

QUICKENING OF THE MORTAL BODY

"If the Spirit of Him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you, He that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies by His Spirit that dwelleth in you." – Rom. 8:11.

EVERY TEXT should be considered in the light of its context. In the Epistle to the Romans, the Apostle's argument is that by nature we are all sinners; and that God's proposition is that He will accept us as sons on a new plane if our lives be offered in consecration: "I beseech you, therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service." – Rom. 12:1.

After an individual has made this presentation of his body for sacrifice, and he has been begotten of the Holy Spirit, the mortal body is counted as being dead, and his mind, his will, is reckoned as the New Creature adopted into the family of God and seeking to serve Him and to grow into *His* likeness, by being conformed to the likeness of His dear Son. Therefore, in all such expressions as we find in our text and its context, the Apostle refers exclusively to the New Creature, and ignores entirely, as *dead*, the mortal body. It is from this standpoint that we can say of the New Creature that he is holy; that the righteousness of the Law is fulfilled in him, and that the Wicked One toucheth him not. – Rom. 8:4; I John 5:18.

Those things which he formerly did he is to do no more. The Apostle says, moreover, that he would not be content merely to be *dead in the flesh* – in the sense of simply abstaining from sin – but that he should seek to become *energetic* in the service of *righteousness*. If we ask how this is to be done, the answer is, "by the Spirit of God." If the Spirit of God was powerful enough to raise our Lord Jesus from the dead, it will quicken, or energize, our mortal bodies. When our bodies have been reckoned as alive, quickened, they

are energized in opposition to sin and in harmony with righteousness. This, then, is the Apostle's thought in our text.

It is well that we should have in mind the thought that the consecration of our bodies to the Lord may permit us to do more in His service than we could have done if we had not been begotten of the Holy Spirit. We are not to expect that this energizing will work a miracle, such as the restoration of a person in the last stage of consumption, etc. The Lord does not work in this way. But the Lord's people would do well to cultivate the thought that if it be the Lord's will they shall be able to do something in His service. If we have this confidence, every one of us can do much more than if we do not have it, for it gives new energy of mind and body.

A great deal of harm is done in the world by people who not only have a wrong opinion themselves, but who spread contagion of thought to others. We see to what a large extent this is carried on by Christian Scientists, who deny that there is either pain or death.

While we do not advocate this course, yet we should not, on the other hand, imagine that our bodies are in worse condition than they really are, but in a wise and judicious manner should seek to use them in the Lord's service. Instead of discouraging others we would do well to encourage them to realize that it is largely according [R5035 : page 178] to their faith that they shall be able to do anything. If we have no strong desire to accomplish something we shall become weak, sickly.

ILLUSTRATION OF THE POWER OF MIND OVER BODY

To some extent the world recognizes the power of the mind over the body. An account in the newspapers recently told of two great, strong men who were sick in bed as the result of the coddling of their mother, who should have encouraged them to get up and take a little air and exercise. Another case reported was that of a woman who imagined that she was *glass*. At first she used to get up while the

attendant put the room in order; but later she would not sit up. After she had been in bed for a year or two, the doctor told her that there was nothing the matter with her body, but with her mind. One day her relatives got her up in the middle of the room and left her there, telling her that there was nothing wrong except her attitude of mind. At first she declared that she would go to pieces. She did not, however. With proper encouragement she lost her fear of breaking and began to improve; in due time she was quite well.

You have heard of the professor upon whom some college boys played a trick. They planned to meet the professor on his way to school and to test the power of the mind over the body. The first boy met him, as they had agreed, when he was going out of his house, and told him that he was not looking well. He replied, "I am feeling quite well." Another met him a block away, then another a little further on, telling him that he looked pale and sick. Yet another met him and said, "You are a sick man." Still another greeted him with, "Professor A, you should be in bed." The next one exclaimed, "I must help [R5036 : page 178] you home, for you are in no condition to be at school!" The professor went home sick. All this occurred within fifteen minutes. The story is said to be true.

All through life we are either helping or hindering others. Tell people something good; seek to cheer them, and when yourself ailing, follow the good suggestions you make to others. If you have a headache, moaning will not mend matters. Do not think so much about it; and by forgetting it, help nature to get rid of it. Nobody knows just how the power of the mind over the body is effected. The claim is that certain attitudes of mind favor certain microbes in the body. Medical journals state that children have died in spasms after having been suckled by mothers who have gotten into a rage a short time before nursing the children. It is well for all to have meek and quiet spirits, for faith, love, hope and kindness make for health.

It is very reasonable and logical that the Lord should have given us the most wonderful power in our minds to make people feel better, to control muscle and nerve. One's conduct in the sick room has an influence upon the patient. One should speak kindly and cheerfully. If nothing that will be helpful can be said truthfully, it is far better to be quiet or to remain outside of the sick room.

A sister supposed to be dying once sent for us. Upon entering the room we said, "Well, Sister, you are looking better than we had expected to see you. You are better!" "I *am* feeling better," she answered. "When did you begin to feel better?" we inquired. "When I heard you in the hall," she said. She is living today and married, and has a child. Yet we might have helped her to die, and might have had a funeral service instead of a marriage ceremony.

"WE HAVE THE MIND OF CHRIST"

It is well for us to consider the question: If the natural mind has such an effect upon the body, how should it be with those who can claim, "We have the mind of Christ"? What effect should this mind, or disposition, which is loving, generous, kind, forgiving toward our fellows, and reverential, loyal and obedient toward God, have upon the body? Does not the Apostle declare that if the spirit, or mind, of God dwell in them their *mortal* bodies shall be quickened?

He does; but do not misunderstand the Apostle's teaching. In the preceding verse (Rom. 8:10) he states, "If Christ be in you the *body* is *dead*" – not literally dead, but reckonedly dead, in that the human will has died and that the will of God in Christ has been accepted instead. The will is dead to sinful things; it does not love nor practise them as once it did. His argument is that such a deadness to sin, although desirable, should not stop at that point; we should by God's grace seek to get *alive* to righteousness and to be as active in its service as once we were alive to sin and active in its service. He proceeds to show that this, although a great change, is possible to us; and he tells us how it is to be accomplished.

He says that the mighty Spirit of God, which could and did raise our Lord from literal death, is able to quicken (make alive) to the service of righteousness these very bodies once alive to sin, but now, by God's grace, mortified, killed, "dead to sin." He therefore urges all who have the spirit, or mind of Christ, not only to be *dead* to sin, but to permit the Spirit of Christ in them to make them *alive* to holiness and to God's service in general. He shows them further that the new mind of Christ which they have received is a spirit of adoption into God's family as sons, and that if they are sons they are not only "free" but must bear fruit unto holiness, and that their joint-heirship with Christ as sons depends upon this quickening of their mortal bodies – "if so be that we suffer with Him, that we may be also glorified together." – Rom. 8:17.

All who catch the real sense of this passage will see that it has no reference to physical quickening and immunity from pain and sickness, but to a quickening, or energizing by the Lord's Spirit so as to be, not only *willing*, but *glad*, to "suffer with Him." Hence those who see their High Calling should not expect exemption from sufferings and trials and difficulties; and the usual aches and pains which come to the Lord's people, as well as to the world, in a natural way, should be treated as the world treats them, but borne with greater patience and cheerfulness.

St. Paul clearly marks the distinction between our new mind, which, consecrated in Christ, is accepted as the New Creature, holy and acceptable to God, and our mortal body, which he calls "this dead body" – originally dead, under Divine sentence, because of sin, but redeemed by the precious blood of Christ, and justified, and then included in our sacrifice when we gave our little *all* in consecration to the Lord, as a living sacrifice, to be dead with Christ, to suffer with Him even unto death. He declares that those who are walking *after* the Spirit, seeking to serve the Lord in Spirit and in truth, from the heart, are freed from condemnation, and that they do not now walk *after the flesh*, wishing to fulfil its desires. – Rom. 8:1,4.

And here we are to distinguish closely between walking *after* the Spirit and walking *up to* the Spirit. We should, of course, follow as closely as possible to the spirit of Truth and righteousness, and yet we cannot hope [R5036 : page 179] to walk *up to* the spirit of the Divine requirements so long as we are in the imperfect flesh, though we may strive in this direction continually. One thing is positive, however – we must not walk *after* the *flesh*. To do so would imply that we had lost the new mind, the new disposition, the new will; that we had become dead to those hopes which had led to our consecration.

The Apostle urges that all remember that one who is "in the flesh," who lives in harmony with the sinful propensities of his fallen, fleshly nature, is not pleasing to God; and that such yielding to the flesh, of course, if persisted in, will end in death. He proceeds to reason that if the spirit, or mind, or disposition of God (the spirit of holiness) dwells in one, he cannot be in sympathetic accord with the fallen human nature, its appetites and ambitions. If any man have not the Spirit of Christ he is not of the Body of Christ. Christ's Spirit is not a Spirit of harmony with sin, but of opposition to sin; He laid down His life to vanquish sin and to deliver mankind from its power and dominion. Therefore, whoever claims to have the Spirit of Christ, but who loves and *wilfully* practises sin, and with *his mind serves* sin, deceives himself; for he has neither part nor lot in Christ.

THE SPIRIT OF GOD IS POWERFUL

St. Paul proceeds further along this same line, arguing that our adoption into God's family, our begetting to newness of heart and mind, and our acceptance thus as members of the Body of Christ, while it means, first of all, that the body is ignored and reckoned as *dead* because of sin and that only our spirits, or minds, are reckoned as righteous and alive – the beginning of our eternal existence – nevertheless, this good condition is not to be considered the limit of our *ambition* and *attainment* in Christ-likeness.

On the contrary, we are to remember that the Spirit of God is powerful; that in the case of our Lord Jesus it was powerful enough to raise Him from the dead. And as we become more imbued with and controlled by the Holy Spirit of God in our hearts, in our minds, Divine power will come to us gradually through this channel of the Holy Spirit, which will permit a figurative raising of our mortal bodies from their death-state into activities of spiritual life in the service of the Lord, for the assurance given us through the Apostle is that if God's Spirit dwells in us in sufficient measure – abundantly – He will energize our *mortal bodies* – not our immortal, resurrection bodies.

It is our hope that in due time the Lord by His Spirit will give us new bodies in the resurrection; and that those bodies will be immortal, perfect in every respect; and that then, not only our minds, but our bodies also will be in fullest harmony with God and His every Law and work of righteousness. That condition will be glorious; it is already a glorious prospect. But the Apostle holds before us that even our present, mortal bodies, sentenced, then justified, reckoned dead because of sin and consecrated, may be so quickened or energized that, instead of being any longer servants of sin, or even merely *dead to it*, they may, under the careful watchfulness of the new mind, be used as servants of righteousness, of Truth.

This means, of course, a High Christian development, a large attainment toward "the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ." The measure of the fulness of Christ, the maturity and growth necessary to its attainment, involves the "*putting on* of the Lord Jesus Christ," and is not the work of a moment, nor of an hour, nor of a month, nor of a year. It is the *work of a life time*. But unless it is begun, it will never be completed. And, indeed, we may be sure that we can never fully put on Christ's characteristics. However, this is the standard for which every one of the Lord's people must continually strive.

The Lord will see our endeavor, our strenuous fighting to put off the old nature, to put off "the works of the flesh" and to be clothed with the garments of righteousness suitable to our relationship to Him, and our success will be proportionate to our attainment of the mind, or disposition of Christ – holy conformity to the will of the Father in all things. How comforting in this connection is the promise of our Lord, that our "Heavenly Father is more willing to give His Holy Spirit (the Spirit of holiness, the Spirit of wisdom) to them that ask Him than are earthly parents to give good gifts unto their children!" – Luke 11:13.

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