

THE MORTIFICATION OF SIN

Colossians 3:5-7

Intro: Last Sunday we entered into the practical section of Paul's letter to the church at Colosse. The emphasis in the first three chapters is primarily upon doctrine, although a verse like chapter 2, verse 6, is an indication that while doctrine and practical Christian living are two different kinds of teaching, yet in another way they are inseparable. Doctrine leads to practice, and practice has to be based upon doctrine.

Another way of stating the difference between these two sections of Colossians is to say that the first part has to do with the great biblical teaching of justification, but the latter part of the epistle deals with sanctification. Or still another way of distinguishing between the two is that the doctrinal section deals with our standing before God, while the latter part deals with our state, or our present spiritual condition. Our standing before God is the same for all of us. It is perfect. We are as ready for heaven as we ever will be. And it is the same for all of us. We are declared to be righteous before God, or justified, by faith in Jesus Christ. We didn't work for it. We certainly do not deserve it. It is all by God's grace. It is perfect and it is complete.

But our state, or condition, here on earth is a different matter. We have been brought into the family of God by a spiritual birth. And as in the physical realm, we need to grow. We grow by learning the truths of the Bible, especially the truth about our Lord Jesus Christ. We need to learn to trust Him, and to live in obedience to the Word of God. The ability and strength to do all of this comes from Christ "Who is our life," as we learned from verse 4 last Sunday.

Those of you who were here last Sunday will remember that I pointed out from the first two verses of chapter 3 that the Apostle Paul told the believers at Colosse that there were two things that he wanted them to do. And he was writing under the direction and with the authority of God, the Holy Spirit. Can I ask this morning how you are doing about those two commandments that he gave them? You know, the Bible is God's gift to us as it was to the people to whom the books of the Bible were originally addressed. Let's look at verses 1 and 2 of chapter 3 before we turn to verse 5.

(Read Col. 3:1-2.)

The two commandments are:

1) "Seek those things which are above . . ."

2) "Set your affection on things above . . ."

"Above" means as we learn at the end of verse 1, "where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God." So above is heaven, and that is in contrast with what we usually do almost exclusively, "not on things on the earth."

Now our contact with Christ in heaven is entirely based upon what we learn about Him from Scripture, from the Bible. Seeking "those things which are above" means seeking Christ, learning of Him. As I told you last week to seek anything (according to the word which Paul used) means to be looking for something with the intention of finding it, and then possessing it, or making it our own. In verse 1 it means seeking the things of Christ, and making what we learn our own. Of course, we can only do this with the Lord's help, but, after all, this is the purpose God had in saving us. We need to read our Bibles to learn all that we can about our precious Savior.

You don't have to answer me, but I am asking you, and I point the question at myself, are we reading our Bible to learn all we can about Christ? The commandments of Scripture are God telling us what He wants us to do.

What about the second question? Setting our affection on the things above, the things of Christ, means that we are to be thinking about Him, thinking about what we are learning about Him. This is why we all need to be reading our Bibles every day, as much as we can, and then thinking about what we are learning of Christ. I gave you the little saying, "Seek Christ, and think Christ."

If you know the Lord, and you are not doing these two things, then don't wait until tomorrow to start; *start today!!!* If you make these two commandments your primary objective every day, you will find that they will bring more joy and peace to you than anything else you could possibly do. It is a fact of the Christian life that the more you seek Christ to learn of Him, and the more you think about Him, the more you will be like Him.

But in seeing this transformation take place in our lives, this growth in sanctification, or holiness, there are things for us to do. And this brings us to verse 5. There is a sense in which we are sanctified when we are saved. We are set apart for God. We become a holy people. But we all

have to grow in holiness. Our lives can be graphed by taking a large piece of paper, and drawing a straight line from left to right across the top of the page. That represents where we all are in God's sight, justified, declared righteous before God. Then on that same piece of paper on the bottom at the far left, draw a line, it may not be straight because we all have our ups and downs, but draw a line that moves gradually upward and finally on the far right it joins the upper line. That is when we will see the Lord and our sanctification joins our justification., and we are like the Lord.

Now let us look at verse 5. Will you notice the word "members." This is the word that you would use in Greek if you were talking about the parts of your body – your head, your eyes, your ears, your hands, your feet, and so on. They are the members which belong to you.

Now we are not just physical, but there is a nature that we have that is just as much a part of us as the body which you can see. We have an inner nature that was made in the image of God, but which was corrupted when Adam disobeyed God back in the Garden of Eden, and since then every person born into this world has been born with a corrupted human nature which we can speak of as a sin nature. And when you look at any of us inwardly, it is not a very pretty picture. We are born with many physical members, but we are also born with these sinful members. They have been our members from conception. The Bible says that "there is not a just man upon the earth, that doeth good, and sinneth not" (Ecc. 7:20). The Bible also says in Psalm 58:3 that

3 The wicked are estranged from the womb: they go astray as soon as they be born, speaking lies.

You see we don't become sinners the first time we commit a sin; we are born sinners, and that is why we sin. We are sinners by nature. That is the reason we need to be saved. Don't try to live a perfect life because when you discover your need, it is already too late. You are already under the judgment of God. God created man for His own glory, that is, for the glory of God. But that condemning charge against all of us is that "all have sinned and come short of the glory of God" (Rom. 3:23). Nobody had to teach any of us to do the wrong thing; we do that by our very nature.

Now when we are saved by the sacrifice of Christ on the Cross, we have through Christ and because of His death on the Cross, the forgiveness of all of our sins past, present and future. But God does not take away our

ability to sin. Christians can still sin, and we do – if not always in what we do, yet we sin in things that we say, and even in things that we think. We do not always sin intentionally, but sometimes our sin is intentional. A true Christian doesn't want to sin, but we sin nevertheless. And that is where we as Christians have trouble.

Now the fact that Paul mentions here in verse 5, and in some of the following verses, the terrible sins that he does mention, does not mean that we all have committed all of them in his list, but it does mean that we are capable of committing any of the sins which he does mention. A Christian does not want to sin. In fact, a Christian will not live in sin. But sometimes if he is not careful, he will sin.

So how are we as Christians, as the people of God, to deal with sin that still is a possibility with us? The word that Paul used is the word, "mortify."

Probably the best explanation of how a believer is to deal with sin, was given by Paul in his epistle to the Romans, chapter 6, beginning with verse 8, and going down through verse 13. I want to read this passage to you, and I would like for you to follow in your Bibles. This is a passage that we all would do well to memorize. Here it is: Romans 6:8-14:

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 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.

Dr. Jerry Bridges spoke to us repeatedly at Family Camp about preaching the Gospel to ourselves every day. This passage is a good example of

that.

Verse 8 could be translated, “For since we died with Christ” – that took place at the Cross. We were united with Christ in His death. He died in our place, as our Substitute. He bore the penalty for our sins. But He did not stay in the tomb. Our chapter in Colossians began, you will remember with the words, “Since ye then be risen with Christ.” So we died with Christ, and we were raised with Christ. And that is what Paul was saying in Romans 6. Our Lord death on the Cross was over 2,000 years ago, but when Paul said in Romans 6:8, “we believe that we shall also live with Him,” at least a part of the meaning is that *we believe that we live with Him now*. He is our life right now! And speaking of the doctrinal and the practical, Romans 6:8-10 is doctrinal, truth that we need to believe; Romans 6:11-13 is practical. And verse 14 is a doctrinal promise. We believe the doctrinal; we obey the practical. And the result is victory over sin, all sin, not just the sins that are mentioned in our passage in Colossians.

Now the sins mentioned in Colossians 3:5 are gross sins. All sin is sin and displeasing to God, but these are gross sins. The sins in verse 8 are not in the same category, but they are sins nevertheless. And the way to be victorious over the lesser sins, if we may call them that, is the same as the way of victory over the grosser sins. To mortify them is to treat them as dead to us, which they are because of Christ’s death on the Cross which is the Gospel which we need to preach to ourselves over and over again.

What basically are the five sins mentioned here in Colossians 3: 5. “Fornication” is immorality. “Uncleanness” is impurity. “Inordinate affection” is passion. “Evil concupiscence” is evil desire. And we all know that “covetousness” is greed. Note that all of these sins have to do with sexual immorality.

All of this calls for the greatest watchfulness on our part. We need to separate ourselves from people and situations which inevitably lead to sin. We need to pray that the Lord will keep us from falling, and present us before Himself unspotted by the world.

Verse 6 tells us that such sins inevitably lead to the judgment of God. The people of the world believe that they are free to do whatever they want to do. Even with Christians there is “sin unto death.” “The way of

the ungodly shall perish.”

In verse 7 Paul indicated that the sins which were mentioned in verse 5 used to be descriptive of the lives that many of the Colossians lived before the Lord saved them.

Paul issued the same warning to the believers in Corinth when he wrote the following in 1 Corinthians 6:9-11:

9 Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind,

10 Nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God.

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.

The only remedy for sin is the Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ. No one is capable of dealing with sin apart from the Gospel. Jesus Christ came to the earth as a Man, not just to provide one way of salvation; He came to secure the salvation of sinners the only way. The Gospel is God's way of delivering us from the penalty of our sins, but also to deliver us from the power and dominion, the tyranny of sin.

Concl: As we read passages like we have had this morning, we need to as the Lord to search our hearts to make sure that our hope is in Christ. King David's prayer in Psalm 139:23 and 24 is a good prayer for all of us to pray every day:

23 Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts:

24 And see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting.