

“<sup>1</sup> If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God. <sup>2</sup> Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth. <sup>3</sup> For ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God. <sup>4</sup> When Christ, *who is* our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with him in glory. <sup>5</sup> Mortify therefore your members which are upon the earth; fornication, uncleanness, inordinate affection, evil concupiscence, and covetousness, which is idolatry: <sup>6</sup> For which things' sake the wrath of God cometh on the children of disobedience: <sup>7</sup> In the which ye also walked some time, when ye lived in them.” (Col 3:1-7)

#### I Christianity affects the whole man.

- A. Jesus Christ came to create a new humanity. This new humanity would be born, not of fleshly means, as the first humanity is, for we are born of the flesh, by carnal means, and are all descended from our father Adam.
- B. But this new humanity would be produced by a different means: not by birth that is the result of sexual reproduction, but by the work of the Spirit of God, according to spiritual means. It would not come by the works of the law, symbolized by circumcision, the cutting off of the flesh. This new birth is the result of a spiritual transformation that identifies us with Jesus Christ and his resurrection. We have been raised with him: justified by faith. Our first father, Adam, lies in the grave, and in him we also are dead in trespasses and in sins. Our New Father is our Father in Heaven, where Christ sits at the right hand of God.
- C. This teaching of salvation by faith requires newness of life: ideas produce consequences, and this wonderful doctrine of salvation by faith in Christ calls us to a transformed ethic--a new way of life. It is impossible that your connection to Jesus Christ not transform you. "If we say we have fellowship with Him and walk in darkness, we lie and do not the truth." I John 1:6
- D. Our affections are to be set on things above, not on the things of the earth. Jesus said that the Gentiles, or unbelievers, were occupied with things to eat, things to wear, houses, lands and possessions, but these things are not to dominate the vision of the people of God. Seek ye first the kingdom, he said, and God would take care of all your needs. Unbelievers are only concerned about the needs and pleasures of the body and care nothing about the nurture and care of the soul; this is what characterizes them: they are carnally minded: they are people of the world.
- E. Two different mind-sets are described here. That which seeks the things of the earth, and that which seeks the things which are above--that which seeks its reward upon the earth, and that which seeks its reward in heaven. Never can those two mind-sets meet: there is no fellowship between them, and no communion with light and with darkness.
- F. The apostle uses very strong words here. "Mortify." Put to death. It is very similar to what Jesus said: "If your right eye offend thee, pluck it out. If your right hand offend thee, cut it off." But there is an important difference, and that difference is in the word "therefore." What the Jew under circumcision did, and what the child of God under the Spirit does may appear on the surface to be the same thing. The self-denial of the Jew or the ascetic may appear to be very similar to the righteousness of the child of God--as for as outward things are concerned.
- G. But thing brings us to a major point that has to do with one of the fundamental attributes of God. The Bible reveals that God is a Spirit, and they that worship Him must worship Him in Spirit and in truth. We speak of the spirituality or the invisibility of God. God cannot be seen by the powers of the senses, and His true worship does not consist essentially of the motions of the flesh. This means that what you do in the body is only

a mirror of your true worship. Your true worship is from the heart and from the inner man.

- H. "Mortify, therefore, your members." Why does Paul use the word "therefore." What is it there for? It points back to verses 1-4. There is a reason why I am called to put to death the members upon the earth. It is not to have life, as they dreamed under circumcision, but because we ARE alive in Jesus Christ. Our members are to be put to death because we ARE dead, and our life is hid with Christ in God.
  - I. This makes all the difference in the world. We do not do these things in order to gain favor with God, but because we have favor with God. We do them, not because we hope to curry some standing with God, but because we have standing with God.
  - J. There appears to be a contradiction here. We call it a paradox, and figure of speech that contains an apparent contradiction. Ye are dead; therefore, put your members to death. It shows us that our sanctification is not yet complete; that our life begins and flows to us from Christ, but that, becoming Christians, we are now to actively seek holiness of life and righteousness; not in order to be approved of God, but because we belong to Christ, and we love Him and want to show forth His glory in the earth.
  - K. You see, it is the hidden motive, the spirit, the reason that defines the worth of an action before God. Man looks on the outward appearance, but God looks on the heart. This is no reason for us to excuse our wicked behavior, by pretending we have good reasons for bad behavior; but it does keep us from resting in our good works, even if they are not done for the right reason. There can be no good reasons for doing evil; there might be bad reasons for doing good.
  - L. The Christian is really part of two families: He is still a member of the family of Adam, and is subject to the temptations that all the sons of Adam are tempted with. But he is also a member of the family of God, and there is now a new power and principle working in him. This new power is greater than he that is in the world, and ultimate victory is assured; but the assurance of victory does not mean that there is no battle to fight. The promise of victory does not mean that we do not fight; it just means that we have encouragement and hope in our struggle.
  - M. "Put to death" simply means that we have a determined refusal. We just say no; we say it again, and again, and again. We stop our ears at the voice of the tempter; we refuse to put ourselves in the way of temptation; we break off associations that lead to sin; we learn to abhor that which is evil and cleave to that which is good. This language here is the language of no compromise; no playing fast and loose with sin. We do not make provisions for the flesh to indulge the lusts thereof.
- II. Verse 5: "Mortify therefore your members which are upon the earth; fornication, uncleanness, inordinate affection, evil concupiscence, and covetousness, which is idolatry:" (Col 3:5) Why members? As Calvin says, because the sins of the world are so closely associated with our bodies. Not that the bodies are evil, but because our bodies have been instruments of sin. The sin cannot be overcome without a reordering of the body. The body must be re-programmed to righteousness, and not to evil.
- A. The particular focus in verse 5 is on sexual sin, for when men indulge the flesh and the body, sexual sin is the inevitable result. We are so prone to sexual evil that only the most vigorous restraint and discipline will keep us. This is the reasons that Biblical faith from the beginning has put up a system of social customs and restraints that these evils might be kept down. When these restraints are removed, as they have been in this century, then all kinds of evils break forth to the destruction of the whole society. These sins are always epidemic in pagan societies and are the destruction of them. They also break loose in societies that turn from true Christianity and from true faith.

- B. Fornication means unlawful sexual intercourse: any sex outside of lawful marriage; it is followed by uncleanness, which is the evil, perverse mindset that produces the fornication. It is the mindset that puts personal desire or pleasure above everything else. Fornication and sexual indulgence is only one part of this uncleanness. This is further emphasized by Inordinate affections: the Greeks used this word for any suffering of strong desire, either good or bad; the New Testament always uses it in an evil sense. We are not only to put off the practice, but the desire for evil things. This corresponds with the spiritual or invisible nature of God. God knows the desires of our heart--the true desire and motive that we try to keep hidden from everyone else.
- C. We have the most cavalier attitude toward such things in the modern age. We are daily bombarded, and we bombard ourselves with television, books, magazines, etc. This feeds the flesh: it is no wonder there are so many tragedies nowadays among Christian families and young people: pre-marital sex, adulteries, homosexuality, and so forth. If you feed the old man; do not be surprised if he becomes strong. Becoming a Christian does not mean that you are immune from temptation; it means that you have been given a way to overcome and win the victory. This tells us how.
- D. Evil Concupiscence: also means strong desire; Covetousness in this context probably does not mean covetousness in general, for it is in the context of sexual sin, but the covetousness forbidden in that part of the 10th commandment which forbids us to covet our neighbor's wife. Adultery is also defrauding--we are cheating our neighbor of that which is rightfully his. A man and a woman in marriage have a right in each other that can only be taken away by fraud and cheating. This is Idolatry, for it concentrates the whole being on an earthly object, rather than on the God for which we have been created.
- E. The covetous man is not content with what God give him. He reaches beyond. He grasps at that which has not been given him. He longs for that which is another's. He does not seek the things above where Christ sits at the right hand of God, but rather he seeks his pleasure in the world, grasping after that which is not his.

III. Verse Six: "For which things' sake the wrath of God cometh on the children of disobedience:" (Col 3:6 AV) Paul's use of language is very interesting. He is not warning them of the judgment of God; no, the judgment of God has no terror for those who are in Christ Jesus. They have been delivered from fear of death and hell, and they are complete in Christ.

- A. But there are two ways that God's glory is revealed in men. The glory of His grace is seen in the elect as in a mirror. The glory of his justice and wrath are seen in the reprobate as in a mirror. The lost are lessons to us. Even in the damnation of the wicked, there is instruction for the Christian: that is not the way to go: see what you have been delivered from. God will not give you over to a reprobate mind; no, God has given you the mind of Christ; you have newness of life; you have been given, not the spirit of fear, but of power, and love, and a sound mind.
- B. God gives the ungodly up, Paul says in Romans 1. Those who live in wicked unbelief are given up to all sorts of sexual wickedness as well as other cruelties, lies, and corruption. There is always progression in society as well as in the lives of individuals. The wheat is either ripening to the harvest of life; or the tares are ripening to the harvest of damnation.
- C. No man escapes the power of God. This power of God is either working in you to conform you to the image of Jesus Christ, or it is working in you to damnation and ruin. Men in hell do not repent. They continue in their rebellion and wicked hatred of God. They suffer in hell with weeping and gnashing of teeth. That is why hell is eternal; for

they continue in their hatred and bitterness against God, that characterized their lives on this earth.

- D. Wrath Cometh: he is not speaking of a future state; but of a present reality. The wrath of God abides on those who are without Christ; and because of this their moral and spiritual condition is constantly getting worse; they harden their hearts, and their hearts are hardened by God. They live in sin and God abandons them to greater sin. They rebel and are hardened in their rebellion, as they close their eyes to God's truth and justice and mercy.
- E. But this is not you. You once lived as they did; but you have come to Christ; you are freed from sin; therefore, free yourself from it. You do not live in those things anymore, and you do not walk in them. Walk in Christ and in the power of the gospel, for that is your life. Be what you are.

IV. Conclusion: Romans 12:1,2. "I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, *which is* your reasonable service. 2 And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what *is* that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God." (Ro 12:1-2 AV)

To mortify the flesh is to give it to Jesus Christ. Day by day, hour by hour, we are to offer up ourselves to Christ, not a dead sacrifices, mutilated and cut into pieces as the offerings were on the altars of Israel, consumed by fire; but living sacrifices, not seeking our own way, or living in our natural covetous idolatry, but content with the portion that our heavenly Father gives to us; thankful for the grace he has poured out on us; asking only that in some way He use us for His own glory, and our member, which once were instruments of sin, be used of Him as instruments of righteousness for the glory of God.

For we are not our own. We have been bought with a price, even the precious blood of Christ, whose sacrifice we celebrate to day in the Lord's Supper. May God bless you.