

THE BELIEVER'S PAST

Col. 3:5-7

March 9, 2008

INTRODUCTION: These sins belong to the old life and have no place in our new life in Christ. The KJV word “mortify” means “put to death” – *“completely kill your sinful actions.”* Because we have **“died with Christ,”** we have the spiritual power to slay the earthly, fleshly desires that want to control us.

Romans 6:11, “Likewise you also, reckon yourselves to be dead indeed to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus our Lord.”

We might be surprised to read that living the risen life involves putting sin to death. Didn't Paul just say that that had already been done? At the moment of salvation, **“our old self was crucified with Christ, that our body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves to sin.” (Rom. 6:6)**

The old self (man) was crucified in order that sin might be rendered ineffective in the believer's life. When a believer accepts Christ, a death takes place. In the spiritual reality, the believer **“went to the cross”** with Christ, was buried with Christ, and arose a new person. That ended any obligation to sin and its demands. One of the first aspects of victory over sin is to know the reality of the Christian experience. Death with Christ is the foundation. The experiential aspects do not necessarily flow from knowledge of truth. Paul's tendency was to move from theology to Christian experience; from our position to our practice. The believer must present his members to Christ. The fact is, people serve whom they obey.

Romans 6:16, “Do you not know that to whom you present yourselves slaves to obey, you are that one's slaves whom you obey, whether of sin leading to death, or of obedience leading to righteousness?”

“members” – the focus could be on the physical body as an instrument of sin. Paul warned against sin dominating in the body. However, these are actions, attitudes, and appearances. It identifies sins of **verse 5 & verse 8**. Paul seems to have been referring generally to all facets of a person's being, identifying them as members. There is a unifying idea between the physical and attitudinal definitions of the term in that the **“members”** are agents through which persons express themselves. Their motivating force (sin or righteousness) finds expression through their members.

Here it is as though Paul is urging the Christians, by the Holy Spirit, to follow their conversion experience with such consecration and allow Christian growth verify the claim to be in Christ. This is a stage of volition and commitment. This knowledge foundation calls for an action of the will. Christians must choose to live consistently with their spiritual experience.

Fact we must know:

Committed, knowledgeable Christians need divine help to live differently; there must be **“power to obey!”** The Holy Spirit provides help for believers to live differently.

Romans 8:2-5, “For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has made me free from the law of sin and death. For what the law could not do in that it was weak through the flesh, God did by sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, on account of sin: He condemned sin in the flesh, that the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us who do not walk according to the flesh but according to the Spirit. For those who live according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who live according to the Spirit, the things of the Spirit.”

Romans 8:9-11, “But you are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God dwells in you. Now if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he is not His. And if Christ is in you, the body is dead because of sin, but the Spirit is life because of righteousness. But if the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, He who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit who dwells in you.”

1 Corinthians 15:10, “But by the grace of God I am what I am, and His grace toward me was not in vain; but I labored more abundantly than they all, yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me.”

In **Col 3:5-7**, Paul is reminding us that though the believer has died with Christ, the death of unchristian behavior was not necessarily an experiential reality. We have died to sin’s penalty (death), but sin’s power still can be strong and our flesh is weak. That is why we must continually put sin to death by yielding to the Holy Spirit.

Romans 8:13, “For if you live according to the flesh you will die; but if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live.”

Sin is like a deposed monarch who no longer reigns, nor has the ability to condemn us, but works hard to debilitate and devastate all his former subjects.

Sin is still **potent** and success against it demands the Spirit’s power. The principle of **Zechariah 4:6, “not by power nor by might, but by my Spirit.”**

So it is true that the believer has died in the sense of paying sin’s penalty by being united with Christ in His death. But it is equally true that sin still attacks his unredeemed humanness.

Romans 8:23, “Not only that, but we also who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, eagerly waiting for the adoption, the redemption of our body.”

With this being true, we wait for the **“redemption of the body,”** and until then, the redeemed spirit, empowered by the Holy Spirit, must kill the sin attacking the flesh.

Richard Baxter writes,

“Use sin as it will use you; spare it not, for it will not spare you; it is your murderer, and the murderer of the world; use it therefore, as a murderer should be used. Kill it before it kills you; and though it bring you to the grave, as it did your Head, it shall not be able to keep you there.”

Now, back to **Col. 3:5**, **“therefore put to death”** literally means kill. Believers are to make a decisive resolution to put sin to death, bringing the flesh under subjection to the Spirit-filled new disposition that the Lord has planted in us.

I. A PRESENT WARFARE TO BE REALIZED. 5

Paul spoke against 2 things, in particular, in all his list of sins:

- Immorality
- Idolatry

1 Cor. 6:9;18; Gal 5:19; Eph. 5:5

Perhaps his thinking followed the 2 tablets of the law.

Positively – love for God and neighbors.

Negatively – idolatry and immorality.

Idolatry reminds us of having no other gods; and **immorality** is the blatant disregard of love for the neighbor.

A. FORNICATION.

(Immorality) – translates porneia and refers to sexual sin. Our English word pornography derives from this word, being a compound word meaning a writing (or pictures) about sexual sin. This is always first on Paul’s list of sexual sins; refers to illicit sexual intercourse; sometimes used as a synonym for adultery.

Porne is the word for prostitute.

1 Thessalonians 4:3, “For this is the will of God, your sanctification: that you should abstain from sexual immorality”

The Jerusalem Council ordered Gentile believers to avoid immorality. The Bible strictly forbids any sexual activity outside the marriage bond between a man and a woman.

B. UNCLEANNES.

Impurity – seems to refer to the defiling that arises in connection with fornication. It goes beyond the acts of immorality, to the evil thoughts and intentions of the mind.

Romans 6:19, “I speak in human terms because of the weakness of your flesh. For just as you presented your members as slaves of uncleanness, and of lawlessness leading to more lawlessness, so now present your members as slaves of righteousness for holiness.”

Matthew 5:28, “But I say to you that whoever looks at a woman to lust for her has already committed adultery with her in his heart.”

Mark 7:21-23, “For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders, thefts, covetousness, wickedness, deceit, lewdness, an evil eye, blasphemy, pride, foolishness. All these evil things come from within and defile a man.”

1 Thessalonians 4:7, “For God did not call us to uncleanness, but in holiness.”

Evil behavior begins with evil thoughts. The battle against all sin, especially sexual sin, begins in the mind.

Philippians 4:8, “Finally, brethren, whatever things are true, whatever things are noble, whatever things are just, whatever things are pure, whatever things are lovely, whatever things are of good report, if there is any virtue and if there is anything praiseworthy — meditate on these things.”

Colossians 3:16, “Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom, teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord.”

Principle of **II Cor 10:3-5**

THOUGHTS:

- 1. Receive**
- 2. Reject**
- 3. Replace**

1 Corinthians 10:13, “No temptation has overtaken you except such as is common to man; but God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are

able, but with the temptation will also make the way of escape, that you may be able to bear it.”

C. PASSION/EVIL DESIRE.

Inordinate affection – describes a state of mind that excites sexual purity. The person who cultivates this kind of appetite can always find opportunity to satisfy it.

These two words together refer to strong desires gone bad. They refer to the misdirected fulfillment of bodily appetites, usually sexual appetites. A passion is uncontrolled and habitual lust. When lust goes unchecked, a passion for what is forbidden arises. Habits are formed which feed each other. Lust encourages passion, and passion produces more perverted lust.

You can see an illustration of these words in **Romans 1:24, 26**

“Therefore God also gave them up to uncleanness, in the lusts of their hearts, to dishonor their bodies among themselves”

“For this reason God gave them up to vile passions. For even their women exchanged the natural use for what is against nature.”

Evil desire refers to the sexual lust created in the mind.

James 1:15, “Then, when desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, brings forth death.”

- **Passion** is the physical side
- **Evil desire** is the mental side

Used together:

1 Thessalonians 4:5, “not in passion of lust, like the Gentiles who do not know God”

Any Help?

Psalms 19:12, “Who can understand his errors? Cleanse me from secret faults.”

Psalms 119:9-16

**“How can a young man cleanse his way?
By taking heed according to Your word.
With my whole heart I have sought You;
Oh, let me not wander from Your commandments!
Your word I have hidden in my heart,
That I might not sin against You.
Blessed are You, O LORD!
Teach me Your statutes.
With my lips I have declared
All the judgments of Your mouth.
I have rejoiced in the way of Your testimonies,
As much as in all riches.
I will meditate on Your precepts,
And contemplate Your ways.
I will delight myself in Your statutes;
I will not forget Your word.”**

D. COVETOUSNESS.

Greed – this is the root cause of all sin

William Barclay:

“It is, therefore, a sin with a very wide range. If it is the desire for money, it leads to theft. If it is the desire for prestige, it leads to evil ambition. If it is the desire for power, it leads to sadistic tyranny. If it is the desire for a person, it leads to sexual sin.”

Covetousness is mentioned last also in the 10 Commandments. Comes from two words: “more” and “to have.” It is the insatiable desire to have more, to have what is forbidden.

James 4:2, “You lust and do not have. You murder and covet and cannot obtain. You fight and war. Yet you do not have because you do not ask.”

It is longing for something that belongs to someone else or placing supreme values on something not yet possessed. It represents a strong movement of desire toward something out of God’s will at the time.

Note, this passage identifies what it is – **idolatry**.
In **Exodus 20:17** it explicitly explains what not to covet.

"You shall not covet your neighbor's house; you shall not covet your neighbor's wife, nor his male servant, nor his female servant, nor his ox, nor his donkey, nor anything that is your neighbor's."

If it is idolatry, it means greed places something or someone ahead of God. That is not likely to be done overtly since society frowns upon it, but subtly and easily other things take the glory that God demands for Himself.

When people sin, it is at its basis their doing what they desire, rather than what God desires. That is, in essence, to worship themselves instead of God, and that is idolatry. The Puritan Stephen Charnock wrote, *"All sin is founded in a secret atheism...All the wicked inclinations in the heart...are sparks from this latent fire; the language of every one of these is, 'I would be Lord to myself, and would not have a God superior to me'...In sins of omission we own not God, in neglecting to perform what he enjoins; in sins of commission we set up some lust in the place of God, and pay to that the homage which is due to our Maker...We deny his sovereignty when we violate his laws...Every sin invades the rights of God, and strips him of one or other of his perfections...Every sin is a kind of cursing god in the heart; an aim at the destruction of the being of god; not actually, but virtually...A man in every sin aims to set up his own will as his rule, and his own glory as the end of his actions against the will and glory of God."*

The antidote for covetousness is contentment. A contented person will not desire to violate another person sexually, or covet anything that person owns. A person who can say with Paul, **"I have learned to be content in whatever circumstances I am"** (*Phil. 4:11*) is not likely to struggle with covetousness. Contentment comes from trusting God. The basis of that trust is our knowledge of Him and His purposes for His people as revealed in Scripture.

Contentment is the opposite of covetousness. Whereas the covetous, greedy person worships himself, the contented person worships God. The Puritan Jeremiah Burroughs wrote: *"You worship God more by (contentment) than when you come to hear a sermon, or spend half an hour, or an hour, in prayer, or when you come to receive a sacrament. These are acts of God's worship, but they are only external acts of worship, to hear and pray and receive sacraments. But (contentment) is the soul's worship, to subject itself thus to God...in active obedience we worship God by doing what pleases God, but passive obedience we do as well worship God by being pleased with what god does."*

Attacking covetousness lays the axe to a root cause of sin. When contentment replaces covetousness, the latter cannot give rise to the process that culminates in an act of sin.

II. A POTENTIAL WRATH TO BE RELEASED. 6

