

## THE BODY OF SIN (Rom. 6:6)

I. Human beings are a body-spirit dualism. This view is crucial for a proper understanding of Paul's teaching about sin and salvation in Romans 6-8.

A. Here is some of the dualistic language used in this passage:

<u>SOUL</u>	<u>BODY</u>
6:6 – “our old self” [“man,” <i>anthrōpos</i> ]	“the body of sin”
6:11 – “yourselves [ <i>heautous</i> ]”	
6:12 –	“your mortal body”
6:13 – “yourselves [ <i>heautous</i> ]”	“your members” [“body parts,” <i>melos</i> ] “your members” [ <i>melos</i> ]
6:17 – “from the heart”	
6:19 –	“your flesh” “your members” [ <i>melos</i> ] “your members” [ <i>melos</i> ]
7:5 –	“in the flesh” “our members” [ <i>melos</i> ]
7:18 –	“in my flesh”
7:22 – “according to the inner man”	
7:23 – “the law of my mind”	“in my members” “in my members”
7:24 –	“the body of this death”
7:25 – “I myself [ <i>autos egō</i> ]” “with the mind”	“with the flesh”
8:10 – “the spirit is alive”	“the body is dead”
8:12 –	“to the flesh” “according to the flesh”
8:13 –	“according to flesh” “the practices of the body”
8:23 –	“the redemption of our body”

B. Contrary to a common view, in these texts *sarx*, “flesh,” refers to the fleshly body and is a synonym for the body. It does NOT refer to our “sinful nature,” or the continuing vestiges of our sinful pre-Christian state.

II. Sin has affected both our souls and our bodies. It has invaded both, and brought both into a state of spiritual corruption.

A. This truth is generally accepted by most Christians with regard to the soul or spirit, which in sinners is seen as sinful, as corrupt, as depraved (partially or totally) as spiritually sick, as spiritually dead.

B. Also, it is generally accepted that sin has brought *physical* disease, defects, and death to the body.

C. My understanding of Paul, though, is that sin has affected our bodies not just physically, but in some SPIRITUAL way. Sin has taken control of the body and uses the body as an instrument for evil.

III. At conversion, via the act of regeneration (death to sin and resurrection to new life), God heals the sin-corrupted *spirit*, but not the *body*.

A. See especially Romans 6:6, “Knowing this, that our old self was crucified with Him, that our body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves to sin.” Here are the things Paul says we should “know” about this regeneration event:

1. **“Our old self.”** This is literally “our old man.” It refers specifically to the INNER man, the soul/spirit. It does not refer to the *whole* person; it does not include the body.
2. **“was crucified with Him.”** This is the same as the death that happened in our baptism (vv. 2-4).
3. **“so that.”** I.e., here is the PURPOSE of that death to sin.
4. **“the body of sin.”**
  - a. This refers to our literal body, the body of flesh and blood, as distinct from the soul or spirit.
  - b. Why say “body of sin”? Because the body is infested with and controlled by the indwelling presence of sin. It is a beachhead or staging point for all sorts of temptations and lusts (6:12).
5. **“might be rendered powerless.”**
  - a. The verb here is the Greek *katergeō*, which can have a strong meaning such as “destroy, do away with”; or a weaker meaning, such as “render powerless.”
  - b. Many Bible versions translate it here as “destroy” or “do away with.” I disagree. Here it means “render powerless.” (See Hebrews 2:14 for the same word and same meaning.)
  - c. In what sense is the “body of sin” rendered powerless in our baptism?
6. **“that we should no longer be slaves to sin.”**
  - a. The body of sin has been rendered powerless because our SOULS have been infused with new spiritual life and spiritual power. Thus we—our souls—can take control of our bodies with all their sinful lusts and desires. WE—our souls or spirits—are in charge, not our bodies. We are now empowered to rule over our bodies.
  - b. This is the PURPOSE for the divine act of death and resurrection that is performed on us in our baptism. It gives us power over sin. Now we CAN overcome sin and do good works!
  - c. We “died to sin” (6:2) “so that we would no longer be slaves to sin” (6:6). “For he who has died is freed from sin” (6:7).

B. In baptism our SOULS (spirits) were raised and renewed, even though our bodies are not yet redeemed and are still permeated with the power of sin. (Remember: we are twofold in nature.)

C. Nevertheless, the “body of sin” has been *rendered powerless* because our renewed SPIRIT is now able to take control of our body (6:6). This establishes the POSSIBILITY of holy living.

D. It is now our *moral responsibility* to stop sinning! (Verse 12 is the first command in Romans.)

1. See especially vv. 12-14. Here, “members” = “the parts of your body.”
2. The question is, WHO IS IN CHARGE: your *new self*, or your *old body*?
3. The pressures & temptations of sin are still present in our bodies, but our renewed spirits are able to overcome them! (Illustration: the “Whac-a-mole” arcade game. Every time a temptation raises its ugly head -- WHACK it!!!)

IV. Because we are a combination of redeemed souls and as-yet-unredeemed bodies, the Christian life is an on-going conflict between the soul and the body (Romans 7:14-25). [This passage should be understood as referring to the Christian life. See my Romans commentary for the reasons why this is the case.]

A. The Severity of the Struggle (vv. 14-20).

1. The conflict is between *willing* and *doing*: “for the willing is present in me, but the doing of the good is not” (18b).

- a. Paul WANTS to do good; he does not want to do evil (19).
    - (1) He has a positive attitude toward the Law: “the Law is spiritual” (14a); “I agree with the Law, confessing that the Law is good” (16b); “I joyfully concur with the Law of God” (22a). See his discussion of the Law’s goodness in vv. 7-13.
    - (2) What is “the good” he wants to do? Behavior *required* by his law code.
    - (3) What is “the very evil” he does not want to do? Behavior *forbidden* by his law code.
  - b. But what does he actually DO (not all the time, but at least sometimes)?
    - (1) The very opposite of what he WANTS to do: “I am not practicing what I would like to do” (15a); “I do the very thing I do not want to do” (16a); “The good that I want, I do not do, but I practice the very evil that I do not want” (19).
    - (2) In fact, “I am doing the very thing I hate” (15b).
2. Paul suggests it is almost like being TAKEN OVER by the sin that dwells in him: “So now, no longer am I the one doing it, but sin which dwells in me” (17, see 20).
    - a. It is like he is a slave to sin, “sold into bondage to sin” (14b).
    - b. This is not an excuse, but an explanation.

## B. The Source of the Struggle (vv. 21-25).

1. Paul’s explanation presupposes the two-fold nature of human beings: physical and spiritual.
  - a. References to the physical body:
    - (1) “I am a being of flesh” (14)
    - (2) “Good does not dwell in my flesh” (18).
    - (3) “My members,” i.e., the members of my body (23, twice). See 6:13.
    - (4) “This body of death” (24). (This is a *spiritual* death present in the *body*!)
    - (5) “With [the] flesh” (25).
  - b. References to the spiritual self:
    - (1) “The inner man” (22). See Rom. 6:6; 2 Cor. 4:16; Eph. 3:16.
    - (2). “My mind” (23).
    - (3) “I myself [*autos ego*]” (25).
    - (4) “With [my] mind” (25).
2. How does this explain the intense struggle that goes on in us?
  - a. The fact is that our SOULS have undergone a radical healing change, but our bodies have not.
  - b. “We are redeemed in two stages. First, at conversion the sinful soul is crucified with Christ and raised up into a state of spiritual life (6:1-6). Then, at the second coming the sin-infested body will be redeemed through resurrection (8:23) or transformation (1 Cor 15:51-54). But in between these two events, while we are still living on this earth, we exist as an awkward combination of redeemed soul and as-yet-unredeemed body.” As F. F. Bruce says, “We are living simultaneously on two planes.” (Cottrell, *Commentary on Romans*, I:444-45)

- c. The crucial factor is that somehow, SIN still lives (dwells) in our bodies (17b, 18a, 20b, 21, 23). (Our bodies are not *inherently* evil, but have become invaded by and commandeered by sin, as it were.)
- 3. The result: the spirit struggles against the flesh.
    - a. “Spiritual conflict is present in the Christian’s life because one part of our being follows the law of God, while the other part follows the law of sin. On the one hand, the regenerated inner man (mind) is fully committed to God’s law, and delights in it. We ‘joyfully concur’ in it (NASB). It is the good thing our hearts want to do. (See Ps 119:14, 16, 24, 35, 47, 97.) . . . “On the other hand, the law of sin is ‘in my members,’ i.e., in the members of my body (cf. ‘in my flesh,’ v. 18). This law or power of sin still ‘lives in’ the body (vv. 17, 20), still permeates it and exploits its appetites and weaknesses” (ibid., 451).
    - b. It is like a military battle (v. 23).
    - c. It is like trying to serve as a slave for two masters: the Law of God (22) and the law of sin (23). See v. 25; see Matt. 6:24.
  - 4. So what can we do?
- C. The Solution to This Struggle (vv. 24, 25a).
    - 1. “Thanks be to God!” God is the solution, in that his overall plan has provided for our victory.
    - 2. Jesus our Lord is the one who set this plan in motion and makes the victory possible.
    - 3. The indwelling Holy Spirit (from Pentecost forward) gives us power over sin (Rom. 8:1-13).
    - 4. The ultimate deliverance comes with the redemption of the body (Rom. 8:23).

## V. Pastoral Implications.

- A. This helps to explain why even Christians may still have so much trouble with “the lusts of the flesh.”
- B. Materialistic science (and our monistic culture in general) seeks a physical or chemical explanation for all such problems, e.g., brain/genetic/hormonal disorders, or chemical imbalance.
  - 1. One result of this “nothing buttery” (simplistic) explanation is the elimination of blame or of personal moral responsibility for immoral behavior. Such is not consistent with Paul’s teaching in Romans 6-7, however.
  - 2. On the other hand, we cannot ignore or dismiss the findings of modern brain research, where it shows that there IS a connection between physical states (e.g., the brain) and behavior patterns.
  - 3. We must, however, be open to spiritual explanations for such physical states in the first place.
- C. If the reality of the spiritual is rejected, then any desired solutions to such problems will also be limited to the physical.
  - 1. We should avail ourselves of effective physical treatments (e.g., drugs) where appropriate.
  - 2. But the only truly effective solutions are based on these two spiritual realities:
    - a. The regeneration of the sinful spirit and the resultant ability of the thus-redeemed spirit to control the remaining desires and inclinations of the as-yet-unredeemed body.
    - b. The presence of the indwelling Holy Spirit, who empowers our spirits to exercise such control.