

THINGS TO BE PUT OFF AND THINGS TO BE PUT ON

“Mortify therefore your members which are upon the earth; fornication, uncleanness, inordinate affection, evil concupiscence, and covetousness, which is idolatry: For which things' sake the wrath of God cometh on the children of disobedience: In the which ye also walked some time, when ye lived in them. But now ye also put off all these; anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy, filthy communication out of your mouth. Lie not one to another, seeing that ye have put off the old man with his deeds; And have put on the new man, which is renewed in knowledge after the image of him that created him: Where there is neither Greek nor Jew, circumcision nor uncircumcision, Barbarian, Scythian, bond nor free: but Christ is all, and in all. Put on therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, longsuffering; Forbearing one another, and forgiving one another, if any man have a quarrel against any: even as Christ forgave you, so also do ye. And above all these things put on charity, which is the bond of perfectness.” (Col 3:5-14)

Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION

The Spirit has summoned us to seek the things that are above, where Christ is presently seated at the right hand of God (3:1). They are to be our quest, our ambition, and the driving objective of our lives. The Lord has urged us to place our affection on those things, developing an insatiable appetite for them.

The hearts and minds of the people of God are to be focused – singularly devoted to the things that are above. No work, routine, or religious accomplishment can compensate for the absence of this commitment.

I do not believe this requirement is common knowledge among professed “Christians.” All manner of religious activity is prevalent in the Western world that does not necessitate a singular devotion to the Lord, even though “the first and great commandment” is “And thou shalt love the Lord thy God with ALL thy heart, and with ALL thy soul, and with ALL thy mind, and with ALL thy strength: this is the first commandment” (Mark 12:30).

The Lord requires our “whole” heart and mind. The very nature of spiritual life demands that our hearts and minds be “single” – devoted to one pursuit. This requirement is portrayed in the words of our blessed Lord: “The light of the body is the eye: if therefore thine eye be single, thy whole body shall be full of light. But if thine eye be evil, thy whole body shall be full of darkness. If therefore the light that is in thee be darkness, how great is that darkness!” (Mat 6:22-23). If we focus on “one thing,” it will impact upon everything we think, say, and do. Our whole persons will be affected, like the whole body being “full of light.” If the object of our attention is fundamentally evil, and destined for

ultimate destruction, the defiling effects of that object flood the whole person with the deluge of darkness – spiritual ignorance and obtuseness.

If the focus of a person's attention is "evil," yet thought to be right, the moral and spiritual darkness that is produced will be of great magnitude. Because it is considered right, it will be readily accepted, with no question about its validity. Thus we see that focus is not only necessary, it must be centered on what is right, else it will be the means of our spiritual demise. That is why we are admonished to seek the things that "are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God." Once those things become obvious to us, we are to set our affection upon them.

There is no substitute for this focus – no form of religion that will make a person acceptable who lacks the proper concentration of both heart and mind.

This singularity of devotion is expressed elsewhere in Scripture.

1. "One thing have I desired of the LORD, that will I seek after; that I may dwell in the house of the LORD all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the LORD, and to inquire in His temple" (Psa 27:4).
2. "Whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none upon earth that I desire beside Thee" (Psa 73:25).
3. "But one thing is needful: and Mary hath chosen that good part, which shall not be taken away from her" (Luke 10:42).
4. "Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended: but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before" (Phil 3:13).
5. "And they, continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, did eat their meat with gladness and singleness of heart" (Acts 2:46).
6. "Servants, be obedient to them that are your masters according to the flesh, with fear and trembling, in singleness of your heart, as unto Christ" (Eph 6:5).
7. "Whether therefore ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God" (1 Cor 10:31).
8. "And whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by him" (Col 3:17).
9. "And whatsoever ye do, do it heartily, as to the Lord, and not unto men" (Col 3:23).
life.

Chapter 2

DIVIDED AFFECTION

Those who divide their affection are attempting the impossible. Such are described as having a "double heart" – "They speak vanity every one with his neighbor: with flattering lips and with a DOUBLE HEART do they speak" (Psa 12:2). They are attempting to "serve two masters," which cannot be done – "No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other." (Matt 6:24). Such are "double minded," and consequently are "unstable" in all of their "ways" – "A double minded man is unstable in all his

ways" (James 1:8). Man has been created with the aptitude for a single focus, one master, a solitary objective. It simply is not possible to live in contradiction of that fact. Differing things may be done, but only one objective will drive the doing of them. Varying duties may be fulfilled, but it is for one master. That is simple the way it is. One may as well attempt to live without breathing or eating as to live without a single focus.

A significant proportion of contemporary religion caters to this kind of mind-set that might be called a divided affection, double heart, or an attempt to serve two masters. They offer a little of the world, and a little of what they think is spiritual. It is not unusual to find religious gurus who are professed experts in marriage, finances, organization, young people, etc. There is a place for these social experts in Bible Colleges and Seminaries, as well as the churches. Mega churches may have several of these experts on their staff. They present themselves as being experts in life on the earth, as well as preparing people to dwell for ever with the Lord. It is all an unwitting attempt to help people serve two masters, successfully have a double heart, and live with a double mind. It is all nothing more than an exercise in vanity.

This deceptive work is generally done by presenting something from the Bible in a carnal wrapping – or taking something that is primarily of the world, and attempting to wrap Scripture around it. In doing this, they imagine their presentation will not be offensive to those not publicly aligned with the Lord. What these poor souls overlook is that such attempts are an abomination to the Lord. He will not bless such efforts, for His design is to separate people from this present evil world, not allow them to remain in harmony with it. Jesus told His disciples, "If ye were of the world, the world would love his own: but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you" (John 15:19). Peter said of the conversion of Gentiles: "God at the first did visit the Gentiles, to take out of them a people for his name." (Acts 15:14). Paul wrote to Titus, ". . . our Savior Jesus Christ, who gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto Himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works." (Titus 2:14). Paul wrote to the Galatians, "Who gave himself for our sins, that he might deliver us from this present evil world, according to the will of God and our Father" (Gal 1:4). It is time for the people of God to take such expressions seriously, and begin to work out their own salvation with fear and trembling (Phil 2:12). Such a quest will address any marital, social, or financial situation that is resolvable. If one does not believe that, there is little hope of them ever becoming acceptable to God.

WHY SAY THESE THINGS?

The exhortation that follows postulates the priority of the things of God. It assumes the people are seeking the things above, and have set their affection upon them. If this has not taken place, the task now before us will simply not be possible.

Spiritual work requires spiritual power. It is not possible to work out our own salvation with fear and trembling (Phil 2:12) while we are in a weakened condition – and a divided heart makes one weak and inadequate. Further, the appropriation of the treasures that are hidden in Christ Jesus (Col 2:3) requires the deliberate abandonment of a primary quest for the things belonging to this world. This requirement is an absolute must, and is at the threshold of the text for this series of devotions.

It is imperative that we see salvation makes no provision for the disinterested and

indifferent. There is no place for a divided heart, a love for this world, or an primary appetite for the transitory. Where these unacceptable qualities exist, there will be a corresponding forfeiture of God's Presence and blessing.

Chapter 3

MORTIFY YOUR MEMBERS

“Mortify therefore your members which are upon the earth...”

Spiritual life is, by its very nature, focused and controlled. It also requires certain versatility, or spiritual dexterity. There are things that must be done, as well as things that must not be done. There are graces to appropriate, and vices to reject. There are things to be nurtured, and things to be put to death.

The grace of God, which brings salvation, instructs us to do these things. That instruction is not academic, but is inward. The Scriptures put it this way: “For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men, teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world; looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Savior Jesus Christ; who gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto Himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works” (Titus 2:11-14). Notice the remarkable scope of spiritual life, or God's great salvation.

1. Denying ungodliness. Ungodlike conduct is to be refused. That is, when we are tempted to be ungodly, grace teaches us to say “NO!” – and Satan has no power to offset that “NO!”
2. Denying worldly lusts. When we confront worldly passions and unlawful desires – fiery darts hurled at us by the wicked one – grace teaches us to say “NO!” – and Satan has no power to offset that “NO!”
3. Living soberly. Living soberly is living with a sound mind, moderately, and in a state of constant alertness. Grace teaches us to do this. – and Satan has no power to abort this doing.
4. Living righteously. Grace teaches us to live in an upright manner, so there is no conflict between our lives and the Divine nature. – and Satan has no power to abort such living.
5. Living godly. Godly lives are pious, devout, and God-fearing lives. – and Satan has no power to abort such living.
6. Looking for appearing of Jesus. Grace so instructs us that we come to anticipate the return of our Lord, and to make the appropriate preparations for it. – and Satan cannot stop this anticipation.
7. Being zealous of good works. Law cannot make a person want to do good works. Grace can assist a person in being zealous for them.– and Satan cannot squelch this zeal.

The natural man cannot adapt life to this requirement: “mortify your members that are upon the earth!” This is because it involves faith, commitment, and perseverance. Grace, which effectively enables the disciple to fulfill this word, is not given to the disobedient, the slothful, the lukewarm, the indolent, and the person who is a friend of the world. Only

faith can take hold of grace and enjoy the benefits that it brings.

Although we are focused, there are differing responsibilities that require uncommon wisdom and strength. This text will deal with some of them.

Chapter 4

THEREFORE MORTIFY

“ . . . therefore . . . ” This admonition is given in view of the preceding verses: “For ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God. When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with Him in glory” (Col 3:3-4). Because we are “dead,” therefore . . . Because our lives are “hid with Christ in God,” therefore . . . Because Christ is “our life,” therefore . . . Because we will “appear with Him in glory,” therefore . . .

Those who are “dead” to sin and this world will be able to respond to this word. Those whose lives are hid with Christ in God will have a heart to fulfill this word. Those who have Christ as their life will be empowered to do what is required of them. Those who anticipate appearing with Christ in glory have reason to obey this word.

The word “therefore” confirms the reasonableness of the exhortation that follows. It is the only acceptable thing to do, and it is totally unreasonable not to respond in this manner.

MORTIFY

“Mortify . . . ” Other versions read, “put to death” (NKJV/NIV), “consider . . . as dead to immorality” (NASB), and “kill” (NJB).

The word “mortify” comes from the Greek word *Nekrw,sate* (nek-ro-sa-tee), which means “to make dead, to put to death, slay” (STRONG’S). Etymologically, it means to put to death a part of the body that is no longer useful, but harmful – as in cutting away a cancerous or malignant growth.

This passage parallels a statement made in the Epistle to the Romans. There, the Spirit admonishes us to have a spiritual mind – one that is in harmony with what occurred when we were baptized into Christ. “Likewise reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord” (Rom 6:11). Our text is detailing HOW to reckon, or consider, ourselves to be “dead indeed unto sin.” In Romans, the picture is one of the “old man” being “crucified with” Jesus Christ (Rom 6:6). The third chapter of Colossians sees the “old man” crucified, yet alive, much like the impenitent thief who was crucified at the side of the Lord Jesus (Lk 23:39). Doctrinally, the word “mortify” means to put to death by keeping the “old man” on the cross, not allowing him to continually express himself. We are not to allow him to come off of the cross, thereby becoming more free to express himself.

Here is an facet of the spiritual warfare into which we have been called. When we enroll as a disciple of Christ, we are also provided with “the whole armor of God” (Eph 6:11), and are made soldiers (2 Tim 2:3-4).

The “sword of the Spirit” (Eph 6:17) must be employed against internal enemies, as well as those that are external to our persons. In this text these are our “members that are upon the earth.”

YOUR MEMBERS

“ . . . your members . . . ” Other versions read, “members of” (NASB), “whatever belongs” (NIV), “whatever in you” (NRSV), “your bodies” (BBE), “the parts of you” (NAB), and “everything in you” (NJB).

“Your members” refer to the part of us that has been “circumcised” by Christ (2:11-12). Although technically separated from us, this part remains with us as long as we are “in the body” (Heb 13:3). As seasoned veterans in the faith know, these members have a certain vigor in us that can surprise those whose senses are not trained to discern good and evil – particularly the evil that is resident in us.

What is earlier called “the body of the sins of the flesh” is here viewed in all of its wretched detail – “your members.” This is “the old man” that “IS crucified with Him” (Rom 6:6) – except he is here seen in all of his varied and wicked capacities – “your members.” Just as the “Divine nature” (of which we have become “partakers”), or participants (2 Pet 1:4) is complex, so our “old man,” is complex in his capacities. Because this nature is resident in our bodies, its diverse abilities of expression are referred to as “your members.” In Christ, we are to treat them as under our authority.

The Spirit is going to give us a magnified perception of “the flesh.” He will show us the details of a principle that is resident with us, yet is not part of our real persons. The seventh chapter of Romans speaks of the animating law that drives “our members that are upon the earth.”

1. In our flesh “dwelleth no good thing” (Rom 7:18).
2. This is “sin that dwelleth in me” (7:20).
3. “Evil is present with me” (7:21).
4. There is “another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind” (7:23).

In the eighth chapter of Romans, the emphasis is on the spiritual impotence of “the flesh,” as well as the unacceptability of those who follow its dictates. The teaching is straightforward and to the point.

1. They that are “after the flesh do mind the things of the flesh” (Rom 8:5).
2. To be “carnally minded is death” (8:6).
3. The “carnal mind is enmity against God” (8:7a).
4. The carnal mind “is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be” (8:7b).
5. They that “are in the flesh cannot please God” (8:8).

There is an unacceptable part of our persons, therefore, that is not yet dead – a part that must be treated harshly, being put to death, or mortified.

Chapter 5

UPON THE EARTH

“ . . . which are upon the earth.” Other versions read, “your earthly body” (NASB), “to your earthly nature” (NIV), “is earthly” (NRSV), “which are of the earth” (BBE), “that is earthly” (NJB).

The expression “on the earth” affirms that this world is the locus in which these “members” operate. They are driven by earthly appetites. These “members” are the part of us that is confined to “this present evil world.” There is no other place in which these “members” can express themselves. There is no other realm in which there are things that can gratify these “members.”

There is nothing in the heavenly places, into which we have been raised (Eph 2:6), that can gratify these “members.” Further, once we pass through the veil of death, they will never again be able to be satisfied. Those who are cast into the “lake of fire” (Rev 20:15), will still have these “members,” yet will never be able to gratify them. Like a gnawing worm, these appetites will cry out for satisfaction, but there will be nothing in all eternity that will be able to gratify them.

It is with this in mind that mortifying them here and now makes perfect sense. If we approach this text from the standpoint of law, we will all too soon forget what it says, for law cannot provoke spiritual mindedness or maintain a remembrance of truth. But when we consider this exhortation with eternity in mind, we will find ourselves shouting the “Amen” to what is said. Our hearts will not only acquiesce to these words, but will call out to us to enter aggressively into the work of mortification that us required.

A WORD ABOUT A WORLDLY CHURCH

One of the marks of spiritual Babylon is its worldly-mindedness. It is preoccupied with temporal things, and feels at home in the realm of sense and time. In strict accord with his crafty nature, the devil has exaggerated human relationships, making them the focus of much religious activity. While spiritual life does address these relationships, it never treats them as primary. If it has to do with this world, it is secondary – even if it is loving your neighbor as yourself (Lev 19:18; Matt 22:39). The Lord provides no way or circumstance that allows this world to become primary.

If men make secondary things primary, they awaken the “old man” – the “members that are upon the earth.”

Putting those members to death involves treating every legitimate earthly relationship as secondary. That is the starting point. If that is not done, the commission becomes impossible.

Chapter 6

FLESHLY LUSTS, #1

“. . .fornication, uncleanness, inordinate affection, evil concupiscence, and covetousness, which is idolatry.”

It is imperative we see that this admonition regards very real propensities that are within us. These are a part of our fleshly constitution, and are therefore called OUR “members.” The fact that they may not have erupted in all of their reprehensible wickedness, by no means suggests they are not in us. They are part of “the flesh,” our “bodies,” and “the old man.” As long as we are “in the body,” we will have to contend with them. The ONLY proper way to do that is to put them to death: “mortify” them! That is an aggressive work, and requires the most extensive effort!

FORNICATION

“ . . .fornication . . .” Other versions read, “immorality” (NASB), “sexual immorality” (NIV), “wrong use of the flesh” (BBE), “sexual vice” (NJB), “sexual sin” (NLT), “lewdness” (WEBSTER), and “whoredom” (YLT).

This is a word with a wide meaning, dealing with bodily immorality. The word from which it is translated is pornei,an (porn-ei-an), from which we get the word “porno,” or pornography. Although I do so with great caution, I am providing the academic definition of this word. These are the kinds of words upon which I do not wish to dwell. “1) Illicit sexual intercourse; 1a) adultery, fornication, homosexuality, lesbianism, intercourse with animals etc.; 1b) sexual intercourse with close relatives; Lev 18; 1c) sexual intercourse with a divorced man or woman; Mk 10:11,12” (STRONG’S). The lexical definition is more subdued: “Generally, of every kind of extramarital, unlawful, or unnatural sexual intercourse fornication, sexual immorality, prostitution” (BARCLAY-NEWMAN).

The word “fornication” was never used in the Law. It’s first mentioning is found in Second Chronicles, when referring to the sin of Jehoram: “Moreover he made high places in the mountains of Judah, and caused the inhabitants of Jerusalem to commit fornication, and compelled Judah thereto” (2 Chron 21:11).

The Law spelled out the details of fleshly immorality, showing the evil diversity of this kind of iniquity. The sins are stated with modesty, as is characteristic of the Spirit. Yet, the scope of this sin is clearly delineated to assist men in avoiding such things.

1. Uncovering the nakedness of one who is near of kin (Lev 18:6).
2. Uncovering the nakedness of one’s father or mother (Lev 18:7).
3. Uncovering the nakedness of the wife of one’s father (Lev 18:8).
4. Uncovering the nakedness of one’s sister (Lev 18:9).
5. Uncovering the nakedness of the daughter of one’s son (Lev 18:10).
6. Uncovering the daughter of one’s father’s wife (Lev 18:11).
7. Uncovering the nakedness of one’s father’s sister (Lev 18:12).
8. Uncovering the nakedness of one’s mother’s sister (Lev 18:13).
9. Uncovering the nakedness of one’s father’s brother (Lev 18:14a).
10. Approaching the wife of one’s father’s brother (Lev 18:14b).
11. Uncovering the nakedness of one’s daughter in law (Lev 18:15).
12. Uncovering the nakedness of one’s brother’s wife (Lev 18:16).
13. Uncovering the nakedness of a woman and her daughter (Lev 18:17a).
14. Uncovering the nakedness her son’s daughter, or her daughter’s daughter (Lev 18:17b).
15. Uncovering the nakedness of a wife’s sister (Lev 18:18).
16. Uncovering the nakedness of a woman when she is unclean (Lev 18:19).
17. Lying carnally with the wife of one’s neighbor (Lev 18:20).
18. Lying with mankind as with womankind (Lev 18:22).

19. Lying with any beast (Lev 18:23a).

20. A woman standing before a beast to lie with it (Lev 18:23b).

A single word that covered all of these sins is found in the seventh commandment: “Thou shalt not commit adultery” (Ex 20:14). The general word encompassing all of these sins that is often used in the Apostolic writings is “fornication” (Acts 15:20; Rom 1:29; 1 Cor 5:1; 1 Cor 6:13,18; 1 Cor 10:8; Eph 5:3; Col 3:5; 1 Thess 4:3; Jude 1:7). It is also used in reference to immorality occurring outside of the marriage bond (1 Cor 7:2).

We are living in a day when the consciousness of this sin has been nearly obliterated. Society now speaks of “alternate life-styles,” “live-in,” “sleeping together,” “Pornography,” “sexual addiction,” “sexual preference,” “single parent,” “teen-pregnancy,” etc. Terminology is employed that diminishes the reprehensible nature of immorality, giving it some legitimacy in society: i.e. “Homosexual” and “lesbian.” All of this has caused a sort of spiritual stupor to descend like a fog upon men’s hearts. It is the direct result of allowing the psychologists and sociologists to market their wares within the church. Although there is not a syllable of tolerance or sympathy for such transgressions in Scripture, people have been led to believe those involved in such things are actually victims instead of transgressors. This attitude, as reprehensible as it is, has even crept into the church.

Chapter 7

FLESHLY LUSTS, #2

Let us be clear about how the Lord speaks about this sin – “fornication.” These words are to be taken seriously. Those who do not do so will eventually be judged by them (John 12:48).

1. “Flee fornication. Every sin that a man doeth is without the body; but he that committeth fornication sinneth against his own body” (1 Cor 6:18).
2. “Neither let us commit fornication, as some of them committed, and fell in one day three and twenty thousand” (1 Cor 10:8).
3. “I have also told you in time past, that they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God” (Gal 5:21).
4. “But fornication, and all uncleanness, or covetousness, let it not be once named among you, as becometh saints” (Eph 5:3).
5. “For this is the will of God, even your sanctification, that ye should abstain from fornication” (1 Thess 4:3).
6. “Even as Sodom and Gomorrha, and the cities about them in like manner, giving themselves over to fornication, and going after strange flesh, are set forth for an example, suffering the vengeance of eternal fire” (Jude 1:7).

THE DIVINE REASONING

There is a pattern of Divine reasoning on this matter – and it relates to the death of Jesus Christ.

1. First, our bodies were not given to us for fornication – that is not an acceptable use of the body, whether society condones it or not. “Now the body is not for fornication, but for the Lord; and the Lord for the body” (1 Cor 6:13).
2. Second, it is God’s will to refrain from all fornication. “For this is the will of God,

even your sanctification, that ye should abstain from fornication” (1 Thess 4:3).

3. Third, this is a sin that is in a category by itself. It is viewed as extraordinarily wicked. “Flee fornication. Every sin that a man doeth is without the body; but he that committeth fornication sinneth against his own body” (1 Cor 6:18).

4. Fourth, our bodies are the temples of the Holy Spirit, thus making fornication a sin against Him. “Or do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God . . .” (1 Cor 6:19a).

5. Fifth, our bodies do not belong to us. They have been bought with a price, and are to be used for God’s glory. “. . . and you are not your own? For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's” (1 Cor 6:19b-20).

Jesus taught us this type of sin can also be committed in the mind, without the outward deed taking place. He said, “Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time, Thou shalt not commit adultery: but I say unto you, That whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart” (Matt 5:27-28).

Our text informs us that this sin is one of our “members” – that is, by nature we do have the capacity to commit it. We should not be surprised, therefore, if Satan hurls flaming arrows at us to excite this sin. Our unwavering response is to “mortify,” or put to death, “fornication.”

Chapter 8

UNCLEANNES

“. . . uncleanness . . .” Other versions read, “impurity” (NASB), and “unclean things” (BBE).

The word “uncleanness” involves both physical and moral impurity, including profligate (extravagant and luxurious) living and impure motives (STRONG’S). Literally, it means “worthless material,” and includes indecency (ROBERTSON).

UNDER THE LAW

The concept of “uncleanness” was taught under the Law. There were approximately seventy things listed that caused the individual to become unclean (Lev 11-15). These things were not to be touched (ex: Lev 5:2-3; 7:19-21). The priests were also charged with making a clear distinction between the clean and the unclean, so there was no doubt in the minds of the people. “And that ye may put difference between holy and unholy, and between unclean and clean” (Lev 10:10).

These various laws were intended to train the senses of the people concerning life in this world. There are competing influences all about us. Some of them are defiling, and others have wholesome and godly effects. In the case of Israel, the Lord instituted various ceremonial laws to convey the principle of “unclean” and “defilement” – that men can be contaminated by what they handle, and those they choose to be their companions.

In delineating the matter of uncleanness, the Spirit later affirmed there was nothing inherently “unclean” about things God created. “I know, and am persuaded by the Lord Jesus, that there is nothing unclean of itself: but to him that esteemeth any thing to be unclean, to him it is unclean” (Rom 14:14). Under the New Covenant, meats and drinks become unclean by perception, as well as what they are used for – not because of their nature. There remain, however, some things that are, in fact, “unclean” and defiling.

IN CHRIST JESUS

In Christ, there are also references to uncleanness. The concept of “unclean” was introduced under the Old Covenant, but did not pass away when it was superceded by a better covenant that is established upon better promises.

1. Unclean spirits. “For UNCLEAN spirits, crying with loud voice, came out of many that were possessed with them: and many taken with palsies, and that were lame, were healed” (Acts 8:7; (Matt 10:1; 12:43; Acts 5:16).

2. Unclean demon. “And in the synagogue there was a man, which had a spirit of an UNCLEAN devil, and cried out with a loud voice, saying, Let us alone; what have we to do with thee, thou Jesus of Nazareth? art thou come to destroy us? I know thee who thou art; the Holy One of God” (Lk 4:33-34).

3. Before we were in Christ, we yielded ourselves to “uncleanness.” “I speak after the manner of men because of the infirmity of your flesh: for as ye have yielded your members servants to UNCLEANNESS and to iniquity unto iniquity; even so now yield your members servants to righteousness unto holiness” (Rom 6:19; Eph 4:19).

4. We are admonished to “touch not the unclean thing.” “Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the UNCLEAN thing; and I will receive you.” (2 Cor 6:17).

5. There is such a thing as repenting of uncleanness. “And lest, when I come again, my God will humble me among you, and that I shall bewail many which have sinned already, and have not repented of the UNCLEANNESS and fornication and lasciviousness which they have committed.” (2 Cor 12:21).

6. Uncleanness is a work of the flesh. “Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are these; Adultery, fornication, UNCLEANNESS , lasciviousness . . .” (Gal 5:19).

7. Uncleanness is not once to be named among saints. “But fornication, and all UNCLEANNESS , or covetousness, let it not be once named among you, as becometh saints.” (Eph 5:3).

8. Uncleanness excludes one from the Kingdom of God. “For this ye know, that no whoremonger, nor UNCLEAN person, nor covetous man, who is an idolater, hath any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God.” (Eph 5:5).

9. Uncleanness is the opposite of holiness. “For God hath not called us unto UNCLEANNESS , but unto holiness.” (1 Thess 4:7).

10. There remains such a thing as the “lust of uncleanness” – a driving desire for defiling things. “But chiefly them that walk after the flesh in the lust of UNCLEANNESS , and despise government. Presumptuous are they, selfwilled, they are not afraid to speak evil of dignities.” (2 Pet 2:10).

THE SERIOUSNESS OF UNCLEANNESS

The seriousness of uncleanness is seen in several Apostolic affirmations. Concerning the body of Christ it is written, “If any man defile the temple of God, him shall God destroy; for the temple of God is holy, which temple ye are” (1 Cor 3:17). Solemnly the people of God are warned, “Looking diligently lest any man fail of the grace of God; lest any root of bitterness springing up trouble you, and thereby many be DEFILED” (Heb12:15). Finally, it is said of the glorified church, “And there shall in no wise enter into it any thing that DEFILETH, neither whatsoever worketh abomination, or maketh a lie: but they

which are written in the Lamb's book of life" (Rev 21:27).

"Uncleanness" is anything that causes the defilement that will not enter into the presence of the Lord.

UNSPOTTED FROM THE WORLD

"Pure religion and undefiled before God" includes the matter of keeping oneself "UNSPOTTED from the world" (James 1:27). The "spot" of the world causes uncleanness, which in turn excludes one from the Kingdom of God. If the intent of salvation is to "deliver us from this present evil world" (Gal 1:4), we can ill afford to become spotted by it, thereby being rendered unclean.

Worldly manners are not to be found in any part of our persons. If the intention of God is to sanctify us wholly, "spirit, soul and body" (1 Thess 5:23), there can be no uncleanness in any of those parts of our being.

HATING THE SPOTTED GARMENT

Even in our quest to turn people from darkness to light, we are admonished to maintain a certain attitude toward the ungodly. We are not to imagine that we cannot be ill effected by our contact with them. Therefore it is written, "Keep yourselves in the love of God, looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life. And of some have compassion, making a difference: and others save with fear, pulling them out of the fire; hating even the garment SPOTTED by the flesh" (Jude 1:21-23). The "fear" is to be found in the one pulling sinners from the fire. Thus some of the other versions read, "on some have mercy with fear" (NASB), "show mercy, mixed with fear" (NIV), "have mercy on still others with fear" (NRSV), "have mercy in fear" (DOUAY), "show mercy with fear" (ESV), and "you must be compassionate but wary" (NJB).

This same thought is expressed in the Epistle to the Galatians. There the focus is on restoring a man who has been overtaken in a fault. "Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual, restore such an one in the spirit of meekness; considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted" (Gal 6:1). Other versions read, "But watch yourself, or you also may be tempted" (NIV), "Take care that you yourselves are not tempted" (NRSV), and "be careful not to fall into the same temptation yourself" (NLT).

How can a person maintain this attitude: keeping unspotted from the world, pulling men out of the fire of transgression fearfully, and rescuing those who have been overcome, while taking care that we ourselves are not overtaken in their sin? One of the chief means is simply this: "hating even the garment spotted by the flesh." Other versions read, "hating even the clothing stained by corrupted flesh" (NIV), "hating even the tunic defiled by their bodies" (NRSV), and "hating even the clothing which is made unclean by the flesh" (BBE).

The idea is that everything surrounding sin is contaminated by it. It is said of the "defiled and unbelieving" that nothing they do is pure, "but even their mind and conscience is defiled" (Tit 1:15). James even takes the matter to clothing. To some this might sound similar to raw superstition, but it is not. This kind of reasoning is virtually unknown in the modern church. Where all manner of worldly influence is seen even in popular clothing. What sensitive soul has not become aware of this contamination? It is the business of the people of God to develop such a hatred for sin and uncleanness, that even the garment that is effected by worldly manners is despised.

DEFILING INFLUENCES

There are people, thoughts, deeds, sights, and sounds that defile and corrupt. These are things that tend to retard spiritual progress and knit one to the cursed and passing order. They soil the mind, bring a blight upon the affection, and erode spiritual qualities. They bring Divine displeasure, the approbation of the world, and push the door of the heart open for the entrance of the wicked one. These are things than change the spiritual quality of a person, like a cancerous growth changes the appearance and function of the body.

We live in a society that has no conception of “uncleanness.” There exists a moral and spiritual filth that has changed the way people think, how they dress, how they groom themselves, and where they go. It has changed what they watch, how they select their closest friends, and how they choose to spend their time. There is something in “the flesh” that is attracted to such things. Our unwavering response is to “mortify,” or put to death, “uncleanness.”

Chapter 9

INORDINATE AFFECTION

“ . . . inordinate affection . . . ” Other versions read, “passion” (NKJV), “lust” (NIV), “vile passions” (DARBY), and “uncontrolled passion” (NJB).

The words “inordinate affection” are translated from a single Greek word: *pa,qoj* (*pa-thos*), from which we get the English word “pathos,” which refers to a mental anguish or suffering. Here the words refer to all the allurements of unhallowed desires: thus the words “inordinate affection” – lusts that are not lawful, yet are eagerly welcomed and entertained.

The word “lust,” as used in several translations (NIV, DOUAY, NIB, NLT) is too shallow, and, in my judgment, is not a good translation. The word “passion” comes closer to the meaning, because it emphasizes the fiery and demanding nature of these desires (NKJV, ASV, NASB, NRSV, BBE, ESV, NAB, NAU, YLT). Several versions emphasize the unusual corruptness of “passion” that is intended by this expression: “vile passions” (DARBY), and “uncontrolled passion” (NJB). These are lusts that are awakened by some external object or person, being distinguished from imaginations, which are often contrivances of the mind. They tend to have the nature of a raging fire.

This word is used two other times in the Apostolic writings. Each one of them emphasizes the driving force of these desires.

1. “For this cause God gave them up unto VILE AFFECTIONS: for even their women did change the natural use into that which is against nature” (Rom 1:26). These were DEPRAVED AND CORRUPTING DESIRES that shouted out for attention. They pulled men into deeper sins, consuming them like an inward fire. The Romans text affirms they erupted in exchanging natural relations for unnatural ones. Today men refer to the sins that are mentioned as lesbianism and homosexuality. These sins did not spring from nature, or the way men were born, as such sinners affirm, but from unlawful desires – “inordinate affection.” Sodomy is part of the fruit produced by these desires.

2. “Not in THE LUST OF CONCUPISCENCE, even as the Gentiles which know not God” (1 Thess 4:5). “Concupiscence” is mentioned later in our text, at which time I will deal with that particular sin. This Thessalonian text is relevant to the Colossian text because of its use of the word “lust.” The “lust” of First Thessalonians 4:5 is the “inordinate affection” of Colossians 3:5. It is the burning desire that produces “concupiscence.”

“Inordinate affections” are unlawful desires – i.e., the desire for things and experiences that are not right. It is the driving inner compulsion to do what the Lord forbids. Our unwavering response must be to “mortify,” or put to death, “inordinate affection.”

Chapter 10

EVIL CONCUPISCENCE

“ . . . evil concupiscence . . . ” Other versions read, “evil desire” (NKJV /NASB/NIV), “unbridled desire” (DARBY), and “shameful desires” (NLT).

The word “concupiscence” is used two other places in Scripture, and means “a desire, craving, and longing for what is forbidden” (STRONG’S). It is a “strong impulse and unrestrained desire for something that is forbidden” (THAYER). These are driving lusts in the heart that erupt in the degrading of the body among people. The Epistle to the Romans refers to this sin in these words, “Wherefore God also gave them up to uncleanness through the lusts of their own hearts, to dishonor their own bodies between themselves” (Rom 1:24).

While the expression “inordinate affection” refers to the fiery condition of a sensual appetite, the words “evil concupiscence” speak of a specific gratification of the appetite. This is accompanied by a dominating determination to satisfy that desire. An example would be David seeing Bathsheba, then determining to take her to himself. Another would be Achan seeing the Babylonish garment, the wedge of gold, and the pieces of silver, then determining to take them for himself. Our unwavering response must be to “mortify,” or put to death, “evil concupiscence.”

A DOWNWARD PROGRESSION SEEN

There is a progression downward seen in these “members” that are to be mortified. Uncleanness speaks of becoming defiled by association with corrupt people and things. Inordinate affection speaks of the compelling desires for unlawful things that are awakened by uncleanness. Evil concupiscence speaks of the determination to gratify those base desires.

If these “members,” relating to desire, are not ALL mortified, the ones that are allowed to remain will awaken other passions, thus causing a fall to occur. If the individual insists on culturing unclean associations, “inordinate affections” will be stirred up. When that happens, a certain resolution will develop within the heart and mind that causes the person to seek means whereby those affections will be gratified.

There is a lot of loose thought in the Christian community on these matters. The spiritual froth that is regularly ladled out to professing Christians brings no power to “mortify” their “members that are upon the earth.” In addition, convenient explanations for transgression are being offered, together with a variety of supposed “recovery” ministries, thereby obscuring what has really taken place when people tumble into transgression.

Those who indulge the flesh have jumped into a downward moral spiral. They have not fallen accidentally. Rather than walking in the light (1 John 1:7), they have been around unclean influences. Those influences have stirred up unlawful appetites. The unlawful appetites have awakened resolves that have driven the individual to seek the gratification of them. That is why they fell.

The Divine solution is to “mortify your members that are upon the earth.” Until this is done, there can be no genuine recovery. What appears to be recovery is only a delusion

until fleshly appetites are put to death.

Chapter 11

COVETOUSNESS, WHICH IS IDOLATRY

“ . . . and covetousness, which is idolatry.” Other versions read, “greed, which amounts to idolatry” (NIV), “greed which is idolatry” (NRSV), “envy, which is the worship of strange gods” (BBE), “unbridled desire, which is idolatry” (DARBY), “covetousness, which is the service of idols” (DOUAY), “especially greed, which is the same thing as worshipping a false god” (NJB), and “Don’t be greedy for the good things of this life, for that is idolatry” (NLT).

“Covetousness” is the “greedy desire to have more – avarice” (THAYER). Lexically, it is defined as “bad behavior, a disposition to have more than one’s share.” It even includes the idea of giving “grudgingly,” or out of a sense of obligation, rather than willingly (2 Cor 9:7) – wanting to hold on to what one has, as well as desiring for more than is appropriate (BARCLAY-NEWMAN).

Under the Law, rulers were to be men void of covetousness. It is written, “Moreover thou shalt provide out of all the people able men, such as fear God, men of truth, hating covetousness; and place such over them, to be rulers of thousands, and rulers of hundreds, rulers of fifties, and rulers of tens” (Ex 18:21).

David contrasted covetousness with having a heart for the Lord’s testimonies: “Incline my heart unto thy testimonies, and not to covetousness” (Psa 119:36).

Through Isaiah, the Lord revealed how He is affected by the covetousness of men: “For the iniquity of his covetousness was I wroth, and smote him: I hid Me, and was wroth, and he went on frowardly in the way of his heart” (Isa 57:17).

One of the signs of the spiritual decadence of Israel was its propensity to covetousness: “For from the least of them even unto the greatest of them every one is given to covetousness; and from the prophet even unto the priest every one dealeth falsely” (Jer 6:13).

Ezekiel spoke to people who appeared to listen to him, but their heart was really going after covetousness: “And they come unto thee as the people cometh, and they sit before thee as my people, and they hear thy words, but they will not do them: for with their mouth they show much love, but their heart goeth after their covetousness” (Ezek 33:31).

Jesus declared that covetousness erupted from within – and that is where it has to be mortified: “For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders, thefts, covetousness . . .” (Mark 7:21-22). Solemnly He told His disciples, “Take heed, and beware of covetousness: for a man’s life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth” (Luke 12:15).

This is one of the sins for which the Gentile world was condemned (Rom 1:29).

It is also a sin that is not to be named among the people of God – not even once: “But fornication, and all uncleanness, or covetousness, let it not be once named among you, as becometh saints” (Eph 5:3).

The Spirit admonishes us to let our lives be totally without this vice: “Let your conversation be without covetousness; and be content with such things as ye have: for he hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee” (Heb 13:5).

We live in a time when covetousness has been dignified. The grasping spirit and a heart

discontent with what one possesses is held forth as being noble – having good ambitions. But this is not the case at all. The quest to have more and better things may appear quite innocent on the surface, but it has the mark of Satan upon it.

The tendency to want more than is our share is found within the flesh. You dare not nourish and culture it. It is to be put to death – suffocated, as it was, by setting your affection on things above, and not on things on the earth. Achan fell because he coveted (Josh 7:21). The Spirit affirms that “the love of money is the root of all evil,” going on to say, “which while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows” (1 Tim 6:10). Do not imagine that you are exempt from this warning! Many a professing believer has lost their spiritual edge because of this “member.”

As soon as covetousness is embraced the soul begins to die. The heart begins to grow hard, the ears are stopped, and the eyes begin to grow dim. Our unwavering response is to “mortify,” or put to death, “covetousness, which is idolatry.”

Chapter 12

HOW CAN WE MORTIFY THESE MEMBERS?

And what is to be our attitude toward these sins. How are we to respond when these “members” are awakened and demand our attention? We are to “mortify” them – put them to death, or kill them.

How is that to be done? Is there a simple routine or discipline that will assure us of subduing these fleshly characteristics? Indeed, the Spirit has already told us that such approaches “lack any value in restraining sensual indulgence” (Col 2:23, NIV).

When our blessed Lord spoke of committing adultery in the heart, He quickly provided a remedy for the proclivity to lust. “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. 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” (Matt 5:29-30). The casual disciple (if there be such a thing) may not be inclined to consider lust as pushing one toward hell – but Jesus affirmed it does. That lust must be mortified. That is, the individual must take measures to rid himself of areas of weakness. He must exercise himself to stay away from things that awaken sinful tendencies, whether it is people, events, sights, or sounds.

When Jesus spoke of plucking out the eye or cutting off the hand, He was not speaking of the assault of the body of flesh and blood, as some poor souls in history have thought. He was rather speaking of cutting off the offending member at the source – which is not a physical eye or hand. One monk of yesteryear, when troubled with lust, gouged out his eyes, thinking that would resolve the lusting impulse. But it did not. He later confessed that he lusted more after taking this decisive action, than he did before.

Speaking of this principle, Solomon said these words. “For the commandment is a lamp; and the law is light; and reproofs of instruction are the way of life: to keep thee from the evil woman, from the flattery of the tongue of a strange woman. Lust not after her beauty in thine heart; neither let her take thee with her eyelids. For by means of a whorish woman a man is brought to a piece of bread: and the adulteress will hunt for the precious life. Can a man take fire in his bosom, and his clothes not be burned? Can one go upon hot coals, and his feet not be burned?” (Prov 6:23-28).

Many a deluded soul has imagined they can play with these wretched “members,” giving them a little here and a little there, as though to pacify them – perhaps an imagination, or a picture, or some other seemingly harmless act. However, these “members” cannot be assuaged by occasional attention. They are like the two daughters of the horseleach who cry out “GIVE! GIVE!” (Prov 30:15). They cannot be satisfied, which is why they must be put to death. If you try to control them, you will find they are uncontrollable. They have to be put to death. If you attempt to ignore them, pretending they do not exist, you will find they will not be ignored. They must be put to death.

Those who attempt to assign a secondary place to them will soon find they will not accept a subordinate position. They must be put to death. What is more, we ourselves must be the executioner. This is a work every person must do for themselves. No one else can do it for you. Emulating a routine developed by some professed expert will not accomplish the task. How do you do it? That is your business, and it belongs to no one else. If you are in Christ Jesus you have access to God, a plentitude of spiritual blessings, the word of God, and the Spirit of God. Now, “work out your own salvation with fear and trembling.” When you put your shoulder to the wheel, Divine help will be on the way.

Chapter 13

THE CAUSE OF DIVINE WRATH #1

“For which things' sake the wrath of God cometh on the children of disobedience.”

Is anyone inclined to think a lot of time is graciously allotted to them for the mortification of their members that are upon the earth? Is there some naive soul who imagines they have time to sow their wild oats, and enjoy the professed good things of this world?

The Spirit will now shout us awake, affirming that we are, indeed, on holy ground. If the mandate to mortify our members that are upon the earth has seemed too harsh, the word that follows will help us to gain a proper perspective.

FOR WHICH THING'S SAKE

“For which things' sake . . .” Other versions read, “Because of THESE things” (NKJV), “For it is on account of these things” (NASB), “Because of these” (NIV), and “it is precisely these things which draw” (NJB).

After all of the arguments have been introduced for God loving men no matter what they do, the Spirit stops the mouths of the foolish. He does not say the Lord will love those who do such things. He does not affirm they have no consequence, or that God is lovingly tolerant of them. The Spirit does not suggest that we have a lot of time to rid ourselves of these inclinations, and that God will be patient and longsuffering with us. That is what some men say, but that is not how the Spirit addresses the subject.

Rather, we are now told what reaction they will summon from the God of heaven. However men may react to the word about these sins – Mortify therefore your members which are upon the earth: fornication, uncleanness, inordinate affection, evil concupiscence, and covetousness – we will now be told how God WILL respond to them. There is not the slightest possibility that this response will be avoided if we do not put these vices to death – denominational dogmas notwithstanding.

The Spirit is very precise on this matter. It is BECAUSE OF these sins that the Divine reaction now declared is expressed. Because men DO these things, the Lord will have this unequivocal response. He will NOT show love. He will NOT show longsuffering. He will NOT speak kindly. He will NOT turn His eyes so as not to see these things. He will

NOT lead the person in paths of righteousness anyway. He will NOT ignore the person who had ignored this warning. Away with meager and flawed representations of God, and India rubber theology that bends this way and that way so men can be comfortable in their sin! Here is the word of the Lord, and the person who gives heed to it is wise.

Chapter 14

THE WRATH OF GOD

“. . . the wrath of God cometh. . . ” Other versions read, “the wrath of God IS coming” (NKJV), “the wrath of God WILL come” (NASB), and “God’s terrible anger WILL come” (NLT).

If those who are neglectful of their spiritual lives knew their real situation, they would enter into a state of fear and trembling! Jesus described those who were not believing on Him (or “living by faith”) as those upon whom God’s wrath is situated. “He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him” (John 3:36).

Do not equate believing on the Son with a mere profession of faith. Those who are in Christ are living “by faith in the Son of God,” who loved them and gave Himself for them (Gal 2:20). Those who are not living in this manner are not believing the Son, regardless of their empty profession.

In addition to the wrath of God hovering over them like a foreboding cloud, such people are those in whom Satan is at work. Our text affirms that the wrath of God will come upon “the children of disobedience.” These are the very people in whom Satan freely works, with little or no inhibition. He is “the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that NOW worketh in the children of disobedience” (Eph 2:3). Such souls may boast of their free will and ability to recover themselves, but they are only deluded.

To have the wrath of God positioned over you, and the devil working in you, is anything but an enviable state. Yet, if professing believers do not choose to “mortify” their members that “are upon the earth,” they at once move toward this position.

THE DAY OF WRATH

There is an appointed “day of wrath” upon the horizon of time (Rom 2:5). It is a time when the Lord will vent the anger that is presently awaiting that day – presently giving men “space to repent.” This day is referred to as the time of “the wrath of the Lamb,” and “the great day of His wrath” in which not a single one who refused Him will be able to stand (Rev 6:16-17). That “wrath” will be “revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men” (Rom 1:18). It will not be subdued, or mixed with mercy, as in Isaiah 54:8; 60:10; and Habakkuk 3:2. It will be the “fierceness of His wrath” (Rev 16:19; 19:15). Those who do not “obey the truth” are told they will experience the “indignation and wrath” of God (Rom 2:8).

Prior to being in Christ, when the vices mentioned in our text ruled us, we were appropriately described as “children of wrath” (Eph 2:3). The wrath of God is like a heat-seeking missile, seeking out those in whom the fire of sin is burning!

Ah, but we have professional religious men who would rather not say these things. They would prefer to work with people to resolve their problems, rather than admonish them to put their earthly members to death. Such men speak to sinners too softly – like lisping a soft and melodious song to a drowning man, instead of throwing him a life preserver!

Solemnly the Spirit speaks to us elsewhere, corroborating the message of our text. He itemizes a similar list of sins: fornication, uncleanness, covetousness, filthiness, foolish talking, jesting, whoremonger, unclean person, covetous person, and idolater. He tells us such people have no “inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God.” Then He breaks through the cloud of delusion, fairly shouting to us: “Let no man deceive you with vain words: for because of these things cometh the wrath of God upon the children of disobedience” (Eph 5:6).

Some may choose to believe the wrath of God comes upon men only because of what they did NOT do. Our text tells us it will also come upon men for that they DID do. If these “members” are not mortified, God’s wrath will come upon the individual. Your “members that are upon the earth” WILL break forth if they are not put to death! They will not repose in sweet sleep if you let them live.

What person of sound mind will therefore reason that this is not an important work, or that the mortification can be delayed with impunity? Few church people are hearing these words – or receiving the solemn charge to put to death their fleshly appetites. With all of its counseling, work shops, and user-friendly devices, the church has done nothing more than make it easier for these “members” to live – these members that are to be put to death by crucifixion.

FOCUSED WRATH

Once more, let me point out that this wrath is focused. There are certain people toward whom it is directed – people who did not mortify their members that are upon the earth. When I ponder the prevalence of these sins in the modern church, this word becomes bitter in my belly just as it did in the bellies of Ezekiel and John (Ezek 3:1-14; Rev 10:9-10).

If this text is true – and it is impossible that it is NOT true – the churches of our land are filled with people who are actually destined for the wrath of God. While they are nurturing their vices, they are actually treasuring up wrath against themselves for the day of wrath (Rom 2:5).

Chapter 15

THE CHILDREN OF DISOBEDIENCE

“ . . . on the children of disobedience.” Other versions read, “sons of disobedience” (NKJV), “those who are disobedient” (NRSV), “those who go against His orders” (BBE), “children of unbelief” (DOUAY), “those who resist” (NJB), and “those who do such things” (NLT).

Notice how the Spirit refers to those who do NOT mortify their members that are upon the earth, therefore allowing them to break forth in all of their fleshly fury. They are “children of disobedience.” Disobedience has, as it was, birthed them. Their attitudes and condition are the result of disobedience!

Elsewhere we are told these are the people in whom Satan freely works. “Wherein in time past ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience” (Eph 2:2). Therefore, where disobedience is found, Satan is at work! Disobedience is his footprint in human lives.

If you do not mortify these members, you will obey them. It is therefore clear that sin is

to be exterminated, not merely subdued.

ONE FINAL WORD

Because of the rarity of such proclamations within the nominal church, it is necessary to say one further thing about putting to death our members that are upon the earth. Lest there are any who have been lulled to sleep by the Babylonish religion of our day, we have a word from God on this subject. It assists us to identify the real people of God. “And they that are Christ's HAVE crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts” (Gal 5:24).

Every conventional translation reads precisely the same: “HAVE crucified” (KJV, NKJV, ASV, NASB, NIV, NRSV, RSV, DARBY, DOUAY, ESV, GENEVA, NAB, NAU, NIB, NJB, WEBSTER, RWB). The exceptions still carry the same idea: “HAVE put to death” (BBE), “HAVE nailed” (NLT), and “DID crucify” (YLT). Grammatically, the word “crucified” is in the past tense. It refers to something that has already been done.

Newness of life began with “the old man” being crucified by the Lord Himself. As it is written, “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” (Rom 6:6). The intent of this crucifixion was the destruction of “the body of sin,” or the whole sinful nature. The means of that destruction is death upon the cross. When, therefore, those who are in Christ are said to have crucified the flesh, together with its affections and lusts, the meaning is that they have acquiesced with where the flesh was placed when they were baptized into Christ. They keep the flesh on the cross, refusing to answer its plaintive pleas to remove it from that cross.

Those, therefore, who are not mortifying their members that are upon the earth, or crucifying the flesh, have no immediate evidence of being children of God. God’s children begin newness of life with the flesh crucified, and continue to keep it crucified.

It is certainly not our purpose to sit in final judgment upon such people. It is in order, however, to remind all who are in this category that they are catering to what God condemns. They have become associated with disobedience, and are individuals in whom Satan is working.

The thing for which they are noted – disobedience – is something about which not one single word of goodness is found. Not one solitary promise for good is addressed to the disobedient, and God nowhere aligns Himself with them. The word, then, with which we have just dealt, is one of very great significance.

Chapter 16

THE DOMAIN IN WHICH WE ONCE LIVED

“ . . . In the which ye also walked some time, when ye lived in them.”

IN WHICH

“In the which . . . ” Other versions read, “in them, (NASB), “these ways” (NIV), and “these are the ways” (NRSV).

Some have conjectured that the word “them” refers to the “children of disobedience.” That would mean our former habitat was the society of the disobedient. While there is a sense in which this is true, that is not the meaning of this verse. This refers to the spiritual vices that are to be mortified. Our past lives were spent “in” them, or under their rule, or dominion. That period of time – when we were ruled by sin – is mentioned in the Epistle

of First Peter. “For the time past of our life may suffice us to have wrought the will of the Gentiles, when we walked in lasciviousness, lusts, excess of wine, revellings, banquetings, and abominable idolatries” (1 Pet 4:3).

The Epistle to the Romans refers to that time as one of shame: “What fruit had ye then in those things whereof ye are now ashamed? for the end of those things is death” (Rom 6:21).

The fact that some of the baser sins have been mentioned (revellings, banquetings, abominable idolatries, etc.), may lead some to believe their past lives were really not so bad. Perhaps they were raised in a home that forbade such indulgences, and thus they never found outward expression in their lives. However, base moral conduct is a glance at the bottom of the pit from which we were digged, and not the whole pit itself. There were other people caught in the mesh of sin who were like the Pharisees, impeccably holy on the outside (Matt 23:37). They were not sloshing around in the depths of the pit, but were nevertheless in it. In fact, their condition tended to be even worse, because they did not view themselves as needing a Savior.

YE ALSO WALKED

“ . . . ye also walked some time.” By saying we “walked” in these ways, the Spirit means we were on the broad road that leads to destruction (Matt 7:13). Even though some of these vices may not have been committed outwardly, our lives were pointed in the direction of self-will. We were not dominated by the will of God. Those in such a condition are on the same path as the most depraved among men. They are moved by a will that puts themselves at the center. That is what makes such a way so dishonorable.

YE LIVED IN THEM

“ . . . when ye lived in them.” Other versions read, “you were living in them” (NASB), and “when you were living that life” (NRSV).

Prior to life in Christ, we all lived in the realm where moral debauchery thrived – even though we might not have been guilty of those baser things. Notwithstanding, we were living according to our own will, which is the root of all sin. We may have expressed our will in more refined manners – ways that were readily acceptable to a worldly society. But we did not live for God, walk in the Spirit, or conduct our lives in fellowship with Christ. That is precisely why we have to be born again.

Our former lives were in the darkness, not in the light. If all manner of immorality did not break out in us, it is not because we were good, or because we had the will of the Lord in mind. Rather than taking credit for keeping ourselves from deeper sins, we must thank God we were not guilty of them. Perhaps this is involved in a most unique expression used by Jude, a brother of our Lord: “preserved in Jesus Christ, and called” (Jude 1:1). Some other versions accentuate the staggering implications of this phrase: “kept for Jesus Christ” (ASV/NASB), and “kept safe for Jesus” (NRSV). This is the sort of word we dare not corrupt. However, it does remove any reason for boasting. We all have much for which to be thankful, and a past of which to be ashamed.

Chapter 17

PUT THESE ALL ASIDE

“ . . . But now ye also put off all these; anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy, filthy communication out of your mouth.”

BUT NOW

“But now . . .” These words are used in contrast to, “In the which ye also walked some time, when ye lived in them.” Then, when we were “dead in trespasses and sins” (Eph 2:1), we lived our lives in the domain of self, and under the power of the devil. “Now,” however, we have been delivered from that realm, and made to sit together with Christ in heavenly places (Col 1:13; Eph 2:6). “Now,” our lives are lived for a different reason, and are governed by different principles. As it is written, “And that He died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto Him which died for them, and rose again” (2 Cor 5:15). And again, “This I say therefore, and testify in the Lord, that ye henceforth walk not as other Gentiles walk, in the vanity of their mind” (Eph 4:17).

The admonition that follows is an aspect of living by faith (Heb 10:38), and walking in the Spirit (Gal 5:16). This is an expression of “newness of life” (Rom 6:4), and is what occurs when we “walk in the light” (1 John 1:7). Old ways of living are abandoned, and new ways adopted. This is not done by means of a routine, but by focusing on Christ rather than self.

PUT OFF ALL THESE

“ . . . ye also put off all these . . .” Other versions read, “But now YOU YOURSELVES are to put off all these” (NKJV), “Put them all aside” (NASB), “you must rid yourselves of all such things” (NIV), “But now you must put them all away” (ESV/NAB), and “but not you must give up all these things” (NJB).

This is a word that calls for spiritual aggression. It cannot be fulfilled casually or in fits and starts. Nor, indeed, can it happen inadvertently, or without some spiritual focus. The Spirit does not suggest we may not have these vices within us. They are, after all, part and parcel of “the flesh.” It may presently appear as though these are not actually resident in you. However, given the proper environment, they will erupt in all of their fury. We are to rid ourselves of these “members.” It is something that “must” be done by the one who is in Christ. Spiritual life will be maintained only to the degree these sins are thrust from us.

This requirement cannot be accomplished by the laying on of hands, or special prayer by someone else. It is not achieved by some miraculous means that does not require personal effort. Group therapy will not get rid of these things. A recovery program will not do so. A counselor cannot walk you through a procedure in which one rids himself of these things. This is not done by managing the sins of reference. Rather, This calls for putting the things off, not managing them. This is something to be done by the individual. It must be done in faith, and by using the resources that are supplied in salvation.