

A Sanctified Body

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The human body has been called the microcosm of the universe, a little world of wonders and a monument of divine wisdom and power, sufficient to convince the most incredulous mind of the existence of the Great Designer. There are enough evidences of supreme skill in the structure of the human hand alone to prove the existence, intelligence and benevolence of God in the face of all the sophistry of infidelity. The records of creation teach the importance and dignity of the human body. When God had made all other parts of the material universe, before He formed the human frame He called a solemn council of the Trinity, and with the most majestic deliberation He decreed, "Let us make man in our image after our likeness," and it is added, "The Lord God formed man out of the dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life." All the infinite wisdom of the Trinity was concentrated in his creation and the kiss of the Almighty awoke his higher nature into consciousness and life.

The reason why God has so honored the human frame is made very clear in the subsequent revelation of Jesus Christ and the great mystery of the incarnation. It was because the human body was designed to be the ultimate climax of the whole creation and the eternal form of the incarnate God Himself. Always, it would seem, that the Lord Jesus Christ had purposed to become embodied in a human form, and to link the creation with the Creator in His own wonderful Person. Therefore, the human body was designed, in the beginning, as the pattern and type of this sublimest form of being which ever should exist. Have we ever fully realized the stupendous fact that, down to the latest ages of eternity, as often as from the distant worlds of space, another and another new inhabitant shall come to the great metropolis of the universe to gaze upon the face of its Lord and to behold the wonderful God to whom all creation owes its existence, and to celebrate His yet more wonderful glory and grace in the redemption of a sinful race of which those ages and realms are forever to hear as the most marvelous story of the eternities, they shall gaze as they enter the celestial gates and approach the jasper throne upon the face of a man, upon a form like yours and mine, upon the human frame and countenance of Jesus! Oh! may we not still say, "Lord, what is man that Thou hast set such honor upon him!" Our hearts sink in amazement and adoration at the infinite grace which has so glorified the human body. Shall we wonder, therefore, beloved, that God should require it to be made worthy of such a destiny and sanctified wholly unto its high calling! For, seated by the side of that wondrous Man, we, too, shall share His glory, and be the objects of the wonder and love of the ages to come.

One of the gravest errors of all the centuries has been to depreciate the body. Today the old form of Gnosticism has been trying to establish the doctrine that matter is not real, that the human body is not real but a fiction, or, as they are pleased to phrase it, "a wrong belief," and this "wrong belief" is the cause of all our physical troubles. The aim, therefore, of their long-ago exploded philosophy is to do away with the body, or, rather, the belief of the body, and to reduce man to a simple combination of mental faculties.

This is wholly contrary to the teachings of Scripture, and, in fact, would seem to be the antichrist of which the Apostle John declared that it should deny that Jesus Christ had come in the flesh. Another ancient error was that the body was essentially evil and the great source of temptation and sin, so that the true aim of life in the struggle after sanctity was to get rid of the body, or, at least, to reduce it to the lowest possible condition and render it as incapable as possible of injuring the soul and spirit. One of their favorite methods was the mortification of the body through physical penances and privations until it became reduced and emaciated, so as to cease to be the instigator of evil. The ascetic idea grew out of this delusion, the essential principle of monasticism being the denying of the body in order to the higher culture of the spiritual life. A still grosser form of delusion taught that the true way to purify the body was to indulge its grossest passions to the utmost excess, thus wearing them out by their own abuse and making their theory prove its extreme folly in the fact that while professing sanctity it really led to every kind of sin.

The blessed Holy Spirit has taught us a more excellent way, and Christ has made provision for the sanctification of the body as well as the soul and spirit. Let us ask once more what is a sanctified body, and the first answer will be

I. IT IS A SEPARATED BODY.

It is essential in order to the true sanctification of the body that it be cleansed from all impurity and physical sin. There are bodily transgressions as distinct as those of the soul and spirit.

Surely it is not necessary to say that a sanctified body is a body cleansed from gross, sensual indulgences.

And yet this is one of the things of which the Apostle most frequently speaks in those epistles which rise to the sublimest heights of spiritual exultation, and speak most freely of our high place in the fellowship of Christ and the life of the Spirit. Those who dwell in heavenly places are not exempt from watching diligently against the sins of the flesh.

Beloved, are your bodies thus separated from all unholy use and all abuse?

The sanctified body, we need scarcely add, is a body cleansed from the indulgences of the appetites in every excessive or unnatural form. It is a body that abhors the coarse sin of gluttony and the pampering of its tastes. It is a body that regards the question of eating and drinking, not as a matter for the delectation of the palate, but as a natural and divine provision for its strength and nourishment, that it may glorify God by the use of its powers for Him. It is a body that abstains from the gross and abominable indulgence of the drunkard. And we believe truly, that, in this day, a wholly sanctified body will be kept from even using that which becomes to such multitudes the very poison of hell and the cause of wreck for time and eternity. It is a body that avoids unnatural physical appetites, whether they be the opiate, the cigar or the wine-cup.

Beloved, are your bodies thus sanctified and separated from all evil?

The sanctified body is one whose hands are clean. The stain of dishonesty is not on them, the withering blight of ill-gotten gain has not blistered them, the mark of violence is not found upon them. They have been separated from every occupation that could displease God or injure a fellow-man.

A sanctified body is one whose feet are cleansed from every false way and unhallowed step. They go not in the paths of sinners and the promenades of worldliness and folly. They are not found in the great procession that throngs the theaters and keeps time in the dance to the carnival of folly and earthly pleasure. They walk not in the broad road that leads to destruction, but have turned aside from every forbidden way to walk in the footprints of the Lord, to carry His messages and to do His will.

A sanctified body is known, as physical health is known, by the appearance of the tongue. Your physician asks to see your tongue when he calls, and there is no surer test of a sanctified body than the condition of its tongue. A sanctified tongue is a true tongue. It is cleansed from every form of falsehood, equivocation, deception, and lying, whether it be the daring perjury of the criminal, or the polite prevarication of fashionable society. Along with this it has also abandoned profanity in every form, the oath of the blasphemer or the polite jest that plays and puns on sacred things and makes light of the holy and the divine. It is a tongue that is free from folly and frivolity. It does not shrink from the spirit of genial and innocent humor when it is controlled by sense and kindness, but it has repudiated foolish talking which is not convenient, and seeks, in everything, to speak in the sight of God as the instrument of His thought and will. And, above all other forms of abuse of the tongue, it has put away evil speaking, the abominable gossip of society, the habit of repeating all that one hears, and especially the evil that affects another. It dare not give publicity to an unkind report or an unfavorable whisper respecting another's character, or even utter that which it knows to be false, unless under the stern necessity of protecting another's soul from danger, and then only when it has first spoken freely and plainly to the offending one directly. A sanctified tongue is also cleansed from all needless speaking. It has learned the golden habit of stillness and finds its greatest blessing in its own suppression and habit of silence and communion with God.

Beloved, has God sanctified your tongue? Are you willing that He should? Will you give to Him the reins of this member, and, henceforth, relinquish to Him the right to hold it in suppression, to keep it from idle, evil, false or foolish speech, and use it wholly as the instrument of His will and service? Solemnly and forcibly has the Apostle James said: "The tongue is a world of iniquity, it setteth on fire the whole course of nature and is set on fire of hell." Almost every chapter in the book of proverbs flashes with sentences of fiery warning against this lively member of the human body, whose control the Apostle has said is the real test of perfection and entire sanctification. "For if any man offend not in tongue, the same is a perfect man and able also to bridle the whole body."

The sanctified body has also been cleansed from the sins of the eyes. It has purposed that it will not look on evil nor on vanity. It refuses to see the faults of others or to dwell upon the spectacle of temptation or the fascinations of vice. It declines to read the doubled-leaded or double-linked lines that flash, through our daily press, the foul deed of a fallen world before the eyes of the public, and keeps the spirit pure by closing the shutters of vision and keeping out the foul images that pass before the windows of the heart for all that will allow them to attract their attention. It is a great thing to learn to turn away your eyes from beholding vanity and to remember the injunction of the wisest preacher: "Let thine eyes look right on and thine eyelids straight

before thee. Ponder the path of thy feet and let all thy ways be established.Â”

Beloved, have you sanctified your eyes and separated them from evil unto the Lord, or will you do so from this moment as the light of conviction is passing even now through your soul? Shall you not say,

Â”Take my eyes and let them see
Only that which pleases TheeÂ”?

A sanctified body has cleansed its sense of hearing and put up the curtains upon its ears against all the sin that assaults our senses from without. It refuses to hear evil as much as to speak it, and puts gossip and slander to flight by looking boldly in its face, and demanding, Â”How dare you?Â”

Beloved, are you one of those of whom it is written, Â”He that shutteth his eyes to the seeing of evil, and his ears from the hearing of evil, he shall dwell on high; his place of defense shall be the munitions of rocksÂ”? Thine Â”eyes shall see the King in his beauty, they shall behold the land that is very far off.Â”

The sanctified body is one whose dress is free from worldliness and sin, and marked by that modesty and simplicity which neither attracts attention by its being either excessive or defective. The truest dress is that which the ordinary observer is less likely to notice, and so controlled by simplicity and propriety that most persons should fail to remember anything special in the appearance of the wearer, and of which it could be as truly said that the wearer was equally unconscious of her dress. There is much in this that speaks for God or the world. Dear friends, is your dress sanctified to the Lord? Is your person a simple, earnest, modest witness for Christ?

The sanctified body is one that has been purified from intemperate work, and immoderate and excessive service of any kind, and also from the needless neglect of the simple laws of nature and of health. While these efforts should not bind us where God’s work or will requires us to go to the extreme of toil and self-sacrifice and self-denial, yet where such denials are needless, they are wrong; and especially is it a physical sin for men and women to violate every principle of prudence in the pursuit of pleasure or selfish gain, and receive the sad retribution in worn-out bodies and premature disease and death, in pursuit of the fancied prize.

The sanctified body has been, or at least should be, separated from disease. We do not say that disease is a voluntary sin, but we do say that it is a blemish and a physical impurity. It is a form of corruption in the flesh. Under the ancient dispensation it disqualified priests from ministering at the altar. It was a defilement or blemish, and so still it is a hindrance to the highest spiritual state and to the most effective service for God. No doubt He can overrule it for much good. He can make the invalid’s chamber a beautiful example and testimony. But this does not make the disease the more pleasing to Him nor the less a blemish; an abnormal condition; an impurity in the human system; something from which Christ has come to separate His people; something which He bore upon the cross that we might not bear it, but Â”by his stripes be healed.Â”

Beloved, have you been separated from disease, from the malarias and humors that defile your blood, depress your liver, drag down your spirits, cloud your brain, irritate your temper and overshadow all your future life and work, besides holding you back from service for God, and occupying your existence with a morbid self-consciousness and a struggle that is dragging you down when God wants every power engaged in service for a suffering world? Are you willing to be sanctified from disease, and is it valuable enough for you to throw your prejudices away and accept the salvation which Christ has come to bring for spirit, soul and body?

II. A SANCTIFIED BODY IS A DEDICATED BODY.

In the twelfth chapter of Romans the Apostle Paul beseeches us to present our body a living sacrifice, and in a later epistle he speaks to the Corinthians as not their own but bought with a price, therefore expected to glorify God in their bodies which are His. It is impossible for the spirit and soul to be consecrated to God while the body is still held in our own hands, in some measure at least. This is as incongruous as a house presented to a friend while we retain the title deed to the lot on which it stands, or a precious jewel while we retain the key of its casket. The dedication of the body implies the setting apart of our entire physical being, with every organ and member, as the property of God, to be the object of His special care and the instrument of His special will and service. While it may be done in one great comprehensive act, once for all, yet it adds great force and definiteness to it to make it explicit and to recognize every individual member as particularly yielded to His ownership and control. Millions have probably been helped to such a consecration by the eloquent but yet simple hymn of Frances Ridley Havergal:

Â”Take my life and let it be

Consecrated, Lord, to Thee;
Take my hands and let them move
At the impulse of Thy love.Â”

We are so prone to generalize things that it is extremely wholesome for us to make our spiritual acts explicit. A consecrated body is one that recognizes itself as the property of God and recognizes Him as the Guardian and Keeper of all its interests and needs. He is responsible to take care of us, and, like little children, we look to Him for all. It is a body which has learned to regard every sense and organ, not as a minister of our own pleasure, but a channel for His life and a weapon for His work. This, indeed, is the word used by the Apostle when he says, “Yield yourself unto God as those who are alive from the dead, and your members as weapons of righteousness unto God.” The hands are presented to Him to work for His glory, whether it be in our secular calling or in our ministry for others. This, of course, implies that our works are consecrated, that our greetings are consecrated, and that even the grasp of our hand speaks for Christ.

It means that our tongues speak only at His bidding and for His glory; that we regard every word as a trust or service, and that our speech is always with grace seasoned with salt and for the edification of others. A consecrated tongue will not speak even the commonest word without waiting upon God for His direction, and looking to Him for His approval. Consecrated ears will be very attentive to all that He would have us hear, as well as dead to all other voices. Consecrated eyes will see a thousand opportunities which others pass by unheeded, a thousand beauties and meanings in things which others miss. Consecrated feet will find the path of duty always easy; the highest stairs, the most lonely walks, the most repulsive journeys, the most self-denying tasks a willing service for their Lord; and the errands on which they run will be doubly effectual because they are the Lord’s feet which carry the Lord’s messages. A consecrated voice will have a new power to sing and speak, which natural tones and cultured elocution or music could never accomplish.

Beloved, are your bodies thus consecrated with all their powers to work and walk and speak, to see and hear, to give of your means and to use your whole external life as a glad and sacred ministry for Christ?

III. A SANCTIFIED BODY IS A BODY FILLED WITH THE HOLY GHOST.

“Know ye not that your bodies are the temples of the Holy Ghost?” So the Master is asking of us all, and there are many who have received Him into their hearts whose flesh has not become His entire abode. None of us yet fully realize to how great an extent our physical frame may become the abode of the Lord Jesus. We have sometimes seen a human face light up with the glory of God in some hour of spiritual elevation, on some mountain top of spiritual experience, or in the light of the borderland, until it seemed as if the body had become transparent and the light of heaven within was shining through the windows of a palace. This may give us some conception of how God can fill even this earthly vessel with Himself. We are told in the New Testament Scriptures the reason is that Christ has become the Head of the human body, and that even in this life “the Lord is for the body and the body for the Lord.” He is, it is true, the source of physical strength and health, but there is something far higher than divine healing, and that is divine health. It is one thing to have the Lord touch us until we are delivered from our infirmities, but it is another thing to have Him possess us with His life, and our life become His life manifest in our mortal flesh.

This is the teaching of the Apostle in the fourth chapter of the Second Corinthians: “We have this treasure in earthen vessels that the excellency of the power may be of God and not of us.” The vessel may be very frail, but if the life of Christ possesses us it fills it with strength as well as divine sacredness. This is what he means when he speaks in the verses that follow of being cast down but not destroyed, perplexed but not in despair, always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life of Jesus also might be made manifest in us. This life will carry us above our physical infirmities on the high tide of a supernatural vitality which is not dependent upon our organic conditions, but elevates us above them and becomes a heavenly nourishment to all our conscious life and work, so that we can truly say, “We live not by bread alone but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God,” and that “in him we live and move and have our being.”

This is really a foretaste of the future life. The frail vessel of clay cannot bear it all as the resurrection body will be able, but we can receive and reflect all that we can hold, in this present mortal life, of the very life of our living, immortal Head, the Second Adam who has been made a quickening Spirit.

Beloved, have you received this mystery, this new and glorious secret, which all may receive in a cleansed, consecrated, and receptive vessel? It is waiting, like the light, to come in wherever there is room to receive it. And this blessed filling not only holds and strengthens, but it endues with power for service, and enables our

body to become a vehicle of the Spirit and the instrument of the higher nature for the noblest ends.

This great and glorious truth which we have been unfolding is not without a parallel and a parable even in the natural realm. We can often see in the lower world how a piece of clay can be so filled with a higher principle as to be transformed and to be endued with higher properties than its own nature was capable of expressing. Take, for example, that rough mass of iron ore out of the dark mine. It is but a lump of earth.; but smelt it, and melt it, and cleanse it from all its dross, and draw it out in malleable form into the supple wire which girds, in millions of miles, the whole circle of the globe today, and then fill it with the electric fire, and lo! the earthen vessel becomes the electric wire and speaks the messages of business and affection to all mankind. What a mighty power a piece of clay has become! So God can take your vessel of earth and cleanse, develop and prepare, and then fill with His holy presence until it shall speak to the millions of earth and the ages of eternity of Him and for Him.

Or, look at these two or three chemicals: prepare them, and bring them into chemical adjustments and positions, and then attach suitable wires to form your circle; then let the battery play, and lo! you have the magnificent system of the electric light; and those two little bits of clay suspend between them that most perfect form which science knows today, and which is illuminating our streets, our factories, our buildings, with a radiance which defies the revolving earth, or the changes of day and night, to affect man's luxury or comfort. So God can take the earthen vessel, and illuminate it with a touch of His glory until it becomes itself the very light of the world.

Or, again, take this little handful of sand and melt it, and cast it into your mould, let it cool, then polish it into a concave lens, and then take it to yonder splendid observatory on Mount Hamilton and put it into the greatest telescope in the world, and then look into the converging lines of heaven which meet in its bosom, and lo! the whole heavens are revealed, the distant worlds of space have stooped down to meet your eye, and that little bit of clay is filled with the vision of immensity. You can see the distant hills of the moon, the rings of Saturn, the nebulous clouds of space, divided up into their innumerable stars and systems; and the whole universe becomes a wonder all through a little bit of clay filled with something higher than itself.

So, beloved, you can be polished and filled until you, too, shall shine with the reflected glory of heaven and become a channel for the Spirit of vision and revelation, disclosing the very secrets of the Lord and the wonders of His Word and works. Or, shall we take another example in that piece of common charcoal? Shall we carry it through all the stages of mineralogy until it becomes crystallized carbon and the rough diamond? Shall we then take it and cut down its rough sides and polish it into facets until from a hundred angles it flashes back the rays of light and the glories of color like a little sun or like a rainbow and sun all combined? It is but a bit of clay filled with light.

So, beloved, these bodies of ours, these earthen vessels, may receive a treasure, too, that will so shine from them, when cleansed and completely sanctified, and when all the Master's discipline has been completed, that will make them like the sun in the kingdom of their Father. For the day is coming when the wondering universe shall look upon us in the image of our glorious Lord, and shall wonder which most to wonder at, the Heavenly Bridegroom or the Heavenly Bride, which has received all her glory, from her more glorious Head, and is all the more wonderful because of her humble origin and because of her dark and sinful past. Oh, let us yield ourselves unto God; let us receive Him into every pore and fibre of our being; let every chord and every member be a channel for His indwelling and inworking, and our whole spirit, soul and body sanctified wholly and presented blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, and then shall these bodies leap into that higher plane and rise to that nobler destiny of which He has given us now the earnest and the foretaste even in this mortal flesh.