**Mortification—The Only Way to Live**

Colossians 3:5-9

**Introduction**

Think how healthy we would be if we treated our spiritual life like we treat our physical life. We don’t just talk about a procedure to correct a life-threatening situation such as cancer, a ruptured appendix, or a gangrenous limb; we don’t just listen to a diagnosis—we take action, even radical action, for the well-being of our physical life. Paul calls for radical action in his letter to the Colossian believers. He tells them that for the welfare of their spiritual life they need to mortify and put off the deeds of the old man. By “deeds,” he means their doings and their mode of acting; their practices and habits, specifically immoral conduct and wicked habits. Why should Christians put off their old ways of life?

1. **Paul gets specific in this section of the letter as to that which needs to be removed from the life of the believer in Christ.** 
   1. Paul identifies that they are wrestling with sexual sin, as well as ill-treatment of fellow Christians.

*“The two lists are classic statements of the ways in which Christians can be untrue to themselves and, more importantly, to God. By bluntly naming sins which are all too often excused or glossed over with euphemisms, Paul sets a clear standard for the church both ancient and modern.” (N.T. Wright)*

* 1. Some do not think we should get specific regarding sin.
     1. However, a doctor gets specific, not general. He doesn’t just say, “You’re sick.”
     2. Warren Wiersbe tells of a pastor who preached a series of sermons against the sins of the saints. A member thought it would be better to preach those to the lost. “After all, sin in the life a Christian is different from sin in the lives of other people.” “Yes,” replied the pastor, “It is worse.”
  2. Paul bases his ethical instruction on solid teaching about God.
     1. Truth about God is essential to the moral well-being of every individual and society.
     2. *“… That quality of life, that we have been accustomed to describe as Christian, cannot in the end survive a serious erosion of Christian standards of belief…Licentiousness and avarice were the marks of human society in Paul’s day. And, as the power of Christian truth declines, so they resume their ancient sway in our own society.” (Stott)*
  3. Paul intensifies his instruction.
     1. There are various degrees in giving a command.
        1. You can increase the intensity of a command by changing the person—from 3rd person (“Let’s close the door.”) to 2nd person (“Bobby, please close the door.”).
        2. You can increase the intensity of a command by dropping the subject (“Close the door.”) or by adding an adverb to emphasize the need to do the action (“Close the door now!”).
     2. From 2:16 to 4:6, Paul uses 22 imperatives (commands) that emphasize who they are in Christ and how they ought then to live.
     3. These imperatives differ in intensity. He is able to do this by changing:
        1. The shift from indicative to imperative.
        2. The shift from 3rd to 2nd person.
        3. The shift in word order (subject-object-verb to verb-subject-object).
        4. The absence of a personal pronoun (implied > explicit).
     4. He brings attention to three imperatives by applying all three (“mortify” in v. 5, “put off” in v. 8, and “put on” in v. 12).

1. **Central Idea: The reason Christians should put off their old ways of life is because sins of the old life have no place in their new life with Christ.**
2. **We should put to death that which represents sexual sin. (v. 5-7)** 
   1. To “mortify” means to put to death; to cease completely from activity, with the implication of extreme measures taken to guarantee such a cessation; to deaden; to do away with.
   2. Specifically, Paul makes it clear that the Colossian Christians should be done with sexual sin.
      1. Fornication – to engage in sexual immorality of any kind.
      2. Uncleanness – sexual vice; immorality; indecency; sexual impurity.
      3. Inordinate affection – uncontrolled sexual passion; lustful desire; evil craving.
      4. Evil concupiscence – to strongly desire to have what belongs to someone else and/or to engage in an activity which is morally wrong.
      5. Covetousness – greed; in the context, it may refer to more and more sexual pleasure and experiences.
   3. We should take radical action against such sin because of His coming judgment on sin. (v. 6)
   4. This way of life characterized their past, not their present standing. (v. 7)
   5. How do you mortify something that is so strongly in you? Cut its supply!
3. *“To put something to death you must cut off its lines of supply: it is futile and self-deceiving to bemoan one’s inability to resist the last stage of a temptation when earlier stages have gone by unnoticed, or even eagerly welcomed…Rather, every Christian has the responsibility, before God, to investigate the lifelines of whatever sins are defeating him personally, and to cut them off without pity. Better that than have them eventually destroy him. (N.T. Wright)*
4. What lines of supply do you still have that are keeping this area alive?
5. What love relationships do you have that threaten your relationship with Christ?
6. Do you have a pure mind? Does what you are watching reflect who you are in Christ? Does what you are wearing reflect who you are in Christ?
7. Does the way you are acting around the opposite sex demonstrate that you are complete in Him?
8. **We should put off behavior that destroys relationships. (v. 8-9)** 
   1. Put off – rid yourself of; take away; throw it off like a dirty shirt.
   2. Throw off that which does not suit or fit a Christian in his relationship with other believers.
      1. Anger – retribution; a chronic attitude of smoldering hatred. *“When a tide of passion or a surge of anger is felt, it must be dealt with as the alien intruder it really is, and turned out of the house as having no right to be there at all, let alone to be giving orders. This is often harder than it sounds, but it must be constantly attempted, in reliance on the grace which continually renews the life of the Christian.” (N.T. Wright)*
      2. Wrath – rage, fits of rage, angry outbursts.
      3. Malice – hateful feelings; attitude of ill will toward a person.
      4. Blasphemy – slander; to damage someone’s reputation; tearing someone down.
      5. Filthy communication – filthy language, shameful words, obscene speech, abusive speech; abrasive speech.
      6. Lie - to communicate what is false, with the evident purpose of misleading; to bend the truth. “Satan is the liar…When a Christian lies, he is cooperating with Satan.” (Wiersbe)
   3. The first three indicate an “attitude of anger and ill will toward others that so often leads to hasty and nasty speech.” (Moo) The second three represent sins of speech that are characteristic of those who do not know Christ.
      1. Are your feelings towards others consuming your day?
      2. Are you driven by revenge?
      3. Does rage characterize your conversation?
      4. Have hateful feelings latched onto your soul?
      5. Have you slandered someone?
      6. Have you told the truth in every situation?
   4. If a person is destroying relationships with such behavior, they do not understand who they or other believers are in Christ. We will elaborate on this section in the next lesson.

**Conclusion**

The sins of your old life have no place in your new life with Christ. Radical action is necessary. Don’t delay in doing what you know to be God’s will. Your spiritual well-being depends on it. For the Christian, mortification is the only way to live!