

Col. 3:5-7 - Put Evil Desires to Death

Written by Tim Black

Monday, 21 May 2007 14:18 - Last Updated Monday, 21 May 2007 14:21

1.

Body

1.

What: Evil Desires v. 5

1.

First, what should you put to death? Evil desires. Paul gives a list of them in v. 5:

1.

Colossians 3:5-7 [5 Put to death therefore what is earthly in you: sexual immorality, impurity, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry.](#)

2.

Therefore

1.

Ground. Paul begins with the word “[therefore,](#)” referring back to the ground of Christian character in 3:1-5. In those verses Paul exhorted you to “[Set your minds on things above.](#)”

” You may remember that the things on which we should set our minds are

God

,

Christ

,
eternal life

,
salvation blessings

,
Christian virtues

, and anything that is
morally pure

. The reason why we should do so is that our life is bound up with Christ our Savior, and so we must give our attention and devotion to Him, to His kingdom and His righteousness. And if you are devoted to Christ in this manner, if you set your mind on Christ, today Paul tells you how your life needs to change in the most practical of ways.

2.

Connection. Amazingly, Paul connects our most grand, mystical union with Christ with our most plain and practical moral obligations as Christians. Would you rather have Christian doctrine, or the Christian life? Paul tells you in this word “[therefore](#)” that you cannot have the one without the other. Your life is not Christian if you are not committed to the doctrine that Christ is your life. And your doctrine that Christ is your life is worthless if it does not change the way you live.

3.

Application. The way you should change is this: If

your mind is set on things above, then you should put these evil desires to death. They are sen
sual

in their focus,
earthly

in their tempting origins, intended objects, and resulting actions. But your governing desires should be

spiritual

in focus, desires that find their origin in Christ, seek the objects He intends, and the actions that He approves. James puts this contrast in the starkest of terms, and the conclusion we must draw is that our desires, our character, our lifestyle, either come from Heaven or Hell. James says,

-

James 3:14-15 14 But if you have bitter jealousy and selfish ambition in your hearts, do not boast and be false to the truth. 15 This is not the wisdom that comes down from above, but is earthly, unspiritual, demonic.

-

Put to death

1.

If your life comes from heaven, then you must “put to death

” the evil desires that remain in your heart. Paul has already told you that “

with Christ you died to the basic principles of the world

” (

2:20

) and that “

you have died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God

” (

3:3

), and so now he tells us that while in respect to God’s sovereign initiative we were passive participants in that death to sin, nevertheless we now have an active role to carry out in furthering

that project. Sinful desires continue to spring up within you, and you need to put them to death. They are the weeds in the good soil of your heart, the termites in your walls, the rats in your basement, the cancer in your bones, and they need to die. Otherwise, they will be the death of you

.

2.

Illustration. Alexander Maclaren gives a fitting illustration.

-

“Suppose a man working at some machine. His fingers get drawn between the rollers or caught in some belting. Another minute and he will be flattened to a shapeless bloody mass. He catches up an axe lying by and with his own arm hacks off his own hand at the wrist.

It takes some nerve to do that. It is not easy nor pleasant, but it is the only alternative to a horrible death. I know of no stimulus that will string a man up to the analogous spiritual act here enjoined, and enjoined by conscience also, except participation in the death of Christ and in the resulting life.” [1](#)

-

Maclaren’s last comment brings out the very important truth that evil desires are desires

. They are

your

desires. This means that of your own will and your own strength you will not desire

to put these desires to death. Only Jesus Christ living in you is able to give you the strength to fight this battle.

-

Members. Paul speaks in v. 5 of “**your members that are on the earth.**

” What are these “**members?**

” They are spiritual members of a spiritual body

.

1.

Spiritual members. In Greek this

word “ members”

means “body parts.” So Paul is telling you to put your “body parts” to death.

Now certainly your

physical

body parts can be used improperly as

instruments for unrighteousness, but

Paul is not speaking about your physical

body. This is evident because when

he enumerates these “body parts” in v.

5, he does not give a list of

physical

body parts, but a list of

sinful desires

. Granted, these desires are

experienced in your physical body, but

in themselves they are more

spiritual

than

physical
in nature.

2.

Spiritual body of flesh. You see,
Paul is speaking of a
spiritual body

. He often refers to it as the “flesh,”
which means the sinful nature that
is the origin of evil desires within us
which are often called the “lusts of the
flesh.” Paul calls this “flesh” a
“body” in Col. 2:11:

-

Colossians 2:11 In him also you were circumcised with a circumcision made without hands, by putting off the **body of the flesh**, by the circumcision of Christ.

-

So now in 3:5 Paul speaks in terms of this same concept of “**the body of the flesh**” and tells us to put to death the “parts” of this body—its hands and feet and arms and ears and legs. In a real sense the vital

organs of this body have already died, because Christ has put off your body of flesh, made a decisive break between you and it, so that it is no longer your identity, it is no longer the core of who you are. You are not the old man, but are the “
new man, created according to God in true righteousness and holiness.

” (

Eph. 4:24

) But though its vital organs are dead, its “body parts”--its “
desires

” and “

manner of life

” (

Eph. 4:22

)--still arise from it and must be exterminated lest like the spasmodic hands of a dying man they grip your heart and ruin the course of your life. Your old heart is dead, so let the body parts die off too. Paul exhorts you in

Rom. 8:13

,

-

Romans 8:13 13 If you live

according to the flesh you will die, but if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live.

-

Listed

-

Let's examine this list of evil desires. Because this list is so general, I believe you and I actually have each one of these desires within us, otherwise Paul would not command you to face them. The question is not whether you have these desires, but whether you seek to slay them when they rise up in your heart. I want you to ask yourself, "In what particular way do I have each of these desires?" and then I want you to commit to

pray to God for help to stop that desire the moment you next experience it.

-

On p. 277 of his commentary Alexander Maclaren says “The series recounts various forms of evil love, and is so arranged as that it starts with the coarse, gross act, and goes on to more subtle and inward forms. It

goes up the stream, as it were,
to the fountain head,
passing inward from deed to
d
esire

”

.

-

Deeds

-

Sexual immorality

-

First is sexual immorality, which covers every kind of sexual act other than those between a husband and wife which are approved by scripture.

-

Examples:

-

premarital sex,
extramarital affairs, incest,
homosexuality, bestiality,
lust

-

pornography, lewd
thoughts, words, or looks

-

Uncleanness

-

Second is uncleanness, or impurity, “which embraces every manifestation in word or look or deed of the impure

spirit, and so is at once wider and subtler than the gross physical act.”²

-

Examples:

-

foolish talk, crude joking, vulgarity, swearing, vulgar gestures

Col. 3:5-7 - Put Evil Desires to Death

Written by Tim Black

Monday, 21 May 2007 14:18 - Last Updated Monday, 21 May 2007 14:21

-

dirty, vile, dead,
mangled, perverse

-

Desires

-

“Then follow ‘passion’ and ‘evil desire’; the sources of the evil deeds. These are again more inward and more general than the preceding.” Passion is more passive, evil desire is more active. “The ‘lusts of

the flesh' are in the one aspect kindled by outward temptations which come with terrible force and carry men captive, acting almost irresistibly....On the other hand they are excited by the voluntary action of the man himself. In the one the evil comes into the heart; in the other the heart goes out to the evil."

3

-

Passions

-

pa,qoj is passive, as
opposed to evpiqumi,
a ,
which is active. It is
“ungovernable desire.”

-

May have a cause in
view

-

Examples:

-

anger, rage, envy,
jealousy, malice, pride,
conceit, enmity,
rivalries, drunkenness,
orgies, hatred toward God,
quarreling, hostility,

hatred, selfish ambition

-

Evil desires

-

strong impulse or desire

-

Has an object in view

Col. 3:5-7 - Put Evil Desires to Death

Written by Tim Black

Monday, 21 May 2007 14:18 - Last Updated Monday, 21 May 2007 14:21

-

Mark 4:19 “**desires for
other things will come
and choke out the message.**
”

-

Desire itself is not
wrong

-

This word for “desire”
is used positively in Luke
17:22, 22:15; 1
Thess. 2:17; Heb. 6:11.

-

Asceticism is not the
right response. The right

goal is not to destroy
the physical body and
its good desires, but the
old spiritual
body and its evil
desires.

-

Greed

-

**Lastly
greed.**

Paul mentions

-

Definition. Greed is the desire to acquire an object that is not rightfully yours.

-

Greed is spiritual idolatry. This means greed is worse than is commonly thought.

-

Matt. 6:24 You
cannot serve God and
money.

-

It is often true that

someone who has been addicted to sensual desires will also become addicted to this desire to acquire. Maclaren says on p. 278, “How many respectable middle-aged gentlemen are now mainly devoted to making money, whose youth was foul with sensual

indulgence?” “The lowest form of idolatry is the giving of supreme trust to a material thing, and making that a god. There is no lower form of fetish-worship than this.”

-

Greed is “the fierce

and ever fiercer longing of the creature which has turned from God to fill itself with the inferior objects of sense.”[4](#)

“To such a god there is given the first thought of the morning, the last wish of the evening, and the action of every waking hour.”

[5](#)

Col. 3:5-7 - Put Evil Desires to Death

Written by Tim Black

Monday, 21 May 2007 14:18 - Last Updated Monday, 21 May 2007 14:21

—

Why: God's Evaluation and Response v. 6

1.

Why should we put evil desires to death? The reason Paul gives is that these evil desires—even the same

evil desires that are within your own heart—are the reason God's wrath is coming.

1.

6 On account of these the wrath of God is coming [on the sons of disobedience].

2.

Sons of disobedience

1.

Probably copied from

its parallel passages in
Eph. 2:2 and 5:6.

2.

Origin that indicates a
state. This is the state
of unbelievers – they
live in disobedience.

3.

Psalm 58:3 The
wicked are estranged
from the womb; they
go astray from birth,
speaking lies.

4.

Result is that God's

wrath comes on them

-

Ephesians 2:3

among whom we all
once lived in the
passions of our flesh,
carrying out the desires
of the body and the

mind, and were by
nature
children of wrath
, like the rest of
mankind.

-

Ephesians 5:6 6
Let no one deceive

you with empty
words, for because of
these things the wrath
of God comes upon
the sons of
disobedience.

-

Wrath

1.

Evil desires pose a
great threat

to you.

2.

“This overgh. is
more than
chastisement...it is
direct and punitive
indignation frequently

inflicted here in the
form of physical
debility and disease,
remorse, and
stupefaction.”

6

3.

Will God's wrath
come on you if you
are a believer? No,
not if you have
placed your faith in
Jesus, who delivers
us from the coming
wrath.

-

1 Thessalonians

1:9-10 you turned to
God from idols to
serve the living and
true God, 10 and to
wait for his Son
from heaven, whom
he raised from the

dead, Jesus who
delivers us from the
wrath to come.

-

But the earthly

consequences of
sin are the same for
both the elect and
the non-elect .

-

These desires
wage war against

your soul.

-

1 Peter 2:11 Be
loved, I urge you as
sojourners and
exiles to abstain
from the passions of

the flesh, which
wage war against
your soul.

—

James 4 tells us
that our evil desires
are the reason we f
ight
, and
war
, and
kill
.

-

These desires
bring forth death.

-

James 1:15 15

Then desire when it
has conceived
gives birth to sin,
and sin when it is
fully grown
brings forth death.

-

Evil desires will
kill you
– this is the goal of
the prostitute in
Rev. 17. Those
who dwell on the

earth are drunk
with her sexual
immorality (

Rev. 17:2

), and she is “

drunk with the
blood of the saints.

” (

Rev. 17:17

)

-

Not only are the
earthly

consequences of
sin the same for
the elect and
the non-elect
alike, but the
eternal
consequences of
sin come on all

who will not
repent .

-

The
consequences are
eternal.

-

Galatians 6:8

For the one who
sows to his own
flesh will from
the flesh reap
corruption, but the

one who sows
to the Spirit will
from the Spirit
reap eternal life.

-

Evil desires
will keep you
from inheriting
the kingdom of
God .

-

1

Corinthians 6:9

Do you not know
that the
unrighteous will

not inherit the
kingdom of God?

Do not be
deceived: neither
the sexually
immoral, nor
idolaters, nor
adulterers, nor

men who practice
homosexuality,
nor thieves,
nor the greedy,
nor drunkards,
nor revilers, nor
swindlers will
inherit the

kingdom of God.

-

Evil desires

will take you to h
ell

▪

-

Revelation

21:8 But as for
the cowardly, the
faithless, the
detestable, as for
murderers, the
sexually
immoral,
sorcerers,

idolaters, and all
liars, their portion
will be in the
lake that burns
with fire and
sulfur, which is
the second
death.

Col. 3:5-7 - Put Evil Desires to Death

Written by Tim Black

Monday, 21 May 2007 14:18 - Last Updated Monday, 21 May 2007 14:21

-

Illustration:

Gollum

-

The ring:

“My precious!”

-

Put it on, and
you gain the
power of being
able to hide in
invisibility, but it

shows you a
world of evil that
is more
powerful than
you, and which
threatens your
life.

-

At the end,
Gollum clutches
the ring as he
falls over a cliff
into a burning

lake of fire.

-

How: Your Walk and Your Life v. 7

1.

How then
should we put
evil desires to
death? Paul
hints at the
answer in v. 7,

saying

1.

7 In these you
too once
walked, when

you were living
in them.

2.

Paul says that before you came to faith in Christ you had an old walk and an old life, and by pointing them out Paul is

telling you to
avoid that old
walk and that
old life
whenever you
are tempted to
take them up
again.

3.

Walk

1.

First Paul
speaks of your
former walk.

2.

Most likely

this is saying
you walked in
the desires
listed above
in v. 5, and it
does not mean
you walked
among the “

sons of disobedience

■

”

3.

“Once walked
” implies you
now walk in a
new era of life,
in a new
sphere with
which you are

identified and
within which you
move.

4.

It refers to your active life—what you do and the direction in which it leads you.

5.

Life

1.

Paul then
speaks of your
former life.

2.

This refers to the root of your life. Tying your old walk and

life together,
Maclaren says
“Your active
life was
occupied and
guided by these
sins in that

past time when
your inward
being was knit
to and
nourished by
them. Or to put
it plainly,

conduct
followed and
was shaped by
inclinations
and desires.”
(283)

3.

This “life”
does not refer
to dwelling in a
location, a

house, a
dwelling, but to
the principle of
life within as it
comes to
expression in
all of your

experience.
What drives
you? A desire
to sin? Or a
desire for
Christ? In what
do you find

supreme
enjoyment, so
that you
engross
yourself in it?
What is the
thing that

you fancy will
give you the
greatest
gratification? In
what do you
so revel that
you can say

you “live” in it?

-

Sexual
immorality

—

Lust

-

Impurity/Unclean- ness

Col. 3:5-7 - Put Evil Desires to Death

Written by Tim Black

Monday, 21 May 2007 14:18 - Last Updated Monday, 21 May 2007 14:21

—

TV

—

Passion/Evil Desire

—

Alcohol

-

Drugs

-

Food

-

Work, children, toys

-

Greed

-

Possessions

Col. 3:5-7 - Put Evil Desires to Death

Written by Tim Black

Monday, 21 May 2007 14:18 - Last Updated Monday, 21 May 2007 14:21

-

Conclusion

1.

You once
lived in what
you must now
put to death.

These desires
are not your
life, and are
contrary to your
spiritual life in
Christ. They
are contrary to

Christ, who is
your life.

2.

Make it your

ambition

1.

1 Peter 4:2-3

2 to live for
the rest of the
time in the flesh
no longer for
human
passions but for
the will of God.

2.

You will suffer
as you seek to

fight against
the evil desires
in your heart.
But remember
that

1.

Romans

5:3-5 suffering

produces

endurance, 4

and

endurance

produces

character, and

character

produces

hope, 5 and

hope does not

put us to
shame,
because God's
love has been
poured into
our hearts
through the

Holy Spirit who
has been given
to us.

2.

And

1.

Philippians

1:6 he who
began a good
work in you
will bring it to
completion at
the day of

Jesus Christ.

1 Maclaren,
275.

2Maclaren,
277.

3Maclaren,
277.

4Eadie, 223,
quoting
Trench, New
Testament
Synonyms

,

§

24.

5Eadie, 223.

6Eadie, 224.