

How Do You View Your Body?



Sermon
By Derek Prince

Our proclamation today is taken from 1 Thessalonians 5:23–24. When we make a proclamation we make it personal. So when the Scripture says "you" we say "we," when it says "your" we say "our." This particular proclamation is right in line with what I will be talking about in just a few moments.

> "Now may the God of peace Himself sanctify us completely; and may our whole spirit, soul, and body be preserved blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. He who calls us is faithful, who also will do it."

Can you say Amen to that?

Now I'd just like to put a question into your mind. When Paul says, ". . . may our whole spirit, soul, and body be preserved blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ." What is involved in our body being preserved blameless? Have you ever given any thought to that question? I think some of the answers will come in what I'm going to speak about.

My theme this morning is How Do You View Your Body? Many of you probably hardly have ever given any consideration to that question. And yet you live in a body. There is one thing sure about all of us here, each of us has a body. I want to say right at the beginning, that my words are addressed to people who have potentially healthy bodies. I say potentially because a lot of you don't have healthy bodies, but you could have. But there are people here who could not have healthy bodies—people who are handicapped. My words are not addressed to them, but I want to say we appreciate you. You are not inferior. You are not secondclass. In fact, some of the sweetest spirits I've ever encountered lived in very limited handicapped bodies. So please don't take anything that I say as any kind of condemnation. I'm addressing people who could be healthy.

When we talk about viewing our body, there are probably two extremes. One is people make their body an idol. They worship it. They cater to its every need. They spend half their time thinking about what to do for their body. How to eat, or how to clothe themselves, or how to make themselves look smart, or pretty, or important. Then there

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are the other group of people at the opposite end who view their body as a kind of weight that they are going to have to drag around until they die. Many of those people are dragging that weight around because originally it was their idol. If you make anything an idol, God will curse it because God curses idols. So between those two extremes most of us here today are found.

I want to turn to a Scripture which is very relevant in Psalm 139:13–14. These are the words of David. He had a revelation about his physical body.

> "For You [God] have formed my inward parts; You have covered me in my mother's womb. I will praise You, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made; Marvelous are Your works, And that my soul knows very well."

David had a revelation about his physical body. He said, "I am fearfully and wonderfully made." He was in awe of what he had in his body. He said, "I am fearfully made. I am wonderfully made." And then he said something that most of us probably could not say, "My soul knows that very well." Does your soul know just how wonderful is the body that you live in? Do you have a revelation? David saw that his body was a creative miracle of God, and he sensed in a sense, that he was personally responsible for that body. You know having a body is a tremendous responsibility. Did you realize that?

Now, I am no scientist. Far from it. I used to be a philosopher. Philosophers and scientists hardly blend. There is information available and I want to give you some simple facts about your body. I had a very elaborate education. I was 16 years in continuous education, always in boarding institutions. You could say the last seven years of my education are what would be called higher education. And looking back I realize something amazing. I never had one lesson about my body in all those years. Somehow it was just taken for granted well your body's there and it goes on functioning and you know, but let's deal with the important things, philosophical questions. And I suppose today included in education is a certain amount of teaching about the body.

Anyhow I'm going to share with you some simple scientific facts which could be available to anybody who would do just the minimum of research or who is in the happy position that I am to have a secretary who does it for me. So here are the facts. These facts could be multiplied dozens of times.

1. Millions of light sensitive nerve cells in the back of each eye relay the information to your brain through a bundle of nerve fibers that form the optic nerve. Your brain analyzes this information and as a result you see. The whole process takes a fraction of a second.

2. The lens focuses light onto the retina, the back wall of your eye. To focus the lens changes shape. In a single day, your lens may change shape 100,000 times.

Did you know that was going on inside you?. You see, you couldn't say like David, "I know I'm fearfully and wonderfully made."

3. Compared to other animals, and I really don't believe you're an animal but this is the way it was presented, you have a big brain for your body. The gray part of your brain is folded to fit inside your skull. Flattened out it would cover an ironing board. Do you know that?

4. Now here is a most stupendous statement. You have 60,000 miles of blood vessels, enough to stretch almost two and a half times around the earth. Did you know that? 60,000 miles of blood vessels inside your body.

5. You have about 5 million hairs on your body, but only about 100,000 grow out of your head. And you remember Jesus said, "Even the hairs of our head are numbered." So whatever the number may be, God knows exactly how many hairs there are on each head in this place this morning.

6. Most of the cells that make up your organs are so small that over 200 of them could fit onto a period at the end of this sentence. I believe we have almost one trillion cells inside our bodies.

7. The last of these interesting facts, about 50 miles of nerves snake through your body. Like a network of telephone wires, they relay messages between your brain, spinal cord, and body. Again, did you know you had about 50 miles of wires inside you?

So when David said, "I am fearfully and wonderfully made," he was simply stating an objective scientific fact.

Now, I want to speak about the place of the body in redemption, and it has a much more important place than many spiritual people are aware. In Romans chapter 12 Paul speaks in the light of all preceding 11 chapters of Romans. He starts with a therefore. "I beseech you therefore brethren . . ." And some of you who are familiar with me will have heard me say, when you find a therefore in the Bible, you want to find our what it's therefore. And this therefore is there because of the previous 11 chapters. In the most

comprehensive and most wonderfully logical presentation, Paul has unfolded the whole redemptive purpose of God through faith in Jesus Christ. The law, redemptions from the law, oh the part of the Holy Spirit; all this marvelous plan of God has been unfolded. And then Paul says, "Therefore . . ." In other words, in the light of all that I've shared with you, how should you respond? What should be your response? And he tells us very plainly.

> "I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service."

So the first response that God requires from us when we hear and respond to the gospel is we present our body. I thought you could say, "Well, God, I thought my body wasn't that important. I know it's my spirit and my soul that really matter. Why are you worried about my body?" God is so wise. He says, "You give me the vessel and I'll have the contents too. Give me your body and your soul and spirit are inside it." But if you leave out the body you've made an incomplete surrender to Me." Then He says in the next verse:

> "And do not be conformed to this age, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove [that you may find out in experience] what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God."

So what you do with your body determines how much you'll appropriate of God's will. If you don't present your body, you're not in a situation to find out God's will for your life. Isn't that amazing? Some of you are struggling saying, "Well, I really don't know what God has planned for me. I don't understand." Let me tell you, you never will understand until you meet God's condition—present your body. When you present your body, God renews you in your mind and with that renewed mind then you begin to find out the will of God for your life. Many of you here, frankly, don't know God's will for your life, and you never will until you meet the condition. "Present your body."

You know, my background is in Greek philosophy. I studied Greek from the age ten onwards. I've read every word of the philosopher Plato in his own original language. I don't say that to boast, but I came to the Bible with a Greek mind set. I had to adjust, because the Bible is a Hebrew mind set. The Greeks kind of thought the body wasn't very important, like many oriental philosophies. The Hebrews think the body is very important. The Jews are such down-to-earth people. You can be super-spiritual and float about like a disembodied person, but the Jew wants to know what about your body. And God wants to know what about your body.

When Paul says, "Present your body a living sacrifice," he's referring to the sacrifices of the Old Testament. Under the Old Testament a Hebrew brought his sacrifice, a lamb or a goat or whatever it might be, placed it on the altar of God and it was killed. After that, that lamb or goat did not belong to that man. It belonged to God. When you place your body on God's altar, from then onwards your body does not belong to you. It belongs to God. But there's one difference. Under the old covenant they killed the body that they placed on the altar. Paul says, "Place your body a living sacrifice." Don't kill it. Have you ever done that? Have you ever realized that God requires that? And once you have given God your body, you don't own it. You are a steward and you will have to answer to God for the way you've treated your body. Because it's God's property, not yours.

There's a Scripture in 2 Corinthians 5:10 which is very, very relevant.

> "For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ [I believe the word 'appear' means be made manifest. In other words when we come before the judgment seat of Christ, and we all, we Christians, not unbelievers, this is not a judgment for unbelievers] we all must be made manifest before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive the things done in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad."

And there are only two categories—good or bad. Whatever is not good, is bad. And everyone of us here who is a believer and continues in the faith to the end of our life, will one day have to be made manifest before the judgment seat of Christ, answering for the things we've done in our body.

I find sometimes people are embarrassed to confess their sins in public. But God says, "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins." There is no promise in the Bible that God will forgive sins we are not willing to confess. So I say to people sometimes it might be

embarrassing to stand up before four or five hundred people and confess your sin, but think how much more embarrassing it will be in eternity, when you are made manifest before the judgment seat of Christ, and the whole universe will understand your sins. I'd rather get it over now. I make a practice of trying to confess my sins regularly. Of course, you may not have any to confess. Well, that's wonderful, but improbable.

What else does the Bible teach us, the New Testament primarily, about our body? Well, let's turn to 1 Corinthians 6:19–20:

> "Do you not know [and I have to pause here and say Paul says that several times—'Do you not know . . .' My observation is whenever he says it most Christians today don't know what he says, 'Do you not know?'] Do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and you are not your own? [Do you see that?] For you were bought at a price; therefore glorify God in your body . . ."

And what does it say about your body? It's a temple of the Holy Spirit.

Now how do we treat a temple? Do we treat it casually? Are we careless? Are we sloppy? Do we make a lot of garbage and mess, and not maintain it's repair? No, the temple is the building that's most cared for in any community, that is a temple community. So, Paul is saying, "Treat your body like a temple, a temple of the Holy Spirit." Treat it reverently. Treat it with respect. Because it is God's temple.

Then in Philippians 3:18–19. This is how not to treat your body. Would you notice this?

> "For many walk [and it's obvious that they're Christians because Paul speaks about them weeping] of whom I have told you often, and now tell you even weeping, that they are the enemies of the cross of Christ: [They're not the enemies of Christ. What they are the enemies of is the cross. It's the cross they don't want. They want Christ, but without the cross. Now listen what it says about them. This is a fearful statement.] whose end is destruction, whose god is their belly, and whose glory is in their shame—who set their mind on earthly things."

Does that describe you? Frankly does that describe you? It describes multitudes of professing Christians today. They set their mind on earthly things, and their god is their belly. Then a little further on in Philippians Paul speaks about the destiny of the believer's body. In verses 20 and 21 of Philippians 3:

> "For our citizenship is in heaven, from which we also eagerly wait for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, [Jesus is coming back for those who are eagerly waiting for Him. Are you in that category? I hope so.] Jesus Christ will transform our lowly body that it may be conformed to His glorious body, according to the working by which He is able even to subdue all things to Himself."

So when Jesus comes there's going to be a great dramatic and instantaneous change. In a moment, in a twinkling of an eye, this body that I have or you have, is going to be supernaturally transformed into a glorious body.

Now, the English translation doesn't exactly express it, but it's the body of our humiliation which will be transformed into the body of His glory. So the body we live in today is a body of humiliation. Why are we humiliated? Because of our sin. The whole Adamic race is humiliated by the body that it lives in. How are we humiliated? Well, our body does things and makes demands which are humiliating. You may eat the finest food and drink the finest drink, but sooner or later you are going to have to empty your belly and your bladder. And how many people can do that with dignity? It brings you right down to the fact you're living in a body of humiliation. Or you may wear the most elegant clothing, expensive, but you run a little or you get a little hot and what happens? You perspire. In other words you sweat. And you're reminded you're living in a body of humiliation. It's a continual reminder. We're sinful creatures. We're paying the penalty for Adam's sin and for our sins. But thank God that's not the end. We're going to get a glorious body. A body of glory like the body of Jesus. Can you conceive of that? Your body has a wonderful destiny.

Then I'd like to go back in Philippians 3 to verses 10 and 11, which is just part of a sentence, but it describes Paul's motivation for living.

> "...that I may know Him [Jesus] and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death, if, by any means, I may attain to the resurrection from the dead."

Notice that, "If by any means." Paul did not take it for granted. Even Paul the great apostle. He said, "My aim is to attain the resurrection." The "out-resurrection" the Greek means. The first resurrection, only the believers, the righteous. Paul did not take it for granted. He said, "I seek to live in such a way that I may partake of that first resurrection." If Paul didn't take it for granted, neither can you or I. If you're taking it for granted, you're taking a big risk.

Then I'll turn to 1 Corinthians 9:27. Again this is Paul's own statement.

> "But I discipline my body and bring it into subjection, lest, when I have preached to others, I myself should become disqualified."

So with all his revelations and his wonderful gifts and his knowledge, Paul said, "I treat my body with severity." Actually that Greek word originally means to give somebody a black eye. So I give my body a black eye. I think some of the other translations say, "I beat my body. I bring it into subjection, lest by any means after I have preached to others, I myself should be disqualified." Preachers, that applies to us. I'll tell you a little later how God made that so clear to me. We can preach to others and still be disqualified ourselves, if we do not control our bodies.

Now, how should we treat our bodies? Of course there are a lot of different factors in treating our bodies, but one of the most essential is what we should eat and drink. Of course that's so simple and basic that we don't discuss it in church. But the fact of the matter is, people that go to church eat and drink, and God has got some advice to all of us. Isaiah 55—this is a beautiful Scripture—verse 2. This is advice from God on how to eat and drink.

> "'Why do you spend money for what is not bread, And your wages for what does not satisfy? [Why do you go out for all that fast food which doesn't do you any good at all, and waste a lot of money on things that don't nourish you and don't make you healthy? It's very up to date. Then God says,] Listen diligently to Me, and eat what is good.' [How simple. Eat things that are good for you, that nourish you, that strengthen you, that don't contribute to cancer, which many things we eat do today.] And let your soul delight itself in abundance."

God says, "Care for your soul by the way you eat. Eat what is good." How stupid to eat what is not good. And how unfortunate if we don't even know what is not good. 1 Corinthians 10:31. You see a lot of this is from 1 Corinthians, very simple instruction.

> "Therefore, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do it to the glory of God."

So, whether we're eating or drinking, we're going to do it to the glory of God. Do you think about that when you sit down to a meal table? Let me ask you a question to which I will not offer an answer. Is it possible to overeat to the glory of God? I leave you to think that one out.

You say, "Brother Prince, people don't talk about this kind of thing in church." I know they don't, but they should. We're very illogical. When a new convert comes if he's smoking, we say you've got to give it up. If he's an alcoholic, you've got to give it up. If he's on drugs, you've got to give it up. All those things can be very unpleasant and traumatic experiences. Giving up drugs, giving up alcohol, giving up smoking. We don't hold back and say, "Well, that's too unpleasant. We won't go into that unpleasant subject. That's asking too much." Why do we never talk to new converts about the way that they eat?

In Hosea 4:6 God says through the prophet:

> "My people are being destroyed for lack of knowledge..."

That is absolutely the truth today in America. God's people are being destroyed for lack of knowledge. I want you to know this is not just an ordinary church service. This is a battlefield here this morning. We are fighting a battle for the

lives of men and women, and some of them are right here this morning. If you don't give to heed to what the Bible and common sense have to say, you'll regret it. It's your body that's at stake; it's your well-being that's at stake.

One of my good secretaries has provided me with a little sampling of significant, scientific statements about eating and drinking and how to treat our body. These are taken from such places as the United States Department of Health and Human Life, the United States Department of Agriculture, the American Cancer Society. They're very reputable distinguished people. They are not freaks. They are not far out. They may be wrong, but at least they're intelligently wrong. So here I'm coming up with a series of statements.

Scientists have estimated that 40 to 60 percent of all cancers are linked to our dietary choices. The U.S. Government's National Cancer Institute now estimates that 35 percent of cancer deaths are linked to diet. What that means is that we have the potential in our daily food choices to make a major impact on the cancer risk we face each day. [Does that register with you?] According to consumer reports food has been implicated in six out of ten leading causes of death—heart disease, cancer, stroke, diabetes, arteriosclerosis which is hardening of the arteries, chronic liver disease, as well as other non-fat related diseases such as osteoporosis and diverticulosis. All these are selections. Today, 40 percent of Americans are overweight, 25 percent of American adults are critically obese. You know what I've observed, there's no difference between people in the church and people out of the church. The same statistics apply. 25 percent of U.S. children are 20 percent or more above ideal weight. Shame on you parents! You are sacrificing the well-being of your children through ignorance or laziness, because those children run a far greater risk of ill health and other problems later in life.

I believe one of the most serious responsibilities of a mother is to train her children in right eating habits. I've dealt with so many men later in life who couldn't recover from the impact of the bad habits that their mother had inculcated in them as children. There's a strange silence!

Now let's go on to soft drinks. By 1900 Americans drank 12 bottles or glasses of soft drinks a year. By 1980 they rose to 359 bottles or soft glasses of soft drinks for every man, woman and child in the nation. And since then, 1980, undoubtedly it has gone higher.

In 1821, the average American, whoever that may be, consumed ten pounds of sugar per year. In the 1970s it was over 100 pounds per year, which is 4.4 ounces a day. By 1996 it had risen to 142 pounds per year, which is almost seven ounces a day. You say, "Well, I don't take that much sugar." Well, let me tell you. In a can or a bottle of Coke there are nine teaspoonfuls of sugar. Most of the processed and packaged food that you take is saturated with sucrose, and you don't know, and you'll go on not knowing unless the Lord wakes you up.

During a corresponding period from 1960 to 1980, that's a very short period, water consumption dropped from 70 gallons a year to 42 gallons a person. You say, Does that matter? Because I get plenty of fluid. It does matter, because water will do things for you that no other fluid will do. All other fluids put some kind of strain on your kidneys. Water does them good.

Now, listen. This is the most astonishing statement. We're all excited about 2000 A.D. aren't we, and getting the gospel to everybody. But there are other facts about 2000 A.D. that we don't speak about. By 2000 A.D. two out of five people in America will develop cancer. Two out of five. These are all sober statements from medical sources. Now if, in a nation, two out of five people had cholera we'd called it a cholera epidemic, wouldn't we? You know what we have? A cancer epidemic. And who's doing anything about it? Who cares? Who knows? How much do we ever hear in church about the cancer epidemic? If there were a cholera epidemic in Fort Lauderdale, believe me, all the churches would be praying. But we haven't opened our eyes. We've been blinded by Satan to the real situation.

There's a few recommendations on how to prevent cancer. Basically they all deal with what we eat or drink. There are seven of them. Avoid obesity, number one. Number two, reduce fat intake. Number three, eat more high fiber foods. If you don't know what they are, find out. Number four, eat more vitamin A and C enriched foods. Number five, eat more cruciferous vegetables. Number six, moderate salt cured smoked and nitrate cured foods. Number seven, moderate consumption of alcohol.

Basically, it's not a complete presentation, because exercise is not dealt with, but basically everything concerns what we eat or drink. You can eat yourself or drink yourself to death with cancer. Heart attack causes, mainly through diet, heredity, and habits. Our heredity we can't change. Our diet and our habits we can change. Most of us need to change our habits of exercise.

Ruth and I were away for eleven months until we returned recently. When we came back to our condo here in Fort Lauderdale, our garbage disposal didn't work properly. So we have a contract with a maintenance firm and he came

and fixed it. He said, “The problem is, you haven’t been using it.” And that’s the problem with a lot of our muscles. They were made to be used, not to be sat on. Listen, you’re laughing, but isn’t what I’m saying true?

Then about stroke prevention. Weight control number one. Exercise number two. Amount and type of fats ingested and potassium, calcium and magnesium intake. High fiber foods. How many of you know what high fiber foods are? A few. It’s important to find out.

Now I have a rather penetrating analysis by an American Internal Medicine specialist. This takes a few moments to read. “One of the most glaring errors in health care in this country and perhaps the world, is the lack of attention to the concept of prevention. It seems that part of human nature is to deny the possibility of illness until it occurs. Once it occurs we will do and pay just about anything to regain what we lost. If our families, schools and media would focus on a few of these areas, we would reduce pain and suffering and reduce billions of dollars spent after the fact on health care.”

Now it says, our families, schools and media. Why leave out our churches? Wouldn’t it be something for our churches to deal with? Do we care about the total person that’s in our church, or do we just care about their souls? Somebody said sarcastically about the Christian church, “They don’t care about people’s bodies. They just deal with souls prepackaged for eternity.” I think it’s a reproach on the church that we don’t face this issue. Incidentally, you know the largest industry in the United States today? It’s not manufacturing. It’s health. It’s the largest industry in the nation today. It really isn’t a health industry. It’s the ill-health industry. Because health doesn’t cost much. Ill-health costs a lot.

Then this Internal medical specialist goes on and he’s speaking as an American to Americans. “First of all we are a country of excess. The average American is obese and under-exercised. We orient ourselves around the TV and with the watching of TV comes the eating.” That really, I’m afraid, is true of most professing church members. We don’t orient ourselves around the Bible and prayer. The really important times of the day are when we watch television.

A recent article in Prevention Magazine noted that one easy way to reduce weight is to reduce television time to one hour a day. The people of this country, in general, eat to the point of being stuffed rather than content. We also eat our biggest meal at dinner when our activity and caloric needs are the least. So here’s a suggestion. Dietary needs for Americans.

Eat a variety of foods.

Maintain healthy weight.

Choose a diet low in fat, saturated fat, and cholesterol.

Choose a diet with plenty of vegetables, fruits and grain products.

Use sugars only in moderation.

Use salt and sodium only in moderation.

If you drink alcoholic beverages, do so in moderation.

That comes from the U.S. Department of Agriculture and the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

Now, we’re going to use our overhead if somebody’s ready. This is a little diagram called a food pyramid. I’ve been presented with a thing called a laser pointer. I hope I know what to do with it. You see. The bottom, biggest section is bread, cereals, rice and pasta. And we should have about six to eleven servings of those. Then we go up to a second section which is divided in two. On the left is the vegetable group, three to four servings a day. On the right the fruit group. So the two main items of diet should be bread, pasta, cereals, rice. The next two should be vegetables and fruit. Then we go up to the higher level and on the left we have milk, yogurt and cheese. On the right we have meat, poultry, fish and so on. Then right at the top we have sweets and fats. A very minimal part.

Let me ask you, do some of you have the pyramid the wrong way up? I mean this is your life that’s at stake. I hope I can get you serious. I don’t mind your laughing. Not the least bit. But your life can well be at stake. There are people here this day who will either live or die in the next few years according to how you respond to what I am telling you today. I hope you love me. I love you, that’s why I’m telling you this.

I think we can dispense with that now. Thank you very much. That was very nice of you. I’ve never used one of those before but it was exciting.

Now, I want to speak about responsibilities of parents. I’ve already said the mother has a tremendous responsibility to train her family in good eating habits. Then, you need to encourage exercise. The one way to do that is set an example. Then I want to ask you this question? Do you treat your car or your house better than your body? Are you actually better informed about the care of your car or your

house than you are about your body? Do you devote more time and thought to the care of your car or your house than your body?

See, if you car wears out, which it will do sometime, another one is available. Even if your house burns down, another one is available. Well, when your body wears out, there's no replacement. That's it. It's the end.

Then I want to say dieting is not a remedy. Just settle that in your mind. You can go on 15 different diets and in the end you'll be worse off than you were before. There's only one suitable remedy. That is change your life style. Did you hear that? Change your life style.

Then I want to ask you a question, just to think about it. The people who sell you your food, are they more interested in your health or your money? They're not primarily concerned in doing you good. They're primarily concerned with getting dollars from you. Some of them are very ethical and wonderful people, but some are very unscrupulous. They'll do anything they can to make you spend more money on food. And a large part of the advertising industry is devoted to that.

Incidentally, that pyramid that I put up was brought out by the U.S. Department of Agriculture and Health and Human Life, and for three months it was held up. It wasn't published. You know why? Because the meat industry lobbied against it intensively. Were they concerned with your health or were they concerned with your money? Eventually the government decided no matter what they say we've got to do it. We owe it to the people to publish this truth.

Now, I want to give a little word of personal testimony, because I am speaking from experience, not from theory. In 1986 Ruth and I were on holiday in a hotel in Austria and the food was just wonderful, delicious! One day we were sitting in front of a big piece of deep fried fish with French fries somewhere on the side, and we'd been drinking strong coffee, not without cream, and we usually ended with an ice cream—not always Ruth, but myself. And as we looked at that fish on that plate and all the fat we said to ourselves, "This really is not good for us." And we decided to pray a very simple prayer included in our grace. Every day we prayed this prayer, "Help us to eat wisely." We had no idea of the ramifications of that prayer. It has changed our life style. Not instantly, but step by step by step.

Now in 1991 I was theoretically having a sabbatical with Ruth in Hawaii, and it turned out to be anything but a sabbatical. I became critically ill with a heart condition which is called bacterial endocarditis, which means an infection causing inflammation of the lining of the heart. It is normally fatal. Until antibiotics were discovered there was no remedy. God was gracious to me. I think I was 17 days in hospital, six weeks on intravenous antibiotics, and here I am alive. I thank God for the doctors. I thank God for all medical personnel that took care of me.

But, right at the beginning of that, I think the day before I went into hospital, I don't remember, I was awake about 2 A.M. and I began to talk to the Lord. I said, "Lord, I've preached healing. I believe in healing. I've been healed myself. I've seen many people healed. Why am I not being healed?" I can't describe all that followed, but it was like I had a personal interview with Jesus. I didn't see Him. I think in a way it was a little bit like being before the Judgment Seat of Christ. And very gently and kindly without ever being condemnatory, He gave me a view of my previous way of living up to that time. I had a series of little scenes. You know where most of them were located? In restaurants. Somebody said if you want to know the best restaurant in town ask a preacher. And that is a pretty perceptive remark. Jesus didn't condemn me, He just showed me this is the way you've been living.

Now I was a preacher. A moderately successful preacher. Accepted by my fellow preachers, accepted by the body of Christ. Just one person didn't accept me. Jesus. I think about Paul. He said, "Lest I become disqualified." I could have easily died then. I wouldn't have been a lost soul as far as I understand. But I would have been a disqualified preacher. My dear preacher friends, you'd better consider that seriously. If Paul could be disqualified you mean you can't be? He said he could be disqualified because he hadn't brought his body under control.

You say, "Well, Brother Prince, what were you doing wrong?" Really basically, I was not obeying the Bible. It was not what I was doing wrong, it was what I was not doing. Let me give you just one Scripture in Colossians 3:2.

> "Set your mind on things above, not on things on the earth."

Now I was preaching. I was active in ministry, but I'll have to say to a large extent my mind was set on things below. My house, my food, all sorts of material issues. In a way, I had lost the vision of eternity. I just say that as a matter of personal experience. Jesus convicted me of it. As a result I made a U-turn. Looking back I was like somebody driving a car who was arrested a few feet from a precipice. Being arrested, I made a U-turn, turned round and started driving the opposite way. That's one of the best pictures of

repentance I know. It's making a U-turn. You've been going one way, you turn around and go the opposite way.

There's another Scripture that I'd like to turn to. 1 Corinthians 15:19. You see, I've been Pentecostal longer than most of you have been born. I never knew what it was to be anything but Pentecostal, then I became Charismatic. You know that makes you more respectable, but it doesn't change much else. And I don't think I'm too respectable. I have to say out of my fairly broad exposure to Pentecostals and Charismatics, most of us are not living with eternity in view. We're preoccupied with all sorts of down to earth material issues. Now I want to read the words of Paul because I think they apply to most of us.

1 Corinthians 15:19:

> "If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men the most pitiable. [Another translation says, 'the most to be pitied.']"

If all we expect from God in salvation is something here in this life, if all our interest it focused on this life, if all our concerns are taken up with this life, Paul says we are of all people the most to be pitied. You don't see that. We don't see that. But many of us Pentecostals and Charismatics are pitiable. We are so proud of the fact that we speak in tongues, and dance, and do all sorts of things, all of which I've done at one time or another and I'm in favor or all of them, but it doesn't change our spiritual condition.

Well, I told you in 1986 we started to pray that prayer, "Help us to eat wisely." We had no idea what we were stepping into. I mean, I look back and it's like being in anther world. It didn't all happen at once. In 1987, I had some medical examination and my cholesterol was 280. Now those of you that know anything about cholesterol, anything over 200 is graded unsafe. Actually I think that's much too high a level. I think 200 is not safe. The doctor said to me, "Do you want diet or medication?" And I said, "Diet." And I got some counsel on diet which helped a little, but I've had to find out most of it myself and through Ruth. But I just want to report to you just last year, 1996, my cholesterol level was 140. It came down exactly 50 percent. You say, "Well, God could have done that." That's true. But He didn't do it until I did something about it. You see God says, "If you do this, I'll do that." If you don't do this, God won't do that. Some of us are just lazy. I want to say again, I'm so grateful to the doctors. I think some doctors are more conscientious than some preachers. Now, I will tell you why. It's not because preachers are bad people. It's because the doctor fells he's got the answer and many, many times the preacher doesn't. I know too much about preachers. I've been one for more than 50 years. I'm letting you into some of the secrets of the trade.

So what are we to do as Christians? Now we come to very simple, down to earth answer. Let's go back to Romans chapter 12. I could quote this but I prefer to read it. Romans 12:1.

> "I beseech you [that's Paul pleading out of a deep sense of concern.] I beseech you [he almost says 'I'm going down on my knees to you. Please, please, please do something!'] by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service."

The first thing that God requires of us when we have comprehended the gospel and its message is "present out bodies a living sacrifice." Hand your body over to God. Put it on God's altar. After that, as I've said, it doesn't belong to you. It belongs to God. You live in it. You're a steward. You'll be accountable at the end of your life for the way you've treated your body which is God's temple. Then it says, and this is something very important to bear in mind, Romans 8:11. The greatest single contributor to physical health is the Holy Spirit.

> "But if the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, He who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit who dwells in you."

So the greatest single factor in a healthy body is the Holy Spirit. He can make up for a lot of our deficiencies, which He probably is doing for many of you. But, there's a limit. Turn to Galatians 5:16–17.

> "I say then: Walk in the Spirit and you shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh. [In other words, the Holy Spirit can keep us from being enslaved by our fleshly lusts. But there's a warning in the next verse.] For the flesh lusts against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; and these are contrary to

> one another, so that you do not do the things that you wish."

So you have two forces inside you. If you're a Spirit filled Christian you have the Holy Spirit and you have the flesh, which is your old carnal nature. And they are in opposition to one another. So, whenever you yield to the Holy Spirit, you put the flesh down. But, whenever you yield to the flesh, you put the Holy Spirit down. These are contrary one to the other. If you gratify your flesh you are, if I may say so, snubbing the Holy Spirit. You're saying to the Holy Spirit, "Well, You're there. You're important. But this is what I am really interested in." You can't have it both ways. You have to make your mind up.

I've finished what I'm going to say, but I think it would be only fair to give you an opportunity if you so desire to respond to what I have said. I'm not pressing you. I'm not urging you. Now, are you here this morning and you've never actually, really presented your body as a living sacrifice to Jesus? Or if you did once present your body, but you've compromised and not gone through with your commitment and you want to make a fresh commitment today, let's just wait in the presence of the Lord for a few minutes. I want you to think this over. I say seriously for some of you, it's a life or death question. We're not playing religious games here this morning. You're life may well be at stake in the next two, three, four, five years. You may either live or die according to the way you treat your body. Okay?

Now, I'm going to pray for you all. Lord, I just pray for these dear people, Your people, that You'll press through with this truth that I've declared today. It's unfamiliar. It's not often discussed in church, but it is vital. It concerns the well-being of the people whom You love. Lord, will You give grace to many who are in the valley of decision right now, to make a real whole-hearted sensible decision to place their body on Your altar.

Now if you have never done that and you intend to do it—I want to warn you once you've place your body on the altar it isn't yours and God can send that body anywhere. He may send you to China. It's His body, not yours. He may give you a kind of occupation or job you don't enjoy, but it's His body not yours. So if, in the light of what I've said, you really want to place your body on God's altar with the firm decision of your will, then I invite you just to stand to your feet wherever you are. Don't do it if you're not going to go through with it. I'm glad for the people who are standing who is many. But I am also glad for the people who are not standing. I'm glad that you are taking it seriously. Because it is a serious decision. Now there are so many people standing that I couldn't call you forward.

Geoff, are you somewhere around? I always like to have the pastor with me. Some of these are your sheep. And some of them have been grazing on forbidden pasture. Now, I'm going to lead you in this prayer.

Say these words after me. Lord Jesus Christ, I believe that you are the Son of God, and the only way to God. That you died on the cross for my sins, and you rose again from the dead. Now in the light of what I've heard this morning I have made a decision, Lord Jesus, to present my body to You on Your altar. I do it now in these simple words. I present my body to You. I realize from now on I will only be a steward. I will be accountable for the way I treat my body, but I depend on Your grace. If I am sincere and wholehearted, you will give me the grace to go through with this commitment. So Lord Jesus, I submit myself and I commit myself to You as my Savior and my Lord. I trust You with the outworking of this. In the Name of Jesus.

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Sermon

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