

Romans - Definition of BODY

Romans Series (Part 10)

By Ed Stevens -- Then and Now Podcast -- Jan 5, 2014

Opening Remarks:

A. Thanks for joining us for another study of the book of Romans from a full preterist perspective.

B. Last time we looked at the subject of baptism as it is dealt with in Romans 6:3-4. Many preterists have tossed baptism aside as a relic of the past. We showed why I believe that is throwing baptism out with the bath water (i.e., throwing the good out with the bad)! There definitely still is a valid place for water baptism in the Church today after the Eternal Kingdom arrived in AD 70. We saw that it is a testimony before the world and the church that we have put our faith in Christ to wash away our sins and give us a new life spiritually. It is a sign of the covenant and a symbol of our purification by repentance to walk in newness of life. We have died with Christ to that old way of life, it was buried with Christ, and we were raised to walk in newness of life. We were born again, or born from above. We died and are now risen with Christ. All of these ideas are pictured for us in water baptism. We noted that the description of baptism as a "burial" here in Rom 6:4 necessarily implies that water baptism was an immersion and not a sprinkling, since a sprinkling simply does not fit the symbolism of a burial. There is a PDF available which traces the origin of Christian baptism. It is entitled, "Origin of Baptism." You may get that PDF simply by emailing me and requesting it.

C. This time we will be looking at the meaning of the word BODY (Gk. soma) as Paul used it here in his epistle to the Romans. The word "body" is used thirteen times here in Romans, so we will be looking at each of them to see what kind of "body" they are talking about (collective or individual). This session will give an overview of all thirteen texts, and then next time we will get down into the individual texts to analyze them in their context.

D. Before we get started, let's ask God's blessing on our study:

Father of our Savior and Redeemer and Lord Jesus: We praise You and thank You for choosing us and showering your mercy and grace upon us, even though we were dead in our trespasses and sins, and totally unworthy of your redemption. We especially ask for your help in our study of Your bond-servant Paul's letter to the dear saints in Rome who suffered horribly in the Neronian persecution just six years after Paul wrote to them, and less than two years after he was there in prison in Rome. Help us to clearly understand what Your Holy Spirit was communicating through Paul to those fellow-saints in Rome, and help us properly apply it to our lives today, so that we will deny ungodliness and worldly desires, and live sensibly, righteously and godly in the world around us [Titus 2:12]. We pray this in the Name of Your Son and our Savior Jesus. Amen.

Go to the Original Source First

This week, in addition to my analysis of the biblical text of Romans, I did a lot of reading in several books by both collective body advocates and individual body advocates, including: (1) Max King's big book - *The Cross and the Parousia*, (2) John A. T. Robinson's book on *The Body*, (3) Tom Holland's *Contours* book, (4) Dave Green's *House Divided* book, (5) Robert H. Gundry's *SOMA* book, plus several of the standard commentaries on Romans (Moo, Schreiner, Morris, Hodge, et al). But one thing all that reading did for me, was to confirm the utter impossibility of the Collective Body concept being the correct interpretative approach here in Romans 5-8.

In coming weeks I will probably interact with some of those writers on both sides of the issue. In this lesson, however, I want to simply give an overview of all thirteen verses in Romans which use the Greek word *SOMA* (which is translated "body").

The best way to understand what happened in a hockey game is to be there in person and watch the action start-to-finish. That way we have the context of the whole game to help us understand every part of the game. That is far better than listening to the radio commentators. As good as they are in their explanations, they simply cannot compare to watching the game in person in the arena.

The same holds true for commentaries on the book of Romans. While the commentaries are immensely helpful in a lot of ways, they simply cannot replace the understanding we can gain simply by listening to Paul himself, in context, explain what he means. So, before we look at what others say about Paul and his book of Romans, we need to know what HE himself says about it -- "straight from the horse's mouth" as they would say in Texas. The only sure way to get an understanding of an idea or concept is to **go to the original source of it**. That is the proper place to begin.

It is not an exaggeration to say that "understanding Romans chapters 5-8 correctly, depends in large measure on knowing what Paul's definition of the word "body" is, and how he is using that word "body" here in the context of Romans. That is where I focused in my studies of these chapters, and I believe it will be helpful for us here as well.

We need to know what Paul means when he uses the word "body" here in Romans. Many cults, heresies, and defective theologies have been based on a misunderstanding of Romans. And the same thing is true even within preterism. Both the Collective Body View (CBV) and the Individual Body View (IBV) use the book of Romans as support for their respective paradigms. Anyone who wishes to correctly understand Christian theology, must get a firm grasp on what Paul is teaching here in Romans, especially in regard to his use of the word "body". So that is where we will focus in this lesson.

What is Paul's Definition of "Body" Here in Romans?

The Greek word SOMA ("body") occurs 142 times in 120 verses in our New Testament, using several different definitions and senses. Here is the list of those verses which use the word BODY, with Paul's thirteen uses in Romans marked in red letters:

Matt 5:29–30; 6:22–23, 25; 10:28; 26:12, 26; 27:52, 58–59; **Mark** 5:29; 14:8, 22; 15:43; **Luke** 11:34, 36; 12:4, 22–23; 17:37; 22:19; 23:52, 55; 24:3, 23; **John** 2:21; 19:31, 38, 40; 20:12; **Acts** 9:40; **Rom** 1:24; 4:19; 6:6, 12; 7:4, 24; 8:10–11, 13, 23; 12:1, 4–5; **1 Cor** 5:3; 6:13, 15–16, 18–20; 7:4, 34; 9:27; 10:16–17; 11:24, 27, 29; 12:12–20, 22–25, 27; 13:3; 15:35, 37–38, 40, 44; **2 Cor** 4:10; 5:6, 8, 10; 10:10; 12:2–3; **Gal** 6:17; **Eph** 1:23; 2:16; 4:4, 12, 16; 5:23, 28, 30; **Phil** 1:20; 3:21; **Col** 1:18, 22, 24; 2:11, 17, 19, 23; 3:15; **1 Thess** 5:23; **Heb** 10:5, 10, 22; 13:3, 11; **James** 2:16, 26; 3:2–3, 6; **1 Pet** 2:24; **Jude** 1:9; **Rev** 18:13

The standard Greek lexicon used by all New Testament scholars, *Bauer-Danker-Arndt-Gingrich* (BDAG) gives five primary definitions to the word **SOMA** in its 142 uses in our New Testament, two of which are color-highlighted below, one in yellow and the other in light blue:

1. body of a human being or animal, *body*

a. **dead body, corpse** -- ...Mt 14:12 v.l.; 27:59; Mk 15:45 v.l.; Lk 17:37; Ac 9:40; GPt 2:4; pl. J 19:31. W. gen. Mt 27:58; Mk 15:43; Lk 23:52, 55; 24:3, 23; Jn 19:38ab, 40; 20:12; Jud 9; GPt 2:3. Pl. Mt 27:52; Hb 13:11. AcPICor 2:27.

b. **the living body** (Hes. et al.) of animals Js 3:3.—Mostly of human beings Mt 5:29f; 6:22f; 26:12; Mk 5:29; 14:8; Lk 11:34abc; J 2:21; **Rom 1:24**; 1 Cor 6:18ab; ...With and in contrast to *pneuma*: **Rom 8:10, 13**; 1 Cor 5:3; 7:34; Jas 2:26. W. and in contrast to *psuche* Mt 6:25ab; 10:28ab; Lk 12:4 v.l., 22f; ...1 Thess 5:23. With and in contrast to its parts ... **Rom 12:4**; 1 Cor 12:12abc, 14 ... Jas 3:6... The body as the seat of sexual function **Rom 4:19**; 1 Cor 7:4ab (rights over the body of one's spouse...).—The body as seat of mortal life ...*be in the body = alive, subject to mortal ills* ... Hb 13:3; 2 Cor 5:6... Paul does not know whether, in a moment of religious ecstasy, he was ἐν σώματι or ἐκτὸς (χωρὶς) τοῦ σώματος 2Cor 12:2f; ... 1 Cor 5:3. 2 Cor 10:10 The body is the instrument of human experience and suffering 2 Cor 4:10ab; Gal 6:17 (1Cor 2, 35); Phil 1:20; the body is the organ of a person's activity: ... *glorify God through your body*, i.e. by leading an upright life 1 Cor 6:20; cp. **Rom 12:1**. This may be the place (s. above in this section) for διὰ τοῦ σώματος 2 Cor 5:10 which, in that case, would be taken in an instrumental sense *with or through the body* ... In some of the last-named passages (such as **Rom 12:1**; Phil 1:20; also Eph 5:28...) **the body is almost synonymous w. the whole personality** ...Because it is subject to sin and death, man's mortal body as the body of flesh; Col 2:11 is a body of sin **Rom 6:6 or 7:24; cp. 8:11**. In fact, soma can actually take the place of sarx **Rom 8:13** ...As a *lowly body* it stands in contrast to the *glorious body* of the heavenly beings Phil 3:21. In another passage the natural body of mortals is opposed to the spiritual body after the resurrection 1 Cor 15:44abc.—Christ's earthly body, which was subject to death ... **Rom 7:4**; Hb 10:5 (Ps 39:7 v.l.), 10; 1 Pt 2:24; 1Cor 2:16f; 2:32; Col 1:22. ... Mt 26:26; Mk 14:22; Lk 22:19; 1 Cor 10:16; 11:24,

27, 29. ...a single body 1 Cor 6:16...

2. plural somata = **slaves** (...doula somata... cp. our colloq. 'get some bodies for the job') Rev 18:13...

3. **plant and seed structure, body**. In order to gain an answer to his own question in 1 Cor 15:35 (with what kind of body do they come, i.e. the dead after the resurrection), Paul speaks of bodies of plants (which are different in kind from the 'body' of the seed which is planted. Maximus Tyr. 40, 60e makes a distinction between the bodies of the plants, which grow old and pass away, and their spermata (seeds), which endure...

4. **substantive reality, the thing itself, the reality** in imagery of a body that casts a shadow, in contrast to its shadow Col 2:17.

5. **a unified group of people, body** fig. ext. of 1, of the Christian community or church (cp. Cyr. Ins. 58, 'body of the Hellenes'; Polyaeus, Exc. 18, 4 of the phalanx; Libanius, Or. 1 p. 176, 25 ...), esp. as the body of Christ, which he fills or enlivens as its Spirit (in this case the head belongs with the body)... **Rom 12:5**. Cp. 1 Cor 10:17; 12:13, 27; Eph 1:23; 2:16; 4:12, 16; 5:23, 30; Col 1:18, 24; 2:19; 3:15; Hs 9, 17, 5; 9, 18, 3f. Eph 4:4; cp. Hs 9, 13, 5; 7 ...

The first and fifth definitions are the only two that apply to our study of Romans. Definition #1 is the individual physical body. Definition #5 is the collective body. Notice that ten of the thirteen verses in Romans which use the word "body" are assigned to the **first definition, the individual body (Rom 1:24; 4:19; 6:6; 7:4, 24; 8:10, 11, 13; 12:1, 4)**, while only one verse was assigned to the **fifth definition, the collective body (Rom 12:5)**. That leaves two other verses which were not assigned to one of these five definitions (**Rom 6:12** "your mortal body" and **Rom 8:23** "redemption of our body"). However, Kittel's TDNT assigns both verses (**Rom 6:12; 8:23**) to the individual category. Just like BDAG and Mounce, Kittel's only assigns one verse (**Rom 12:5**) to the collective body category. *This means that the Collective Body View is going against all the standard scholarly Greek lexicons when they suggest that ten or more of these "body" references here in Romans are referring to a collective body.* That certainly should raise a yellow caution flag for us.

How Does Paul Use the Word "Body" in Romans?

Notice how BDAG assigned these definitions of SOMA to the 13 occurrences of "body" here in Romans. We have color-coded those occurrences to show which definitions BDAG assigned to each one of these thirteen texts. **The first twelve of them were assigned to the individual physical body definition, while only the last one (Rom 12:5) was assigned to the collective body definition.** We need to look at every one of these thirteen references in their context to verify that they indeed have the meaning that these Greek lexicons are assigning to them. Note especially the phrases below which use **red lettering**. We need to discover how the word "body" is used in these particular phrases in these thirteen verses of Romans:

Rom. 1:24 Therefore God gave them over in the lusts of their hearts to impurity, so that **their bodies [plural]** would be dishonored among them. *[Note the plural number of*

individual bodies here, not just one singular collective body.]

Rom. 4:19 Without becoming weak in faith [Abraham] contemplated **his own body**, now as good as dead since he was about a hundred years old, and the deadness of Sarah's womb. *[Obviously referring to Abraham's individual physical body here.]*

Rom. 6:6 knowing this, that our old self was crucified with Him, in order that **our body of sin** might be **done away with**, so that we would **no longer be slaves to sin**. *[The Collective Body advocates see this usage of a plural "our" with a singular "body" as a strong argument for a collective body here in this text. However, in our previous podcast on the phrase "our lowly body" in Phil 3:21, we showed that this usage of a plural possessive personal pronoun "our" with a singular noun "body" is very common in Koine Greek of the first century, as well as in the New Testament and Paul's writings especially. It does **not** indicate a collective body at all. It simply meant that each of the persons indicated in the "our" had his own individual "body". Furthermore, the connection of the phrase "of sin" to "our body" indicates a control over our bodies by sin. It is not an adjectival use of "sin" here (as in "our sinful body"), but rather a possessive use of "sin" (as in "sin's control or rule over our bodies"). **Sin was the master** over our bodies before we became Christians, but now that we have **died to sin**, sin is no longer our master. Our bodies are no longer owned, controlled and ruled over by sin. In Christ, our bodies are no longer under the domination of, or in slavery to, Sin as our Master.]*

Rom. 6:12 Therefore do not let sin reign in **your mortal body** so that you obey its lusts *[Here again we see that plural possessive personal pronoun "your" used in combination with a singular noun "mortal body". We showed in that previous podcast on Phil 3:21 that this is a very common usage in New Testament Greek, and is not referring to a collective body, but rather to each of the individuals in the "your" group having their own individual "mortal body". The individual body meaning will be even more clear to us shortly when we look at the whole context surrounding this verse. See below.]*

Rom. 7:4 Therefore, my brethren, you also were made to **die** to the Law through **the body of Christ**, so that you might be joined to another, to Him who **was raised** from the dead, in order that we might bear fruit for God. *[The reason I do not take this reference to "the body of Christ" as a collective body is because it is clearly referring to the body in which Christ died and was raised. That is definitely referring to his individual physical body, not to the church as his body. To make this into a collective body, we would be doing what the liberal scholars have tried to do by removing the scandal of the physical resurrection of Jesus and replacing it with a resurrection of the church or some other metaphorical concept like "his memory was resurrected" in their thoughts later. That appears to be one of the reasons why John A. T. Robinson suggested a collective body application of this text, in order to downplay or remove the physical body resurrection of Jesus from the historical scenario. However, the reference to Christ's individual physical body is clearly in view here, and cannot be erased or redefined by the Collective Body approach without negating the physical death of Christ's physical body here in this text. We will see this even more clearly when we look at the surrounding context in our next session.]*

Rom. 7:24 Wretched man that I am! Who will set me free from **the body of this death**?
[The key to seeing this reference to "the body" as an individual usage is found in the surrounding verses of the context, which we will look at below. In brief, this is simply another example of the possessive (not descriptive) use of the phrase "of this death" like we saw in Rom 6:6 where it referred to our bodies being possessed or controlled or enslaved by Sin (personified). Here Paul is talking about "Death" (personified) owning his body, because of his enslavement to Sin (personified). In the context he is merely restating the gospel, when he points out that Christ died on our behalf, in order to redeem us back from our enslavement to Sin and Death. Because of sin, Paul's body was owned by Death and doomed to die, not only physical death (the first death), but eternal death (the second death) as well. But Jesus redeemed him (and all of the saints) from Death's grip so that physical death no longer had any power to push us into eternal death.]

Rom. 8:10 If Christ is in you, though **the body is dead because of sin**, yet the spirit is alive because of righteousness.
[Paul points out that our bodies are subject to physical death (the first death) "because of sin." That is because of the law of sin and death. If we sin, we have to die. And that physical death puts us under the dominion of eternal death unless a redeemer intervenes. By dying with Christ and receiving His Spirit to indwell us, our spirits are quickened or made alive, so that physical death no longer puts us under the control of eternal death. So, even though our physical bodies still have to die (because of our sinfulness), our spirits do not suffer the second death (eternal death). Our spirits have been made alive so that we can escape eternal death and live forever with God.]

Rom. 8:11 But if the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in **you [plural]**, He who raised Christ Jesus from out of **the dead ones [plural]** will also **give life to your [plural] mortal bodies [plural]** through His Spirit who dwells in you.
[Did you notice the plural usage of "bodies" here? This is talking about a bunch of individual bodies, not one big collective body. This is a real difficult text for the Collective Body View. You would be amazed at the hermeneutical gymnastics in which they have to engage, in order to get around the implications of this plural use of "bodies"! Some of them have been willing to admit that it is referring to individual bodies being given spiritual life, but most of them try to twist it to somehow make it fit into their Collective Body paradigm. We call that "EISegesis" (not EXegesis), when we put our own preferred meaning INTO the text, rather than drawing the real meaning OUT of the text. The Collective Body interpreters are letting the demands of their paradigm dictate their interpretation of this text. Yet, they are the ones who insist that the singular/plural usage of body or bodies absolutely determines without exception whether it is an individual or collective body. If so, then how can they get around the implications of the plural "bodies" usage here? Furthermore, the individual body interpretation of this verse (8:11) directly relates to the "deeds of the body" two verses later (8:13).]

Rom. 8:13 for if you are living according to the flesh, you are about to [MELLO] die; but if by the Spirit you are **putting to death the deeds of the body**, you will live.

*[As we noted in the previous text (8:11), there is a direct and inseparable connection between verse 11 and verse 13. Paul is here (8:13) talking to the same group of individual saints that he addressed two verses earlier (8:11), each of whom had their own individual "mortal bodies" (8:11), and who were now being exhorted by Apostle Paul to "put to death the [sinful] deeds of [their individual bodies]". In net effect, he was exhorting them to "put to death" or "mortify" a sinful lifestyle that is lived "according to the flesh," and instead live according to the Spirit who was indwelling them. They "put to death [or "mortified"] the deeds of their individual bodies" by repenting of that evil way of life and following the way of righteousness into which the Spirit was leading them. This is clearly talking about **individual mortification** of the fleshly lifestyle, NOT "the dying-rising reciprocity of a collective body" (the church). We also need to note that this idea of "putting to death the deeds of the body" is referred to repeatedly throughout the preceding context by such phrases as: "died to sin" (6:2), "reckon yourselves indeed to be dead to sin" (6:11), "do not let sin reign" (6:12), "do not present your members as instruments of unrighteousness to sin" (6:13), and "do not walk according to the flesh" (8:4-9). So, it does not take a lot of guesswork to figure out what Paul means here in Rom 8:13 when he urges those Roman saints to "put to death" (mortify) the kind of deeds that were associated with their former fleshly-oriented lifestyle outside of Christ.]*

Rom. 8:23 And not only this, but also we ourselves, having the first fruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting eagerly for our adoption as sons, the **redemption of our body**.

*[Note the usage of the phrase "our [plural] body [singular]" here. We have seen this particular grammatical construction used many times throughout the New Testament, most of which are in a clearly individual body context. We saw this especially in our previous podcast that dealt with the phrase "our lowly body" in Phil 3:21. Since we have already established that the previous context leading up to verse 23 is focused on the individual saints, it would be a serious break with that context to assign a collective body meaning to this phrase here in 8:23. Furthermore, in previous podcasts we have also shown what this "redemption" of the bodies of the individual living saints is talking about. Paul is referring to "the glory that [was] about to be revealed" (8:18) to those saints who would live and remain until the Parousia, at which time their bodies would be "**redeemed**" (Rom 8:23) from having to experience physical death by being "**changed**" (1 Cor 15:51-52) or "**transformed**" (Phil 3:21) from mortal to immortal. So, this redemption of their individual bodies is referring to the bodily "change" that occurred at the Parousia, at which time they were "**caught up together with**" the resurrected dead saints to be with Christ forever afterwards (1 Thess 4:17). That indeed was a very **glorious redemption** that was **about to be revealed** to them (Rom 8:18), not worthy to be compared to the horrendous sufferings that those Roman saints were about to experience during the Neronian persecution just six years after this letter was written. No other generation of saints suffered so much. They certainly earned and deserved such a great reward as that. We pitifully spoiled rotten American Christians certainly do not deserve such a reward. We have little clue what that kind of suffering is all about. That is why Paul's exhortations here to "put to death" (mortify) the evil deeds of our sinful worldly lifestyles is still relevant to us today. We need that exhortation just as much as the first century saints did. Friendship with the world is hostility toward God (Jas 4:4).]*

Rom. 12:1 Therefore I urge you, brethren, by the mercies of God, to **present your bodies [plural] a living and holy sacrifice**, acceptable to God, which is your spiritual service of worship.

[Notice the plural usage of "bodies" here. This can not be referring to one big singular collective body presenting itself as a sacrifice to God, but rather to individual Christians offering up their individual bodies as clean, pure, holy, and righteous sacrifices to God, in service to Him. You would think that the Collective Body advocates would admit the individual implications of this usage of the plural form of "bodies," but they are compelled by the demands of their paradigm to interpret it as a reference to the collective body. In their case, it appears that Eisegesis, unproven assumptions, and circular reasoning strikes again. They are so desperate to support their collective body paradigm that they see a collective body under every rock and behind every tree, regardless of whether it is actually there or not. It is indeed found in some soteriological and eschatological texts, but not in all of them, and certainly not in this one.]

Rom. 12:4 For just as we have **many members in one body** and all the members do not have the same function,

Rom. 12:5 so we, who are many, are **one body in Christ**, and individually members one of another.

*[The analogy that Paul sets up here in verses 4 and 5 is for the purpose of comparing the individual physical body to the collective body of the church. Verse 5 is clearly talking about the church as being a collective body composed of many members (or body parts). The **body analogy** is appropriately used in this context to teach the saints how a collective body of people is supposed to function. It is like teamwork in any sport. If the individual members of the team do not function as a team, they will never win their games. It is the same way in the church. Each member (or part) of the church must function in a way that promotes the building up (or edification) of the whole body. When one part of our bodies malfunctions, the whole body suffers. That is the principle that Paul is teaching here in this body analogy. Chapter twelve is not a soteriological or eschatological context, but instead a sanctification and edification context. Therefore it is not talking about a collective body going through some kind of dying-rising reciprocity or eschatological change during the transition period. That idea is foreign to this context, and has to be imported or forced into the text before it can be found here. There are plenty of texts that have a collective body application without us inventing more (e.g., Rom 12; 1 Cor 12; Eph; Col; et al). We Individual Body guys do not deny that there are some texts which talk about a collective body in some kind of ecclesiological, soteriological, or eschatological sense. Nor do we go overboard in pushing the Individual Body concept into texts where it does not belong. Instead, all of us need to remember that the fundamental task of every Bible interpreter is to draw OUT of each text as accurately as possible ONLY what the original author intended to communicate to his original audience, and never force our own interpretation INTO the text.]*

Some of us might be wondering at this point which of these 13 occurrences of "body" in the book of Romans do the Collective Body guys apply to a *collective* interpretation? It might surprise you to know that some of them apply the collective concept to every one

of those "body" texts in Romans except for **Rom 4:19** (and perhaps 8:11 and 12:4). That still leaves at least ten of those texts applied in a collective body way. Do you see a problem with that? I surely do, and we will point it out in coming sessions as we get deeper into the context of all these "body" texts.

Conclusion:

All we needed to do in this session was to survey the thirteen uses of the word "body" here in Romans. I wanted to give us a brief introduction to each of these texts, so that we will be somewhat familiar with them before digging deeper into their contextual meaning in future sessions.

We need to understand that both individual and collective body views believe in both kinds of bodies. And both views agree that the concept of a collective body presupposes the existence of an individual body with which to compare it. We saw an example of that right here in Romans 12:4-5 where Paul talked about the human body with its many parts being the pattern for the church with its many members.

Furthermore, there are a number of biblical texts which both views agreeably assign to the same individual or collective category. However, the big difference between the two views is regarding which texts each view assigns to each category. For instance, right here in Romans, I have assigned most of these body texts to the individual body category, whereas the collective body guys would assign those same body texts to their collective body category. Both views are tempted to assign every eschatological resurrection text to its own particular category. But as we have seen here in this lesson, that simply will not work. There are too many exceptions to the rule. There are too many individual body texts, and too many collective body texts. Neither extreme will work. The truth lies somewhere in the middle between the two extremes.

All of us have the obligation to use proper hermeneutical rules and exegetical tools to determine which category each text belongs in. The context is the most critical factor in that analysis, and that is what we are laser-focused on in these studies of Romans. All of us have the obligation to be Bereans and search the scriptures to make sure our interpretations are in harmony with the context.

We mentioned the words "mortification" and "sanctification" earlier in this session. Of course, sanctification is talking about pursuing after holiness in our lifestyle. I remember the first time I heard the phrase "mortification of our bodies." I thought it was talking about what the morticians do to our bodies in the mortuary (i.e., prepare them for burial)! Seemed logical to me. But that is not the biblical definition of mortification at all.

Paul was talking about mortification when he exhorted the Roman Christians to "put to death the deeds of the body" (Rom 8:13). In other words, stop giving in to temptation. Die in relationship to sin, and stop letting sin rule your life. Follow the leading of the Spirit instead. Resist and reject and push away from the sinful temptations that the

world and our fleshly bodies keep throwing at us. Quit listening to the worldly voices, and start listening to the voice of God in His Word.

As Christians we have "died to sin" and "died to the flesh" and have been raised to walk in newness of life in Christ, following the impulses of the Spirit, rather than giving in to the temptations of the flesh. That is what Paul means by mortification of the body: killing (or mortifying) the influence of sin over our lives, by dying daily to that old sinful lifestyle, and rising above it to follow the leading of the Spirit in our pursuit of holiness (or sanctification).

When individuals become Christians they "die to sin" and pursue after sanctification. That is the kind of language we see Paul using here in the context surrounding several of these "body" texts. It is very individualistic language. Paul is urging those individual saints to mortify (kill) the fleshly influence and pursue after sanctification in their individual bodies. He is NOT talking about mortification and sanctification of a collective body.

This is an extremely important point that must not get lost in the shuffle: The whole motivation for each of those individual Roman saints to persevere in their faith by **mortification** of their fleshly desires and **sanctification** of their bodies, is eliminated when the word "body" here in Romans 6-8 is collectivized. It makes nonsense out of the moral and ethical exhortations that Paul delivers to those individual saints. It means that the individual is not bound to mortify his own individual flesh and pursue after individual sanctification, since that is only for the collective body.

Maybe that idea does not bother the collective body guys, but it strikes terror in my soul. And I have to believe that Paul would be horrified at the thought of it as well. The collective body application of these texts would remove all the moral and ethical restrictions that Paul gives to individual Christians here in Romans. Maybe that is why we see so much bad fruit coming from the lives of those who hold the Collective Body View. Maybe they have noticed that the collective interpretation of all the body texts removes the obligation for individual Christians to live holy lives. Maybe that is why the collective body view is so popular among universalists and antinomians especially. They do not think the moral and ethical restraints of the Bible apply to them as individuals. They think it is all about the collective body now.

That may be why some of them take the "heaven now" and "immortal body now" and "perfection now" views. It also explains why some of them believe the "continuation of sinning in heaven" idea. When we disengage the moral and ethical restraints from the individual Christian and apply them only to the collective body, we have just eliminated all motivation for the individual Christian to live a holy life.

So, you can see why I am very anxious to clarify this issue for us. I have seen too many of my fellow preterists being led astray by the dangerous moral and ethical implications of the collective body view. It offers a false sense of security for those who are living an unholy lifestyle.

The way we interpret these references to the body has significant impact on the moral, ethical, and spiritual exhortations that Paul gives to the saints here in Romans. If the collective body view is the correct interpretation of all those "body" texts, then those moral-ethical-spiritual exhortations only apply to the collective body, and have no relevance to the individual Christian today.

Thank God the collective body view is not right about that. Christians today are just as much obligated to pursue after godliness and holiness as they were before AD 70. The moral and ethical restraints and exhortations are just as applicable to us today as they were to the first century saints. The destruction of Jerusalem did not change that, nor can the relativistic culture ever change it. These biblical moral and ethical principles are absolutely true and relevant for "all generations of the age of the ages" (Eph 3:21).

So when we hear some preterist teacher use the collective body view to question, downplay, reinterpret, or eliminate those moral and ethical principles, it ought to be cause for pause. It ought to at least raise a yellow caution flag for us, if not a red flag.

I hope that helps you see what is at stake here in our understanding of the book of Romans. Apostle Paul did not hold back from teaching us the hard truth about what godliness and holiness is all about. Don't let anyone, especially fellow preterists, deceive you into thinking that the moral, ethical, and spiritual exhortations in Scripture are no longer relevant to Christians today. They are supremely relevant, and our soul-salvation depends on it. Pursue after sanctification -- without which NO ONE will see the Lord in the afterlife (Heb 12:14).

Well, that will do for this session. Next time we will dig deeper into the context of some of those "body" texts to see what Paul was really saying to those first century Christians, and I think we will see that they are, in fact, individual body texts.

Thanks so much for listening.

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