

Imperatives of Crucified Living-2

Hacking Agag to Pieces

Our Ugly Flesh

Colossians 3

Paul's epistles to the Galatians, Ephesians and Colossians were to people living in Roman Asia which is the area of modern Turkey. In the time of Paul was incredibly Roman.

There are more Greek temples in Turkey than in Greece, and there are more Roman cities in Turkey than there are in all of Italy. This was the epicenter of Roman life in the first and second centuries.

Why the history lesson? As you turn to Galatians 2 this evening let me describe life in the Roman world of the 1st century.

In Roman Asia (Turkey) was also the city we know from Revelation called Thyatira. This city was renowned for its manufacturing and industry. Most workers in Thyatira were members of guilds, much like our labor unions of today. They set prices for labor and sales areas and so on: potters, dyers, tanners, bakers, metal workers, textile makers, bronze smiths, slave dealers, leather workers and the rest had their guilds in this town. History of this period notes three things.

- Trade guilds were compulsory; to be employed in a trade was only via the guild. It was a closed shop.
- Every guild in Thyatira had a patron God or Goddess. Thus, every guild function began with paying homage to that deity by offering--this was the obligatory opening to all meetings which were required to be an artisan/craftsman.
- Business followed and then the customary banquets known for their sexual freedom. The cost for the Christian was unmistakable.

Ramsay the famed 19th century archaeologist, writes "revelry, license and intoxication marked these pagan religious societies (trade guilds) lounging on dining couches, surrounded by troupes of unclothed, dancing and singing slaves...would be fatal to all self-restraining spirits". In short, a guild was no place for Christians and yet quitting the union was economic suicide.

So the battle with the flesh raged every day in Thyatira and all the other towns of Roman Asia. Add to this bath houses in every city where prostitution was normal and considered healthy. Athletic facilities where such emphasis was placed on the human body that many sports were practiced and competed in total nudity. These saints were

vexed with the flesh, temptation, and sin.

Now listen to Paul's words to them in Galatians 2:20.

The battle was already won by Christ, the world, my flesh and the Devil were all defeated at the cross--and we just need to believe and act upon that truth! How do we do that more regularly?

Two passages explain this truth. The first the attitude we need, and second the action we need to take. We need to repeat, reaffirm, and remember over and over again that the past work of Christ's death on the cross saved me and keeps me. Listen to Paul in Galatians 2 as he sets forth the attitude we are to have.

*Galatians 2:20 I have been crucified with Christ (**past event--justification**); it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me (**present event-sanctification**); and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God (**present event-sanctification**), who loved me and gave Himself for me (**past event--justification**). NKJV*

Notice the sandwich type presentation. The past work of Christ on the cross secured my salvation in the present and offers my sanctification in the present, based on the past work of Christ's cross.

How did I get saved? By trusting, believing, clinging to the truth that Jesus Christ took my sins, and stood in my place and bore the punishment of God's wrath I deserved. The guiltless One took my guilt; the sinless One took my sin; the holy One took my wretchedness and on and on I could go.

But did I see Him there personally? No, it was by what? Yes, faith.

I believed the truth of God's Word and God changed me forever. The same way we were saved is the same way we live the rest of our lives.

So apply that faith that you and I have for the work of Christ on the cross in our place and apply it now to the rest of our walk.

Flesh can't defeat flesh. Resolves, promises, fighting and striving in our own power only leads to further defeats--it is only by yielding to the power of the cross. And what is the power of the cross? It is the defeat of death, sin, and Satan that Jesus accomplished once for all time when He died on the cross.

Remember our study of the life of Saul these past few weeks? We saw repeatedly that the downfall of King Saul started with his selective obedience. But his undoing was when he spared Agag. We learned that if we want to waste our lives just be like Saul who kept only the best--**of what God hated**.

To God the Amalekites were a deadly poison that had to be dealt with; they were

emitting dangerous spiritual radiation that would contaminate all that came into contact with them. So when God gave them into Saul's hand he wasn't to even spare their livestock – every one and every thing was to be destroyed. But Saul and his men went through that which God hated and saved the best.

1 Samuel 15: 32-33 Then Samuel said, "Bring Agag king of the Amalekites here to me." So Agag came to him cautiously. And Agag said, "Surely the bitterness of death is past." 33 But Samuel said, "As your sword has made women childless, so shall your mother be childless among women." And Samuel hacked Agag in pieces before the Lord in Gilgal.

Samuel was God's man, His obedient instrument for that moment—and Samuel's harsh action towards Agag is an example of how we must deal with the flesh, that old sinful part of us that remains.

Let me repeat the message God has left us from the failed life of King Saul. Saul is a picture of one of God's servants who suffers loss. Let me underline in your heart and mind this sobering truth--any part of our old life that we spare will come back and slay us and rob us of God's blessing, fruitfulness, and rewards.

- Any part of our flesh (like Agag) that we exempt from mortification will come back with a vengeance and slay us.
- All of our flesh (like the Amalekites) always comes to strike us down when we are weakest – and then rob us of our crown.

Now join me in Colossians 3, as we see the action we must take to live the life of killing our flesh, mortifying our flesh—and living the crucified with Christ life!

Now, in simple faith that saved you repeat that to yourself. (Just like my old pastor John MacArthur always used to tell us 'preach the Gospel to yourself!') Say something like this:

Even if I do not feel it, understand it, or even at times want it I WILL by faith, believing YOU consider myself dead to sin. Or in times of need, "Lord I operate on what I know is true, you have made me dead to sin."

When I truly prayed, asking in simple faith for Christ to save me—whether I felt a strong emotional feeling or not, God began His work within me. I started changing from the inside out. The same is true with these imperatives.

- Jesus lived—that's history.
 - Jesus died—that's theology.
 - Jesus died for me and took my sins upon Himself on the Cross—that's salvation.
 - Jesus died for me to live through Him—that's sanctification.

And Christ's work on Calvary forever gave us the power and authority so we can stop anything that enslaves us and so that we can start anything He asks us to do!

Just as there is nothing we can do before our salvation to make us accepted by God; and there is nothing we can do after our salvation that makes us acceptable to God.

As we were saved only by the accomplishment of Christ's sacrifice on the cross—so we live each day 'by faith' (the same faith by which we were saved). We are always dependent upon Christ's gracious death upon the cross that saves and keeps us!

Colossians 3 is built around 14 imperative commands. Remember that **God never commands me to do what He hasn't already given me the grace to accomplish by faith through His Spirit!**

Let's walk back through this chapter, see what Paul relates to us from the Lord, and then pause and ASK the Lord to unleash these powerful spiritual qualities in our lives today.

If then you were raised with Christ,

- **seek those things which are above**, where Christ is, sitting at the right hand of God.

*[Because of Christ's death for my sins—I can now seek and do what pleases God. Close your eyes, look up at the Lord and say, **Lord Jesus today I want You to help me seek things above!**]*

- v. 2 **Set your mind** on things above, not on things on the earth. 3 For you died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. 4 When Christ who is our life appears, then you also will appear with Him in glory.

*[Because of Christ's death for my sins—I can now turn my mind to the Lord's channel and really experience Him. Close your eyes, look up at the Lord and say, **Lord Jesus right now I want You to set my mind on things above!**]*

- v. 5 Therefore **put to death your members** which are on the earth:

Paul is saying is, "Put to death every part of your self which is against God and keeps you from fulfilling his will." He uses the same expression in Romans 8: 13: "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." It is exactly the same line of thought as that of Jesus when he demanded that a man should cut off a hand or a foot, or tear out an eye when it was leading him into sin (Matthew 5:29, 30). The Christian must kill self-centeredness and regard as dead all private desires and ambitions. There must be in his life a radical transformation of the will and a radical shift of the centre. Anything which would keep him from fully obeying God and fully surrendering to Christ must be brought to the Great Physician to be surgically excised.

[Because of Christ's death for my sins—I can now go to my Great Physician and He

will surgically removed any tumor of sin that kills my walk with God. Close your eyes, look up at the Lord and say, **Lord Jesus right now I want You to kill these evil desires in my life.**]

1. fornication (NIV sexual immorality):

Fornication and uncleanness must go. Chastity was the one completely new virtue which Christianity brought into the world. In the ancient world sexual relationships before marriage and outside marriage were the normal and accepted practice. The sexual appetite was regarded as a thing to be gratified, not to be controlled. The Christian ethic insists on chastity, regarding the physical relationship between the sexes as something so precious that indiscriminate use of it in the end spoils it.

Fornication means "sexual immorality." Is that your sin today? Let's not kid ourselves—there are a great many folk who are covering up this sin in their thoughts, or in their secret life, and yet they still talk about being dedicated Christians! Paul brings this right out into the open and tells us that we are to put our physical members in the place of death. Do your eyes cause you trouble? Do you look with the eye of lust? Put those eyes in the place of death, and now use them as the eyes of Christ to look upon Him. That will change things, will it not?

*[Because of Christ's death for my sins—He can now defeat any form of fornication in my life.. Close your eyes, look up at the Lord and say, **Lord Jesus right now I want You to kill every immoral desire in my life.**]*

2. uncleanness (NIV impurity):

This includes thoughts, words, looks, gestures, and the jokes we tell.

*[Because of Christ's death for my sins—He can now defeat any form of impurity and uncleanness in my life.. Close your eyes, look up at the Lord and say, **Lord Jesus right now I want You to remove all impurity and filthiness from my heart.**]*

3. passion (NIV lust):

This KJV inordinate affection means "uncontrolled passion or lust." passion a kind of person who is the slave of his passion (palkos)

*[Because you died for me—He can now defeat any form of impurity and uncleanness in my life.. Close your eyes, look up at the Lord and say, **Lord Jesus right now I want You to remove all impurity and filthiness from my heart.**]*

4. evil desire:

This is KJV evil concupiscence—that means “evil desires.” This is a person who is driven by the desire for the wrong things (epithumia).

*[Because of Christ's death for my sins—He can now defeat any form of enslaving passion in my life.. Close your eyes, look up at the Lord and say, **Lord Jesus right now I want You to liberate me from uncontrolled lust in my life.**]*

5. and **covetousness (NIV greed)**, which is idolatry. 6 Because of these things the wrath of God is coming upon the sons of disobedience, 7 in which you yourselves once walked when you lived in them.

*Pleonexia is one of the ugliest of sins but it is hard to find a single word to translate it. It comes from two Greek words; the first half of the word is from pleon which means more and the second half is from echein which means to have. Pleonexia is basically **the insatiable desire to have more.***

It has been described as ruthless self-seeking. 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. C. F. D. Moule well describes it as “the opposite of the desire to give.”

*[Because of Christ's death for my sins—He can now defeat any form of enslaving passion in my life.. Close your eyes, look up at the Lord and say, **Lord Jesus right now I want You to liberate me from always wanting more of anything but You.**]*

- v. 8 But now you yourselves are to **put off all these**:

Paul says that there are certain things of which the Colossians must strip themselves. The word he uses is the word for putting off clothes. There is here a picture from the life of the early Christian. When the Christian was baptized, he put off his old clothes when he went down into the water and when he emerged he put on a new and pure white robe. He divested himself of one kind of life and put on another.

*[Because of Christ's death for my sins—He can now strip off of me anything that grieves or quenches His working in and through me. Close your eyes, look up at the Lord and say, **Lord Jesus right now I want You to strip off these areas of my life.**]*

1. anger:

There is a place for anger that is justified. You remember that the Lord Jesus was angry at the Pharisees because of the hardness of their hearts. That is not a sinful anger. The problem is that we become angry over the wrong

things. Orge is anger which has become inveterate; it is long-lasting, slow-burning anger, which refuses to be pacified and nurses its wrath to keep it warm.

*[Because of Christ's death for my sins—He can now defeat any form of improper anger in my life.. Close your eyes, look up at the Lord and say, **Lord Jesus right now I want You to strip off my ungodly anger.**]*

2. wrath (NIV rage):

Anger becomes "wrath" when we develop an unforgiving spirit. thumos is a blaze of sudden anger which is quickly kindled and just as quickly dies. The Greeks likened it to a fire amongst straw, which quickly blazed and just as quickly burned itself out. For the Christian both the burst of temper and the long-lasting anger are alike forbidden.

*[Because of Christ's death for my sins—He can now defeat any form of improper wrath in my life. Close your eyes, look up at the Lord and say, **Lord Jesus right now I want You to strip off my outbursts of wrath and rage.**]*

3. malice:

This is kakia a difficult word to translate, for it really means that viciousness of mind from which all the individual vices spring. It is all-pervading evil. Someone has said that "malice" is congealed anger. It is an anger that has been nursed along. It is an anger that tries to take revenge and get even. Paul says that a Christian is to put that off like an old, dirty, filthy garment. That kind of behavior does not represent Christ.

*[Because of Christ's death for my sins—He can now defeat any form of malice in my life.. Close your eyes, look up at the Lord and say, **Lord Jesus right now I want You to strip off my viciousness.**]*

4. blasphemy (NIV slander):

This word is blasphemeia insulting and slanderous speaking in general; when that insulting speech is directed against God, it becomes blasphemy. The first type of blasphemy is to defame the name of God. It is not just taking His name in vain, but it is to misrepresent Him, to hate Him. In this context it is much more likely that what is forbidden is slanderous talk against one's fellow-men.

*[Because of Christ's death for my sins—He can now defeat any form of slander in my life.. Close your eyes, look up at the Lord and say, **Lord Jesus right now I want You to strip off any slander from my mouth.**]*

5. filthy language out of your mouth:

The word is aischrologia which means foul communication and includes both that which is abusive, filthy, and obscene language.

*[Because of Christ's death for my sins—He can now defeat any form of filthiness in my talk.. Close your eyes, look up at the Lord and say, **Lord Jesus right now cleanse my mouth, and my heart so that nothing inside me is filthy so that nothing filthy comes out.**]*

- v. 9 **Do not lie to one another**, since you have put off the old man with his deeds, 10 and have put on the new man who is renewed in knowledge according to the image of Him who created him, 11 where there is neither Greek nor Jew, circumcised nor uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave nor free, but Christ is all and in all:

SALVATION brought a complete change in our personality. We put off the old self and put on the new self, just as the candidate for baptism puts off his old clothes and puts on the new white robe.

Barbarians were those who were not Greeks, those whom we would call heathen today. The Scythian was the worst kind of barbarian. Scythia was north of the Black Sea and the Caspian Sea in the area around the Caucasus Mountains. The people who lived there were probably the most barbaric the world has known. You talk about pagan, heathen, brutal, and mean! They would take their enemies and scalp them; then they would use the skull as a cup and drink the blood of their victims out of the skull! I cannot think of anything more heathen than that! Did you know that the ancestors of many of us who have white skin came from that territory? We are called Caucasians after the area where these barbarians lived.

*[Because of Christ's death on the cross—He can now make me live the truth. Close your eyes, look up at the Lord and say, **Lord Jesus right now live through me so that I do not live a lie by talking the talk but not living the truth.**]*