



# Body Builders

What the Bible says about taking good care of our bodies

by Ern Baxter

**I**f you happen to rent a house from a good landlord, you know he never minds keeping the place up. If the roof leaks or the plumbing breaks down, you call him and he sends someone over to fix the problem at his expense, since he is the owner. Once I surrender my body to the Lord as a temple for His Spirit, as the new Landlord He becomes responsible for repairs. As a member of the Covenant, I now have the privilege to call Him when my body breaks down. "Lord, your house needs some repairs...." Often He responds very graciously and sends some repairmen around to fix the place up.

If, however, I am constantly calling the landlord for repairs because I have been throwing chairs through the windows and flushing diapers down the toilet then eventually he's either going to charge me for the repairs, or let me live in the mess I've made, or tell me to get out. That's what my body's Landlord did to me. As a matter of fact, I came very close to being evicted!

As I understand our Covenant, the Lord will take care of the normal repairs, but we are responsible to honor Him by keeping His house in the best possible shape we can. Sometimes in His grace He will effect some repair even when we haven't done our part. But if we are wise, we will never presume on God's grace.

I have studied the Scripture systematically in order to understand the biblical principles with regard to our bodies. I would like to set forth what I found in a simple, straightforward fashion without excessive commentary. God's Word will have its own impact.

### **Lord of My Body**

*Principle 1: My body is "for the Lord, and the Lord for the body."*

"Food for the stomach and the stomach for food"—but God will destroy them both. The body is not meant for sexual immorality, but for the Lord,

and the Lord for the body (1 Cor. 6:13 NIV).

Scripture makes it plain that Jesus Christ is Lord of my body. My body was designed to manifest the purposes of God, and my soul and spirit are dependent upon the body to bring worship and obedience to God. Through the fall of man the body shared the effects of alienation from God and His creational design. In redemption, however, the body as well as the soul and spirit is to be restored as an instrument to express God's holiness and righteousness. We may only want our souls saved, but God wants to save the whole "us."

We must know what the Lord requires of us with regard to our bodies, and be as obedient to those requirements as we are in other areas of our personal response to Christ's lordship. Not only do we have "a body from the Lord"—that is, His lordship over our bodies; we also find that "the Lord is for the body"—that is, the Lord is infinitely interested in the well-being and redemption of our physical bodies. My body is not a despised appendage to my soul. It has its own distinctive purpose, function, and destiny under Christ's redemptive lordship.

*Principle 2: My body will be resurrected.*

"By His power God raised the Lord from the dead, and he will raise us also" (1 Cor. 6:14 NIV). As Christians, our attitude toward our bodies should be significantly affected by our coming resurrection. The future resurrection of this earthly body, which will be in the same form as Christ's glorified body, should impress us with reverent concern as to how we view and trust the organ which will house our glorified personality.

### **Sharing the Judgment**

*Principle 3: My body shares the judgment.*

For we must all appear before

the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive what is due him for the things done while in the body, whether good or bad (2 Cor. 5:10 NIV).

The body is an essential part of the human personality. By means of my body I do deeds, and my body shares the "reward" of those deeds whether they are "good" or "bad." In the horrible but accurate picture of ungodly society penned by Paul in Romans, we see the body as the instrument of man's unrestrained desire for forbidden pleasure. Because they chose this course, "God gave them up—to be the playthings of their own foul bodies" (Rom. 1:24 JBP). God's action resulted in the heathens' receiving "in themselves the due penalty for their perversion" (v. 27 NIV).

The body, as part of the total human personality, experiences its share of rewards and penalties now, and will do so at the judgment seat of Christ.

*Principle 4: My body is a member of Christ.*

"Do you not know that your bodies are members of Christ?" (1 Cor. 6:15 NAS). How supremely superior is the revelation of God concerning the human body when compared with the philosophical fumbblings of men in their lostness. I personally recall the measure of amazement I registered when I first faced the astounding implications of the phrase—"your bodies are members of Christ." At that time I was quite convinced that I was spiritually joined to Christ, but I had not thought of my body as sharing in that unity, at least not to the same degree. "You mean," I asked, "this dirty old body I pop Roloids into and stick under showers is part of Christ?" My attitude probably betrayed some sub-Christian thinking on my part concerning the nature of the Christian's body.

Verse 17 in the sixth chapter of Paul's letter goes on to state that he that is joined unto the Lord is

one with Him in spirit. This provides a kind of Bible logic for verse 15. If my spirit is one spirit with the Lord, and my body is "for the Lord" and the instrument for my spirit's manifestation, my body evidently shares that vital union. This being the case, our unity with Christ imposes the highest conceivable obligation to act consistently with this intimate and exalting relationship.

### The Temple of God

*Principle 5: My body is a temple of the Holy Spirit.*

"Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God?" (1 Cor. 6:19 NIV). In Old Testament times the temple was "the holy place," the place of God's presence among men. Jesus, speaking of His body as "this temple," compared it with the temple in Jerusalem

which He called "my Father's house" (Jn. 2:16, 19). Then Paul in this same letter to the Corinthians refers to the Church as "the temple of God" (1 Cor. 3:16), as he does elsewhere in his writings (see 2 Corinthians 6:16; Ephesians 2:21).

How sobering and sanctifying this word should be. As the temple of God, my body stands in relationship with the glorious temple of the Old Covenant, the divinely prepared body of my incomparable Lord Jesus, and the ultimate community of God's presence and purpose. This one fact would seem to be sufficient to secure an attitude of holy, healthy concern

for the manner in which I care for my body. But there is more.

*Principle 6: My body is God's purchased possession.*

"You are not your own; you were bought at a price. Therefore honor God with your body" (1 Cor. 6:19-20

tion the purchase; he wants us to remember the "price." We are told that God purchased us "with his own blood" (Acts 20:28), and we are His "purchased possession" (Eph. 1:14).

"Therefore bring glory to God in your body" (1 Cor. 6:20 JBP).

**My Earthly House**  
*Principle 7: My body is my "home."*

If the earthly tent we live in is destroyed, we have a building from God, an eternal house in heaven, not built by human hands....Therefore we are always confident and know that as long as we are at home in the body we are away from the Lord (2 Cor. 5:1, 6 NIV).

My body is my "earthly house." To the biblical Christian who truly grasps the fullness of his redemption, it becomes immediately obvious

**The Lord would state:  
"You give me your body,  
and I—the God of the  
Universe—will  
keep you in the  
knowledge of My will  
from this day until time  
ends for you."**

NIV). If a Christian has been well instructed in the most elementary facts of his salvation, he should know he has been "redeemed." I have been purchased—I am the property of my Redeemer. Every part of me belongs to Him by purchase. I do not have independent rights to my body, or any other part of my being; I am *all* His! Paul bluntly says, "Ye are not your own," and remember, on this occasion he is speaking of our bodies. There is not a single Christian who has an independent, unilateral right to his body.

Paul is not content just to men-

that while my body is my home, I do not own it. Instead, I occupy my bodily home by the kindness of a wealthy Benefactor who came along when my house was owned and run by a vicious landlord. He bought my house and turned it over to me, asking me to care for it in accord with His requirements. Interestingly, His requirements for the care of my house are lovingly designed to ensure my peace, joy, and security. The kindness of my Benefactor and a proper concern for my own highest good should combine to make me want to be a good householder.

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*Principle 8: My body is a sacrificial offering to God.*

"Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God" (Rom. 12:1 NIV). We are a sacrifice that lives. Christ's sacrificial death enables us to live a sacrificial life. We live to become, at every moment of our existence, the active agent of the divine will. Please note that Paul does not ask his readers to present their "souls and spirits" as a sacrifice. As a good Jew, he believed that if the body was presented, the soul and spirit had to come along.

Our "living sacrifice" is to be holy. This undoubtedly means "without blemish," or free from those defects which would cause an offering to be rejected. It is also to be acceptable, which would point to the Old Testament when it speaks of the offering as a sweet-smelling savor.

The presentation of our bodies to God as a living, constant sacrifice of our members to His will is our "reasonable service" (KJV) or "an act of intelligent worship" (JBP). Such a sacrifice is the most sound, sane, intelligent, reasonable, and rational thing a redeemed creature can do!

Beyond being our reasonable service to the Lord, our sacrifice is also the wisest move we can make. When we give our bodies to the Lord we enter into a kind of divine contract or covenant. The Lord would state something like this: "You give me your body, and I—the Creator, the Redeemer, and the God of the Universe—will keep you in the knowledge of My will from this day until time ends for you." There is also a maintenance clause in the contract: If we give Him our bodies in covenant, He will keep them quickened and patched up until the resurrection. Who could walk away from that deal?

## **Weapons of Righteousness**

*Principle 9: My body is an armory for righteousness.*

Do not, then allow sin to establish any power over your mortal bodies in making you give way to its lusts. Nor hand over your bodily parts to be, as it were, weapons of evil for the devil's purposes. But, like men rescued from certain death, put yourselves in God's hands as weapons of good for his own purposes (Rom. 6: 12-13 JBP).

Sin, in this passage, is referred to as a king who had previously ruled over my body, requiring me to be subject to its appetites. This destructive sovereign had enlisted the various parts of my body as weapons in the service of unrighteousness, with death as the wages for my service (see verse 23). Our Lord Jesus Christ changed that. He dethroned the king, delivered me from sin's army, and enlisted the various parts of my body to be used as weapons of righteousness. So Paul exhorts us to put ourselves at the disposal of God, as dead men raised to life. My body is a weapon to be used on the side of righteousness. It follows, then, that I ought to give my body the kind of care and treatment that will enable it to be most effective in its prescribed role in the warfare.

*Principle 10: My body is to be that of a well-conditioned athlete.*

"I buffet my body and make it my slave, lest possibly, after I have preached to others, I myself should be disqualified" (1 Cor. 9:27 NAS). It becomes obvious to us when reading the first Corinthian letter that the Corinthians lacked discipline in every area of life. In the ninth chapter, borrowing a figure from the athletic contest, Paul likens the Christian life to a race and boxing match. In connection with a race, he urges, "So run that ye may obtain." A competitor must have a desire to win. Desire alone, however, will not suffice. The athlete must train to be in top physical form: "Every competitor in athletic events goes into serious training"

(1 Cor. 9:25 JBP). "Let us strip off everything that hinders us," says another Bible writer, "as well as the sin which dogs our feet, and let us run the race that we have to run with patience, our eyes fixed on Jesus the source and the goal of our faith" (Heb. 12:1-2 JBP).

Paul was apparently impressed by the kind of dedication and discipline that characterized these athletes. "Athletes," he said, "will take tremendous pains—for a fading crown of leaves" (1 Cor. 9:25 JBP). What, then, should be the Christian's commitment, since "our contest is for a crown that will never fade" (v. 25 JBP)?

Challenged by the lesser to excel at the greater, Paul says, "I run the race then with determination" (v. 26 JBP). Then moving from running to boxing he becomes very specific about the place of his body in the greater spiritual contest. "I am no shadow-boxer," he writes. "I really fight!" (v. 26 JBP). And then his application takes a unique turn as he treats his body as an opponent: "I bruise my own body and make it know its master" (v. 27 NEB). This is strong language. The word translated "bruise" means "to hit under the eye"—that is, to buffet or disable an antagonist as a pugilist.

Paul realized that if he was to fulfil his work for God, *he must be master of his body*. If an athlete could master his body for fleeting glory and a perishable crown, how much more should the Christian

take authority over the illegitimate and excessive sensual desires of his body! With Paul this was not optional. His body was his only means of serving God. To fail to keep his body under the control of his God-mastered spirit was to

stating the husband's responsibility as "head of the wife," He commands the husband to love his wife as his own body since the two are "one flesh." He then points up a generally accepted fact: "No man ever yet hated his own flesh; but nourishes and cherishes it."

With a proper desire for the highest well-being of our physical body, we will intelligently nourish and cherish it, or as Bishop Moule comments, we will "develop its good condition and its well-being, its healthful comfort." *Nourish* refers to the "strengthening by food, renewing the life," and *cherish* to the "protection and preservation of life."

We can only conclude that it is not only man's instinct but his duty to protect and nourish that mysterious work of God, his body, connected as it is by God's will in a thousand ways to

**It is not only man's instinct but his duty to protect and nourish that mysterious work of God, his body, connected as it is by God's will in a thousand ways to the action of his spirit.**

risk being "disqualified."

#### **"Nourish and Cherish"**

*Principle 11: My body is something I "nourish and cherish"* (see Leviticus 19:18; Matthew 19:19; 22:39; Romans 13:9; Galatians 5:14; James 2:8; Ephesians 5:28-29; 2 Timothy 3:2). "No man ever yet hated his own flesh" (Eph. 5:29).

The importance of caring for our bodies is indirectly referred to in Paul's teaching on the marriage relationship. Men are to "love their wives as their own bodies." God's order for marriage is that the "two shall become one flesh." Therefore,

the action of his spirit. □

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