

# Mortifying Our Members

*Message from the DVD Archive*

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**Bible Text:** Colossians 3:5-9  
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Alright, let's take our Bibles and look at Colossians 3. Colossians 3. I'd like to have us read from verse 5 down to verse 9. Colossians 3, beginning with verse 5.

5 Mortify therefore your members which are upon the earth; fornication, uncleanness, inordinate affection, evil concupiscence [that's lusts], and covetousness, which is idolatry: 6 For which things' sake the wrath of God cometh on the children of disobedience: 7 In the which ye also walked some time, when ye lived in them. 8 But now ye also put off all these; anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy, filthy communication out of your mouth. 9 Lie not one to another, seeing that ye have put off the old man with his deeds;

I'd like to speak with you in these few moments that we have on what it is to mortify our members, see what Paul says there in verse 5, "Mortify therefore your members which are upon the earth." For those of us who the Spirit of God has regenerated, I believe we've certainly puzzled over this question: if I'm the Lord's, why do I struggle so much with sin? Does that reflect your thoughts? I hope so. You don't struggle with sin where there's no life but where there's life, there's going to be a struggle with sin. That's an indication of life. I'm not just talking about struggling with the concept of judgment to come. Pharaoh did that. He had no life. He saw the mighty hand of God in judgment and asked Moses to have it removed. Even Esau or Cain, they regretted what they did, but there was no repentance granted. But where there's life, there's a knowledge, an acknowledgment of not just sin as in doing sin, but our sinfulness and it weighs on our heart and mind, and I'm sure that if you're the Lord's, you've asked that question. In fact, as glorious as the message of redemption at the cross and our justification there, it still raises this question: if our Lord died to redeem us and God has put away our sin and now justified before him by his imputed righteousness, why does my sin nature still live on and work against me?

I believe many times it's this struggle that causes us sadly to look away from Christ and begin to look to methods, and I'll tell you, there's preachers a dime a dozen out there that are ready to tell you immediately, "Well, I've got the answer. You just follow these five steps here and you'll have victory over your flesh. Or you do these things and you're

going to find yourself sinning less and less." I grew up under teaching like that and it created a false assurance. It created a false sense of righteousness and holiness.

But why is it, why is it that the Lord, he redeemed us, he's declared us righteous based on God's righteousness before the Father, why doesn't he take away the sin nature? Well, I believe I can give you an answer from the Old Testament. This may surprise you and you think, "Well, we're in the New Testament," but look back in Exodus 23. I believe all of these narratives here in the Old Testament are given for our learning; they teach us something of the way of God. And here in Exodus 23, similar example, here the Lord has delivered Israel out of Egypt with a high hand, brought them out in that Passover lamb. They saw his mighty works. Where did he lead them, into a life of ease? No, there's no rest on this earth and I believe there's a type there of the struggle that we can expect, even being redeemed, even being delivered, facing enemies in this world. Sin is an enemy. Satan is an enemy. Our flesh is an enemy.

And here in Exodus 23, beginning with verse 28, he said, "I will send hornets before thee, which shall drive out the Hivite, the Canaanite, and the Hittite, from before thee." God's providential power is such that he can drive out the enemies if he would. But look at verse 29 here, "I will not drive them out from before thee in one year." Now was he able to? Yes. But he says, "I'll not do it, lest the land become desolate and the beasts of the field multiply against thee." In other words, you get rid of one enemy, there's still another. If it's not the people killing you, it's going to be the wild beasts in this wilderness. "By little and little I will drive them out from before thee, until thou be increased, and inherit the land. And I will set thy bounds from the Red sea even unto the sea of the Philistines, and from the desert unto the river: for I will deliver the inhabitants of the land into your hand; and thou shalt drive them out before thee. Thou shalt make no covenant with them, nor with their gods." So he's saying they're not going to be driven out at once, but at the same time, don't you dare make a covenant with their gods, with these enemies. You'll be living among them, but recognize that they're still your enemy. "They shall not dwell in thy land, lest they make thee sin against me: for if thou serve their gods, it will surely be a snare unto thee."

You say, "Well, how does that answer this question of Christ redeeming us in our struggle?" Well, as I said, it's not that the Lord couldn't do away with our sin, our sin nature, in one fell swoop he could. But you know, to do so, he'd have to kill us immediately. Stop and think about it. Our sin nature is so attached to this flesh and who we are, that for God to take it out of our person would destroy us. He'd have to kill us because that is the only way that this thing is going to die, is this flesh to be put in the grave. It's so much a part of who we are. If you ever think otherwise, you've missed who we are as descendants of Adam. Sin isn't just what we do, it's who we are. It's who we are. And just like this wilderness place in the land of Canaan, even if God were to remove the most powerful enemies that were mentioned here, there would still be the beasts to destroy them.

That's the sense. What God is telling them is, "If you're going to be preserved, I'm going to preserve you." Now that doesn't mean to take the enemy lightly. That doesn't mean to lie down with the enemy, and to join hands with the enemy in some sort of covenant. No,

it's still the enemy. But if God's going to deliver you, it's going to be God to do it. And so he's left us, just like with the children of Israel, this is the example, he left them to contend with these enemies as a demonstration of his power and grace and strength in doing so. Who was Israel? They were nothing in the face of this enemy and yet God preserved them. God brought them in. God was the one who established them in his faithfulness. And I'll tell you what, that's going to be what we're going to be reminded of as we, by his grace, head toward glory. If there's any saving, if there's any keeping, it's going to be God doing it in the face of our enemies. Didn't David say that in Psalm 23, "Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies, my cup runneth over, surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life. I'll dwell in the house of the Lord forever." It's the Lord keeping us. It's in the face of this sin, it's in the face of these temptations, it's in the face of all that this flesh represents that we see the true grace of God and we're humbled before Christ and we're brought to look again and again and again to his sacrifice alone as our only hope.

So just as he left Israel to contend against the enemy, by his grace, he's going to manifest his strength in us and that's what it says over here in Exodus 23 in verse 30, "By little and little I will drive them out from before thee, until thou be increased." There's that strengthening. It goes contrary to what we think. "You mean to tell me that in the face of these trials and temptations we're being strengthened by God's grace?" The enemy's no less still, this flesh is still what it is but we're kept by the very power and grace of God.

You know, in John 17, if you look over there, John 17, I believe it's so important just to tell you straight up how it is because there's some that preach another gospel. They say, "Well, if you'll just give yourself to Jesus, all will be well. You'll have victory over your sin. You'll have victory over your flesh." They put it in a sense of you'll be able to rise above the plane and live on this higher plane in life. There's no such thing. Just like there was in Israel, there was a constant struggle with those enemies. There's a constant struggle as long as we're in this flesh with our sin nature.

Christ put it this way in John 17 in verse 15, "I pray not that thou shouldest take them out of the world, but that thou shouldest keep them from the evil." He prayed, this is his intercessory prayer that our salvation is in the Lord, but how does he pray? That we be kept in this world by his grace, by his power from the evil.

And as we saw back with Israel, they were not covenant with this flesh. This is where a lot of people go wrong. They think, "Well, if I can just learn a way to change it." You'll not change your flesh. People talk about reforming it, or subduing it, or reeducating it, if you will. Do you know the one thing, coming back here to Colossians 3, that we're instructed to do? Actually there's two. There's two instructions here that I want us to see. The first is we're to mortify it, put it to death is what the scripture says. That's the first thing you see in verse 5, and then down in verse 9 at the end, it says there that you put off the old man with his deeds. So there's a putting to death and there's a putting off which we're instructed in the scripture.

So let's just take a look at those two commands because that's what they are, they're commands. These aren't options. Think of yourself in a struggle, in a conflict, engaged in

a battle, these are your marching orders. This is how we're to live daily. First of all, to put off, or to put to death, mortify therefore your members which are upon the earth. Now, it's an interesting term that's used here. It's the word that we get necrology from and it deals with death. It's a Greek word, the same word, nekrosate. It means to consider sin as you would a terrorist. We hear a lot of talk today about what do we do with these terrorists. Can you educate them? Can you restrain them? What can you do? You hear talk, "Well, the only thing that will put them to end is putting them to death." Well, sin is an enemy. It's a terrorist for which the Lord Jesus Christ died. You know, it was such an enemy it cost him his life. For him to be the sin bearer, for him to be the substitute, it required his death. There was no other way that sin could be put away other than through the death of our Lord Jesus Christ. And therefore, if it was his enemy, if God has given me his Spirit, would I not count it as my enemy? Would I not see just how evil it is within me?

And you can see the things that are listed here. This isn't an exhaustive list but fornication, uncleanness, inordinate affection, evil concupiscence. Concupiscence means a lust for what is forbidden. Where did that come from? All the way back in the garden. God said, "Thou shalt not eat." These are just symptoms, if you will, or proofs of who we are in Adam, every one of these things. And covetousness, which is idolatry. Wasn't that Adam's disobedience? The sin in the garden, fornication, the uncleanness, the going after what God had said, "Thou shalt not"? This is the way our sin nature is. When God says, "Thou shalt," our flesh says, "You'll not." Or if God says, "Thou shalt not," the flesh says, "I will." It's an enmity.

This flesh is an enmity with God and it will not be reformed and it took the death of the Lord Jesus Christ to deal with this curse and to deal with this condemnation, and my guiltiness before a holy God. And I'll tell you what, even when the Spirit of God is given to me, this sin nature is not going to lie down and roll over and say, "Okay, well then, since the Spirit's here now, I guess I'll just have to flee." It's going nowhere. It's going nowhere. That's why the scriptures speak of the flesh versus the Spirit. There's a constant struggle of the flesh versus the Spirit.

But you notice the action described here is an order, it's a command, mortify therefore. Look at the word "therefore." What is the word there for? Therefore. It's in light of what our position is in Christ. If he's died for us, and he's risen again for us, and he is sitting in the heavens, and he intercedes for us, then mortify your members which are upon the earth. This isn't a call. The message of grace and justification in Christ and redemption is not a call just to live a life of sin. There's a call here to put it to death. Don't spare it.

When that says mortify, that's what it's talking about. Don't take this thing light. When that first thought arises in the heart that would draw your heart away from Christ, that's where you deal with it. That's where you deal with it. Don't fondle it. Don't coddle it. Don't entertain it. Don't think yourself capable of getting along with it, allowing it to nurture your mind and somehow live. You know, we read that in Exodus 23:33, "They shall not dwell in thy land, lest they make thee sin against me." This flesh is going to

constantly endeavor to cause us to sin against our Lord. You can be sure there's going to be a battle.

He says, "For if thou serve their gods, it will surely be a snare unto thee." Has there been any one of you or myself that has fallen in sin that it has not been a snare? When we first began to think about it, and this business of getting caught by sin or somehow blindsided, read it in James. It starts in the heart. You begin to think it over. You mull it. You plan it. And you execute it. But then there's your snare. If it weren't for the blood righteousness of the Lord Jesus Christ, God would have to cast us off forever. You say, "Why doesn't he?" There's a surety. There's a Savior. But I'll tell you, that's why his Spirit is there. He will not leave you to relish in that sin. He's going to draw you again and again and again to the Lord Jesus Christ.

I believe that's why there's only one remedy, mortify. To sin, to live a life of sin, as you see down in verse 6, that is characteristic of those on whom God's wrath is coming. See, he says, "For which things' sake the wrath of God comes on the children of disobedience." In scripture, you've got vessels of wrath, vessels of mercy. You've got children of obedience, children of disobedience. You've got the elect and the non-elect. If a person professes to be the Lord's and that the Spirit has done a work of grace in his heart and brought him to Christ, why would you want to live like the children of disobedience on whom the wrath of God is coming? That's the sense here. This is not characteristic of those whom the Lord has redeemed, rather it's characteristic of those on whom the wrath of God is coming.

There is the wrath of God that abides upon those who remain in unbelief. The Lord has passed them by. That ought to cause any that sin to question if I can live this sort of hostile rebellion and not in submission to the Lord, I've got to question whether or not I'm a child of disobedience because that's what this is characteristic of. And you notice here in verse 7, it is characteristic of what we were. What we were. It says, "In the which he also walked some time." Walking has to do with the course of life and a direction, "when ye lived in them." Now it's one thing to be blind and ignorant in rebellious in doing these things and living this way, but it's another to profess to know the Lord and to continue in them.

So that's why it says here, mortify, put to death. The tense of the verb and the command is, don't even give it a second thought. Don't spare. It's execute it. Don't listen to the pleading of the enemy in this regard. Put it to death. But secondly, down here we see in, as I said in verse 9, there's a putting off. There's a putting to death and a putting off. You say, "Well, if it's put to death, why would it say afterward put off?" Well, what do you do with a dead body? You dump it. And that's the sense that's used here. In other words, that old man and again, I believe what it's referring to there is that condemnation that we were under in Adam that Christ redeemed us from, that old man is dead. When Christ died, our condemnation died in him. Our sin was put away in him and if something's dead, you lay it aside. That's the sense here. It's just like taking off dead weight or getting rid of a filthy garment. We don't put any confidence in this flesh. We don't follow its guidance. We

look to Christ and when Christ died, that's what he did, he put our sin away judicially therefore, we're not accountable to it.

The first husband, Adam, has died. He's dead, that's for his people, for Christ's people, and we're married to another. And when the Spirit gives us life, what we do is cast off that old garment of flesh. It's like blind Bartimaeus sitting there in his beggar's clothes and when the Lord gave him sight, do you suppose he went back and put those old beggar's clothes back on, sat back down there in that dust? No, he's free. He cast it off. And that's the thing we do. We still have to deal with this sin and this sin nature, but I'll tell you what, it's not our master. It's not our master. We have but one Master, Christ, and we owe allegiance to him and it's by God's Spirit, there's nothing in here that caused us to do it, but it's his Spirit that continually draws our heart and affection and mind to our beloved Savior. And when the Spirit gives life, that's what we do, we cast off the old garment of the flesh, seeing it crucified with Christ and we've been delivered out of its power because grace reigns.

You know, it's interesting. I know some of this you don't understand maybe because of not understanding the original Greek, but there are different moods and tenses that go along with verbs in the original, and this is an interesting one here where it says that ye have put off the old man with his deeds. The sense is you put it off for your own sake because carrying a burden, you can't carry it around. So put it off for yourself. Christ dealt with it in his death, so you don't. Quit walking around with it. It's nothing but dead weight. That's the sense here and being joined to the body of Christ legally, we were when Christ died, that's where it was dealt with, but even experientially we're no longer subject. If the Spirit has been given to us, we're no longer subject to the dictates of the flesh. That old man, our condemnation in Adam with all of its lusts, passions, and deceitfulness, Christ died to put away.

We read it over here in Romans 6, but if you'll just come back, I just want to show you briefly these two ways in which that old man, Adam, our condemnation was put off. First of all, in Christ, in his death. You see this in Romans 6, in verse 6, "Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with him." The tense of that verb there is past tense. It was crucified with him. In other words, when Christ died, that body of sin that he bore in his flesh, he bore away. He took it away. That's the curse of sin. It's crucified. It's a passive thing. It's something that we don't have anything to do with. When Christ died, I wasn't even born yet, and yet he bore my sin. My sin was put away when he died. There's my justification. Here it says, "Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with him," was crucified with him is the way that should be interpreted. That's talking about Christ's death. It's not something that you do, it's something that Christ did. He bore the legal condemnation of my sin before God.

But look down here in verse 10. It says, "For in that he died, he died unto sin once: but in that he liveth, he liveth unto God. Likewise reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin." Now when it says "reckon ye yourselves," who's that talking about? That's talking about those that are born of the Spirit of God. That's that experiential putting off the body of sin. You know, it's like getting all your credit cards paid off and then going

right back and starting charging the debt back up again. What it's saying is, it's paid. Don't run up that debt.

"Reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed." That word reckon means to consider it dead. Anytime this matter comes up as far as temptation and sin and anything that would lead you away from Christ, bring out the proclamation this is why Christ died. Reckon, count it, impute it, consider it. That's what that word means there.

Well, if you come back here to Colossians 3, you can see how these sins that are listed here, and again, it's not exhaustive, but they're typical. They're typical. You notice in verse 8 the progression, "But now ye also put off all these." See, there's the putting off. It's mentioned twice. If Christ died for it, then don't you dare make it your lifestyle. "Put off all these; anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy, filthy communication out of your mouth. If you notice, the anger and the wrath and the malice, those are heart sins, aren't they? Those are things that begin in the heart. And then if you look at the rest, blasphemy, filthy communication out of your mouth, lying to one another, those are mouth sins. Out of the heart, the mouth speaketh. And therefore it says here, seeing that ye have put off the old man with his deeds. Is there going to be a difference in the way that we think, the way we speak if we're truly the Lord's? Absolutely because the Spirit of God is going to direct our hearts and minds again and again to his Son, the Lord Jesus Christ. Put off the old man with his deeds.

I just want you to look at one other passage over here in 2 Corinthians 10. Again, don't think that this is just a one-time thing where putting off is, "Well, I've done that so now what else is there?" This is a continual struggle that the Lord has put us in, to his glory, that our hearts and minds would ever put confidence in this flesh and that our hearts and minds might ever be directed to the one remedy which is the Lord Jesus Christ. You see, in 2 Corinthians 10 and verse 3, it says, "For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war after the flesh: (For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds;) Casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ."

I just say this in conclusion: this is not something done in the flesh but it's done against all the power of the flesh. That's what verse 3 says, "For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war after the flesh." We don't take fleshly arms and try to deal with this thing. The minute you think you can handle it, you're defeated already in the flesh. But secondly, it's only by the sovereign power and will and enabling of the Spirit of God. In Romans 8:13, I didn't read that to you, but you can go back and read that. It says that by the Spirit that we mortify or make to die. By the Spirit of God. It's not anything internal in us as far as an innate righteousness or any kind of sinless nature in us. It's the Spirit of God that causes us to put to death this enemy.

But you know the one motivation, you say, "Well, what's the one motivation, character and conduct for the believer?" Well, it's the righteousness of Christ. It's the obedience of Christ. That's what it says here in verse 5, "Casting down imaginations," all reasonings, "and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into

captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ." Now when it says to the obedience of Christ, it's not talking about my obedience to him but it's subjecting every thought to that obedience that he worked out. In Romans 5 and verse 19, by one man's obedience many are made righteous. There is my righteousness. It's not my obedience, but it's his obedience. And with that, the Spirit constantly causes me to do away with any kind of fleshly reasoning that somehow I'm going to be able to deal with this in my flesh.

"Cast down every high thing that exalteth itself." It's not by might or by power, but by my Spirit, saith the Lord. And it says there "that exalts itself against the knowledge of God." And to think that somehow you can make yourself holy in the face of the knowledge of God and who he is, or you can make yourself just in the face of God's justice, his mightiness. I look to Christ bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ. That obedience that was imputed to my account, that's my hope. That's where I look and that's where the Spirit of God draws me.

Well, I hope that's some help but I know that we need to be reminded of this day in and day out. Thankfully, there is hope in the Lord Jesus Christ.