

"Put To Death, Therefore..."

"...your members which are upon the earth" (Col. 3:5). The word "Therefore" tells us the apostle's appeal rests upon the preceding verses: "seek the things which are above," "set your mind on the things that are above," "ye died" (Col. 3:1-3). To do these things we must put to death our members which are upon the earth. We cannot "die" unless we "put to death" fornication, uncleanness, passion, evil desire and covetousness. James states the process which culminates in sin: "each man is tempted when he is drawn away by his own lust and enticed. Then the lust when it hath conceived beareth sin; and the sin when it is full-grown bringeth forth death" (James. 1:14f). In Colossians Paul names the sin (Fornication) and then tells how it comes about. All the named items (save fornication and uncleanness) are matters of the heart-- passion, evil desire and covetousness and while covetousness may be any inordinate desire for possession of things, its appearance in this context with fornication seems to relegate its inordinate desire for possession, to the carnal possession of another's body.

Those whose obsessions for these things and their failure to check such desires and passions in their hearts are styled "sons of disobedience" (Col. 3:6). This same expression is found in Ephesians 2:2 where Paul explains that Gentiles were dead through their trespasses and sins. They walked according to the course of this world; (walked) according to the prince of the powers of the air (Satan) and (walked according) to the spirit that ... worketh in sons of disobedience" (Eph. 2:1f). Just as Jesus charged Jews with being sons of the devil because they followed the path he beckoned them to walk in, so those who give themselves over to fornication and uncleanness are "children of disobedience." They have disobeyed God's instructions to "put these things to death" (Jn. 8:38; 44f). And, the warning "For which things sake cometh the wrath of God upon the children of disobedience" is similarly express in Ephesians (Col. 3:6; Eph. 5:5-6).

"Wherein ye once walked, when ye lived in these things" (Col. 3:7). There are those who say that fornication or adultery is an act, not a state: that one does not "live in adultery." Paul disagrees with them. One who has a "'live in' partner" is "living in fornication." One who unscripturally divorces his mate and remarries another is "living in adultery." One can only cease to "live in fornication" when he ceases to have a "'live in' mate;" one can only cease to "live in adultery" when he ceases to live with a mate he has no right to have. Being baptized does not change the sin of having a "live

in;" nor the sin of "living in adultery."

Because God's wrath comes upon sons of disobedience, we should "put to death our members which are upon the earth". Until we do, we are not seeking the things that are above, not setting our mind on the things that are above, nor have we died, as Christ demanded that we must. Until we "put to death" our members upon the earth, we cannot be called "children of obedience," but must still be regarded as "sons of disobedience upon whom God's wrath will some day come (1 Pet. 1:14; Col. 3:6).

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