

WHEN YOUR BODY SEEMS TO BE FALLING APART PHILLIPIANS 3
WHEN YOUR BODY SEEMS TO BE FALLING
APART, REMEMBER PHILIPPIANS 3:21

"[The lord] shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body, according to the working whereby he is able even to subdue all things unto himself"

Mrs. Scott was a charming lady whose children attended my Sunday School. She only came to my services on rare occasions for she was very heavy and very sensitive about her appearance. Diets and reducing exercises were of no value because of her other ailments. One day as I sat beside her bed, she said, "Tell me about the new body I shall receive in heaven."

Momentarily, I was speechless, but she continued, "See, Pastor, my feet are already dead. Gangrene has set in and is spreading up my legs. I have not long to live and would like to know something about the new body I shall receive when this one has been forgotten. Her eyes were bright, and her face was radiant as she waited for my answer. My emotions were stirred, but just then her daughter entered the room and said, "Mother, the insurance man is at the door; he wants his money."

My sick friend said, "Oh, tell him to come back next week. I am about to hear about my new body." The daughter was very surprised, but I couldn't repress laughter. I was about to instruct a lady who could exclaim triumphantly, "O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victor?" (1 Cor. 15:55).

His Glorious Body... It Was Real

The Bible says that when the disciples thought they had seen a spirit, He said unto them, "Why are ye troubled? and why do thoughts arise in your hearts? Behold my hands and my feet, that it is I myself: handle me, and see; for a spirit hath not flesh and bones, as ye see me have" (Luke 24:38-39).

The church has always been troubled by heretics who said the Lord's resurrection was not physical, that He only rose in spirit, that His body remained in the grave and ultimately decayed and became dust. That view is not only wrong; it is insulting. It implies that Christ was a liar. When the disciples thought they were being visited by a ghost or spirit, Jesus instantly reminded them they were looking at flesh and bones. When they remained unconvinced, He asked for food and shared their meal. There was noth-

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ing phony about His appearances. His body was real, and Mrs. Scott was thrilled as I explained these facts.

His Glorious Body... It Was Remarkable

Jesus was in some respects limited during His ministry. If He had cast Himself from the pinnacle of the temple, His body would have been injured on the rocks. Throughout the storm on the sea of Galilee, the Lord was overcome by weariness and slept in the boat. If the Savior arrived unexpectedly at a home, He was obliged to announce His presence by knocking. Yet after His resurrection a closed door was unable to prevent His entry into the room where the disciples were gathered (see John 20:26). When Christ ascended from the mount of Olives, His body resisted the laws of gravity, and the watching disciples saw His entry into the clouds. His mortal body had put on immortality. He had been changed and glorified. I told Mrs. Scott that she would have a body exactly like His. Suffering and pain, and all kinds of physical problems would belong to the past. Even elderly people would become young again.

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His Glorious Body... It Was Recognizable

It is probable that the Lord had the power to disguise Himself! Mark described this as "another form" (Mark 16:12). When Mary came to the sepulcher, she saw someone she assumed was the gardener. Maybe she was blinded by her tears or too preoccupied to look closely at the Man standing near the tomb. Yet within moments she was able to say, "Rabboni!" (John 20:16).

Thomas was the greatest doubter of the disciples, but he recognized the Lord when he cried, "My Lord, and my God" (John 20:28). Charles Haddon Spurgeon was asked by a lady in his church, "Shall we know each other in heaven?" The pastor's reply was abrupt and challenging. He said, "Do you think we shall be bigger fools up there than we are down here?" My ailing sister in the Lord smiled. What I said made sense!

The pains of old age increase steadily, and every one threatens to become fatal! Recently I telephoned a friend to ask how she was recovering from an illness. She said, "I don't know what to say, except that my old body seems to be falling apart." Thank God, a new body awaits every Christian; it will last forever. Funeral directors, doctors, and hospital facilities will be unknown in eternity.

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WHEN YOU CAN'T SLEEP, REMEMBER SAMUEL WHO
HAD A SIMILAR EXPERIENCE. 1 SAMUEL 3:10

"And the lord came, and stood, and called as at other times, Samuel, Samuel. Then Samuel answered, Speak; for thy servant heareth."

David believed God gave sleep to His people (see Ps. 127:2), but there are occasions when his faith might have been challenged. Sleep was designed by God to bring rest to weary bodies and refreshment to tired minds. Nevertheless, sometimes sleep is elusive. Overwhelming noise, over-active minds, overpowering pain, and sometimes, over-filled stomachs prevent people from obtaining necessary rest. Consequently, the manufacturers and dispensers of sleeping pills are making their fortunes. It might be wise to consider that occasionally even the Lord disturbs His slumbering people.

When Jonah was awakened on his run-away voyage to Tarshish, the captain of the vessel said to him, "What meanest thou, O sleeper? arise, call upon thy God, if so be that God will think upon us, that we perish not" (Jonah 1:6). The shipmaster's timely intervention changed Jonah's attitude and saved the lives of his crew. When Ahasuerus, the king of Babylon was unable to sleep, he was used by God to prevent the death of Mordecai and save the lives of many Hebrews (see Esther 6:1). Quite recently a friend said to me, "I do not sleep much these nights, so I use the time to pray for you." Repeatedly, Paul said that he prayed for his friends night and day (see 1 Thess. 3:10 and 2 Tim. 1:3). Perhaps some of God's people are so preoccupied during the day that they need to make up for lost time at night! It is better to pray than to remain restless in bed.

A young lady once said to me, "I do most of my praying at night, and the Devil hates it! He does not like my praying so much, and quickly puts me to sleep. Praying works better than sleeping pills!" When the boy named Samuel was unable to sleep, he discovered God was calling him to great service. When he listened, the Lord revealed facts unknown to other people. Quite recently I awakened in the middle of the night, and I asked as I lay in bed, "Why did God permit this to happen? It must be because I need to pray for someone." Instantly, the name of a Christian brother came into my mind. I spent the next few minutes asking God to help that

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man. I know now that he had a great need. Furthermore, after my
prayers had been uttered, I slept for the rest of the night.

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During our visit to South Africa, my wife and I stayed for a
time in a missionary home. We met a charming missionary who was
also a temporary guest. One day I asked about her most exciting
experience on the mission field. She described how her first real
assignment was to accompany an older missionary on a special trek
to reach a certain tribe of cannibals. When they arrived they discov-
ered the chief did not want white people in his district. He probably
feared he would be reported for some of the practices he encour-
aged. He grumbled, and pointing to a mud hut and said, "You can
stay there tonight, but tomorrow you leave."

Mrs Phipson paused, and it was easy to see she was reliving her
experience in that hostile village. She continued, "I was wide awake,
and while my partner slept, I listened to noises outside the hut.
Finally, I crawled to the small door and saw we were surrounded by
natives who were flat on their stomachs, wriggling like worms to-
ward us. I hurried to awaken my senior worker who, realizing our
danger, said, 'Quick, light the lamp. Let them see that we are awake.'
Then we made tea and drank it. Then we made more tea and drank
that! We continued until dawn. During this time the head-hunters
finally left us."

I was about to interrupt with a question when she lifted her hand
and said, "I have not finished. The next morning we left, and to be
honest I was glad to get away. Three weeks later a native runner
from the base station overtook us with our mail. My friend opened
one of her letters to discover a lady overseas had written to ask,
'Did you have any special need on (and the date was given). I could
not sleep that night for your face haunted me. I turned over and over
in my bed, but had no rest until I prayed specially for you. Sudden-
ly, I knew everything was alright but I would like to know what
happened on that particular night.'" Mrs. Phipson said, "I kept a
diary in those days, so I was able to turn its pages to answer her
question. On the night that lady was constrained to pray for her
friend—that was the night the cannibals left us." It pays to pray—
even when you cannot sleep.

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WHEN GOD SEEMS TO BE VERY SLOW ANSWERING
YOUR PRAYERS, REMEMBER HEBREWS 10:36-37

"For ye have need of patience ... For yet a little while,
and he that shall come will come, and will not tarry."

I was very desperate, but in my own defense let me add I was
also inexperienced and had much to learn. I expected God to turn
the world upside down, but it seemed I was more concerned than
He. My services had continued nightly for three weeks. The large
Gospel Hall was crowded to capacity, but no one had responded to
my invitation to trust the Savior. At that time I was twenty years old,
and my enthusiasm exceeded my knowledge! The local Christians
appeared to be disappointed, and I thought they were beginning to

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blame me for the lack of visible results in the meetings. My hostess was a dynamic lady whose love for the Lord overflowed. Night after night she stared at me and said, "There is a difference between praying, and praying through." Each time she repeated the statement, I felt that somewhere I had failed. Actually, I began to resent her words and wanted to say, "Then why don't you pray through and get things moving?" I was afraid to challenge her, however, and remained silent!

I prayed by the hour but the meetings became progressively worse. I was so certain God would answer my appeal for help that one night I said to the congregation, "After we have prayed, I shall go to the counseling room to wait for you. I have asked the Lord to bring six souls to Himself." But when everybody went away, I felt horribly alone and became resentful. I knelt by a chair and said, "Lord, it's not fair. I'm doing all the work down here, and You are doing nothing!" That was a very stupid thing to say, but, as I have already explained, I was desperate. Then suddenly I heard a voice saying, "If I could save souls as easily as you think I can, I would have saved the whole world long ago."

That dynamic utterance destroyed my ego and left me in a state of confusion. I had never known an experience when God's voice was so authoritative and real. Nevertheless, my disturbed and disappointed soul was still rebellious. I placed my Bible on the chair before me, closed my eyes, stabbed with my finger at the unseen page, and said, "Alright, Lord, if You cannot save all these people, at least say something to me." When I opened my eyes to see the verse at which my finger pointed, I read, "For ye have need of

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patience that, after ye have done the will of God, ye might receive the promise. For yet a little while, and he that shall come will come, and will not tarry." I was astounded. I had neither heard nor read that text and was unaware it was in the Bible.

Later that night I climbed into my bed, pulled the blankets over my head, and prayed until I fell asleep. The next afternoon when I entered the sanctuary, I took one step down the aisle and suddenly stopped. I knew something had happened. The entire building seemed to be filled with the presence of God. Perhaps the change had taken place within me, but everything appeared to be different. The service which followed had been especially convened for Christians; I neither preached the Gospel nor issued an invitation, and yet amazing things happened.

A soldier about to leave said, "Sir, I am the boxing champion of my regiment." I looked at his flattened nose, smiled, and said, "Fellow, there was at least one punch you didn't dodge." He grinned and replied, "Yes, sir, I knocked out a lot of fighters, but today the love of God has knocked me out." He came to the front of the sanctuary with three other soldiers, and they were the first of about seventy adults who came to know Christ as their Savior. They were the firstfruits of a wonderful harvest. Since that day I have never complained of a difficult assignment or the lack of converts in my evangelistic crusades. I really did have need of patience, for He who intended to come did come to that Gospel Hall at Lerwick in the Shetland Islands.

The person who wrote the epistle to the Hebrews was aware of the tremendous trials besetting the church of his day. The Roman Empire was attempting to annihilate Christians. The faith of new believers was being challenged. The temple at Jerusalem was either destroyed or was about to be destroyed. Many believers were being fed to ravenous beasts or burned to death in the emperor's garden. To many of these suffering people it must have seemed a waste of

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time to pray. Whatever they requested, it appeared God was either indifferent to the needs of His people or not sufficiently interested to listen to their desperate requests. Yet the writer of this remarkable letter stood firm in the midst of the storm, and his words echoed amazing confidence. He was sure the Lord would come, and he was not mistaken.

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WHEN YOU HAVE LOST A LOVED
ONE, REMEMBER JOHN 11:6

"When he (Jesus) had heard therefore that he (Lazarus) was sick he abode two days still in the same place where he was."
The home in Bethany was strangely silent. Lazarus was dead, and his sisters were devastated. The laughter known during the visits of Jesus had disappeared. Martha, who was an excellent cook, had no desire to remain in her kitchen. Everything had changed. She and her sister had nursed their ailing brother and toward the end of his illness sent an urgent appeal for assistance to Jesus.

Alas! They now believed their request had fallen upon deaf ears. Their Friend was not interested. He had remained two days doing things which could have been postponed! Now it was too late to do anything. Their brother had been buried, and life in the home seemed meaningless. It was difficult to decide which was worse—that Lazarus had died or that Jesus had let them down. Their outlook was intensely bleak, and probably Martha and Mary would have disagreed if someone suggested the sun would shine again.

Let us not blame them. They had watched the sufferings of their brother and had prayed earnestly that God would spare him. Their prayers had remained unanswered, and apparently even Jesus did not care. Such circumstances challenge the faith of even the greatest Christians. Inevitably the question arose, "Why did God allow this to happen to us?" It should always be remembered that shadows are caused by light—there are no shadows in darkness. Even stars reflect the light of the sun, and although storms may temporarily hide it, the sun is always shining.

God's Profound Patience

When Mary and Martha believed the Lord had insufficient interest to respond to their desperate plea for help, He also was troubled. He could never forget His friends, but much more was at stake than the extension of a man's life. Good photographs are only developed in darkness. Jesus was waiting for gloom to envelop His dearest friends in order to produce within their souls His likeness. They were waiting for Him, and He was waiting for them

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God's Prepared Plan

When Jesus eventually arrived in Bethany, Martha went to meet him and said, "Lord, if thou hadst been here, my brother had not died. But I know, that even now, whatsoever thou wilt ask of God, God will give it thee" (John 11:21-22). The subsequent Scriptures reveal that her faith related to events of the last day. Jesus was more concerned that she understood the significance of what was to hap-

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pen that day. His followers had recognized Him to be a wonderful Friend, a tremendous Teacher, and even a possible Messiah. None, however, believed Him to be God's Son. The raising of a dead man was nothing compared with opening their blind eyes.

Gods Prepared Place

Christ knew what He intended to do. Lazarus would soon be home again, but there was much more at stake than performing a miracle. Lazarus would eventually die again, and there would be no earthly healer to whom a message for help could be despatched. If people believed Him to be the Son of God, then just as easily as He brought Lazarus back to be with them in Bethany, He could also guarantee his presence in heaven. The happiness of those bereaved sisters did not depend on the immediate resurrection of their brother, but on their increasing understanding of the greatness of their Friend, Jesus of Nazareth. This truth was enunciated when a little later Jesus said to His disciples, "Let not your heart be troubled; ye believe in God, believe also in me . . . I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also" (John 14:1-3).

God's Perfect Peace

It is easy to hear the Lord saying, "Mary, if you are still alive when your brother dies again, do not grieve. Stand by his grave and say exultantly, 'O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?'" (1 Cor. 15:55). When the women understood His message, the sun was shining again! God's ways are not always our ways, but His ways are always best. If darkness surrounds you now, be of good cheer. It will pass!

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WHEN YOU FEEL LONELY, REMEMBER OTHERS
WHO FELT THE SAME WAY AND JOSHUA 1:5;
1 KINGS 19:10; ACTS 23:11

The feeling of loneliness can be a depressing experience. It is possible to feel lonely in a crowd, to see innumerable faces, none of which can be recognized. A few people choose to become hermits; others confine themselves to religious institutions believing that in solitude peace be found. Yet the fact remains that most people love the company of other human beings, and consequently, when circumstances isolate them, despondency is never far away. A boy away at school, a member of the armed services separated from family, a young missionary in a foreign land, and even travelers whose occupation demands sacrifice—all can be frustrated by loneliness. The Bible has a special message for such people.

The Man Who Was lonely in a Crowd (Joshua 1:5)

Poor Joshua! When God said, "Moses my servant is dead," an ominous chill was felt throughout Israel, but no man was more affected than the new leader who was asked to succeed the revered patriarch. His task was unenviable for circumstances would often separate him from the most important people in the nation. Critics would shatter his tranquility, insurmountable obstacles would challenge his ingenuity, and a sense of inadequacy would undermine his confidence. Even the Lord recognized the weight of the burden to be carried, and with great wisdom said, "As I was with Moses so I will be with thee: I will not fail thee, nor forsake thee." Although

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many problems arose to confront and confuse Israel's leader, Joshua knew he could never be alone again. He welcomed solitude, for in the stillness, it was easier to hear the voice of his Master.

The Man Who Was lonely in a Cave (1 Kings 19:10)

Poor Elijah! He who had been hunted by men was now haunted by memories. He had stood triumphantly before a multitude but had been frightened by a sinful woman. Jezebel had ruined his ministry and threatened to end his life. At the height of his career Elijah failed to do his duty, and as he hid in a mountain cave, probably wished he were dead. Had it been possible for Elijah and Jonah to meet, they could have talked long into the night. The reluctant messenger to Nineveh would have appreciated the feelings of his

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older brother. Jonah felt desperately alone when he said, "Therefore now, O Lord, take, I beseech thee, my life from me; for it is better for me to die, than to live" (Jonah 4:3).

When a healthy man loses the desire to live, it is generally because of failure and disappointment within his life. The person who continually thinks about disasters, disorders and defeats has no time to consider the promises of God. Elijah listened to the voices of nature and remained unmoved; when he was still, a whisper from the Lord stirred his soul and he realized he was not alone.

The Man Who Was lonely in a Cell (Acts 23:11)

Poor Paul! Two years in a prison cell would be sufficient to sadden the heart of any man, but for Paul the time was heart-breaking. He had traversed continents and preached to multitudes of people. He sighed when he remembered those exhilarating meetings. But everything had changed, and Paul was desperately alone. He had few friends and preached only to his guards. His imprisonment had been occasioned by an intense desire to attend a festival at Jerusalem. God warned him to stay away from the feast but unfortunately the apostle's enthusiasm ran away with his reason! Luke's statement was self-explanatory: "And finding disciples, we tarried there seven days: who said to Paul through the Spirit, that he should not go up to Jerusalem" (Acts 21:4). Paul disregarded that command, and when it was too late to change his attitude, he was alone with accusing memories. The two years of incarceration might have been used proclaiming the Gospel of Christ

Then a wonderful thing happened. "And the night following the Lord stood by him, and said, Be of good cheer, Paul: for as thou hast testified of me in Jerusalem, so must thou hear witness also at Rome" (Acts 23:11). Paul's disobedience did not indicate God had forsaken him. Much work still had to be accomplished. The prisoner's spirit was liberated even before his prison door opened. The Lord visited Joshua, Elijah and Paul.

Are you alone in a crowd, a cave, or a cell? Look carefully around. God is nearer than you can imagine.

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