

Series: *Christ's Preeminence Demonstrated*

Title: "Put to Death Your Members" (Colossians 3:5)

Speaker: Dr. Paul M. Elliott

Original Air Date: Week of 9/10/2017

Page 1 of 13

Today we are coming once again to Colossians chapter 3, verse 5, where we find this command of God for the Christian. Colossians chapter 3, verse 5:

Therefore put to death your members which are on the earth: fornication, uncleanness, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry. Because of these things the wrath of God is coming upon the sons of disobedience, in which you yourselves once walked when you lived in them.

The Principle of Purity Graphically Demonstrated

In our last message, we focused on the words that we find here at the beginning of verse five: "therefore put to death your members which are on the earth..." We asked the question, "What do these words mean?" We saw that at this point in the Word of God a vital principle of the Christian life is being stated. That principle is the principle of purity. God commands holiness within His people. He commands that holiness not only of His people collectively, but also of His people individually.

The purity of the life and thinking and testimony of a *body* of believers in Christ is a function of the purity of the life and thinking and testimony of the *individuals* who make up that particular visible body of believers.

In our last message we took note of the fact that we find a repeated command in many places in the Word of God, from beginning to end, and that command is,

Series: *Christ's Preeminence Demonstrated*

Title: "Put to Death Your Members" (Colossians 3:5)

Speaker: Dr. Paul M. Elliott

Original Air Date: Week of 9/10/2017

Page 2 of 13

"Be holy, because I am holy." This is a command of God for believers in all times. It is not merely an Old Testament command, or a New Testament command. But we also saw in our last message that this particular principle of purity is given to us, first of all, and very vividly, in the history of the Old Testament camp of Israel in the wilderness.

And so, in our last message, we looked at one of the most graphic presentations of the principle of purity in the Old Testament, which is found in the book of Numbers, in chapter 25. We found in that passage that after a series of great military and spiritual victories, the camp of Israel had once again fallen into the sin of idolatry as they did so many, many times.

At this particular point in their history, the people of Israel, we are told, "began to commit harlotry with the women of Moab." They bowed down to the gods of Moab instead of remaining loyal to the one true and living God, Jehovah. At this particular time, Israel became involved in the worship of a false God called the Baal of Peor. The worship of the Baal of Peor was particularly immoral and obscene.

And so we read in Numbers chapter 25 that "the anger of the Lord was aroused against Israel." God sent a plague among the Israelites, and 24,000 people died. God through Moses ordered the execution of all those who had been involved with the worship of the Baal of Peor.

And we saw in Numbers chapter 25 at verse 6 that even as the people of Israel were mourning and weeping at the door of the tabernacle, a man of Israel who

Series: *Christ's Preeminence Demonstrated*

Title: "Put to Death Your Members" (Colossians 3:5)

Speaker: Dr. Paul M. Elliott

Original Air Date: Week of 9/10/2017

Page 3 of 13

persisted in his rebellion against God brought a woman of Midian – a woman of another nation to which Israel had joined itself in horrible idolatry – and we are told that he “presented to his brethren [this] Midianite woman in the sight of Moses and in the sight of all the congregation of the children of Israel, who were weeping at the door of the tabernacle of meeting.”

Take careful note of the words here. We are told that this man “presented” this woman to his brethren. The sense is that he was putting this woman on display, as it were, and inviting his brethren to continue in the immoral practices of this pagan idolatry with the woman that he had now brought to them.

Such was the brazenness of this man that he did this even at the door of the tabernacle where the one true and living God continually dwelled over the mercy seat, visible as a pillar of cloud by day and a pillar of fire by night. In essence, dear friends, we can very rightly say that this man was making an obscene gesture toward the one true and living God who was visibly present just a short distance away.

But we read in Numbers chapter 25 verse 7 that Phinehas, one of the priests, saw what was happening and did what God commanded to be done. He followed this rebellious Israelite, who had taken a pagan woman into his tent, and he killed them both. And at the end of verse 8, we read that the plague was stopped because of this man’s righteous act.

Series: *Christ's Preeminence Demonstrated*

Title: "Put to Death Your Members" (Colossians 3:5)

Speaker: Dr. Paul M. Elliott

Original Air Date: Week of 9/10/2017

Page 4 of 13

Phinehas understood the holiness of God. He understood God's command that the camp of Israel was to be kept pure of idolatry. He understood that Jehovah had said to Moses that He would condescend to come and live among the people of Israel. He would dwell above the mercy seat in the Holy of Holies of the tabernacle, visible in the form of a pillar of cloud by day, and of fire by night.

But, the Lord had said that there is a condition for My dwelling among you. You must keep the camp of Israel holy, because I walk among you. You must keep the land that I am giving you holy, because I live among you in this tabernacle.

You must obey My Law. You must not persist in sin. You must have nothing to do with the gods and the practices of the unbelievers around you. You must remain absolutely loyal to Me. You must keep My dwelling place pure.

How Does This Apply Under the New Covenant?

But what are we who live in the New Covenant dispensation to make of these things? Has the principle changed? Is God any less holy? Is God any less demanding of holiness on the part of His people? Certainly not. God has not changed. But He has changed the situation of His people.

Christ has come. The cross work has been finished. God no longer dwells above the mercy seat of a temple made with hands. The Holy Spirit has come among the people of God.

Series: *Christ's Preeminence Demonstrated*

Title: "Put to Death Your Members" (Colossians 3:5)

Speaker: Dr. Paul M. Elliott

Original Air Date: Week of 9/10/2017

Page 5 of 13

And so we must see how God's Word tells us to apply the same principal that we find in the Old Dispensation to our situation in the New Dispensation. How are we to do that? We find the answer in the portion of Scripture we read earlier in Colossians chapter 3.

Please turn there again with me – Colossians chapter 3, verse 5. This is what we read. This is the commandment of God: "Therefore put to death your members which are on the earth..."

The Meaning of "Put to Death"

And note that it is "Put to death – *therefore* – your members which are upon the earth." Put them to death. Why? Because of the facts that are stated in the preceding four verses. Colossians 3, beginning at verse 1:

If [or more accurately, since] then you were raised with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ is, sitting at the right hand of God. Set your mind on things above, not on things on the earth. For [- notice -] you died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. When Christ who is our life appears, then you also will appear with Him in glory.

"You died," Paul declares. You died! You are positionally dead in Christ to this present world. You are positionally dead in Christ to sin. You are positionally kept safe with Christ in God. You are a citizen not merely of this present world, but far more vitally, you are a citizen of the world to come.

Series: *Christ's Preeminence Demonstrated*

Title: "Put to Death Your Members" (Colossians 3:5)

Speaker: Dr. Paul M. Elliott

Original Air Date: Week of 9/10/2017

Page 6 of 13

As Paul declares in Galatians chapter 2 verse 20,

I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me.

And in First John chapter 2 beginning at verse 15 we read this command:

Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world – the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life – is not of the Father but is of the world. And the world is passing away, and the lust of it; but he who does the will of God abides forever. (1 John 2:15-17)

Many in the evangelical church today say that we need to “engage the culture” and “exegete the culture.” They say that we need to bring the cultures around us into the church. Evangelicals call it “the culture” and they praise it. The Bible calls it “the world” and condemns it.

Dear friend, on which side are you? Christianity is not the culture of this present evil world. Christianity is the culture of the world to come. Start living like a citizen of the world to come, here and now. “Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth.”

How are we to do this? Verse 5 gives the answer: “Put to death therefore your members which are upon the earth.”

Series: *Christ's Preeminence Demonstrated*

Title: "Put to Death Your Members" (Colossians 3:5)

Speaker: Dr. Paul M. Elliott

Original Air Date: Week of 9/10/2017

Page 7 of 13

The Meaning of "Your Members"

Here is something exceedingly significant. What does Paul then name as our "members which are upon the earth?" He names not parts of the body, but *sins* – notice verse 5 again: "fornication, uncleanness, passion [in other words, lustful passions], evil desire [or more accurately, evil cravings], and covetousness, which is idolatry. Because of these things the wrath of God is coming upon the sons of disobedience..."

These things are so closely identified with our fallen natures that Paul calls them "your members" – just as though they are flesh-and-blood members of your body, a hand, an arm, a foot, or an eye. These things are still a part of us – "fornication, uncleanness, lustful passions, evil cravings, and covetousness, which is idolatry."

All of these things – both in a physical and material sense, and in a spiritual sense as well. And these things – our members upon earth – must be put to death, just as surely as the pagan brought into the tent of the Israelite was put to death.

And that putting to death of these things within us must be by the power of the Word of God and the Spirit of God.

First Thessalonians 4:3 – "For this is the will of God, even your sanctification, that you should abstain from sexual immorality..."

Philippians 2:12 – "...work out your own salvation [in other words, live like a saved person, show the outworking of salvation in your life] with fear and

Series: *Christ's Preeminence Demonstrated*

Title: "Put to Death Your Members" (Colossians 3:5)

Speaker: Dr. Paul M. Elliott

Original Air Date: Week of 9/10/2017

Page 8 of 13

trembling; for it is God who works in you both to will and to do for His good pleasure."

And the great theme of the book of Colossians which we are currently studying is the preeminence of Christ in all things. Christ must be preeminent in our hearts. And if He is to be preeminent, we must put to death that which opposes Him. He must have – He will have – no rivals.

The Principle of Holiness

And with this in mind, let me bring us back to the central principle in all of this – the principle of the holiness of God.

We saw in the book of Numbers how that principle was implemented under the Old Covenant. Jehovah said that He would come and live among the people of Israel. He would dwell above the mercy seat in a tabernacle made with hands.

But, the Lord said, you must keep this land holy, because I live among you in this tabernacle. You must obey My Law. You must not persist in sin. And so we see Phinehas literally putting to death the Israelite who persisted in sin, and putting to death the pagan he had brought into his tent.

But under the New Covenant, God does not dwell in a tabernacle made with hands. He dwells in the tabernacles of our hearts.

First Corinthians 6:19-20 – “do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and you are not your own?”

Series: *Christ's Preeminence Demonstrated*

Title: "Put to Death Your Members" (Colossians 3:5)

Speaker: Dr. Paul M. Elliott

Original Air Date: Week of 9/10/2017

Page 9 of 13

For you were bought at a price; therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God's."

Under the Old Covenant, God dwelled in a physical tabernacle in a physical land. Under the Old Covenant, God commanded Israel to keep *the land* pure of idolatry and all the sin that went with it. In the New Covenant, we, individually, are the dwelling places of God in this present evil world. Under the New Covenant, God commands us to keep *ourselves* pure of idolatry and all the sin that goes with it.

The Principle of "One Flesh"

Why did God unleash His wrath against Israel in the particularly striking and bloody manner that He did in Numbers chapter 25? We read there in verse 3 that "Israel was *joined* to Baal of Peor." In the original language, this denotes the idea that the Israelites *closely bound themselves* to this false god. They closely bound themselves to the disgusting worship that was involved. The word denotes the idea that Israel was yoked together with this false God.

Here we have another principle. That principle is that whatever and whomever you join yourself to, you become one with that thing or that person. In First Corinthians chapter 6 beginning at verse 15 we read that this principle applies to the New Covenant believer as well as the Old. This is the word of the Lord through the Apostle Paul:

Series: *Christ's Preeminence Demonstrated*

Title: "Put to Death Your Members" (Colossians 3:5)

Speaker: Dr. Paul M. Elliott

Original Air Date: Week of 9/10/2017

Page 10 of 13

Do you not know that your bodies are members of Christ? Shall I then take the members of Christ and make them members of a harlot? Certainly not! Or do you not know that he who is joined to a harlot is one body with her? For "the two," He says, "shall become one flesh." But he who is joined to the Lord is one spirit with Him. (1 Corinthians 6:15-17)

And Paul by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit declares this to us in Second Corinthians chapter 6 beginning at verse 14 –

For what fellowship has righteousness with lawlessness? And what communion has light with darkness? And what accord has Christ with Belial? Or what part has a believer with an unbeliever? And what agreement has the temple of God with idols? For you are the temple of the living God. As God has said: "I will dwell in them and walk among them. I will be their God, and they shall be My people."

Therefore "Come out from among them and be separate, says the Lord. Do not touch what is unclean, and I will receive you." "I will be a Father to you, and you shall be My sons and daughters, says the Lord Almighty."

Therefore, having these promises, beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God.

Series: *Christ's Preeminence Demonstrated*

Title: "Put to Death Your Members" (Colossians 3:5)

Speaker: Dr. Paul M. Elliott

Original Air Date: Week of 9/10/2017

Page 11 of 13

Have You Missed the Point?

Now perhaps you are listening today, and you are thinking a thought that I myself have been guilty of at times, when I have sat in a service, or listened to the radio, and heard the Word of God preached. I have said to myself, "O, I wish so-and-so could hear this. This is just the thing he needs to hear – this is just the thing she needs to hear."

Dear friend, if you are thinking that way, you have missed the point. Let me answer you with the words of the Holy Spirit through the Apostle Paul in Romans chapter 2, verse 1:

Therefore you are inexcusable, O man, whoever you are who judge, for in whatever you judge another you condemn yourself; for you who judge practice the same things.

This is for all of us. It is for you. It is for me.

It is easy to hate the sin you see in the world. It is easy to be disgusted with the sin you see in others. But what about the sin within yourself?

Are You Bringing Pagans Into the Tent of Your Heart?

Are you striving against sin, as we read in Hebrews chapter 12? Do you hate the invasion of your heart and soul and mind by sin? Are you continually conscious of the fact that you, as a believer in Christ, are the temple of the living God in this present evil world?

Series: *Christ's Preeminence Demonstrated*

Title: "Put to Death Your Members" (Colossians 3:5)

Speaker: Dr. Paul M. Elliott

Original Air Date: Week of 9/10/2017

Page 12 of 13

Dear Christian – Are you bringing pagans into the tent of your heart, in various forms, in various ways? Are you defiling the temple in which God dwells by making compromises with the unbelief and idolatry of this world?

Or do you strive to keep His temple from being defiled? Do you continually seek, by the grace of God, by the power of the indwelling Spirit, by the power of the sanctifying Word of truth, to put to death the sin and the sinful propensities within you?

Under the magnification of the Word of God, no sin is small or insignificant. In view of the absolute holiness of God, no sin that we would harbor in our hearts is trivial.

And so, let me conclude today by asking you this: Are you like the Israelite who took the pagan woman into his tent, or are you like Phinehas who was zealous for the holiness of his God?

Are you seeking the holiness that is fitting for the temple of the living God in this present evil world – whose temple you are?

Are you endeavoring to put to death the things that displease Him?

Are you seeking to obey His command to mortify your members here on earth, to seek no fellowship with unrighteousness, to seek no communion with darkness, to make no compromise between the temple of God and the idols of this world?

Series: *Christ's Preeminence Demonstrated*

Title: "Put to Death Your Members" (Colossians 3:5)

Speaker: Dr. Paul M. Elliott

Original Air Date: Week of 9/10/2017

Page 13 of 13

Can the Lord say of you, as He said of Phinehas the son of Eleazar –

“he was zealous for My sake”?

“he was zealous for his God”?

May it be so, dear friends. More, and more, may it be so. We must redeem the time, because the days are evil.

About the Broadcast

The Scripture-Driven Church airs each week across the United States and around the world. Our goal is to obey Christ's Great Commission: preaching the Gospel to all, and equipping believers in Christ to live every area of life by the sole authority of Scripture, to the glory of our Lord and Savior.

For more information, please visit our website, www.teachingtheword.org.

The prayers of our listeners and supporters are vital to all we do. We thank you for bringing this ministry before the throne of grace. We are also grateful to God for the gifts of individuals and churches that support this work financially.

**May the Lord richly bless your personal study
of His inspired, infallible, inerrant Word.**

TeachingtheWord Ministries
Box 2533, Westminster, Maryland 21158 USA