

**THE OLD LIFE**  
Colossians 3:5-11 – Part 1

**Intro:** We have seen in our study of Colossians that, although there are a few exhortations in chapter 2, primarily chapters 1 and 2 are doctrinal in character. We are told to walk in Christ in 2:6 and 7, and we are given warnings in 2:8, 16, and 18 which we need to pay attention to day after day, yet chapters 1 and 2 are primarily doctrinal. But then when we get to chapter 3 and continuing down through verse 6 of chapter 4 Paul's emphasis is practical.

In many churches today there is strong resistance to doctrine. People say, "Don't give us doctrine; we just want sermons that are practical." It is like saying that they don't want to know anything; we just want to be told what they should do. And many pastors are foolish enough to give in to their desires.

For example, how would you like to go to a doctor who didn't know anything about the human body? Or how would you like a mechanic to work on your car who had never studied anything about the motor of a car? How would you like to fly in a passenger jet if it was piloted by some one who didn't know anything about planes? Would you like to have a house built by someone who never had learned anything foundations and how strong a structure has to be to support a roof? And yet when it comes to the things of God people will say, "Don't bother me with teaching; I just want to know how to live." All learning has to be a combination of teaching and practical application.

How can you know how to have fellowship with God, how to please God, or that you need to trust Him, if you don't know Him? The Apostle Paul teaches us in Colossians, as well as in his other epistles that doctrine must be the foundation, and that practical truth, if it is to mean anything at all to us, must be built upon a doctrinal foundation. Paul makes it very clear in this epistle which we are studying that if you don't know who Jesus Christ is, and if you do not know what He accomplished when He died on the Cross, and rose again, you are not going to understand the Christian life.

Paul had been teaching in chapters 1 and 2 what Christ did accomplish by His death and resurrection. If you did not know something about our Lord's death and resurrection, you wouldn't have the slightest idea about

what Paul wrote in the first verse of chapter 3. “If, or *since* (as we can translate it) “ye then be risen with Christ,” is a statement of doctrine. And after Paul said, “Seek those things which are above” (which is practical), he added, “where Christ sitteth at the right hand of God” – that is doctrinal. How can we seek the things which are above if we don’t know that when Christ was raised from the dead, we were raised with Him, and the significance of that truth? If we don’t know that at this very moment Christ is sitting at the right hand of God, and what that means, how can we have any idea of what it means to “seek those things which are above”?

Our weakness on doctrine has resulted in a corruption of the Gospel message. People may be told that they need to believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, but they are not told *why Christ!* The prosperity, feel-good gospel which is so popular in many churches today, would never have gotten anywhere if people were not so ignorant of what the real issues are in salvation. The real issues are the holiness of God and the sinfulness of man, and what God has done in Christ for sinners that they might be acceptable to God.

I’m emphasizing this as we come to the practical section of this epistle so that when you hear anyone who belittles doctrine, you will know immediately that they don’t know what they are talking about. When the Apostle Paul was reminding Timothy that his charge before God was to “preach the Word,” he said that the Scriptures were “profitable for doctrine” first, and then “for reproof,” and then “for correction,” and then “for instruction in righteousness.” The doctrine of Scripture is basic, is fundamental, is foundational. And all of the practical instruction in Scripture rests upon the doctrinal teaching.

I could say a lot more about this, but I hope that I have said enough to awaken any of you who might be inclined to agree with those who would turn us away from the great doctrinal truths of God’s Word. The Bible is its own best commentary. Just to cite what another writer of Scripture has said, the Apostle John, he has told us why he wrote the Gospel which bears his name. Listen to John 20:30-31:

30 And many other signs truly did Jesus in the presence of his disciples, which are not written in this book:

31 But these are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through his name.

The Apostle John's point is that the miracles which the Lord Jesus Christ performed while He was here on earth are positive proof that He was the Christ, the Messiah, the Son of God, and that knowing what He did, and becoming acquainted with what He taught, we would believe in Him, trust in Him, that we might have eternal life. The four Gospels are full of wonderful teaching about the Lord Jesus Christ, and the purpose of the four writers was through the doctrine of Christ, those who read the Gospels would realize Who He is, would trust in Him, and be saved.

Now let me review for you what we saw last week in the first four verses of chapter three. I pointed out last Sunday three major facts, or truths about Jesus Christ which Paul mentioned in these first four verses. (Review.)

Paul taught briefly in chapters 1 and 2 that Christ became a Substitute for all who would ever be saved when He died, when He was buried, when He arose from the dead, and when He ascended back to the Father. This truth is explained more fully in Paul's letters to the churches at Rome and at Ephesus, especially in his letter to the church at Rome. But what this means (and this is doctrine) is that in God's sight we were joined with Christ in His death, burial, resurrection, and ascension. And so we can say that we died when He died, we were buried when He was buried, we arose when He arose, and we ascended when He ascended. This is doctrine that we need to understand. Christ died taking upon Himself the penalty for our sins, and everything that happened to Christ after that – His burial, resurrection, and ascension show how we have benefitted from what Christ did on the Cross. He provided a full atonement for our sins, and through Christ we have full acceptance with God. We are saved. Our sins are forgiven, and we have everlasting life.

Now the Apostle Paul explained to the Colossian believers that Christ has also become our life. See Col. 3:3-4. That is why he exhorted the Colossian believers, and us too, to "walk in Him" in Col. 2:6. And he also wrote in Col. 1:27 that Christ is in us, and He is our "hope of glory." The word "glory" there means *glorification*! So the Christian life is not just a life in which we try to do in our own strength what we are told in Scripture to do, but it is a life in which the Lord Himself, living in us, enables us to be obedient to His Word. And the ultimate goal of our salvation is that through the work of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, we becoming more and more like Christ. This is what Paul was primarily concerned about in the teachings of chapters 3 and 4 down through verse 6.

Now in order for this to become a reality, we have certain responsibilities which Paul addressed to the Colossian believers, but which have applied to all believers from that day to this, and on to the end of time. But we need to remember that obedience to God's Word is only possible through the power of Christ. We can't do it in our own strength.

Verses 5 through 11 Paul divided into two parts:

1) Verses 5-7.

2) Verses 8-11.

The verb that Paul used in verse 5 is translated in the KJV, "mortify." The verb that Paul used in verse 8 is "put off," and, looking ahead, the verb that he used in verse 12 is "put on." We will deal with these last two verbs when we come to verse 8. But now let us look at verses 5-7.

### **I. THE MORTIFICATION OF OUR MEMBERS ON EARTH (Col. 3:5-7).**

If you will look for a moment at verse 2 you will see that there Paul contrasted "things above" with "things on earth." We are to "set our affections on "things above, not on things on the earth." This was just after he had mentioned in verse 1 that Christ is sitting on the right hand of God. Contrast with this the first part of verse 5 where Paul speaks of the believers members "which are upon the earth." And so, if Christ is in heaven at the right hand of God, to set our affections on things above must be that we are to set our affections on the things of Christ, on the attributes of Christ, which we will consider when we get to verses 12 through 14. We can also say that if we are *not* to set our affections on things on the earth, and that is where our members are, then we are not desire, nor seek, the sins that are mentioned first in verse 5 – and sins are what they are! According to verse 6 these are a sample of what brings the judgment of God.

And so we are to set our affections on the things of Christ, but we are to mortify the sins which are called "your members which are upon the earth.

What does it mean to "set our affections" on something? It means to think about it, to make that the objective of our living. And for Paul this meant that a child of God has to have his mind, his thinking, renewed. Cf. Rom. 12:1-2. It needs to be put on another track. The person who isn't a Christian is concerned about what is going to make him happy here

and now, but because his mind is corrupt and sinful, he is going to be seeking and thinking about the wrong things. We as believers need to be thinking about “things above,” the things of Christ. Our new life is to be a life of pleasing God; the old life was a life of pleasing ourselves, doing what we wanted to do, totally unconcerned about God and His will.

But a Christian soon learns after he is saved, that he can still sin. What is he to do about it? Paul said here that we need to “mortify” our “members which are upon the earth.” Let’s think about the word “members” for just a moment.

Our bodies have certain members: our heads, our arms and hands, our legs and feet. The members of our bodies are all of the parts that make up a human body. Paul is evidently using that word to describe the makeup of our souls, of our inner man. This is one way he had of describing man’s depraved nature. Inwardly, in our hearts, we are sinners, sinners by nature, born in sin. And this is our problem.

The Apostle Paul has given us several lists of sins which characterize the human heart. One is in Rom. 1:28-32. There is another one in Gal. 5:19-21, and he called them “the works of the flesh.” The Lord Jesus gave His own list in Mark 7:21-23. No list is complete, but they give us enough so we can tell what the flesh is.

Now this is what Paul said we are to put to death, to mortify. But how are we going to harmonize this with what Paul said in Rom. 6:6:

6 Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin.

The Greek actually says “that our old man was crucified with Him,” that is, with Christ. The word translated “destroyed” can also mean *to deprive of its influence and power*. Eventually it is going to be destroyed, but for now Christ, by His death on the Cross, not only delivered us from sin’s penalty, but also from sin’s power.

Now when Paul said in our verse in Colossians that we are to “mortify our members which are upon the earth,” he meant not that we are to try to do what our Lord has already done, and which we could never have done, but that we are by faith to act upon what the Word tells us that we need to do. We are to treat our sins as powerless to cause us to sin or to keep us under its control.

Now this is not a kind of wishing will make it so. We are dealing here with the truth of God. Christ died to deliver us from sin's power as well as sin's penalty. Until that day when we are transformed into the very likeness of our Lord, when we see Him, it is going to be possible for us to sin. *But we do not have to sin.* How do we mortify our sinful members which are on the earth. We hide God's word in our hearts that we might not sin against Him (Psa. 119:11). We pray that the Lord will not let any sin have dominion over us, as the Psalmist prayed in Ps 119:133: "Order my steps in thy word: and let not any iniquity have dominion over me." And we stay away from the people and stay out of situations that could possibly lead us into sin. Even your presence here this morning in the presence of God and among the people of God, is a safeguard, a means of mortifying sin. In the case of the first sin that is mentioned here in verse 5, we do not do what the young man in Proverbs 7 did when he went to the harlots house asking for trouble, but we run like Joseph did when Potiphar's wife tried to force him to sin with her.

At this point Paul mentioned five sins as characteristic of what he had in mind, sins which even believers can be guilty of if we do not accept our responsibility by heeding God's warning and using the means that God has provided for our victory over sin.

But let me point out that basic to an understanding of we can put behind us the old life, and live the new life in Christ, *is doctrine!* What doctrine? The doctrine of the Cross, the doctrine of the death of Christ, or to state it even another way, the doctrine of the Gospel. The Bible not only records the historic fact that Jesus Christ, God's Son, died on a Cross over 2,000 years ago, but it explains what he accomplished when He died on the Cross. He died for our sins. He died for the sins of all who would ever believe in Him. He died to secure our justification before the Lord. He died to secure our sanctification. His resurrection was evidence that He was the Son of God and that it was not possible for Him to be held in the grip of death. His resurrection shows that His work was accepted, and so today He is seated in heaven at the right hand of the Father, the place of honor. There He prays for us. And only eternity will reveal how many times we have been kept from falling possibly into deep sin because our Lord saw us in danger, and interceded for us with the Father. And so He is able to save us, and keep us saved unto the very end when "we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is. And then it will nevermore be possible for us to think a thought, or to speak a word, or to commit an act that will in any way be sin in God's sight.

**Concl:** Next Sunday, the Lord willing, we will pick up in Colossians 3 where we are leaving it today. But as I close today, let me say that I hope you have seen the value of Biblical doctrine, and that none of you will believe the lie that some people are spreading today, that doctrine is not important. It is important, very important! In fact, when you consider time and eternity, nothing is more important for any of us than the teaching of the Word of God.

But the question is, Are you trusting in the saving work of the Lord Jesus Christ? If so, you should be living a new life, a life of obedience to the Word of God, a life where more and more you show that God has made you a new creation so that you love what the Lord loves, and hate the sin which is destroying our country and the world in which we live. People who do not know the Lord are spiritually blind to what is going on. And they are spiritually dead, so they can't do anything about it even if they discover what our problem is. The Lord Jesus Christ is the only Savior, and He is a complete Savior. If you do not know the Savior, it is my prayer that the Lord will use His Word in your heart today that perhaps before you leave this place today you will be able to say, "Yes, I am trusting in the Lord Jesus Christ and His work on the Cross for the salvation of my soul." May the Lord fulfill His own gracious will in each of our lives today.