

**“GOD THE LORD IS MY STRENGTH”:
FINDING OUR CONTENTMENT AND HAPPINESS IN GOD**

**“PUT TO DEATH”:
ENEMIES OF HOLY HAPPINESS
(COLOSSIANS 3:5)**

I. Glorification Is the Goal

- A. What is God’s purpose for you and for me? What is it that God wants ultimately for each one of his children?
- B. The Bible gives one powerful and beautiful answer expressed in a number of ways.
- Jn 17:22-24: “The glory that you have given me I have given to them, that they may be one even as we are one, ²³ I in them and you in me, that they may become perfectly one, so that the world may know that you sent me and loved them even as you loved me. ²⁴ Father, I desire that they also, whom you have given me, may be with me where I am, to see my glory that you have given me because you loved me before the foundation of the world.”
 - 2 Pet 1:4: “by which he has granted to us his precious and very great promises, so that through them you may become partakers of the divine nature, having escaped from the corruption that is in the world because of sinful desire.”
 - Rev 21:3: “And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, ‘Behold, the dwelling place of God is with man. He will dwell with them, and they will be his people, and God himself will be with them as their God.’”
- C. What are some things that prevent us from experiencing this kind of life-giving, soul-enriching contentment in God? What are some of the enemies of this experience of satisfaction in God?
- D. Colossians 3:5 identifies the enemies of our satisfaction in God—and exhorts us to war against them all our lives from our exalted position in Jesus Christ.

II. “Put to Death” (Col 3:5)

- A. Colossians 3:5 gives us a list of the enemies of our souls.
- B. The first thing that we see about these problems is that they are *not* external powers, foreign armies, terrorists, or robbers.
- C. Rather, they are what we might call “bad qualities.”
- D. Yet these bad qualities are so dangerous, so destructive to ourselves and others that there is no other way of dealing with them than to *put them to death*, to slay, kill, and deprive of life.
- E. The verb here is a command from the Lord Jesus.
- F. The primary war we human beings fight is not without but within.
- G. Indeed, the reason terrorists and other criminals exist in the first place were because these people failed to deal with their inner monsters.
- H. In order to truly love our fellow human beings, and to be truly satisfied in God, we need to put these things to death.

III. Earthly Parts (Col 3:5)

- A. What exactly are these inner monsters, these subterranean serpents of the soul that our beloved Savior wants us to put to death, to intentionally deprive of life?
t—They are “what is earthly in you” (Col 3:5).
- B. The things we need to put to death are parts of who we are.
 - They are *what* is in us.
 - They are *members* of our persons.
 - They are *parts* of who we are (even if they are not all of who we are), if that makes sense.
- C. In this case, “earthly” refers to certain kinds of values and attitudes that are perverse, destructive, and idolatrous.
- D. Perhaps Paul uses “earthly” to describe these things due to the fact that all these values have one thing in common: They are all focused on the good things of this earth to the exclusion of God.

IV. Dragons (Col 3:5)

- A. We come to a list of earthly things that Paul has in mind.
- B. First, sexual immorality (*porneia*)
 - 1. Sexuality is a good thing that God made in us.
 - 2. The natural, gender-based fascination between men and women is a part of who we are as human beings made in God's image.
 - 3. The issue lies in what we do with this "natural fascination."
 - a. What we do with this "natural fascination" determines whether our sexuality remains in the orbit of holiness or degenerates into *porneia*.
 - b. What tips the scales over in a person is the extent to which God is at the center of his or her heart.
 - c. If God does not rule at the center, sexual fascination and pleasure begin to take up the sacred space that should only be reserved for the King of Life.
 - d. When that happens, various forms of sexual perversion result.
- C. Second: impurity (*akatharsian*)
 - a. Impurity may have a broader meaning than sexual immorality. It covers both actual adultery and the adulterous fantasies or desires.
 - b. Impurity is what gives rise to sexual immorality to begin with.
- D. Third: passion (*pathos*)
 - a. Passion leads to impurity.
 - b. Passion is a strong feeling for something. In this case, it is a strong feeling for that which is twisted, perverse, and impure.
 - c. Sexual immorality and impurity require passion to come into being.

V. Dark Roots (Col 3:5)

- A. Paul identifies the root as "covetousness" and "idolatry."
- B. "Covetousness" is evil desire.

- C. This is the kind of desire that is condemned in the Tenth Commandment.
- Exodus 20:17: “You shall not covet your neighbor’s house; you shall not covet your neighbor’s wife, or his male servant, or his female servant, or his ox, or his donkey, or anything that is your neighbor’s.”
- D. Paul then equates covetousness/evil desire to idolatry.
- Exodus 20:3: “You shall have no other gods before me.”
- E. Implications:
1. The First Commandment and Tenth Commandments are two sides of the same coin.
 2. Wherever there is idolatry, there will also be covetousness.
 3. Whereas idolatry has to do with our relationship with God, covetousness has to do with our relationship to one another.
 4. But idolatry never remains a purely private matter. It has inter-personal consequences.
- F. Sexual immorality, impurity, sinful passions, wicked desires of all sorts, and most of all, idolatry are the enemies that work against our satisfaction in God and emerge from a lack of satisfaction in God.
- G. “On account of these the wrath of God is coming” (v 6).

VI. Deprive the Darkness, Feed the Light

- A. We must strive against these sins. We must deprive them of the oxygen and food that they need to survive and to thrive. How do we do this?
- B. First: *Stand against say “no” to these sins in our lives every day.*
1. Every day, we must say “no” to evil desire and idolatry.
 2. What spurs us to do this is by remembering that this is exactly our Father’s own position on such sins: “On account of these the wrath of God is coming” (v 6).
- C. Second: *We must say “yes” to what God has done and will do for us for the sake of Christ.*
- Colossians 3:1-4: “If then you have been raised with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. ²Set your minds on things that are above,

not on things that are on earth. ³ For you have died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. ⁴ When Christ who is your life appears, then you also will appear with him in glory.”

1. Only after verse 4 does Paul say: “Put to death *therefore* what is earthly in you...”
 2. Putting the earthly members to death is a result/application of being joined to Christ, of having our lives “hidden with Christ in God.”
 3. The more we set our minds on things that are above, the things of this earth will begin to lose their power.
 - Philippians 4:8 : “Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence, if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things.”
- D. As we strive against our sins, let us make sure that we are feeding and nurturing the renewed nature that God has given to us.
—We do this is by feeding our minds with God’s love for us in Christ.
- E. It is precisely because Christ himself is our Life that what is dark in us will be broken.

VII. Our Power in the Gospel

- A. On the one hand, we must not be naïve. As long as sin remains in us, this command to “put to death therefore what is earthly in you” will always be God’s Word to you and me *now*.
- B. On the other hand, we must be dominated by hope.
 1. We must heed the word of the Gospel.
 2. The Gospel assures us:
 - a. Because Christ died for our sins, God loves us as we struggle with our sins.
 - b. Because Christ has been raised from the dead, so will we.

To defend our satisfaction in God from the enemies of our souls, to grow in our satisfaction in God, we must always remember who we are and where we are. We have been “raised with Christ” (Col 3:1) and “hidden with Christ in God” (Col 3:3). Christ Jesus is our Life (Col 3:4). Let us live according to this truth.

Questions for Further Reflection

1. Is there anything about today’s sermon that blessed and encouraged you?
2. Why does Paul call these bad qualities “earthly”? Is he condemning anything that is merely earthly?
3. How do immorality, impurity, and passion relate to one another?
4. How do we work at starving the sinful desires/impulses in ourselves?
5. How do we feed the new man/nature inside us? Discuss with Col 3:1-4 and Phil 4:8 in mind.
6. How does our union with Christ relate to the command to put our earthly members/parts to death?
7. Pray for the grace to see yourself in Christ.