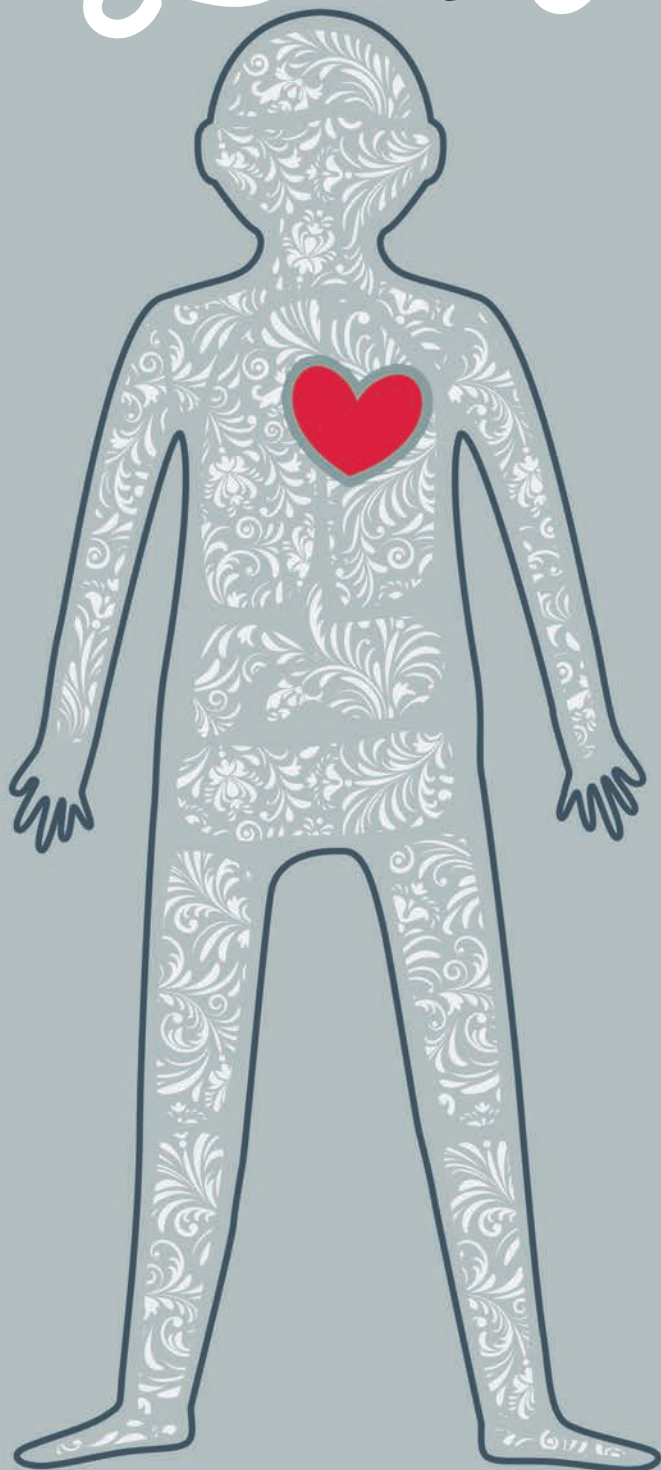


REDEEMED

# Body AND Soul

by James Gier



---

***The body and blood of our Lord Jesus Christ strengthen and preserve you in body and soul to life everlasting. Depart in peace. Amen.***

This dismissal of blessing from Holy Communion confesses that the very body and blood of God in the Lord Jesus Christ brings eternal life to our body and soul.

Luther states that in addition to the strengthening of the soul, “the mouth, the throat, the body, which eats Christ’s body, will also have its benefit in that it will live forever and arise on the Last Day to eternal salvation.” God’s redemption of mankind includes both the body and the soul.

## **What’s Gnosticism?**

An early heresy Christians dealt with was Gnosticism. It challenged the belief and denied the truth of the redemption and resurrection of the body. It taught a dualism between good and evil, maintaining that all material matter, including the body (and soul) of man, was evil. Only the enlightened spirit was good.

For Gnostics, redemption is the eternal liberation of the spirit from the body in death. Because the body is evil and comes to nothing beyond the natural life, it does not matter what one does in the body, allowing for the indulgence of the flesh and its passions. The theological implications are extensive, including the denial that Jesus Christ came in the flesh (1 JOHN 4:2-3), let alone that He died and rose again in the flesh, overthrowing the entire Gospel.

# GOD'S *Redemption* OF MANKIND INCLUDES BOTH THE BODY AND THE SOUL.

## How do we treat the body?

Similar teachings arose during the Reformation, raising the question, “Is the body good or evil, and does it matter how we treat the body in this life?” Lutheran Reformers maintained an essential biblical distinction between original sin that dwells in the nature of man, and the body and soul as that created and preserved by God. The body and soul are not sin (or evil) itself but are *infected* with sin. Salvation is not the liberation of man’s spirit from the body, but of the whole man in body and soul (and spirit) from the infection of sin and its eternal consequence — *death*!

## What should we believe about the human body?

Scripture teaches that the body is a vital part of man’s creation, redemption and sanctification, temporally and eternally. It matters what we do **to** the body and **in** the body as Christians. The faith we hold in the heart we live out in the body as the organ of the soul in subdued obedience to the Lord. This is the proper identity, respect and adornment of the body — a “holy” life that honors God.

Luther again wrote about the Lord’s Supper: “So, when we eat Christ’s flesh physically and spiritually, the food is so powerful that it transforms us into itself and out of fleshly, sinful, mortal men makes spiritual, holy, living men.”

As God’s holy people (1 PETER 2:9), we are to

regard the body as “holy” to God. Unfortunately, this regard for the body is not respected in our culture today. Even Christians have succumbed to numerous “self-identifying” forms of bodily defacement, desecration, and mutilation in “the dishonoring of their bodies” (ROM. 1:24–27).

From dietary emaciation to muscle dysmorphia, from dismemberment of babies in the womb from denial of body gender to all unnatural expressions of sexuality, the ongoing influence of Gnosticism is clearly evident.

Is this how we Christians are to treat our bodies or those of others? “Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, whom you have from God? You are not your own, for you were bought with a price. So glorify God in your body” (1 COR. 6:19–20).


Christians throughout history have honored the body and presented it as a living sacrifice to God (ROM. 12:1), not letting sin reign in it to obey its passion but rather as an instrument of righteousness (ROM. 6:12–13) and spiritual worship.

From conception to death, the body is created and sustained by God and to be treated and buried honorably, all to His glory and the truth of eternal life in the bodily death and resurrection of Christ for our body and soul.

Therefore, “May the God of peace himself sanctify you completely, and may your whole spirit and soul and body be kept blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ” (1 THESS. 5:23). **LW**

## Remember

- Scripture teaches that the body is a vital part of man’s creation, redemption and sanctification, temporally and eternally.
- As God’s holy people (1 Peter 2:9), we are to regard the body as “holy” to God.
- It matters what we do **to** the body and **in** the body as Christians.

.....   
The Rev. James Gier  
([revgier@sbcglobal.net](mailto:revgier@sbcglobal.net)) is pastor of Mount Calvary  
Lutheran Church, Excelsior  
Springs, Mo.