

Radiant and Unfading

Take-Home • Session 5: The Verdict Reversed

What We Found

The story that began in chapter 2 reached its conclusion. The men who plotted against the righteous man returned for a second speech, and everything had changed: the man they condemned stood before them with great confidence. Now they spoke of the past, and in anguish: this is the man whom we once held in derision, we fools; why has he been numbered among the sons of God? The sonship they mocked was real. Then they described their own lives: passed like a shadow, like a ship whose wake closes behind it, like an arrow that leaves no trace; we had no sign of virtue to show. The author adds his own judgment: chaff before the wind (5:14). Their recognition is real, but it arrives too late, and the passage was written to move us now, while there is still time: now is the acceptable time (2 Corinthians 6:2).

Then two great affirmations. The righteous live for ever, and they receive a glorious crown from the hand of the Lord, the same hand that held their souls at 3:1; the hand that kept them now crowns them. And the Lord went to war in full armor: righteousness as a breastplate, impartial justice as a helmet, holiness as a shield, wrath for a sword. We found where that armor reappears: Ephesians 6:10-17, the whole armor of God. And the twist was better than the parallel: in Wisdom, God wears the armor; in Ephesians, God hands it to us. Grace means being dressed in God's own battle gear.

Voices of the Church

VOICES OF THE CHURCH

St. Polycarp of Smyrna • *as recorded in the Martyrdom of Polycarp, chs. 9-11 (c. AD 155)*

Threatened with burning unless he cursed Christ, the aged disciple of St. John answered that the fire his judges threatened burns for an hour, but they knew nothing of the fire of the coming judgment. Eighty-six years he had served Christ, who had never done him wrong. He knew which verdict was temporary.

VOICES OF THE CHURCH

St. Basil the Great • *Homily 6 on the rich fool, I Will Tear Down My Barns (Destruam horrea mea, PG 31; 4th century)*

The bread you are holding back belongs to the hungry, the coat in your closet to the naked. That is Basil. The application is ours: hoarded wealth vanishes like a shadow at the judgment, and only what was given away crosses over.

VOICES OF THE CHURCH

St. Thomas More • *At his trial and on the scaffold, 1535*

Convicted under the Treason Act of 1534 for maliciously denying the royal supremacy the Act of Supremacy had declared, he told the lords who sentenced him that he trusted they would yet meet merrily together in heaven (as William Roper records). On the scaffold he died, as the Paris Newsletter of 1535

reports, the king's good servant, and God's first (the familiar but God's first is from Robert Bolt's play, not from More). A man who accepted the earthly verdict rather than betray the eternal one, because he had read to the end of the book.

Live It This Week

- **Read ahead, slowly.** Read Wisdom 6 with a pencil. The author is about to turn and speak directly to the powerful; mark every verse that feels like it is speaking directly to you.
- **Suit up daily. Each morning this week, pray Ephesians 6:10-17 slowly, naming each piece of armor as you put it on. It takes ninety seconds and changes the day.**
- **Leave one trace of virtue.** Do one hidden act of love this week that will never be seen or repaid, a wake that does not close.
- **Choose your disclosure day.** Everything will be laid bare eventually; Confession is choosing mercy as the venue. If it has been a while, go this month.

Memory Verse

| *"But the righteous live for ever, and their reward is with the Lord."* (**Wisdom 5:15**)

Before next session: read Wisdom 6.

Catechism references: CCC 1039, CCC 1040.

Scripture We Opened

- Tonight's text: Wisdom 5:1-23
- The discovery: Ephesians 6:10-17 (the whole armor of God)
- Wisdom 2:12-20 (the first speech, reread against 5:3-5)
- Isaiah 52:13-15 and Isaiah 53 (the vindicated Servant before astonished kings)
- Romans 12:19 (vengeance belongs to God)
- 2 Corinthians 6:2 (now is the acceptable time)
- Psalm 1:4 (chaff which the wind drives away)
- 2 Timothy 4:8; James 1:12; Revelation 2:10 (the crown promised)
- Isaiah 59:16-17
- 1 Thessalonians 5:8 (armor language already, with different pieces)
- Luke 12:2-3 (nothing covered that will not be revealed)
- Acts 2:32-36; Philippians 2:9-11 (Christ condemned by men, vindicated by God)