

Text: Colossians 3:4-8

Title: Killing Sin

Truth: Christians must mortify sin because of God's wrath and Christ's coming.

Date/Location: Sunday November 14, 2015 at FBC

Introduction

We continue our study of Colossians 3 in the 'practical' section of the letter. Paul gets specific and personal as to how Christians are to live.

I. The Revelation of the Believer in Glory, v. 4

When the Messiah appears, who is our life, then you also with Him will be revealed in glory.

- A. He will **appear**. That is, He will come back again to this earth. He does not appear presently, but He will appear in the future. That is a cardinal doctrine of Christianity. See also 1 John 2:28; 1 Peter 1:13; Acts 1:11. The second coming happens in two stages, and it is not specified here at which stage this publicly revealed glorification occurs. I favor interpreting the timing not as the rapture, when we will receive immortal bodies and be whisked away to heaven, but as the second coming when Christ returns to the earth in power and great glory, bringing His people with Him to reign upon the earth for 1000 years (Matthew 24:30, 25:31; Rev. 19:11-16, 20:4).
- B. **Christ is our life**. The real kind of life, the kind that matters, is spiritual life, that somewhat intangible reality that Christians have which is caused by the Holy Spirit dwelling in them. The one and only reason we have that kind of life is because of Jesus Christ.
- C. At the same time He appears, the believer will also 'appear.' Because the verb *appear* is the same root but in the passive voice, I translated it as "will be revealed." The passive voice tells us that this is not something that we will accomplish, but Christ will do it to and for us.
- D. The life that is hidden with Christ in God presently (v. 3) will be openly manifested to the world when Christ returns. This is the main idea of verse 4. Christ's appearing specifies the timing of our transformation; the fact that He is our life describes the One who will appear, but it is what happens "then" that is the big idea of the verse. We will be **revealed in glory**. That means we will appear in radiant splendor, in sinless perfection, in justified and sanctified honor, because of Christ. Not only will our souls be transformed by this time, but also our bodies (Philippians 3:20-21, 1 John 3:2).

Connection between this idea and the next: From 3:5's "therefore," we conclude that it is for reasons revealed in verse 3 and earlier— 1) our future destiny, the eschatological hope tied in with Christ's return (3:4); 2) the fact that we died with Christ; 3) the fact that we rose again with Him to a new heavenly life and mindset (2:20 and 3:1-3)—that we must kill our sinful tendencies and deeds.

II. Mortification, v. 5a

- A. In theological studies, the big technical word for our heavy-handed dealing with sin is *mortification*. It means to "mortify" or "kill" those parts of ourselves which are sinful. We do this to ourselves; I cannot mortify your sins for you.
1. The verb that is used is "ne-kro'-sa-teh" which means to make dead or put to death. We use the root idea in various English words. For example, "necrotizing fasciitis (neck-ro-tie-zing fas-e-i-tis) is a serious bacterial skin infection that spreads quickly and kills the body's soft tissue" (cdc.gov). It is more commonly called the *flesh eating bacteria*. Necromancy (sorcery or witchcraft involving the dead) is another word based on the same root.
 2. This is a plural command. **We are to kill sin!** This mortification of sin starts with repentance at the time of salvation. *Repentance* is a change of mind from being in favor of sin to being settled against it. True repentance is a gift from God (Acts 11:18, 2 Tim. 2:25), it is commanded by God (Mark 1:15, Acts 17:30), it is at the center of the gospel message (Acts 26:20), and it is exercised by all true believers as a corollary or integral part of true faith (exemplified in Acts 11:21).
- B. The Bible gives a list of some of the sins which we are to mortify. We will examine the list shortly.

Connection between this idea and the next: But before we study the "sin list" in detail, I want to make sure that we address the next point so as to motivate why we should understand and reject sin.

III. Why Mortify Sin, v. 6-7

We need to kill sin because the kinds of sins listed in verse 5b and 8 are:

- A. **Sins that bring the wrath of God.** God's wrath comes upon people *because of these things*. It is these sins that induce God to inflict wrath, i.e., punishment for sin.

1. What is wrath?

- i. Based on the holiness of God. Holiness is separateness from sin. In God, it creates a just standard. This standard is exercised against sin, and we call that holy anger his wrath.
- ii. It is judicial. Not emotionally based, but also not impersonal. It is God's perfect attitude against sin, a settled disposition of His nature against that which is evil, i.e., against His nature.
- iii. It is not an attribute, but a disposition that arises out of His attributes at sin. The wrath of God is not 'fate' or some cosmic principle of mechanical retribution but an act of God's justice.
- iv. Wrath can be placated or removed by what is called propitiation. Jesus Christ is the propitiation—wrath-satisfier—for our sins (1 John 2:2).

2. John 3:36 and Rom. 1:18 are some correlating verses.

3. The reason for God's wrath is not because God is an old meanie. It is because of *sins*. In other words, people must not blame God for God's wrath; rather they ought to blame themselves!

4. God's anger is not because of one particular sin (such as disbelief in Christ), but because of "these things" (plural).

B. Sins that all of us participated in before we were Christians. We were people characterized by (sons of) disobedience, and we don't want to be that way now!

1. We used to be that way (1 Cor. 6:9-11), but now those who are in Christ are not that way. We were in the realm of God's wrath, but by stepping over the line into Christ, we stepped out of that realm and into the realm of eternal life. That's the only way to avoid God's wrath. When you get into Christ by turning from sin and trusting in Him, then you exit the realm of wrath so that God's wrath does not hang over you anymore.

2. There are likely degrees of wrath (perhaps Deut. 32:22, Matthew 10:15, 11:22-24). Whether degrees or not, no amount of the wrath of God is a pleasant proposition (Hebrews 10:31).

IV. Sins to Mortify, v. 5b, 8

A. Before looking at the list itself, notice that the bad actions are called "your members **which are on the earth.**" This uses the same wording as in verse 3:2 where it says that we must not set our minds on **things on the earth**. The point then about earthly things is that these are sinful

things. This should make more concrete what we studied last time about how to set our mind on things above versus on things on the earth. If our minds are thinking about sinful things, about worldly things, about things that get a higher place than God in our minds, then we need to kill those thoughts and move on to things higher.

B. The Sin List. We all need to examine ourselves and see if these things are in our lives. If so, murder them.

1. Fornication. Unlawful sexual intercourse, prostitution, pre-marital sex, infidelity, pornography, gay marriage, etc.
2. Uncleaness. Any moral corruption or vice.
3. Passion. Strong desires, lusts, homosexual desires.
4. Evil desire. Longing or craving for sinful things.
5. Covetousness = idolatry. Wanting more, greed, avarice. This shows that you are replacing God with the thing you want more of.
6. Anger. Strong displeasure, with its emotional aspect in focus.
7. Wrath. Intense anger, as in rage, indignation.
8. Malice. General wickedness, or mean-spirited ill-will.
9. Blasphemy. Defamation, reviling, disrespect, slander, toward people or God.
10. Filthy Language. Obscene speech, poor taste, dirty talk, sailor-speak instead of the language of a gentleman or lady.
11. Lying (additional point from v. 9). This means to tell a falsehood, to deceive, or to direct away from the truth.

See similar sin lists in 1 Cor. 6:9-10 and Romans 1:28-31.

Conclusion

Simply put, believers are to mortify sin because the sinful lifestyle characterized our past and brings the wrath of God both now and especially in the future. We also look forward to being glorified with Christ at His second coming, so we want to move decisively in the direction of purity starting NOW.

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