

BLESSED ARE YE

BY B. G. ECHOLS

Paul presents us with a Christian's tally sheet and it is always outbalanced by what we are promised (2 Cor. 4:17, 18). As Peter contemplates the various trials and difficulties that may befall Christians, he also reminds us that what God assures us far outweighs anything Satan can do. "If ye are reproached for the name of Christ, blessed are ye; because the Spirit of glory and the Spirit of God resteth upon you" (1 Peter 4:14). "If" does not imply doubt. It means when the reproach comes, here is to be your response.

Reproach is one type of persecution. It means to revile, slander, or speak evil of. This comes "for the name of Christ," that is, our adherence to Him and our loyalty to His cause. "Blessed" is the same idea Jesus expressed in Mt. 5:11, 12. "Blessed are ye when men shall reproach you, and persecute you, and say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake. Rejoice, and be exceeding glad: for great is your reward in heaven: for so persecuted they the prophets that were before you." It is happiness to be able to show our willingness to suffer for our faith. Instead of reveling in self-pity, congratulate yourself that you can suffer for the name of Christ.

Peter is excited about the glory of God and Christ (2 Pet. 1:16-18; 1 Pet. 4:11, 13, 16). In contrast to the reproach man casts upon us is the glory of God that rests on us. Let us keep our eyes on the greater blessing. Our happiness is crowned with the fact that God is near. "Resteth" shows His abiding presence with us. He does not abandon us. Regardless of how we may be tempted to feel abandoned, God is near. Man reviles; God glorifies. What was foretold of Christ is true of us, but not in the same measure (Isa. 11:2). God rests on those who patiently suffer for Christ.

"For let none of you suffer as a murderer, or a thief, or an evil-doer, or as a meddler in other men's matters..." (1 Pet. 4:15). The best of men need to be warned about the worst of sins. Not one among us should be guilty of any of these. It is not the fact that we suffer that brings blessings, but the cause (1 Pet. 2:20). While we may think that murder is far

from us, we may be guilty already (1 John 3:15). An "evil-doer" is one who breaks the law. We should be ashamed if, as followers of Christ, we should be guilty and have to suffer for any of these things. The busy-body is in the worst of company. Yet even saints can sometimes be shockingly nose-y. Let us not be prying when we should be praying.

Christians might have been falsely charged as meddlers in their efforts to convert. At the same time, we must be careful how far we look into other's lives in our efforts to teach them the truth. Our new awareness and concern for proper living does not allow us to interfere in the lives of non-Christians to try to force them to live according to the light we have. Consciousness of spiritual knowledge and high spiritual dignity expose Christians to the temptation of making ourselves judges of others and meddling into other people's lives. Another popular view is that Peter is warning Christians about getting involved in any sort of plot against the government. A major conspiracy against Nero was crushed in A.D. 65. Christians are not to be involved in such undertakings.

"But if a man suffer as a Christian, let him not be ashamed, but let him glorify God in this name" (1 Peter 4:16). "As a Christian" means for being a Christian. The word "Christian" occurs three times in the N.T. (Acts 11:26; Acts 26:28). James may refer to it (Jas. 2:7). The suffering has already been described in ways to indicate what Peter has in mind (2:20; 3:13, 14).

A Christian is a follower of Christ. Christ is a Person. Our faith is not centered on a system of doctrines, but on a Person - the Son of God. The word "Christian" has been polluted in modern usage, but in its true meaning it is the name in which we glorify God. Why should anyone want to wear any sectarian name such as Catholic, Protestant, Lutheran, Baptist, Pentecostal, etc.?

It is no disgrace to suffer as a Christian and for being a Christian. We must continue to confess Him

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Questions



Answers

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QUESTION: *"When Christ comes again and the dead are raised, will it be the natural, physical remains which will be raised or will it be transformed to a spiritual body?"*

— NB, Ok.

ANSWER:

That there will be a resurrection is undeniable by scriptural evidence. It is as certain as the resurrection of Jesus Christ (cf. 1 Cor. 15:7-10), and, in fact, our resurrection depends on the resurrection of Jesus — if Christ was not raised, we will not be raised. Furthermore, as the question itself indicates, that resurrection will be when Christ comes again (1 Thess. 4:14-16; 1 Cor. 15:24-25). But "with what body do they come?" (1 Cor. 15:35). The answer to that question is as difficult for us to understand as it was for the Corinthians.

I remember brother Rolly McDowell's father in Australia posing, what he considered to be, an unanswerable dilemma to explain why he did not believe in the resurrection of the dead. He worked in the emergency room at a hospital and saw many bodies come in dismembered. He said that some arms, legs and different parts merely thrown away as the dead bodies were taken to the morgue. "How then can they be raised if all the parts are not there?" If that is the basis for explaining away the resurrection, I believe that I can pose a greater dilemma than that. Many bodies have completely

disintegrated and through becoming soil have actually been recycled as elements through other forms of life. How can God raise what is no longer there? To believe in a CREATOR first makes believing in the power of God to raise easy. To deny the Creator makes denying the resurrection a reasonable conclusion.

A review of the entire fifteenth chapter of First Corinthians will help you in your private study, but space prohibits that in this setting. Specifically, there are two verses in chapter fifteen which answer the question directly. (v. 44a) — "It is sown a natural body; IT IS RAISED A SPIRITUAL BODY.." (v. 52) — "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." The bodies will not be raised as natural bodies then changed, but they will be raised in a changed state. When Paul says, "...we shall be changed (v. 52b)," it is in contrast to the bodies which are raised incorruptible. Those who will be changed at the last trump are those who are alive and remain until the coming of the Lord, not the ones who were dead and then raised.

I must confess that I do not understand exactly what a "spiritual body" is but it is a "body." Furthermore, I can understand "incorruptible" and "immortal" only by a contrast with what I know by experience in this world. I must accept the fact that what is natural and physical is not the same as what is spiritual and incorruptible and know that one day we will all understand.

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openly before the world. It is far better to be the persecuted for Christ's sake than to be the persecutor. Peter can remember when he denied Christ three times as if he were ashamed to acknowledge his discipleship. There is no reason to be ashamed if you suffer for Christ's sake. To wear the name is a great responsibility, and also a solemn one. How do we glorify God? A good example is the apostles (Acts 5:41). Our good behavior, especially when being persecuted, and our preaching the word, glorifies God. If a man is known as a Christian and does not live as one, he dishonors God.