

Life ^{is a} Mess

THERE WAS A TIME WHEN I COULD GAZE OUT MY LIBRARY WINDOW upon a tableau of sylvan tranquility, a beautiful, peaceful setting of birds and deer, all gathered round the quietude of a pond nestled in the timber.

Now as I gaze out my library window, instead of tranquil beauty I look upon a cluttered mess. Right now the exterior of our house and the immediate vicinity is a scene of chaos. Trailers and pickup trucks are parked on the front lawn. The house itself is trapped within a tangle of ladders and scaffolding, extension cords, cables and compressor hoses. Just outside the library window is a barricade of saw horses, stacked cartons of siding and trim, tarps, power cords and tools. The area is littered with oddly shaped siding scraps, snippets of



trim and metal flashing, and the odd assortment of personal detritus left behind by the workers. And because this is not mid-July, but late December, the entire conglomeration is untidily nestled in a swamp of dirty snow, ice, and soggy melt.

One day, however, the mess will be gone, and in its place will be a gleaming new edifice, bright and beautiful to behold. Already hints of that future beauty are being revealed every day, as the contractors finish a wall here and a window or door there, and then remove the scaffolding and ladders. There will come a day when all the tools and saw horses and bits and bobs of construction will be a thing of the past, and in their place will be a new and remarkably improved house surrounded by an unobstructed vista.



For we know that if the earthly tent which is our house is torn down, we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.

2 Corinthians 5:1

Life is a mess. In fact, one finds that the older one gets, the more untidy life is. The fresh spring of youth, happily ignorant of the rigors to come, is fearless, tight, muscular, free. But as the decades pile up, with more of them behind than in front of us, the taut beauty of youth is replaced, all too soon, by the sagging wrinkles of age. Ignorance is gradually replaced by wisdom gained through experience, but with it comes a gravitational withering of the edifice.

More than that, living itself is an inexact science fraught with missteps, ill-conceived notions, and bad decisions. At times it seems that

with every repair or improvement comes the breakdown of something else. We move through life to an inexorable rhythm: two steps forward, one step back.

For indeed in this *house* we groan, longing to be clothed with our dwelling from heaven...

2 Corinthians 5:2

But there will come a day—a bright and beautiful day—when all the scaffolding and trash of this temporal life will be gone, removed from sight, forgotten. And in place of our patched and much-repaired decrepitude will stand a gleaming *new* edifice—no longer a patchwork of disease, scars, regrets, trials and hard knocks, but something entirely new. No restoration of youthful but fallen flesh, no simple renovation of the old, or a magical return to what we long ago were—not *just* a removal of pain and sorrow, but a *change* into someone we never were.

Now I say this, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; nor does the perishable inherit the imperishable. Behold, I tell you a mystery; we will not all sleep, but we will all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet; for the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised imperishable, and we will be changed. For this perishable must put on the imperishable, and this mortal must put on immortality.

1 Corinthians 15:50-53