

Body

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- [0 : 00] Well, this morning we're in week four of our series Inside Out, in which we explore different facets of our humanity. And just like in previous weeks, we're actually going to cover quite a wide range of biblical material today.
- And so all the verses that you really need to know will be on the screen, and that will help you to follow along. And also, you've got a sermon outline, and I really encourage you to use that this morning.
- I think it would really help to just keep you on track in following along as well. And you will notice that just about 97% of the verses I cite are on the outline already. So you don't have to worry too much about remembering all the references.
- And so that's what we'll be doing this morning. And the sermon might be slightly longer than usual. I'm hoping it won't be, but it might be. So just to give you a heads up on that as well.
- Let's ask God for His help. Father, I just pray, Lord, again, that you would speak through your word this morning, especially as we consider who we are as human beings before you.
- [1 : 08] Help us to understand ourselves better, so that we can worship you in a way that is not ignorant, but with understanding, and that we can glorify you.
- So all this we just commit into your hands. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen. Greg Allison, a professor who teaches at a major Baptist seminary, once tells this story of a student who came to see him.
- After some small talk, the student told him his problem. He had leturgy, insomnia, digestive and urinary problems, and wondered if he was experiencing some spiritual attack.
- And so he was caught by surprise when Professor Allison started asking him, What are you eating? How are you resting? Are you exercising? As it turns out, he was binging on junk food, not getting any rest, and not bothering to exercise.
- His justification was that, since his body was going to go down under anyway, there's no need to eat well, sleep well, or exercise well. And he couldn't understand why Professor Allison didn't offer him a more spiritual solution.
- [2 : 15] To him, bodies are hardly worth bothering about. Now this morning, we're going to be thinking about our bodies. And it's such an obvious aspect of our common humanity that it seems hardly worth the bother.
- It seems better to fix our attention on the more spiritual or at least invisible aspects of our humanity, as we've been doing over the past three weeks. But as C.S. Lewis once wrote, There is no good trying to be more spiritual than God.
- God never meant man to be a purely spiritual creature. As he says, that's why bodily acts like baptism and communion are such an integral part of our church life.

There is no need to try to be more spiritual than God. After all, he made us with bodies, and we experience all of life as bodily creatures. And that's one reason to consider the body this morning.

But another reason, I think, is because today, we get all sorts of mixed messages on how to approach our bodies. On the one hand, the body can be treated as just insignificant raw material.

[3 : 23] After all due to technological advances, we live in an increasingly disembodied world. Think about older technologies such as the phone or the radio.

What they do is they detach the human voice from the bodies to whom they belong, so you can experience hearing somebody without experiencing them bodily.

And now, thanks to Facebook, you can become friends with someone halfway across the world whom you've never met in person. Thanks to WhatsApp, you can get a steady stream of information flowing to you without ever personally encountering the person behind that information.

All thanks to the forward button. And indeed, right now, thanks to live streaming technology, you are encountering me as pixels on a screen, rather than as a physical flesh and blood person.

And in such a technologically oriented world, it's easy for us, subconsciously, to begin to absorb the myth that our bodies don't really matter that much.

[4 : 27] It's just raw material, which we can disregard or perhaps modify however we like. Now, I'm not saying that we consciously think of our bodies that way. We probably don't.

But I am saying that we are influenced more than we know. So on the one hand, the world can simply treat our body as insignificant raw material.

But on the other hand, the world can also treat our body as objects of worship. Now, advertisers know this. That's why in advertisements, bodies are prominent. Advertisers show you the best looking hair, the well sculpted biceps, the sexy figure.

Why? Because they know very well that's what many people find fulfillment in. It's what lies behind our desire to know which nutritional supplements really do work, or which fitness program is most effective.

A perfectly functioning body has become, for many people, the ultimate goal in life. And so these are the stories the world tells today about our bodies.

[5 : 37] But what story does God tell? Well, this morning we're going to let the Bible tell the story of our bodies. We'll tell the story as a drama in four acts.

As God's creation, as broken and fallen, as redeemed and set apart, and as raised and glorified. And as we do so, I hope we'll get a clearer sense of where our bodies fit within our humanity, and how we can live with them to God's glory.

And so act one, the body as God's creation. And let's start right at the beginning with Genesis 1 verse 31. God saw all that he had made, and it was very good.

All throughout Genesis 1, God has been creating. The stars you marvel at, the sea you're in awe of, the flowers you admire, he made them.

Why so? Because he's constructing the stage upon which the entire human drama is going to unfold. And here's the thing to notice.

[6 : 45] It's a theatre that's robustly physical. It's substantial. There is nothing dreamlike about it. And over and over again, like a constant exclamation point, the Bible keeps proclaiming, And God saw that it was good.

And it wasn't just the stars or the sea that God proclaims as good. It's human beings. And notice how we are made. In Genesis 2 verse 7, we're told that the Lord God formed a man from the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life.

And the man became a living creature. We're created from dust. We're created from stuff. Stuff that is part of the physical creation.

And so we are marked out as also being part of the same physical creation, as the stars, as the sea, as the flowers. We're not angels or ghosts.

We have physical bodies. Bodies, God says, that are very good. But what are some of the specific characteristics of these good created bodies?

[8 : 02] As we explore further, we discover three things in particular. Firstly, your body is not accidental. My friends, your body didn't come about because the dust in the ground randomly organised itself.

Your body didn't come about because some genes randomly sequenced itself. Neither was your body mass-produced on some divine factory line.

Your body was lovingly and carefully and personally made. As Psalm 139 verse 14 puts it, you are fearfully and wonderfully made.

God handcrafted you. He knitted you together. Every hand. Every limb. Or as Isaiah 64 verse 8 puts it, God is the potter and we as the clay are the work of his hands.

The great theologian John Calvin, in his sermons on Psalm 139 and the Book of Job, waxes eloquently on the amazing way that God has constructed the human body.

[9 : 11] When we examine the body, he says, even to the nail of our fingers, everything is in its right place. Change the angle of your elbows maybe, or place the ear lower on your body, and it would feel out of place.

Who is it, he asks, who could execute such a complicated and diversified structure? The answer is obvious. God alone. It's simply amazing that he can give shape to such a messy heap of lips and ribs and hips in the first place.

And so your body is not accidental. It's intentional. It's planned. Then, it has a design. God knew what shape it would take, what environment it would be produced in, what family of origin it would come from, what ethnicity would characterize it.

And since all those things, your physicality, your family, your culture, all play a part in forming you to be the particular you, It's no surprise that the psalmist goes on to affirm in verse 16, Your eyes saw my unformed body.

All the days ordained for me were written in your book before one of them came to be. God knows you. Really knows you, even your past, present and future.

[10 : 44] And that means you are precious to God in your embodied form. And so, strictly speaking, no pregnancy is ever unplanned in God's eyes.

In Psalm 104 verse 24, the psalmist says God's wisdom is shown in his creation. How many are your works, Lord? In wisdom you made them all.

The earth is full of your creatures. And that includes your body. But your body is not accidental either in the sense that it is made with a purpose.

We make things with a purpose, don't we? We make x-ray machines to scan x-rays, not to bake a cake. We bake tennis rackets to play tennis with, not to unlock a door.

And God made our bodies with a purpose. What's that purpose? Well, in Genesis 1 verse 26 to 28, we're told that we're made to image God.

[11 : 43] And to image God would include ruling over the physical world that he had made, and to be fruitful and multiply. And notice, to do those things, we need bodies.

To multiply, we need gendered bodies, male and female. A subject we'll consider more next week. If we have no bodies, we can't fulfill the mandate of Genesis 1 verse 28.

And to image God also appears in some sense to mean being relational. And we need our bodies to do that. We use our vocal cords to communicate verbally, and bodily expressions to communicate non-verbally.

And so that means our bodies are integral to our purpose as human beings. We are not just ghosts in a shell. There's a sense in which we can even say, we are our body.

We eat with our bodies. We hear with our bodies. We see with our bodies. And so when someone points out somebody to you on the street, and your eyes spot that person, you say, I see him.

[12 : 59] You don't normally say, my eyes see him. You don't think of your eyes as completely distinct from you. And that cautions us against doing to our bodies whatever we like.

What we do to our body, we do to ourselves. Our bodies are not unformed clay for us to simply play with.

Our bodies are not accidental. They are integral to us. And they are designed to fulfill God's purpose. Secondly, your body is not unlimited.

To have a body is necessarily to be limited. We need to eat because our bodies need energy. We need to sleep because our bodies need replenishing.

In Psalm 121 verses 3 to 4, we are told that God will neither slumber nor sleep. And the point is, that's what distinguishes God from us.

[14 : 01] God doesn't have a body that needs rest. But we do. And the book of Ecclesiastes is especially realistic about our limitations.

In Ecclesiastes 1 verse 8, we are told that the eye never has enough of seeing, nor the ear is full of hearing. As much as our eyes and our ears can take in, it is still too limited to have a God-like view of the world.

In 2 verse 11, the writer surveys all the works his hands have done, and realized that they can only achieve a limited amount, no matter how much effort he puts in.

Or take Job. In the last chapters of the book, we find an extended meditation on our limitations as human beings. In Job 40 verse 8, the rhetorical question is asked, do you have an arm like God's?

And can your voice thunder like his? In 41 verse 1, we are asked, Can you pull in Leviathan, that's a giant sea creature, with a fish hook, or tie down its tongue with a rope?

[15 : 12] The answer, of course, is no. We are created beings with limited bodies. And it's not just limited in strength and abilities.

As the saying goes, you can't be in two places at once. Why not? Because right now, your body is in front of a device. It's not playing football in a stadium.

Your body limits you to a place. Now, one of the attractions of cyberspace is that it seems like you can be in many places at once. You could be online playing chess with someone in Russia, or you chat with your cousin in America, as you sit in your Malaysian living room.

You are freed from bodily limitations, also it seems. But of course, it is still an illusion. You are not in Moscow.

You are still here in Kuching, or wherever it is you are currently based. And so the fact that God created us with bodies reminds us to be humble.

[16 : 16] Earlier, we said that God made us from dust to mark us out as being part of this physical creation. But perhaps he does so too to remind us that we are not God.

We are limited. As Psalm 103 verse 14 puts it, He knows how we are formed. He remembers that we are dust. Without the breath of the Lord, we are nothing.

And we must keep that in mind. Thirdly, your body is not definitive. According to scripture, your body is you, and yet it is not the sum total of who you are.

In 1 Samuel 16 verse 7, a familiar verse, we are told, people look at the outward appearance, but the Lord looks at the heart. In other words, the Bible is telling us, if we only look at somebody's body, we are not getting the full picture.

There is more to a person than his or her body. After all, even if your leg was amputated, you will still be you.

[17 : 31] Now, as we said already, this doesn't completely disconnect our bodies from ourselves. Scripture doesn't let you off the hook if you commit adultery and excuse yourself saying, Oh, it wasn't me.

You know, I got physical with the other party, sure. But it means nothing. It's just my body hooking up with another body. And scripture says, rubbish.

And yet, we are more than our bodies. And that is freeing, because it means we don't have to be defined exclusively by our bodies.

We don't have to keep comparing ourselves and feel depressed if our body shape does not conform to the accepted standards of the world. But alternatively, it also means that we shouldn't boast or obsess about our bodies to the exclusion of everything else.

As we've seen already, God is interested in the heart. And God is looking for those who are after his own heart. Speaking of the exemplary woman, Proverbs 31 verse 30 says, Charm is deceptive, Charm is deceptive, and beauty is fleeting, but a woman who fears the Lord is to be praised.

[18 : 56] God looks beyond our bodies. And yet, we know that in reality, what happens to our bodies deeply impacts us.

And that takes us to act too. Our bodies as broken and fallen. And here is where the sermon could get really personal. I don't know all of you listening in now, but it wouldn't be surprising if you are currently experiencing your body, or the body of a loved one, as a source of unhappiness and suffering.

Perhaps you can identify with Psalm 6 verse 2 and 3. Have mercy on me, Lord, for I am faint. Heal me, Lord, for my bones are in agony.

My soul is in deep anguish. How long, Lord? How long? Why is that? Well, according to scripture, we now live in a vandalized world.

God created everything good, but it's now been defaced by anger, destroyed by division, defamed by slander, devastated by greed.

[20 : 14] And our bodies are not exempted. In Matthew Lee Anderson's memorable phrase, If our bodies are a temple, the temple lies in ruins.

And we experience that ruin in two ways. Firstly, our bodies can be places of brokenness. We fall sick. Things happen to our bodies.

I'm sure if I were to survey all of you listening in today, and I were to ask you, how many of you took some medication this week, or applied something to help your body feel better?

I'm sure at least half of you would say yes. Just yesterday, I had an ulcer in my mouth, and I had to put some bunjella on it. You see, we fall sick. And we stay sick. I was reading about someone in Malaysia who caught and recovered from COVID-19 recently.

And he said, What no one really tells you is that even after you recover, there's still all these after effects. He feels constantly tired. He can't concentrate for long. He doesn't know if his lungs are scarred permanently.

- [21 : 21] His body is broken. Some of you might not have COVID-19, but you've been struggling with some chronic condition for some time. Some of you are undergoing some pretty invasive treatment or treatment that makes your body feel bad, like chemotherapy.
- And you know very well what it feels like not to have your body do what you want it to do. And all these reveal our bodies to be places of brokenness.
- And scripture tells us why that is so. Romans 8 verse 20. For creation was subject to frustration, not by its own choice, but by the will of the one who subjected it.
- When human beings chose not to honour the Creator, they suffered the consequences of their choice. Now this doesn't mean that if your body is undergoing much pain now, you are directly paying for the individual sins of the past.
- It doesn't mean that you are suffering more because you have sinned more. No. It doesn't mean that you draw such a direct correlation in John 9 verse 1 to 3, and neither does Romans 8.
- [22 : 36] All Romans 8 verse 20 does is draw a general connection, not a specific one. But the connection is there. We know why our bodies are broken. It's because all of creation is now out of sync with God, including us.
- And so our bodies fall out of sync as well. And as we experience our broken bodies, Romans 8 verse 23 says we groan inwardly.
- In 2 Corinthians 12 verse 7, Paul talks about some sort of affliction. He's experiencing what he calls a thorn in the flesh. And some of you know exactly what Paul is talking about.
- That's why you groan. But what can sometimes make things worse is when people don't quite understand the pain you're feeling in your bodies. They think you're just grumbling. They think you're just soft. And so you feel sad, isolated, even rejected. Or perhaps your thorn is something very visible, like a physical deformity, or an eating disorder, or a skin disease.
- [23 : 48] And that can bring you great shame. Or perhaps you could even be experiencing gender dysphoria, when it feels like your body, your given body, is a complete mismatch with who you feel yourself to be.
- And I can't even imagine what that feels like. And that also brings a sense of great shame and loneliness. My point is, when our bodies are places of brokenness, the brokenness often goes beyond our bodies.
- They impact our relationship with others. And I want us to come to terms with that. The pain is not just broken down bodies.
- The pain is relational. It lies in social exclusion. And so let that encourage us to be more understanding, and slower to judge others, and to walk patiently alongside others, with broken bodies.
- But secondly, our bodies are also instruments of sin. In Romans 6 verse 12 to 13, Paul makes clear that it is possible to offer our bodies as instruments of wickedness.
- [25 : 06] Sin, after all, is usually mediated through our body parts. Our bodily actions reflect our attitudes, our mindsets, our desires. Consider the tongue, for example.
- In James 3 verse 5 to 6, we are told that, the tongue is a small part of the body, but it makes great boasts. Consider why the great forest is set on fire by a small spark.
- The tongue also is a fire, a whirl of evil among the parts of the body. It corrupts the whole body, sets the whole course of one's life on fire, and is itself set on fire by hell.
- The tongue itself is not sinful. It can be used for good, to praise God, to speak truth, to encourage others. But it can also cause great damage, as James points out.

You can slander, you can deceive people with it. And of course, it's not just the tongue. With our bodies, we're capable of displeasing God. The eye looks at wrong things.

[26 : 12] The hands cause violence to others. Feet run away from responsibility. And again, when we come to terms with our own wrongdoing, we can experience great shame. Think of Adam and Eve, hiding from God the moment they knew what they've done.

And sometimes we experience shame, not because we use our bodies as instruments of sin, but because others use their bodies as instruments of sin against us.

Think of victims of domestic violence or sexual assault. Our bodies are capable of great wickedness. And so in such a world, we cry along with Paul, in Romans 7 verse 24, What a wretched man I am!

Who will rescue me from this body that is subject to death? Who will rescue us from our fallen and broken bodies? Well, praise God, this is not the end of the story.

The story of our bodies now reaches its turning point. And so we come to act 3. Our bodies redeem and set apart.

[27 : 29] And set apart. You see, compared to some other philosophies or religions, Christianity does not see the rejection of the body as the solution. Rather, the true solution is found in the redemption of the body.

Now, how can we be so sure of this? Answer? Because of Jesus. For what do we see when we look at Jesus?

Firstly, we see Jesus becoming one with us by becoming one of us. He took on a human body.

He took on a particular body of a first century Jewish man. And the Apostle John couldn't help but marvel at this as he writes in 1 John 1 verse 1 to 2, that which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked at, and our hands have touched.

This we proclaim concerning the word of life. The life appeared, we have seen it and testified to it, and we proclaim to you the eternal life, which was with the Father and has appeared to us.

[28 : 48] You see, Jesus wasn't a ghost in a shell either. He doesn't wear a human body the way an astronaut wears a space suit.

No, that's not what Christians affirm. We affirm he took on the fullness of human nature, a human mind, human emotions, human will, and yes, a human body.

He's not just wearing a space suit. In the 1970s, there was an Italian singer who released a song, and his Italian audience was told that it was an English song, and it became a hit.

But there's a catch. The song has no English in it at all, apart from the words, all right. The song is made up of gibberish. Listen to it, and any English speaker can tell straight away that he's not singing English at all.

He's not one of them. And if the singer insists that he is a native English speaker, you would laugh at him. But Jesus is not like that.

[29 : 58] He is one of us. He has a body like us. He's a native of this earth like us. And so Jesus experienced what you experience, bodily speaking.

He experienced growing up. He experienced going hungry. He experienced getting tired. He can speak the language of human experience.

He can claim the experience of human embodiment. He knows what it's like to be you and me. And indeed, in a recent article, Andrew Abernathy, an Old Testament scholar, has an interesting, if provocative, suggestion.

He reminds us of Isaiah 52 verse 14, where we're told that Jesus was so disfigured beyond that of any human being, and his form marked beyond human likeness, so much so that many would be appalled at him.

And then a few verses later, in 53 verse 2, we're told that he had no beauty or majesty to attract us to him. Nothing in his appearance that we should desire him.

[31 : 14] So what seems beyond doubt is that Jesus did not come looking like Tom Cruise or Chris Evans. You know, here's a thought we hardly consider. Jesus was not physically attractive.

He did not have a hot body. But Dr. Abernathy wonders whether we could go even further than that. Perhaps Jesus didn't just look attractive, but his body was actually repulsive.

Perhaps he wasn't even as able-bodied as we normally think. It's certainly an interesting thought. Now whatever the case, the Bible is clear on at least this.

Jesus became one of us, and in so doing became one with us. And it's what he does next that makes him truly beautiful.

For secondly, we see Jesus giving his broken body to atone for us. As Jesus eats with his disciples just before he dies, he takes the bread, he gives thanks, and he breaks it, saying, this is my body given for you.

[32 : 41] In other words, Jesus is saying, I'm willing to put my body on the line for you. I'm willing to put my body on the cross for you.

Because I know, without my broken body, there is no gospel, no good news. As Hebrews 2 verse 14 puts it, since the children have flesh and blood, he too shared in their humanity, so that by his death, he might break the power of him who holds the power of death, that is, the devil.

And Jesus says, why have I taken on human flesh? Why do I share in your humanity? So that with that very body, I will die, and you can live.

Or as John Calvin puts it, he takes on a mortal body, in the likeness of sinful flesh, so that we can have an immortal, incorruptible body.

He performs a great exchange. When Jesus hung on the cross, it causes him more pain to speak than to stay silent.

[34 : 06] And yet he still exercises his vocal cords to say, Father, forgive them. As the nails rip through the soft tissue of his body, they will cause severe nerve damage and build up the carbon dioxide in his blood, causing him to slowly suffocate like a COVID-19 victim today.

And yet he chose not to come down from the cross. This is my body, broken for you. And with this broken body, he gives us a renewed body.

And this renewed body is no longer our own. If you've been with us over the past few months, you might remember what 1 Corinthians 6, verse 19 to 20 says, Do you not know that your bodies are temples of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have received from God?

You are not your own. You were bought at a price. And therefore, honour God with your bodies. And that's what we do today as followers of Jesus.

And so how are we to honour God with our bodies? Here are a number of ways. Number one, We worship with our bodies. Our bodies are for the Lord, as 1 Corinthians 6 verse 13 says.

[35 : 41] And so to worship God with our bodies would mean, on the one hand, no longer doing certain things with our bodies. In the context of 1 Corinthians 6, that's to flee sexual immorality.

Elsewhere in the New Testament, Jesus says, don't let your eyes turn the bodies of others into objects of lust. Matthew 5 verse 28. Nor should we get drunk and lose control over your body.

Ephesians 5 verse 18. Or take gluttony. Now that's not something we think much about today. And yet in Titus 1 verse 12, as well as in the book of Proverbs, it is always viewed negatively.

The problem with gluttony isn't that food isn't to be enjoyed. Gluttony, contrary to popular belief, isn't so much about eating too much food, but about a certain habit of the heart.

Gluttony is about always looking for gratification apart from God, and only in his good gifts, in this case, food.

[36 : 47] Now perhaps it's something we should think about more, given the high place food has in our culture. On the other hand, however, worshipping God with our bodies also means pursuing certain things.

In 1 Corinthians 7, it's to be willing to engage in sexual relations with your spouse. That's a God-honouring thing to do with your body. It's to use your body to work hard to provide for yourself, 2 Thessalonians 3, 12, and your family, 1 Timothy 5, verse 8.

In Romans 12, verse 1 to 2, our bodies are to be offered as living sacrifices. That would mean letting your mind be conformed to God's will. And if we keep reading on in Romans 12, it would mean serving others with whatever gifts we have, whether that's encouragement with our lips, or showing hospitality with our hands, or using our ears to provide a listening ear.

Indeed, even in gathered worship, there is no shame in active and physical involvement. We see people lifting their hands and kneeling and falling in scripture.

With our bodies, we worship God. Number two, we honour God as we discipline our bodies. In 1 Corinthians 9, verse 27, and here I read from the ESV to get across the sense clearly, Paul writes, but I discipline my body and keep it under control, lest after preaching to others, I myself should not be disqualified.

[38 : 25] Paul's not talking about intentionally punishing the body or depriving it of food or anything like that. But he is saying that he does not allow the desires and urges of his body to control his behaviour.

And part of that involves self-care. It's good to care for your body, not to damage it with harmful substances, and to push its limits. We catch a glimpse of this in 1 Timothy 4, verse 8.

In this verse, Paul makes the point that godliness is the most valuable thing we can pursue. But that doesn't necessarily mean that physical training has no value.

It's of some value. And when we think about how often Paul travelled and how often he had to flee from his enemies, you have to imagine that he made sure that his body was up to the task.

Number three, we honour God as we relate with our bodies. As I mentioned at the beginning, we live now in an increasingly disembodied world thanks to technology.

[39 : 29] And what we might not realise is what a big impact that makes on our relationships. We begin to cultivate and project a disembodied online persona that ironically hides us rather than reveals us.

We find it so much easier to leave a critical comment on Facebook since the person we're criticising is not in front of us. And all it takes is just a few seconds to post.

And our phones can prevent us from being fully present with the person who is right in front of us as our attentions are diverted. I know I have to work hard on this with my kids.

When our bodies are removed from our relationships, it can have a dehumanising effect. Indeed, when we survey the New Testament, it clearly expresses a preference for physical face-to-face contact.

Look at the following verses. Romans 1 verse 11 to 12. 1 Thessalonians 2 verse 17.

[40 : 44] But brothers and sisters, when we were often by being separated from you for a short time, in person, though not in thought, out of our intense longing, we made every effort to see you.

Or 2 John 12. I have much to write to you, but I do not want to use paper and ink or WhatsApp. Instead, I hope to visit you and talk with you face-to-face so that our joy may be complete.

And so in these days of online church and social distancing, we need to remind ourselves constantly that this is not normal. This is not what God wants for us.

And so we need to pray on for the day when we can relate to one another again as embodied, personal, fully present people.

And number four. We honour God as we suffer in our bodies. Now this might sound counterintuitive. Really? To unpack what I mean, consider these words from Paul in 2 Corinthians 4 verse 8 to 10.

[41 : 55] We are hard-pressed on every side, but not crushed. Perplexed, but not in despair. Persecuted, but not abandoned. Struck down, but not destroyed.

We always carry around in our body the death of Jesus so that the life of Jesus may also be revealed in our body. What Paul means is this.

In verse 10, Paul talks about how he's experiencing his life and his ministry currently. It helps to know that the phrase translated the death of Jesus here may be more precisely translated the dying of Jesus.

In the Greek, it's expressing the ongoing nature of the process of dying. And so it's probably not so much simply pointing to the moment where Jesus died, but more to the process when he hung on the cross, lonely, thirsty, exhausted.

And Paul says that's what he feels like. He is suffering in his body. But as he suffers, he is carrying around, in a sense, the dying of Jesus.

[43 : 11] And so he puts on display the way of the cross. But he also puts on display at the same time the resurrection power of God.

He's showing that he has a hope beyond just this life. And when he does that, he's honoring God. For just as God raised Jesus to life, God is renewing Paul the same way, even as he suffers.

And that's why he goes on to say in 2 Corinthians 4, verse 16 to 18, Therefore, we do not lose heart. Though outwardly we are wasting away, yet inwardly we are being renewed day by day.

For our light and momentary troubles are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all. And so we fix our eyes not on what is seen, but on what is unseen.

Seeing what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal. So my friends, I know there are some of you today who are suffering.

[44 : 23] You are suffering in ways that I have not suffered. The tiredness you're feeling, the pain you're experiencing, the discouragement you're facing, even perhaps, the dysphoria you're undergoing, are real.

But hear the word of God. Take heart. Don't lose heart. For a day is coming when all will be made well.

Your suffering, though it may not feel that way, is momentary. They are but a few minutes compared with your life to come when you enjoy eternal life with Christ, with renewed bodies.

For here is Act 4 of the story, our bodies as raised and glorified. The Bible says we are dust, and to dust we shall return.

It doesn't matter who you are today, Joe Biden, Xi Jinping, Dr. Mahathir. One day, even the most powerful and long-lasting figures will be reduced to the material we find underneath our sofas and on our ceiling fans.

[45 : 41] But then, one day, as Daniel 12 verse 2 says, multitudes who sleep in the dust of the earth will awake. And those in Christ will no longer be dust.

They will no longer be subject to decay. Rather, as 1 Corinthians 15 verse 42 to 44 says, our bodies will be raised imperishable, in glory, in power.

It will be empowered by the Spirit. Why? Because though the first Adam was of the dust of the earth, the second Adam was of heaven.

And he came down, gave up his body, so that one day, you will perfectly bear his image and be clothed with perfect bodies.

And that's why you can keep persevering amidst your broken bodies today. For one day, you will have bodies that can run and jump and climb and go swimming and hiking and cycling.

[46 : 49] You will have bodies that will have no indwelling sin, which will be perfectly calibrated in worship to the Lord.

In short, you have a future to look forward to. This is the story of our bodies in Christ. Therefore, I urge you, brothers and sisters, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God.

This is your true and proper worship. Let's go. And in a world confused about bodies, live out that story today.

Let's pray. Heavenly Father, as we come this morning, we are amazed at your great and manifold wisdom, at your genius in the way that you designed this world, and at the way that you designed this world and designed us as human beings to be embodied creatures.

Father, help us to receive our bodies as gifts from you. Help us to receive our bodies as given by you. And Father, help us to keep that in mind, especially because I'm sure there are some, perhaps many, today, who experience your bodies as a source of suffering or as a source of shame, as a source of dishonor.

[48 : 47] But Father, help them to remember that not only did you give us the gift of our bodies, but you gave us the gift of Jesus who chose to give his body and broke it for our sake.

And so, Father, help us to accept with gratitude this gift he has given us, this gift of a renewed and incorruptible body in the future and help us to run the race in light of that future.

Help us to look forward to that day and even today, even as we are outwardly wasting away, help us to remember that you are renewing us inwardly day by day.

All this we pray in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen. Well, we're going to celebrate our future again in the words of our final song.

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