



A new creation focus through Colossians ...

Death to Earthly Members

The war, observed the apostle Paul, is between the Spirit and the flesh. The human body is part of the material creation, subject to the laws of nature and the storms of an earthly existence. The body, then, operates on the basis of maximum benefit with minimum effort. This natural tendency leads to the formation of a spiritual type of "body of flesh" which develops when the descendant of Adam commits his first sin. In the initial stage of the spiritual war, the forces of darkness win as the flesh now takes ascendancy over the spirit of the man, his heart is corrupted, and he has now become locked into the domain of Satan. But the gospel of Christ comes to the rescue, as the individual now reaches for victory as he puts off the "body of the flesh" in his immersion into Christ. However, the battle still rages daily in the Christian as it raged daily in Christ Himself. "The flesh sets its desire against the Spirit," affirmed Paul to the Galatian churches, "and the Spirit against the flesh" (Galatians 5:17). Hence the need for continuing exhortation for the brethren in this spiritual war.

- **Consider the body dead** — "You have died," was Paul's blunt statement, "and your life is hidden with Christ." The eventual goal of the saint is to participate in Christ's glory at His second coming. "Therefore," exhorts the apostle, "consider the members of your earthly body as dead to immorality, impurity, passion, evil desire, and greed, which amounts to idolatry" (Colossians 3:5). Because of his immersion into Christ, the old self is indeed buried, but the saint of God has to continue to program his mind as to the truthfulness of that fact. The disciple of Christ is to consider his body as dead — no ability to be aroused in any way by sinful desires. No more sexual immorality; no more impure or unsavory thoughts; no more being pulled along by the strong but immoral passions, the fire in the bosom referred to by Proverbs; no more slaving after evil desires, plans or plots to get what is forbidden; no more being driven by greed, by what John D. Rockefeller called "just one more dollar." Paul's comment that greed "amounts to idolatry" is significant, and establishes that not all idols have physical form.

- **The wrath of God** — The wrath of God is unbearable, and the human mind cannot really process the intensity and eternal duration of His anger. While the Christian is pictured as delivered from that wrath, he is continually warned not to drift away from the faith or be pulled back into fleshly lusts or he will experience that fierce anger of the Lord. "For it is on account of these things that the wrath of God will come," is the apostle's admonition, "and in them you also once walked, when you were living in them" (Colossians 3:6,7). The follower of Christ has been delivered from the lifestyle of the darkness; why would he go back into it again? The downward pull can be powerful, but the saint is given every positive reason to overcome, as well as the warning as to what will happen if he drifts back into the old life. The picture of the fires of hell still has to burn in the recesses of the saint's mind as a powerful incentive to move forward in Christ.

The scripture is emphatic that the deeds of the flesh are a part of the past life of the Christian. "In them you *once* walked," avers the apostle. "You *were* living in them," he stresses. "What benefit," the same apostle asked the brethren in Rome, "were you then deriving of the things of which you are now ashamed?" (Romans 6:21). After asking that probing question, he came back to the same point he had mentioned to the Colossians, "For the outcome of those things is death." The overall message of the word of God is clear: Put the past things to death, and continue to turn to God that you may live!

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