

Has This Popular Christian Teaching Led Believers Into an Ungodly View of Their Bodies?

I grew up in a wonderful charismatic church. Yet, I heard no sermons on the resurrection. When the word was mentioned, I assumed the speaker was referring to our Lord and Savior rising from the dead. I was never taught that my body, while it would die, would be pieced back together again by divine hands in a glorified, immortal form. I was taught that I am a spirit, have a soul and live in a body.

That “living in a body” never sounded like a positive, however! It sounded like an endured frustration, an unfortunate reality. I had an interesting conversation recently with one of the local pastors in Ethiopia, an African nation where my team and I hold many of our mass crusades. Like most of the born-again, Spirit-filled leaders in that country, his upbringing was Ethiopian Orthodox, a religion that uses priests, angels, saints and the Virgin Mary as mediators between the faithful and God, supplanting grace and relationship with rituals, fasting and good works.

Since they come from a background of such doctrinal error, I have found that pastors in Ethiopia are especially diligent not to lead their flocks astray. They flee from error—or even a hint of it—like nothing I have ever seen. This dear pastor made a thought-provoking statement: “Many pastors in the Western church teach that a human being is a spirit, has a soul and lives in a body. We do not teach that. We teach that every person is spirit, soul and body.”

This made me think. Now, I do not disagree with the “I am a

spirit, have a soul and live in a body” adage. It helps us take an intensely complicated subject and wrap our heads around it. The concept of our triuneness is complex, just like the Trinity is complex. The danger is that our adage, if not properly explained, can leave the body out in the cold, undermined and unwanted: a pathetic, frustrating and weary thing, something to be endured rather than embraced.

Perhaps this is why so many young ladies in our churches suffer from eating disorders. Perhaps this is why so many believers—while strong in spirit—suffer from poor body image or treat their physical forms shamefully. Others struggle to believe that Jesus did not only die for their sins but for their sicknesses as well. They battle to comprehend that Jesus is the healer of their bodies because, after all, God cares about their spirits and souls. Their bodies? Their bodies do not matter to Him as much.

Let us speak about the resurrection for a moment. We know that when Adam and Eve succumbed to sin, their immortal forms became mortal. God declared to Adam following that harrowing fall: “By the sweat of your face, you will eat bread until you return to the ground, because out of it you were taken; for you are dust, and to dust you will return” (Gen.3:19).

When we die, our bodies decompose and return to their compositional elements. Is this then the end of them? Are they condemned to nothingness? If so, I would believe God attaches no great importance to them. If God left our bodies in the grave and said, “Good riddance! I am glad I shall never see you again!” then I would believe they exist solely to house our spirits while on earth. I am a spirit, I have a soul and I endure this troublesome, fleshly tent. Soon, I shall be rid of it!

Yet this is not the case. The resurrection is coming. The Creator of our bodies will not leave them in the earth or sea. He values them too highly, He treasures them too greatly.

Consider Psalm 139, which describes how He formed our inward parts, skillfully assembling us in the wombs of mothers, knitting us together and seeing our substance while yet unformed, constructing us with great precision and awesome wonder.

At the resurrection, He will re-assemble our bodies with equal devotion—albeit in a shorter time frame. His touch will lovingly take every immortal bit and transform it into an immortal bit. Bit will connect with bit, until the bits are our bodies once more but this time, better. This time, they shall be sinless, perfect, glorified and eternal.

In Luke 21, Jesus speaks to His disciples about the persecution they will face for His sake. He says: “You will be betrayed by parents and brothers and relatives and friends. And they will put some of you to death. You will be hated by all men for My name’s sake, but not a hair of your head shall perish” (Luke 21:16-18).

Many of these followers being directly addressed by Jesus suffered horrific ends. They were beheaded, crucified, burnt alive. Yet, our Lord promised that not a hair on their heads would be lost. At the resurrection, every piece—even our hairs—will be restored and renewed. What epic devotion to our physical forms! Could God be more devoted towards them? Impossible. He intends to glorify even our hairs, refusing to give the devil any spoils of war. “O death, where is your sting? O grave, where is your victory?” (1 Cor. 15:55). Hallelujah!

Aside from our bodies being considered so precious by God that He will transform them into everlasting vessels, Scripture is filled with many other verses regarding their sacredness. 1 Corinthians 6 gives us some important insights. There, the apostle Paul is addressing sexual immorality. “Do you not know that your bodies are the parts of Christ?” he says in verse 15. Then, in verses 18-20: “Escape from sexual immorality.

Every sin that a man commits is outside the body. But he who commits sexual immorality sins against his own body. What? Do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God, and that you are not your own? You were bought with a price. Therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God's."

Note that Paul does not say our spirits are parts of Christ. He does not say our souls are temples of the Holy Spirit. He does not say that only the immaterial parts of us were bought at a price. Rather, He speaks about the body (that houses both spirit and soul) as being a purchased member of Christ, a temple of God Almighty.

In summary, dear reader, our God does not adore your spirit, fancy your soul but only tolerate your body. No! He loves you: spirit, soul and body. He bought back all of you on the cross of Calvary.

Treasure your body. Treat it well. If you are in need of healing, trust Him for it with all your heart. He died for your immaterial and material bits. He is passionately in love with all of you and intends to live eternally with all of you as well. Now, believe it! Your spirit, your body, your soul—you in your entirety—are His beloved.

Dear pastor, please, preach on the resurrection. Preach on how our God values our material selves. Do not focus solely on our invisible elements. This message needs to be heard by believers. It is the truth—and the truth sets us free! {eoa}

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