

## Our Bodies as Sacrifice

As we get older and experience physical strength and health waning it makes us more aware that we must take greater care of our bodies. One cannot dismiss the help of medical people, doctors, nurses and nutritionists, yet their powers to help is limited while in contrast there is a scriptural basis pointing to God's unlimited power.

In Genesis 2:7 we read that *the LORD God formed the man out of the dust of the ground and blew into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living being.* We see then, that there are two sources for our being, substances from the earth below, and the Spirit of God from above.

These are miracles in both aspects: scientists have determined that many of the rare elements that compose the human body are only created by the internal processes of the stars and eventually released into the cosmos in the form of super novae, finding their way to planetary bodies, and then into our very bodies; in other words we share the same star dust in our physical composition!

In the second case, the Hebrew term in Scripture for the Spirit is *ruah* and the word "Spirit" is synonymous with "breath" in a number of different languages. Breath, like Spirit, is an unnoticeable reality we perceive as it is something that cannot be physically grasped and yet of critical importance; without breath there is no physical life, without spirit there is no spiritual life. The Psalmist points to the interplay of these two words: *Take away their breath, they perish and return to the dust. Send forth your spirit, they are created and you renew the face of the earth.*<sup>1</sup> The potential of God is realized through the Spirit and we can synchronize God's energy flow with our breathing; the Spirit is our breath, our very life. Breathe in the Spirit from the Father Creator, breathe out the Spirit to the Son, breathe in the Spirit from the Divine Word, breathe out the Spirit to the Father, and in this way let the divine energy of love and life saturate our prayer and our very being.

The Psalmist was also well aware of the Creator's part in our creation: *You formed my inmost being; you knit me in my mother's womb. I praise you, because I am wonderfully made; wonderful are your works! My very self you know. My bones are not hidden from you, when I was being made in secret, fashioned in the depths of the earth.*<sup>2</sup> He notes God's presence in every part of the universe and God's control over the mysterious and hidden operations that occur within us. This suggests that when our bodies are not functioning as they should we can bring them back to the creator as well as to regular medicine. The Psalmist notes: *Some fell sick from their wicked ways, afflicted because of their sins. They loathed all manner of food; they were at*

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<sup>1</sup> Psalm 104:29b-30

<sup>2</sup> Psalm 139: 13-15

*the gates of death. In their distress they cried to the LORD, who saved them in their peril, sent forth his word to heal them, and snatched them from the grave.*<sup>3</sup>

The problem is that man, in his fallen condition has been corrupted spiritually, morally, and physically by sin, initiated in the Garden of Eden (Genesis 3). *The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law.*<sup>4</sup> But Jesus died to redeem us, he bore our sins in his body when crucified in order that we might live in holiness and by his stripes we were healed. *He himself bore our sins in his body upon the cross, so that, free from sin, we might live for righteousness. By his wounds you have been healed.*<sup>5</sup>

Paul reminds us: *Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, whom you have from God, and that you are not your own? For you have been purchased at a price. Therefore, glorify God in your body.*<sup>6</sup>

We have been redeemed at a price, Jesus' blood and we are called to glorify God in our bodies. Moreover we are *urged by the mercies of God, to offer our bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God, our spiritual worship.*<sup>7</sup>

In the Old Testament sacrifices were first killed before being offered but now our offering is to be our very living body, giving up its ownership to God who will take care of it. Our Lord, Jesus Christ shed his blood in order to redeem us from sin, sickness, and from the power of the Evil One. In return we offer our bodies on the Lord's altar as a living sacrifice to be at his disposal and take seriously our responsibilities of striving for holiness and sanctification according to the Word and the Spirit. *My son, to my words be attentive, to my sayings incline your ear; Let them not slip from your sight, keep them within your heart; For they are life to those who find them bringing health to one's whole being.*<sup>8</sup> *This is the will of God, your holiness: that you refrain from immorality. For God did not call us to impurity but to holiness.*<sup>9</sup> This implies we must not let ourselves be dominated by anything and this requires discipline and discernment. *"Everything is lawful for me," but I will not let myself be dominated by anything. "Food for the stomach and the stomach for food," but God will do away with both the one and the other. The body, however, is not for immorality, but for the Lord, and the Lord is for the body.*<sup>10</sup> Our bodies are something sacred and holy and not to be abused by drunkenness, gluttony, or immorality. In order to use our bodies effectively we need a healthy dose of self-control. *Every athlete exercises discipline in every way. They do it to win a perishable crown, but we an imperishable*

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<sup>3</sup> Psalm 107:17-20

<sup>4</sup> 1Corinthians 15:56

<sup>5</sup> 1Peter 2:24

<sup>6</sup> 1Corinthians 6:19-20

<sup>7</sup> Romans 12:1

<sup>8</sup> Proverbs 4:20-22

<sup>9</sup> 1Thessalonians 4:3,7

<sup>10</sup> 1Corinthians 6:12-13

*one. Thus I do not run aimlessly; I do not fight as if I were shadowboxing. No, I drive my body and train it, for fear that, after having preached to others, I myself should be disqualified.<sup>11</sup>*

*Paul warns the Philippians about those misled Christians who are enemies to the cross of Christ: Join with others in being imitators of me, brothers, and observe those who thus conduct themselves according to the model you have in us. For many, as I have often told you and now tell you even in tears, conduct themselves as enemies of the cross of Christ. Their end is destruction. Their God is their stomach; their glory is in their "shame." Their minds are occupied with earthly things. But our citizenship is in heaven, and from it we also await a savior, the Lord Jesus Christ. He will change our lowly body to conform with his glorified body by the power that enables him also to bring all things into subjection to himself.<sup>12</sup>*

*We need to respond to God's Spirit talking to us so it is essential that we do not conform to this age but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that we may discern what is the will of God, what is good and pleasing and perfect.<sup>13</sup>*

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<sup>11</sup> 1Corinthians 9:25-27

<sup>12</sup> Philippians 3:17-21

<sup>13</sup> Romans 12:2