

**T**HE LORD COMES TO DEATH, and discourses with him, and bids him bring the souls out of Hades and death, and give them back to Him. Behold then, Death, troubled at these things, goes in to his ministers, and gathers together all his powers; and the prince of wickedness produces the bond-deeds, and says, “See, these obeyed my words; see how men worshipped us.”

But God, Who is a just judge, displays His justice here also, and says to him, “Adam [*that is, Adam and all his descendants*] obeyed thee, and thou didst take possession of all the hearts of him. Humanity obeyed thee. What is My body doing here? This is without sin. That body of the first Adam was under obligation to thee, and thou hast a right to keep the bond-deeds of it; but to Me all bear witness that I never sinned. I owe thee nothing, and all bear witness that I am the Son of God. . . . Therefore I purchase the body that was sold to thee through the first Adam; I cancel thy bonds. I paid the debts of Adam, when I was crucified and descended into Hades; and I command thee, O Hades and darkness and Death, bring out the imprisoned souls of Adam.” Thus the evil powers, stricken with terror, give back the imprisoned Adam.

But when you hear that at that time the Lord delivered the souls from hell and darkness, and went down to hell, and did a glorious work, do not imagine that these things are so very far from your own soul. Man is capable of admitting and receiving the evil one. Death keeps fast hold of the souls of Adam, and the thoughts of the soul lie imprisoned in the darkness. When you hear of sepulchres, do not think only of visible ones; your own heart is a sepulchre and a tomb. When the prince of wickedness and his angels burrow there, and make paths and thoroughfares there, on which the powers of Satan walk into your mind and thoughts, are you not a hell, a tomb, a sepulchre, a dead man towards God? There it was that Satan coined reprobate silver. In this soul he sowed seeds of bitterness. It is leavened with old leaven; a fountain of mire springs there. Well, then, the Lord comes into souls that seek after Him, into the deep of the heart-hell, and there lays His command upon death, saying, “Bring out the imprisoned souls that are seeking after Me, which thou detainest by force.” So He breaks through the heavy stones that lie on the soul, opens the sepulchres, raises up the man that is dead indeed, brings out of the dark jail the imprisoned soul. . . . In His own person He enters into two quarters, into the depth of Hades, and into the deep gulf of the heart, where the soul with its thoughts is held fast by death, and brings up out of the darksome hole the Adam that lay dead.

St Macarius the Great, *Fifty Spiritual Homilies*,  
tr. Mason, Homily xi, pp. 84–6

PEARLS FROM THE HOLY FATHERS

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