

## Committing Sin to the Cemetery # 10

Colossians 3: 5-11

In our last study we considered the need for an eternal perspective while living in a temporal world. Paul encouraged the church in regard to their position in Christ and offered a challenge to set our affections on things above rather than on the things of this earth. We are well aware that we live in a sin cursed world and inhabit bodies that are prone to sin and failure. If we fail to keep a proper perspective, leading to close fellowship with the Lord, we will stumble and fall.

Knowing the tendencies of the flesh, Paul now discusses the need to mortify, or put to death, the sins and lusts of the flesh that rise up within us. He deals with those tendencies that hinder our focus and the consequences related to a focus that is lacking. It ought to be the desire of every Christian to live above sin, but as long as we dwell in a body of flesh, sin will remain. At the moment we were saved, we were delivered from the penalty of sin. As we grow in Christ, we are delivered from the power of sin, but not until we meet the Lord will we be delivered from the presence of sin.

As I studied this passage I thought of a committal service at the conclusion of a funeral. It is there we pay our last respects and commit the body to the ground. I am not familiar with funeral traditions of Paul's day, but it is evident he had something similar in mind. We need to mortify the sin that besets us and commit it to the cemetery. I want to examine the [admonitions](#) in the text as we think on: [Committing Sin to the Cemetery](#).

**I. A Call for Abandonment** (5, 8-9a) – Here Paul admonishes the church to mortify their members (the members of the body as the seat of desire and passions). He expected them to literally put to death the hindrances of the flesh. These desires are separated into two categories.

**A. Sins of Idolatry** (5) – Some discern this to say that covetousness is like unto idolatry, but I believe each of these sins amount to idolatry. They are sins that please the flesh, and when committed, we in essence make our bodies our god. Let's consider these sins.

- **Fornication** – Sexual impurity of any kind.
- **Uncleanness** – A life of impurity, fueled by improper motives.
- **Inordinate Affection** – Depraved passions. A mind that dwells on sin.
- **Evil Concupisence** – A lust for the sinful.
- **Covetousness** – The sin of always wanting more. <sup>i</sup>

**B. Sins of Hostility (8-9a)** –These are sins committed toward our fellow man, most often in a hostile and aggressive manner. Paul speaks of:

- **Anger** – Sudden outbursts, smoldering, resentful bitterness.
- **Wrath** – Seeking the role of God and passing judgment on others.
- **Malice** – Ill will toward another, desiring to injure and get revenge.
- **Blasphemy** – Speech which slanders another, God or man. A common form is gossip.
- **Filthy Communications** – Foul speech, coarse humor, obscene gestures.
- **Lying** – Anything less than the absolute truth. <sup>ii</sup>

**II. A Call for Awareness (6-10)** – After calling for the believer to mortify such sin in our bodies, Paul calls for our awareness of certain aspects of our lives. We are to be aware of:

**A. The Chastisement of God (6)** – *For which things' sake the wrath of God cometh on the children of disobedience:* Paul reveals the wrath of God would come upon the children of disobedience for such sins. The believer has been delivered from the wrath of God and eternal punishment for sin, but we must never forget that God is holy and cannot condone sin. His wrath will be poured out upon those who deny Christ, and we would be foolish to believe we can sin and get by with it. Sin bears consequences, whether in the life of an unbeliever or a believer. [Gal.6:7 – Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap.](#)

**B. The Corruption of Sin (7)** – *In the which ye also walked some time, when ye lived in them.* Such sin and rebellion mark the unbeliever. Prior to Christ our lives were dictated by sin and the desire to please the flesh. We lived at enmity with God. Paul challenged the church to remember where they were prior to salvation. He urged them to acknowledge the corruption of sin and the displeasure it brings to God. Life lived in sin is never pleasing to the Lord.

▪ We need an awakening in our day. I fear that our society has become so saturated with sin that we have somehow become deadened to its affects and corruption. Sins that used to be opposed and condemned have now been accepted by mainstream America. The modern church has softened her stand on sin. There is nothing glamorous or pleasing about sin. We must be aware of the devastation it brings and the consequences that result, not only in society, but in our personal lives as well. We need a fresh glimpse of the holiness of God to create a repulsive reaction to sin!

**C. The Consecration of Believers (9b-10a)** – ...seeing that ye have put off the old man with his deeds; <sup>[10]</sup> And have put on the new *man*. Paul again reminds them of their relationship with Christ. In salvation the old man of sin had died, he had been put off, and they had put on the new man. Rather than a life that reflected one dominated by sin, they were to live in light of Christ. There needed to be an awareness of the believer's obligation to become more like Christ. The longer they were saved, the more they should reflect Christ.

- The same is true in our lives. The longer we walk with Jesus, the more we should reflect Him. We should not be known and recognized for the sin we commit, but the Savior we serve! Rom.13:14 – But put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make not provision for the flesh, to fulfil the lusts thereof. Eph.4:24 – And that ye put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness.

**D. The Comprehension in Christ (10b)** – And have put on the new *man*, which is renewed in knowledge after the image of him that created him: Paul reveals a genuine benefit of being in Christ. The closer we walk with Him, becoming more like Him, the more we learn of Him. If they were to be fruitful servants of the Lord, a deep knowledge of Christ was essential. This is only obtained through a right relationship with Christ. If they were to overcome the lusts of the flesh, with the ability to mortify the deeds of the flesh, they would need the mind of Christ. That is not to say they would know and understand as He does, but they would be enlightened through Christ, growing in wisdom and knowledge.

- I thought of those we admire in this life. Most people who are good at what they do and are successful in their field have a deep understanding of their particular area. They have been exposed to a certain activity or regiment so long, it almost seems “second nature” to them. That is exactly what Paul speaks of here. As we walk with Christ, conforming to His image, we develop a nature that seeks to serve Christ rather than the desires of the flesh. We become known for our Christ-likeness rather than our carnal ways and attitudes. This is what the Lord desires of us; that is the person we were saved to be! Rom.12:2 – 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.

**III. A Call for Assimilation (11)** – In our closing thought, Paul offers a final admonition concerning our mortifying the flesh. Colossae was a culturally diverse city. There were people from all backgrounds, nationalities, and walks of life. None were excluded from the gospel and the church was experiencing growth in every ethnic group. Apparently there was some dissention and division due to the diverse nature of the church. Paul reveals the need to come together as one body in Christ. He knew all believers served the same Lord and were going to the same heaven.

- We have come a long way in America in regard to prejudice and equal rights, but this is a message that the church continues to need. All believers make up one body. The body of Christ is not divided. I think we all understand that and yet many of our churches don't reflect an acceptance of that truth. Paul speaks of:

**A. The Absence of Race (11a)** – [Where there is neither Greek nor Jew](#). Each was skeptical and prejudice toward the other. The Jews viewed the Greeks as lesser vessels because they were not of the chosen race. The Greeks viewed the Jews as legalistic bigots. Paul reminds the church that race creates no division in the body of Christ. The Lord didn't view them as Greeks or Jews, He viewed them as children.

- Many in our area need to accept this truth. Publicly they may admit their acceptance, but privately they still hold on to racial bias. Many seem to feel as if white southerners have a monopoly on Christianity. I hate to burst your bubble, but our precious renditions of a pale skinned, blue eyed Jesus are not accurate. It is time to see all men as loved of God, in need of salvation, and precious to the Lord. There will be no segregation in heaven!

**B. The Absence of Religion (11b)** – [Where there is neither...circumcision nor uncircumcision](#). It is evident in the writings of Paul that he had grown weary of this debate. The Jews sought to bind the Greeks to the tradition of circumcision. They saw no way one could be right with God apart from that practice. This had become a major point of religious contention. Paul declares this has nothing to do with one's salvation and acceptance of God. An Old Testament command was unnecessarily being forced on a people it was never intended for.

- This debate is unheard of in our day, but there are others just as bad. Many place undue emphasis on traditions and certain religious practices, creating unnecessary bondage on believers. We are quick to proclaim our belief in grace and yet many seek to rob others of their liberty in Christ. May we never force unnecessary restrictions on others out of religious preference. Some tend to think that Baptist are the only ones who will make it to heaven, but they will be sadly mistaken.

**C. The Absence of Resentment (11c)** – [Where there is neither...Barbarian or Scythian](#). I am sure many were astonished at this statement from Paul. These were considered outcasts by society and to be avoided at all costs. The Barbarians were viewed as ignorant and unlearned, so much so that the term Barbarian became a slang term to identify people of lower education. This was detestable among the Greeks. The Scythians were known as a violent people. Josephus, the Jewish Historian said, "The Scythians delight in murdering people and are little better than wild

beasts.” The Colossians and even many within the church didn’t want that kind of people within their congregation. Paul reminds them of the grace of God that brought salvation to all men. They may have come from a different background. There may have been personal issues in the past, but they were not to be resented because of their culture or genealogy.

- We don’t deal with Scythians, but this issue is prevalent in the modern church. Many churches want everybody to be saved and attend church, as long as they don’t attend their church. Have we not been guilty of judging others simply because they were different than us? Have you ever refused to fellowship with someone because you knew about their past? We must learn to get beyond these issues. Christ has saved and forgiven them. We cannot be right with the Lord if we resent certain people.

#### **D. The Absence of Rank** (11d) – *Where there is neither...bond nor free: but Christ is all, and in all.*

Slaves were considered the bottom of the rung on the social ladder. They were viewed as nothing more than personal property to be used as their owner pleased. These would not have been welcome in most circles in society. Paul declared that a slave who was born again in Christ was not viewed any differently in the eyes of God than the wealthiest man in the church. Their physical bondage had nothing to do with their spiritual freedom.

- I don’t sense that here and I am grateful for it, but every church is not as ours. Some churches have an unwritten rule as to who is accepted and who isn’t. In fact, we would not be welcome in some circles. I am glad the Lord loves the poor and lowly as much as he does the rich and well known. We are all just sinners saved by His marvelous grace. We have nothing to boast of but Christ. I pray we continue to be a people willing to welcome others regardless of their race, intelligence, social status, or financial situation.

**Conclusion:** These have been challenging verses. They confront where and how we live. Are we willing to commit our sins to the cemetery? Are we willing to lay aside the prejudices and preconceived notions we have for the benefit of the body of Christ? Are we willing to acknowledge the needs of our day and address them? This church will be no stronger spiritually than those who make it up. We need a close relationship with Christ if we are to be fruitful for Him. Is all well tonight? If there is a need of any kind, bring it before the Lord.

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<sup>i</sup> Adapted from: [http://sermonnotebook.org/new%20testament/col3\\_1-17.htm](http://sermonnotebook.org/new%20testament/col3_1-17.htm)

<sup>ii</sup> Ibid