

# You Are Your Body

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[ 0 : 00 ] Page 188 in the New Testament section of your Pew Bible. Page 188 in the New Testament section of your Pew Bible, Ephesians chapter 2, verses 9 to 12.

For in him the whole fullness of deity dwells bodily. And you have come to fullness of life in him who is the head of all rule and authority.

Now the significance of those two verses is that they are the fulcrum on which the whole epistle to the Colossians hangs. What Colossians has to say, put in two verses, you find in those two verses, 9 and 10 of Colossians chapter 2.

What is happening is it says that you ask the question, where do we find the fullness of God?

Now a lot of people have a lot of different answers to that. And you might think that we find it in this religion of the East, or we find it in this philosophy, or we find it in nature, or we find it in adventure, or we find it in ecstasy, or we find it in all sorts of things.

[ 1 : 37 ] Probably the Colossians had a whole gradation of spiritual beings that went up and up and up to the very throne of God. And what they were teaching, that Jesus was one of the sort of lower manifestations of God, and that you really needed to go on to higher manifestations of God.

Now that kind of thinking and that kind of logic is very prevalent in our world today, that people have by reason of mysticism or by reason of some kind of religious devotion or spiritual inquiry.

They found a higher awareness of God in something else. Paul dealt with that by saying in verse 9, what he says, in him, that is in Jesus Christ, the whole fullness of God dwells bodily.

It's all in him. Now that's where Christians get into trouble with other religions, because of that statement, that in Jesus Christ, the whole fullness of God dwells.

That doesn't give us control over anything. All it does is say that if you want to know where you find the fullness of God, you find it in the person of Jesus Christ incarnate, because it says the fullness of deity dwells bodily.

[ 3 : 24 ] Now that's very strange, isn't it? Because most of us try and separate deity away from the body, but the fullness of deity dwells bodily in Jesus Christ.

Well, I want just to expand on that, and to remind you that you also dwell in a body.

You can familiarize yourself with it by shaking hands with yourself, if you like, just to remind you of the harsh physical reality of what's holding down the pew you're sitting in.

That there it is. There you are. And lots of people in this room can identify you because of that body. And if they saw you without it, they would hardly know you.

And it's because the New Testament takes your body very seriously. In fact, the New Testament says you are your body.

[ 4 : 35 ] Don't try and escape from that reality. That's who you are. Now you may try to master it. You may serve it.

You may find it humiliating. You may suffer from some kind of anorexia in that you want to try and eliminate it as far as it's possible to eliminate it.

You may contemplate suicide by way of getting rid of it. But the New Testament says you can't do that because you are your body. You can't be separated from it.

And that, let me remind you, is why in the Creed you say that you believe in the resurrection of the body because we don't exist apart from our bodies, either this body or the glorious body which has been promised to us.

So that you need to be conscious of the weight of your body. We become very conscious of the appearance of our body.

[ 5 : 51 ] We sometimes become very sensitive about the smell of our body, the unmanageable desires of our body, the humiliations of our body.

And sometimes, we're having a great argument now, that when the pain which our body gives us becomes so severe, then we want to get rid of the body because we can't tolerate that any longer. The constant desire we seem to have, except at perhaps certain stages in our life, is to escape from our body. It is so humiliating.

The most difficult thing about being a Christian is that I have a body. It's what's given me trouble all these many years as a Christian.

God is spirit, and I'm a body, and he can't possibly mean that I should be subject to and tolerate the misery of my bodily existence.

[ 6 : 54 ] And so I try and keep my bodily presence away from the spiritual presence of God until you hit that verse which says, the whole fullness of God dwelt bodily in Christ.

So that what your spiritual battle is in terms of this world, you are meant to fight in your body. You're not to dissociate from it.

You have to deal with it. In all its ages, in all its stages, in all its lumps, in all its bumps, you have to be able to deal with your body. In all its temptations, in all its weaknesses, you have to accept that that's the body that God has given you, and that's the body you have to live in.

There is no escape from it. And I think it's important to come to terms with that. The really beautiful body of Magic Johnson has suddenly been stricken in that great basketball player.

He suddenly has a new awareness of his body and how inseparable it is from who he is. He has undergone a kind of baptism in that he has suddenly come face to face in a very, I guess, tragic way with his own mortality.

[ 8 : 26 ] And the difficulty with our bodies is that they remind us constantly of our mortality, of the fact that we are subject to death.

And so, we don't know what to do with it. We push our bodies to the limit by climbing Mount Everest, which is a tremendous feat of physical endurance.

I don't suppose it would compare with the voyageurs who paddle canoes from Montreal to Vancouver carrying packs of 400 pounds over portages all along the way.

but the tremendous sort of strength of the body. We try and push it as hard as we can. But you see, all of it is to remind you in the most graphic, personal, direct terms that what Jesus did for us, he did in the body.

In a body just like yours, just like mine, subject to the same weaknesses. A body like ours. What Jesus accomplished, he accomplished in the body.

[ 9 : 40 ] And that's why our future does not depend on our escaping from our body. Our future depends on our being in Christ.

Now, just read it over again. In him, that is Christ, the whole fullness of deity dwells bodily. you have come to fullness of life in him who is the head of all rule and authority, the head of the body which is his church.

Then look at verse 11. And we get down to something rather more personal. Circumcision. It says, in him also you were circumcised with a circumcision made without hands by putting off the body of flesh in the circumcision of Christ.

Now, what Paul is doing is moving from the kind of ceremonial and ritual circumcision by which people came under the covenant with God as a sign of the covenant in the Old Testament.

And it's still a sign of the covenant people of God. And circumcision was the sign of that.

[ 11 : 06 ] But Paul is saying for the Gentiles that's not where their circumcision is. That's not the same thing. He says it's not an outward male handmade a human imposed sign.

It's not that anymore. There is another circumcision. And that's described in verse 11 as in him you also were circumcised with a circumcision made without hands by putting off the body of flesh in the circumcision of Christ.

Christ's death is the reality of what circumcision means. I.e. it finds its fulfillment in Christ's death. There was a tiny wound which was a sign of the covenant which would be fulfilled in the wounding and death of Jesus Christ on the cross.

rejection of the self and all its demands total submission to the will of God without limit Christ's death on the cross is the point at which humanity embodied embodied humanity has totally surrendered to the will of God.

[ 12 : 42 ] you see that's why I'm telling you about this body business because Christ in the body totally surrendered to the will of God.

Now we live subject to the tyrannous dictatorship of our bodies and in a not very happy relationship to them much of the time but Jesus brought his body in his body came to a place of subjection to and obedience to Jesus Christ sorry subjection to and obedience to God by his going to the cross he has done what we can't do we can't submit our bodies continue to tyrannize us and we live through most of this life subject to the joys and tyrannies of our physical existence but Jesus in the body came to the place of submission and obedience to

God so that human life he has done for us what we can't do human life is not the triumph of flesh over death that is we do a lot of things for our bodies we pamper them and we recreate them and we enter we have surgical interventions in them and all those kinds of things happen to our to our bodies but we don't triumph over death human life is the submission of the flesh to the purpose of God and that's a lifelong purpose what God wants to accomplish in you spiritually he wants to accomplish while you are in the body so that you will come to fullness of life in him who is the head of all rule and authority so what

I'm saying is you have a body Christ in his body submitted to the will of God and that's why it goes on to say what baptism means look at the next verse you were buried with him in baptism in which you were also raised with him through faith in the working of God who raised him from the death when Christ gave up his body on the cross we are baptized into his death when you are baptized you are buried when you are baptized you join a community that is constantly celebrating the death of Christ you can only experience death consciously in the death of another person most of you won't be around when you die to watch it happen if you want to know what death means you experience it in the life of another and so there is held before you the death of

Christ on the cross and you are asked to sit and survey the wondrous cross on which the prince of glory died and you find your death in his death that's what baptism into his death means you enter into the death of Christ by baptism it's why the passage says in that kind of mysterious way you were buried with him in baptism you enter into the death of Christ by baptism I should say it once again so you make sure you get when you do that you see you come to terms with your own mortality in the death of

[17:28] Christ you encounter your own mortality and by baptism into that death you share in the death of Christ so that your death as a Christian is meant to be a conscious partaking of the death of Christ you accept the fact that as he died you by baptism into him are dying with him that is your death when somebody comes to be baptized baptized they come in effect to die but that isn't all that baptism is because it goes on to say in which you were also raised with him through faith in the working of God God raised Jesus from the dead to die no more the reason we celebrate the death of

Jesus is that in his death death itself was put to death and by baptism we are incorporated into his body into his death and into his resurrection that's where our life is that's the source of our life baptism then becomes a choice that you have made or that has been made for you and you have personally accepted it that's why when you become a Christian when you know how they cried out to Peter when he preached the first sermon what are we going to do and Peter said you're going to be baptized into the death of Christ into the resurrection of Christ into the body of Christ which is his church and that's where you're going to find out who you are you're dead you're alive and you're a member of the body and that becomes the basic definition of who you are as a person that's what happened to you in your baptism try and remember when it was

I can't remember when mine was I know it was at a time before I was conscious of such things happening to me and I know that when I was about 14 I was confirmed and repeated the vows of my baptism I know also that I didn't understand it until I was taught from the scriptures what it meant that Christ had died for me and that my believing in him was a sharing in his death and his resurrection and an incorporation into his body body so baptism is your personal humiliation that is you die to self you die to the demands of the body you are brought to life in Christ to share as you have his death now you share his resurrected life and that's why as a

Christian you're not subject to death anymore yes Paul says you have to slough off this body but your life is a sharing of the risen life of Christ which is not subject to death that's your real life that's your true life and that's what happens to you in baptism somebody told me recently that God humbled himself three times he humbled himself first in the incarnation when God became flesh he humbled himself secondly at the crucifixion when he gave up his body to death on the cross he humbles himself thirdly in the church which is his body so it is if God isn't ashamed of the church

perhaps it would be better if you wouldn't be and so that I

I beg of you that you will be humble enough to accept the fact of your baptism as the basis of who you are you have a Christian name and you know what that is and that name is based on the fact of your sharing in the death of Christ your sharing in the resurrection of Christ and your membership in the body of Christ that's who you are that's where you come to fullness God the whole fullness of God dwells bodily in Jesus Christ the fullness of our life is the same as we come to fullness of life in him in him in him the fullness of deity dwells in him we come to fullness of life that's where your life is that's who you are now the great human temptation is to say no I'm somebody else somebody better somebody more powerful somebody more significant somebody with a greater destiny somebody with a higher calling there isn't such a thing fullness of life is to have shared in the death of

[ 23 : 50 ] Christ the resurrection of Christ and to be a member of the body of Christ that's what the fullness is and that's what your baptism means I would invite you if you are not to consider being baptized I would invite you if you are to recognize that in that you have come to fullness of life in him that's the heritage that belongs to you and that's what we need to claim amen