

Title: How is our Flesh Mortified?

Text: Col 3: 1-4

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Colossians 3: 1: If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God. 2: Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth.

The apostle Paul had never met many of the saints at Colossae nor those of Laodicea face-to-face. But Paul had great fear for them and for all to whom he ministered. It is the fear of every God-sent pastor. It is my fear for you. It was fear that the devil and his false teachers would beguile them.

Paul is declaring how the sinful flesh in God's saint's is mortified. But first he declares how it is not mortified. Not only is it not mortified by the teaching and means and methods of beguilers but the flesh is enflamed. Paul feared those who professed to believe Christ would prove to have never been born of God by being beguiled by these deceivers.

We will not speak on every verse but let's hear what Paul writes in chapter two and then we will look at our text in chapter 3.

Colossians 2: 1: For I would that ye knew what great conflict I have for you, and for them at Laodicea, and for as many as have not seen my face in the flesh; 2: That their hearts might be comforted, being knit together in love, and unto all riches of the full assurance of understanding, to the acknowledgement of the mystery of God, and of the Father, and of Christ; 3: In whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. 4: And this I say, lest any man should beguile you with enticing words.

The beguiling, deceiving words that entice believers is the message that turns you from Christ above to things below. Deceivers put something between the believer and Christ. They deceive men into thinking something is required of your hand to make you accepted of God.

Colossians 2: 6: As ye have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in him: 7: Rooted and built up in him, and stablished in the faith, as ye have been taught, abounding therein with thanksgiving.

Paul knew they had received the Lord Jesus by God-given faith in Christ. So Paul encouraged them to walk by faith, not by sight. They received Christ by God-given faith, so Paul teaches them to walk by God-given faith.

The devil and his false teachers deceive by telling men that Christ is not All. They say it is not enough to walk by faith in Christ. No man says those exact words. But they do so by teaching you to mind things below rather than setting your affection on Christ above.

Colossians 2: 8 Beware lest any man spoil you [lead you away from Christ and rob you] through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ.

Philosophy uses natural reason and natural things below. *Vain deceit* exalts the sinner. *The tradition of men* is something men add as a "must." *After the rudiments of the world* refers to the old covenant law and ceremonies; they were the rudiments of the world; deceivers turn you again to the law, making your law-obedience part of your righteousness.

The best way to recognize these things is this, these teachings are "*not after Christ.*" Beware of any man whose does not declare that Christ is All and the believer is complete in Christ. God's true preacher turns you from you and things below to Christ above and teaches you to walk by faith in Christ alone.

Colossians 2: 9: For in him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily. 10: And YE ARE COMPLETE IN HIM, which is the head of all principality and power:

Christ has power to save his people because the fulness of the triune God dwells in the man, Christ Jesus. He is the Head of all principality and power. Christ has power over all! Therefore, God's preacher preaches Christ and him crucified, risen and reigning with all power to save. We pray to Christ to save our brethren. We wait on Christ to work in the heart of his people. So do God's people. God's people bow to Christ and wait on Christ to make them and their brethren stand.

We have the assurance that Christ shall make his people stand because each sinner given faith is COMPLETE IN CHRIST! As fully as the fulness of the Godhead dwells in Christ's body so fully is the believer complete in Christ.

Paul shows how we are made complete in Christ. It is all of God our Savior and none of us. Paul uses circumcision to describe what Christ works *for us and in us* because the legalizing Jews were requiring believers to be circumcised with physical circumcision and keep the law.

First, Paul declares the circumcision Christ accomplished on the cross.

Colossians 2: 11: In [Christ] also ye are circumcised with the circumcision made without hands, in putting off the body of the sins of the flesh by the circumcision of Christ: Buried with him in baptism, wherein also ye are risen with him through the faith of the operation of God, who hath raised him from the dead.

In Christ on the cross, the body of sins of each of God's elect was destroyed under God's justice. On the cross, God's elect were immersed [baptized] in God's justice and buried in Christ. That is how God's elect were circumcised. It was without our hands. It was by the Lord Jesus bearing our sin and curse on the cross. The body of the sins of our flesh was put off by the circumcision of Christ on the cross. He justified his people!

Then through the preaching of the gospel of Christ, the Spirit of God circumcised us in heart and gave us faith in Christ.

Colossians 2: 13: And you, being dead in your sins and the uncircumcision of your flesh, hath he quickened together with him, having forgiven you all trespasses; 14: blotted out the handwriting of ordinances that was against us, which was contrary to us, and took the law out of the way, nailing it to his cross. 15: And having spoiled principalities and powers, he made a shew of them openly, triumphing over them in it.

The Spirit of God finds us dead in our sins and the uncircumcision of our flesh. The Spirit quickens us together with Christ. Through faith, the Spirit bears witness in our new spirit that God has forgiven us all trespasses. The Spirit bears witness that the law, which condemned us, was taken out of the way and nailed to the cross. In other words, Christ fulfilled the law on our behalf and delivered us from its curse. That is redemption.

Thus Christ conquered the devil and delivered us from all our enemies: Christ spoiled principalities and powers by saving his elect out of the hands of the devil. He continues to save his elect from the devil's false teachers. Christ openly made a mockery of them when he triumphed over the devil and all our enemies on the cross and he does so in the new birth. He continues to do so as he keeps us and delivers us from false teachers.

Having declared the gospel, Paul begins to deal with his main subject. He is teaching us that our flesh is not mortified through our works, as false teachers vainly declare. Even in preaching against false teachers, Paul exalts Christ first and declares the believer is complete in Christ. It is only through the message of the gospel of Christ and him crucified that our flesh is mortified. It is the gospel of Christ by which Christ saves us from false preachers.

Colossians 2: 16: Let no man therefore judge you in meat, or in drink, or in respect of a holyday, or of the new moon, or of the sabbath days: 17: Which are a shadow of things to come; but the body is of Christ.

Having declared that our judgment was settled in Christ on the cross, Paul says let no man judge you therefore for what you eat or drink or because you do not observe old covenant days and seasons or any of man's commandments. The law was a shadow but Christ is the body which the ceremonies typified.

For example, the dietary laws were a shadow picturing Christ who sanctifies his people and purifies our hearts through faith. That is what Christ taught Peter when he told him to eat the unclean animals. The Lord Jesus was sending Peter to preach to one of his Gentile elect who Christ had redeemed. The dietary laws had separated--sanctified--Jew from Gentile so that the Gentiles would have nothing to do with the Gentiles. So Christ let down that sheet having unclean animals and told Peter to kill and eat. When Peter objected, calling those things unclean, Christ said, "what God hath cleansed, that call not thou common" (Acts 10: 15). That is what the dietary laws typified. It is God the Father who sanctified us, "of God are you in Christ Jesus." It is Christ's work on the cross and his work in our hearts that sanctifies us, "who of God made unto us sanctification" (1 Cor 1: 30-31).

Likewise, the sabbath days typified Christ in whom the believer rests from all our works. God provided all on the day before the sabbath Saturday. God has blessed us with all spiritual blessings in Christ Jesus according as he chose us in him before the foundation of the world. Christ has accomplished our redemption. Christ accomplished our new birth. Ye are complete in Christ. Christ is our rest from all our vain works.

Colossians 2: 18: Let no man beguile you of your reward in a voluntary humility and worshipping of angels intruding into those things which he hath not seen, vainly puffed up by his fleshly mind, 19: And not holding the Head, from which all the body by joints and bands having nourishment ministered, and knit together, increaseth with the increase of God.

Let no man rob you of Christ your Reward: Christ is your Inheritance, your Reward, your All. Do not give ear to men who exalt the sinner's will as free. Give ear to no man who puts anything between you and Christ. In Paul's day deceivers taught that believers must come to angels before they could come to Christ. In our day, they put the pope, preachers or a thousand other things between the believer and Christ.

Here is the problem, such men do not behold Christ the Head. If any man puts anything between the believer and Christ then he manifests that he does not know Christ our Head. Any man who does not declare Christ is All and the believer is complete in Christ, who exalts the sinner's will and works, is vainly puffed up by his fleshly mind and not beholding Christ our Head.

God the Father has made Christ Head over all things to the church. That means Christ is able to call his people through the gospel. That is why we preach Christ and him crucified alone. It means through the preaching of the gospel, Christ is able to knit our hearts together by the Spirit of God through faith in Christ. That is why we preach Christ and him crucified alone, and all the more when there is trouble between brethren. Through the same gospel, Christ our Head ministers all nourishment to each member of his church, his body--*he filleth all in all*. Christ our Head makes each believer increase with the increase of God through the preaching of the gospel which gives Christ all the glory and declares the believer to be a self-righteous sinner in his flesh.

Colossians 2: 20: Wherefore if ye be dead with Christ from the rudiments of the world, why, as though living in the world, are ye subject to ordinances, 21: (Touch not; taste not; handle not; 22: Which all are to perish with the using;) after the commandments and doctrines of men?

Now, Paul comes a little closer to his main point. If you believe you died to the law in Christ from the rudiments of the world, and that Christ is your Life at God's right hand, then why would you act as though your life is in this world by subjecting to ordinances? When professing believers subject themselves to ordinances and commands which say touch not, taste not, handle not, then they are saying that at least part of their eternal life is by them doing those things. They are saying they do not believe they are complete in Christ and that their life is at God's right hand.

"*The rudiments of the world*" are the first principles, the ABC's. The Hebrew writer spoke of going from milk to meat. It is sad but unregenerate, religious men think that means we get beyond Christ and go on to live after the law. The Hebrew writer said the rudiments of the world are the shadows: the washings and offerings of the old covenant law was the milk; those things were only a shadow.

But Christ has come and Christ is the Meat: we grow by learning more of Christ--learning more of our Completion in him--as Paul declared in verses 6-7, "*As ye have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in him: Rooted and built up in him, and stablished in the faith, as ye have been taught, abounding therein with thanksgiving*"--that is to go from milk to meat.

The Galatian believers were being beguiled to turn back to the law. It is the danger every age has faced. It is the danger we face today. Listen to how Paul declared the law and sacrifices and ceremonies were the rudiments. Children begin learning their ABC's. The law and ceremonies were the first elements, the ABC's, that God used to teach his elect church when we were children.

Galatians 4: 1: Now I say, *That* the heir, as long as he is a child, differeth nothing from a servant, though he be lord of all; 2: But is under tutors and governors until the time appointed of the father. 3: Even so we, when we were children, were in bondage under THE ELEMENTS OF THE WORLD: 4: But when the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law, 5: TO REDEEM THEM THAT WERE UNDER THE LAW, that we might receive the adoption of sons. 6: And because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father. 7: Wherefore thou art no more a servant, but a son; and if a son, then an heir of God through Christ. 8: Howbeit then, when ye knew not God, ye did service unto them which by nature are no gods. 9: But now, after that ye have known God, or rather are known of God, HOW TURN YE AGAIN TO THE WEAK AND BEGGARLY ELEMENTS, WHEREUNTO YE DESIRE AGAIN TO BE IN BONDAGE? 10: Ye observe days, and months, and times, and years. 11: I am afraid of you, lest I have bestowed upon you labour in vain.

Read Colossians 2: 20-22 without the parenthesis.

Colossians 2: 20: Wherefore if ye be dead with Christ from the rudiments of the world, why, as though living in the world, are ye subject to ordinances,...after the commandments and doctrines of men?

If God has given you faith in Christ then you died to the law in Christ and your life [your righteousness] is Christ at God's right hand. Get that, believer, your life is at God's right hand. Then why, as though your life is in this world, are ye subject to ordinances, after the commandments and doctrines of men?

Now read the parenthesis. Touch not, taste not; handle not; are all to perish with the using. If your life is in things you do then when you die all your so-called righteousness will die with you. But if your righteousness is Christ at God's right hand then you have eternal life and everlasting righteousness in Christ.

Why do the works of the law appeal to natural man?

Colossians 2: 23: Which things have indeed a shew of wisdom in will worship, and humility, and neglecting of the body; not in any honour to the satisfying of the flesh.

Sinners love to appear wise before men so they put on a vain show before men in their subjection to various laws. It is will worship; it is the worship of a man's will. It is false humility. They neglect the body in an effort to mortify the flesh: they cut out meat and drink; they do all sorts of things to mortify the flesh; they cause themselves much pain and suffering; they deny the body even basic needs. But it does not mortify the flesh. It enflames the flesh. It feeds the flesh. It puffs a man up into thinking he has contributed to Christ's work to make himself holy. Those things do not mortify the flesh but enflame the flesh.

Now, we come to our text. After declaring how the flesh is not mortified, Paul declares how the flesh is mortified.

Colossians 3: 1: If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God. 2: Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth. 3: For ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God. 4: When Christ, *who is* our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with him in glory.

ARE YOU RISEN WITH CHRIST?

There is only one way to know if you are risen with Christ: faith. Do you believe the Lord Jesus is the Son of God? Do you believe he is Salvation? Do you believe that you are complete in Christ? Faith believes Christ made us meet--fit--to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light, apart from any work of our hands.

Colossians 1: 12: Giving thanks unto the Father, which hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light: 13: Who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated *us* into the kingdom of his dear Son: 14: In whom we have redemption through his blood, *even* the forgiveness of sins:

To be "meet" means we are justified by Christ's Righteousness and our new man is holy by Christ formed in us.

The Hebrew writer said we have been called "*to the general assembly and church of the firstborn, which are written in heaven, and to God the Judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect*" (Heb 12: 23). "The spirits of just men made perfect" are not only those saints already in glory but it describes every saint born-again of God and robed in Christ's righteousness.

One, every sinner born-again of God is holy, made perfect, in the new spirit created of God. We have been born of incorruptible Seed by Christ our Holiness being formed in us. Therefore, the new man within us cannot sin. Our sin-nature is sin and only sins. But our new man cannot be corrupted because the new man is born of incorruptible seed. "Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin; for his seed remaineth in him: and he cannot sin, because he is born of God" (1 Jn 3: 9). "The hidden man of the heart,..is not corruptible, even the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit" (1 Pet 3:4).

Two, every believer is just man. God the Father justified us in Christ his Son. Christ justified us when he cried, "It is finished." Christ made each of his elect the righteousness of God in him. Therefore, through God-given faith, God imputes Christ's righteousness to us.

So every true believer has that holiness without which no man shall see God by Christ being formed in us. Christ has justified every sinner who is given faith in Christ. Those born-again of God and given faith in Christ are meet for heaven. They are "*the spirits of just men made perfect.*" God the Father in Christ, through the Spirit, has made us meet for glory. Christ is the "meetness" required to enter our inheritance in light in the presence of holy God in heaven.

Either we believe Christ is our meetness for glory or we believe there remains something for us to do. If you believe there remains something for you to do then you do not believe on the Lord Jesus Christ. Seek Christ today while he may be found. You are yet without Christ if you think there is one thing you must do to be saved. The sinner must believe on Christ--and even faith is not of ourselves but of God.

But if God has given you faith to believe Christ is your Life at God's right hand, so that you trust none of your works, then it is because God has made you meet for glory. That is the work of God by which he saves his people. If all your Righteousness and Sanctification is Christ at God's right hand then you are risen with Christ. So the Spirit of God commands us, "*seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God. Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth.*"

YOU ARE DEAD AND ALIVE

Colossians 3: 3: For ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God. 4: When Christ, *who is our life*, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with him in glory.

Those God sanctifies are both dead and alive. My old man--my sinful self--died in Christ on the cross under the justice of God. My new man--my sinless self--arose in Christ and is there at God's right hand. This is what true, God-given faith believes.

Galatians 6: 20: I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me. 21: I do not frustrate the grace of God: for if righteousness *come* by the law, then Christ is dead in vain.

Romans 7: 6: Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with *him*, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin. 7: For he that is dead is freed [justified] from sin. 8 Now if we be dead with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with him: 9: Knowing that Christ being raised from the dead dieth no more; death hath no more dominion over him. 10: For in that he died, he died unto sin once: but in that he liveth, he liveth unto God. 11: Likewise reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord. 12: Let not sin therefore [or thereby] reign in your mortal body, that ye should obey it in the lusts thereof. 13 Neither yield ye your members *as* instruments of unrighteousness unto sin: but yield yourselves unto God, as those that are alive from the dead, and your members *as* instruments of righteousness unto God. 14: For sin shall not have dominion over you: for ye are not under the law, but under grace.

THE MAIN POINT: HOW IS OUR FLESH MORTIFIED?

Colossians 3: 5: Mortify therefore your members which are upon the earth; fornication, uncleanness, inordinate affection, evil concupiscence, and covetousness, which is idolatry: 6: For which things' sake the wrath of God cometh on the children of disobedience: 7: In the which ye also walked some time, when ye lived in them. 8: But now ye also put off all these; anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy, filthy communication out of your mouth. 9: Lie not one to another,...

The word "mortify therefore" could be translated "mortify thereby."

Paul declared that our flesh is not mortified by us attempting to mortify it with touch not, taste not, handle not. Paul declared if we are risen with Christ and our life is at God's right hand then set your affection on Christ above. Mortify, thereby, your members which are upon the earth.

It is only when the Spirit of God sets the affection of our new man on Christ above [affection singular on Christ alone] that we treat our flesh like a dead thing. Not one sin of our flesh diminishes the righteousness we have in Christ and not one good deed adds to the righteousness we have in Christ. Do not regard the flesh as diminishing or contributing. Christ is All! Christ is Life. That means Christ is Righteousness because life and righteousness are one and the same thing.

Romans 8: 10: And if Christ *be* in you, the body *is* dead because of sin; but the Spirit *is* LIFE BECAUSE OF RIGHTEOUSNESS.

Paul greatest fear was that deceivers would turn the affection of these believers from being set on Christ above to things below.

2 Corinthians 11: 3: But I fear, lest by any means, as the serpent beguiled Eve through his subtilty, so your minds should be corrupted from the SIMPLICITY that is in Christ.

Simplicity means singleness. It is having the affection, singular, set on Christ above and him alone.

When our affection is turned to things below so that we touch not, taste not, handle not--so that we do many other things in an effort to mortify our flesh in the strength of our flesh--then we may not commit any of these sins outwardly. Yet, we commit all these sins spiritually--"*fornication, uncleanness, inordinate affection, evil concupiscence, and covetousness, which is idolatry.*" These are all idolatry. Likewise, if our life is in touch not, taste not, handle not then when a fellow believer falls, we will commit all these other sins--"*anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy, filthy communication out of your mouth and lying.*" Paul declared that very thing. When Paul was Saul and focused on things below, he said,

Romans 7: 8:...sin, taking occasion by the commandment, wrought in me all manner of concupiscence. For without the law sin was dead. 9: For I was alive without the law once: but when the commandment came [setting his affection on Christ above], sin revived, and I died.

Through the preaching of the gospel of Christ and him crucified, the Spirit of God turns our affection to Christ above and makes us regard our flesh as "dead." Thereby, we mortify the flesh. He enables us to put off the old man and put on the new man. It is by the Spirit renewing our inward man in the knowledge of Christ after the image of Christ that created our new man.

Colossians 2: 9...seeing that ye have put off the old man with his deeds; 10: And have put on the new *man*, which is renewed in knowledge after the image of him that created him: 11: Where there is neither Greek nor Jew, circumcision nor uncircumcision, Barbarian, Scythian, bond *nor* free: but Christ *is* all, and in all.

It is the Spirit creating a new man in us in Christ's image that we are made a new creation and given faith in Christ. Likewise, it is the Spirit renewing our new man in the knowledge of Christ that our new man is grown in the image of Christ that created our new man.

In our new man, we regard none of those things which we once put all the emphasis on as contributing to or diminishing from our righteousness. All these things are the old things that are past away. In the new man, all things are become new.

"*Where there is neither Greek nor Jew*". The Jews once thought only Jews were elect. Vain religion in our day puts emphasis on denominations. Many put emphasis on being a Calvinist or Armenian. But now in the new man, those born of God know that it is not our race nor denomination nor knowledge of any system of doctrine nor anything of the flesh that saves. God our Father chose us freely by grace in Christ and blessed with all spiritual blessings in Christ thereby. So we no longer judge men after the flesh.

"*Circumcision nor uncircumcision.*" We once righteousness was by our keeping the law and we looked down on those we thought did not keep the law. Now, in the new man, God has taught us that no man has ever kept the law of God. It is only by Christ fulfilling the law and making us a new creation in him that we are made the righteousness of God. So we no longer know men after the flesh.

"*Barbarian, Scythian.*" We once regarded education and education, cultured and uncultured people. Now, in the new man, we see that both educated and uneducated were ignorant of God and how God saves. Now, in the new man, God has made Christ alone to be our Wisdom. So we no longer know and judge men after the flesh.

"*Bond nor free.*" There was a time we would have never thought a man bound in slavery or imprisoned could be a child of God. Now, in the new man, we see we all fell in Adam and were bound. But now in the new man, those bound are Christ's freemen and those free are Christ's willing bondservants. We no longer judge after the flesh.

When you sit hearing the good news of Christ declared, you do not even regard self. You treat self like a dead man. Not only this but beholding how God, for Christ sake, has mercy on you continually and how that Christ has forgiven you continually every day, the Spirit enables us to put on the new man.

Colossians 3: 12: Put on therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, longsuffering; 13: Forbearing one another, and forgiving one another, if any man have a quarrel against any: even as Christ forgave you, so also *do* ye. 14: And above all these things *put on* charity, which is the bond of perfectness. 15: And let the peace of God rule in your hearts, to the which also ye are called in one body; and be ye thankful. 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. 17: And whatsoever ye do in word or deed, *do* all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by him.

This is why Paul told the Corinthians, "I determined to know nothing among you save Jesus Christ and him crucified" Paul did not want to hear the various reports of sins they were committing. Those were the second causes of their strife and division. The first cause was that they did not have their affection set on Christ above alone.

So knowing it is only through the preaching of Christ and him crucified that the Spirit created a new man in us in the first hour, Paul was determined to preach Christ alone to them that the Spirit might set their affection on Christ above, renews their inward man in the knowledge of Christ and thereby mortify their flesh.

He was determined to do for the Corinthians what he is doing for the Colossians and every church. He was determined to preach Christ and him crucified. He was determined to pray that the Spirit would set their affection on Christ above, not on things in the earth. He was determined to wait on Christ our Head to minister this nourishment to them. That is why I preach Christ to you. It is why I pray to Christ that he would send the Spirit and enable every child of God to heed this word from Christ our Head. This is why I wait on Christ. It is because this is how our flesh is mortified. This is how we put on the new man.

Colossians 3: 1: If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God. 2: Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth. 3: For ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God. 4: When Christ, *who is* our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with him in glory. 4: Mortify [thereby] your members which are on the earth [and put on the new man thereby]

Amen!