matthew 19:16-19). He set this as an ascending series of precepts before those who wished to follow Him, where the precepts of the Law are the entrance into life. What He said to this lawyer, He says to everyone. The former said, ‘All these have I done’, and most likely he had not kept them, for if he had, the Lord would not have said to him, ‘Keep the Commandments’ (Matthew 19:17). The Lord, exposing his covetousness, said to him, ‘If you wish to be perfect, sell all that you have, and distribute to the poor; and come, follow me’ (Matthew 19:21). He promised to those, who would act thus, the portion of the Apostles⁷. He did not preach to His followers another God the Father, besides Him, who was proclaimed by the Law from the beginning, nor the fables invented by the heretics. But He taught that they should obey the Commandments, which God imposed from the beginning, and do away with their former covetousness by good works, and follow after Christ. That possessions distributed to the poor annul former covetousness, Zacchaeus made clear, when he said, ‘Half of my goods I give to the poor; and if I have defrauded anyone, I restore fourfold’” (Luke 19:8).

The Temptation of the Lawyer

In our Gospel lesson, the lawyer wanted to justify himself and sought clarification on the word “neighbor” (Luke 10:29). The implication was that he was only interested in tempting Jesus (Luke 10:25), not in inheriting eternal life. Cyril of Alexandria⁸ comes out smoking against the lawyer, saying that he had no intention of learning from Him, but merely sought to tempt Him. Thus Jesus rightly returned his focus to that part of the Mosaic Law that might lead to his understanding and repentance.

“For a man to make a pretence of pleasant-spoken words, with a tongue anointed with the honey of deception, with a heart full of bitterness is double-dealing and hypocrisy in action and conduct. ‘Their tongue is a piercing arrow; the words of their mouth are deceitful; he speaks peacefully to his neighbor, and enmity is in his heart’ (Jeremiah 9:8 LXX). And again, ‘Their words are smoother than oil, yet they are arrows’ (Psalm 54:21 LXX); by which is meant that their words have the force of arrows shot from bows and striking violently.”

“As proof of my assertion let us examine the lawyer's words. ‘A certain lawyer stood up, and tempted Him, saying, Teacher, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?’ (Luke 10:25) A lawyer, according to the custom of the Jews, was

⁷ This is exactly what the Twelve Apostles did; they left everything (Matthew 19:29), and so did the entire Early Church after Pentecost (Acts 2:44-45).

⁸ Cyril of Alexandria, Commentary on the Gospel of Luke, Homily 68, Studion Publishers, 1983, pp 287-290,

one acquainted with the Law, or at least having the reputation for knowing it; but in this case, he really didn't know it. This man imagined that he could trap Christ! Many people had accused Christ, saying that He taught that the commandments given by Moses were of no value, while He introduced new teachings, which were not in accordance with the Law. The lawyer, expecting to be able to trap Christ, and get Him to say something against Moses, tempted Him, saying, 'What shall I do to inherit eternal life?'"

"But he didn't know Who he was dealing with! How could he have ventured to tempt God, Who tries the hearts and reins (Psalm 7:9 LXX), and to Whom nothing in us is hid? He might have said, 'What shall I do to be saved, or to please God, and receive reward from Him?' But he passed by this, and used rather Christ's expressions, trying to pour ridicule upon His head. Since Jesus spoke constantly of eternal life to as many as drew near to Him, the haughty lawyer, to ridicule Him, made use of His own expressions."

"Now had he been truly desirous of learning, he would have heard from Him the things that lead on to eternal life; but as he wickedly tempted Him, he heard nothing more than those commands, which were given by Moses. Jesus said, 'What is written in the Law? How do you read it?' (Luke 10:26) And on the lawyer's repeating what is enacted in the Law, as if to punish his wickedness, and reprove his malicious purpose, Christ, as knowing all things, said, 'You have answered rightly; do this, and you shall live' (Luke 10:28). At this point, the lawyer had missed his prey; his wickedness was unsuccessful, the net of deceit was torn apart. He was 'found and caught, because he contended against the Lord'" (Jeremiah 50:24).

"Having missed his prey, he fell headlong into vanity; hurried from one pitfall to another, he fell from deceit to pride. One kind of wickedness, as soon as it has seized him, thrusts him on to another, making him wander from destruction to destruction. He does not ask in order that he may learn, but wishing to justify himself. For observe how from self-love as well as pride he shamelessly called out, 'And who is my neighbor?' (Luke 10:29) There is no one like you, O lawyer? Do you raise yourself above everyone? Those who are able to judge themselves are wise (Proverbs 13:10 LXX). As he exalted himself and boasted in vain imaginations, he learned from Christ, that he was destitute of love towards his neighbors; the profession of being learned in the Law didn't profit him in any way whatever."

"Very skillfully Jesus weaved the parable of him who fell into the hands of thieves, saying, that when he was lying half dead, a priest passed by, and in like manner a Levite, without feeling towards him any sentiment of humanity, or dropping upon him the oil of compassionate love. But rather, their mind was unsympathetic and cruel towards him. But one of another race, a Samaritan, fulfilled the law of love. Justly He asked, which of these three, he thinks, was the sufferer's neighbor. He said, 'He that showed mercy to him'. And to this Christ added, 'Go also, and act in like manner' (Luke 10:37). You have seen, O lawyer, and it has been proved by the parable, that it is of no avail whatever to any man, to be set up by empty names, and to pride yourself with meaningless titles, so long as the excellence of deeds does not accompany them. The dignity of the

priesthood is useless to its owners, and equally so being called learned in the Law, unless they excel also in deeds. For a crown of love is being made for him who loves his neighbor; and he proves to be a Samaritan. As Peter testified, 'I perceive that God shows no partiality. But in every nation whoever fears Him and works righteousness is accepted by Him' (Acts 10:34-35). For Christ, Who loves our virtues, accepts all who are diligent in good pursuits."

Loving Our Neighbor as Ourselves

The command in the Mosaic Law to love one's neighbor (Leviticus 19:18) uses the Hebrew word "*rea*" meaning friend or companion and thus implies a very close neighbor. But the Mosaic Law also says to treat the stranger among you as the native and to love the stranger as yourself, remembering that you were once strangers in Egypt (Leviticus 19:33-34). The Hebrew word for stranger is "*ger*" meaning sojourner; in the Greek Septuagint, the corresponding word is "*proselutos*" meaning one who draws near; that is, a proselyte. So how far should loving one's neighbor extend? Should it extend just to one's friends and companions, to the members of one's own tribe or people, as far as to Gentile proselytes or to any sojourner passing through? For a Mosaic Law scholar knowledgeable about minute details of the Law, this was a thought-provoking question that might be used to trap Jesus into saying something against Moses.

Jesus proceeded with the Parable of the Good Samaritan to clarify this. In the Parable the victim is:

- Robbed, stripped and wounded
- Ignored by a priest and a Levite
- Given first aid by a Samaritan
- Transported to the nearest inn and treated further by the Samaritan
- Given 1 to 2 weeks further paid medical care by the Samaritan.

In the context, it is implied that the victim was a Jew⁹. Being left half dead, he was likely bleeding to death from puncture wounds. By the time the Samaritan reached him, he had probably lost enough blood to make him very weak. Pouring wine on his wounds served as an antiseptic due to the alcohol in the wine. Pouring oil on his wounds also served as an ointment to further prevent infection.

The priest and Levite passing by had good excuses for not getting involved. They were probably either going to or coming from serving in the Temple in Jerusalem. Priests and Levites were divided up into 24 lots (1 Chronicles 24) where those in one lot served in the Temple in Jerusalem for one week, then went home. Twenty-three weeks later they served one week again. That way, service in the Temple was divided up among all the priests and Levites. The homes of the priests and Levites were confined to the "Levitical Cities" prescribed in the Mosaic Law (Numbers 35:1-8, Joshua 21:1-42). This lasted until the kingdom was divided after the death of Solomon and most Levites abandoned the Northern cities and returned to Judah. After the Babylonian captivity, Levitical cities were not distinct anymore and priests and Levites

⁹ 1st Century Jews and Samaritans generally despised each other (John 4:8, 20). If the Samaritan had helped another foreigner, it would be no big deal. But for him to stop to help a Jew was remarkable.

grouped together into what were called “Priestly Centers.” From these “Priestly Centers”, they traveled together to and from Jerusalem. One such “Priestly Center” was Nazareth¹⁰.

From the viewpoint of the priest or Levite, it was easy to rationalize not getting involved. The man was bleeding, and therefore he was unclean and so would they be if they touched him (Leviticus 15:2-13). And they couldn’t serve in the Temple if they were unclean (Leviticus 22:2-6). But yet, the Lord cut through this religiosity excuse by saying, “I desire mercy, not sacrifice” (Matthew 9:13, 2:7, both of which quote Hosea 6:6). Even the scribe understood this, saying that loving one’s neighbor is more important than sacrifice (Mark 12:33). God can raise up from stones children to Abraham who can offer sacrifices (Matthew 3:9, Luke 3:8, 19:40). What God really wants is someone who will be like Him and show mercy.

For the Samaritan to transport the wounded man to an inn was not a small task either. If the guy was unconscious or drifting in and out, he couldn’t ride. Somehow, the Samaritan “set him on his own animal” (Luke 20:34).

Finally, after taking care of the wounded man overnight, the Samaritan gave the innkeeper two denarii (this represented two days’ wages for a laborer!) to continue his medical care and promised more if more was needed.

Jesus concluded the story by asking the lawyer which of the three was a neighbor to him who fell among thieves (Luke 10:36). The lawyer got the message, “He who showed mercy on him” (Luke 10:37). Then Jesus said to him (and to us) “Go and do likewise.”

Ambrose of Milan stated¹¹ that there are “ordinary duties” and “perfect duties”. “Ordinary duties” are keeping the Commandments; everyone should do this without even thinking about it. “Perfect duties” refer to loving our enemies and showing mercy to the poor, whereby we receive more than we give. The righteous Job is a good example of this.

“Every duty is either ‘ordinary’ or ‘perfect’, a fact which we can also confirm by the authority of the Scriptures. For the Lord said, ‘If you will enter into life, keep the Commandments. The lawyer said, ‘Which?’ Jesus said to him, ‘Do not murder, commit adultery, steal, or bear false witness; honor your father and your mother, and love your neighbor as yourself’ (Matthew 19:17-19). These are ordinary duties, to which something is lacking.”

“Upon this the young man said to Him, ‘All these things have I kept from my youth, what do I still lack? Jesus said to him, ‘If you will be perfect, go and sell all your goods and give to the poor, and you shall have treasure in heaven; and come and follow Me’ (Matthew 19:20-21). Earlier the same is written, where the Lord said that we must love our enemies, and pray for those that falsely accuse and persecute us, and bless those that curse us. This we are bound to do, if we want to be perfect as our Father Who is in heaven. He directs the sun to shed his rays over the evil and the good, and makes the lands of the whole earth fertile with rain and dew without any distinction (Matthew 5:45). This, then, is a perfect duty, whereby all things are put right, which could have any failings in them.”

¹⁰ Alfred Edersheim, Sketches of Jewish Social Life, Hendrickson Publishers, Peabody MA, 1995, pp. 36-37.

¹¹ Ambrose of Milan, Duties of the Clergy, I, xi, 36-39.

“Mercy is a good thing, for it makes men perfect, in that it imitates the perfect Father. Nothing graces the Christian soul so much as mercy; mercy as shown chiefly towards the poor, that you may treat them as sharers in common with you in the produce of nature, which brings forth the fruits of the earth for use to all. Thus you may freely give to a poor man what you have, and in this way help him who is your brother and companion. You give silver; he receives life. You give money; he considers it his fortune. Your coin makes up all his property.”

“Further, he bestows more on you than you on him, since he is your debtor in regard to your salvation. How? If you clothe the naked, you clothe yourself with righteousness; if you bring the stranger under your roof, if you support the needy, he procures for you the friendship of the saints and eternal habitations. That is no small recompense. You sow earthly things and receive heavenly. Do you wonder at the judgment of God in the case of holy Job? Wonder rather at his virtue, in that he could say, ‘I was an eye to the blind, and a foot to the lame. I was a father to the poor, and I searched out the case *that* I did not know’ (Job 29:15-16). Their shoulders were made warm with the skins of my lambs. The stranger dwelt not at my gates, but my door was open to everyone that came. Clearly blessed is he from whose house a poor man has never gone with empty hand. Nor again is anyone more blessed than he who is sensible to the needs of the poor, and the hardships of the weak and helpless. In the Day of Judgment he will receive salvation from the Lord, Whom he will have as his debtor for the mercy he has shown.”

John Chrysostom looked¹² very carefully at Paul’s words, “All the Commandments are summed up in this saying, namely, ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself’. Love does no harm to a neighbor; therefore love *is* the fulfillment of the law” (Romans 13:9-10). God puts love for our brethren on a par with love for God Himself; that is, one Commandment “is like” the other. There are two parts: abstinence from evil and doing good deeds. He considers us worthy to share His love, and He has been saying this even from ancient times.

“He does not say merely it is fulfilled, but ‘it is summed up’, that is, the whole work of the Commandments is concisely and in a few words completed. For the beginning and the end of virtue is love. This it has for its root and its groundwork, this for its summit. If then it is both beginning and fulfillment, what is there equal to it? But he does not seek love merely, but intense love. He does not say merely ‘love your neighbor’ but, ‘as yourself’. Christ also said that ‘the Law and the Prophets hang on it’. And in making two kinds of love, see how He has raised this! For after saying that the first commandment is, ‘You shall love the Lord your God’, He added a second; and He did not stop there, but added, ‘like it; You shall love your neighbor as yourself’ (Matthew 22:37-40). What can be equal to this love for man, or this gentleness? When we were at infinite distance from Him, He brought the love for us into comparison with that toward Himself, and said that it ‘is like this’. He puts the measures of either as nearly the same, of the one He says, ‘with all your heart, and with all your soul’, but of the love towards one’s neighbor, He says, ‘as yourself’. When we are fond of

¹² John Chrysostom, Homilies on Romans, XXIII, vv. 9-10.

anyone, we say, if you love him, then you love me. So He also showed this and said, 'is like it'; to Peter, He said, 'If you love Me, feed My sheep'" (John 21:16).

"Observe how the Law has two virtues: (1) abstinence from evils, for it 'works no harm', and (2) the working of good deeds. 'For it is', he says, 'the fulfilling (or filling up) of the Law' (Matthew 5:18). It does not bring before us instruction only on moral duties in a concise form, but makes the accomplishment of them easy also. He was not just careful that we should become acquainted with things that are profitable to us, but also the doing of them was a great assistance to us. He did not just accomplish some part of the Commandments, but the whole sum of virtue in us. Let us then love one another, since in this way we shall also love God, Who loves us. He considers you worthy to share His love, and hates you when you don't share it. For man's love is full of envy and grudging; but God's love is free from all passion; therefore He seeks for those to share His love. For He says, love with Me, and then I will love you the more. These are the words of a vehement lover! If you love My brethren, then I will also reckon Myself to be greatly beloved of you. For He vehemently desires our salvation, and this He showed from ancient times. Hear what He said when He was forming man, 'Let Us make man in Our Image', and again, 'Let Us make a helper for him. It is not good for him to be alone' (Genesis 2:18). And when man had transgressed, He rebuked him, but observe how gently. He did not say, 'Wretch! After receiving so great benefits, have you trusted the devil, and left your Benefactor, to take up with the evil spirit?' But what did He say? 'Who told you that you were naked, unless you have eaten of the Tree, which is the only one I commanded you not to eat of?' (Genesis 3:11) This is as if a father were to say to a child, who was ordered not to touch a sword, and then disobeyed and got wounded, 'How did you come to be wounded? You came so by not listening to me'. You see they are the words of a friend rather than a master, of a friend despised, and not even then forsaking. Let us then imitate Him, and when we need to rebuke, let us preserve this moderation."

Tertullian stated¹³ that Adam, in the Garden, knew the Law given to Moses in a condensed form, and he gives evidence for this from the Scriptures. This condensed form certainly included loving God and neighbor.

"Why should people believe that God, the founder of the universe, the Governor of the whole world (Jeremiah 31:27 LXX (37:27), Hosea 2:23, Zechariah 10:9, Matthew 13:31-43), had given a Law through Moses to one people, and not to all nations? Unless He had given it to everyone, He would not have permitted proselytes out of the nations to have access to it. He gave to all nations the same Law, which at definite times He directed should be observed, when He willed, through whom He willed, and as He willed. In the beginning of the world, He gave to Adam and Eve a Law, that they were not to eat of the fruit of the tree planted in the middle of Paradise; if they did otherwise, they were to die (Genesis 2:16-17, 3:2-3). In this Law given to Adam, we recognize in embryo all the precepts, which afterwards sprouted when given through Moses. If they had loved the Lord their God, they would not have disobeyed His precept

¹³ Tertullian, *An Answer to the Jews*, I, vii, 2.

(Genesis 3:6). If they had loved their neighbor¹⁴, that is, themselves, they would not have believed the persuasion of the serpent, and thus would not have committed murder upon themselves, falling from immortality, by disobeying God's precept. They also would have abstained from theft, stealthily tasting the fruit of the tree (Genesis 3:12-13); they would not have been anxious to hide beneath a tree to escape the view of the Lord their God (Genesis 3:8-9). Further, they would not have made themselves partners with the lies of the devil, by believing him that they would be 'like God' (Genesis 3:4-5). And thus they would not have offended God either, as their Father, if they had not coveted another's, they would not have tasted of the unlawful fruit."

"Therefore, in this general and primordial Law of God, we recognize all the precepts of the Mosaic Law, which germinated when disclosed at their proper times. For the subsequent addition of a Law is the work of the same Being who had before given a precept; it is His function subsequently to train those, whom He had formed as righteous creatures. Before the Law of Moses, I contend that there was a Law unwritten, which was habitually understood naturally, and by the fathers was habitually kept. How was Noah 'found righteous' (Genesis 6:9, 7:1, Hebrews 11:7), if in his case the righteousness of a natural Law had not preceded him? How was Abraham accounted 'a friend of God' (Isaiah 41:8, James 2:23), if not on the ground of righteousness, in the observance of a natural Law? How was Melchizedek named 'priest'¹⁵ of the most high God', if before the Levitical priesthood, there were no Levites who offered sacrifices to God? It was after the above-mentioned patriarchs that the Law was given to Moses, 430 years after Abraham at their Exodus from Egypt (Genesis 15:13, Exodus 12:40-42, Acts 7:6). From this we understand that God's Law preceded Moses, and was not first given at Sinai but existed in Paradise. It was updated for the patriarchs, and again for the Jews, at definite periods and even set forth to the Gentiles."

We Are Like the Man Fallen Among Thieves

There are many ways where we are like the man who fell among thieves. Sin, the passions, covetousness have wounded us and the devil has beaten us up. As we get mired in sin, we feel like we are half dead. Christ, who was even called a Samaritan by His enemies (John 8:48), doesn't pass us by, but comes to help us. He pours wine and oil on our wounds: the wine is an antiseptic, like discipline, that may cause temporary pain as it does its work. The oil is soothing, like compassion, and seals the wounds to prevent further infection. After carrying us to a place, the Church, where we can be taken care of, our Good Samaritan gives us two denarii, which is like the servant who received two talents from his master. If we need more, He will provide more later.

Clement of Alexandria stated¹⁶ that true love, such as shown by the Samaritan, buds into well-doing, since "a man is justified by works, and not by faith only" (James 2:24). Our love is

¹⁴ Compare Leviticus 19:18, Matthew 22:34-40, Matthew 19:19, Mark 12:28-34, Luke 10:25-28, Romans 13:9, Galatians 5:14, James 2:8, Deuteronomy 6:4-5, Exodus 20:12-17, Deuteronomy 5:16-21.

¹⁵ See Genesis 14:18, Psalm 110:4, Hebrews 5:10, 7:1-3, 10, 15, 17.

¹⁶ Clement of Alexandria, Salvation of the Rich Man, 27-30.

directed first to God, then to our neighbor. Love shown to our neighbor, God accepts as if done to Himself. On another level, we are like the wounded man lying on the road, and Christ is the Good Samaritan

“The Master accordingly, when asked, ‘Which is the greatest of the Commandments?’, said, ‘You shall love the Lord your God with all your soul, and with all your strength’ (Matthew 22:36-38). That no commandment is greater than this, He says, with good reason; it commands us regarding the Greatest God Himself. Being loved by Him beforehand, it is impious for us to regard anything else older or more excellent.”

“The second in order, and not any less than this, He says, is, ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself’ (Matthew 22:39); that is, God above yourself. When the lawyer inquired, ‘Who is my neighbor?’ (Luke 10:29), He did not specify the blood relation, the fellow-citizen, the proselyte, him that had been circumcised, or the man who uses the same Law. But He introduces one on his way down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and represents him stabbed by robbers, thrown half-dead on the road, passed by the priest, looked sideways at by the Levite, but pitied by the vilified and excommunicated Samaritan. He did not, like those, pass casually, but provided such things as the man in danger required, such as oil, bandages, a beast of burden, money for the inn-keeper, part given now, and part promised. ‘Which of them was neighbor to him that suffered these things?’ On his answering, ‘He that showed mercy to him’ (Luke 10:36-37), He replied, ‘Go, therefore, and do likewise’, since love buds into well-doing.”

“In both the Commandments, then, He introduces love; but distinguishes it in order. He assigns to God the first part of love, and allots the second to our neighbor. He has pitied us most of all, we who were all but put to death with many wounds, fears, lusts, passions, pains, deceits, and pleasures by the rulers of darkness? Of these wounds the only physician is Jesus, who cuts out the passions thoroughly by the root. He does not do as the Law does, with bare effects¹⁷, but applies His ax to the roots of wickedness. He it is that poured wine on our wounded souls that brought the oil, which flows from the compassions of the Father, and gave it abundantly. He it is that produced the bindings of health and salvation that cannot be undone, Faith, Hope, Love. He it is that subjected angels, and principalities, and powers to serve us. They also shall be delivered from the vanity of the world through the revelation of the glory of the sons of God. We are therefore to love Him equally with God. And he who loves Christ Jesus does His will and keeps His Commandments. ‘For not everyone that said to Me, Lord, Lord, shall enter the kingdom of heaven; but he that does the will of My Father’ (Matthew 7:21). And ‘Why call Me Lord, Lord, and not do the things which I say?’ (Luke 6:46) ‘And blessed are you who see and hear what neither righteous men nor prophets’ have seen or heard (Matthew 13:16-17), if you do what I say.”

“He then is first who loves Christ; and second, he who loves and cares for those who have believed on Him. For whatever is done to a disciple, the Lord accepts as done to Himself, and reckons the whole as His. ‘Come, you blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world. For I was hungry, and you gave Me to eat’ (Matthew 25:35 etc). And in

¹⁷ That is, He does not just say, “Thou shall not” to a stiff-necked people, but calls to those who have a willing heart.

another place, ‘He that receives you; receives Me; and he that doesn’t receive you, rejects Me’” (Matthew 10:40, Luke 10:16).

Ambrose of Milan applied¹⁸ the imagery of the wounded man, who was helped by the Samaritan, to those who have lapsed (denied the Faith) under persecution and succumbed to the pleasures and comforts of this life. In this way, he is wounded and half dead, and he needs both the comfort of the oil and the discipline or disinfectant of the wine.

“It is a twofold grace that everyone who believes might, in addition, suffer for the Lord Jesus. He who believes receives His grace, but he receives a second, if his faith is crowned by suffering. Peter received grace before he suffered, but when he suffered he received a second gift. And many who have not had the grace to suffer for Christ have nevertheless had the grace of believing on Him.”

“Therefore, ‘everyone that believes in Him should not perish’ (John 3:15-16). Let no one, whatever his condition, fear that he will perish, even after a fall. It may come to pass that the Good Samaritan may find someone going down from Jerusalem to Jericho; that is, falling back from the martyr’s conflict to the pleasures of this life and the comforts of the world. We may be wounded by robbers, that is, by persecutors, and left half dead. That Good Samaritan, Who is the Guardian of our souls -- for the word ‘Samaritan’ means Guardian -- won’t pass him by, but tend and heal him.”

“He doesn’t pass him by, because He sees in him some signs of life, so that there is hope that he may recover. Doesn’t it seem to you that he who has fallen is half alive if faith sustains any breath of life? He is dead who completely casts God out of his heart. He who does not completely cast Him out, but under pressure from torments has denied Him for a time, is half dead. If he is dead, you cannot ask him to repent, seeing he cannot be healed? If he is half dead, pour in oil and wine, not wine without oil, oil for comforting and wine for the sting of disinfectant. Place him on your beast, give him over to the host, lay out two denarii for his cure, be a neighbor to him. You cannot be a neighbor unless you have compassion on him; for no one can be called a neighbor unless he has healed, not killed, another. If you wish to be called a neighbor, Christ says to you, ‘Go and do likewise’” (Luke 10:37).

Gregory the Great, Pope of Rome, wrote¹⁹ to shepherds in the Church regarding the balance between compassion and discipline, where both are necessary. One extreme is the High Priest Eli, who was unable to discipline his sons out of excess compassion and lost everything. On the other hand, harsh discipline without compassion represents a lack of love. The Good Samaritan exhibits a balance in that he poured wine on the man’s wounds as an antiseptic (discipline) but also poured oil on the wounds to soothe them (compassion).

“Eli, overcome by false affection, would not punish his delinquent sons, and smote himself along with his sons before the strict Judge (1 Samuel 4:17, 18). God said to him, ‘You have honored your sons more than Me’ (1 Samuel 2:29). The Lord also criticized the shepherds of Israel saying, ‘That which was broken you have not bound up, and that which was cast away you have not brought back’

¹⁸ Ambrose of Milan, Two Books Concerning Repentance, I, xi, 50-52.

¹⁹ Gregory the Great, Book of Pastoral Rule, II, 6.

(Ezekiel 34:4). One who has fallen away is brought back when anyone who has fallen into sin is recalled to a state of righteousness by pastoral diligence. For binding a fracture is similar to discipline subduing a sin; if not done, the injured might bleed to death for lack of the wound being compressed and constrained adequately.

But often a fracture is made worse, when it is bound too tight, so that the cut is more severely felt from being constrained improperly. Wounds of sin in subordinates should be done with great carefulness, so that it exercises discipline against delinquents, but retains loving-kindness. Care should be taken that a ruler shows himself to his subjects as a mother in loving-kindness, and as a father in discipline. It should be done with anxious overview, so that neither discipline is rigid nor loving-kindness is lax. There is much lacking both to discipline and to compassion, if one is used without the other. Rulers ought to exercise both compassion justly considerate, and discipline affectionately severe towards their subjects. For the Truth teaches, the man is brought by the care of the Samaritan half dead into the inn, and both wine and oil are applied to his wounds (Luke 10:34); the wine to make them smart, the oil to soothe them. For whoever superintends the healing of wounds needs to administer the wine to the smart of pain, and in oil the softness of loving-kindness. Through wine what is festering may be purged, and through oil what is curable may be soothed. Gentleness must be mingled with severity; a sort of compound must be made of both, so that subjects are neither overcome by too much severity, nor relaxed by too great kindness. This is well signified by that ark of the tabernacle, in which, together with the tablets, there was a rod and manna (Hebrews 9:4). With knowledge of sacred Scripture in the good ruler's heart there is the rod of constraint, there should be also the manna of sweetness. David said, 'Your rod and Your staff, they have comforted me' (Psalm 23:4). For with a rod we are disciplined, with a staff we are supported. If, then, there is the constraint of the rod for striking, there should be also the comfort of the staff for supporting. Therefore let there be love, but not weakness; let there be vigor, but not aggravation; let there be zeal, but not senseless burning; let there be pity; but not sparing more than is expedient. Justice and mercy blend themselves together in the best rule.

Irenaeus likened²⁰ the dew on the fleece for Gideon to the Holy Spirit diffusing throughout the world. We are the ones who had fallen among thieves that the Holy Spirit cares for; we receive the two denarii for our care to make us fruitful and bring an increase to our Master

“Gideon, foreseeing the gracious gift of God, changed his request, and prophesied that there would be dryness upon the fleece of wool (a type of the people), on which alone at first there had been dew (Judges 6:36-40). This indicates that those people should no longer have the Holy Spirit from God, as Isaiah said, 'I will also command the clouds, that they rain no rain upon it' (Isaiah 5:6). But that the dew, which is the Spirit of God, who descended upon the Lord, should be diffused throughout the earth. This is 'the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge and piety,

²⁰ Irenaeus of Lyon, *Against Heresies*, III, xvii, 3.

the spirit of the fear of God' (Isaiah 11:2). This Spirit He conferred on the Church, sending the Comforter from heaven throughout the entire world. The Lord also told us that the devil, like lightning, was thrown down from heaven. We need the dew of God, that we might not be consumed by fire, nor rendered unfruitful. Where we have an accuser, there we need an Advocate, the Lord commending to the Holy Spirit His own man, who had fallen among thieves. He Himself had compassion, and bound up his wounds, giving two royal denarii. We, receiving by the Spirit the image and superscription of the Father and the Son, might cause the denarius entrusted to us to be fruitful, counting out the increase to the Lord."

John Chrysostom stated²¹ that we should not be overly curious about the spiritual condition of those that we give help to. The Samaritan didn't do this to the wounded man, but gave him help immediately. Being overly curious and selective can take away the greater part of charity. Even if we are dealing with an unbeliever, he may be sanctified by someone else.

"I beseech you, brethren, to minister to the saints. For every believer is a saint in that he is a believer. Though he is a person living in the world, he is a saint. 'The unbelieving husband is sanctified by the wife, and the unbelieving wife by the husband' (1 Corinthians 7:14). See how the faith makes the saint? If then we see even a secular person in misfortune, let us stretch out a hand to him. Let us not be zealous for those only who dwell in the mountains; they are indeed saints both in manner of life and in faith; these others however are saints by their faith, and some of them also in manner of life. Let us not, if we see a monk thrown into prison, in that case go in to visit; but if it is a secular person, refuse to go in. He also is a saint and a brother."

"What then, you say, if he is unclean and polluted? Listen to Christ saying, 'Judge not that you be not judged' (Matthew 7:1). Help him for God's sake! Even if we see a heathen in misfortune, we ought to show kindness to him, and to every man without exception who is in misfortunes, and much more to a believer who is in the world. Listen to Paul, saying, 'Do good to all men, but especially to those who are of the household of faith' (Galatians 6:10).

I don't know why this notion has been introduced, or where this custom has prevailed. For he that only helps monks, and with others is over-curious in his inquiries, and says, 'unless he be worthy, unless he be righteous, unless he work miracles, I won't stretch out my hand'; such a one has taken away the greater part of charity. In time he will destroy the act of charity itself. And yet that is charity, which is shown towards sinners, towards the guilty. This is charity, not the pitying those who have done well, but those who have done wrong."

"Listen to the Parable! 'A certain man went down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and fell among thieves' (Luke 10:30-37). When they had beaten him, they left him next to the road, having badly bruised him. A certain Levite came, and when he saw him, he passed by; a priest came, and when he saw him, he hurried past. A certain Samaritan came, and showed great care for him. He 'bandaged his wounds' (Luke 10:34), dropped oil on them, set him upon his

²¹ John Chrysostom, Homilies on Hebrews, X, 7-8.

donkey, 'brought him to the inn, said to the host, Take care of him' (Luke 10:35). Observe his great liberality, 'I will give you whatever you shall spend'. Who then is his neighbor? 'He that showed mercy on him! Go then also and do likewise' (Luke 10:37). What a parable He spoke! He didn't say that a Jew did this to a Samaritan, but that a Samaritan showed all that liberality. Having then heard these things, let us not care only for 'those that are of the household of faith' (Galatians 6:10), and neglect others. If you see any one in affliction, do not be curious to inquire further. His being in affliction involves a just claim to your aid. For if you see a donkey choking, you raise him up, and do not curiously inquire whose he is. Much more about a man, one ought not to be over-curious in inquiring whose he is. He is God's, whether he is heathen or Jew; since even if he is an unbeliever, still he needs help. If it had been committed to you to inquire and to judge, you would have had something to say. But, as it is, his misfortune does not allow you to search out these things. Even about men in good health, it is not right to be over-curious, or to be a busybody in other men's matters; much less about those that are in affliction."

**TREASURE IN VESSELS OF CLAY:
*Menas the Wonderworker***

**November 11, 2012
15th Sunday after Pentecost
Revision C**

Epistle: 2 Corinthians 4:6-15

Today's Epistle reading is used variously on the 4th Sunday after Pentecost or half of it on Transfiguration Sunday and the other half on the 4th Sunday after Easter.

Background for the Church in Corinth

Paul founded the Church in Corinth about 51 AD toward the end of his Second Missionary Journey and stayed there a year and a half (Acts 18:11). Silas was traveling with Paul at the time along with Luke, Timothy and Andronicus, where all but Paul were of the original Seventy. Luke was left behind to oversee the Macedonian Churches. (Note switch in tenses from "we" to "they" and back to "we" in Acts 16:16, 17:1, 20:6). Silas was left behind in Corinth and was later Bishop of Corinth. (Note that we never hear from Silas again traveling with Paul after he arrived in Corinth, Acts 18:5).

Before Paul arrived in Corinth for an extended stay again in late 55 AD, he wrote four letters to Corinth (two of which are lost) and paid the Church one brief visit. For more details of this see the Epistle lesson for the 14th Sunday after Pentecost. In the interval from 52 to 55 AD, Apollos and the Apostle Peter visited Corinth. Apollos was one of the original Seventy, but must have been back home in Alexandria at the time of Pentecost. He knew only the baptism of John in 53 AD when he came to Ephesus (Acts 18:24-28). Aquila and Priscilla, the overseers Paul left in Ephesus (Acts 18:18-19), straightened Apollos out and also wrote to the Churches in Achaia (Athens and Corinth) to receive Apollos when he arrived (Acts 18:27). Apollos proceeded to help out by vigorously refuting the Jews publicly showing from the Scriptures that Jesus is the Christ (Acts 18:28). In the chapter just prior to our Epistle reading (1 Corinthians 3:8), Paul said that he and Apollos are one; that is, of one mind in the work of establishing the Churches.

The same can be said for the relationship between Paul and Peter. Peter visited Corinth in the early 50's AD on his way to Rome. He obviously made a big impression in Corinth since there were factions that had developed by 55 AD (1 Corinthians 1:12) centered around Paul, Apollos, Peter and none of the above (i.e. Christ)!! On Peter's way to Corinth, Paul met him in Macedonia and together they ordained four bishops:

Olympas	for	Philippi
Jason	for	Thessalonica
Silas	for	Corinth
Herodion	for	Patras (SW Greece)

Thus we can definitely say that Peter and Paul were one in the work also.

From a detailed study of Paul's Missionary Journeys, one can see that Paul worked with at least 60 of the original members of the 70 at some point. For more details, see Appendix A. Many of them like Luke, Timothy, and Titus traveled with him a lot. In addition, Paul had some contact with Peter, John, Andrew and Philip.

The Imagery of Gold and Precious Stones

The Garden of Eden: In and around the Garden of Eden, gold and some precious stones are mentioned: bdellium and onyx (Genesis 2:10-13). The implication is that they are just raw materials, however.

The Ephod: As part of the ephod or garment worn by Aaron the priest, were two large onyx gem stones with the names of the 12 tribes of Israel engraved on them (Exodus 28:9-12).

The Breastpiece: The breastpiece of judgment, actually a pocket or pouch, that contained the Urim and Thummin (meaning "lights and truth") had an embroidered face and held 12 large gems representing the 12 tribes of Israel (Exodus 28:15-21). Aaron continually carried the verdict or judgment of the sons of Israel before the Lord. This verdict was already given on the Altar of Burnt offering as part of Aaron's preparation (Exodus 28:29-30).

The New Jerusalem:: The light of the New Jerusalem was like a precious stone. The gates were twelve pearls, on which were inscribed the names of the 12 tribes of Israel. The foundations were 12 precious stones on which are written the names of the Twelve Apostles (Revelation 21:10-21).

The Church Today: Paul was speaking of building with various materials: gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw. In 1 Corinthians 3:17, the building is said to be the temple of God. Part of the building process is a fire test — this is part of the Word of the Cross (1 Corinthians 3:10-17).

We have a treasure in dirt (clay) vessels (2 Corinthians 4:6-9). The treasure is like the proverbial sword in the fire. The treasure is the light of the knowledge of the Glory of God in the face of Jesus (2 Corinthians 4:6). As we carry our cross, the sword heats up and we begin to take on the image of God (v.4), which is the fire. This process is referred to as deification where we begin to become God-like. The words printed on icons of St. Athanasius reflect this: God became man that man might become god.

There will be tribulations in our lives, but this is just part of the process that refines the gold and cuts the precious stones. As we go on, we die a little more each day to our self-centeredness and death is working in us. The more this happens, the more we are aware of the will of God and grace and thanksgiving abound to the glory of God (2 Corinthians 4:8-15).

The result is that Christians have been a unique people. Consider the First Century writing of an unknown author describing Christians of his day: "For the Christians are

distinguished from other men neither by country, nor language, nor the customs which they observe. For they neither inhabit cities of their own, nor employ a peculiar form of speech, nor lead a life which is marked out by any singularity. The course of conduct which they follow has not been devised by any speculation or deliberation of inquisitive men; nor [are they]...the advocates of merely human doctrines. But, inhabiting Greek as well as barbarian cities, according as the lot of each of them has determined, and following the customs of the natives as to clothing, food, and the rest of their ordinary conduct, they display to us their wonderful and confessedly striking manner of life. They dwell in their own countries, but simply as sojourners. As citizens, they share in all things with others, and yet endure all things as if foreigners. Every foreign land is to them as their native country, and every land of their birth as a land of strangers. They marry ... beget children; but they do not destroy their offspring [literally, “cast away fetuses”]. They have a common table, but not a common bed. They are in the flesh, but they do not live after the flesh. They pass their days on earth, but they are citizens of heaven. They obey the prescribed laws, and at the same time, surpass the laws by their lives. They love all men, and are persecuted by all. They are unknown and condemned; they are put to death and restored to life. They are poor, yet make many rich; they are in lack of all things, and yet abound in all; they are dishonored, and yet in their very dishonor are glorified. They are evil spoken of, and yet are justified; they are reviled, and bless [2 Corinthians 4:12]; they are insulted, and repay the insult with honor; they do good, yet are punished as evil-doers. When punished, they rejoice as though quickened to life; they are assigned by the Jews as foreigners, and are persecuted by the Greeks; yet those who hate them are unable to assign any reason for their hatred” (The Epistle to Diognetus, Chapter 5, The Ante-Nicene Fathers).

What Happens to the Earthenware Vessel?

But yet a very real problem that the Church has had to address over the centuries is: “What happens to the clay vessel?” Gnostics in the First Century quoted Paul as saying that “...flesh and blood cannot inherit the Kingdom of God” (1 Corinthians 15:50). Therefore, they said, the flesh and blood doesn’t matter and only spiritual things matter. The Apostle John vehemently opposed this idea (which was championed by ex-deacon Nicolas of Acts 6:5) regarding the gnostic Nicolaitans (Revelation 2:6, 14-15).

In the same context as the above, Paul stated regarding the resurrection (1 Corinthians 15:52-54):

- The dead will be raised
- We shall be changed
- The corruptible must put on incorruption
- The mortal must put on immortality
- Death will be swallowed up in victory

The Gnostics stated that the resurrection was already past (2 Timothy 2:17-18) and occurred at baptism. Paul vehemently opposed this and even delivered some Gnostics over to Satan (for the destruction of their flesh) in order that they may learn not to blaspheme in this regard (1 Timothy 1:18-20; compare 1 Corinthians 5:1-5).

The Scriptures teach that in the resurrection the righteous will shine forth like the sun (Matthew 13:43, Daniel 12:3) and that we will be like Him (1 John 3:2) who is the firstborn of many brethren (Romans 8:29, Colossians 1:15-18, Revelation 1:5). And when the resurrected Christ appeared to the Apostles in the upper room, He pointed out to them specifically that He was not just spirit but that He retained flesh and bones in His resurrected state (Luke 24:38-39). There was probably something different about the risen Jesus' appearance. The Apostles didn't dare ask the risen Jesus who He was when He appeared to them in Galilee (John 21:12); Luke and Cleopas didn't recognize Him at all for a while on the road to Emmaus (Luke 24:13-31). There was undoubtedly something different when the corruptible put on incorruption and the mortal put on immortality. It was changed (1 Corinthians 15:52-54). But yet it was still recognizable on closer inspection.

The Role of the Clay Vessels

So what is the proper role of our fleshly bodies in this life? Irenaeus (2nd Century) quotes Paul using these words with respect to our fleshly bodies: "Paul declares that we are 'always bearing about in our body the dying of Jesus, that also the life of Jesus Christ might be manifested in our body. For if we who live are delivered into death for Jesus' sake, it is that the life of Jesus may also be manifested in our mortal flesh' [2 Corinthians 4:10-11]. And that the Spirit lays hold of the flesh, he says in the same Epistle: 'That ye are the epistle of Christ, ministered by us, inscribed not with ink, but with the Spirit of the living God, not in tables of stone, but in the fleshly tables of the heart' [2 Corinthians 3:3]. If, therefore, in the present time fleshly hearts are made partakers of the Spirit, what is there astonishing if, in the resurrection, they receive that life which is granted by the Spirit? Of this resurrection the Apostle speaks in the Epistle to the Philippians: 'Having been made conformable to His death, if by any means I might attain to the resurrection which is from the dead' [Philippians 3:11]. In what other mortal flesh, therefore, can life be understood, unless in that substance which is also put to death on account of that confession which is made of God. He, Himself has declared: 'If, as a man, I have fought with beasts at Ephesus, what advantage is it to me if the dead do not rise? For if the dead do not rise, neither has Christ risen. Now, if Christ has not risen, our preaching is in vain, and your faith is in vain. In that case, we are found to be false witnesses for God, since we testified that He raised up Christ. For if the dead do not rise, neither has Christ risen. But if Christ is not risen, your faith is in vain, since ye are yet in your sins. Therefore those who have fallen asleep in Christ have perished. If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are more miserable than all men. But now Christ has risen from the dead, the first-fruits of those that sleep; for as by man [came] death, by man also [came] the resurrection of the dead' " [1 Corinthians 15:13-21].

"In all these passages, as I have already said, these men (i.e. the heretics) must either allege that the apostle expresses opinions contradicting himself with respect to that statement 'Flesh and blood cannot inherit the Kingdom of God' (1 Corinthians 15:50); or on the other hand, they will be forced to make perverse and crooked interpretations of all the passages, so as to overturn and alter the sense of the words: (Against Heresies, Book V, chapter 13, 4).

All this was put into place when the Lord created Adam and Eve. Not only were they created in the Image of God, but the Epistle text states that God commanded light to shine out of

darkness (2 Corinthians 4:6). John Chrysostom (4th Century) comments on this: “And where did He command light to shine out of darkness? In the beginning and in prelude to the creation; for, says He, ‘Darkness was upon the face of the deep. And God said, let there be light, and there was light’ (Genesis 1:2, 3). Then, He said: ‘Let it be, and it was’; but now He said nothing, but Himself became Light for us. For He did not say, ‘has now commanded light’, but ‘has Himself shined’ (v.6). Therefore, neither do we see tangible objects by the shining of this light, but we see God Himself through Christ. For of the Spirit, he says (2 Corinthians 3:18): ‘But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory even as from the Lord Spirit’. And of the Son, (2 Corinthians 4:4): ‘That the light of the Gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine on them.’ And of the Father (2 Corinthians 4:6): ‘He that said Light shall shine out of darkness shined in your hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ’ “.

“For seeing he had spoken many and great things of the unspeakable glory, lest any should say: ‘And how enjoying so great a glory can we remain in a mortal body?’ he said that this very thing is indeed the chief marvel and a very great example of the power of God, that an earthen vessel has been enabled to bear so great a brightness and to keep so high a treasure. None of the things we hold is human!” (Homily viii on 2 Corinthians 4).

“And what is the ‘dying of the Lord Jesus,’ which they bore about? Their daily deaths by which also the resurrection was shown, ‘For if anyone doesn’t believe’, Paul says, ‘that Jesus died and rose again, beholding us every day die and rise again, let him believe henceforward in the resurrection. His life is manifested in our body’ (2 Corinthians 4:10-11). By snatching us out of the perils, that which seems a mark of weakness and being destitute proclaims His resurrection. His power had appeared in that we suffered, but without being overcome. We bear His dying that the power of His life may be made manifest, who did not permit mortal flesh to be overcome by the snowstorm of these calamities” (Homily ix on 2 Corinthians 4).

Attempts to Link the Earthen to the Heavenly

All this is so utterly unfathomable and glorious that there have been attempts in the past to water it down, sometimes by deceit. For example, in the 4th Century, the words of the Nicene Creed were carefully drafted to refute the attempts of the Arian bishops to craft Jesus more in our image rather than vice versa. The words co-essential and consubstantial were used to distinguish the nature of Jesus’ divinity from the nature of Jesus’ flesh — which is the same as ours.

Athanasius of Alexandria (4th Century) put it in these words: “When the Bishops said that the Word must be described as the True Power and image of the Father, in all things exact and like the Father, and as unalterable, and as always, and as in Him without division (for never was the Word not, but He was always, existing everlastingly with the Father, as the radiance of light), Eusebius [an Arian bishop] and his fellows endured indeed, as not daring to contradict, being put to shame by the arguments which were urged against them; but withal they were caught whispering to each other and winking with their eyes [at the Council], that ‘like’, and ‘always’, and ‘power’, and ‘in Him’, were, as before, common to us and the Son and that it was no difficulty to agree to these. As to ‘like’, they said it was written of us, ‘Man is the image and

glory of God' [1 Corinthians 11:7]; 'always', that it was written, 'for we which live are always' [2 Corinthians 4:11]; 'in Him', 'in Him we live and move and have our being' [Acts 17:28]...as to 'power', that the caterpillar and the locust are called 'power' and 'great power' [Joel 2:25], and that it is often said of the people, for instance, 'all the power of the Lord came out of the land of Egypt' [Exodus 12:41]; and there are others also, heavenly ones, for Scripture says, 'the Lord of powers is with us, the God of Jacob is our refuge' [Psalms 46:7]...But the Bishops discerning in this too their dissimulation, and whereas it is written, 'deceit is in the heart of the irreligious that imagine evil' [Proverbs 12:20], were again compelled on their part to collect the sense of the Scriptures, and to re-say ... more distinctly still, namely, that the Son is 'one in essence' with the Father, by way of saying, that the Son was from the Father, and not merely like, but the same in likeness, and of showing that the Son's likeness and unalterableness was different from such copy of the same as is ascribed to us, which we acquire from virtue on the ground of observance of the commandments. For bodies which are like each other may be separated and become at distances from each other, as are human sons relative to their parents ... but since the generation of the Son from the Father is not according to the nature of men, and not only like, but inseparable from the essence of the Father, and He and the Father are one, as He has said Himself [John 8:58, 10:30], and the Word is ever in the Father and the Father in the Word, as the radiance stands towards the light ... therefore the Council, as understanding this, suitably wrote 'one in essence', that they might defeat the perverseness of the heretics, and show that the Word was other than the originated things. For, after thus writing, they at once added, 'they who say that the Son of God is from nothing, or created, or alterable, or a work, or from other essence, these the Holy Catholic Church anathematized' " (Athanasius' Defense of the Nicene Definition. The Nicene and Post Nicene Fathers).