

MORTIFY YOUR MEMBERS! (COLOSSIANS 3:5-7)

Take your Bibles and turn to Colossians, chapter 3. Once again, it's been a few weeks since we were in Colossians, so I want to remind us of a few things we looked at last time before we look at verses 5-7 today.

--The book/letter of Colossians has 4 chapters where the **first** two focus on **teaching truth**—things we need **to know**—and the **last** two chapters teach us how we are **to live** in light of the truth we have been taught.

--So chapter 3 serves as the **transition** between **instruction** and **application**. It starts off instructional, though, and we looked at the wonderful truths taught in verses 1-4 a few weeks ago. What are those truths?

First—as seen in verse 1—we have been **risen with Christ!** God counts as being **united** to Christ and **being one** with Him! We also see our union with Christ in vs 3 “For ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God.”

Second—as seen in verse 4—Christ is going **to return**. Notice what it says. It doesn't say **if** Christ returns—it says **when** Christ returns! And when Jesus returns, **we** will “appear with Him **in glory!**” What does **it mean** to appear with Christ in glory?

--It certainly means that believers will be with Him in the **place** of glory—which is in heaven!

--And it also refers to the **perfection** of glory—meaning God's children will **be given a body** fashioned like unto Christ's glorious body as stated in Philippians 3:21.

--But it may also refer to **positions of glory!** Without giving us a lot of details, God's Word says that His children will someday be “kings and priests!” The Apostle John used those very words in Revelation 1:5b-6 “Unto Him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in His own blood, And hath **made us kings and priests unto God and His Father**; to Him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen.”

And in light of these truths, we are to **do certain** things. **What** is it that we are supposed to do?

First—according to verse 1—we are to **seek Christ!** **Second**—according to verse 2—we are to **set our affection** on things above. That doesn't mean we are to have “warm, fuzzy feelings” about heaven. What it means is that we are to **set our minds on**—to be intentionally focusing on and thinking about—Christ and heavenly things. And let's not forget that both of these are **commands**—not suggestions—that we are to be **continually doing**—not just doing once in a while!

And that brings us to verse 5-9. Up to this point, the **greatest difficulty** for me in preaching from this letter has been trying to fully grasp—and share with you—the **greatness** of Christ—and all the **blessings** that we have in Him.

This morning, I have a **new challenge**: how to share with you what God through Paul has to say about some very specific **adult** (and **possibly teen**) sins—in the presence of some fairly **young children!** I didn't want to skip the verses, though, because God included them in His Word, so they are obviously important. Please follow along as I read verses 5-9.

In the five verses I just read, Paul gives us **two** commands. The **first** is found in vs 5: “**Mortify** therefore your members....” The **second** command is found in vs 8: “But now ye also **put off** all these...” I was originally going to cover **both commands** today, but I didn't really feel I could adequately do that so we will look at just **one** this week and the other next **week**—or next **year!**

1. The command to mortify

As already mentioned, the word “mortify” in vs 5 is a command. But in order to **carry out** the command, we need to know what **it means**.

A. The meaning

So what does “mortify” mean? It means to “put to death; to slay; to render inoperative.”

Notice the quote on your outline: “The KJV word **mortify** implies that sin will not die out of itself but that **we must kill it** and death can be a painful process. **Put them to death. Kill them.** Take no prisoners. **Show no mercy.** That's what Paul is commanding. This is not the self-denial of asceticism but because we now have a new heart, a new desire, a new power...Christ in us and we by His Spirit now kill those **passions one by one.**” (https://www.preceptaustin.org/colossians_35#3:5)

Is this man being overdramatic? Not at all! Neither was the **Puritan John Owen** who wrote “be killing sin or it will be killing you!” (https://www.preceptaustin.org/colossians_35#3:5)

Too many believers, I'm afraid, have rewritten—and watered down—I Peter 5:8 to read ‘Be apethic, be careless; because your friend the devil, as a harmless kitten, strolls about, looking for someone he can scare a little bit.’

Is that what the Bible says? No! **I Peter 5:8** says, “Be sober [serious minded], be vigilant [alert; on guard]; because your adversary [an enemy who hates you] the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour [destroy, wreck, and ruin]:”

So **what exactly is it** that we are supposed to mortify? What are we to “show no mercy to” and “kill” in our lives? Vs 5 “Mortify therefore **your members** which are upon the earth...”

B. The members

What does Paul mean by “your members which are upon the earth”?

The word “members” comes from the Greek word “MEH-los.” It is used 34 x in the Greek NT and I want us to notice how Jesus used it in **Mt 5:29-30** “And if thy right eye offend thee, **pluck it out**, and **cast it** from thee: for it is profitable for thee that one of thy **members** should perish, and not that thy whole body should be cast into hell. ³⁰ And if thy right hand offend thee, **cut it off**, and **cast it from thee**: for it is profitable for thee that one of thy **members** should perish, and not that thy whole body should be cast into hell.”

What does “member” mean in these two verses? It means individual **body parts**, right? That is what your right **eye**—and right **hand**—are!

But there's another reason for us to look at what Jesus says here in Matthew 5: because “plucking out” your eye—and “cutting off” your hand—sounds a lot like “putting to death” the members of your body, doesn't it?

--Is Jesus saying to literally “pluck out” your actual **physical eye**? No; He's not!

--Is Jesus saying to literally “cut off” your actual **physical hand**? No; He's not!

And Paul here in Colossians 3:5 is not saying to literally **put to death your** “body parts” that are involved in this list of sins!

But both Jesus and Paul are using the body as a picture to help us understand that just as your **appendix** needs to be removed if it is infected—and **tumors** need to be removed if they are cancerous—**sin** needs to be **rooted out of** our lives!

And we need to be willing to take **drastic steps** to do that! **Plucking** out...**cutting** off... and “**killing**” are strong, forceful, and intentional actions! Not only that, parents need to be willing to take **drastic steps** to help their children and teens not have these sins **planted into** their lives in the first place!

2. The content of what we are to mortify

So **what is it** that we are to eradicate—to put to death—to get rid of from our lives? For the sake of the younger audience, I'm not going to **publicly elaborate** on the first four in this list. I did, however, provide you **with definitions**—and other references—on your outline for you to look at later.

I will **publicly say** this, though: God through Paul is plainly stating that **physical intimacy**—except in a marriage relationship between one man and one woman—**is wrong**, period! Society and your sin nature **do not determine** what is right and wrong in this arena—**God's Word** does! And God's **Word** should be the standard for God's **people!** Amen?!

I do want to direct our attention to the end of vs 5, though. In addition to rooting out and killing immoral **behavior**—and immoral **thinking**—from our lives, God wants us to put to death “covetousness, which is idolatry:”

First, let’s think about... A. The sinfulness of covetousness

--**What is** covetousness? It is a strong desire—a lusting after—something we either **don’t have**—or **want more of**.

--What does it **look like**? Sometimes it is a longing for **pleasure**—like the sins listed in the first part of this verse. Sometimes it is a desire for **possessions**—bigger and better and more **things!** And sometimes it is a pursuit of **prestige**—of fame and power and recognition.

--**Why** is it sinful? Because God plainly forbids covetousness in His Word!

--**God says it** in the **Ten Commandments. Exodus 20:17** “Thou shalt **not covet** thy neighbour's house, thou shalt **not covet** thy neighbour's wife, nor his manservant, nor his maidservant, nor his ox, nor his ass, nor any thing that is thy neighbour's.”

--**Jesus said it** as recorded in **Luke 12:15** “And He [Jesus] said unto them, Take heed, and beware of **covetousness**: for a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth.”

--And similar to what we have here in Colossians 3:5, Paul wrote to the Ephesian believers in **Ephesians 5:3** “But fornication, and all uncleanness, or **covetousness**, let it **not be once named among you**, as becometh saints;”

--Not only is it sinful because God forbids it, it is also sinful because **it is the opposite** of being content with what we have (Heb 13:5)!

Next, let’s consider... B. The similarity between covetousness and idolatry

Why does Paul write that covetousness is idolatry? The obvious reason is because that is what **God led him** to write! But it should also be obvious that when we want something so badly that we will **sin in order** to get it, we are serving and pleasing ourselves instead of God! And that is the very definition of idolatry!

--Was **Achan seeking to please God** when he took the “Babylonish garment, and two hundred shekels of silver, and a wedge of gold” for himself—when they were supposed to be dedicated to God? No; he was seeking to please **himself!** He **had an idol** between him and God: himself!

--Was **David seeking to please God** when he stole one of his faithful soldier’s wives? No; he was seeking to please **himself!** He had an idol—someone he was pleasing and serving in place of God. Who was David’s idol at this point? Just like Achan, it was **himself!**

--And there are countless examples of present-day idolatry where men—and women—will cheat, lie, and steal to get what they want—even if it means hurting their own children, parents, or spouse! Why? Because they **have an idol**—themselves!

Next, let’s consider... 3. The consequence for failing to mortify

What happens if we fail to mortify—if we fail to put to death—sin in our life? To again quote the Puritan **John Owen**: “Every **unmortified sin** will certainly do two things: 1) It will **weaken** the soul, and deprive it of its vigour. 2) It will **darken** the soul, and deprive it of its comfort and peace.”

(https://www.preceptaustin.org/colossians_35#3:5)

But Paul gives a more solemn warning than that, though, in vs 6. Notice what it says: “For which things’ sake the **wrath of God** cometh on the children of disobedience:”

What is the **wrath of God**? It is God’s hatred for—and judgment of—sin! What is the **punishment** for sin? Romans 6:23 reminds us that the wages of sin—the penalty for sin—is **death**. But as you’ve heard me say quite often, **death** in the Bible doesn’t just mean the end of **physical** life. It means **separation**—and usually refers to **eternal separation** from God in a place that **Jesus called hell!** And Jesus not only **referred** to hell, He also **described it!**

--In Mt 25:30, Jesus says it is a place of **outer darkness** and **weeping and gnashing** of teeth.

--In Mt 25:41, Jesus calls it a place of **everlasting fire**

--In Mt 25:46, Jesus calls it a place of **everlasting punishment**

--In Mk 9:43-48, Jesus says five times—in the span of six verses—that hell is a place where the **fire is not quenched**.

--And let's not forget that **John 3:16** also refers to hell! The word "hell" is not there, but the word "perish" is. And since "perish" is the opposite of having everlasting life, to **perish** means to have everlasting death; **everlasting separation** from God!

Back to vs 6. Is Paul saying that if you commit one of these immoral activities—or are covetous—that you will lose your salvation if you are a child of God?

No; that's not what he is saying! He's saying that God's wrath comes on the **children of disobedience**—meaning the unsaved. So why does he use this as a warning to believers?

Because these sins characterize the life of **an unbeliever**! And if you are a **child of God**, your life should not look like the life of **an unbeliever**. Stated another way, if you are a child of **the King** don't live like a child of **the devil**!

Lasting, let's notice... **4. The conquering of our old lifestyle**

How do we know **we can have victory** over a lifestyle that is characterized by **immorality** and self-pleasing, self-serving **idolatry**?

A. The example of those who had gotten victory!

Paul points to some of the Colossian believers themselves **as examples** of those who had gotten victory over these sins and lifestyle! We see that in **vs 7**: "In the which ye also **walked** some time, when ye **lived** in them." Think about what Paul is saying. To "walk" and "live" is not the same as "dabble" or "stumble," is it? Their life had been **characterized** by these sins; that was their **lifestyle**!

But it is also important to see that "walked" and "lived" are **past tense**, meaning that is how they **used to be**—but they weren't like that anymore!

Paul made a similar statement to the believers in Corinth. After giving an even lengthier list of sins than what we have here in vs 5, Paul wrote this in **I Corinthians 6:11** "And such **were some of you**: but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God."

Just like some of the believers in Colossae, some of the believers in Corinth had been rescued from an immoral and covetous lifestyle. How? By being born again and becoming a child of God!

B. The exhortations for having victory

So how can we have victory over these sins in particular—and sin in general?

1) The first—and the most obvious thing we need to do—is to **become a child of God**! We cannot fight our **sin** nature if we don't have a **new** nature! As stated in Colossians 1:13, we need to be "delivered from the power of darkness" and "translated into the kingdom of His dear Son."

2) Second, we need to believe that **we can live a life** that is pleasing to God! That is Paul's **prayer** in Colossians 1:10—"that ye might walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing." And Paul believed that that was **a possibility** for all believers according to Colossians 1:28: "...that we may present every man perfect [mature] in Christ Jesus."

3) Third, we need to be persuaded regarding all that we **have in Christ**—and that we **don't need anything** or **anyone** else for satisfaction in life! Colossians 2:3 reminds us that in Christ "are hid all treasures of wisdom and knowledge" and—according to Colossians 2:11—"we are complete in Him!"

4) We also need to do what Paul told us to do in Colossians 3:1 and 2. **Seek Christ** by focusing on Him and the things above! In the words of a well-known song, "*Turn your eyes upon Jesus. Look full in His wonderful face; and the things of earth will grow strangely dim in the light of His glory and grace.*"

5) And today we learned that we need to do what Paul says in Colossians 3:5: **be radical—and serious**—about getting sin out of our life! What might that look like?

--It might mean that you have to **stop being friends** with certain people. If all they do is drag you into sin, why have them as a friend?

--It might mean you need to get yourself an **accountability partner**, someone who is willing to ask you hard questions about what kind of **movies** you watch—and what you **look at** on your **computer**.

--Speaking of **computers**, it may mean you need to have someone **set up a blocker** that keeps you from going to certain websites. **Parents** with children and teens, **I can't urge you strongly enough** to have someone help you **set up blockers** to restrict what your young people have access to on their phones and computers!

Remember what I said earlier **about the devil!** He is not a loving kitten that wants to cuddle up next to you and possibly scare you once in a while. He is an enemy that **hates you...** and wants to literally **destroy you and your life!**

6) Much more could be said, but here's one more thing God's Word says we need to do: **yield yourself to God!**

Romans 6:13 "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."

Here we have the word "members" again—the same word that Paul used in Colossians 3:5. What are we to do with our members—our body parts? Don't yield them to sin; do yield them to God!

What if we all got in the habit of developing a **yielding mindset** to God? Imagine if we started our day with this thought: "Lord, this **mind** is not mine—it **belongs to you** because you made it and gave it to me. Not only that, but as your child, you bought me with a price. So I'm going to use **my mind** today in a way that pleases you."

It certainly needs to start with **the mind**, but what if we had this same kind of yielding—and said the same things—regarding our eyes...and ears...and mouth...and arms...and hands...and feet? Would that make a difference in our lives? It certainly would!

I realize 6 things are a lot, so I'm going to boil it down to this: Be saved (if you're not), be seeking, and be surrendered.

So what would God have us do in light of what we've heard this morning?

1. First, if you were to die today, where would your soul go?

--If you are trusting in baptism...or trying to be a good person...or belonging to a certain church...or even "praying a prayer," you **will not go** to heaven!

--Instead, you will **go to hell**—the place Jesus described as outer darkness...and weeping and gnashing of teeth...and torment...and everlasting fire!

Please, do not ever **let my lack of urgency**—or lack of tears—stop you from believing what God says about the horrors of hell!

2. Second—if you are a child of God—are you living like one?

--Are you daily seeking Christ?

--Are you doing your part to kill sin in your life?

In Acts 19:19 we read of new believers taking books connected to their old way of life—in their case magic and spells—and **burned** them.

--Maybe some of you need to go through your books and movies and do some **house cleaning**.

Don't sell them or give them away—**destroy** them!

--Are you daily yielding "the members of your body" to God because He created them—and bought you with a price?