

Functions of the Body



What Is Man? (Part 8)
by Derek Prince

In previous talks, we looked at the nature of man as originally created by God. We saw that man is a triune being, created in the likeness of a triune God and that the three elements of man's personality are spirit and soul and body. We looked at the changes produced in man in every area of his being by his rebellion against God. His spirit died; His soul became infected with rebellion; and his body became subject to corruption, decay, and death.

And now, we've been looking at God's program to restore man to the miracle of regeneration. We're looking in detail at how regenerated man is intended to function, how each element of his total personality should function, and how they should relate to each other.

In my two previous talks I've outlined the functions of the spirit and the soul. Let me briefly recapitulate the three functions of the spirit are all God related. They are worship, fellowship, and revelation.

The three functions of the soul are all self-centered. They are will, intellect, and emotions.

Today I'm going to speak about God's program for the third element of man: the body.

Here we come up against a fact of church history and theology that sometimes there's been an unscriptural tendency amongst Christians to underestimate the importance, the beauty, the significance, and the glory of God's program for the body of the believer. There's been a tendency to kind of write the body off as something evil and unworthy, that we almost need to be ashamed of, and to try and live as though, practically speaking, we didn't have bodies. I think possibly this is in some measure associated with a philosophy or the outlook that's called asceticism, though I don't believe all ascetics necessarily had that view. But I want to say that it's not the way the Scripture speaks about our body.

I want to turn first to Psalm 139, verses 13 through 16 where David marvels at the nature of his own body and praises God for it. This is what he says:

> "For you created my inmost being; [He's speaking, of course, to the Lord.] you knit me together in my mother's womb. I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made; [Two beautiful words—fearful and wonderful. The marvel of God's creation in the human body is awesome; it's awe-inspiring. It's also wonderful.] Your works are wonderful, I know that full well. [And where David says, 'They're your works,' he's speaking specifically about his physical body.] My frame [or my physical body] was not hidden from you when I was made in the secret place. [It blesses me to think that God had a secret place that he made our frame, that it was kind of a secret that He was keeping hidden until He could reveal it. Then David goes on:] When I was woven together in the depths of the earth, your eyes saw my unformed body. [That's a staggering thought. We read at creation that God formed man of the dust, or the clay, so his physical body comes from the earth. But I understand that David's words here to mean that God carefully prepared, in the earth, the various constituent elements that were going to form man's body. Let me read those words again:] When I was woven together in the depth of the earth, your eyes saw my unformed body. [Then he goes on:] All the days ordained for me were written in your book before one of them came to be." (NIV)

So God has a plan that originates in eternity for the human body. He carefully prepared the constituent elements that were to form the human body and He has a program for every day of our life. That's a staggering thought, isn't it? It should give us a very different concept of what our bodies mean to God.

Now, God designed man's body for one supreme purpose and if we don't see this, we miss it all. The body of the regenerated believer is designed to be God's temple, God's dwelling place—the place where He lives. Paul states this so clearly in 1 Corinthians 6:19 and 20:

> "Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God? You are not your own; you were bought at a price. Therefore honor God with your body." (NIV)

It's important to understand that when Jesus bought us with His precious blood shed on the cross, He didn't buy part of us; He bought us all—spirit, soul, and body. He redeemed total humanity. He gave Himself totally that He might redeem us totally. The body is included in redemption and it is redeemed for a specific purpose, that it may be the special dwelling place, the temple of God, through the Holy Spirit. God, Almighty God, the only true God indwells each sanctified believer in His body through the Holy Spirit. You see, there's another side to this. When Stephen spoke to the Jewish council in Acts, chapter 7, verse 48, He said this:

> "The Most High does not dwell in houses made by human hands." (NASB)

God does not live in any physical temple. He does not live in a synagogue, a church, a chapel, or any such place. He may visit them when His people are there, but His dwelling place is the body of the redeemed believer. And there's a certain area in the body which God has set apart for the dwelling place of His spirit. It's called in Scripture, the innermost part. Let me just give you two passages which speak about this innermost part as the part of the body which God particularly occupies. Proverbs 20, verse 27:

> "The spirit of man is the lamp of the Lord, searching all the innermost parts of his being." (NASB)

So the spirit dwells in the innermost parts of man's being. The Hebrew says, "the innermost chambers." But in John, chapter 7, verses 38 and 39, Jesus says something even more specific. He says:

> "He who believes in Me, as the Scripture said, 'From his innermost being shall flow rivers of living water.' But this He spoke of the Spirit, whom those who believed in Him were to receive." (NASB)

So He's talking about the place where the Holy Spirit will dwell in the believer. The translation that I read says, "From His innermost being." The King James translation is much closer to the original. It says, "From His belly." Now I could understand that people think, "Well, the belly as somewhat vulgar and unrefined and we shouldn't talk about it in terms of sacred things." But the word used in Greek means a hollow or a concave place. Interestingly enough, the same root word is used in the latter language as the word for heaven, and heaven, as we know, is a concave place. And heaven is God's dwelling place in the physical universe. So, heaven is God's dwelling place out there but there's a concave place somewhere in the innermost part of man, somewhere that we could perhaps call the belly which is where the Spirit of God dwells. And those of us who've experienced the power of the Spirit, we know that there are certain times when the moving

of the Spirit begins from that innermost part of our being.

Now, let's go on with God's purpose for the body. Our physical members are to become slaves or instruments of righteousness. First the Holy Spirit takes up His dwelling place, then our bodies become His instruments. Romans 6:19:

> "I am speaking in human terms because of the weakness of your flesh. For just as you presented your members as slaves to impurity and to lawlessness, resulting in further lawlessness, so now present your members [your physical members] as slaves to righteousness, resulting in sanctification [or holiness]." (NASB)

So God's program for our physical members is that we present them to Him as slaves, absolutely to do His will. The King James says, "As instruments," and through this, they become sanctified. When presented to God, without reservation, our bodies become sanctified and worthy temples of the Holy Spirit.

I just want to present to you one more vitally important fact about the body of the regenerated believer as God's temple. Let me put it this way, simply and briefly. God accepts responsibility for the maintenance of His appointed temple. When our body is offered to God without reservation, as a dwelling place for His Holy Spirit, when our members are yielded to Him without reservation as slaves or instruments to do His will, then God says, "All right, since the body is mine, I'll accept responsibility for its maintenance and its well-being, both in this life and in the next."

Listen to what Paul says in Romans 8:11:

> "And if the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead is living in you, [you'll notice, that's the basis, that the Holy Spirit is living in us, in our physical bodies] he who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through his Spirit, who lives in you." (NIV)

Notice, it's our mortal bodies, not the body we'll have after resurrection, but even in this life. Because our bodies have become the temples of the Holy Spirit, the Holy Spirit is dwelling in us. The same power is now living in our bodies that raised the dead body of Jesus from the tomb and God says that power will give life; it will impart vitality, vigor, strength, wholeness to your physical bodies.

And then, of course, there's the final transformation of our bodies for which we're waiting until the return of the Lord. Just let me read that briefly in Philippians 3:20 and 21:

> "But our citizenship is in heaven. And we eagerly await a Savior from there, the Lord Jesus Christ, who, by the power that enables him to bring everything under his control, will transform our lowly bodies so that they will be like his glorious body." (NIV)

That's the culmination of God's program for the body of the redeemed believer. At present, we have a lowly body, but when Jesus comes, if we are truly His, He'll transform that lowly body into a glorious body that's like His own glorious body.

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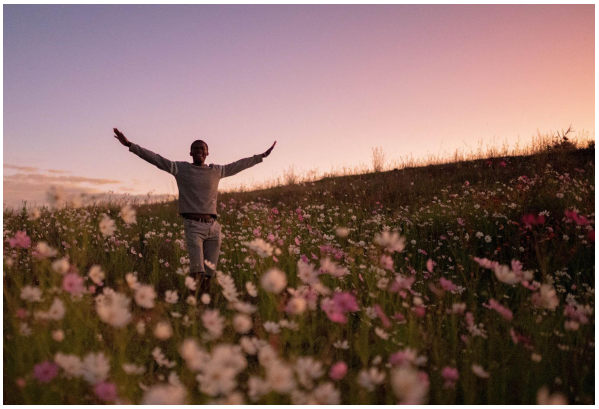
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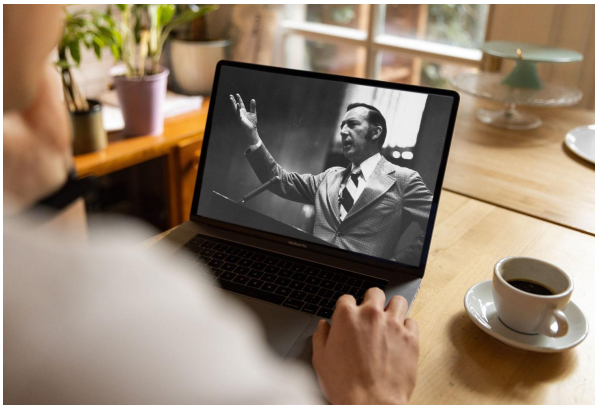
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