

Be filled with the Holy Spirit – part 3: “God is holy, and God lives in you, so that makes you...”

Message for Sunday, June 25, 2017
by Bruce Fraser

Scripture: 1 Corinthians 6:19-20

Children’s Message: Romans 8:26 “The Spirit helps us in our weakness”

(Before the worship service, as people are arriving, ask permission to put a small pebble inside each of the shoes of the children. They will live with the experience for about ten minutes before we have our conversation.)

What does it feel like, having a pebble in your shoe? Does it help you to walk better? Does it make you eager to do even more walking or running? *Wait for answers for all of these, and more comments as well.*

OK, you’ve been very good to cooperate with me on this. Go ahead and take the pebbles out of your shoes. But while you’ve got your shoes off, here’s another question: What if I gave you something to put in your shoe which *would* help you to walk or run better? You could go a long distance, and not feel tired. Your feet would be happy to wear shoes—you might even want to wear your shoes to bed! Would you like to have something like that? (Pull out a box and reach into it while I say this, as if I’m going to get something out.)

Well, sorry, I don’t have anything like that. I was just reaching in here for a tissue for my nose. In fact, I’ve never heard of such a thing.

But this reminds me of the Holy Spirit. We’ve been talking about the Holy Spirit the last couple of weeks. The Holy Spirit is God living in us.

We can be kind others even when we don’t feel like it, because God is alive inside us, and filling us with his kindness.

You might be feeling all stressed out and impatient because things are going right for you. When that happens, you can just close your eyes and pray, “Lord, I really need your patience in me right now. Please help me.”

You might be afraid of someone who is mean to you. Of course, when you’re afraid, that just makes a bully even more happy to be mean to you. You might want to pray, “Lord, make me strong and mighty so I can fight this person.” But Jesus tells us that isn’t how we deal with enemies. So you could pray like this, “Lord, help me to be strong so I can love my enemy, just like Jesus taught us. I need your love inside me, though, because right now I’m afraid.”

God lives in us, and his power is available to us!

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1 Corinthians 6:19-20, New Living Translation:
Don’t you know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit, who lives in you and was given to you by God? You do not belong to yourself, for God bought you with a high price. So you must honour God with your body.

The key part of this passage is “your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit.”

Consider what a temple is: it’s a holy place, set apart for the worship of God. The Bible says that your body is a temple. Your body is a holy place. Your body is set apart for the worship of God. Wow!

But there’s even more to this. When Paul wrote this letter to the church in the Greek city of Corinth, there were three main groups of people in that church.

1) To the sophisticated: Your body is wonderful

The first group of people were Greeks, elegant and sophisticated, for whom the greatest thing was the human mind. (Example: the writings of the Greek philosophers Socrates and Plato are still studied today). They considered the body to be a necessary evil.

In today’s world, they would be like the parents who turn beet red when little Joey or Janet comes home and says, “Where did I come from? Someone at school told me that you did something to make me.” These parents reply, “Who told you that?!”

Don't be going around telling stories! I don't want to hear any more of that kind of talk!"

These Greeks were embarrassed about their bodies. The body was something they would just as soon do without.

So when Paul writes, "Your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit" —in other words, God lives in your body—this was utterly astonishing to them. Many of them would have been offended by this kind of talk. Many people today are still offended by the gospel of Jesus Christ.

What this means is that God honours the human body. That's not surprising, since God designed and created the human body—but this was all new to them.

Think about that for yourself. God honours your body. Do you? Or do you look at yourself and all you see are the wrinkles, the pimples, the rolls of fat? That's what you're supposed to see, if the advertisers have their way. The people selling anti-aging creams and weight-loss programs *want* you to be embarrassed about your body. Then you'll buy their products.

But God honours your body. He comes and lives in it. You have a wonderful body.

2) To the pleasure seeker: Your body is holy

The second group of people were also Greeks, who also thought the body was worthless. But they came up with a different result. Their thinking went like this: "We can do whatever we want with our bodies. The body isn't important, so it doesn't matter. We can abuse it or work it or—and this is what got people excited!—we can indulge it. We can pamper it luxuriously; we can feed it Big Macs and fries and Cokes (or whatever they had back then); we can satisfy it every time it becomes sexually aroused, with whomever happens to be available at the moment."

These people lived for pleasure. Example: the city of Corinth in Greece had a temple devoted to Aphrodite, the goddess of love. There were more than a thousand prostitutes, male and female,

employed at that temple. Having sex with a prostitute was part of the worship experience!

You don't have to look far to find this type of thinking in today's world. It's just as much an issue for us now as it was back then.

So when Paul writes, "Your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit," that made them look at the body in a whole new light. I mentioned this at the beginning: Your body is a holy place. Your body is set apart for the worship of God.

This means that we must use our body only in ways that bring honour to God. This passage makes the obvious connection with sex. People may think that things that are done in private are nobody else's business: but even what we do in secret is God's business.

But it goes beyond that. When we eat good food, when we exercise, when we get enough sleep; and when we don't abuse drugs and alcohol and tobacco—in other words, when we look after our bodies—then we are not just honouring our bodies. We are actually honouring God, the one who created our bodies. Your body is holy; treat it that way.

3) To the building lover: God lives in you

The third group of people were Jews living in Corinth who had heard and believed the gospel of Jesus Christ, and had become part of the church there. But they had some habits that were hard to let go.

In Jesus' time, just like now, devout Jews met together for worship in their towns and villages in the local synagogue. It was OK, but it was only a poor substitute for *real* worship: going to the Temple in Jerusalem. Most Jews would travel to Jerusalem for the major festivals of the year, especially for Passover. The Temple was the centre of the Jewish faith, for the Temple was God's dwelling place on earth. This is what God said to King Solomon when the Temple was dedicated:

2 Chronicles 7:16, New Living Translation:

"I have chosen this Temple and set it apart to be my home forever. My eyes and my heart will always be here."

So when Paul wrote “Your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit,” that would have been just as astonishing for them as it was for the sophisticated Greeks. In a single sentence, Paul wiped out more than a thousand years of sacred Law and tradition. God doesn’t need special buildings to meet with people; God lives inside his people!

The same principle applies today; that is, for people who love the building. This building in which we meet to worship is nothing. It’s convenient, in that it keeps us warm and dry, but that’s about it. The church is not the building; the church is the people gathered together with Jesus Christ at their centre. Some people today still find that difficult to accept. Some habits are hard to let go.

4) Your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit! Wow!

This is simply one of the most amazing statements in the entire Bible. To illustrate the power of this, I’m going to tell about a young woman named Melissa. Actually, she’s going to tell the story herself, just as she wrote it.¹

It was homecoming, the biggest event of the year for a high-school girl. I was getting ready for the football game. This particular year I was up for homecoming queen.

I had on a Georgiou suit for the occasion and a very expensive formal for the dance. I had an appointment with a makeup artist and manicurist before the dance. I had spent tons of money at a tanning salon hoping that the tanning beds could make me look better. I was the size that I wanted to be—due to the fact that I had not eaten in months. I was everything that Hollywood was telling me that I had to be. I was deathly skinny, popular and completely miserable.

The morning after the event was over, I woke up to the smell of warm blueberry muffins. I walked downstairs only to see the norm. My mom was sitting in the dining room doing her “quiet time.” Her “quiet time” was the time she spent alone with God each day. I watched her. She was in her old, faded pink robe. Her hair was a mess, and she did not have on a hint of makeup; but she looked so beautiful.

I had watched her do her “quiet time” for seventeen years, but it had never caught my attention like this. There was something about that day that was absolutely brilliant. Her face was radiant, and I knew that she was truly satisfied. I wanted what she had. She was confident about who she was—even without makeup on. I envied her. I wanted to have whatever it was that fulfilled her.

I tiptoed up the stairs and dug around in my drawers. Finally, I found my own dusty Bible I had shoved in the drawer every Sunday after church. As I cracked open the Bible, I felt immediate renewal. I felt that I had some kind of energy somewhere deep inside my soul. I remember staring at a verse that told me who I was in Christ. It said that my body was not my own and that my body was the temple of the Holy Spirit. I found that my identity was in Christ Himself. That was refreshing to me because I hated myself.

Next Steps:

- Give thanks for your body. Yes, *your* body!
- Honour God by taking care of your body.

You are so precious. Jesus gave his life for you. You belong to God. That’s what worship is all about: offering ourselves to God.

Prayer:

Holy God, everything around us has come from you.

Everything we can see is the result of your creation. Including ourselves.

You are holy, and you created us to be like you. We don’t even come close. But you love us anyway.

You gave us your Son, Jesus, so that the wrong in our lives can be washed away. You give us the Holy Spirit, so that we can live in a new way: your way.

As we worship you now, Lord God, we open ourselves up to you. Come in, cleanse, heal, and renew. Fill us—*soak* us—with your Holy Spirit, we pray. Draw us closer to your heart, O God. That is our desire: to be in your presence, and to never be the same again. Amen.

¹ Quoted in Beth Moore’s book *Feathers from My Nest*.